

Sports Media in Turkey: A Sample on the University Students

by
Leyla Tavacioglu¹

Sport has an important place among the basic factors of “modern life” in the 21st century. The governments and sources of power, which shape and direct the society, produce and promote all kinds of goods and politics by using sports as a medium in a mechanism that embraces the whole life. This both creates a large area of movement for these power sources and also makes it possible to give the target audiences an unlimited area of freedom. Sport, as a social institution, has close and intense interactions with other social institutions like family, education, economy and media. Media has become an irreplaceable part of our social lives, especially with the effect of technological developments. Many social scientists have, in their researches, questioned the effects of mass communication vehicles on personal and social life, and tried to explain the individual and social behavior models by using sociological and socio-psychological approaches. Media and sport are indeed structures, which influence and nurture each other. However, in Turkey, one cannot claim that the broadcasting policy of the sport media has developed by consciously following the sports agenda. Objective: In this study it was aimed to show the degree of interest in, and consumption of, the sports media in Turkey. Material and Method: 400 students who study at Istanbul Technical University (ITU) and Marmara University (MU) have participated in our study. The study comprised of students who are active and inactive in sports. The survey included 46 questions on all sports branches (e.g. volleyball, basketball, winter sports, summer sports). The results have been reached by evaluating the survey on students’ interest in sports, and their consumption of sports media.

Key words: sport, modern life, society, sport media

Introduction

It is not possible to give a single definition for the term ‘sports’ by reason of the diversity and complexity of what it connotes. Several definitions have been made in the past decade, most of which have lost their significance today. Some examples include: “A safety valve in human nature to ensure health and peace (...); “a friendly competition atmosphere”; “substitution of war with peace”; “a means to liberate tension and aggressions of daily life, to ensure mental and bodily health;” “an educative tool which organizes national unity through a patriotic,

hierarchical and authoritative state”, “the opium of the masses (Fisek, 1980).” It can also be argued that the extents of these definitions have loosened as a result of the deformations in social life. Today sport draws attention as an integrative and complex axis for concepts like modernity, socialization, and globalization in today’s consumerism.

Sport has an important place among the basic factors of “modern life” in the 21st century. The governments and sources of power, which shape and direct the society, produce and promote all kinds of goods and politics by using sports as a medium in a mechanism that embraces the whole life. This both creates a large area of movement for these power

¹ - Istanbul Technical University Maritime Faculty, Turkey

sources and also makes it possible to give the target audiences an unlimited area of freedom (Sert, 2008). Thus, it seems possible to see and watch the economical, cultural, political and social changes and evolutions through the medium of sports.

This close relationship may be seen as a concrete indicator of the mechanism on which Foucault's notion of power operates. As it is known, in the power conception of Foucault, there is a versatile, variable, pluralistic structure that exists everywhere, that takes the nature and shape of the space it occupies, that does not have a specific form. The diagrammatic characteristic of power shapes and reinforces the anarchy. In this process of change, new forms that arise as a result of the change in the relationships among powers, after gaining shape and reinforcement, may replace them. These forms are the changes, transformations of the relationships among specific powers (Akay, 1995). Therefore, power should be considered not as any political, economical, cultural singularity, but in terms of the interactions within a social integrity which comprises all of them. The basis of relationship in power requires interaction between at least two subjects. Power comes out as a determinative attribute in the relationship that forms as a result of interaction and creates the individual power between two persons. The determinative characteristic of interactions in power relationships in the society is important since the social power is formed at the stage of interaction. Therefore, social power may be defined as a characteristic of the relationship among groups, classes, or other social entities or among persons as members of the society (Teun & Dijk, 1994).

Sport, as a social institution, has close and intense interactions with other social institutions like family, education, economy and media. "This makes it hard for us to analyze sports in sociological terms" (Amman, 2000). The value of sports as an institution depends largely on its highly increasing interaction with other institutions in the 21st century, and the reciprocal effects that this interaction will have on our social lives as a consequence (Talimciler, 2005).

Almost everyone can find a personal point of contact in this mechanism on which the mass communication vehicles prepare the grounds for all kinds of meeting, interaction and bonding, and which, sometimes, provides these facilities on its own. Media has become an irreplaceable part of our social lives, especially with the effect of technological developments. Mass communication has assumed an

important role in the development process of person by replacing society and groups (Demiray, 2003). Many social scientists have, in their researches, questioned the effects of mass communication vehicles on personal and social life, and tried to explain the individual and social behavior models by using sociological and socio-psychological approaches. Media and sport are indeed structures, which influence and nurture each other. In Turkey, there are 55 national, 23 regional and 2381 local, in total 2459 newspapers, out of which only 5 are sports newspapers. Out of a total of 258 television channels, 27 are national, 16 are regional and 215 are local, while only 10 are sports channels and 3 of these sports channels are owned by major football clubs. Out of a total of 1087 radio channels, 36 are national, 10 are regional and 951 are local, while only 2 of them are sports channels. The sports news on the back pages of the newspapers primarily cover football and to a lesser extent basketball. The same is also true for the final sections of television and radio news.

It is observed that the sports media is giving substantial coverage to football only and thus increasingly becoming a "football-media". According to the study carried out by Ozsoy et al. on the contents of 10 major newspapers in Turkey, newspapers devote 56% of space to news, 27.3% to photographs, 6.5% to opinion articles and commentaries while 17.2% to advertorials and advertisements. The study has also shown that football has the largest percentage of coverage, i.e. 65.72, in the sports pages compared to other branches of sport (Ozsoy et al. 2008). This concurs with the results of the study carried out by Ozturk et al.

Unfortunately, the focus of the Turkish media is the news relating to the popular four football teams in Turkey, namely Fenerbahce, Galatasaray, Besiktas and Trabzonspor. While there are 18 teams in the Super League of Turkey, you will find nothing other than the news relating to these four well-known football teams in the sports pages of newspapers. This is because the sports media believe that fans of other teams are not newspaper readers or buyers while only fans of these four teams are potential consumers. Although this may be a rightful strategy for newspapers, it is not fair in terms of national, particularly amateur sports. Literature suggests that many stations are eliminating or otherwise revising the sports segment in response to the industry conditions. The sport segment is emphasizing more localism and appealing to casual fans. Major factors for

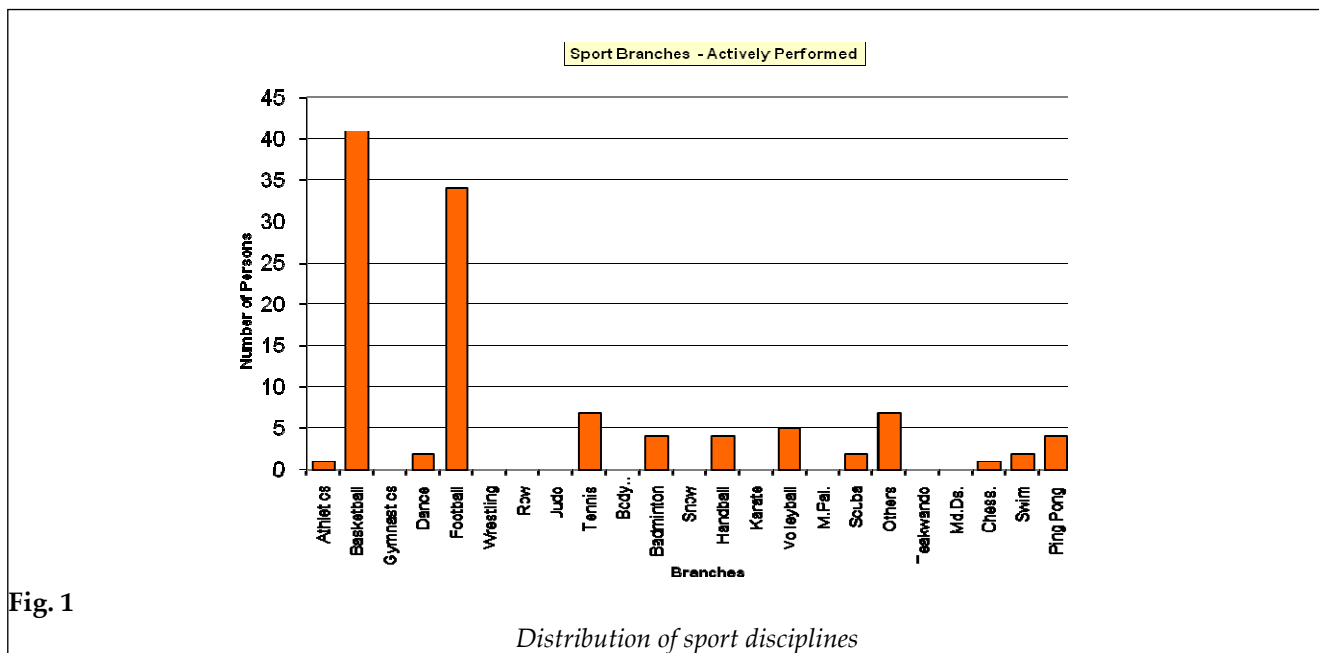


Fig. 1

Distribution of sport disciplines

change were audience ratings and competition from all-sports networks. The implication of these changes for the broadcast industry and journalism education were discussed (Shultz & Sheffer, 2004).

Ramonet, as a French communication scientist, argues that people’s interest in branches of sports mostly depends on the broadcasting policies of newspapers, television and radio. While those branches of sports which are widely covered by mass communication vehicles develop, the branches which are disregarded by mass communication vehicles are faced with the risk of disappearing. There is no doubt that we cannot expect the mass communication vehicles to show the same degree of interest to all branches of sports because of commercial concerns. However, this should not be construed to mean that “mass communication vehicles should highlight only a couple of sports branches and disregard the rest.” At this point, what is important is to follow the recent developments, and set up a broad-

casting policy accordingly. The unfair competition among the sports branches, which arises out of commercial concerns, can thus be avoided.

However, in Turkey, one cannot claim that the broadcasting policy of the sport media has developed by consciously following the sports agenda. It is a fact that the sports pages of the newspapers are more interested in competition in the green fields than in other branches of sports. Newspaper and TV as the media for creating public opinion have important functions in sports. Sport today is greatly influenced and affected by the media, which is itself very much involved in sports. This study was carried out to reveal the interaction between sports and media by taking also the socio-cultural status into account. In this study it was aimed to show the degree of interest in, and consumption of, the sports media in Turkey. Sport is an important social concept frequently used in daily life; just like music and art. Visual and printed media also constitute an

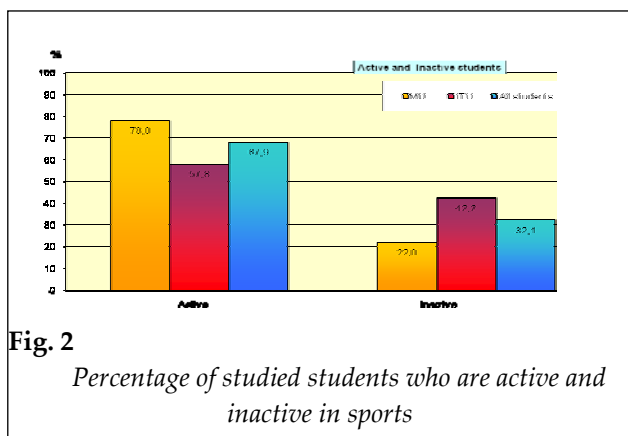


Fig. 2

Percentage of studied students who are active and inactive in sports

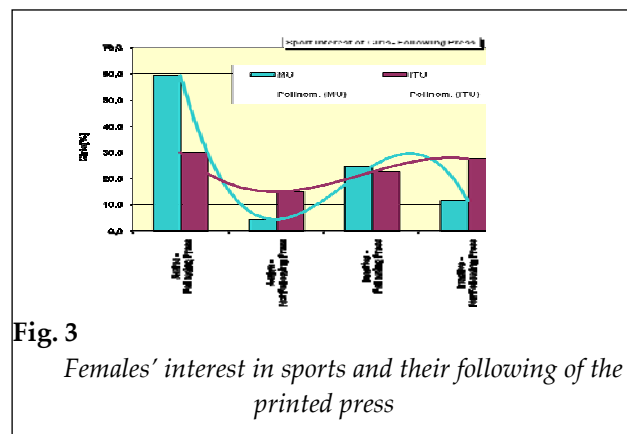


Fig. 3

Females' interest in sports and their following of the printed press

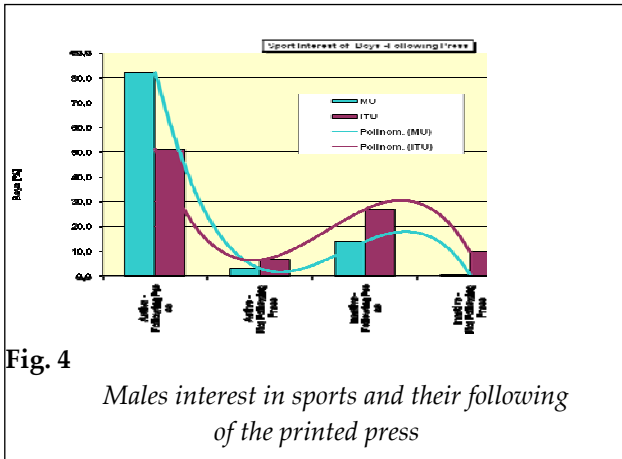


Fig. 4 Males interest in sports and their following of the printed press

important part of our lives. The two closely related concepts, sports community and media, are not detached from each other. All kinds of media including the printed media and radio and television show interest in sports groups and cover issues that relate to the desires and expectations of these groups. This relationship between sports and media and the consumption of the sports news by the target audiences have formed the subject-matter of various case studies conducted by many researchers. The major factors that influence the prevalence of sports branches in a country heavily depend on the spectators' ratings and competition in all sports branches. In Turkey, when the term "sport" is used, what comes to mind initially is football, although within the last ten years, certain other sports branches have also gained spectators. The sports pages with wide coverage of football in the newspapers, the football programs on the televisions and the football newspapers have shaped our cognitive map by which we collect attributes of football (Talimciler, 2003).

Talimciler has, in his research, showed that the media increased the tension among the supporters. The purpose of our study is to show, on a comparative basis, the percentages of consumption of printed and visual media by university students based on the relationship between media and sports.

Material and methods

400 students who study at Istanbul Technical University (ITU) and Marmara University (MU) participated in our study. The average age in our sampling is 21.5±2.9 years. The study comprised of students who are active and inactive in sports. The survey included 46 questions on sport disciplines (e.g. volleyball, basketball, winter sports, summer sports). The distribution of sports disciplines is illustrated in Figure 1.

The results were reached by evaluating the survey on students' interest in sports, and their consumption of sports media. The analysis of the results was conducted by basic statistics.

Results

200 students from MU and 200 students from ITU participated in our study. The students' relationship with sports is illustrated in Table 1. Percentages of students who are actively engaged in and inactive in sports have been illustrated in figure 2.

While examining the socio-economical and cultural levels of the participants, the sociological aspect has also been included in our study. 91.7% of the students involved in the research study in state high-schools. As it can be seen in Table 2, students with a good level of education have been chosen. They were raised in middle income families (Table 2). These students give importance to social life and go on a vacation at least once a year. 23% listen to pop music. While 32.6 % go to the cinema once every 15 days, 22.4% go to the cinema once a month. 58.7% of them attend concerts while 10.9% watch opera, and 9.8% attend ballet performances three times a year. They have an intermediate level of book, newspaper and magazine readership (Table 3). Most of the students who participated in the research are actively interested in sports. When the results were examined, it was observed that 40% followed the sports media (Table 4). Types of sports news followed are

	Girl [%]	Boy [%]	All Students [%]	
			MU[%]	ITU[%]
Active in Sports	46.5	60.6	78	57.8
Inactive in Sports	53.5	38.7	22.0	42.2
Licensed			87.1	28.0
Non-Licensed			12.9	72.0
Actively Engaged - Licensed	4	25		
Actively Engaged - Non-Licensed	15	67		

Tabela 2

Academic Backgrounds of Parents

	MU [%]	ITU [%]	Total [%]
Literate	2.60	1.60	2.11
Primary School	20.31	16.57	18.46
Secondary School	18.22	8.02	13.19
High School	33.33	19.25	26.38
University and Academy	22.91	49.73	36.14
MA & PhD Degree	2.60	4.28	3.43

illustrated in Table 5.

While 80.7% of the MU students participate in sports activities as spectators, once a week, 26.6% of the ITU students participate in sports activities as spectators only once a month. The relationship between sports and media continues either positively or negatively, depending on personal viewpoints. Media coverage helps to increase public interest and spectators' support in sports. This fact has also been taken into consideration in our study.

cial dimensions of sports, which is true at various levels. Sport reaches many people through the media. When the results are examined, it is observed that regardless of whether or not they are actively engaged in sports, most of the students are interested in sports. They show their interest by widely consuming media. The students of MU follow the printed press for gathering information about their favorite branch of sports more than the students of ITU (MU: 92.0%, ITU: 74.8%). The results of this research show, that children between ages 12 and 14 mostly follow the sports news in the printed press (Bulgu,1995). This finding indicates that regardless of age, sport has largely entered into our lives with the help of the media.

When the correlation between a sport activity and television viewing was analyzed, it was observed that MU students exhibited a positive relationship, while ITU students exhibited a negative one (re-

Tabela 3

Frequency of Newspaper, Magazine and Book Reading

	Percentage of Reading [%]			Newspaper [%]			Magazine [%]		
	MU	ITU	Total	MU	ITU	Total	MU	ITU	Total
Not Reading	5.5	5.6	5.6	3.0	1.5	2.3	2.0	4.1	3.1
Reading Everyday	16.6	18.3	17.4	73.4	64	68.7	10.6	6.7	8.7
Frequently Reading	24.6	32.5	28.5	15.1	24	19.5	38.2	47.4	42.7
Sometimes	40.2	3.20	36.1	7.5	8.5	8.0	43.2	34.5	38.9
Rarely	13.1	11.7	12.4	1.0	2.0	1.5	6.0	7.2	6.6

When students were asked to express their views regarding the relationship between media and sports, 80% of the participants responded that the printed and visual media should give the same degree of importance to all branches of sports. When we look at the percentages, it is also noticed that males follow the printed media much more than females (Figure 3- 4).

Discussion

Sports and media are both vehicles. The relationship between sports and media offers an insight into the intrinsic tension between the economical and so-

spectively; $r=0.629,-0.906$). This result might depend on the busy schedule of courses taught at ITU. Compared to other channels, TRT 3 television channel broadcasts sports news more extensively, by 32.7%. This channel is widely preferred among students who study sports. When the correlation between a sports activity and the following of the printed media was analyzed, a positive relationship was found ($r=0.95$). It has been observed that 31.9% of the MU students are actively interested in football while 35.3 % of the ITU students are actively interested in basketball, which fact relates to the popularity of football and the popular sports image of basketball.

Tabela 4

Readership of Sports News in Printed Press

Sabah	26.11%	Radikal	76.4%
Milliyet	49.04%	Star	10.82%
Hürriyet	10.8%	Fanatik-Basketbol	29.29%
Türkiye	3.18%	Others	8.91%

Tabela 5

Types of Sports Materials that are Followed in the Media

Articles	57.6%	Team News	81.2%
Headlines	19.20%	Sport Education	8.47%
Sports Documentaries	19.21%	Others	3.38%
Daily News	79.09%		

Sports draw the attention of not only media but also the advertising companies who use it as an effective medium for marketing their products. The advertising companies prefer the image of sports since companies may become popular using famous sportsmen and sports images (Sunay, et. al, 2004). Our research indicates that sports-related news are widely consumed among young people (especially the MU students) via media although our research also reveals that the sports media is insufficient. According

to the authors the collaborations between science and sports organizations and the number of people, who have raised an awareness on their scientific and sports potential, will increase in the coming years."

As a conclusion, what needs to be done is to produce, through mass communication vehicles, long-term social projects which will provide the conditions that will accurately reflect the social structure in the general sense.

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Corresponding author

Tavacioglu Leyla

Istanbul Technical University Maritime Faculty

Performance Analyses Laboratory

34940 Tuzla-Istanbul-Turkey

Tel: +902163954501

Fax: +902163954500

E-mail: tavaciog@itu.edu.tr