

**The sports manager, the print media and the representation of
elite female athletes – a learning approach.**

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Abstract

In a post feminist era the dilemma facing sports managers today is how to promote their female athletes physical ability while at the same time presenting appropriate images of their femininity and sexuality. There is no easy answer to this problem. “Damned if they do, damned if they don’t,” describes the dilemma facing female elite athletes, and their sports manager in determining how best to present themselves publicly.

Professional sport requires professional management. Sport managers work in a highly competitive industry and part of that involves winning sponsorship dollars from major corporations; an area closely related to the securing of media coverage. Sponsors are attracted to sports teams and athletes who command media interest. Therefore within the sports industry there is a need for sports managers with a comprehensive understanding of both the media and sponsorship. The representation of elite women athletes is a particular challenge because many want an image that promotes their athleticism while still maintaining their femininity.

ALPHA is the first Greek letter of the alphabet and is often used to describe something new and original. This research centres on the development and trial of a new media evaluation tool. The ALPHA (analysis of text, location, photographs, headings of athletes) media analysis model provides sports managers and students with a comprehensive tool to analyse, evaluate and understand the current level of media coverage of their particular sport over a period of time. Application of the model was tested on newspaper coverage of elite female sports during the Olympics and a non-Olympic period. The research illuminated key issues relevant to the media coverage of elite female athletes. From the results teaching boxes have been developed in order to illustrate how use of this tool can enhance the education of sports managers.

While this research showed that there had been some improvement in the amount of media coverage given to elite female athletes, there is still a need for sports managers to work towards improving the quality of that coverage. The ALPHA media analysis model provides sports managers and athletes with a means to make informed choices because they can effectively evaluate media coverage. As such this research adds to the overall development and professionalisation of the sports industry.

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