

Gatekeeping in Sri Lankan Sport News Reporting

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Abstract: As Lance Bennett stated, gate keeping is news's process of deciding what events to let into its broadcast of deciding what news is or what will become news. As well in sport news reporting, there is some selectivity/ gatekeeping in how and how many news items are presented. Previous western research on sport news reporting had found that there is a gender based selectivity in sport news reporting and suggests that the world of sport news is male dominated in general. This case study was conducted to bridge some of the research gap as there is less research conducted in Asian countries including Sri Lanka, to assay weather the same result could occur as per the Western findings in sport news reporting. The objective of this case study was to find if there is a gender based selectivity in Sri Lankan sport news reporting. Though social media on sport news reporting has been developed in this fast moving country, this case study was limited to print media. A content analysis was conducted using secondary data on Kreedaa magazine. The magazine was purposively selected as it is the absolute printed sport magazine in Sri Lanka which is targeting sport lovers and sportsmen and women. Eight Kreedaa magazines which published by the Associated News Papers of Ceylon Ltd. for the year 2014 were analyzed using purposive sampling technique, excluding the advertisements and general articles inside the mag. The title and subtitles of articles and photographs on the front, middle, back and other pages of the magazine were considered in analyzing data. More than 76% of story coverage and 85% of image/ photograph coverage were on male sports and male sport models. Such findings suggests that, Sri Lankan sport news world also more male dominant.

Keywords: Gatekeeping, Gender, Printed Media, Sport News Reporting.

INTRODUCTION

As cited by Cassidy, "gatekeeping in mass communication can be seen as the overall process through which the social reality transmitted by the news media is constructed" [1]. And Lance Bennett stated, "Gatekeeping is news's process of deciding what events to let into its broadcast of deciding what news is or what will become news [2]. As well in sport news reporting, there is some selectivity[1] or gatekeeping in how and how many news items are presented. Because, "Sports give rise to icons and give people something to believe in, as following a team or player acts as a way of life" [3] with the service of sport journalism which facilitates on tracking "the latest news, scores, or gossip in real time" [3] sport fans incline to only know what sport journalists tell them and little more[4]. And telling this latest sport news, scores, or gossip in real time, of course "plays an influential role in creating images of both women and men" [5] in sport. However, "Sports coverage in the media is in many ways dominated by the coverage of men's rather than women's participation, which can be mirrored in the traditional public perception that men are active and athletic, and women, by exclusion, are not"[5].

Hence, the key objective of this case study was to find if there is a gender based selectivity in Sri Lankan sport news reporting. Because, it is commonly assumed that "sports news and sports reporting is highly gendered around the globe" [6]. To reach that key objective, three specific objectives was set; viz. (1) to analyze the content of the magazine by gender, (2) to analyze the story types of the magazine by gender and (3) to analyze the images of the magazine by gender.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Gatekeeping theory was initially applied by David Manning White in a journalism context by studying the decisions made by a newspaper wire editor in selecting stories that should be published[7]. To date, the application of this theory is being viewed under various branches of journalism. When considering sport news reporting, previous western research on sport news reporting had found that there is a gender based selectivity/ gatekeeping in sport news reporting and suggests that the world of sport news is male dominated in general [8]. To address this phenomenon, in Sri Lanka less research has been conducted. Hence, this

case study will be bridging some of the research gap as there is less research conducted in Asian countries including Sri Lanka, to assay whether the same result could occur as per the Western findings in sport news reporting.

At all events, it is understood that when men and women come to competitive sports their biological differences are characterized and sports have generally been defined and developed according to masculine model [8]. Because, sporting achievement is largely based on speed, strength and endurance and contemporary sporting practices which also includes media coverage confirm beliefs about male superiority and female inferiority [9]. As well, "Gender stereotypes and socialization tend to maintain the traditional gender roles of men and women, with the media playing an important part. Thus gender related sports images have evolved, portraying women as fit only for certain sports but not others. In addition, media companies and editorial decision makers tend to think of male sports as being commercially more viable than female sports, so that they publish no lack of sports role models for boys, while the opposite tends to be true for girls. While studies show that the news world is in general male dominated the world of sports news proves to be even more starkly so" [8].

According to North [10], "the mainstream news media have long been charged by feminist and critical media scholars of largely excluding women from its sports coverage, and concomitantly highlighting the ongoing relative absence of female sports reporters". Duncan & Messner [11]; Kinkema & Harris [12] and Jones [13] also highlights that "women's sports are underrepresented in the sports media and largely framed as less exciting and less newsworthy than men's sports" [6] Also, North suggests that sport news content has largely ignored women's achievements in sport [6].

As stated by CGEI [14], "Referring to the wider world, a study of seventy countries was carried out by Erin Research and the Global Media Monitoring Project in 2000, examining one day's worth of news about 16,000 stories altogether. The study illuminated an indisputable male domination of the news, whose subjects in 78% of the instances were men. In sports news, moreover, 88% of the news subjects were men and only 12% women." North[15] in her study, analyzed a month of pre-Olympic sports coverage and general sports coverage in two major Australian newspapers, finding that while pre-Olympic coverage includes more women's sport than in general sport, sportsmen and men's sport remains highly privileged in both areas. The fact that horseracing receives three times more media coverage than women's sports in her

study clearly identifies sportswomen's marginalized status.

Also, the report on Towards a Level Playing Field; discussed on the coverage of women's sports and female athletes in radio, television and print media comparative to the coverage of male sport, male athletes and mixed sport. Eventually, the study suggested notwithstanding the ongoing successes and strong participation levels, female sports teams and individual women received starkly uneven amounts of coverage across the three media platforms in comparison to male sports and individual male athletes [15-16].

METHODOLOGY

Though social media on sport news reporting has been developed in this fast moving country, this case study was limited to print media. A content analysis by Duncan & Messner [11]; Kinkema & Harris [13]; Singer [16]; was conducted using secondary data on *Kreeda* magazine. The magazine is published twice a month and it was purposively selected as this mag is the absolute printed Sinhalese sport magazine in Sri Lanka which is targeting the lion's portion of sport lovers and sportsmen and women. Eight *Kreeda* magazines which published by the Associated News Papers of Ceylon Ltd. for the year 2014 were analyzed using purposive sampling technique. Advertisements, articles which covered a mix of sports and general knowledge articles inside the mag were excluded during the analysis. The title and subtitles of articles and photographs on the front, middle, back and other pages of the magazine were considered in analyzing data. Based on the titles and subtitles of the magazine story types were categorized. Eventually, findings were presented in tabulations and charts according to the objectives of the study using MS Excel software.

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

Findings of the case study is being discussed under the specific objectives (to analyze the content of the magazine by gender, to analyze the story types of the magazine by gender and to analyze the images of the magazine by gender) and the key objective (to find if there is a gender based selectivity in Sri Lankan sport news reporting) accordingly.

Content of the Magazine by Gender

Out of the presented 295 stories of the *Kreeda* magazine, 225 stories were on men's stories (See table 1) which is 76% (See figure 1). The least number of sport stories were reported on female athletes (11%) in contrast to the total sport stories of the magazine. There were only 39 total stories (13%) in the study sample which have mentioned on both male and female athletes

in the same article. In all the months, the magazine was dominated by male athletes' news stories.

Table 1: Content of the Magazine by Gender

Month	Number of Stories	Men	Women	Mixed
January V1	66	41	7	18
January V2	34	27	4	3
February V1	36	29	5	2
February V2	30	24	2	4
November V1	26	16	5	5
November V2	32	26	2	4
December V1	36	31	4	1
December V2	35	31	2	2
Total	295	225	31	39

Source: Study Analysis, 2015

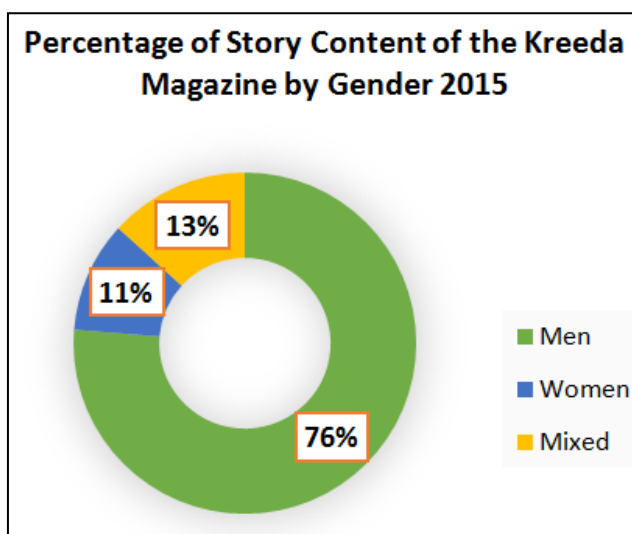


Fig-1: Percentage of Story Content of the Kreedaa Magazine by Gender in 2015
Source: Study Analysis, 2015

Story Types of the Magazine by Gender

After analyzing both volumes of each month, viz. January, February, November and December it could be found out that wide range of sports (story types) had been covered by the magazine. Such as, Cricket, Track and Field, Motor Racing, Netball, Rugby, Volleyball/ Beach volleyball, Elle, Tennis, Weight lifting, Football, Boxing, Badminton, Ice-skating/ Figure-skating, Gymnastics, Bicycling, Basketball, Archery, Chess, Squash, Handball, Snooker, Watersports, Golf, Table tennis, Body building, Hockey, Karate, Baseball, Wrestling and Para sports (See Annex 1).The lion's portion of the story types had been given to Males' Cricket according to the analysis (See figure 2). Motor racing, rugby, football, wrestling, para sports, body building, and were the other dominant story types which covered more on male athletes.

Few 31 female athletes' stories were identified on track and field, cricket, water sports, ice-skating/ figure-skating, karate, gymnastics, handball, tennis, netball, squash, hockey, weightlifting, bicycling and para-sports (See figure 2). Compared to the 225 male athletes' stories on cricket, track and field, motor racing, rugby, volleyball/ beach volleyball, elle, tennis, weight lifting, football, boxing, badminton, gymnastics, bicycling, basketball, archery, chess, squash, handball, snooker, watersports, golf, table tennis, body building, hockey, karate, baseball, wrestling and para sports the percentage of content of the female sport stories were 13%. Story types such as cricket, track and field, volleyball/ beach volleyball, tennis, badminton, ice-skating/ figure-skating, archery, water sports, table tennis, chess, bicycling, watersport and golf in several instances have covered information on both male and female athletes within the same article (See annex 1).

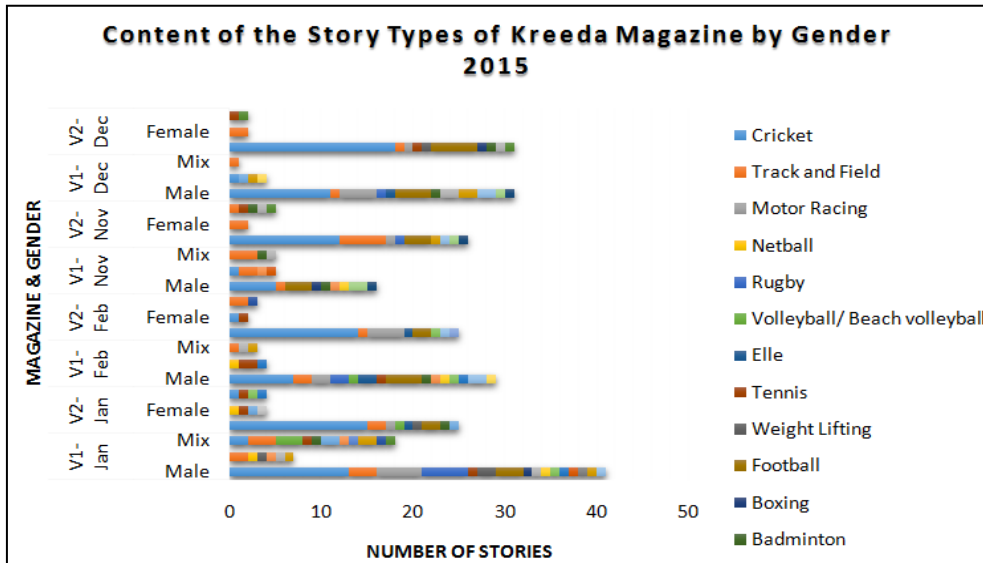


Fig- 2: Content of the Story Types of Kreedaa Magazine by Gender in 2015
 Source: Study Analysis, 2015

Images of the Magazine by Gender

As per the table 2, it is evident that more than 60 images of the magazine is covered by male athletes in every month. There were no more than five images which represented both male and female athletes through the same image. In each month not more than

17 images of female athletes were covered by magazine. When considering the total images covered by athletes throughout the four months, the magazine was dominant by male athletes’ images (See figure 3) which is 85%.

Table 2: Content of the Magazine Images by Gender

Month	Number of Images	Men	Women	Mixed
January V1	84	68	14	2
January V2	77	61	12	4
February V1	100	85	15	-
February V2	88	79	5	4
November V1	114	92	17	5
November V2	80	72	6	2
December V1	90	82	7	1
December V2	87	73	11	3
Total				

Source: Study Analysis, 2015

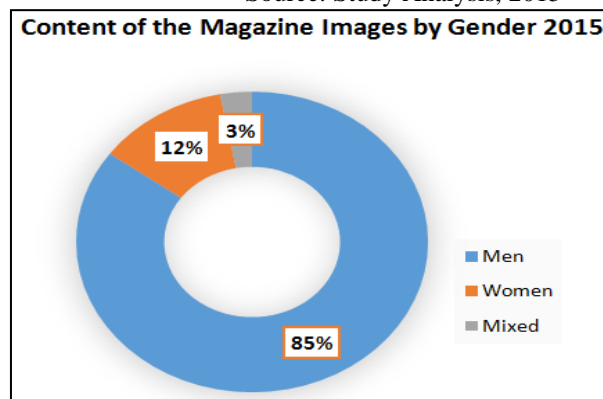


Fig-3: Content of Images of Kreedaa Magazine by Gender in 2015
 Source: Study Analysis, 2015

Gender Based Selectivity in Sri Lankan Sport News Reporting

When considering the sport coverage by *Kreeda* magazine, it is consolidated that there is a gender based selectivity in Sri Lankan sport news reporting. More than 76% of coverage were on male sports and male sport models. More than 85% of image/ photograph coverage were on male sports and male sport models. "It represents the world to us, shapes our knowledge and histories, and influences our values and attitudes. Consequently, the reporting of sport provides a 'lens for understanding dominant narratives about masculinity and femininity, sexuality and race among other' [17]". This statement also proved when analyzing the story types presented in the magazine. Sports viz. cricket, wrestling, rugby and football which highlight masculinity, were more dominant in the magazine while 12% of female athlete images of the magazine highlighted femininity and sexuality.

Hence, such findings suggests that, Sri Lankan sport news world also more male dominant and there is a gender based selectivity or gender based gatekeeping in sport news coverage.

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Annex 1

Magazine	V1-Jan			V2-Jan			V1-Feb			V2-Feb			V1-Nov			V2-Nov			V1-Dec			V2-Dec		
	Male	Female	Mix	Male	Female	Mix	Male	Female	Mix	Male	Female	Mix	Male	Female	Mix	Male	Female	Mix	Male	Female	Mix	Male	Female	Mix
Cricket	1	0	2	15		1	7			14	1		5	1		12			11	1		18		
Track and Field	3	2	3	2			2		1	1		2	1	2	3	5	2	1	1		1	1	2	
Motor Racing	5	0	0	1			2			4						1			4			1		
Netball		1			1			1																
Rugby	5						2									1			1					
Volleyball/ Beach volleyball			3	1			1																	
Elle	0	0	0	1			2			1									1					
Tennis	1		1		1	1	1	2			1							1				1		1
Weight Lifting	2	1	0	1																		1		
Football	3			2			4			2			3			3			4			5		
Boxing	1												1									1		
Badminton			1	1			1					1		1			1	1	1			1		
Ice-skating/ Figure-skating			2	1	1															1				
Gymnastics		1	1				1						1	1										
Bicycling	1	1							1						1			1	2			1		
Basketball	1						1					1											1	
Archery			1																					
Chess	1					1	1			1														
Squash	1					1	1	1																
Handball	1												1											
Snooker	1																							
Watersports	1	1	2					1								1			2	1				
Golf			1									1												
Table tennis			1															1				1		1
Body building	1						2			1						1			2					
General/ Mix																								
Hockey					1																			
Karate							1													1				
Baseball										1														
Wrestling													2			1			1					
Para Sports													1			1			1					