Mansplaining and Sexist Practices in Cable and Multiplatform Sports Journalistic Programs of Infotainment in Peru

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Abstract. Sports journalistic programs of infotainment have become highly relevant in recent years. However, the visibility of women journalists in this type of programs is minimal compared to their male colleagues and is often a decorative presence. This article highlight the sexist practices in the intrinsic narrative of Peruvian sports journalistic programs establishing differences between the programs that are broadcast by cable and the programs that are broadcast simultaneously in multiplatform mode over cable, radio, Youtube and Facebook. Through a methodological study with a qualitative approach, a content analysis guide was applied to eight episodes of *Exitosa Deportes*, *Fox Sports Radio Peru*, *De fútbol se habla así* and *Equipo F*. As a result, the heteronormative profile of the women journalists involved and their invisibilized role based on their actions and participation within the different sections of the program were identified in both kind of programs. Nevertheless, the main result of this research was that sports journalistic programs on Internet produce an environment conducive to mansplaining more regularly than on cable television where there are more rules that do not allow or in any case make up the way in which gender stereotypes are perpetuate on professional profile of women journalists. Also, multiplatform programs promote an inequal environment where mansplaining is constantly generated delegitimizing women knowledge of sports issues. We conclude that this type of infotainment content continues to minimizing women presence in media and social media spaces. Therefore, this study contributes to the existing literature in communication and media studies with a gender perspective and gender stereotypes in digital sports journalism.

Keywords: Sexism · infotainment · digital sports journalism

1 Introduction

One of the persistent problems in the sports field is the evident marginalization of women, both in the discourses of power and in their representation [1]. This is reflected in sports journalism, where the presence of women accompanies the information or is a "hook" to attract a male audience [2]. In this context, sports journalism programs on television have turned towards a new hybrid genre: infotainment, which presents information as

a show and has as its main objective to hook the audience, making use of techniques typical of fiction and entertainment [3–5].

Likewise, there is a dominant perspective from which information is narrated and analyzed and humor and criticism are handled [6] and traditional gender roles are reproduced, presenting them as everyday, reinforcing stereotypes in their staging [7]. In Peruvian television productions, "*criollo*" humor is used, as the ability to turn a serious situation into a source of laughter using cunning or vividness [8]. In this case, "*criollo*" means typical of a Latin American country. In infotainment, journalists and hosts are encouraged to have their own style to achieve an identity [4], often with that humor.

In addition, sports programs permanently associate norms and specific individual behaviors to men and women [9]. In fact, sports journalism over the years has contributed to show sports as an environment of masculinity [10]. In this area, mansplaining is constantly used, normalizing the paternalistic and condescending explanation of sports issues to a woman [11, 12]. Men assume that they have more knowledge, even when women have more experience in the subject [12, 13]. Mansplainers tend to ignore or usurp the word while restricting a woman opportunity to contribute to the conversation [11]. Therefore, mansplaining is a practice of institutionalized sexism that contributes to the silencing and marginalization of women's voices [14].

1.1 New Technologies and Sport Content

Different platforms offer the audience greater participation, interactivity and the possibility of accessing television content from different devices [15]. Users are no longer passive consumers and the relationship between the medium and the audience is more horizontal [16]. Consumer immediate participation encourages dialogue, allowing the appearance of virtual communities [17]. Then, users tend to feel identified by some type of common interest with others, although they are not necessarily able to build communicative practices and consensus on values and interpretations [18]. In this environment, in which the audience makes full use of their freedom of expression, although many times this freedom added to anonymity can lead to negatively charged messages [17]. Among the formats most consumed by audiences on social networks are sports [19]. In the case of YouTube, there are even those who point out that communication between peers does not demand professional journalists [20]. In this scenario, digital sports journalism has changed in terms of production, distribution and consumption of content, it goes from scarcity to "digital fullness", making it possible for any actor to distribute and create content [21]. Finally, it is known that successful sports programs on social networks are not necessarily most watched on traditional television [22].

1.2 Inequality and Exclusion by Gender Reasons in Sports Journalistic Programs

Sports journalism is undoubtedly the field with one of the most notorious and enduring gender divisions historically [23, 24]. Sport has played a key role in maintaining the privileged position of mainly white men in Western societies, for example, it was assumed that heterosexual women have less legitimacy in soccer [24]. Gender inequality refers to the unequal treatment of people because of their gender, either excluding it, exploiting it or unequally distributing power, resources and privileges [25].

According to this, some researchers agree that women with different functions within sports journalism, do not access power positions, since the hiring criteria is not completely neutral [10, 26]. Women need to have an added value compared to their male colleagues; knowledge of sports is not enough, they must have physical parameters, linked to beauty and a hegemonic figure, to appear on TV [10, 26–28].

1.3   Objectification and Sexualization of Women Journalists

Sports journalistic programs serve as a conduit to subtly implement gender messages in which the bodies of journalists are objectified, giving priority to their beauty and figure before their professional abilities [29]. Sexism can be presented in the adoption of negative attitudes that are based on the supposed inferiority of women (hostile sexism) or in subtle attitudes with a positive affective tone but that limit women to certain roles (benevolent sexism) [30, 31]. Benevolent sexism in sports programs incorporates young, thin women with a middle or upper-middle class appearance as journalists to "beautify" the production [9, 10, 28, 32]. These journalists are chosen to interview male athletes because the production considers that it will be easier for them to persuade them to talk, also if they are dressed in a provocative way [32, 33]. Furthermore, during the programs "courtly love" is often used, which can be defined as a set of behaviors in which an idealization of the lovers is represented, where the man (in this case, the male journalists) from of language and etiquette formulas establish a game of sexual attractions to try to conquer the woman (female journalists in the program) [34]. On the other hand, female journalists have also experienced hostile sexism from sports officials, receiving unwanted proposals of meetings in inappropriate spaces [32]. It is common for women journalists to perceive unfair treatment due to the stereotypes, harassment and abuse they face not only from all the actors involved in sports, but also from public in social networks [35].

2   Methodology

The research was carried out from an interpretive paradigm, with a qualitative approach [36, 37]. A case study [37] was designed including one multiplatform journalistic program broadcasted in cable television, radio, Youtube and Facebook simultaneously and three programs only broadcasted on cable television (see Table 1). All the programs selected has used hashtags on Twitter (see Table 1). All the programs included in the sample correspond to the infotainment genre and sports magazine format. The content of *Exitosa Deportes* (ED), *Fox Sports Radio Peru* (FSRP), *De fútbol se habla así* (DFSHA) and *Equipo F* (EF) includes the following sections: opening, interview, gathering, public participation and closure.

Also, these programs address specialized topics related to Peruvian and international soccer tournaments. The sample of eight episodes was selected due to the low proportion of female journalists hosting the program (see Table 1) and the presence of incidents of benevolent or hostile sexism with female journalists, which in some cases had media repercussions [38, 39]. In the case of the multiplatform program, comments

Table 1. Sports journalistic programs selected

Programs	FSRP	ED	DFSHA	EF
Broadcast (month/year)	03/2018–12/2019	06/2014–present	04/2018–present	08/2021–present
Frequency	Diary	Diary	Diary	Weekly
Cable channel	Fox Sports	Exitosa TV	DirecTV Sports	ESPN
Radio	–	Exitosa Radio	–	–
Youtube	–	Exitosa Deportes	–	–
Twitter	#FoxSportsPeru	#ExitosaDeportes	#DeFutbolSeHablaAsí	#ESPNEquipoFPerú
Facebook	–	@radioexitosadeportes	–	–
# Male hosts	7	3	5	3
# Female hosts (Code)	1 (F1)	1 (C1)	1 (J1)	1 (C1)
Episodes selected	18/07/2018 26/07/2018	17/12/2019 19/12/2019	04/04/2022 06/04/2022	27/02/2022 06/03/2022

were observed randomly applying the filter "best comments" and "most recent comments" in Youtube and "more relevant" and "most recent comments" in Facebook. A content analysis guide [40] was designed based on two categories of analysis applied to the profile and behavior of three female journalists: character development (physical, psychological and social dimension) and female actions in all the program sections.

2.1 Ethical Considerations

For reasons of anonymity and confidentiality, the names of women journalists have been replaced by alphanumeric codes to analyze the characteristics of their media behavior. Only information referring to their public exposure in the media is handled.

3 Results and Discussion

3.1 Multiplatform Content Produces a Mansplaining Environment

In the selected episodes analyzed, it has been verified that the masculine representation continues to dominate the roles within sports journalism [33]. Stereotypes are constantly reinforcing that women are a kind of "outsiders" within this field [26, 41].

Similarities were found in the physical pattern of women journalists: hegemonic faces, slim and slightly athletic bodies that are exposed by the use of tight clothing, representing what is socially accepted as beautiful [10, 26, 28] (see Table 2). While their male counterparts do have a diversity of faces, build (mostly medium or thick) and clothing. None of the women journalists exceeds 35 years old, while their male counterparts belong to various age ranges from 40 years old. Socially, each female journalist has a different personality and belongs to different social and power positions.

Table 2. Women journalists profile

Program	FSRP	ED/EF	DFSHA
Female host code	F1	C1	J1
Physical dimension	White Thin Single Tight clothes	White Thin Single Tight clothes	White Thin Married Formal clothes
Psychological dimension	Introvert Smiley Quiet	Extrovert Confrontational Joker	Formal Cordial Serious
Social dimension	Not confrontational Model Media person Miss Peru	Confront ideas Journalist Media person Show business	Exposes ideas Former soccer player Sport brand image

F1 is linked to beauty contests and C1 and J1 are linked to sports for exercising sports journalism and being an athlete, respectively. On the other hand, the conditions in which women journalists work differ in the case of the multiplatform program. ED is a program handled as a radio program broadcast live on cable and social networks. The woman journalist arrives late and start to using cosmetic creams on her face in the air or asks another colleague in a low voice while another speaks. Radio convention is used on a live multiplatform show. While the advertising is launched, in the screen they are seen talking or getting up from their seats. Programs that are only broadcast on cable handle television codes, so journalists have a more controlled role.

In addition, interaction with users is also differentiated, because in the case of ED, the interaction is live and user comments are seen in real time on Youtube and Facebook. However, in the other programs, although hashtags are used on Twitter, there is not such a massive response as in ED that has social networks launching live content. Ask the viewers to use a hashtag implies to watch TV in real time and then use another device to access a social network, just in that case it is possible to comment. While on the other hand the program broadcasted by YouTube and Facebook allows the user on a single platform to watch the program and comment at the same time.

In that context, the multiplatform program allows a more confident space with Youtube rules open for the big public, where if the woman journalist confront male colleagues, the male colleagues find the followers as an empathic public with patriarchy rules that usually supports male behavior and more mansplaining situations where faced. According to the comments observed applying the filter "best comments" or "all comments", most of the users show support or even celebrate that kind of practices.

However, it can also happen that avoiding confrontational situations leads to invisibility (benevolent sexism). In the program FSRP, broadcasted through cable television, F1, due to his introverted nature and her relationship with beauty pageants, is only allowed to interact in a limited way with three of her male colleagues. This magazine is more traditional and adjusted to cable television codes. It is a content aimed at a

conservative upper middle class public. In the same way, DFSHA shows J1, a woman journalist married, serious and formal, which makes her look like a subject of respect from her male colleagues, with whom she never has a confrontation. In addition, she is a former soccer player, which also puts her in another power position compared to her colleagues C1 and F1. J1 never show herself out of her journalist role as C1.

3.2   Sexist Interactions, Romantic Allusions and "Criollo" Humour in Broadcasts

C1 participates in the interviews and the gathering evidencing knowledge, however, she is constantly interrupted, questioned or delegitimized [28, 35] by the main sports commentator. The main sports commentator ignores her or downplays her comments. In this case, C1 tacitly accepts the sexist rules in order to be integrated in the team.

On another hand, F1 participates in the home section, but in the rest of the program she is limited to reading tweets sent by the followers in response to a question day. In the other programs the public participation is limited to journalists reading comments on air rarely. Otherwise, J1 has a fairly active participation. During the gathering and the interviews, she is very present and is treated with respect. Nevertheless, in the case of C1 and F1, situations of objectification and sexualization of their bodies were evidenced [35]] through the use of "*criollo*" humor. In ED the main sports commentator and C1 were discussing the exercise routine of a soccer player, when the male colleague mentioned that she had ¨gluteazos¨ (big buttocks). Her male colleague laughed along with the other male members of the panel. After this episode C1 quits the magazine. On another occasion, C1 in EF was constantly interrupted by a male colleague until she repeated a previous affirmation of him, then the male colleague told her: "ok now you can talk". This is how mansplaining is evidenced in this type of programs [11–13].

Constantly, F1 went through situations of benevolent sexism. The main host linked her humorously with two of her male colleagues, who came to hug and kiss her. Also, she received compliments about her physique and a constant game of "courtly love" [34] alluding to the jealousy between both hosts for her "love". F1 never show disagreement during the magazine. Female journalists accept those terms where they are clearly at a disadvantage in order to change the terms. Being in such a masculinized environment suggests that traditional gender roles will gradually be broken down [28]. Nevertheless, it can also be thought that the introduction of women in this field will not cause changes [32], since they accept its norms and conditions, which are based on standards and practices that have masculinity as a model and that in turn they hind women by reinforcing sexist narratives.

4   Conclusions

Clear differences were identified between the multiplatform program and the ones transmitted exclusively by cable. Cable shows, due to their niche content, follow television canons, however, multiplatform show follows the rules of Youtube and social networks.

This program establish horizontal communication with users and along with male journalists create a confidence environment for mansplaining and other sexism practices (benevolent or hostile). Male journalists adapt to social networks language, with less

regulation, and sports digital community usually endorses practices of mistreatment and mansplaining towards women journalists. The main result of this research was that sports journalistic programs on Internet produce an environment conducive to mansplaining more regularly than on cable television where there are more rules that do not allow or in any case make up the way in which gender stereotypes are perpetuate on professional profile of women journalists. Also, multiplatform programs promote an inequal environment where mansplaining is constantly generated delegitimizing women knowledge of sports issues. We conclude that this type of infotainment content continues to minimizing women presence in media and social media spaces. Therefore, this study contributes to the existing literature in communication and media studies with a gender perspective and gender stereotypes in digital sports journalism.

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