

# **THE HUMAN FACTOR IN THE HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE MEDIA: ISRAELI SPORTS PAGES AS A CASE STUDY**

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Due to the ability of the veteran communications media to adapt to a new social and media reality as a new medium threatens to replace them, they can be considered a living organism in continuous development. The attempt to study the dynamics of the communications media's adaptability one to another and to their audiences' demands, has focused research attention mainly on aspects of technology content, but has yet to consider the human aspect of newsrooms. The current study attempts to present a unique, initial contribution to existing models of communication media's historical development, by calling attention to the parallel processes taking place within the journalist community itself. By means of in-depth interviews with male and female sports journalists in Israel, breakthrough, establishment, defense, and adaptation mechanisms to a new journalistic reality can be identified as part of the generational and societal changes that have taken place in the newsroom. The feminization of sports journalism, which has a special place in the development of sports journalism in Israel, and the resultant reactions to it, has developed only in recent years. The masculinity entrenched in the sports institution, and within it the sports press perceived as the central body of knowledge for sports comprehension, has left a very limited amount of space for women. The significant entrance of female journalists into the field has been accompanied by sharp expressions of self-defense by male journalists.

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## **Theoretical Background**

### **The Sports Media**

Sports have been covered by the media for over 200 years. What began as the conclusion of the news (political news for the most part), in the written press especially, has turned into one of the media's largest, most central branches (Nichols, Moynahan, Hall & Taylor, 2002). Some even claim that sports play a key role in the commercialization and globalization of the media (Robertson, 2004). Sports supplements of the written press have significantly increased and are read almost more than any other supplement in the newspaper; for many, the sports supplement is the central reason for purchasing the newspaper (Mencher, 2007). Multi-cable television has made possible the development of a large number of sports channels in countries all over the world, and they broadcast sports 24 hours a day. In Israel there are no less than six local sports channels, in addition to sports broadcasts that appear on national television channels and on top to the international channels received in Israel (Galily & Bernstein, 2008). Purchasing broadcasting rights of important sports events has already turned into a major struggle among channels, s mainly expressed by unprecedented amounts of money. The radio dedicates entire broadcast blocks to sports on a daily basis, beyond the special broadcasts of games and events. Tens of thousands of sports internet sites have been launched around the world, including sites of general knowledge, expertise in specific branches, and focus on athletes or specific teams. The vast literature, films, magazines and journals on the subject of sport have also become routinely available. The development of sports media is of course related to the considerable popularity of sports in general, although the relative ease of producing sport events, in comparison to other entertainment areas also plays a role (Weingarten, 2003). The quality of the broadcasts and reports from the sports stadiums is continually improving as a result of the increasing number of cameras, writers and financial and technological resources invested in coverage, and as part of the competition between the various communications media themselves. In addition, it's not necessary to write a script to create drama, suspense or excitement. Sports provide them all and what's more, in real-time, which often far exceeds the imagination (Galily, 1997) - male and female athletes who stretch the limits of

human ability by breaking new records, dramatic changes a moment before the end of games, heroes and heroines who surmount physical and mental barriers, battles between athletes and spectators representing nations, etc. - It creates for the media exactly what it seeks; all the media has to do is be there. In modern-day terms, sports can be categorized as the ultimate reality show.

The relationship between the media and sports is both fascinating and complex, due to the contributions and compensations they provide for one another. Sports expose the media to data, which is then immediately converted to publicity and capital. A closer look at international sport event ratings illustrates the force of this phenomenon. One basketball game between the US and China in the 2008 Beijing Olympics managed to attract no less than 750 million viewers around the world (Grosberd, 2008). Overall, the Beijing Olympics demonstrated once again the intensive relationship between sports and the media. At their conclusion, it was reported that the Olympic Games in Beijing became the most watched event in the history of the US (Daskal, 2008a). According to the Nielsen Media Research ratings which were published in September 2008, at the end of the Olympic Games, television viewing reached a record high of 4.7 billion viewers, which account for some 70% of the world population, for a period of 17 days. For the sake of comparison, during the 2004 Olympic Games in Athens, some 3.9 billion viewers watched the event.<sup>3</sup> During the Soccer World Championship Games which took place in France in 1998, some 37 million cumulative viewers watched the games, while the 2000 Olympic Games in Sydney were watched by 3.5 billion people (Weingarten, 2003). The astronomical figures have turned the struggle for sports broadcasting rights and the investment surrounding them to a top priority economic issue. The American television network NBC, which won the tender to broadcast the 2010 Winter Olympics in Vancouver and the 2012 Summer Olympics in London, paid a record sum of \$2.2 billion for the broadcasting right before the location of the games was even announced. Thus, the network has reinforced the clear trend of increasing costs to broadcast sports events. Nevertheless, beyond the cost of broadcasting rights, there is also an upward trend in media coverage standards. That is, sports encourage the media to become more sophisticated and to develop, as it must rise to new,

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<sup>3</sup> Quantitative data which were sampled from a number of world markets, appear in the official Neilson site: [http://www.nielsen.com/media/2008/pr\\_080905.html](http://www.nielsen.com/media/2008/pr_080905.html)

increasing athletic challenges (speed, technique, esthetics, etc.), while also, as part of the attempt to please its vast audience, it must provide it with in-depth interpretations, exact photos, and the capture of unique moments. Thus, for example, a single soccer game, in the 2008 European Champions League was filmed live by 30 television cameras to millions of viewers around the world (Daskal, 2008b) in accordance with the procedures and standards required by the League management. The European Championship Games in Soccer, which took place in Portugal in 2004, were also filmed by 24 to 26 cameras per game (Shai, 2004). In the written press the phenomenon has been expressed by the significant increase of sports supplements, both in the extent and depth of coverage given to events, including statistical analyses, interpretation columns and numerous photos. An additional contribution of sports to the media lies in sports' ability to serve as an incentive for media consumers to adopt new technologies (cable, pay-per-view channels, internet broadcasts, etc.), apropos "taking advantage of" sports fans' limitless passion for sports (Robertson, 2004).

The other side of the coin is sports' dependency on the media. David Stern, the NBA Commissioner and one of the most influential people in sports in the world, stated that "the success of a league derives from the quality of its television product" This statement is related to the basic assumption that the majority of sports enthusiasts around the world consume the product in a mediated format, that is through media coverage. Consequently, practically all the various sports branches have been required to adapt themselves to the new media reality and change their rules accordingly. Gilad Weingarten (2003) has thoroughly described the changes and adaptations that the various sports branches have been required to execute in their competitions and regulations, in order to stay attractive enough for television. The majority of the changes have had to do with time elements, for television can not afford too many "dead moments" which can lead viewers to change channels. Thus, for example, entire events in swimming consolation finals and gymnastics obligatory exercises have been cut. In athletics, only one jump-off disqualification is permitted and in basketball, the 24 seconds-for-offense rule has been introduced. In volleyball, some far-reaching changes have been made, including the scoring method. Television's dramatic influence, has given off signals in negative directions as well,

when sports branches which do not film well, and accordingly, do not get much exposure, are in danger of extinction. (Weingarten,2003)<sup>4</sup>

Research in the field of sports media, has thus focused a great deal on the reciprocal relations between media and sports. Emphasis has been placed on media contents, while neglecting the two ends on the transfer of information axis. Information producers responsible for the organizational structure, the processes of recruitment and the production of sports information distributed by them can be found on the one end. The reading public, which producers have taken for granted its ingrained male interest in sports, and moreover, the lack of female interest in the subject, can be found on the other. That is perhaps the reason for Germany's utter surprise when TV-viewing ratings from the 2008 Summer European Soccer Championship were made public. ARD, the German television network, reported that during the quarter finals of the tournament between Germany and Portugal, an average of 26.14 million Germans watched the game, more than half of which were women (Dan, 2008).

### **Sports Media Development in Israel**

Initial sports reports, along with the appearance of the first Hebrew daily newspapers, appeared in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, though the subject did not gain extensive research interest (Kaufman, 1997). The first written announcement of a soccer game in Eretz Israel was published in the *Herut* newspaper as far back as 1912 (Kaufman, 2006), in reference to the sports competitions that took place in the Rehovot colony. Sports games, and subsequent newspaper reports, have never discontinued since, not even during World War I. They became more descriptive during the British Mandate in Eretz Israel (Kaufman & Galily, 2007). The Hebrew daily *Do'ar Hayom*, under the management of Itamar Ben A"vi, was the first to unify

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<sup>4</sup> One side of the complex relations between the media and sports focuses on television's ability to turn into an influencing factor on a game, in real time. Modern technological capabilities enable millimeter precision, exact monitoring and playbacks of facts, which sometimes elude the referee's eyes. In contrast, tradition has held its ground in quite a few sports branches, such as the NFL, which has limited the use of television for the purpose of judgment decisions. In accordance, all tennis players are permitted to contest judges' decisions three times and to examine their decisions on television. There are many other sports branches, such as World Soccer, which prevent media intervention, even at the cost of judgment errors. Proponents of this approach claim that such intervention can harm the enjoyment and authenticity of the game which began much before its coverage by the media.

a section on sports information (1925), though this did not appear on a regular basis and did not consolidate unique characteristics (Paz, 2002). In its footsteps, other sports sections began to appear in the newspaper *Davar* (1927) and in *Ha'aretz* (1928). The sections had a personal tone to them and their political character was salient, in accordance with the ideological struggles of the time (Kaufman, 1997). At the same time, private newspapers such as *Niv Ha'Sport*, *Hed Ha'Sport* and *Ha'Sport* were first published, though not for long (Caspi & Limor, 1992). In general, sports reports in Hebrew journalism during the Mandate period were short, random and shoved to the newspaper margins. From a content aspect, the majority of notices were merely partial reports of soccer game results (Kaufman & Galily, 2007), though other sports activities in other branches are known to have existed alongside soccer (Goldbourt, 2002; Yaron & Sibor, 2002). Similarly prominent is the absence of news on international world sports. It is important to emphasize that up until the first Hebrew radio broadcasts in the early 30's, the daily newspapers were the main source of information on goings-on in the settlement, including sports events (Kaufman, 1997).

Competition among sports sections was non-existent, though in 1938 the phenomenon can first be detected when the newspaper, *Ha'aretz*, sent a special correspondent with the Israeli national soccer team to a game in Athens. The other dailies responded by giving special evening editions to cover the sports event (Paz, 2002).

During the period following World War II, the trend towards more extensive sports sections continued. *Mishmar* and later on, *Al Hamishmar*, which was a publication of the youth movement, "The Young Guardian", also published a sports section with its appearance (1943), as *Ha'Mashkif*, on the other side, a publication of the Revisionist movement, made sure a respectable place was given to sports (Paz, 2002). The newspapers' political character and partisan attribution clearly reflected upon the way they treated sports teams, as these were connected to political centers in the Settlement. The appearance of the evening newspapers, *Yedioth Ahronoth* (1939) and *Ma'ariv* (1948), and their attitude to sports at their start, had no hint of the intensity with which they would engage in the subject in future.

Already prior to the establishment of the State of Israel, private sports newspapers were published, on a weekly basis. *Sport Ha'Shavua* (a renewed version of *Ha'Sport*) and *Especlaria Shel Sport*, which was edited by Yosef Yekutiely, the initiator of the "Maccabiah" (1946), were printed every Sunday, though due to the War of Independence and the military draft of their editors, they were forced to close down, as was *Kol Ha'Sport*, which was published only six times (Paz, 1987). Even before this time, prior to the establishment of the State, sports journals were affiliated with sports centers, such as *The Maccabi* which was the Maccabi Organization's sports journal and *Ozenu*, a bi-weekly dedicated to workers' sports issues.

Following the War of Independence, a number of other sports newspapers were published, though there was a sense that a daily, professional sports paper which was not identified with political centers was still lacking (Paz, 2002). *Ha'Sport Ha'Leumi* which was identified with the Freedom Movement was closed down and *Sport Israeli* unified with *Sport La'Am*, which was identified with the *Ha'Poel* Movement (Caspi and Limor, 1992). The unification of the newspapers gave birth in 1954 to the most important sports newspaper in Israel – *Hadshot Ha'Sport* (Paz, 2002). The newspaper which functioned until 1985 enjoyed almost exclusive sports coverage during its heyday and many believe it changed the face of the Israeli sports press<sup>5</sup>. It extended coverage to diverse branches, added usage of basketball statistics, was characterized by lighter language, while at the same time made use of witty puns, which influenced sports journalism to follow. It made a clear distinction between information and opinion and maintained absence of political influence. *Hadshot Ha'Sport* was not affiliated with a sports center and was not identified with any political faction. It was considered a haven for the many sports writers who passed through it and wrote there. Its distribution reached 40,000 copies at its height (Paz, 2002). The decision made by the evening newspapers, *Yedioth Ahronoth* and *Ma'ariv*, to extend their sports sections heralded the newspaper's extinction. *Hadshot Ha'Sport* could not compete with the economic resources available to the evening papers and closed down in 1985 (Caspi and Limor, 1992). The radio, which became a central player in the media game in Israel during those years, began to broadcast a weekly program called *Shirim ve Shearim* (Songs and Goals) at the start of the 1970

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<sup>5</sup> The newspaper became a daily in 1959. Initially it appeared twice a week, on Sundays and Fridays.

football season. It is considered, as is *Hadshot Ha'Sport*, a significant cornerstone in sports journalism in Israel. For the first time, football game leagues were broadcast directly to hundreds of thousands of listeners around the county. At the same time, the first television channel broadcast the program *Mabat Sport*, which summarized Saturday football games (Galily, 2002). The appearance of the newspaper *Hadashot* (News) in 1984, with its colorful sports section, bringing a new spirit to sports journalism (Lehrer, 1986), was perhaps the last nail hammered into *Hadshot Ha'Sport's* coffin. Of course, the gradual increase of radio and television sports broadcasts didn't help the newspaper to surmount its difficulties. Several years after it closed, there was an attempt to revive a similar format with a newspaper entitled, *Olam Ha'Sport*, though it failed to attract readers and closed a year after. *Hadashot's* sports section, much like the paper itself, left its mark on Israeli sports journalism, through the colorful language it used and the diversity of interpretations it offered (Paz, 2002). Its impact can still be felt today in the *Yedioth Ahronoth* and *Ma'ariv* sports sections. At the same time, attempts to publish and market sports journals in distinct fields, have failed. The only journal which can be found on shelves today is *Shem Ha'Mischak* (The Name of the Game) from the *Ma'ariv* publishing house.

When Israeli media became multi-channelled, the sports press was no less affected. Beyond the significant increase in the volume of sports broadcasts, as a result of the entrance of the new commercial channel to the arena and the reception of foreign sports channels on cable, a new star was born in the Israeli sports press. The Sports Channel (Channel 5), which was established in 1991, began very gradually to establish its programs, until its flagship program *Hadshot Ha'Sport* was launched in 1998 (Galily, 2002). The daily news show began to expand, along with the channel, and became the most significant agent in the field of news within the sports world. At the beginning of the millennium, in addition to the Sports Channel, which since its establishment has expanded into four parallel channels, another two broadcasting channels were added by the Charlton Company, introducing the "pay-per-view" system. Nevertheless, *Hadshot Ha'Sport* has remained the central and almost only program of its kind in the field. The largest dailies continued to expand their sports sections, as part of the internalization process of sports' economic potential. The sports sections of *Yedioth Ahronoth* and *Ma'ariv* comprise an average of 12-16 pages a day. Even the solid newspaper *Ha'aretz* decided in the early years of 2000 to



publish a large colorful 4-page Broadsheet sports supplement, separate from the rest of the paper (Ben-Porat, 2007). A content analysis of the three largest Israeli dailies' sports sections, *Yedioth Ahronoth*, *Ma'ariv* and *Ha'aretz* reveals that football coverage, followed by basketball coverage, takes up almost the entire space of the newspaper. In fact, the extensive coverage of these two branches, allows not more than 10% of newspaper space for the other sports branches (Weingarten, 1997)<sup>6</sup>.

Sports sections have recently benefited from the launching of internet sports sites, which have significantly expanded the space of Israeli sports journalism. Similar to the adaptation process of the newspaper itself, so have sports sections had to cope with the unique character of online journalism. While on the one hand, an increase of visual aspects can be recognized, on the other hand, so can an attempt to convert the news emphases to journalistic features stressing depth and interpretation as well. Two popular sites in Israel are "One" (<http://www.one.co.il>) and the sports channel site (<http://www.sport5.co.il>) (Gilboa, 2008). In addition to these the sports sections of the largest internet news sites can also be found.

A salient benefit produced by electronic sports journalism in general, and by online sports journalism, in particular, is the considerable entrance of women to the sports journalism profession. Written sports journalism has been and still remains a clear male reserve, in contrast to the general feminization trend in the media. From all the popular fields of coverage, the smallest number of women writers can be found in sports (Lahover, 2000; Skwar, 1999). The numbers decrease, almost to none, when it comes to sports section editors. In Israel, only one female sports journalist, or two at the most, can be found in the sections of the largest daily newspapers.

### **Communications Media Development Models**

Models which have attempted to examine the development of communications media and its ability to function alongside parallel means of communication, have

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<sup>6</sup> The study examined the three dailies' sports supplements during a random week. Clearly, to examine one week or another, during a certain period, can significantly impact the findings. A week during the local football league is unlike a pre-season or post-season period. Similarly, a week when international sports events take place will have an impact. Notwithstanding, even an untrained eye can see the dominance of both branches in the Israeli media, as part of the Israeli sports culture.

emphasized technological and content adaptations made by veteran communications media in order to cope with new ones. The model presented by Caspi, examines communications media's historical development from a technological aspect. According to this model, the development process is a four-staged "historical wheel" which accounts for the parallel existence of the various means of communication (Caspi, 1993: 115). The first stage is the **breakthrough** stage when attention is called to the very appearance of the medium, and veteran communications media are temporarily abandoned. During the second stage, **establishment** sets in. That is, usage of the new communications media becomes commonplace, as it fulfils essential roles in the system and its effectiveness is established. The third stage of **self-defense** refers to the stage when a new medium appears which threatens the existing communications balance in one way or another. **Self-defense** displayed by veteran means of communications derives from fear that a significant piece of their consumer pie will be eaten.

Cohen-Avigdor and Lehman-Wilzig (2003) broaden the discussion on self-defense and describe reactions available to the veteran medium<sup>7</sup>. For the sake of clarifying the stage, their expansion has been combined with the self-defense offered by Napoli (1998). The initial reaction is usually indifference, followed by opposition, which can be aggressive or defensive in nature, in an attempt to block the spread of technology. On the aggressive side, the veteran medium can disseminate words of admonishment against the new medium to question its credibility, or to scare the public with the dire consequences of adopting the new medium. The second option is an attempt at halting the process, by preventing content sources from the new medium, or by legal opposition to the young medium. In any case, the assumption is that the veteran medium will do its utmost to prevent the establishment of the new one, from an understanding of the added value the latter can provide its customers. One characteristic practice of self-defense, following opposition, is the distinction the veteran medium asks its consumers to make between itself and the new technology.

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<sup>7</sup> The Natural Lifespan of New Media Developmental Model presented by Cohen-Avigdor and Lehman-Wilzig, expands the basic developmental models, as it integrates conditions from the field of "Novelty Distribution". The basic model's description of the journalistic struggle derives from the division of the institutionalization stage offered by Cohen-Avigdor and Lymon-Weilzig, into "growth" and "maturity". The transition from one to the other is related to the market share percentage the medium adopts. The struggle among journalists is not so sensitive to the quantitative differences, and therefore, it was decided to copy it to the basic model framework.

The fourth stage in Caspi's development model focuses on the veteran medium's adaptation to the new one and finding the golden path for their parallel, or joint, existence in the space provided. The obligatory acceptance of the new medium's presence can be expressed by submission, which means the extinction or the disappearance of the veteran means of communications or by adaptations and changes in the communications functions that the old medium performs.

An additional theoretical approach, important to the on-going discussion on the development of journalism, is offered by Saffo's 30-Year Rule (1992). The model refers to the complete adoption of new technology within a generational period of 30 years. According to the rule, during the first decade, the novelty arouses enthusiasm and awe. The second decade is signified by an expansion of the penetration to the market, and the third expresses final acceptance, when the technology is routinely adopted by many audiences.

## **Procedure**

The research literature in mass communications media development has focused for the most part on technological aspects on the one hand and consumer audience reactions on the other (Cohen-Avigdor & Lymon-Weilzig, 2003; Livio, 2005). It has not, however, touched upon competition among journalists, as part of media development. The present study attempts to duplicate the historical model of communications media development (Caspi, 1993), which focuses on means of communications and the role of the media, and to reproduce it in newsrooms and the inter-generational competition among journalists. For this purpose, the basic four-stage model offered by Dan Caspi for understanding the development of communications media and the relations to one another, and Saffo's 30-Year Rule (1992) which focuses the discussion on the generational cycle of social changes and their inclusion in society (Loop, 1998) have been combined.

## **Methodology**

For a more in-depth understanding of institutional aspects related to the evolution of sports journalism, in-depth interviews were conducted in the current study with male and female sports journalists in a variety of writing and editing positions. Some were employed in a newspaper at the time of the interviews, and the others were former senior writers. The aim of these interviews was to try to identify trends, or changes, in their perceptions regarding sports journalism. 24 sports journalists, 10 of whom were former journalists, were interviewed in total, using the "snow ball" method. The division between written and electronic press was even<sup>8</sup>. The questions presented in the interviews focused on the journalist's personal background, that is, age, professional training, recruitment process, journalistic experience, and perception of the role of a journalist. Due to the small number of female sports writers and the great interest their entrance to the field aroused, an attempt was made to interview as many female sports journalists as possible. In total, 9 female sports writers from different periods in the history of Israeli sports journalism were interviewed.

Personal interviews permit getting to the bottom of issues and revealing phenomena and informal customs that shape the system's structure. Unlike the survey or the closed questionnaire, an interview does not assume a world of common meanings exists for the subjects, nor a defined range of answers, but rather that groups and individuals experience reality and the purpose of the interview differently.

The current study used the semi-structured in-depth interview method, which enables the interviewer not only to present the interviewees with similar questions on similar subjects, but also allows space and freedom for subjective definitions of each and every one of them. This way an interviewer can maintain the common ground among the group that is examined, as well as sustain unique shades and experiences of each one of its members (Helman, 1994). This method is not short of criticism, as writers tend to avoid personal comments regarding news coverage in interviews, staying true to their sense of journalistic commitment to objectivity (Lavi, 2001).

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<sup>8</sup> Interviews included male and female journalists from the written, television, and online press. Although the sports press exists on the radio in Israel as well, the news there is not treated thoroughly or consistently enough so that a journalistic work routine can be characterized. For this reason, radio journalists, a large part of who are employed by other means of communications, were excluded from the sample.

Another difficulty in the interview method is related to the investigator's position and his or her possible impact on interview contents (Sasson-Levi, 2006). The interviewer's status before the interviewee, which produces an hierarchical structure, practically form its very definition (Hastrup, 1992) could impact the nature of the conversation – whether due to interviewees' attempts to please the investigator or to the manner in which questions are presented by the interviewer and the emphases placed on them. For this reason, strict diligence to permit interviewees to speak freely, with minimal interruptions, even when the conversation skewed away from the study's path was maintained. Confidentiality was ensured, so that they could express themselves freely. With that, it is unavoidable that even subconsciously, by means of gestures, smiles, or expressions of surprise, certain messages were conveyed to the interviewees regarding the investigator's expectations from the interview.

## **Findings**

The current study's findings illustrate that developmental processes similar to those associated with communications media, also occur among the journalist population during a change in generations, or during significant social changes. An examination of the relevant debates taking place in the Israeli sports media has shed some light on the model.

The sports press in Israel began to be shaped just prior to the establishment of the State of Israel, with the appearance of private sports newspapers on a regular basis. The entrance of the evening newspapers, *Yedioth Ahronoth* and *Ma'ariv* to the sports arena, and later the founding of *Hadshot Ha'Sport* institutionalized the field. An analysis of the journalist profession also points to a **breakthrough** stage, at which time a limited number of journalists attempted to create sports journalism from nothing. With justice they were called the "Founding Members Generation" or the "National Team" of the sports press in Israel (Porat, 1987). The **establishment** stage is associated with the attempt made by *Hadshot Ha'Sport* members to professionalize the journalism trade in the field of sports. As early as the 1960's, two of the founding members generation, Moshe Lehrer and Yishayahu Porat, established a training course framework for journalists and sports reporters (Personal Interview,

24.09.2008). Many sports journalists who followed were a product of that training. *Hadshot Ha'Sport* indeed led to considerable changes and generated a new atmosphere in the sports press scene in Israel, though in the absence of the journalist generation that preceded it, the new spirit would not have been accepted so naturally.

In the 1980's, as the former generation had become institutionalized, a new journalist generation was making its **breakthrough**. The expansion of sports columns in the daily newspapers and the appearance of the newspaper *Hadashot* called for the recruitment of a new generation of sports journalists, which significantly changed the face of the profession. The recruitment process, perception of the profession, and especially the way the new sports journalists conducted themselves, aroused the anger of the veteran journalist generation, a reaction that can be regarded the start of the **self-defense** stage. The veteran generation's indifference to the expansion of the dailies' sports columns turned into aggressive opposition with the appearance of *Hadashot* and the dailies' growing distribution, which also dedicated extensive space to sports. Israel Rosenblatt, a respected senior member of the veteran journalist generation, described the breakthrough of the new generation in the journalist yearbook (1987):

In order to expand, the written and televised sports press needs a trained reservoir of manpower which is unavailable. Since, in any case, the trend for expansion has been a function of commercial competition, and not of sports development in Israel, the increased demand has led to lower standards. What was initially a profession, with the halo of a new beginning and a sense of mission, has turned into an arena replete with moonlighters. These moonlighters regard sports journalism as a temporary side job, which does not deserve a great deal of time or thought. They've brought with them no writing talent nor unique professional knowledge of any kind. Nevertheless, their heightened sense of smell immediately sniffed the latent possibilities in using their new status as sports journalists, though they have no link to sports or journalism, in order to promote personal and commercial interests,

This self-defense stage was aggressive in character, as veteran journalists spoke out against new ones. Criticism lashed out at their abilities, understanding in

the field, their training and conduct, which bordered, according to the first generation, on the crossing of ethical red lines. Yishayahu (Shia) Porat, a senior sports journalist, who worked in *Israeli Sport* and later in *Hadshot Ha'Sport* also expressed his strong opposition to the new generation of writers in the journalist yearbook (1987):

The sports journalists of 1987 in Israel [...] are, in general, less knowledgeable. The computer at their fingertips is sharp and threatening – much more than was the pen in the hands of the "Founders". The "'47 Generation" dealt more with the politics of sports and tended to write about the Hapoel-Maccabi-Beitar rivalry with great passion, alongside sports item reports. The "'87 Generation" is more involved with the economy of sports and treats the athlete with "personal care" and attention.

Rosenblatt (1987) also addressed the training and experience of the younger generation of journalists. Sarcastic remarks can be noted regarding the importance of having one's name in the newspaper in this generation:

Those for whom syntax rules have always caused pain and suffering have become "journalists". Their writing has become characterized by stuttered writing and professional shallowness. They have given authoritative advice to coaches and athletes who are far more experienced than they are. Instead of checking facts, they have been concerned with making them fit to the reality as they see it. On the other hand, they have made sure that the holy bi-line (writer's name) is not deleted from their prolific writing. Amateurism, cynicism and disrespect have begun to control the arena. Only a handful of professionals found in all the newspapers is forced to deal not only with the new genre, deplete of any tradition of the Hebrew press, but also with the new sports institution on its many levels...

When it comes to the way journalists conduct themselves, agreement can also be found among senior sports journalists regarding the problematic view new journalists have of the profession.

These "norms" have spread like weeds only that their ugly form has changed [...]. The boundaries of journalistic ethics (R.I.P.) have been trampled on, not only in the relations between journalists and institutions, but also in the sensitive day-to-day relations between journalists and unions, coaches and players (Rosenblatt, 1987).

It seems to me that after decades of close contact with reality, sports journalists have never been closer to the red line separating coverage of events from collaborating with one's own production, as today (Porat, 1987).

The issue of coverage itself was not left untouched either, as blame was placed on the new journalists and not on the outcome of new technology, as offered by the basic model:

In effect, professional coverage has become a depleted derivative of gossip and yellow streams. Only a few manage to summarize their journalistic mission with professional-colorful précis, which provides their readers with a true picture of what has happened on the field [...]. The sports press presents football with exaggerated coverage and lack of adequate internal balance between the important and unimportant, only to reveal the lack of professionalism of many of the writers, their lack of mastery in the field they work in, and their disregard to elementary rules of decency (Rosenblatt, 1987).

In summary, it can be concluded that journalism's self-defense at the stage of the first change of generations, is expressed only in verbal attacks towards the abilities and skills of the new generation and threats regarding the implications of the phenomenon. With that, the generation of veteran journalists did not take any real defensive steps to halt the new generation of journalists.

The stage of **adaptation** to a new reality is of interest because it discriminates between the behavior of the medium and the position of the journalists. *Hadshot Ha'Sport*, which was a symbol of the institutionalization of the sports press in Israel, did not manage to survive and adapt itself to the new reality offered by sports media. Shortly after attempts at self-defense were made, the newspaper closed down and



disappeared from the local media map. In contrast, veteran journalists, who expressed so vehemently their disappointment with the new generation of journalists, actually found their place in the new media experience. *Hadshot Ha'Sport* writers were assimilated into the large daily newspapers, especially in editing positions. Thus, for example, Moshe Lehrer and Yishayahu Porat became *Ma'ariv* sports editors, after the former also edited the *Yedioth Ahronoth* sports section. Yehiel Arazi was appointed editor of the *Ha'aretz* sports section, and like him, Yehushua Sagi began to write for the paper. Israel Paz wrote personal columns in *Yedioth Ahronoth* and Zvi Bar-Shira began writing for *Ma'ariv* (Personal Interview, 28.11.2007). For assimilation to occur, acceptance of the new generation of journalists was required, and members of the veteran generation found themselves under the same roof with the objects of their criticism.

At the same time, the same mid-generation, responsible for "coloring" the sports section, became **established**. Its presence began to be perceived as natural, as its skills and performance ceased to make waves as they had in the breakthrough stage. Significant evidence for the professional establishment of this generation of journalists is the passage of sports journalists to parallel media channels which are considered more serious and well-established. Thus, for example, many of today's renowned journalists in social and political arenas, such as Tzadok Yehezkeili, Ben Caspit, Yair Stern and Ofer Shelach, made their way up from sports journalism during the mid-generation period and moved on to political and military coverage. As a result, sports journalism gained a reputation for its professionalism, despite the criticism it had received only a few years earlier.

At the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, as new agents began to blossom in the local sports media, the mid-generation of written sports journalism began a process of **self-defense**. The television program "*Hadshot Ha'Sport*", and especially the flourishing of internet sites, led by "One" and the Sports Channel (Sport 5), introduced a new young generation of journalists that changed the rules of the game once again. The launching of new editorial boards in new organizations opened the gate for women to the previously closed world of sports media. Criticism, much like the initial wave of self-defense, was lashed out at the questionable abilities of women journalists and their supposedly problematic conduct in a number of aspects. The way women are

accepted and the way they function and perceive their role in the electronic sports press, especially online, has in fact turned into the crux of clashes between veteran and new journalism. The main claim made by veteran male and female journalists is that the feminization process, which began to accelerate significantly in the electronic sports media, has led to a dramatic change in the perception of the journalist's role and the dominant professional values in the field. In other words, the argument contends that the new female journalists have led to the deterioration of journalism as a profession in general and have hurt the basic essence of the occupation. Interestingly, the majority of the interviewees in the current study chose the expression have "cheaped" the profession to allow women to enter the field.

The grievance towards the female effect on the development of the media concentrated on a number of central complaints<sup>9</sup>:

1. Working style: The entrance of women to sports media, which until this time was an absolute male reservation, led to significant changes in working style. The main complaints made in this respect were that the formal barriers between female journalists and the objects of coverage were torn down. Relations between male journalists and their objects of coverage have been discussed extensively in the media (Gutman, 2005), as on the one hand professional integrity is at stake and on the other personal friendship. However, when the relations are between genders, obviously between men and young women, the tension between professionalism and friendship is blurred and immediately sexual connotations are assumed. A large number of testimonies, including those of female journalists themselves, have emphasized that personal relationships have grown between young female journalists and their objects of coverage. Almost all the veteran male journalists presented these relationships, apropos romantic and sexual connotations, as the essence of female work in the field. Thus, in fact, women have changed the classic perception of journalism which discriminates between the professional and the personal. Apart from the prestige that could be harmed from the ties bonded with the objects of coverage, content issues

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<sup>9</sup> The claims are presented from the point of view of veteran male and female journalists, even if they are incorrect and do not necessarily stand the test of reality.

are raised as well, which are an outcome of the nature of the relations. The preoccupation with gossip and athletes' private lives is a consequence of those relationships.

2. Age, experience and training: Examination of the journalism profession has become a central subject in sociology research. Despite the difficulty in analysis, there is solid agreement in regard to the number of dimensions that compose the picture of ideal journalism (Singer, 2004). The concern with the central body of knowledge and the issue of training journalists are at the center of the discussion regarding the question of the field's professionalism. On the issue of female sports journalists, claims have been voiced that their young age and their meager professional baggage are the main factors responsible for the differences in approach by new and veteran journalists. In fact, young women, with no background in journalism or deep understanding of sports, write in an amateur fashion. Professionally, as well, complaints have been voiced on their inadequate understanding, or on faulty reports made by female journalists. Also, in terms of syntax and linguistic aspects, complaints have been made on their poor language and basic grammatical mistakes. A number of the interviewees mentioned the importance of their role as (male) editors to minimize the damage. Apart from content aspects, the young age of female journalists also affects athletes who have less respect to female sports journalists, as representatives of the new media. This is because she, for the most part, does not display appropriate professional knowledge, and especially because of the proximity of female journalists to athletes. Veteran sports journalists emphasized again and again that they are mature and old enough to keep appropriate distance from athletes. However, the relations between athletes and young female journalists, often called "girls", affect them as well, since professional appreciation in general, including sports media, is decreasing as a result of young female journalists' conduct.
3. Emphasis on physical appearance on account of knowledge: The presence of women in sports media has turned attention away from professional knowledge towards physical appearance. Here, appearance has also become a scale for judgment and recruitment of additional female journalists. It is interesting that this claim was made to a large extent by senior female sports journalists. The central claim in this context is that the emphasis on

appearance when recruiting female journalists has influenced the working style and nature of reporting in the press. Thus, for example, female sports journalists admitted that it is easier for women, especially at their age, to extract information from athletes and sports professionals. Veteran journalists added that young female sports journalists make use of their femininity for their advantage. Women use seductive methods to take advantage of their personal proximity to athletes during interviews in order to extract news. Salient expressions of content used to describe the phenomenon are "scoops" and "exclusive publications" which are blooming in the electronic sports press. Extracting knowledge from a first source, which became possible, among others, due to personal relations between female writers and the objects of their coverage, has turned into the main edge of electronic media over written journalism and a central criterion in the competition between internet sites themselves. With media turning in this direction, the demand for original, newsworthy information increases, and consequently so does the need for recruiting more female sports writers who can continue to supply the demand. Another emphasis regarding the femininity of female sports writers is made on the emotional aspect. In this case, only female sports writers made the claim that, like extracting newsworthy information, women also possess an ability to arouse emotional sides from their objects of coverage, in ways that male sports journalists in the written press, most of whom are distant men, can not evoke. Thus, personal stories again become central to the new sports media.

4. The sports press as part of the world of entertainment: One of the effects that concern veteran journalists is that sports journalism, due to the entrance of women to the field, has become a field of entertainment. The written sports press perceives its role in a serious manner, as another branch of serious news. During interviews, many examples were given of the profession's harsh demands once again, from the non-stop commitment to work to the effect on one's personal life. However, in quite a few of the interviews, journalists mentioned that the intensity which is characteristic of their work is a kind of "journalism school". In order to demonstrate this point, veteran journalists mentioned the fact that several of the senior political commentators in the Israeli media were in the past sports journalists. Rina Mazliach from TV's Channel Two and Ben Caspit from *Ma'ariv*, are only a couple of examples of

the natural passage that sports journalists made following the training they got from sports journalism. Young female journalists, however, consider themselves, according to veteran journalists' interpretation, as part of the world of entertainment. For this reason they wish to increase their personal exposure. As a result, the new female sports journalists tilt sport journalism to lighter more entertaining directions, on the account of serious in-depth work resulting from grueling investigation work.

5. Ethics: The increasing amount of young women in sports journalism who arrive at the branch with no training or appropriate background, raises ethical questions regarding the journalistic work. The relations between writers and their objects of coverage have already been mentioned. However, in addition, veteran journalists describe many other examples of the problematic performance of new female sports journalists who allow themselves to stray from basic rules of ethics of the profession. Among others, they have been accused of making up stories, routinely intervening in response to articles and promoting personal interests.

The strong criticism against the presence of women in sports media has aroused, as a central indicator of the struggle between the new means of communications and the old ones, places the focus of the competition between the new and old means of communications on the human side. That is, similar to the stages of media development and their adaptation to one another, the present study suggests a need to relate in parallel terms to the personal sides in the evolution of journalism.

## Discussion and Conclusions

The verbal attacks on the new generation of female journalists found in the current study began to be heard only years after the new sports media organizations had already been established. Two explanations are possible. First, according to the 30-Year-Rule, only during the second decade does the medium become significant, following its intensified penetration to the market and its acceptance as a player in the field. Therefore, criticism is heard only after the threat has been felt. Another explanation emphasizes that the change of generations led to aggressive self-defense

not because of the new technology, but rather due to the social changes it brought about. In other words, self-defense was a reaction to the feminization of sports media, which was made possible thanks to the new players that appeared in the media. As long as electronic sports journalism maintained complete male dominance, it was perceived as a direct continuation of the familiar journalistic climate. The significance of such a viewpoint is that the emphasis in the developmental process of journalism lies in social aspects which can derive from technological changes, though not necessarily. The current study tends to accept the second interpretation and sees the criticism as essentially social in nature for several reasons. First, the voiced criticism has been very personal in nature. That is, it refers to professional characteristics of journalists on a personal level (training, writing ability, perception of the profession and setting ethical limits), although oftentimes they could derive from the nature of the medium. Thus, for example, the internet, which dictates a massive amount of news and a speedy exchange of news items on the site, could explain some of the syntax errors and credibility which are in question in the eyes of the critics. With that, a great deal of the criticism does not refer, not even indirectly, to the medium (writing ability and expression, for instance). The fact that the criticism has been repetitive, voicing similar complaints, illustrates the concept that not the medium is at the center of self-defense, but rather the journalists themselves. In addition, criticism can be heard within the same medium, during the change of generations or significant social changes. The first self-defense that was presented in the aforementioned sub-sample was intra-organizational in nature and focused on the expansion of newspapers which led to extensive recruitment. In the second wave of self-defense, criticism was callously aimed at the femininity of female journalists, and the fact that men were not mentioned whatsoever strengthens the argument. To summarize, it can be said that the criticism voiced during the interviews conducted in this study was an expression of aggressive journalistic self-defense against the feminization trend in the sports media, as a reaction to the new media that penetrated the market.

Critical analysis of repetitive journalistic self-defense, from a conflict-base approach, can provide an additional viewpoint to journalistic reactions. One of the claims identified with the critical approach in regard to the journalism profession maintains that certain professions have formed a professional status for themselves

which have been socially acknowledged, from an aim to maintain a professional monopoly. In accordance, sports journalism, in its first cycle, considered itself an exclusive professional body, belonging to the founding generation. Acceptance of new members was difficult, as was the blurring of the formerly clear professional borderlines. The "second wave" of journalistic self-defense expresses a double grievance: loss of the profession's unique quality, similar to any influx of new personnel, as well as the breakdown of gender hegemony. Sports media, which represents sports' body of knowledge, had been for years a clearly male fortress, an expression of the unshaken bond between sports and masculinity. The profession found it difficult to accept the increasing femininity, as a significant group and not only as individuals, within its borders, since it considered the phenomenon an erosion of the bond's stability. Therefore, criticism towards women in sports media, though reminiscent in essence of the criticism aimed at the mid-generation, is more prominent and aggressive in its content. It is battle to defend the home managed by male sports journalists against a foreign body trying to exhibit knowledge and understanding in a field that it doesn't belong.

#### Some concluding remarks:

1. Presentation of the generational exchange was made in a somewhat rough manner. In effect, sports journalists joined and left editorial boards within the range between generations. Still, journalistic self-defense can be clearly discerned as a result of sociological and social changes which enabled the development of communications media. Expansion of sports journalism and the resultant need to stretch professional limits in a quantitative sense has been a central explanation for stretching professional limits according to critics, in every generation.
2. The basic model refers to the development of means of communications themselves, emphasizes the ability of the medium to adapt to a new competitor every time and thus to maintain an almost unlimited lifespan. The present sub-model's treatment of the journalistic profession limits its lifespan to one generation or two at the most.
3. One of the main foci of criticism in terms of journalism's ability has centered on journalistic writing and proper usage of language. In both waves of self-

defense there are mounting testimonies against the faulty grammatical skills and stuttered language of new journalists lacking in witty puns and tongue in cheek language. Deutcher (2007), who attempted to address the development of language, has presented human language as a changing and renewing organism as part of the natural development of language, journalistic language included. Complaints against the decreasing level of language are not exclusive to the sports field or to journalism. They are found in all fields and often reflect generation gaps. Thus, for example, Lipz-Eliasi (2006) has identified linguistic differences made by youngsters and adults in internet chats, as in the blurring of distinctions made between written and spoken language.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> The globalization process and media's place in it, has gained a great deal of attention regarding their affect on language. The computer and the internet, which have significantly contributed to bringing together vast populations from around the world (Friedman, 2007), have assisted in shaping global language which at times erodes local language.



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