

SPORTS: FASTER, HIGHER, STRONGER, AND PUBLIC RELATIONS

ILAN TAMIR, YEHIEL (HILIK) LIMOR, AND YAIR GALILY

Abstract: Sport in the modern age is both politics and business. In a combined world of politics, business, hatred, jealousy and boastfulness, in which each person aims to achieve his objective while “disregarding all the rules,” as Orwell describes, public relations are a valuable strategic and tactical weapon. Success is not measured on the sports field alone, but in the newspaper headlines, on the television and the computer screens and in the bank account. The motto once proposed by Baron Pierre de Coubertin—“*Citius, Altius, Fortius*” (faster, higher, stronger)—is slowly clearing the way for a new, more updated motto: “Faster, higher, stronger, bigger (business) and especially—more PR.”

Keywords: sport; public relations; media; communications.

Modern day sports are not just entertainment for the masses. They are also a “religion” with hundreds of millions of believers throughout the world (Price, 2001); they are fertile ground for political activity on both the international and national levels (Strenk, 1980; Riordan & Kruger, 1999; Murray, 2003; Harif, 2011). Sport is also a giant industry, encompassing countries and nations, shifting enormous sums of money annually. In short:

Sport is both international and a part of every day life. It shapes relationship at every level: diplomatic, cultural, economic, organizational, community and interpersonal (Le’tang, 2006, p. 386).

Political involvement in sport, whose foundations derive from ancient Greece thousands of years ago, reflects the attempts of many entities to take advantage of the attraction of sports and the potential power it holds to transmit messages and values, formulate social norms and even operate as a tool for developing diplomatic relations or as a punitive tool in the political sphere. Professionalization and privatization have contributed to the fact that sport, which was a spontaneous form of social amusement for centuries, has evolved “from game to merchandise” (Ben-Porat, 2002), and like any other merchandise, the sports industry operates within established, obligating frameworks, measured with strict criteria of profit and loss, shifting enormous sums of money. Thus, for example, in the first quarter of 2009, this industry was worth an estimated 29 billion US dollars (Dascal, 2009), which is

approximately 120 billion US dollars annually. A report published in May 2010 estimated that the world sports industry would be worth a total of approximately 133 billion US dollars in 2013 (Clark, 2010). According to various estimates, international investment in the sports industry is currently showing an annual growth of approximately 4%, with the primary sources of income being sponsorships, ticket sales and broadcasting rights.

Every industry and business requires advertising to advance its sales and “there is almost no firm, institution or organization that does not dedicate at least a small portion of its marketing resources to advertising” (Hornik & Lieberman, 1994, p. 42). In modern times, advertising alone is not sufficient; PR is needed as well. In fact public relations are an umbrella term that encompasses “all media activities whose purpose is to improve image, advance, market and support private, social and political organizations and products” (Limor, Adoni, & Mann, 2007, p. 255).

While public and research attention usually focuses on the financial, political, social and even personal aspects of the sports industry—in addition, of course, to the sports themselves—public relations has not won similar attention. In fact, “the attention to sports public relations has been somewhat sporadic” (Le’tang & Hopwood, 2008, p. 87), and most work focuses on specific angles or is limited in scope, concentrating on issues such as sport and celebrities (Summers & Johnson-Morgan, 2008) or on certain sport branches (Anderson, 2004; 2006; 2008; Hopwood, 2005; Trosby, 2010), or specific teams (Jensen & Butler, 2007; Xifra, 2008; Mitrook, Parish, & Seltzer, 2008).

Hopwood (2005, p. 174) emphasizes that “public relations practice in sport is not always evident, yet to the contemporary sports business, it has much to offer”. This paper will map, for the first time, all the “players” participating in the “PR game,” identifying their various interests and categorizing the different roles and primary modes of operation of public relations in sports.

PR, the public sphere and the media sphere

Despite the ever increasing importance of public relations in the modern age, a single, accepted theory of the roles and functions of public relations has not yet been formulated. There are those who claim that public relations depend on a proper theoretical foundation, based on qualitative and quantitative research (Botan & Taylor, 2004, p. 659). On the other hand, there are those who claim that public relations is not a “pure” academic discipline, because the primary theories on public relations are simply theories that have been “imported” from other disciplines; there are even those who doubt whether public relations will ever develop into a discipline that has unique theories of its own (Botan & Hazleton, 2006).

Not only does the theoretical aspect remain unformulated. The truth is that the definition of public relations is not fully agreed upon. Rex Harlow, one of the founders of the Public Relations Society of America, gathered no less than 500 different definitions. He condensed all of them into one definition—“Public relations is a unique managing tool that helps build channels of communication, understanding and cooperation between the organization and its public” (Harlow, 1976)—which became one of the most accepted, common definitions of public relations (Limor, Leshem, & Mendelzis, 2013). There are also several definitions of sports public relations, and for the purpose of this paper we adopt the following definition:

Sport public relations is a managerial communication-based function designed to identify a sport organization’s key publics, evaluate its relationships with those publics, and foster desirable relationships between the sport organization and those publics (Stoldt, Dittmore, & Branvold, 2006, p. 2).

Who are the target audiences to which public relations mechanisms are directed, and what are their modes of operation? The list of target audiences can be long and varied and include the general public, customers and consumers, the organization’s employees, shareholders and investors, suppliers and service providers, donors and volunteers. Essentially, the different target audiences can often be defined as “sphericules”. The accepted definition of a “sphericule”, a term coined by media researcher Todd Gitlin (1998), is “a public sphere of a social minority or community with a unique way of life” (Limor, Adoni, & Mann, 2007, p. 367). If we broaden the definition to include common issues or areas of interest, the ramifications are that a person may simultaneously be a member of several public sphericules.

The most commonly known mode of operation of public relations is called media relations, which is defined as the transfer of information to the mass media in order that they publish it and bring it to the general public’s knowledge. We should keep in mind that the distinction between an “advertisement” and “PR material” is that an advertisement is paid for; PR material is published without the PR professional or the organization he works for paying for the publicity.

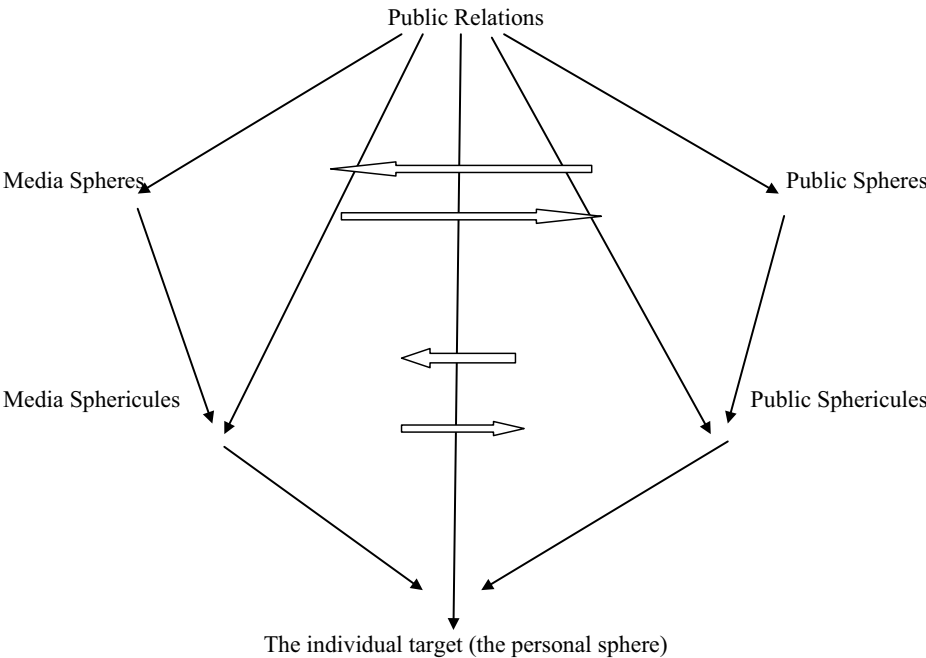


Figure 1 Public relations, public spheres and media spheres

Press connections are just one channel, through which PR professionals try to transfer information to their target audiences to achieve their goal, i.e.: influence (cognitive, affective or instrumental) on individuals or groups. Other modes of operation include organizing events (including conferences), sponsorship, media consulting, media marketing, research, internal communication, community relations, fundraising, and relations with investors or with customers and suppliers.

As a generalization, one can say that public relations, directed at the target audiences—and essentially, at the “personal space” of each individual belonging to a certain target audience—can be managed in one of two central channels. One is the mass media channel, and the other—the direct channel, in which contact with the target audience is not made via mass media channels. The first channel includes utilizing newspapers, television, radio and large websites on the internet; the second channel, however, includes a variety of means, including conferences and assemblies, personal meetings, direct mailing, text messages, email and, of course, social media. It is possible to make contact with target audiences in a combination of ways and channels, using both the mass media as well as other means.

If we adopt the “sphericules” approach, according to which the “sphericule” is the public sphere common to a group of people with a common issue, interest or topic, it is possible to continue to suggest the identification of “media sphericules.” These are niche media that are not directed at the general public, but rather at defined target audiences, to which people with common interests are exposed. These will be, for example, a periodical devoted to stamp collecting, extreme sports, fishkeeping or tending “natural” gardens.

Public relations managed in the mass media channel can be managed either via “the large media spheres” (television, national press, radio and internet) or via “media sphericules,” meaning—media directed at the “public sphericules,” which are subgroups found among the general public. Simultaneously, there are public relations activities that do not utilize the mass media, but rather turn directly to the public spheres or sphericules, such as events, conferences or parlor meetings, intended to be directed at either a large, heterogeneous audience or a small, homogenous subgroup. However, we should keep in mind that activity in the public sphere is not managed in a vacuum and is not necessarily detached from the media spheres. Indeed, many of these activities are exposed to the mass media—or become exposed to them a posteriori—and thus are also publicized on the mass media channels.

Bear in mind that a mutual flow of information exists from the media spheres to the sphericules and vice versa; information sent to the sphere or sphericule—public or media—could very well find its way to other spheres or sphericules.

PR activity—areas of activity in sport

The term “public relations” is, as mentioned previously, an umbrella term. The many tasks related to the public relations system indicate that this is a complex system of activities that are essentially intertwined, “like spokes in a wheel” (Heath, 2004).

It is possible to identify at least 17 aspects or areas of public relations activity (Limor, Leshem, & Mendelzis, 2013); they are: *Counseling; Media Relations; Research; Employee/Member Relations or Internal Communications; Community Relations; Public Affairs; Government Affairs; Public Issues Management; Investor Relations; Financial Relations;*

Industry Relations; Development/Fundraising; Donor Relations; Minority Relations/Multicultural Affairs; Special Events and Public Participation; Consumer/Customer Relations; Lobbying.

The most well known area of activity is mass media relations, which includes activities such as sending messages to the press, organizing press conferences, holding press tours, initiating interviews and media appearances. In the modern age, PR professionals are not just involved in this area; they are now involved in the entire range of the organization's PR related activities (or of the person whom they represent). These activities can include:

- A. *Events.* This area is very broad, including anything from special sports events (such as friendly matches or exhibition games) to onetime events (season opening ceremony, inaugural title events, events celebrating moving up to a higher league, events in honor of the selection and inauguration of the best players).
- B. *Sponsorships.* Public relations professionals today are involved more than ever before in raising donations and sponsorships, and maintaining the relations with sponsors and donors.
- C. *Organizing fan clubs and maintaining connections with them.*
- D. *Working with new media and especially social media.* This activity includes responsibility for running the website and updating it, clever management of social media (including Facebook, Tweeter, YouTube, LinkedIn, blogs etc.) and their use.

Sports, politics and business

The transformation of sports from a game to merchandise is a result of processes or aspects in at least six arenas, which are parallel and complementary, some of which even date back to ancient times: political, technological, media, economic-commercial, global and cultural processes.

The political arena. The visit of the American table tennis delegation to China in 1968 was perceived as a historical turning point, and it was claimed that sport had helped advance international relations for the first time. Statements such as this were, of course, unfounded. The connection between sport, politics and international relations did not begin with hitting a small white ball. As far back as Athens (11th–7th millennium BC), sport fulfilled an important double political role: a tool for creating social unity and a channel for communicating with enemies and allies. In later generations, countries and rulers continued to use sports as a tool for advancing political objectives. The development of national consciousness and pride by various governments in the twentieth century was intended to advance national and political objectives. Communist governments encouraged sport as a means of raising their status in the international arena. Democratic governments also learned that sport can be part of the public diplomatic activity, and this is a type of “asset” worth investing in, because it can bring great political returns (Riordan, 1999).

The media arena. Since the beginning of their history, printed newspapers discovered the public interest in sport. Just three decades after the appearance of the first daily newspaper, in 1733, the first coverage of a sports competition was published. Gradually, the media

increased the coverage of sports news and thus contributed to increasing public interest. As the public interest increased, the newspapers broadened their coverage and so forth (Weingarten, 2003). In addition to the coverage on the news pages of the newspapers, over the years, columns, supplements and even special newspapers dedicated entirely to sport were added. The birth of the radio in the 1920s, of the television that followed in its wake, and later of the internet, reinforced sports coverage and increased public interest in it even more. Live broadcast enabled television channels to “create” media events, especially contests, as defined by Dayan and Katz (Dayan & Katz, 1992), between groups or individual athletes. Broadcasting rights at sports events became a necessity, enlisted by advertising and public relations to advance sales. As the demand for this product increased, it grew in value, and consequently, so did advertising and PR in this area.

The technological arena. This aspect is directly related its precursor. The development of color television and advanced broadcasting technologies—especially high quality HD and 3D television broadcasting—as well as satellite broadcasting, all turned sports viewing into an experience which brings the spectator close to the real event. Media companies, competing to supply the content, developed and refined sports coverage and established, utilizing the technological innovations, various specialized and niche channels dedicated to sports. Technology also had additional influences. For example, construction technology facilitated the building of complex stadiums and sports facilities, while the computer and cellular phone became suppliers of visual information and content at any time anywhere.

The commercial arena. The increasing public interest in sport is not unknown to athletes and business people. The first group gradually learned to request and receives compensation for their appearances, and later on, also understood that they themselves desired merchandise on the market, even outside the sports field. Business people, who identified the financial potential in sports, purchased and even formulated sports teams. In short: sport became business (Ben-Porat, 1998).

The global aspect. Processes of globalization, which are no doubt connected to the financial aspect, turned sport, like other areas in the financial and social world, into an international product. Political and geographic borders were blurred and even erased, and the innovations of technology enabled every spectator anywhere in the world to watch a live broadcast of the opening ceremony of the Olympics in Beijing, the FIFA World Cup Finals in soccer in Johannesburg, or the Grand Prix through the streets of Monaco. Sports groups and players who became international brand names helped blur the local or national pride and identification, transforming sport into a sort of global religion whose members have no defined citizenship. Globalization also assisted in turning branches of sport which were once bound to certain countries into familiar and even popular sports in other countries.

The cultural aspect. This aspect is twofold. On one hand, people dedicate more time to watching sports events and sports broadcasts, mainly due to the increasing number of sport channels, on TV and the internet. The second issue is related to physical fitness awareness (Sassatelli, 1999), which encourages many to play sport (Liran-Alfer & Kama, 2007), turning

star athletes into role models. The development of health consciousness in the Western world, which emphasizes the importance of physical fitness, has also contributed to the increase in the interest in sport and the playing of sport.

Sports, like the shows of the Barnum Circus, are performed and managed in three parallel arenas: local, national, and international. Like any other industry involving large sums of money and passions and interests, it needs sales and marketing advancement mechanisms. In the modern age, PR and marketing go hand in hand, with PR being part of a wider system of MARCOM—marketing communication.

But who are the “customers”? Who are those connected to the sports field and interested in PR? A close examination reveals that there are at least 28 “players” participating in the PR “game” on and around the sports field. Some of the players are veterans and their presence in this arena is not new, while others joined the game only in the modern age. They do not all have joint interests, and in fact, they often have conflicting and clashing interests.

“The Players.” It is possible to identify, as mentioned previously, 28 “players” who use PR activities in the field of sport. They are countries, local authorities and municipalities, political parties, politicians, owners and investors, clubs and teams, athletes, sports agents, mass media, sports advancement organizations, sponsors, advertisers, coaches, referees, sports officials, athletes unions, fan organizations, gambling companies, health product manufacturers, service providers, electronics companies (including computer and content manufacturers), stores, the police and emergency services, merchandise manufacturers, sports memorabilia collectors, artists (primarily singers), universities and colleges and various, one-time interest groups.

Countries. As far back as ancient Greece, countries discovered the power of sport as a political tool. Every game between national teams since then has become a symbolic battle over prestige and status. Countries utilize the success of sport for their internal needs (encouraging the national morale and pride), as well as their external needs (improving international image).

Fascist Italy developed its sports representation as part of the imperialistic objective which the regime adopted. They believed that sport would help them win political victories, increase the prestige of the government and party, and would strengthen the status of the Duce; Italy indeed won a significant number of titles (Martin, 2004). The Nazi regime hosted the Olympics in Berlin in 1936 as part of their efforts to aggrandize the country’s prestige and prove its competence and its technological, organizational and athletic achievements. Eastern European countries developed their athletes to be “diplomats in training suits” (Strenk, 1980), and publicize, via their athletic achievements, the Communist message and the positive alternative it offered to the capitalist West. In the modern age, countries attempt to advance sport using PR mechanisms in order to attain other objectives, such as health (encouraging physical activity to prevent diseases), education (directing youth and adults to athletic activity instead of anti-social activities or to eradicate negative social phenomena) or the economy (initiating and hosting sports events as a mechanism for advancing tourism).

To this category, we may add political, or partially political, entities that use sport to boost their international status. For example, Wales and Scotland are careful to preserve their independent status at the World Cup games, while the Palestinian Authority sent a delegation

of athletes to the 1996 Olympics, long before declaring its intentions of appealing to the United Nations for recognition as an independent state.

Local authorities and municipalities. Like the countries, local authorities and municipalities also view sport as a tool to advance their interests; firstly, to raise awareness of the name of their city and develop its image. Liverpool, a gray industrial city in Britain, is internationally famous thanks to the “The Beatles” and the soccer team. Barcelona is famous today not only for Gaudi’s buildings, but also, and perhaps primarily, for its soccer team. There are many other cities in the world like these—in the Netherlands, Germany, Belgium, Spain, Portugal and others—whose names are famous only, or primarily, because of their sports teams. Local authorities are interested in developing their sports teams as a local flag around which the entire population can rally. They also fight to host large, important sports events. Every event like this provides advertisement and prestige for the city, creates employment opportunities, accelerates the establishment of new infrastructure and promises the attendance of many tourists and sports fans. The Olympics that were held in Barcelona in 1992 boosted the entire city a generation ahead, catalyzed rejuvenation and turned it into an international tourist attraction. An extensive system of public relations “sold” the city not only to sports fans that arrived in honor of the Olympic Games, but to millions of other tourists throughout the world. Chicago, which competed to host the Olympics in 2016, understood the importance of public relations in its battle with Tokyo, Madrid and Rio De Janeiro, and enlisted the assistance of one of the residents of the city—the “Number 1 PR man,” US President Barack Obama.

Public relations are used by the local authority not only to “sell” the city to tourists and guests. They are also used to “sell” sport to the residents of the city—as something to do during free time, as a healthy activity, as a social event that unites the residents and as a pre-emptive method of stopping crime.

Political parties. The Gordian knot between political parties and sports, which has almost become completely frayed during the past decades in the democratic world, characterized in the past not only totalitarian countries where the party was the owner of sports teams, but also democratic ones. Sport was a pawn in the hand of the party. It was the source of the creation of new roles and jobs, a focal point of identification and primarily, a PR tool to prove that “the party is connected to the people.

The disconnection of ownership relations did not detach the parties from sport. Political parties, in many countries in the world, try to enlist famous personalities to join their lists. On the other hand, there are famous athletes who are interested in advancing their athletic success and directing it to the political arena. Thus, for example, in the senatorial and gubernatorial elections held in the United States in 2010, as many as nine former star athletes ran for office.

Politicians. The widespread popularity of sport created an opportunity for politicians attempting to win political capital via sports. Politicians at the beginning of their career try to win representational roles in sports teams, knowing that this will ensure them the media coverage. Reuven Rivlin, Speaker of the Israeli Parliament (Knesset), received his first

extensive publicity when he served as chairman of the soccer team. Many politicians take care to watch sports events, aware that the television cameras will not miss their presence at the stadium; thus, they attend sports events, not to watch, but primarily to be seen. Their presence at an event can serve as a political declaration, mainly to potential voters.

When the Israeli windsurfer, Gal Friedman, won a gold medal at the Athens Olympics in 2004, it was the Israeli Minister of Education, Culture and Sport who hurried to jump up on stage and stand next to the winner, appearing with him in all of the photos publicized by the media. When the Israeli Maccabi Tel Aviv basketball team won the European Cup, it was the prime minister who hurried to call the team's coach to congratulate him, and the conversation between the two became, thanks to his PR staff, a highly covered event.

Owners and investors. The new ownership and managerial patterns in sports obligated team owners to develop public relations for teams in their ownership and even for themselves. The reasons for purchasing a sports team are varied, but in all cases, there is a PR interest. Thus, when business people purchase a sports team, they want to be publicly glorified because of "their" team, like very wealthy art collectors exalting themselves with their purchases. In other cases, purchasing a sports team can serve as a way to win public recognition, admiration and even legitimacy. Silvio Berlusconi, who later became a prime minister of Italy, purchased the successful soccer team, *Milan*, during the 1980s, which was, in addition to his control of the mass media, a springboard into the political arena.

Clubs and teams. Every sports team, whoever its owners are, is an independent entity interested in winning a group of fans, being a point of attraction for new players and developing a positive image, in order to advance its club both professionally and financially. For this reason, for example, teams grant sponsorship to charities, participate in friendly matches whose profits are donated to public causes, and encourage the players to take part in activities against negative phenomena such as violence and racism.

Athletes. It is not only sport that has become merchandise. The individual athlete has also become merchandise and a brand name. The more famous the athlete is, the higher his value climbs on the sports market, as does his salary. Furthermore, famous athletes, especially if they are physically attractive, may receive advertising contracts or agreements to lend their name to commercial brands, which will direct huge sums to their pockets. *Nike*, for example, created special athletic shoes that carry the name of Michael Jordan, as did *Adidas*, which developed a product line named for the tennis player, Stan Smith and the basketball player Patrick Ewing, or *Puma*, who manufactured a running shoe named after the Jamaican sprinter, Usain Bolt. Famous athletes took advantage and continue to utilize their fame for commercial development via products carrying their name and identified with them even after they took off their sports clothes and hung up their running, basketball or tennis shoes. Their external appearance also has financial significance and ramifications: Andre Agassi's haircut, like the hairstyles of soccer players Cristiano Ronaldo and David Villa, were imitated by the masses and contributed to an image which was translated into advertising contracts. The interest in PR activity is thus twofold: displayed by both the players and the companies with whom they are connected commercially.

Sports agents. Agents are interested in public relations in order to increase the value of their “merchandise,” i.e. the athlete they represent. The higher the athlete’s value goes, the higher the agent’s profits will rise. However, agents do not stop at advancing their “merchandise’s” image alone. They also need their own PR, to attract additional athletes and even customers who are not connected to sport.

Mass media. Media consumers read newspapers, watch television and listen to the radio because they are interested in the content. Sports content is desired and consumed. Broadcast and print media which dedicate time and space to sports coverage utilize public relations to bring their activity to the attention of wider audiences. Public relations will contribute, for example, to increasing the number of viewers of a television broadcast, and a high rating translates into higher profits. However, the media is not just an agent for transmitting information and content to the audience. In many cases, they are also the creators of the content—or agents who purchased the rights to them—and they need public relations to increase awareness of the contents and raise public interest in them, to enable them to sell them to other media channels. The vast public interest in sport also encourages the media to sponsor sports events—an action that is purely a PR move—to win the desired public response.

Sport advancement organizations. The large scope of sports activity in the world, especially of the sports industry, requires and obligates establishing bodies and mechanisms to organize the activity, advance and manage it. Thus, many bodies have been established, mostly non-governmental (NGO), that operate on an international level (for example: the International Olympic Committee or the international federations of the various branches of sport), on a regional level (for example, the basketball or soccer federations in Europe) on a national level (for example, the national soccer federation, the national Olympic committee), and sometimes even on local level. One of the responsibilities of these organizations is the development of sports awareness, determination of the rules of the game and the setting of norms and behavior regulations. Each one of these organizations wants to succeed in fulfilling its responsibilities, but is also interested in winning recognition and public appreciation for its activities. Organizations like the National Basketball Association in the United States are not just involved in the technical organization of the games, but are essentially responsible for managing a broad financial system. Furthermore, as is natural for organizations which grow over the years, their expenses balloon and arouse public and media criticism of their managerial practices, especially if the activity in their field is tainted by financial irregularities or sports failures. Public relations are not only a vital tool to achieve the gamut of functional objectives, recognition and appreciation objectives and financial objectives, but are also a weapon to fight criticism.

Sponsors. Sponsorship is gradually starting to occupy a central place in the mixture of marketing and public relations of organizations and companies throughout the world. There are those who claim that, in the twentieth century, there was constant annual growth of approximately 9% in the sums invested in sponsorships and dedicated to them (Irwin, Sutton, & McCarthy, 2008). What is sponsorship? One definition is:

Assistance (with money, manpower, means and other resources, or with reputation) to an organization, company or individual to facilitate its performance of certain actions; in return, the sponsor will merit public and media exposure which will strengthen his public status as one who is willing to donate his resources to advance activities for the good of society, which will help his business (Limor, Leshem, & Mendelzis, 2013).

Since the purpose of sponsorship is public relations, the sponsor is interested in advancing the publicity for the activity or cause enjoying his sponsorship and increasing awareness of it. Thus, for example, cigarette manufacturers, whose regular means of advertising on television were blocked, hurried to sponsor sports events—like motor racing or horse racing (Crompton, 1993)—while advancing the public relations for these races, thus advancing their own public relations.

The relationship between the sponsor and recipient is not one-sided. The recipient of the sponsorship enjoys the prestige of the sponsor and his financial donation, but in the same way, the sponsor may enjoy the prestige of the recipient. In certain cases, the willingness to accept the sponsorship can be a sort of “validation” of the donor.

Advertisers. Business corporations invest in advertising to advance themselves and their products. They are interested in ensuring that the investment in advertising will bear fruit and that their advertisement will have maximal exposure. When investors advertise through sports—with a sign on the sports field, a logo on the players’ uniforms or advertisements on television—maximal exposure means the presence of a large audience at the sports stadium, or a high number of viewers of the television broadcast of the game. Thus, the corporations are interested in and assist with indirect advertising, i.e.: public relations, in order to increase exposure to their direct advertising. A similar phenomenon occurs in regard to advertising agreements between companies and players or teams. The athletes and teams are “advertising agents,” and so it is worthwhile developing and managing their public relations, as well as the connection between the two sides, as a method of boosting exposure for the advertisers.

Coaches. Until a few years ago, coaches’ salaries were not high, and often were less than those of the players and athletes they coached. Media publicity, with public relations being one of its engines, was more than once the alternative to their low salaries. The twenty first century heralded, to a great extent, change. Star coaches began to enjoy inflated salaries and benefits—for example: the income of José Mourinho, the coach of the Spanish soccer team *Real Madrid*, is estimated at approximately 10 million euros per season. Public relations are now a “tool” used on the coaching market, which is, like any other market, a market of buyers and sellers, of supply and demand. Sleek public relations can contribute to the development of good relations with the media, which can serve as a stimulus, putting pressure on the professional, and in turn financial, advancement of coaches.

Referees. Sports referees have become, especially since the beginning of the age of direct television broadcasts, stars in and of themselves. The public and media image of a referee influences his status and professional advancement, but also his future, especially if he is interested in starting a new career after he removes his refereeing uniform. Good public relations can pave the way for former referees to take up the position of media commentator,

managerial jobs in referees' unions and even advertising contracts. The example of the international soccer referee from Italy, Pierluigi Collina—nicknamed “David Beckham with a whistle” (Ein Dor, 2005)—who signed a one million euro advertising contract with the *Opel* automotive company, is probably kept in mind by many referees who understand the importance of public relations to their professional and financial future.

Sports officials. The sports industry, with its wealth of organizations and activities, offers a wide range of jobs and positions—on the international, national or local levels. Some of the positions include financial and economic benefits, others supply social compensation, and there are those who offer both. The greater the honor and the more significant the material compensation is—the greater the battle for every seat, title and position. Public relations are a vital tool in this battle, which is often fought out publicly. Testimonies of this are frequently heard not only in reports in the sports editions of the media, but also on the main pages of the newspapers and internet, as well as on television and radio news broadcasts.

Jobs related to the sports field can constitute a springboard to other businesses as well, including the political arena. The mayor of the Israeli city of Sakhnin, Mazen Ghanim, who served for a decade as chairman of the local soccer team, admitted that “thanks to the team, I am now the mayor” (Nahmani, 2011). Owners of sports teams also can take advantage of their reputation and popularity to boost their other businesses, especially on the local-municipal level. In addition, former prime minister Ehud Olmert admitted, after completing his term, that

the creation of social legitimacy, social status, is done via involvement in sports, which results in many ensuing rewards...they write about you, ask for your reaction, you become a commentator...(Weitz, 2011).

Athletes' Unions. In the various branches of sport, athletes and players unions were founded and continue to run, operating similarly to professional unions. They look out for the interests of the players, their health and wellbeing, both while they are active in sport and after they retire. Thus, for example, the National Basketball Players Association in the United States fought to increase the salaries of the players, while the Israeli Basketball Players Association fought for the ratification of the “Russian Law” (adopted in some European countries) which obligates the presence of two local players on each team throughout the entire game; the Israel Football Players Association in Israel was active in ensuring pension benefits for players ending their professional career. Many of these activities involve public struggles and efforts to create favorable public opinion, and this requires, naturally, the assistance of public relations professionals and experienced media advisors.

Fan organizations. Fans are not only the financial backbone of every sports team. They are also its heart and engine. Like any heart—they are full of positive and negative emotions. They are not only fans, but also lovers (of players, coaches, managers and owners) and sometimes haters. Their emotional moods are often directed toward semi-practical efforts: demands that managers and owners resign, that a coach is dismissed, that certain players are chosen for the opening play. Fan organizations are also interested in increasing their members, uniting them and motivating them to join actions, such as fundraising or displaying an active presence at sports events.

Gambling companies. Gambling is today, for better and for worse, an inseparable part of the sports industry. Advertisement and public relations for sports events “heat up” the atmosphere surrounding these games, arouse public attention, and encourage, albeit indirectly, the gamblers. The negative social image that overshadows the gambling industry causes gambling companies, even if their activities are legal, to try to “clear” their name and win public legitimacy, and they utilize public relations for this purpose (for example: by giving sponsorships and donations, and initiating events to encourage positive athletic values).

Health product manufacturers. Many commercial companies are involved in manufacturing and marketing products connected to health and sports, such as health equipment (treadmills, exercise bikes, etc.) or drugs to improve physical function (pills to repair cartilage etc.). Since sport is connected with a healthy lifestyle and athletes represent stretching the limits of human capability, sometimes even challenging the limits of nature, commercial companies prefer to advance themselves and their businesses using the joint activities of advertising and public relations which utilize famous sports personalities.

Service providers. Like any other industry, the sports industry exists and operates with the assistance of various service providers. Architects and engineers plan and build stadiums and sports facilities, while specialized companies supply the appropriate equipment and maintenance, and so forth. We can also add the service providers which cater to the teams and players—services that include clothing, footwear, personal equipment and the like—and even companies holding rights to supply catering and beverage services at the stadiums. All of these use public relations to take advantage of their activity on the sports field, and the extensive public interest in sports, to leverage it to other areas as well.

Electronics companies (including computer and content manufacturers). Most sports fans follow sports developments with the help of the mass media—at its forefront, the television. Electronics manufacturers who are interested in advancing sales of their products try to embellish, using crafty public relations, the viewing experience of sports events and to present it as the closest thing to reality. It is no wonder that the marketing, advertising and public relations efforts related to electronic equipment—especially television sets, screens or converters and other projection equipment—are channeled to peak times for sports broadcast consumption (Olympic Games, World Cup soccer games and more). Computerized games, which constitute a respectable source of income for electronic companies, are based on the high interest in popular branches of sports—especially that of children and young people—and the virtual sports games increase, with the assistance of advertisers and PR professionals, the volume of sales.

Stores. Stores selling toys, clothing, home appliances and electronics are the channel through which the large manufacturers market their products to the general public, especially if these products carry the names of athletes or are identified with them. The stores, especially large chains in these fields, operate advertising and public relations efforts to advance the sales of these products, utilizing the great interest in sports, especially among

children and youth. Interest in sports is also often used as a stimulus to advance other products which are not directly related to sports.

Police, enforcement and emergency services. The great popularity of sport, and the fact that large sports events attract huge audiences, is also utilized by official bodies and even emergency services to advance their public relations. The police, fire department or ambulance service use sports events to publicize their actions, knowing that any action connected to sports—including, for example, arresting famous athletes for involvement in a fight, driving over the speed limit or tax evasion—will win them a place in the headlines and ensure the desired PR.

Merchandise manufacturers. The sports industry, like the entertainment industry, has already learned the great financial significance hidden in the production of merchandise and its marketing. Teams and athletes sign contracts with commercial bodies so that they will manufacture and market products carrying their name and the portrait of the stars and top athletes. Public relations, like advertising, are vital to stimulating the sales machine.

Sports memorabilia collectors. Sport related memorabilia collecting—which includes, clothes, shoes or sports equipment of athletes, signed balls, and the like—is developing and increasing constantly. During the past decade, it has become a well oiled industry, estimated to circulate billions of US dollars (Ze'evi, 2011). Companies specializing in the sale of items to collectors, manufacturers of sports equipment, teams and players, and of course collectors—are all interested, directly and indirectly, in PR for collecting, especially because of the financial significance involved.

Artists. Artists have also expressed the importance of sports as a public relations tool. They too take advantage of the interest in sports to win publicity and a public presence opportunity. Artists and singers buy sports teams (for example: the purchase of a soccer team by the singer, Elton John), others write and compose songs for sports teams (for example, the singer Rod Stewart, who wrote a special song for the soccer team *Celtic United*). Like politicians, artists are careful to watch sports events, knowing that the media cameras will focus on them and ensure them the PR and publicity.

Universities and colleges. Universities and colleges in the United States, as well as in other countries, develop their sports teams and assist them, with the clear knowledge that these are a public relations tool for the institution. There are universities and colleges who are known primarily for their sports teams. The more successful the team is, the greater audience it attracts to its games, giving the educational institution PR and causing many students to knock on its doors. Of course, the financial aspect must not be ignored, since “the universities’ sports teams are the generators of large profits” (Isaacson, 2010, p. 599).

Various one-time interest groups. The sports fields are a magnet for different interest groups, permanent or ad-hoc, interested in utilizing the interest in sports to advance themselves and the interests they represent. An extreme, striking example are terror

organizations, which threaten to commit terror attacks at large sports events, knowing that the attack—even just the threat of the attack—will win them much publicity and draw public attention. Threat messages of terror organizations are a form of public relations and they often achieve their goal—public sensation—as occurred on a Saturday in 2008, when the Dakar Rally (formerly known as the Paris-Dakar) was cancelled due to threats from the Al-Qaeda movement. Also noteworthy is the fact that claiming responsibility after a terror attack has been committed is a public relations move as well.

Summary and conclusions

The 28 “players” are not one entity, nor do they even have one common interest. Actually, at least five basic interests can be identified that may stimulate each of the players to engage in public relations activities: political, financial/economic, image/reputation, ideological and professional. The interests themselves are not one-dimensional; rather, they are like general variables. For example, the ideological interest may be in the national, educational, cultural, social, or ethnic fields, or a combination of these fields. The financial/economic interest may be the advancement of the organization’s personal objectives (country, corporation or company) or of an individual person, or alternatively, causing the objectives of others to fail.

Multiplication of the figures above shows that there are at least 140 potential interests (28 “players” multiplied by five basic interests), but actually, the number is much greater, because these interests are, as mentioned earlier, general variables, and there are also an infinite number of ways to combine them. Furthermore, the “player” is not necessarily alone. A group may have several owners-partners, each of whom has his own interests, which are not necessarily overlapping; each player in the group, who is seemingly one “player,” has his own desires, dreams and interests. This is true about almost every one of the 28 “players.”

The significance of this fact is simple and clear: hundreds and thousands of causes, reasons and interests motivate the “players” on the sports field. In 1945, George Orwell published an article in the British magazine *Tribune*, entitled “The Sporting Spirit.” “Serious sport has nothing to do with fair play,” Orwell claimed. “It is bound up with hatred, jealousy, boastfulness, disregard of all rules and sadistic pleasure in witnessing violence.” (Orwell, 1945, p. 10)

Sport in the modern age is both politics and business. In a combined world of politics, business, hatred, jealousy and boastfulness, in which each person aims to achieve his objective while “disregarding all the rules,” as Orwell describes, public relations are a valuable strategic and tactical weapon. Success is not measured on the sports field alone, but in the newspaper headlines, on the television and the computer screens and in the bank account. The motto once proposed by Baron Pierre de Coubertin—“*Citius, Altius, Fortius*” (faster, higher, stronger)—is slowly clearing the way for a new, more updated motto: “Faster, higher, stronger, bigger (business) and especially—more public relations.”

References

- Anderson, W. (2004). Major League Baseball under investigation: How the industry used public relations to promote its past to save its present. *Public Relations Review*, 30, 439-445.

- Anderson, W. (2006). American v. National Football League: Using public relations to 'win' a war against monopoly. *Public Relations Review*, 32, 53-57.
- Anderson, W. (2008). Pete Rosella: A historical review of how the NFL commissioner used public relations. *Public Relations Review*, 34, 151-155.
- Ben-Porat, A. (1998). The commodification of football in Israel. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 33(3), 269-276.
- Ben-Porat, A. (2002). *From game to merchandise: Israeli soccer 1948-1999*. Be'er Sheva: Ben Gurion University of the Negev.
- Blake, A. (1996). *The body language*. London: Lawrence & Wishart.
- Botan, C., & Hazleton, V. (2006). Public relations in a New Age. In C. Botan & V. Hazleton (Eds.), *Public Relations Theory II* (pp.1-18). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Botan, C., & Taylor, M. (2004). Public relations: State of the field. *Journal of Communication*, 54(4), 645-661.
- Clark, J. (2010). Back on track? The outlook for the global sports market to 2013. Price water house Coopers report. Retrieved on February 12, 2012 from <http://www.pwc.com/gx/en/entertainment-media/pdf/Global-Sports-Outlook.pdf>
- Crompton, J. L. (1993). Sponsorship of sport by tobacco and alcohol companies: A review of the issue. *Journal of Sport & Social Issues*, 17, 148-167.
- Dascal, A. (2009, August 2). International sports circulated 29 billion US dollars in the first quarter. *Calcalist*. Retrieved on July 19, 2011 from <http://www.calcalist.co.il/sport/articles/0,7340,L-3339462,00.html>
- Dayan, D., & Katz, E. (1992). *Media events: The live broadcasting of history*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Ein Dor, A. (2005, August 31). A clearing in the stands. *Walla*, Sports. Retrieved on July 19, 2011 from <http://sports.walla.co.il/?w=7/770962>
- Gitlin, T. (1998). Public sphere or public sphericules?. In T. Liebes & J. Curran (Eds.), *Media, ritual, identity* (pp. 168-175). London: Routledge.
- Gladstone, R. (2011, June 19). Want to be big with Maccabi to reach the NBA. *Sport5*. Retrieved on July 19, 2011 from <http://www.sport5.co.il/articles.aspx?FolderID=274&docID=101861&lang=HE>
- Harif, H. (2011). *Zionism of muscles*. Jerusalem: Yad Ben-Zvi.
- Harlow, R. (1976). Building a public relations definition. *Public Relations Review*, 2(4), 34-42.
- Heath, R. (2004). Public Relations. *Encyclopedia of Public Relations*. Sage. Retrieved on September 20, 2009 from http://www.sage-ereference.com/publicrelations/Article_n345.html.
- Hopwood, M. (2005). Applying the public relations function to the business of sport. *International Journal of Sports Marketing & Sponsorship*, 6(3), 174-188.
- Hornik, Y., & Lieberman, Y. (1994). *Advertising Management*. Tel Aviv, Israel: The Open University.
- Irwin, R. L., Sutton, W. A., & McCarthy, L. M. (2008). *Sport promotion and sales management*. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.
- Isaacson, T. (2010). Sport public relations. In R. L. Heath (Ed.), *The Sage handbook of public relations* (pp. 599-609). Los Angeles: Sage.
- Jensen, R., & B. Butler (2007). Is sport becoming too commercialised? The Houston Astros' public relations crisis. *International Journal of Sports Marketing & Sponsorship*, 9(1), 23-32.
- Le'tang, J. (2006). Public relations and sport in promotional. *Public Relations Review*, 32(4), 386-394.
- Le'tang, J., & Hopwood, M. (2008). Sports public relations. *Public Relations Review*, 34(2), 87-89.
- Liran-Alfer, D. & Kama, A. (2007). *Shaping the body and building identity: Presentation of the body on commercial television*. Tel Aviv: Chaim Herzog Institute for Communication, Society and Politics.
- Limor, Y., Adoni, H. & Mann, R. (2007). *Media and communication lexicón*. Tel Aviv, Israel: Yedioth Aharonot.

- Limor, Y., Leshem, B., & Mendelzis, L. (2013). *Public relations – strategy and tactics*. Raanana, Israel: The Open University. (forthcoming).
- Martin, S. (2004). *Football and fascism: The national game under Mussolini*. New York: Berg.
- Mitrook, M., Parish, N., & Seltzer, T. (2008). From advocacy to accommodation: A case study of the Orlando Magic's public relations. *Public Relations Review*, 34(2), 161-168.
- Murray, W. J. (2003) Introduction. In A. Kruger & W.J. Murray (Eds.), *The Nazi Olympics: Sport, Politics and appeasement in the 1930s* (pp. 1-16). Champagne, IL: University of Illinois.
- Nahmani, L. (2011, August 18). Sakhnin is like a child to me, I won't let it fall. *Israel Hayom*, 52.
- Orwell, G. (1945, December 14). The sporting spirit. *Tribune*, 468, 10-11.
- Price, J. L. (2001). *From season to season: Sports as American religion*. Macon, GA: Mercer University Press.
- Riordan, J. (1999). The impact of communism on sport. In J. Riordan & A. Kruger (Eds.), *The international politics of sport in the 20th century* (pp. 48-66). London: E & FN Spon.
- Rojek C. (2000). Leisure and the rich today: Veblen's thesis after a century in Leisure. *Leisure studies*, 19 (1), 1-15.
- Sassatelli, R. (1999). Interaction order and beyond: A field analysis of body culture within fitness gyms. *Body & Society*, 5 (2-3), 227-248.
- Stoldt, C., Dittmore, S. W., & Bravnold, S. E. (2006). *Sport public relations*. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.
- Strenk, A. (1980). Diplomats in track suits: The role of sports in the foreign of the German democratic republic. *Journal of Sport & Social Issues*, 4 (1), 34-45.
- Summers, J., & Johnson-Morgan, M. (2008). More than just the media: Considering the role of public relations in the creation of sporting celebrity and the management of fan expectations. *Public Relations Review*, 34, 176-182.
- Trosby, E. (2010). Public relations, football and the management of player transgression in Australia. *Public Communication Review*, 1(2), 49-66.
- Weingarten, G. (2003). Winning triangle: Sports, television, money. *Panim*, 25, 42-48.
- Weitz, G. (2011, April 18). Ehud Olmert, previous incarnation. *Haaretz*, Passover Supplement, 21-24.
- Xifra, J. (2008). Soccer, civil religion, and public relations: Devotional-promotional communication and Barcelona Football Club. *Public Relations Review*, 34, 192-198.
- Ze'evi, T. (2011, August 22). To collectors. *Haaretz*, Sports, 8.

School of communication,
Ariel University
E-mail: ilant@ariel.ac.il

Yehiel (Hilik) Limor
Tel Aviv University
E-mail: hilik43@013.net

Interdisciplinary Center (IDC)
Herzliya, Israel
E-mail: ygalily@idc.ac.il