



Sport and Sports Media as a Culture Industry Product

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Abstract

Today, the concept of sports is associated with commercialized and industrialized elite sports instead of the activities that are required to sustain healthy lives. Sport is the first area in which capitalism can deepen its hold on society and renew it. This conceptual study examines how Marxist critical theorists, led by Frankfurt school of thought and French structuralism, address sports. According to critical theorists; culture industry products such as cinema, television and music entertain and divert the masses from thinking about the realities of life. Today's culture industry which is based on commodification serves to spread a shallow culture instead of a culture with depth. Sports, transmitted to the masses via the media, are now a part of this shallow culture. According to culture industry, first conceptualized by the representatives of the Frankfurt school of thought Adorno and Horkheimer, masses have become the objects that are shaped by the culture instead of subjects that establish it. When considered as a part of the culture industry, sports are one of the mass entertainment and diversion tools that define the lifestyle of individuals. According to critical thinkers, sports such as football -the focus of interest for the masses- is a field in which injustice in income distribution is legitimized.

Review

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INTRODUCTION

When one says sport, instead of the body movements that people do to keep their lives healthy, commercialized and industrialized elite sports come to mind. In the modern sense, sport has transformed into a highly profitable sector with capitalism developing in the 20th century. Football, one of the most widespread sports branches in the world, is one of the areas where capitalism deepens and re-establishes its hegemony over society.

In our age, in order to keep the society healthy, socialist approaches like "sport for all" have been pushed to the second plan. Instead of this approach, a sport concept, which is just being watched, gambled on, reproduces the nationalism/urban nationalism and ultimately turns into violence, arises. The sports media is also an important transporter of these alienated sport

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concepts to the society. Media sport can be seen to be much more than watching television, catching radio broadcast and reading print texts.

Virtually every new communication technology and service seeks a sporting application, because sport is universally seen as a key driver for their uptake. This means that media sport is hunting down customers at every breathing moment and in every conceivable space. The customization of media sport and the enlistment of consumers as co-producers, therefore, can be interpreted within a post-fordist framework of flexible accumulation, production and consumption of cultural goods (Rowe, 2004: 210). The sports media in the culture industry is thinking commercially and rebuilding the current business while presenting content that is dominated by popular sports branches.

In this study, the sport approaches of the theorists of critical streams such as the Frankfurt School, structuralism, British Cultural Studies, which are based on Marx's political viewpoint, were examined.

Culture industry

Culture industry means the standardization of popular culture products such as media contents, books, music and cinema. The culture industry term has been used by thinkers of the Frankfurt School, which advocates that such industries are used to reinforce and strengthen the dominance of capitalism.

Frankfurt School of Social Studies which was composed of thinkers such as Theodor Adorno, Herbert Marcuse and Walter Benjamin, was founded by Max Horkheimer in 1923 at the University of Frankfurt. In 1933, the school-members, who were basically Marxist-prone with the capture of the governance by the Nazis, became famous for developing the form of criticism which was known as Western Marxism until the birth of structuralist Marxism in the 1950s and 1960s (Sim, 2006: 262-263). According to the culture industry which was conceptualized by Adorno and Horkheimer - representatives of the Frankfurt School for the first time, masses have become objects that are shaped by culture, not the ones create culture. The Frankfurt School thinkers suggest that the primary purpose of the culture industry is to catalyze the individual's adoption of capitalism. Moreover, the affirmative culture of the culture industry creates amusement and mental distancing by providing a temporary escape with little effort from the responsibility and the heavy-boring affairs of everyday life.

Today's society is not creating a culture of individuals; culture shapes the individuals within itself. When considered as part of the culture industry, sport is one of the means of amusement and determination of life styles of masses. Sport is closely related to the media today. Media refers to the means of mass communication, such as television, radio, newspapers or the internet. The sport media nexus refers to the relationship between sport and the media industry generally.

Changes in the delivery of information an entertainment through the print and broadcast media are taking place almost daily. The development of existing media technologies and

evolution of new ones are profoundly changing the economic foundations, structure, and administrations of sports. Sport communication evolved into big business in 1990s. The large sums of advertising money available for sport programming created enormous competition for broadcast rights among the ever increasing numbers of television networks, cable channels, and independent producers. The competition provided a rich source of income for sport organizations (Nichols et al., 2003: 275). The relationship between sport and the media is not predicated on benevolence or generosity. The media does not report on sport as a function of public service, nor does sport provide the media with access merely to increase public awareness. Rather, the sport media nexus is driven by commercial forces. Professional sport is now a commodity that can be bought and sold by the media, as well as a vehicle through which other businesses can promote and sell their products. (Nicholson, 2007: 10).

Marketization has impacted on both the sports and the media industries. The reporting of the political and economic dimension of sports has become more important in recent years as the commercialisation of the industry across the globe has developed. The increased centrality of the market in the media industries has helped propel the expansion of a celebrity culture, into which sports stars increasingly find them drawn. Sport journalism and writing is now also seen as a key element of the wider branding of most newspapers as they reposition their appeals in attempts to attract new readers (Boyle, 2006: 4).

At some point during the past 20 years the relationship between sports media and culture began to change, and the sports media abandoned their role as enforcers of traditional cultural values. Modern sports media mainly exist as an outlet for non-traditional cultural values such as voyeurism, sensationalism, celebrity, and, most importantly, entertainment (Shultz, 2005: 3). The institutions of sports media structure for us a world of excitement and mythical deep play. But they also shift us away from many positive humanistic values. They inundate us with commercial messages inseparable from the amoral condition of postmodern exploitation. In limited ways within a balanced and rational human life, sport media can make significant positive contributions (Real, 2003: 26).

METHOD

In this study, the original works of the related authors and, video archives and visual documents were examined and the emphasis on sports was evaluated.

FINDINGS

According to Critical Theory, cultural industry products such as cinema, television and music occupy masses and keep them from thinking about the facts of life. Today's culture industry based on commodification, serves to spread a shallow culture instead of a deep one. According to Critical Culture, sports reaching reach masses through media, has become a part of this shallow culture.

In their work named *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, the leading thinkers of the Frankfurt School, Adorno and Horkheimer, suggest that the so-called enlightenment project has become a myth that supports the cultural status quo that leads to the control of the individual in an oppressive mass culture. Adorno and Horkheimer's approach to the sport is as follows:

"Sports is not a game, it is a ritual. Those who are restricted, celebrate their restriction. The masters of the mass culture sense the main support, which is the base of their dictatorship, in sports passion and sports passion bases on this. (...) The rules of the sport are like the rules of the market, but everybody is given the equal opportunity to fight, everybody is expected to play fair. Thus, the sport allows the competition which is reduced to its own oppressiveness, to keep its existence in the deceiving world, in which is destroyed. The athlete himself may develop some virtues that will prove his worth in crucial political moments such as solidarity, helpfulness, and even enthusiasm. These virtues do not remain in the sports viewers, rude watching curiosity becomes dominant. Mass culture wants to transform the consumers into a spectator who shouts at the tribunes, not sportsmen" (Adorno & Horkheimer, 2010: 381-382). Adorno & Horkheimer's writings in the 1940s are also valid in today's sporting environment. Moreover, it can be said that popular culture have become shallower and had a negative impact on society over time.

One of the discussions in the field of sports is that football is dominant in the sports media and other amateur sports branches are not given enough space (Özsoy et al., 2013). Elite and professional sport is enveloped by the media. In this case the sport would not be described as media sport, because without the nexus or bond between the two, the product would not exist. Consumers of sport must necessarily consume a mediated product. Professional sport is now a commodity that can be bought and sold by the media, as well as a vehicle through which other businesses can promote and sell their products (Nicholson, 2007: 8-13).

It is anticipated that many sports branches will be able to develop further through the media. According to the thinkers of the Frankfurt School, the present structure of the presentation of popular cultural products is nothing but a deception of capital owners. According to Adorno&Horkheimer, while all consumer needs are satisfied by the culture industry, on the other hand these requirements are regulated so that the individual is always a consumer and nothing more than an object of the culture industry. The culture industry not only make consumer believe this deception as satisfaction, but it also imposes on the consumer's mind to be content with what they are presented to. With all its brunches, the culture industry promises an escape from everyday life (Adorno & Horkheimer, 2010: 189).

Jameson, following Adorno, Horkheimer, and the Frankfurt School, places us in a period called "late capitalism", a period which Jameson also refers to as "multinational capitalism" and "media capitalism". Jameson argues that culture is today no longer endowed with the relative autonomy it once enjoyed. In this sense, the (post)modern Olympic Games in all their commercialism are not aberrations but logical expressions of the age in which they exist (Real, 2003: 20).

Marcuse, another theoretician of the Frankfurt School, also criticizes this system established between the media and the masses. According to Marcuse, modern society is irrational as a whole. While explaining the state of mankind, Marcuse emphasizes the role of media pretending as it meets the demands of the society as follows;

“Its productivity is destructive of the free development of human needs, its peace maintained by the constant threat of war, its growth dependent on the repression of the real possibilities for pacifying the struggle for existence – individual, national, and international. Our mass media have little difficulty in selling particular interests as those of all sensible men. The political needs of society become individual needs and aspirations, their satisfaction promotes business and the commonweal, and the whole appeals to be the very embodiment of reason” (Marcuse, 2012: 10).

Walter Benjamin, thinker of the Frankfurt School, not directly touched on sports but also addressed the subject of the entertainment industry. The modern framework of this industry is shaped by global events such as Modern Olympics and the FIFA World Cup. These organizations revealed the scale of the capitalist culture being truly global (Roche, 2000: 12).

Sports as the ideological apparatus of the state according to Althusser

Sports as the ideological apparatus of the state according to Althusser adds apparatus which Marx refers as state apparatus such as government, administration, army, police, courts, prisons, as well as the state's ideological apparatus of which he describes as public and private apparatus; church, school, family, law, political, union, media and cultural environments (literature, fine arts, sports, etc.) (Althusser, 2006: 90). According to Althusser, the State's Ideological Apparatus (SIAs) cause people to have misconceptions about the world and society they live in. The SIAs in which media and sports are involved, fulfill the function of distracting the society from the reality of the life they live in. Sport plays the most important role in terms of chauvinism. While nations try to outrun each other in international sporting organizations, nationalistic feelings are reproduced. Ethnic streams in nation states announce their presence through football (Althusser, 2006: 92).

Italian Antonio Gramsci, who Althusser was influenced by, is also an important thinker who makes analyses in the framework of the concept of "hegemony". According to Gramsci, domination of the ruling classes is provided by their force usage as well as the consent of the dependent masses. According to Gramsci, hegemony is regarded as establishing certain superiority in the institution of society, and it also covers the concepts such as family, education, art, religion and so on. Hegemony can never be simple product of the preponderance of a single state or grouping of states exerting power over other states. This is, of course, partly because human beings have consciousness and a degree of free will or agency within the limits of the possible (Yaylagül, 2006: 97).

The dominant ideology is accepted as valid and natural by the functioning of hegemonic apparatus. The domination forced by the state on the public is usually being smoothed within

the civil society. For Gramsci, the civil society which stands very closely to economical area hides state's enforcements on the political society. Sport is used as a tool in the establishment of hegemony on the masses and in the gaining of the consent. According to Gramsci, sport has a contradictory role. Economic life is hidden in football and presented as pure entertainment at the same time.

When Gramsci applies hegemony concept to the media, it becomes a tool which conveys the values of the dominant class to the target audience. Every initiative and practice of capital owners' profit and growth purposes are defended as community's benefit. Events and facts that are newsworthy are always presented from the viewpoint of the ruling class. Individualism is promoted, people are blamed in poverty and failure (Yaylagül: 2006: 101).

The thinkers of the British Cultural Studies, examining the structure of the lower classes by taking advantage of Gramsci's approach, also criticize the present system from different angles. Being under the influence of Gramsci, Stuart Hall argues that media produces "consent" in society, effectively. Consent production is the basis for the function of hegemonic relations. The hegemonic relationship does not depend on the intentions of the individual, but on social structures and practices. Thus, people do not realize that they are in a hegemonic relationship and are exposed to a certain dominant ideology. They are in a world surrounded by dominant ideology while shopping, listening to music, watching movies, playing or games movies, traveling, reading newspapers, watching TV, eating or even walking on the streets.

Formation of the body according to Foucault

According to the French post-structuralist thinker Michel Foucault, power is not driven by the social class, but it invaded into all the tissues of society. Everyone in society makes power. Foucault does not deal with the society in terms of classes and refuses the hierarchical structure. Ruling power cannot be imposed top-down by a small minority. People are involved in the process without being aware that they are surrounded by power and that they themselves play a role in the production of power: "the human-beings are provided with the desire of his/her own body via sports, gymnastics , exercises in the military, etc. This is also a power. It is the application of power on the human bodies by both the others and the one her/him."

The works that Michel Foucault discusses how the body is built through medical, scientific, sexual and sporting discourses has been a pioneer for many feminists and sports sociologists. For example, Bordo (1993: 27) suggested that Foucault's notion of power was very helpful in the analysis of contemporary diet and exercise disciplines, in understanding the importance of eating disorders in the reproduction of normative feminine practices in our culture and the training of the docile female body in accordance with cultural demands. When Foucault's notion of bodily production technologies is considered, sports can be regarded as a structure whose central characteristic is discipline and control. According to Foucault, sport is the whole of disciplinary information and practices that shape the body in the direction of

patriarchal capitalism needs. In this context, sport / body combination creates the following illusion: Sport and body are transparent and are dependent of politics, culture and economics. Physical performance and physical strength are the important parts in sports, which mean that since it is a field entirely dominated by biology and physiology, cultural politics cannot manipulate it. But for the very reason, it is precisely one of the ideological mechanisms that best serve social gender ideologies by normalizing existing differences. That means that the sport environment operates as an area where the differences between men and women are drawn as inequality by normalizing these physical differences around the discourse of transparency and independence. For this reason, it is important to research the power relations in sports generally, not just social gender relations. As Foucault said, our main political task in society is to criticize the functioning of social institutions which appear to be impartial and independent.

The articulations between Foucault and sport start with his own direct address of the topic, in the context of an ethics of the self and advertisements for fitness to rule others. He undertook this analysis by examining Western philosophy's origins. In ancient Greece and Rome, the body was the locus for an ethics of the self, a combat with pleasure and pain that enabled people to find the truth about themselves and master their drives (Foucault, 1986: 66–9).

The metaphor of the match, of athletic competition and battle, did not serve merely to designate the nature of the relationship with the desires and pleasures, with their force that always liable to turn seditious or rebellious; it is also possible that such confidentiality will be maintained. The increased medical involvement in the cultivation of the self appears to have been expressed through a particular and intense form of attention to the body. This attention is very different from that manifested by the positive valuation of physical vigour during an epoch when gymnastic and athletic and military training were an integral part of the education of a free man. The body the adult has to care for, when he is concerned about himself is no longer the young body that needed shaping by gymnastics; it is a fragile, threatened body, undermined by petty miseries (Foucault, 1988: 56-57).

Manufacturing of Consent

According to the US opposition thinker Noam Chomsky, sports are used as a brainwashing tool. The sport keeps people from thinking and worrying about what they are doing in what matters most to their lives. Most of the discourses utilized in society are assiduously learned in institutions. The media, much like in the case of ideology and habitus, have a strong influence in the transmission and assimilation of popular discourses; and, in so doing, contribute to the “manufacturing of consent” (Herman & Chomsky, 1998).

In an interview with Chomsky, he explains his thoughts about sports as follows:

"Sport is another brainwashing tool. The reason for this is that it draws people's attention to a specific direction. This is extremely important. Sport keeps people away from thinking and worrying about what is important for their lives and what they are doing. The intelligence of simple people is used in sports. Sometimes, as we listen to one of the radio channels, people

call and make us think how strange our real important issues are. I put an emphasis on this. Because, this is really important. I remember my high school times, I was old enough. Suddenly, I asked why it is so important for my school football team to win the game. I mean, there was nobody I knew on the team. There was no common point with them. Then why am I cheering? That was really irrational. But, in fact, it makes sense, because this is some sort of irrational bow to authority. The group solidarity behind the elements of leadership is, in fact, an irrational chauvinism. This is also a feature of competitive sports. If you look closely, they usually perform these functions. That is why so much energy is invested in their advertising, supporting or paying" (Chomsky, 2000).

CONCLUSION

According to critical thinkers, sport is a field which keeps the oppressed under hegemony from thinking and the injustice of society's income distribution is legitimized. Especially, football and all other popular sporting branches have become one of the industrial branches of capitalism. These games are now out of sports and have become one of the bourgeoisie's tools of power. In addition, sports media, being a popular cultural product, is also an important actor which completes this process. The sports media also functions to strengthen and develop this process of exploitation. Sports and media are connected by a symbiotic link. They feed on each other and strengthen each other.

Through sports and the media, the public is being removed from the real agenda. With the influence of modernism and popular cultures, activities such as physical activity, worship, and book reading are pushed into the second plan in daily life. Especially young population is kept in an artificial sports environment. Critical thinkers have criticized the present system by revealing the negativity of capitalism-oriented economic, political and cultural structure. The most important criticism directed towards critical theorists is that there is no alternative model beyond criticism of the present situation with a pessimistic point of view.

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