



Assignment: Analyzing Media Messages: Body Image and Representation in Sport

Purpose

The media plays a powerful role in shaping how athletes and athletic bodies are perceived. From advertising campaigns to social media posts, these portrayals can either challenge or reinforce narrow beauty and performance ideals. As future coaches, developing awareness of these messages helps you promote body confidence, question harmful norms, and create environments that value athletes for their abilities, health, and individuality.

Learning Goals

- Analyze how athletes are portrayed in media related to body image and confidence.
- Compare and contrast examples that promote positive, inclusive messages with those that reinforce unrealistic or limiting ideals.
- Identify key takeaways for how coaches can counter harmful narratives and encourage body confidence among athletes.

Assignment

1. Select Two Media Examples

Choose two contrasting media portrayals related to women athletes and body image. Your selections may include:

- Commercials or ad campaigns (Do a search for 'media campaigns of women athletes')
- Social media posts or influencer content featuring women athletes
- Magazine covers, short films, or sports brand promotions

2. Research and Context

Gather background information on each piece:

- What brand, campaign, or platform is it from?
- What is the message or visual story being told?
- Who is the intended audience?

- What did you think of it?
- How was it received by the public or sports community?

3. Compare and Contrast

Analyze the differences between the two portrayals. Consider:

- Representation: Whose bodies are shown? What types of bodies are represented? Who is missing?
- Message: What is being communicated about strength, performance, beauty, or success
- Tone and imagery: Are the visuals empowering, objectifying, authentic, or edited/unrealistic?
- Impact: How might these portrayals influence athletes' self-perception, confidence, or motivation? Do the portrayals increase interest in, and respect for, women's sport?

4. Connect to Coaching Practice

Reflect on how this media analysis can inform your approach as a coach. Consider:

- How do media messages shape athletes' expectations about their bodies?
- What steps can coaches take to challenge harmful ideals and celebrate body diversity?
- How can you use positive media examples to foster healthier team culture and self-talk?

Final Product

Choose one format for your submission:

- Written analysis
- Visual comparison or infographic analyzing both media examples and key messages
- Short presentation or video reflection (3–5 minutes) summarizing your findings and coaching takeaways

Guiding Questions

Use these prompts to guide your analysis and reflection:

- What visual and verbal cues communicate messages about body image in each example?
- How do these portrayals influence perceptions of what an "athlete's body" should look like?
- What values are promoted: performance, appearance, diversity, strength, beauty, confidence?
- How can coaches help athletes critically view and resist negative body messaging in the media?
- How might you integrate positive body image messages into your own coaching or team environment?