

# Identifying Sports Media Factors Influencing Attitude Change and Increasing Iranian Women's Interest in Formula One Racing

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## Abstract

**Purpose:** Sports media play a crucial role in shaping attitudes and increasing audience interest in sporting events. This study aimed to identify the influential factors of sports media in changing attitudes and enhancing the interest of Iranian women in Formula One racing.

**Method:** This applied research was conducted using a qualitative approach with a descriptive phenomenological methodology. The study population consisted of 23 subject-matter experts. Data collection was carried out through semi-structured interviews, and data were analyzed and categorized using MAXQDA software (version 20). To ensure validity and reliability, the criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability were applied.

**Results:** Findings indicate that sports media significantly impact the change in attitudes and increase the interest of Iranian women in Formula One racing. Increased media coverage, the production of simplified educational content, and the use of social media play a key role in raising awareness and attracting female audiences. Additionally, the presence of women in key roles within the sport, such as drivers and analysts, helps reduce gender stereotypes and motivates more women to follow the races. However, the lack of targeted media coverage for women and insufficient investment in gender-appropriate content production remain major obstacles in this area.

**Conclusion:** The study concludes that sports media particularly through enhanced coverage and simplified educational content play an effective role in changing attitudes and attracting Iranian women to Formula One racing. The inclusion of women in prominent roles and leveraging social media can also help dismantle gender stereotypes and boost women's interest in the sport. Nonetheless, the scarcity of targeted content and limited media coverage remain among the key challenges in engaging more women in Formula One.

**Keyword:** Formula One - Media - Physical Education Students.

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## Introduction

Formula One racing, as one of the most popular and thrilling sports competitions globally, has in recent years attracted increasing attention from audiences in various countries, including Iran. These races, known for their high speed, close rivalries, and cutting-edge automotive technologies, have begun to appeal not only to male fans but also to a growing number of female spectators. Traditionally, women in Iran have shown less interest in high-speed and competitive sports like Formula One. However, with the expansion of sports media and increased coverage of these races, shifts in public attitudes particularly among Iranian women have become noticeable (Pasha, 2019). Sports media serve as powerful tools in shaping public attitudes and interests. Through diverse and engaging content, these media outlets not only convey information about competitions but also significantly influence the formation and strengthening of interest in particular sports. In this context, sports media have played a key role in shifting Iranian women's perspectives on Formula One racing. Through expert analysis, motivational interviews with successful figures, and appealing promotional content, they can transform Formula One into an attractive topic for women (Yousefi, 2021). Studies have shown that sports media can impact individuals' attitudes and social behaviors, leading to notable changes in behavioral patterns and interests (Goodarzi, 2020). In light of this, the present study aims to identify the media strategies employed in Iran to attract female audiences to Formula One and to examine their effectiveness in altering attitudes and increasing interest. In other words, sports media can, through suitable content, enhance the visibility of women's roles in these competitions and provide a platform for boosting the appeal of Formula One among female audiences (Azari, 2022). Formula One racing is recognized as one of the most exhilarating and widely followed sporting events worldwide. With a focus on speed,

advanced technology, and intense rivalries, the sport has captivated audiences across many nations, including Iran. While team sports such as football have traditionally been more popular in Iran, particularly among men, the growing presence of Formula One in media coverage has led to changes in public interest and attitudes, especially among women (Pasha, 2019). In this shift, sports media have played a central role by shaping perceptions and attracting new viewers.

By leveraging engaging and diverse content, sports media can not only inform audiences about events but also effectively cultivate interest in niche sports such as Formula One among different social groups (Yousefi, 2021). In Iran, especially in recent years, media outlets have attempted to present Formula One as an exciting subject for female audiences through dedicated programs, expert commentary, and special reports. Some media initiatives have explored ways to frame Formula One in a manner that resonates more with women. As such, producing suitable content, highlighting successful female figures in the sport, and emphasizing the emotional and human aspects of competition can be highly effective in attracting female viewers (Mahdavi, 2021).

Research shows that media can play a crucial role in altering attitudes and influencing social behaviors (Goodarzi, 2020). The rise of social and digital media has also created new opportunities for content dissemination. Platforms like Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube have become powerful tools for introducing Formula One to Iranian women. Visually engaging content, short videos from races and behind-the-scenes footage, and quick analyses can easily capture female viewers' attention and encourage them to follow the sport. Such content not only makes the competitions more appealing to women but also provides them with relatable role models in the sports domain (Ghanbari, 2020).

Despite the progress made by sports media in shifting Iranian women's attitudes toward

Formula One, certain challenges and barriers remain. One such barrier involves cultural and social constraints that may discourage women from engaging with sports traditionally dominated by men, such as Formula One (Zarei, 2019). Media content must therefore be designed in a way that is appealing to women and draws their attention to these races. Strategies such as targeted advertising campaigns and content tailored specifically to female audiences can prove effective (Saeedi, 2021).

In Iran, sports media have been able to effect some changes in women's attitudes toward Formula One through engaging content, creative promotional strategies, and the use of social media. Although challenges persist, continued efforts and improved strategies can help attract more female audiences and increase their interest in the sport. This trend underscores the power of media in shaping social attitudes and boosting interest in specialized sports among different segments of society (Shahram, 2021).

In today's world, sports media play a vital role in shaping audience attitudes and behaviors and can influence changes in preferences and the level of attention paid to specific sporting events. Among these, Formula One has emerged as one of the most captivating and widely followed global competitions. Although traditionally sports like football and volleyball have enjoyed greater popularity in Iran, recent years have witnessed a shift in public perception particularly among women regarding Formula One. These changes have been largely driven by the way the sport is covered by sports media and presented through social networks.

Although Formula One has traditionally appealed more to men, sports media have succeeded in making it more attractive to women through compelling content, expert analysis, and dedicated coverage. The aim of this study is to examine the strategies that sports media can adopt to engage and reshape

Iranian women's attitudes toward Formula One and to identify measures that could enhance their interest and participation. Cultural, social, and structural challenges may hinder the process of attracting women to such sports, and thus identifying and addressing these barriers is crucial. This study therefore seeks to analyze and identify the key factors through which sports media can help engage Iranian women with Formula One and significantly influence their perceptions.

Given the rapid growth of sports media and their substantial influence on shifting public attitudes and raising awareness, understanding how these media affect women's interest in specific sports like Formula One in Iran is of great importance. Despite the international excitement surrounding Formula One, cultural and social factors have historically limited its appeal among Iranian women. However, in recent years, with expanded media coverage and the rise of social networks, we have observed a shift in women's perceptions of the sport particularly in the social and cultural domains. Therefore, research into the media strategies for attracting female audiences to Formula One can aid in shaping effective media policies and promotional strategies.

This study is necessary because previous research on the changing attitudes and interests of Iranian women toward Formula One has paid little attention to the media context. As powerful tools for social and cultural transformation, media can help shift traditional attitudes, and understanding how they influence women's interest in niche sports can lead to the development of more effective strategies for increasing female participation. Furthermore, considering the cultural barriers that may hinder women's involvement in such competitions, this research aims to identify obstacles and propose actionable solutions. As such, this study holds significant scientific and practical value.

### **Materials and Methods**

This study is applied in nature and was

conducted using a qualitative method with a descriptive phenomenological approach. For analyzing the interview data, Colaizzi's (1978) method was employed. The participants in the study included: university faculty members in the field of sport management, Formula One experts and analysts, professional race car drivers, and Formula One fans. Ultimately, 23 individuals from the aforementioned groups were selected as the sample.

Participants were chosen based on their direct experience with or involvement in the subject under investigation. Therefore, criteria for inclusion were participants' lived, professional, and academic experiences relevant to the topic, their full willingness to participate in interviews, and their ability to express themselves effectively. The exclusion criteria included a lack of willingness to continue cooperation and insufficient or incomplete information provided by the participants.

Sampling was conducted using purposive and snowball techniques, and continued until data saturation was reached that is, until no new, non-repetitive concepts could be extracted from the interviews. The data collection tool in the qualitative phase was a semi-structured

interview. For the categorization and analysis of the data, MAXQDA software version 20 was used.

To ensure validity and reliability, the criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability were applied. For credibility, the interview transcripts and coding methods were shared with several participants and sport management faculty members, and their feedback was incorporated. For transferability, detailed documentation of all research procedures and participants' demographic characteristics was provided.

To assess dependability, the method of inter-coder agreement was utilized. Two expert coders in sport management familiar with qualitative coding independently analyzed the interviews. The inter-coder agreement rate was found to be 82%, which, being above the 60% threshold, confirmed the dependability of the study.

For confirmability, several sport management faculty members and subject-matter experts not involved in the research process reviewed all stages of the study, and their feedback was integrated accordingly.

**Table 1. Demographic Information of Interviewees**

<b>Group</b>	<b>Experts</b>	<b>Position Gender and Number of Participants</b>
Group 1	University faculty members in the field of sport management	2 males, 1 female
Group 2	Formula One specialists	6 males
Group 3	Senior managers of the Automobile and Motorcycle Federation	2 males
Group 4	Former drivers from various Formula series classes	4 males
Group 5	Formula One fans	5 males, 3 females

## Results

Through the analysis of data obtained from the study participants, the factors influencing how sports media affect the attitudes and interest of Iranian women in Formula One races in Iran were identified. These factors include 48 sub-themes categorized under six main themes: the impact of media content on attitudes and

interests; the role of social and online media in shaping perceptions; cultural and social barriers to following Formula One; the role of women in Formula One and its influence on female audiences; the impact of technical and expert analyses on women's understanding of the races; and media coverage and its effect on women's engagement. Table 1 presents the main and sub-themes of the study.

**Table 2. Identification of the Factors Through Which Sports Media Influence the Shift in Attitudes and Increase in Interest of Iranian Women in Formula One Races**

Main Theme	Sub-Themes
<b>Impact of Media Content on Attitudes and Interests</b>	- Appeal of media content and its effect on women's attitudes - Presentation of human and emotional aspects in media coverage - Role of technical analysis in shifting women's perceptions of Formula One - Use of visual imagery and video to boost interest in races - Highlighting different dimensions of competition in the media - Gender-sensitive media content tailored for women - Educational content contributing to women's awareness and interest in Formula One - Impact of documentaries and special programs in attracting female audiences
<b>Role of Social and Online Media in Shaping Attitudes</b>	- Influence of social networks in facilitating engagement and changing perceptions - User-generated content in social media platforms - Role of videos and visual posts on social media - Influence of influencers and public figures on women's attitudes - Targeted campaigns and advertisements aimed at attracting female fans - Use of hashtags and online challenges to raise awareness - Link between following race news and a sense of belonging to the sports community - Role of online platforms in education and information dissemination about Formula One
<b>Cultural and Social Barriers to Following Formula One</b>	- Stereotypical views of motorsports as male-dominated and their impact on women - Lack of female role models in Formula One - Cultural restrictions on watching and engaging with sports events - Role of family and upbringing in shaping perceptions of motorsports - Limited access to media that cover Formula One events - Absence of educational and awareness-building programs for women - Traditional perspectives on women's participation in professional sports - Lack of social and economic support for women interested in this field
<b>Role of Women in Formula One and Its Impact on Female Audiences</b>	- Women participating as drivers in Formula One - Women's roles in engineering and technical teams - Media representation of women in Formula One and its impact on female audiences - Women as commentators and analysts in Formula One - Role modeling by successful women in Formula One for younger generations - Women's involvement in Formula One advertising and marketing - Role of the FIA (Fédération Internationale de l'Automobile) in supporting women - Impact of campaigns and support programs in boosting women's participation
<b>Impact of Technical and Expert Analysis on Women's Understanding of Races</b>	- Role of technical analysis in improving women's knowledge of Formula One - Simplification of complex technical concepts for female audiences - Contribution of female experts in delivering race analysis - Role of sports media in teaching the technical aspects of Formula One to women - Effectiveness of educational videos in enhancing women's technical understanding - Use of digital technologies to deliver technical insights to women - Relationship between technical understanding and increased excitement in viewing races - Social media as a channel for women to access technical analysis
<b>Media Coverage and Its Effect on Women's Engagement</b>	- Influence of the extent of media coverage on women's awareness and interest - Role of content diversity in attracting female audiences - Quality of commentary and its impact on women's engagement - Highlighting female presence in sports media - Effectiveness of media marketing and advertising in attracting women - Role of domestic and international TV channels in increasing women's engagement - Role of social media in providing easier access to Formula One for women - Analysis of women-focused media content and its influence on attitude shifts

### Discussion

Previous studies have shown that sports media play a crucial role in shaping attitudes and increasing public interest in sporting events. Research on the impact of media on women's attitudes toward professional sports has generally emphasized that the extent and quality of media coverage can directly

influence women's interest and participation in following competitions. Studies on male-dominated sports such as football and basketball have demonstrated that the continued presence of women in media content whether as reporters or professional athletes can reduce stereotypical perceptions and boost women's interest in these fields.

According to conducted research, social media platforms have emerged in recent years as a key factor in transforming women's sports consumption patterns. For example, studies have shown that social media, by offering diverse content including technical analyses, interviews, educational videos, and direct interactions between fans and athletes, can help audiences better understand competitions and encourage women to engage more actively with such events. These findings can also be examined in relation to Formula 1, as the increasing use of digital platforms and targeted content production in this field may influence public attitudes.

Compared to existing literature, one of the primary barriers to attracting women to motorsports has been the lack of female role models. Studies on traditionally male-dominated sports such as boxing and football indicate that when women have actively participated in these disciplines, interest among other women has significantly increased. In Formula 1, the presence of women in key roles such as drivers, engineers, and commentators could similarly influence attitudes.

Previous studies have also emphasized that appropriate media coverage can increase women's knowledge and awareness of technical and specialized aspects of competitions. Some research has found that presenting technical analyses in a simplified and engaging format can enhance understanding and, as a result, heighten women's interest. Given the complex nature of Formula 1, examining the impact of educational and media content for female audiences can be considered an effective strategy for increasing interest and engagement with these races.

A comparison with the existing literature shows that media can influence women's attitudes toward high-risk and traditionally male sports like Formula 1 by expanding coverage, diversifying content, providing comprehensible analysis, highlighting women's roles, and leveraging digital media capabilities.

Nevertheless, cultural and social challenges such as gender stereotypes, limited access to sports content, and the absence of female role models remain obstacles to increasing Iranian women's interest in these competitions.

Numerous studies have indicated that sports media significantly affect audience attitudes and interest in various sports. A key finding in previous research is that the extent of media coverage, content presentation, and the presence of women in the creation and delivery of sports analysis can directly impact women's engagement and enthusiasm for traditionally male sports. Research on popular sports like football and basketball shows that more expansive and diverse media coverage leads to increased awareness and understanding among female audiences, which in turn boosts their interest. Comparative analyses between levels of female interest in sports with varying degrees of media attention confirm that media content substantially influences behavioral patterns.

Formula 1, as a complex and technical sport, requires more educational and explanatory content to attract new audiences particularly women. Many potential female viewers do not connect with these races due to a lack of accessible and comprehensible information about rules, strategies, and technical features of Formula 1 cars.

Research on the influence of social media on changing sports attitudes has shown that platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, and Twitter play a major role in increasing awareness of niche sports by producing diverse content, enabling direct user interaction, and presenting information in simple and appealing formats. In the context of Formula 1, many female users who have engaged with analytical content, short documentaries, educational videos, and live discussions through social media have shown increased interest in following the races. These findings are consistent with studies on other high-risk and technical sports like motorcycle racing and

rugby, where digital media has clearly boosted women's participation. In Iran, while official media outlets have rarely produced specialized Formula 1 content, social media and international platforms have provided interested women with opportunities to access valuable resources for understanding the sport better.

Reviewing past research also reveals that the lack of female role models is one of the key barriers to attracting women to sports like Formula 1. In sports initially considered male-dominated such as women's football and wrestling when female athletes appeared professionally and received appropriate media coverage, women's participation increased dramatically. Although women are involved in some areas of Formula 1, such as car engineering and team management, the number of female drivers and the media coverage of their roles remain limited. Previous studies have stressed that increasing the presence of women in key positions can positively impact female audiences' interest, as seeing relatable role models provides greater motivation to follow and engage in the sport.

Another theme in earlier studies is the role of media coverage in shifting perceptions of specific sports. Many studies confirm that how technical information is presented can enhance comprehension and interest. In technically complex sports like Formula 1, delivering specialized analyses in simplified formats such as educational videos, infographics, and brief reports can help make the sport more accessible. Research on similar sports, including motorcycle racing and ice hockey, has shown that when media provide technical details in a clear and engaging manner, women's interest in those sports increases. A similar trend is expected in Formula 1 if such content is developed and promoted effectively. Past research has also shown that the type of commentary and the presence of female sportscasters significantly influence women's interest in sports events. In studies related to women's football, the use of female reporters

and analysts led to greater female audience engagement. These findings are applicable to Formula 1 as well, as women's involvement as commentators and analysts can alter audience perceptions and enhance female viewership.

Compared to studies in other countries, it is evident that women's interest in Formula 1 is directly related to their access to information and how media content is delivered. In countries where the media have deliberately produced educational and engaging content tailored to women, female interest and participation in Formula 1 have increased. For instance, in European countries where Formula 1 races are covered via digital media, special documentaries, and targeted marketing campaigns, female engagement is much higher than in countries with weaker media coverage. In contrast, Iranian sports media have generally provided limited, superficial coverage of Formula 1, without producing specialized programs to raise awareness among female audiences.

Therefore, based on the findings of this research, it can be suggested that increasing both the quantity and quality of media coverage, creating simplified educational content, ensuring the greater visibility of women in key roles, and utilizing social media as a powerful tool for changing perceptions can significantly enhance Iranian women's interest in Formula 1 races.

In conclusion, comparative analysis with previous research shows that media can play a pivotal role in changing women's attitudes toward Formula 1 through adjustments in content delivery, highlighting female participation, launching targeted campaigns, simplifying technical analysis, and leveraging social media. However, cultural and social challenges such as traditional views on high-risk sports, gender stereotypes, and limited media resources still need to be addressed by implementing effective strategies to attract more women to this sport.

Findings from this study underscore that sports

media play a highly influential role in altering perceptions and increasing Iranian women's interest in Formula 1 races. As previous studies have affirmed, the volume and format of media coverage, diversity and quality of content, and the prominence of women in the sport directly affect female audience engagement. Since Formula 1 is recognized as a complex and technical discipline, offering accurate information, simplifying expert analyses, and creating educational media environments can contribute to a better understanding and stronger interest among women.

In recent years, social media and digital platforms through diverse content such as short documentaries, educational videos, race analyses, and direct interactions with experts and drivers have become effective tools for shifting perceptions and increasing audience engagement. Meanwhile, in Iran, coverage of Formula 1 remains limited and mostly consists of general, non-specialized reports, which contributes to women's lack of familiarity with the sport and thus, reduced interest.

Studies show that one important factor in attracting women to Formula 1 is the presence of female figures in the sport. Although the number of women in roles such as driver, analyst, or reporter is limited, experiences from other high-risk sports indicate that the more media highlight women's roles, the more women are likely to become interested and involved. Media play a crucial role in showcasing and promoting women in Formula 1, helping to challenge traditional attitudes and gender stereotypes, and creating stronger incentives for women to follow the sport.

Additionally, the way technical analyses are presented plays a vital role in attracting audiences. Studies from other sports have shown that when complex information is delivered in clear and engaging formats, women's interest and understanding improve. Thus, in Formula 1, producing educational content, scientific documentaries, and simplified analytical reports can contribute to

better understanding and increased excitement among female audiences.

Compared to other countries, it is evident that in societies where media actively and strategically cover Formula 1 and create engaging content tailored to women, the level of female interest in these competitions has risen sharply. This is especially true in countries where digital media and social networks are the primary sources of information. Female participation in Formula 1 is significantly higher. In Iran, due to inadequate investment in sports media and the lack of focus on women as a target audience in motorsports, female interest in Formula 1 remains lower than in other countries.

Nevertheless, findings from this study suggest that enhancing the quality and quantity of media coverage, increasing simplified technical analysis, creating engaging educational content, expanding the use of social media, and promoting women's prominent roles in this sport can lead to significant shifts in Iranian women's perceptions of Formula 1.

### **Conclusion**

Overall, sports media can have a significant impact on changing Iranian women's attitudes toward Formula 1 racing by utilizing various strategies such as expanding media coverage, diversifying content, offering simplified analyses, strengthening the presence of women in sports media, and leveraging digital platforms. However, cultural and social challenges, gender stereotypes, and media limitations still act as barriers to increasing women's participation in this sport. Nonetheless, with the implementation of appropriate media policies and the creation of more opportunities for women in this field, it is possible to gradually shift existing attitudes and enhance interest and engagement with Formula 1 racing among Iranian women.

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