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Sport and the digital economy: A case study of the Canadian sports analytics industry

Sports analytics involves data collection, management, and analysis in the interest of improving sport performance. Canadian athletes, teams, and sport organizations are increasingly seeking deeper insight into training and competition through technologies such as Artificial Intelligence, wearable activity trackers, and software platforms for representing performance. They are doing so through consultation with a growing number of Canadian sports analytics companies. Moreover, sports analytics presents media with new ways of communicating insight on sport to various stakeholders, including fans and consumers. Yet existing research on sports analytics is often technical in nature, meaning it considers techniques for improving sport performance. This is important work, but key social scientific questions remain unexplored. For example, such questions include: How are job roles and responsibilities in sport changing as a result of technological innovation? What factors enable or constrain the pursuit of analytics-related career opportunities? And how are sports analytics knowledge and practice impacting communication within sport organizations? This four-year, multi-method project was therefore designed with the following objectives: 1) To 'map' the Canadian sports analytics landscape by identifying and outlining contributions from key stakeholders in the industry (e.g., in sport, in the commercial sector, in media, and in education/professional development); and 2) To explore stakeholder perspectives on opportunities, issues, and concerns related to work and communication in sports analytics. The overall aim is to deliver stakeholder-derived insight on successes in sports analytics and on whether and how sports analytics knowledge and practice might be better integrated into the Canadian sport sector. In pursuing this aim, the project will address the SSHRC future challenge area of 'Working in the Digital Economy' by taking sports analytics as a case study in the wider trend of integrating information and communication technologies into organizational practices.

Tags: Data and Analytics; Digital Media; Ethics; High Performance; Technology