



ATHENS INSTITUTE

Abstract Book

**26th Annual International Conference on
Sports: Economic, Management,
Marketing & Social Aspects
11-16 May 2026, Athens, Greece**

**Edited by
Spiro Doukas & Olga Gkounta**

2026

Abstracts
26th Annual International
Conference on Sports: Economic,
Management, Marketing &
Social Aspects
11-16 May 2026, Athens, Greece

Edited by
Spiro Doukas & Olga Gkounta

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Preface

This book includes the abstracts of all the papers presented at the 26th *Annual International Conference on Sports: Economic, Management, Marketing & Social Aspects* (11-16 May 2026), organized by the Athens Institute.

A full conference program can be found before the relevant abstracts. In accordance with Athens Institute’s Publication Policy, the papers presented during this conference will be considered for inclusion in one of Athens Institute’s many publications only after a blind peer review process.

The purpose of this abstract book is to provide members of Athens Institute and other academics around the world with a resource through which they can discover colleagues and additional research relevant to their own work. This purpose is in congruence with the overall mission of the association. Athens Institute was established in 1995 as an independent academic organization with the mission to become a forum where academics and researchers from all over the world can meet to exchange ideas on their research and consider the future developments of their fields of study.

To facilitate the communication, a new references section includes all the abstract books published as part of this conference (Table 1). I invite the readers to access these abstract books –these are available for free– and compare how the themes of the conference have evolved over the years. According to Athens Institute’s mission, the presenters in these conferences are coming from many different countries, presenting various topics.

Table 1. *Publication of Books of Abstracts of Proceedings, 2010-2026*

| Year | Papers | Countries | References |
|------|--------|-----------|--|
| 2026 | 21 | 17 | Doukas and Gkounta (2026) |
| 2025 | 27 | 22 | Kosma and Gkounta (2025) |
| 2024 | 32 | 16 | Kosma and Gkounta (2024) |
| 2023 | 24 | 12 | Kosma and Gkounta (2023) |
| 2022 | 29 | 17 | Gkounta (2022) |
| 2021 | 12 | 9 | Papanikos (2021) |
| 2020 | 16 | 9 | Papanikos (2020) |
| 2019 | 32 | 20 | Papanikos (2019) |
| 2018 | 31 | 23 | Papanikos (2018) |
| 2017 | 25 | 15 | Papanikos (2017) |
| 2016 | 25 | 11 | Papanikos (2016) |
| 2015 | 27 | 16 | Papanikos (2015) |
| 2014 | 21 | 14 | Papanikos (2014) |
| 2013 | 16 | 11 | Papanikos (2013) |
| 2012 | 16 | 9 | Papanikos (2012) |
| 2011 | 26 | 16 | Papanikos (2011) |
| 2010 | 24 | 29 | Papanikos (2010) |

It is our hope that through Athens Institute's conferences and publications, Athens will become a place where academics and researchers from all over the world can regularly meet to discuss the developments of their disciplines and present their work. Since 1995, Athens Institute has organized more than 400 international conferences and has published over 200 books. Academically, the institute is organized into 7 divisions and 37 units. Each unit organizes at least one annual conference and undertakes various small and large research projects.

For each of these events, the involvement of multiple parties is crucial. I would like to thank all the participants, the members of the organizing and academic committees, and most importantly the administration staff of Athens Institute for putting this conference and its subsequent publications together.

Gregory T. Papanikos
President

Editors' Note

These abstracts provide a vital means to the dissemination of scholarly inquiry in the field of Sports. The breadth and depth of research approaches and topics represented in this book underscores the diversity of the conference.

Athens Institute's mission is to bring together academics from all corners of the world in order to engage with each other, brainstorm, exchange ideas, be inspired by one another, and once they are back in their institutions and countries to implement what they have acquired. The *26th Annual International Conference on Sports: Economic, Management, Marketing & Social Aspects* accomplished this goal by bringing together academics and scholars from 17 different countries (Austria, Bulgaria, Canada, Egypt, Finland, Georgia, Germany, Israel, Latvia, Mexico, Palestine, Portugal, South Africa, Taiwan, Türkiye, UK, USA), which brought in the conference the perspectives of many different country approaches and realities in the field. To be noted is that this year's conference included a cross-cutting intellectual theme "Sports, Media and Wars" that raised lots of thinking and discussion.

Publishing this book can help that spirit of engaged scholarship continue into the future. With our joint efforts, the next editions of this conference will be even better. We hope that this abstract book as a whole will be both of interest and of value to the reading audience.

Spiro Doukas & Olga Gkounta
Editors

**26th Annual International Conference on Sports: Economic,
Management, Marketing & Social Aspects, 11-16 May 2026,
Athens, Greece**

Organizing & Scientific Committee

Athens Institute's conferences are organized by the Academic Council. This conference has been organized with the valuable contribution of the following academic members of the Athens Institute.

1. Dr. Gregory T. Papanikos, President, Athens Institute.
2. Dr. Maria Kosma, Head, Sports Unit, Athens Institute & Associate Professor, Louisiana State University, USA.
3. Dr. Spiro Doukas, Deputy Head, Sports Unit, Athens Institute & Professor, American Public University, USA.
4. Dr. Mario Nicolliello, Deputy Head, Sports Unit & Researcher, University of Brescia, Italy.

FINAL CONFERENCE PROGRAM

26th Annual International Conference on Sports: Economic, Management,
Marketing & Social Aspects, 11-16 May 2026, Athens, Greece

PROGRAM

08:30-09:15

Registration

09:15-10:00 Opening Speech and Welcoming Remarks

Speaker: **Gregory T. Papanikos**, President, Athens Institute & Professor (Adjunct), University of Tennessee, Knoxville, USA.

10:00-11:30 Session 1

Moderator: **Spiro Doukas**, Deputy Head, Sports Unit, Athens Institute & Professor, American Public University, USA.

1. **Theodore Trafalis**, Professor, The University of Oklahoma, USA.
Dana Guzman F., Graduate Student, The University of Oklahoma, USA.
Title: Nonlinear Optimization of Weekly Training Plans for Competitive Tennis Players.
2. **Maryam Hethnawi**, Supervisor, Ministry of Education, Palestine.
Title: The Impact of Israeli Incursions on the Social and Athletic Situation of Members of Sports Academies in Jenin Governorate.
3. **Seppo Suominen**, Senior Lecturer, Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences, Finland.
Title: Outdoor Temperature and Attendance at Indoor Swimming Centres: Evidence from Hourly Administrative Data.
4. **Amit Gayer**, Lecturer, University of Kiryat Shmona in the Galilee, Israel.
Title: Strategic Ordering in Multi-Player Settings.

11:30-13:00 Session 2

Moderator: **Theodore Trafalis**, Professor, The University of Oklahoma, USA.

1. **Daniel Marinho**, Professor, University of Beira Interior/CIDESD, Portugal.
Diogo Marques, Assistant Professor, University of Beira Interior/CIDESD, Portugal.
Henrique Neiva, Associate Professor, University of Beira Interior/CIDESD, Portugal.
Mário Marques, Professor, University of Beira Interior/CIDESD, Portugal.
Title: The Impact of Different Resistance Training Volumes on Physical Frailty in Institutionalized Older Adults – Preliminary Findings of the TrackFrailty Project.
2. **Miglena Zhiyanski**, Professor, Forest Research Institute – Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, Bulgaria.
Elena Todorova, Assistant Professor, Forest Research Institute – Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, Bulgaria.
Title: Integrating Socio-Ecological Approach for Recognizing Sport Activities as Cultural Ecosystem Services Provided by Forest Ecosystems.
3. **Ema Jakovljevic**, MS Oec., Austria.
Title: How the Croatian Government Uses Sports and Individual Athletes to Promote Tourism.
4. **Gregory T. Papanikos**, President, Athens Institute & Professor (Adjunct), University of Tennessee, Knoxville, USA.
Title: Population, GDP per Capita, and Qualification for the 2026 FIFA World Cup: Evidence from UEFA Men's National Teams.

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| <p>13:00-14:00 Session 3 – A Symposium on “Sports, Media and Wars I” Moderator: John V. Pavlik, Professor, Department of Journalism and Media Studies, School of Communication & Information, Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey, USA.</p> |
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Maria Petrova Bakardjieva, Professor, University of Calgary, Canada. <i>Title: Politics by Other Means: Identity, Affect and Spectacle in Sport and War.</i> Naila Hamdy, Associate Dean of Graduate Studies and Research, The American University in Cairo, Egypt. <i>Title: From Stadiums to Battlefields: Sports, Media, and the Making of War Narratives in the Middle East.</i> Theodore Trafalis, Professor, The University of Oklahoma, USA. <i>Title: Sports Gambling and Geopolitical Intelligence.</i> Laura Trujillo, Professor & Researcher, Universidad Panamericana, Mexico. <i>Title: Sport, Power, and Narrative: A Media Ecology Approach to the Case of Iran.</i> Gregory T. Papanikos, Professor (Adjunct), University of Tennessee, Knoxville, USA. <i>Title: Goals and Geopolitics: How Media Frames Iran, the U.S., and the 2026 World Cup.</i> <p>Interventions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Spiro Doukas, Deputy Head, Sports Unit, Athens Institute & Professor, American Public University, USA. Elsa G. Sánchez Huerta Villalba, Professor, Universidad Panamericana, México. |
| <p>14:00-15:00 Lunch</p> |
| <p>18:00-20:00 Session 4 – Visit Aristotle’s Lyceum</p> |
| <p style="text-align: center;">It requires pre-booking</p> |
| <p>20:30-22:30 <u>An Ancient Athenian Symposium: Continuous Dialogues, Timeless Flavors</u> (featuring authentic ancient Athenian dishes, local wine, and sweet delicacies from ancient Athens)</p> |
| <p style="text-align: center;">Tuesday 12 May 2026</p> |
| <p>09:00-10:30 Session 5 (Joint session with the Mass Media and Communication Unit) Moderator: Yen-Jung Chang, Professor, National Taiwan Normal University, Taiwan.</p> |
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Faith Valente, Professor, North Idaho College, USA. Carl Bozman, Professor, Gonzaga University, USA. <i>Title: The Relative Influence of Brand Trust Dimensions.</i> Brian Massey, Professor, East Carolina University, USA. <i>Title: Unifying Theories of Journalism Through the Principles of Quantum Physics.</i> Amani Ismail, Associate Dean, School of Humanities and Creative Arts & Mass Communications Program Lead, University of Hertfordshire hosted by Global Academic Foundation, Egypt. Gayane Torosyan, Professor, State University of New York at Oneonta, USA. <i>Title: The Internet, Academic Integrity, and College Student Practices: A Contemporary Perspective.</i> Memory Mabika, Lecturer, University of Venda, South Africa. <i>Title: A Netnographic Analysis of TikTok Interactions in Indigenous Languages: The Case of Tshivenda and ChiShona.</i> |
| <p>10:30-12:00 Session 6 (Joint session with the Mass Media and Communication Unit) Moderator: Brian Massey, Professor, East Carolina University, USA.</p> |
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Yen-Jung Chang, Professor, National Taiwan Normal University, Taiwan. Ching-Yi Peng, Assistant Professor, National Taipei University of Nursing and Health Sciences, Taiwan. <i>Title: A Qualitative Study on Hypertensive Patients’ Perceptions of Marketing Strategies in Food and Supplement Advertising in Taiwan.</i> |

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none">Hande Bilsel, Associate Professor, Bahçeşehir University, Türkiye. Murat Copcu, Assistant Professor, Bahçeşehir University, Türkiye. <i>Title: From Monsters to Mascots: Anthropomorphized Germs in Hygiene Advertising.</i>Kevin Onyenankeya, Senior Lecturer, University of Fort Hare, South Africa. <i>Title: Improving Functional and Interactive Health Literacy at the Community Level: The Nexus of Indigenous Language Radio Programming.</i>Luise Ende, Researcher, University of Kassel, Germany. <i>Title: Executional Greenwashing by Natural Sounds? The Impact of Product Color and Background Sound on the Sustainability Rating of Online Presented Fashion.</i> |
| <p>12:00-13:30 Session 7 (Joint session with the Mass Media and Communication Unit) Moderator: Elsa G. Sánchez Huerta Villalba, Professor, Universidad Panamericana, México.</p> |
| <ol style="list-style-type: none">Maria Bakardjieva, Professor, University of Calgary, Canada. <i>Title: Two Shades of Grassroots Illiberalism: Investigating the Discursive Construction of a Global Phenomenon.</i>Mariam Adamashvili, Assistant Professor, Georgian National University SEU, Georgia. <i>Title: Media Ethics in the Context of Covering Religious Issues According to the Guidelines and Ethical Coverage Manuals of Western and Georgian Media Organizations.</i>Diana Liparteliani, Assistant Professor, Georgian National University SEU, Georgia. <i>Title: Media Polarization, Manipulative Practices and Democratic Vulnerability in Small States (The Case of Georgia).</i>Anastasija Tetarenko-Supe, PhD Candidate & Researcher, University of Latvia, Latvia. <i>Title: How to Win the Attention War? Politically Motivated Discreditation of Media in Latvia.</i>Aleksandar Kocic, Lecturer, Edinburgh Napier University, UK. <i>Title: Does Local Radio Have a Future?</i> |
| <p>13:30-14:30 Session 8 - A Symposium on "Sports, Media and Wars II" Moderator: Gregory T. Papanikos, Professor (Adjunct), University of Tennessee, Knoxville, USA.</p> |
| <ol style="list-style-type: none">Brian Massey, Professor, East Carolina University, USA. <i>Title: Trivializing War: Performance Politics and U.S.-Iran Football Spat.</i>John V. Pavlik, Professor, Department of Journalism and Media Studies, School of Communication & Information, Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey, USA. <i>Title: From Prediction Markets to Artificial Intelligence: How Emerging Technology Is Reshaping the Landscape of Sports, Media and War.</i>Amani Ismail, Associate Dean, School of Humanities and Creative Arts & Mass Communications Program Lead, University of Hertfordshire hosted by Global Academic Foundation, Egypt. <i>Title: Media Narratives on Warring Nations and Access to Global Sports.</i> |
| <p>14:30-15:30 Lunch</p> |
| <p>17:00-20:00 Session 9 Old and New-An Educational Urban Walk</p> |
| <p>The urban walk ticket is not included as part of your registration fee. It includes transportation costs and the cost to enter the Parthenon and the other monuments on the Acropolis Hill. The urban walk tour includes the broader area of Athens. Among other sites, it includes: Zappion, Syntagma Square, Temple of Olympian Zeus, Ancient Roman Agora and on Acropolis Hill: the Propylaea, the Temple of Athena Nike, the Erechtheion, and the Parthenon. The program of the tour may be adjusted, if there is a need beyond our control. This is a private event organized by the Athens Institute exclusively for the conference participants.</p> |

26th Annual International Conference on Sports: Economic, Management, Marketing & Social Aspects, 11-16 May 2026, Athens, Greece: Abstract Book

20:30-22:30

Athenian Early Evening Symposium (Sequence of Events: Ongoing Academic Discussions, Dinner, Wine and Water, Music, Dance)

Wednesday 13 May 2026
An Educational Visit to Selected Islands
or Nafplio & Mycenae Visit

Thursday 14 May 2026
Visiting the Oracle of Delphi

Friday 15 May 2026
Visiting the Ancient Corinth and Cape Sounion

Saturday 16 May 2026
11:00-13:00 - The Academic Discussion continues in the downtown open agora (close to the Aristotelian Lyceum)

Mariam Adamashvili

Assistant Professor, Georgian National University SEU, Georgia

Media Ethics in the Context of Covering Religious Issues According to the Guidelines and Ethical Coverage Manuals of Western and Georgian Media Organizations.

The article is devoted to the ethical and professional standards of covering religious issues in Western media and to an analytical interpretation of this experience in the context of the Georgian media landscape. The study is based on a comparative analysis of the editorial codes and ethical guidelines of leading Western media organizations (BBC, The Guardian, Associated Press, NPR, The New York Times, The Washington Post, and others). It also examines media ethics and professional journalistic standards in light of the normative documents of media organizations operating in Georgia. The paper draws on the theoretical perspective of media as a social institution and discusses its role in shaping public discourse, pluralism, and democratic culture.

The aim of the research is to identify the key principles that define responsible practices in covering religion and to assess their potential applicability within the Georgian media environment. The study seeks to conceptualize media freedom and editorial independence in the context of professional responsibility and ethical self-regulation, particularly in a transitional democracy. The research employs a qualitative methodology and includes a content and discourse analysis of the Code of Conduct of the Georgian Public Broadcaster, the Organizational Guidelines of Channel One, the journalistic standards of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, and the Charter of Journalistic Ethics.

In the article, religion is examined as a phenomenon of social, cultural, and political significance, whose media representation requires particular sensitivity, contextualization, and editorial independence. The analysis shows that Western media ethical frameworks converge around principles such as the separation of fact and opinion, pluralism of voices, avoidance of hate speech, careful representation of sacred symbols, and journalistic responsibility toward the public interest.

The research findings indicate that these ethical documents are broadly consistent with international journalistic standards and establish a normative framework for media ethics based on accuracy, impartiality, balance, and the prioritization of the public interest. At the same time, the study concludes that the effectiveness of ethical norms depends not only on formal regulations but also on the quality of their implementation in practice, journalists' professional self-awareness, and

the institutional culture of media organizations. From this perspective, media ethics is presented as a substantive precondition for media freedom and one of the determining factors in the sustainability of a democratic media environment. Particular attention is paid to regulations governing the coverage of ethnic and religious minorities, the prohibition of hate speech, and principles of protecting human dignity.

Based on the research findings, the article formulates specific recommendations for Georgian media aimed at improving the quality of coverage of religious issues, reducing sensationalism, and strengthening ethical self-regulation. The study provides a theoretical and practical foundation for further empirical research, which will focus on an in-depth analysis of the discursive and institutional characteristics of media coverage of religion in Georgia.

Maria Bakardjieva
Professor, University of Calgary, Canada

Two Shades of Grassroots Illiberalism: Investigating the Discursive Construction of a Global Phenomenon

Whether in the form of sweeping MAGA electoral wins in the United States, an enduring support for the Reform Party in the UK, the rise of the radical right Alternative fur Deutschland in Germany or the shocking success of a protofascist presidential candidate in Rumania, a specter is haunting what were until recently considered established or aspiring liberal democracies – the specter of illiberalism. This paper will argue that illiberalism is a more accurate term for what has been previously labeled a “populist zeitgeist” (Mudde, 2004). For more than 20 years academic discourse has singled out populism as a growing cultural and political movement. However, as organizations and leaders considered populists have moved forcefully into the formal arena of politics, more has been revealed about the actual substance of their ideological and political programs. For that and a range of other reasons, the time has come to clarify and refine the terms through which we try to capture these developments occurring in widely diverse polities and cultures around the globe. Illiberalism presents itself as a good candidate-concept for bringing more precision to our understanding. It has already been formally defined as an ideology and policy that leaders such as Hungary’s Victor Orban stand on as they pursue and exercise power. The analysis presented here aims to look beyond the pronouncements and moves that transpire in the political field and the discourses of intellectuals, pundits, think-tanks and academics. It shifts the focus to the social conditions and cultural dispositions that make ordinary people, referred to as the civic grassroots, respond, embrace and mobilize around illiberal appeals. The main question posed, therefore, is why illiberal ideology and political programs meet with popular support.

The paper examines closely the discourses of social movements with illiberal orientation in Bulgaria and Canada. Based on interviews with representatives of organizations exemplifying such movements and on discourse analysis of their online publications and interactions, the paper demonstrates the paradoxical relationship between illiberal ideology and the economic, political and cultural consequences wrought by neoliberalism. Special attention is dedicated to the way social media platforms are employed for the spread of illiberalism. Across the distinct examples of illiberal grassroots mobilization unfolding in these two different national and cultural contexts, common assumptions and

common tropes offer insights into the sources from which illiberal ideology draws its grassroots support. Grassroots illiberalism, we propose, is a logical response to and a plausible upshot of the erosion of social welfare and democratic governance that neoliberalism has caused. It is a response congruent with the rationality that shapes neoliberal subjects. With acute sensitivity to national and local experiences, it construes the calamities caused by neoliberalism as a failure of liberal-democratic values and institutions. Therefore, instead of (or along with) challenging the market absolutism inherent in neoliberal ideology and policy, it attacks the core principles of liberalism, rejects the institutions of the liberal social order as a whole, and undermines democracy along the way.

Hande Bilsel

Associate Professor, Bahçeşehir University, Türkiye

&

Murat Copcu

Assistant Professor, Bahçeşehir University, Türkiye

From Monsters to Mascots: Anthropomorphized Germs in Hygiene Advertising

This paper examines how anthropomorphized germs in hygiene advertising construct cultural meanings of risk, cleanliness, and responsible consumption. Focusing on a corpus of contemporary television and digital commercials for soaps, disinfectants, and household cleaners, it explores how “germ characters” mediate between invisible microbiological threats and the everyday practices of audiences. While germs are, scientifically, imperceptible agents, advertising repeatedly visualizes them as tiny monsters, mischievous blobs, or even playful companions who invade bodies and homes. These figures invite viewers to imagine, fear, and control contamination in highly stylized ways, and in doing so, they naturalize particular understandings of health, hygiene, and the “good” consumer.

Theoretically, the paper draws on semiotics and Roland Barthes’s notion of myth to analyze how germs are turned into legible, emotionally charged signs. It also engages with work on anthropomorphism and character branding to show how advertisers borrow techniques from animation and children’s media to make risk feel tangible and narratable. Methodologically, the study employs qualitative visual and textual analysis of selected campaigns from different brands and markets, paying attention to character design, color, gesture, facial expression, voice-over, and the staging of contagion and cure. The analysis traces how the same basic germ figures are adapted across platforms (television spots, YouTube pre-rolls, social-media shorts), adjusting tempo, humor, and visual density to different screens and attention economies.

The paper argues that anthropomorphized germs operate as powerful communication devices that simplify microbiological complexity while reinforcing classed and gendered divisions of domestic labor and hygiene responsibility. Germ villains often target mothers, wives, and female caregivers, positioning them as guardians of the clean home and healthy family, while implying that proper consumption of branded products is the main route to safety. At the same time, by making germs cute or humorous, some campaigns normalize constant low-level anxiety and routinised cleaning as everyday entertainment.

By reading these campaigns as cultural texts rather than neutral health information, the study contributes to debates in advertising and marketing communication, media and cultural studies, and risk and health communication. It shows how commercial storytelling about germs both echoes and reshapes public health discourses, especially after the COVID-19 pandemic. Finally, the paper suggests how critical semiotic insights can inform more reflexive creative strategies for hygiene and cleanliness advertising, opening space for representations of care and responsibility that do not rely solely on fear, disgust, or gendered guilt.

Yen-Jung Chang

Professor, National Taiwan Normal University, Taiwan

&

Ching-Yi Peng

Assistant Professor, National Taipei University of Nursing and Health Sciences, Taiwan

A Qualitative Study on Hypertensive Patients' Perceptions of Marketing Strategies in Food and Supplement Advertising in Taiwan

Background: Food and supplement advertisements claiming to lower blood pressure or improve cardiovascular health are prevalent in Taiwan. This study aims to explore hypertensive patients' perceptions of marketing strategies used in food and supplement advertising in Taiwan.

Methods: This qualitative study, conducted in 2025, recruited a total of 23 hypertensive participants. Individual interviews were conducted after obtaining informed consent. The semi-structured interviews employed open-ended questions to explore participants' perceptions of food and supplement advertisements targeting blood pressure management. Based on a previous pilot study, six categories of marketing features were incorporated into the experimental advertisements: professional endorsement, award certification, claims of treatment results, patient testimonials, celebrity endorsements, and natural ingredients. Participants were also asked about their experiences with purchasing or using hypertension-related foods and supplements.

Results: The 23 participants had a mean age of 54.2 years, and 17 were female. After viewing six types of advertisements, participants rated advertisements featuring professional endorsements the highest, indicating a tendency to trust recommendations from medical authorities. Advertisements employing award-based marketing strategies and those emphasizing natural ingredients received the next highest ratings. In contrast, advertisements featuring user testimonials received lower ratings, and participants indicated that they were less likely to trust this type of marketing content. Beyond that, most participants reported that they would not replace their antihypertensive medication with related supplements and expressed strong distrust or aversion toward these products. During the interviews, participants often avoided engaging in detailed discussions about the content of these advertisements, expressing concerns that the ads might be deceptive. They stated that they neither watched the advertisements nor purchased

the products themselves. However, some participants reported having tried these supplements when purchased by family members. Their decision to continue using them depended on whether they perceived any potential health benefits.

Conclusion: This study revealed that hypertensive patients in Taiwan generally exhibited a cautious and skeptical attitude toward food and supplement advertisements related to blood pressure management. Professional endorsements, award recognition, and claims of natural ingredients were perceived as more credible persuasive strategies. Future research should further investigate whether marketing strategies for health supplements influence patients' medication adherence.

Luise Ende

Researcher, University of Kassel, Germany

Executorial Greenwashing by Natural Sounds? The Impact of Product Color and Background Sound on the Sustainability Rating of Online Presented Fashion

In two experiments was investigated the influence of sensory cues – specifically product color and sound – on consumer perceptions of sustainability regarding long sleeves. Utilizing a 2 x 2 mixed design, the research examines the effects of typical natural versus non-natural colors and nature versus non-nature sounds. The initial online experiment involved 158 participants, while a subsequent replication study included 180 participants. Findings consistently indicate that long sleeves in natural colors are perceived as significantly more sustainable than those in non-natural colors. However, the impact of sound on sustainability judgments yielded mixed results; while the first study found no significant difference between the sound of a passing train and a waterfall with chirping birds on classification judgment, the analysis of the replication study yielded a significant difference in the comparison to a highway sound. The effects were found independent from a control for participants' motivation and mood, and even with a relatively young and educated sample. This research highlights ethical issues surrounding the use of sensory cues in marketing, particularly regarding greenwashing practices that may mislead consumers about a product's environmental impact. In conclusion, the study emphasizes the significant role of color and sound in shaping sustainability perceptions, underscoring the need for awareness of greenwashing strategies in the fashion industry as well as necessary ethical and political regulations.

Amit Gayer

Lecturer, University of Kiryat Shmona in the Galilee, Israel

Strategic Ordering in Multi-Player Settings

This paper develops a theoretical model of a strategic ordering game in team-based chess leagues. Teams consist of players with distinct ratings and choose a fixed permutation assigning players to boards, with match outcomes determined solely by rating comparisons across corresponding boards. In the symmetric environment, all teams have identical rating profiles, so any differences in match outcomes arise exclusively from the ordering strategies they select. The analysis shows that when all teams adopt the standard ordering, a profitable unilateral deviation exists. As a result, the standard ordering profile cannot constitute a Nash equilibrium in the symmetric case.

Maryam Hethnawi

Supervisor, Ministry of Education, Palestine

&

Aseel Qady

Department Head, The Higher Council for Youth and Sports, Palestine

The Impact of Israeli Incursions on the Social and Athletic Situation of Members of Sports Academies in Jenin Governorate

The study aimed to identify the impact of repeated Israeli incursions on the social and athletic situation of members of sports academies in Jenin Governorate, by analyzing the psychological, social, and institutional dimensions experienced by athletes under harsh security conditions. It also sought to examine the challenges faced by sports academies in continuing to provide their training services and to offer practical recommendations to support athletes and sports institutions in the affected areas. The study adopted the descriptive-analytical approach and utilized both a questionnaire and interviews with directors and administrators of the academies to deepen understanding of the incursions' impact on academy members. The study sample consisted of a purposive group of 142 young athletes from various age categories affiliated with sports academies in Jenin Governorate, in addition to 10 directors and administrators. The sample was selected based on direct or indirect exposure to Israeli incursions to ensure representation of the most affected groups.

The findings revealed that the Israeli incursions caused significant disruption in the social lives of athletes, reflected in high levels of anxiety and stress, weakened social relationships within the academies, and interruptions of training sessions and tournaments, along with the destruction of some sports facilities—all of which negatively affected athletic performance and motivation to participate. At the institutional level, academies faced operational continuity difficulties and shortages of human and material resources, which impacted the quality of training programs provided.

The study recommended providing sustained psychological and social support for athletes in areas affected by Israeli incursions, developing flexible training models that account for security interruptions, documenting violations against sports facilities and submitting them to human rights and international bodies, and enhancing the role of sports academies as centers of community resilience. It also emphasized the importance of establishing a dedicated

support fund for sports academies in affected areas in cooperation with
local and international organizations.

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The Internet, Academic Integrity, and College Student Practices: A Contemporary Perspective

This paper investigates one of new media's recent academic controversies, namely students' increasing use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in academic settings. Through anonymously surveying undergraduate college students about their positions on academic integrity/misconduct and their own college practices, the study seeks to navigate the technology/society complex by illuminating how we can situate the contemporary education landscape within expectations of student work authenticity and how ethics possibly fit into theories of internet centrism and technological determinism.

To answer the study's research question, we designed a survey that we administered to students enrolled in a media law and policy undergraduate course at a medium-sized East Coast university. The course is offered to second-year Media Studies students and a mixed group of other majors at various levels of undergraduate studies. This course explores how the law and common practice impact media industries and journalism interests. Topics include the First Amendment, libel, invasion of privacy, free press, fair trial, regulation of obscene and sensitive content, regulation of advertising, ethics, and intellectual property. The survey was administered anonymously on Blackboard, and students received course credit for completing it. The responses of students under the age of 18 were excluded from the study through a pre-screening process.

Survey questions totaled 10; they inquired (in this order) about: sources used in research assignments; whether they have previously used paraphrasing computer software in courses and which (if any); whether they believe universities should allow students to use AI-based computer software to improve their assignments and to justify their position; whether they believe universities should use text-matching software to detect originality and to justify their position; the school level when they first learned about plagiarism and other types of academic misconduct; and whether they believe universities are right to apply a penalty for academic misconduct and to justify their position. The survey

included both closed-ended questions (required) and open-ended questions (optional).

Findings point to thought-provoking notions on how intellectual property, fairness in assessment, and the fruits of technology are perceived and interact within a wider dynamic. The paper also highlights the ongoing nature of a multidimensional debate.

The study raises various issues to contemplate. Prime among these is: where should educators draw the line in determining the acceptability of use of AI-based tools in college education, and on a more profound level, what is the role of intellectuals in balancing the influence of technological determinism and ethical practices? Other issues that present themselves include the expectation for originality of student output and the extent to which educational institutions seek to uphold and reinforce the values of student creativity, pride in one's work, and the vitality of bearing the fruits of one's genuine labor.

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How the Croatian Government Uses Sports and Individual Athletes to Promote Tourism

The article explains how Croatia uses sport as a powerful tool to promote tourism, strengthen national identity, and improve its international image. Sport and tourism are closely connected because sporting events attract visitors, media attention, and investment, while tourism benefits from the global visibility created by athletes and competitions.

The paper describes sports tourism as travel connected to sporting activities, either through participation or watching events. Croatia has strong potential for sports tourism because of its coastline, islands, mountains, and climate, which support activities such as sailing, cycling, skiing, hiking, and tennis.

A major theme of the article is the use of sport as “soft power.” Successful athletes and teams improve Croatia’s international reputation and help create a positive national brand. Famous Croatian athletes such as Luka Modrić, Janica Kostelić, Blanka Vlašić, Goran Ivanišević and Marin Čilić are presented as informal ambassadors who connect Croatia with excellence, resilience, and professionalism.

The article highlights Croatian football as the country’s strongest sports brand. The greatest example was the 2018 FIFA World Cup, when Croatia reached the final and gained worldwide media attention. During the tournament, Croatia was promoted globally not only as a football nation but also as an attractive Mediterranean tourist destination. After the World Cup, visits to the Croatian National Tourist Board website reportedly increased by about 250%, while international recognition of Croatia rose significantly. Tourist arrivals and airport traffic also increased in 2018.

The paper also discusses important sports events that help tourism development, including the Croatia Open Umag, the Boris Hanžeković Memorial, and the Snow Queen Trophy. These events help extend tourism beyond the summer season and support regional economic growth. The Croatia Open Umag, for example, attracts more than 100,000 visitors and combines sport with gastronomy and entertainment.

Another important point is government investment in sports infrastructure. The Croatian Ministry of Tourism and Sport increased public funding for sports projects between 2024 and 2026, supporting stadiums, sports facilities, and regional development. These investments

aim to improve tourism competitiveness and encourage sports participation.

In conclusion, the article argues that Croatia successfully uses sport as a strategy for tourism promotion, economic development, and international branding. Despite being a small country, Croatia has achieved global visibility through sporting success, especially football, and continues to use athletes and sporting events to strengthen its tourism industry and national image.

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Does Local Radio Have a Future?

Local news is considered vital to the functioning of local communities and the engagement of citizens in local democracies (Fenton 2011; McLeod, Scheufele and Moy 1999; Nielsen 2015). Local radio's role is to bring to the fore issues relevant to the local communities it serves. However, local radio in the UK is at a turning point, with the BBC reducing its local radio output and commercial radio, largely owned by a small number of media groups, moving away from localism while maintaining only a minimal local news output. The remaining independent commercial stations often maintain strong links with the local communities they serve but struggle to provide any substantive local news coverage.

Using the theoretical frameworks of the public sphere (Habermas 1989; 1997) and localism (Napoli 2001; Cowling 2005), the present study aims to contribute to a limited body of knowledge on the role of local radio as seen by those who make it and those who listen to it. It employs extensive one-to-one interviews with 30 local BBC and commercial radio journalists and station managers, as well as four listener focus groups with 16 participants in total, in order to answer the following research questions:

- How do local radio journalists in the UK reflect on their experience of practice in meeting the informational needs of their listeners?
- How do local radio journalists and listeners perceive the role of radio in providing news?
- What are the views of both groups regarding the future of local radio in the UK?

The study finds that both local radio journalists and listeners are aware that radio in the UK is at a turning point, with numerous challenges lying ahead. Journalists understand that resources are shrinking while the competition for consumers' attention is growing. They say that traditional roles of local radio as provider of local news and forum for debate are under threat as new, digital platforms offer an alternative. In the context of major changes in the ways radio is produced and consumed, the present study shows that commercial radio seems best placed to take the advantage of the new technologies available,

while the BBC and independent stations see their strengths in providing for under-served communities. All journalists interviewed still express optimism regarding the short-to-medium future of local radio.

Listeners, however, point out they are trying to make sense of the fast-changing and “overwhelming” media ecosystem. They say they value local radio and listen to it; they express a desire to stay informed, but reluctantly admit that in the current global context, local news does not matter to them very much. Their sense of civic duty is implied but does not seem to be the major determinant of listening habits.

The present study contributes to a limited body of research on contemporary local radio. It does so at the time of significant changes the medium is going through and against a great deal of uncertainty regarding its future.

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Media Polarization, Manipulative Practices and Democratic Vulnerability in Small States (The Case of Georgia)

Media polarization in contemporary information environments is increasingly shaped not only by internal political divisions within countries, but also by communicative and manipulative practices embedded in digital media systems that have become part of everyday life. The transformation of mass communication has introduced new challenges: algorithm-driven platforms, emotionally charged narratives, and fragmented information flows have fundamentally altered how audiences access news and interpret social reality. As a result, new patterns of media consumption and perception have emerged.

These dynamics are particularly visible in small and vulnerable media markets, where audience fragmentation and the influence of so-called “information bubbles” have significantly undermined public trust in the media. In such contexts, polarization is intensified not merely through political competition, but through structural features of contemporary communication environments.

The present study examines the relationship between media polarization and manipulative communication practices, using Georgia as a case study. Rather than approaching polarization solely as a consequence of partisan rivalry, the research conceptualizes it as a communicative process shaped by media agenda-setting, platform logics, and audience behavior. The analysis focuses on mechanisms such as agenda-setting, framing, emotionalization, selective exposure, and narrative fragmentation, whose combined effects contribute to the formation of polarized media environments. Digital platforms play a central role in this process, as they tend to privilege emotionally engaging content, accelerate the circulation of simplified narratives, and limit access to diverse perspectives.

Special attention is given to the erosion of public trust in journalism and to the transformation of journalists’ professional roles within polarized media systems. In small media markets, journalists increasingly operate under conditions of economic vulnerability, audience dependency, and algorithmic visibility. Such pressures may blur the boundary between information and interpretation, encouraging media actors to adopt communication strategies oriented toward engagement rather than contextual accuracy. As a result, journalists may struggle to maintain their traditional role as neutral informers and

instead become active participants in polarized communication ecosystems. This development further complicates issues of credibility, professionalism, and ethical responsibility.

Methodologically, the study is based on qualitative content analysis and discourse analysis of selected media outputs and digital communication practices. This approach allows for the identification of recurring patterns of manipulation, emotional framing, and narrative construction across different media platforms. Media polarization is examined as a structural factor of democratic vulnerability in small states, where limited media pluralism, concentrated information flows, and weak self-regulatory mechanisms amplify the effects of manipulative communication strategies.

By placing the Georgian case within a broader comparative framework, the study contributes to ongoing international debates on media polarization, manipulative communication, audience fragmentation, and democratic resilience. The findings are relevant for scholars working in mass communication, digital media, journalism studies, and media ethics, and aim to support interdisciplinary and cross-national academic dialogue on contemporary communication challenges.

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A Netnographic Analysis of TikTok Interactions in Indigenous Languages: The Case of Tshivenda and ChiShona

Preserving and revitalising indigenous languages is a pressing global concern, given the perceived threat posed by dominant languages like English, French, Spanish, and Mandarin. The United Nations reports a disconcerting rate of at least two indigenous languages dying every month, leading to the loss of valuable indigenous knowledge embedded in each language. As a result, language scholars are turning to advanced communication technologies as potential tools for indigenous language revitalisation. This comparative research focuses on how TikTok, a prominent digital platform for social interaction, is used by Chishona and Tshivenda speakers. The paper evaluates how the two language speakers are utilising their indigenous language of TikTok to establish the role of Facebook in the preservation and revitalisation of indigenous languages. It explores how TikTok may contribute to the ongoing efforts to safeguard and revive languages in the face of digital colonialism. This study adopts a netnographic approach, focusing on analysing user-generated content in TikTok public interactions where Tshivenda and ChiShona are used. Netnography enables the exploration of digital cultural expressions and community discourse without requiring face-to-face interaction. Instead, the study uses content analyses for data collection, observing ethical considerations such as confidentiality, privacy, and the researcher's potential influence on data interpretation. The study will outline the conclusions and their corresponding implications.

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The Impact of Different Resistance Training Volumes on Physical Frailty in Institutionalized Older Adults – Preliminary Findings of the TrackFrailty Project

Encouraging supervised exercise strategies in residential care facilities is of utmost importance to prevent and reverse the high rates of physical frailty. Given the vulnerability of these individuals, it is critical to determine the minimum strength training (ST) volume required to reverse physical frailty and improve functional performance. This study analyzed the impact of a 10-week ST cycle on the reversal of physical frailty in institutionalized older adults. This study, which is part of the TrackFrailty project (ClinicalTrials ID NCT06812286; version 2), reports the preliminary findings of the first ST cycle. In a randomized controlled trial, fifty-five institutionalized individuals, all considered physically frail or pre-frail at baseline according to the Fried frailty criteria, were randomly assigned to a less-volume (LV; n=19; 83±12 years), more-volume (MV; n=18; 85±8 years), or an active control group (CG; n=18; 85±5 years). Participants in LV and MV completed a 10-week ST cycle, which consisted of two sessions per week, eight exercises (chair squat, medicine ball throw, knee extension, shoulder press, calf raise, biceps curls, lateral raises, and chair stand plus walking), 1-2 sets per exercise of 2-5 repetitions (LV) or 1-3 sets per exercise of 6-10 repetitions (MV), and intensities progressing from 5-15% of body weight (weight vests) and 1-5 kg (dumbbells, ankle weights, and medicine balls). The LV performed approximately 1000 total repetitions, whereas the MV group completed approximately 2000. Participants in CG performed a supervised stretching routine twice per week. The primary outcome was the change in frailty criteria over 10 weeks. Secondary outcomes included changes in the Short Physical Performance Battery (SPPB), handgrip strength, medicine ball throw, and 10-m and 6-minute walking. A repeated-measures ANOVA (three groups; pre-test and post-test) was used to analyze the data. The results showed no differences between groups in

frailty status at the pre-test and post-test. The MV showed a trend towards significance in frailty status reversal (a decrease of 0.2 points; $p = 0.06$). There were no differences between groups in the secondary outcomes at the pre-test; at the post-test, only a significant difference was observed between LV and CG in SPPB scores (8.6 vs. 6.5 points; $p = 0.03$). Both LV and MV significantly increased SPPB scores ($p < 0.001$ and $p < 0.03$), handgrip strength (both $p < 0.001$), and 10-m walking ($p < 0.10$ and $p = 0.049$) after 10 weeks, while only LV also increased medicine ball throw ($p = 0.03$). Finally, CG increased handgrip strength ($p = 0.01$) and 10-m walking ($p = 0.04$). Preliminary results from the first 10-week ST cycle integrated into the TrackFrailty project showed that neither a total volume of approximately 1000 repetitions nor one of approximately 2000 repetitions was considered sufficient to reverse physical frailty in institutionalized older adults. However, both ST volumes were effective in improving physical performance outcomes in this population, with the LV group demonstrating greater efficiency (50% less volume). Future ST cycles will be important to determine the effectiveness of a low-volume approach in reversing physical frailty status in institutionalized older adults.

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Unifying Theories of Journalism Through the Principles of Quantum Physics

This paper argues that theories of journalism are more than the separate analytical paths they appear to be. Deep down, they all are emanations of the same primal human need to communicate and to understand the fullness of why. Each in its essence is part of a harmonious whole. To make that case, this paper draws from Oleksandr Kholod's novel concept of "quantum journalism." It situates the production and consumption of news as a macro social activity organized by the principles of the micro realm of subatomic particles. Likewise, theories about journalism also would be rooted in the quantum and as such, in a state of fundamental unity. The proposition was tested by calibrating the elements of two (seemingly) unlike perspectives – news ecology and journalism field theory – to the principles of quantum physics and assessing their fit.

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Improving Functional and Interactive Health Literacy at the Community Level: The Nexus of Indigenous Language Radio Programming

In South Africa, health literacy is inadequate. Health literacy improvement initiatives contend with a plethora of impediments, including differences in education, languages spoken, “a racially defined political and socioeconomic structure” (Onyenankeya and Salawu, 2019, p. 33), and a binary health system that often confines disadvantaged individuals and communities to ineffectual public health facilities. These structural, socioeconomic and cultural factors result in a significant variation in health literacy among the populace, where only a few privileged individuals can access, understand, and use information and services, leaving the majority to struggle with health illiteracy.

Inadequate health literacy is particularly problematic in rural communities, where residents often face greater difficulty accessing health information. The difficulties in accessing health information hinder the capacity of these marginalized communities to make informed health-related decisions and take appropriate actions (Obaremi and Olatokun, 2022; Ouchene et al., 2024; Wallace et al., 2021). Therefore, health literacy initiatives face the arduous challenge of bridging the educational and language divide and providing equitable access to health information simultaneously.

This paper explored how indigenous language radio programming, such as Umhlobo Wenene’s (UWFM’s) *Khanyisa Kukhanye Mhlobo* show, could be leveraged to promote and improve functional and interactive among rural communities.

A qualitative methodology, grounded in the theory of self-efficacy was employed, and data were collected through a combination of in-depth interviews and audio content analysis.

The results suggest that *Khanyisa Kukhanye Mhlobo* can serve as a valuable media outlet for disseminating accurate and reliable health-related information to the public, particularly to marginalized communities. Using the first language or mother tongue and combining socially relevant health messages and stories that resonate with the listeners’ way of life and experiences makes the Show relatable and inspires trust, making the information more effective and actionable.

Consistent with previous findings, the study suggests that when health literacy is offered in a participatory manner and language spoken by the audience, it can increase the uptake of health information, modify behavior and empower individuals to participate actively in community health initiatives.

The findings underscore the importance of public health agencies and NGOs utilizing indigenous language media platforms to deliver health literacy interventions. The results of this study provide insight into health literacy and behavior change among a specific African population and indigenous language radio, a medium rarely explored in mainstream academic endeavours.

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Population, GDP per Capita, and Qualification for the 2026 FIFA World Cup: Evidence from UEFA Men's National Teams

This paper examines the role of population size and GDP per capita in determining the probability of World Cup qualification among the 52 UEFA member nations competing in the 2026 FIFA World Cup European qualifying rounds. Using a probit model alongside logit and OLS linear probability model estimates for robustness, the study finds that population size is a statistically significant and dominant determinant of qualification, consistent with the hypothesis that larger countries draw from deeper talent pools. GDP per capita is positive but only borderline significant, suggesting that within Europe's relatively wealthy context, income differences play a secondary role. Predicted probabilities identify eight overachievers—most notably Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia—and three underachievers, with Italy as the most structurally surprising non-qualifier.

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Outdoor Temperature and Attendance at Indoor Swimming Centres: Evidence from Hourly Administrative Data

It seems that multiple ticket holders are more sensitive to temperature than single ticket holders. They have an option of postponing the swimming center visit to the next day, but the single ticket visitors might have more restrictions with their time schedule due to obligations with children or work. Most of the swimming centers in the city of Vantaa have not just swimming pool but also a gym. Several different ticket alternatives are available, single ticket users pay more for a visit than multiple ticket holders. In addition, the morning ticket is cheaper than the normal ticket. Since the weather conditions in the winter are very cold, open water swimming is not possible for most people, during the summer, open water swimming is possible and free while the ticket to a swimming pool costs about 5€. Therefore, the outside temperature and swimming center visits should have a negative correlation. This is verified with highly detailed data from all five swimming centers in Vantaa.

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How to Win the Attention War? Politically Motivated Discreditation of Media in Latvia

This study examines politically motivated discreditation of professional media as a strategic intervention in the securitization process, conceptualized as part of a broader struggle over attention and communicative authority. Focusing on Latvia, former USSR state and relatively new democracy, the research analyzes how political actors deploy attacks against journalists on the microblogging platform X (formerly Twitter) in order to reshape securitization channels and to gain advantage in what can be described as an attention war surrounding security-related issues.

The study is grounded in securitization theory (Buzan, Wæver & de Wilde, 1998), which conceptualizes security as a performative process whereby political actors seek to convince a relevant audience that a particular issue constitutes an existential threat requiring extraordinary measures. While securitization scholarship has extensively theorized speech acts, actors, the role of communication channels through which securitizing moves circulate remains comparatively under-theorized. Channels are often treated as neutral or technical conduits, rather than as politically contested arenas. This study addresses that gap by placing communication channels - and struggles over their legitimacy - at the center of securitization analysis.

Building on the author's original analytical model of the securitization process, the study conceptualizes communication channels as a distinct component alongside actor, message, audience, and context. From this perspective, professional journalism is understood as a historically central securitization channel that translates elite discourse into publicly accessible, credible, and accountable narratives. Attacks on journalists are therefore not peripheral to securitization but constitute attempts to weaken, bypass, or ideologically reconfigure these channels.

Empirically, the study focuses on Latvian political elites - members of the Saeima (Parliament) and government ministers—and their communication on X in late 2025 and early 2026, a period marked by intensified security discourse. Although no more than approximately 5% of Latvia's population actively uses X, the platform plays a disproportionate role in securitization dynamics. It functions as an elite arena where securitizing moves are articulated, contested, and

strategically amplified into mainstream media. This configuration creates conditions in which attention becomes a scarce resource and control over visibility is integral to successful securitization.

Within this environment, media discreditation emerges as a deliberate securitization tactic. By portraying journalists as biased, hostile, or politically motivated, political actors seek to undermine trust in professional media and to destabilize their role as legitimate intermediaries between securitizing actors and audiences. Such attacks are frequently embedded within securitizing narratives and function to redirect attention, pre-empt critical scrutiny, and consolidate greater control over the circulation and interpretation of security claims.

Methodologically, the study employs a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative content analysis with qualitative narrative analysis. The findings demonstrate that media delegitimization is systematic and closely intertwined with securitization moves. The study contributes to securitization theory by foregrounding attention and channel contestation as central dynamics of contemporary security politics, with significant implications for democratic accountability, media credibility, and the public's capacity to recognize and evaluate security threats.

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&

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Nonlinear Optimization of Weekly Training Plans for Competitive Tennis Players

This project develops a constrained nonlinear optimization model for designing a competitive tennis player's weekly training schedule. The central challenge is that athletes must train enough to improve performance while avoiding workloads that increase injury risk. To represent this tradeoff mathematically, the objective combines (1) a concave performance benefit function capturing diminishing returns from training and (2) a convex injury-risk penalty that grows more than linearly with high-stress workload while allowing recovery activity to reduce risk. The model incorporates realistic linear constraints, including a limit on total weekly training time, a cap on high-intensity on-court hours, and a minimum recovery requirement. First-order necessary optimality conditions are derived using the Lagrangian and Karush-Kuhn-Tucker (KKT) framework for inequality-constrained nonlinear programs. The nonlinear program is solved numerically in MATLAB using `fmincon`, with the SQP algorithm and solver settings. Sensitivity analyses illustrate how optimal allocations shift under different risk-performance tradeoffs and stricter recovery rules. Overall, the project shows how nonlinear constrained optimization can support weekly workload planning decisions in high-performance tennis settings.

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&

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The Relative Influence of Brand Trust Dimensions

Brand trust is the belief that a branded product, person, or organization will consistently deliver on its expressed or implied promises. Consistent perceptions of performance reduce uncertainty and mitigate associated perceived risks – two factors which have long been a focus of communication research. This study explores how four hypothesized dimensions of brand trust (authenticity, ability, affinity, and advocacy) impact a well-known measure of brand trust.

The fundamental question of whether one component of brand trust may matter more than another has not been previously addressed. We analyze published cross sectional data from a panel of over 13,188 adults for 405 firms to answer this question.

All brand trust observations are converted from a rank-number to a percentile: $1 - \text{firm rank}/\text{max rank}$ in the sample. This is a percentile where a value close to 1 means it is the most trusted firm, and a value close to zero is a lesser trusted firm. We did this both for the overall brand trust variable, as well as for each of the four components of brand trust.

We use simple quantile regressions to test hypotheses. Regressions select the median for the dependent variable as the quantile of interest. Overall brand trust percentile is the dependent variable. Each of the percentile rankings for the components represent independent variables.

Quantile regression allows for t-tests on the individual parameter estimates. However, there is no R-square for quantile regression. It is a linear programming problem which attempts to minimize weighted linear deviations from the quantile of interest. Instead of an R-square, deviations are measured as mean absolute percentages, or MAPE, (rather than mean square percentage errors). Overall goodness of fit is measured by a “pseudo R-square”.

If we have an unrestricted model, and a restricted version of that model, $\text{pseudo R-square} = 1 - (\text{Unrestricted MAPE}/\text{Restricted MAPE})$. The higher the pseudo R square, the more that the restriction harms the model’s ability to predict the dependent variable. In other words, higher pseudo R-squares mean that the restriction is invalid. Put yet another

way, higher pseudo R-square values indicate the relative impact on any variable that is omitted from the unrestricted model is larger.

All of the coefficient estimates are significant, so all four variables matter. The first pseudo-R-square compares all brand trust component variables included in the model versus including none of them. Jointly, the pseudo-R-square is very large.

Subsequent pseudo R-squares compare the change in pseudo-R-square by excluding one brand trust dimension ranking at a time. Comparing these second sets of pseudo-R-squares across regressions (where, again, in each regression one component variable is omitted at a time) allows us to gauge which component matters most. Affinity rankings matter the most in overall brand trust, followed by advocacy, and ability. Authenticity is least important by a substantial margin.

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Integrating Socio-Ecological Approach for Recognizing Sport Activities as Cultural Ecosystem Services Provided by Forest Ecosystems

This study advances the understanding of sport activities as an integral component of Cultural Ecosystem Services (CES) provided by forest ecosystems and green infrastructure. Although forest-based sports (such as hiking, trail running, mountain biking, and orienteering) generate substantial cultural, social, and health-related benefits, they remain insufficiently represented in ecosystem-services assessments, spatial planning, and natural-capital evaluations. Building on recent bibliometric evidence and extended conceptual analyses, the study examines the functional linkages between forest conditions, green infrastructure design, accessibility, and the delivery of sport-related CES. The Parangalitsa Reserve (Rila Mountains, Bulgaria) is used as a case-study region to demonstrate how high-value forest landscapes and their surrounding buffer zones can support the integration of sport-related CES, assessed by implementation of sociological studies performed among different stakeholders. Particular attention is given to identify the perspectives for utilization the potential of protected areas, where zonation systems (core areas, buffer zones, transition zones) provide a governance framework for balancing conservation, recreation, and sport. Buffer zones emerge as multifunctional spaces where sport activities can be planned and managed to enhance CES while safeguarding eco-sociological integrity. Integrating sport activities into CES assessments and mapping can significantly strengthen territorial planning, highlight the societal value of natural capital, and support multifunctional landscapes that maintain biodiversity and deliver long-term public benefits.

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