Chapter 16
Nature and Characteristics of the Sport Industry and Its Current Trends Impacting the Industry

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ABSTRACT

Global competition for fans and other stakeholders have caused increased pressures to maintain sport organizations’ power and influence through e-commerce and social media. The ever evolving nature of sport managing research demands a reexamination of some of the major trends in the discipline that are impacted directly/indirectly by electronic mediation and its technology, especially social media. Although there are numerous trends that are occurring in sport management as a discipline, but this study concentrates on the role of ecommerce within organizations. The major trends examined are commercialization of sport, the role of mass communication to appeal to the needs of users, the need of engagement by fans, and the social needs for sports to deal with the epidemic of physical inactivity of the populace.

INTRODUCTION

General vs. Sport Management

There are many major similarities and major differences associated with sport management from general management. True, both general business management and the sport industries must deal with marketing forces in selling/advertising their products and/or services and, if possible, operate with a positive cash flow. However, sport industry and its associated research are rare unique, according to Pedersen (2013), since sport industry has an enviable position in that it has a universal significance, ubiquitous presence, and overall importance to its growth and viability in society. Only a few corresponding examples in the non-sport world comes to mind that have similar characteristics, but most are nonprofit entities, such
as healthcare and general public services. The major trend in sport management that is changing its characteristics is its research identity. Every academic discipline struggles with evolutionary changes in society attributes and how contemporary events may be framed in such a way that fits a predictive theory. The physical sciences generally have years of experimentation and active discourse on theory development to frame future research propositions and guide young scholars. However, in many of the social sciences, which do not lead itself to active experimentation in most cases, there is a trend to let current events, economic and political upheaval, and public opinion shape research agendas.

Sport management as an academic discipline is similarly struggling with establishing a sound theoretical framework to guide scholarly research. As research agendas are formulated in sport-related research, what are the theoretical underpinnings or paradigms that support and give credibility to such research? Unfortunately, this popularity greatly influences what is considered relevant themes or research threads, especially among doctoral students. Both Frisby (2005) and Pederson (2013) have commented that much research in sport management has been done at the micro-level, catering to new and emerging issues that have caught the attention of the public. Since American sports are becoming part of a global entertainment network, as noted by Helland (2007) and Lever & Wheeler (1993), all of its products and services, including cyberspace, are subjected to intensified commercialization.

**Purpose of Present Study**

The purpose of this present study is to explore the ever evolving nature of sport management research, to make the case for some of the major trends in the discipline that are impacted directly/indirectly by electronic mediation and its technology, especially social media. As there are numerous trends that are occurring in sport management as a discipline, but this study will concentrate on the following: Commercialization of sport, the role of mass communication to appeal to the needs of users, the need of engagement by fans, and the social needs for sports to deal with the epidemic of physical inactivity of the populace.

**MAJOR TRENDS WITHIN SPORT MANAGEMENT IMPACTED BY ELECTRONIC MEDIATION**

**Commercialization in Sport**

Although the beginning of commercialization in sport had humble beginning, now the astronomical costs associated with this new sports/media complex are being justified as part of giving valuable exposure to new series/entertainment specials through advertising spots and products. The great transformational changes in both technology and society’s need for mass consumption (both services and goods), has led to an almost insatiable appetite sports to be treated as a consumable for the general commodification of leisure time. Many of the changes in global sports are the direct result and reflection of the existing pattern of growth through consumerism. In-other-terms, a growth of consumerism may over take the need for businesses to promote socially responsible behavior or citizenship. For example, one of the current trends in business is the opposite; there is a renewed call for ethical development among AACSB-accredited institutions to promote a more balance approach (e.g.; the 3Ps, profit, planet, and people). Unfortunately, it is natural for economic incentives to take over virtually all sectors of traditional life.