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The reciprocal and influential connection between sport marketing and management and the sport sciences

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Abstract: Sport marketing and management have become significant professions within the global landscape of the sport and business industry. Sport marketing and management have had a historical association with the sport sciences; however, there has been a trend to change the focus towards a business orientation at both the educational and professional levels. Does that mean sport marketing and management are no longer important to the sport sciences? The author seeks to answer that question by researching the biophysical, psychosocial and sociocultural domains of sport science to determine whether each domain plays an integral role in sport marketing and management while also enhancing the ability of sport scientists to advance their fields of study.

The research shows that, because of the hybrid nature of sport management, there is a need for cross-disciplinary education in sport sciences and sport marketing and management. This requires educators to recognise that interdisciplinary dialogue between sport studies and management needs to take place to assure the future growth of the profession across disciplines. In addition, there is a need for various elements within the professions of sport marketing, sport management and sport sciences to build effective and efficient relationships, collaborations and cooperative efforts.

Keywords: sport marketing; sport management; sport sciences; biophysical domain; psychosocial domain; sociocultural domain.

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1 Introduction

Entrepreneurship involves the organisation, management, and assumption of risk of a business or enterprise (Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary, 2008). An entrepreneur is someone who puts all of the factors of production (physical, human, and financial resources) together to make a good or service (Sawyer *et al.*, 2004). Therefore, to be entrepreneurial means using these factors of production to be profitable.

These definitions support the notion of the entrepreneurial nature of the sport sector, which has become a significant part of the landscape within the global business industry. The sport sector is one of the largest and fastest growing industries in the USA, evidenced by it being far more than twice the size of the US auto industry, and seven times the size of the movie industry (SportBusiness Journal, 2007). Total Sport Promotion, a niche sport management agency founded to provide a comprehensive range of services, reported that the UK market has an annual worth of almost £17 billion (Total Sport Promotion, 2007). According to data provided by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (2006), the entire sport, recreation, and leisure industry in Australia is worth in the neighbourhood of \$65 billion AUD. Further evidence is provided by the National Sporting Goods Association (2007) Research Newsletter, where it was reported by The NPD Group, Inc. (a provider of consumer and retail information) that sporting goods continue to be one of the fastest growing segments of the sports industry, with the world consumption of sporting goods reaching \$256 billion in 2006.

Entrepreneurship is the engine that drives any successful industry or economy (Morrison *et al.*, 1999). As documented above, this business concept has a significant role in the sport sector. Sport marketers and sport managers play a crucial role in planning, organising, leading and controlling the entrepreneurial nature of the sport sector. This is accomplished by:

- understanding consumers through market research, managing information systems, and the analysis of consumer behaviour
- managing logistics related to products and services including purchasing, inventory control, supply chains, and sales
- administrating promotional aspects of the business or enterprise through advertising, sponsorship, and communication management
- operating specialised areas within the sport sector including retail management and e-business/e-commerce
- recognising the differences and intricacies of the domestic, international, and global sport sub-sectors (Schwarz and Hunter, 2008).

With this recognition of sport being an integral part of the business landscape, there have been questions regarding the link between sport marketing and management, and the sport sciences. Historically, sport marketing and management programmes at institutions of higher education have been housed in physical education and sport sciences departments. Recently, there has been a shift towards relocating these programmes into business schools. A main reason for this shift is because of the realisation of the constant evolution in the entrepreneurial nature of the sport sector, specifically related to the innovative, proactive and risk taking nature of sport. Support for this includes:

- the unique qualities of sport products induce innovative behaviour on the part of (sport) organisations (Desbordes, 2001)
- directors (of sport programmes) need to be proactive by monitoring personnel, facility and financial changes; by listing problems from the previous year, and by creating an agenda to improve the programme while trying to divine what the future holds for their sports programmes (Hoch, 2007)
- risk is inherent in any business, and the business of sport is no exception – standard business risk stems from variability in the relevant economic environment (*e.g.*, fans' available income, ticket prices, fluctuations in the markets for branded goods or broadcasting rights, *etc.*), and sport business is also risky because players' performance is uncertain and to a great deal depends on the specific team members recruited, the coach, the goals of the management, and the way all of these are synchronised (Kedar-Levy and Bar-Eli, 2008).

The result of this realisation is that sport marketing and management have become more acceptable majors within business schools. However, a major question has arisen as to whether sport marketing and management are no longer important to the sport sciences? On the contrary, sport marketing and management play a crucial role in all aspects of the sport sciences. Unfortunately, many do not see the connection – believing that both sport marketing and management focuses solely on the business aspects of sport, and sport sciences only take into consideration the biophysical (the study of biological structures and processes), psychosocial (the interaction between social and psychological behaviour factors), and sociocultural (the relationship between social and cultural factors) domains of sport. In reality, the business focus of sport marketing and management actually enhances the sport sciences. This is discussed in greater detail below.

2 Biophysical domain

The biophysical domain focuses on physical activity from the sciences of biomechanics, exercise physiology, nutrition, and sports medicine (Woods, 2007). While this domain of sport science focuses on the kinematic and kinetic aspects of physical laws as applied to human movement (Rhodes University, 2006), the application of these biophysical areas within the sport industry is often interrelated to marketing concepts. One example is a study that analysed the effectiveness of social marketing interventions for health improvement in the areas of diet, physical activity, and substance misuse, and that these interventions can work with a range of target groups, in different settings, and can work upstream as well as with individuals (Gordon *et al.*, 2006). Another example is a study

conducted to analyse the aging population in the USA, where it was determined that skill in marketing to the (mature) consumer is increasingly important as related to articulating the needs for specific strategies to address the changes related to the biophysical aging process (Moschis *et al.*, 1996).

From an ethical standpoint, a study investigating the nutritional intake, physical performance capacity, and specific anthropometric variables for a group of school-aged children found that there are a number of issues related to responsible and ethical marketing that are crucial to articulating advice to this population (Deriemaeker *et al.*, 2007). Responsible and ethical marketing can only be done if there is sufficient knowledge of the key elements of the nutritional, health and fitness status of the target population (Thackeray and Neiger, 2000). Using scientific evidence concerning the situation in the target population may lead to more efficient ethical marketing as a part of the health promotion. Also the importance of good social marketing towards positive behaviour changes in youth may increase the effectiveness of health promotion (Thackeray and Neiger, 2000). As a result, one could then surmise that the positive relationship between health behaviours and changes in health behaviour can be a marketing advantage for sport scientists if used in a proper way (O'Halloran *et al.*, 2001).

Since nutritional habits and physical activity are often addressed simultaneously because they are important components of a healthy lifestyle, children ready for physical activity behaviour may be more open for good nutritional practice and vice versa (Deriemaeker *et al.*, 2007). As a consequence, the link between health behaviours can be used as a marketing tool by positively affecting the choice and behaviour of children based on rational and ethical considerations. Behaviours of the youngsters may easily be influenced and this may compromise health behaviour in later life; therefore, marketing campaigns, and more so those addressed to youngsters, need to be positively health-oriented with the different aspects of health in their proper context (Deriemaeker *et al.*, 2007).

In addition to marketing, there are also concepts in management related to the various components of the biophysical domain. One study determined that athletic training graduates have been increasingly employed in private sector settings, including sports medicine clinics, hospitals, professional sport, industrial fitness programmes, wellness centres, and community centres (Moss and Parks, 1991). The conclusions from this study suggested that curricula should be developed to prepare students for positions requiring not only the science-based expertise traditionally associated with athletic training, but also the business-related expertise associated with management positions in private settings (Moss and Parks, 1991).

This has resulted in institutions of higher education looking toward offering degrees that are focused on sport science and business. This is supported through interviews with fitness professionals who discussed the need for fitness related degrees to be also business-minded and experience-based in order to help elevate the status of fitness professionals in a time of high demand (Shaver, 2007). Support for this comes from interviews with professionals and educators who stated that:

- without business and experiential components, the degrees are too general and makes the graduate vulnerable to experience that they have never learned in a collegiate setting including customer service skills, interpersonal relationship skills, and marketing

- students who want to major in fitness often begin in exercise science curriculums and find they want to work with people and not be scientists – hence the need to take leadership and management classes in combination with the hard sciences
- personal fitness training concentrations should cover topics related to aging, injury prevention, nutrition, business and marketing, and weight management
- by incorporating degrees emphasising the skill sets that large health clubs to small personal training studios have been requesting for a number of years, not only will the students graduating from degree programmes have better job opportunities, but also employers will be able to increase the value of their businesses by having a well trained and educated staff to design exercise programmes for many members with different health concerns and goals, and to have employees who know how to implement the proper systems to administer and manage the business aspects of a health and fitness department (Shaver, 2007).

3 Psychosocial domain

The psychosocial domain of sport science focuses on physical activity from the science of psychology, including sport psychology, motor learning and behaviour, and pedagogy (Woods, 2007). The specific areas of interest in this domain include perceptual motor-development and the biological basis of skill acquisition, motivation to meet the demands of varying situations, the impact of modern living and of sedentary life styles, and the social consequences of these behaviours, together with the management of stress in order to achieve superior performance (Rhodes University, 2006).

This area of sport science has a correlated relationship in sport marketing to consumer behaviour. In sport consumer behaviour, sport marketers utilise basic cultural, personal, social, and psychological principles to explain how those factors directly affect individual purchasing and consumption behaviour of participants, fans, spectators, volunteers, community and corporate partners. It also shows how individual and environmental factors, socialisation, and participation directly influence the decision-making process for sport consumption (Schwarz and Hunter, 2008). One study that articulates this concept showed that factors such as psychosocial involvement with sports influenced Black consumers' attendance at Historically Black College/University (HBCU) sports (Armstrong, 2002). The analysis revealed that the intensity of ethnic identification and psychosocial involvement with HBCU sports significantly influenced HBCU sports attendance frequency, and psychosocial involvement with HBCU sports exerted a profound and positive influence on general sport consumption (Armstrong, 2002).

In addition to the theoretical association of marketing to the psychosocial domain, professional application of marketing techniques is becoming more prevalent, especially for sport psychologists. This is confirmed in a study that examined current issues concerning the sport psychology profession and the role of marketing in professional service organisations (DeFrancesco and Cronin, 1998). Results showed that there is significant need for identifying marketing techniques and strategies to enhance the career opportunities of the sport psychologist, and that few sport psychologists have the entrepreneurial skills needed to reach alternative target markets (DeFrancesco and Cronin, 1998).

The psychosocial domain also is connected to managerial concepts through human resource management and organisational behaviour. Human resources, which are critical to organisational effectiveness, must be effectively managed. Human resource management relies on the ability to explain and predict organisational behaviour, which is the attitudes and behaviours of individuals and groups in the organisation; their satisfaction, commitment, performance, and so on (Doherty, 1998). These psychosocial concepts of management can be tied directly back to the psychographic profiles of consumers through the use of the Lifestyle Inventory, an adapted version of Modified Likert Scale which centres on the measurement of psychographic data by taking into account the values and personality traits of people as reflected in their unique activities, interests, and opinions toward their work, leisure time, and purchases (Schwarz and Hunter, 2008). This information can be easily stylised for use by sport scientists in their evaluation of psychological, behavioural, pedagogical, and cognitive processes of individuals in a variety of settings.

This is directly related to the managerial concept of organisational effectiveness. There is a growing body of work within sport psychology and organisational stress literature that state that ineffective sport organisations compromise athletic performance, but there has been little effort made to bridge the gap between management and sport, despite constituent similarities. With most research carried out in non-sport settings, the crossover of findings to sport has not been made potentially leaving practitioners lacking in conceptual, theoretical, and applied knowledge (Lee *et al.*, 2007). As a result, a study was conducted to review both the mainstream and sport literatures to identify common themes linked to effectiveness. Results highlighted ten dimensions of organisational effectiveness – organisational culture, resources and support, communication and atmosphere, long-term planning, internal procedures, activity level, efficiency of throughput process, realisation of aims, interest in athletes, and calibre of board and external liaisons – and that both interpersonal and environmental dynamics facilitate the effective running of an organisation (Lee *et al.*, 2007).

From a professional standpoint, the link between the psychosocial domain and management is shown in a study that concluded there is a link between excellence in performance and business because there are direct links that can be drawn as related to organisational issues, stress, leadership, high-performing teams, and one-to-one coaching/consulting (Jones, 2002). A further conclusion was that the principles of elite performance in sport are easily transferable to the business context, and also that sport has a considerable amount to learn from excellence in business (Jones, 2002).

4 Sociocultural domain

The sociocultural domain focuses on physical activity from the sciences of sociology, history, and philosophy (Woods, 2007). In the area of sport sociology, the sociocultural domain is recognised as being an integral component of sport marketing and management. Sport sociology is the study of sport and physical activity within the context of the social conditions and culture in which people live (Woods, 2007), and is articulated through topics in sport marketing and management related to ethics (ex. ambush marketing), culture (ex. subcultures, cross-cultures, social setting, social class), and morality (ex. social responsibility, professional practice, reasoning). Evidence to support this claim is shown by institutions of higher education requiring within the

sport marketing and/or management major at least one course ranging in title from Sports in Society, Sociology of Sport, and Ethics and Sociocultural Issues in Sport. Further evidence is provided by the Sport Management Program Review Council (SMPRC) guidelines for programme approval of sport management education programmes, administered cooperatively by the North American Society of Sport Management (NASSM) and the National Association for Sport and Physical Education (NASPE), which has a required content area of socio-cultural dimensions including sport and gender, race, and disability; violence and deviant behaviour in sport; sport aggression; extrinsic and intrinsic motivation in sport; international cultures and sport; Ancient and modern Olympics; sport in education (intercollegiate, recreation, interscholastic, international); and professionalisation of Sport (Sport Management Program Review Council, 2000).

The foundation for history, psychology, and sociology can be articulated through social constructions, which are the aspects of the social world that are created by people as they interact with one another under the social, political, and economic conditions that exist in their society (Coakley, 2007). Social constructions are also the foundation of sport marketing and management. This is especially true in regards to culture and ethnicity in sport. Due to sport's distinctive capacity to symbolise national, cultural, subcultural, and ethnic identities, sport performances are often interpreted by those who watch or who participate in ways that dramatise ongoing cultural issues (Thomas and Dyall, 1999). Consequently, sport is capable of enhancing or worsening intercultural relations – the effect depends on the ways that sport programmes and events are designed, marketed, and managed (Thomas and Dyall, 1999; Horne, 1996). Given that ethnic homogeneity in nations is the exception rather than the rule, sport managers need to address issues arising from cultural diversity among sports participants, spectators, and administrators (Doherty and Chelladurai, 1999; Taylor and Toohey, 1999; DeSensi, 1994). As a result, the relationship between sport marketing and management, and the sociocultural domain, focuses on:

- the development of skills for effective communication with people from a range of different cultural groups
- intercultural communication in sport settings
- key features of cultural and ethnic differences among participants
- managing sport in ways that develop an organisational culture that is consistent with ethnic diversity among participants (Thomas and Dyall, 1999).

There is a significant relationship between the marketing of sport and leisure organisations and sport sociology (Yiannikis, 1989). In addition, sport management is interdependent with sport sociology as specialisation areas including deviance and ethics, economics, social stratification, patriarchy, race and ethnicity, and marketing and research (Bryant, 1993). Therefore, in order for researchers, practitioners, and academicians in sport marketing and management to understand the social product of sport, it is critical that they recognise a positive theoretical relationship between sport management and sport sociology (Bryant, 1993).

5 Future of the relationship

For there to be a quality relationship between sport marketing and management, and the sport sciences, the starting point is in the hands of academicians in institutions of higher education. According to one study, a major factor considered by students when returning for a Masters degree in Sport Management studies is that they desire to learn more about the business of sport (Lewis and Quarterman, 2006). This is supported by research that shows:

- there is a demand for competent professionals equipped with business skills and a thorough understanding of the field in the multi-billion-dollar sports business
- the advanced degrees in sports/leisure management or business will likely be the way to move into upper echelon positions in the field
- colleges and universities must prepare future professionals by developing comprehensive preparatory programmes, including offering programmes that take into account the need for duality in sports management preparation through programmes articulated through colleges of business and departments of sports and exercise science (Whiddon, 1990).

Unfortunately, too often academicians have their areas of specialty, where their academic programme has set parameters with limited room for collaboration or cooperation between schools. These concerns are born out of opposing views regarding the most appropriate housing for sport management programmes within the university structure: college of education, school of business, or kinesiology department. Results from a focus showed that some (panelists) felt sport management should be housed with other management disciplines; while others felt sport management must remain close to the other realms of sport studies, such as sport sociology and sport psychology, in order to maintain its distinctive focus on sport (Costa, 2005). The difference of opinion is, in fact, an outcome of the hybrid nature of sport management. It is simultaneously about management and about sport. The appropriate concern, then, is not which academic unit should house the discipline, but the degree to which any home (whether business or sport studies) will facilitate the requisite interdisciplinary dialog between sport studies (*e.g.*, kinesiology) and the study of management (including its related disciplines, such as marketing, finance, and operations) (Costa, 2005).

This reality is in line with the move of 21st century higher education to cross-list units, engage in cooperative education between schools, and provide collaborative programme offerings. One example is at the University of Ballarat in Australia where the School of Human Movement and Sport Sciences is offering a Masters in Applied Sport Management that infuses elements of human movement, sport sciences, and business management throughout the degree programme (University of Ballarat, 2007). At Barry University in Florida, they offer a dual-degree in Sport Management and Business Administration (MS/MBA) that provides students with both sport industry specific skills and in-depth business knowledge by offering a combination of courses from the Sport and Exercise Science Department and the School of Business (Barry University, 2006). Individuals who graduate from these programmes (and other like programmes around the world) will enter the workplace with a more complete understanding of the collaborative

relationship between sport marketing and management, and the sport sciences. The result will be the ability to integrate elements of each specialty within the individual's chosen profession in the sport industry.

The reason these institutions of higher education are supporting cross-disciplinary educational programmes is because of the needs and wants of their students. The reasons for undertaking a degree are diverse and usually driven by personal needs and desires, including expanding knowledge of a specific subject, improving career progression, increasing the chances of getting a job, a love of the subject and to enable lifestyle changes by raising salary (Felton, 2006). This move towards cross-disciplinary education is also supported in the sport industry and has been articulated in numerous studies. For instance, results of one study showed that athletic training graduates have been increasingly employed in private sector settings, including sports medicine clinics, hospitals, professional sport, industrial fitness programmes, wellness centres, and community centres; and the evidence suggests that curricula should be developed to prepare students for positions requiring not only the science-based expertise traditionally associated with athletic training, but also the business-related expertise associated with management positions in private settings (Moss and Parks, 1991). Another study articulated that sport psychology is a booming business because elite athletes in many sports are getting closer and closer to one another in terms of physical prowess and talents, leaving thoughts and feelings as the x-factor that brings victory (Ayan, 2006). This is further supported by a study that showed that many sport psychologists have stated that aspirations for consulting work are prevalent due to the continuous increase in the availability of and financial rewards from those opportunities (Williams and Scherzer, 2003).

6 Conclusion

An increased understanding of sport as both a social and business force will lead towards an increased ability to ascertain and assess evidence, disseminate and extend knowledge, and develop and test new theory (Cuneen and Schneider, 2001). It is now time to acknowledge the important role sport marketing and management plays in the sport sciences to enhance both the business and science aspects of sport. For too long, the business and science aspects of sport have been looked at as separate entities. By articulating and implementing this relationship, the entire sport industry will benefit. I challenge the readers of the article to consider the following: although divided, the sport business and science industries have and will continue to grow and thrive... but imagine how much stronger the sport industry could become if the various elements within sport marketing, sport management, and sport science build effective and efficient relationships, collaborations, and cooperative efforts with each other? The possibilities are endless!

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