
Foreword

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Biographical notes: Miltiadis D. Lytras is an Assistant Professor in the Computer Engineering and Informatics Department (CEID) of the University of Patras, Greece. His research focuses on semantic web, knowledge management and e-learning, with more than 80 publications in these areas. He has co-edited/co-edits 25 special issues in international journals such as the *IEEE Transaction on Knowledge and Data Engineering*, *IEEE Internet Computing*, *IEEE Transactions on Education*, etc., and has authored/edited 12 books. He serves as the (Co-)Editor-in-Chief of 12 international journals while he is also an Associate Editor or an Editorial Board Member in seven more.

Patricia Ordóñez de Pablos is a Professor in the Department of Business Administration and Accountability at the Faculty of Economics of the University of Oviedo, Spain. Her teaching and research interests focus on the areas of strategic management, knowledge management, intellectual capital measuring and reporting, organisational learning and human resources management. She is the Executive Editor of the *International Journal of Learning and Intellectual* and the *International Journal of Strategic Change Management*.

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Sport is a growing industry, with enormous numbers of people involved in the management and administration of sports, fitness and exercise. Whether in voluntary, public or commercial sectors, all can benefit by improving the practice and delivery of the management of sport and its organisations. The sport industry has grown dramatically in the past decade and promises to continue to expand. It is rapidly growing, both nationally and internationally. For example, in the USA, it has been recognised as one of the top 25 career choices for women and it is an industry with a Gross National Product (GNP) in excess of US\$100 billion.

Sport management includes a wide variety of topics, such as organisational theory, behaviour and strategy, port operations, law and policy, economics, finance and accounting, marketing, consumer behaviour, sponsorship, advertising and licensing, media, communications and public relations, sport tourism, facility and event management and gender and diversity.

Like sport, marketing also has very long history and since both can be dynamic, it is no surprise that marketing and sport became intertwined very early on in the proceedings. Sport marketing can be traced back to the promoters in ancient Greece and Rome, although the term 'sports marketing' emerged in more recent times (it is said to have been first coined in the late 1970s).

According to Mullin *et al.* (2007):

"Sport marketing consists of all activities designed to meet the needs and wants of sport consumers through exchange processes. Sport marketing has developed two major thrusts: the marketing of sport products and services directly to consumers of sport, and marketing of other consumer and industrial products or services through the use of sport promotions."

Although sport marketing is a particularly unique form of marketing and it does differ significantly from other types of marketing, it must be firmly based on the accepted marketing principles. Sport shows some service characteristics, such as perishability and intangibility – in other words, sport cannot be simply 'bottled' and sold or kept in stock for sale at a later date. Some further challenging (though interesting) factors that relate to sport and certain areas of sport marketing are simultaneous production and consumption, the consumers as producers, simultaneous competition and cooperation, unpredictability and inconsistency, competitor diversity, the potential large add-on costs and revenue complexity, among others.

The special issue titled 'Strategic issues in the management of sport firms and organisations: opportunities and challenges' for the *International Journal of Sport Management and Marketing* consists of eight papers that address the recent key issues on sport management and marketing.

In the paper 'Introducing FOrNeX: a composite index for the intangible resources of the football club', Andrikopoulos and Kaimenakis propose an intellectual capital analysis of the football club's organisational identity and performance. The authors build an intellectual capital map of its value-creating intangible resources (for example,

player talent, fan base and club athletic performance). They develop the Football Organization News Index (FOrNeX), which is a decision-making instrument based on a multidimensional approach to a football club's organisational performance.

Sullivan, in his paper entitled 'Coaching education: staff development strategies for the adult learner', states that it is important that the sport manager initiates the process with an understanding of the key concepts regarding adult education. The understanding and application of the theoretical concepts will enhance a strategic approach to staff development. Additionally, sport managers will be able fulfil a vital function in serving as a competent delivery system for important sport science research.

In the paper 'Developing winning baseball teams: a neural net analysis' by Hall and Seaman, they show how neural networks can be used to forecast individual and team outcomes as a means to help the management improve the overall organisational performance. They propose an analytical paradigm that consists of a three-tiered hierarchal design that combines a number of specific on-field and off-field factors in predicting team performance. The outcomes indicate that the developed model estimated the runs scored and the runs against within 5% of the actual performance over a five-year period.

In the paper 'Auditing performance management practices: a comparison of Canadian sport organisations', MacLean aims to identify and contrast the performance management practices within the small sport/recreation organisations representing the nonprofit, commercial and public sectors of the Canadian sport industry. She interviews key executives and analyses documents which were used to conduct a performance management audit. The results of her research suggest that no sector of the sport industry is superior in practicing performance management and issues with communication, evaluating individual performance and integrating the employee and organisational performance objectives exist.

Maltese, in his paper 'Managing assets in the field of sports special events: a proposal for a new methodological and analytical approach', indicates that the managerial aptitudes to manipulate assets within a single system are strategic, but not easily modelised. The axes of fortification through learning and making the control of the threshold effects possible, as well as the exploitation of the connecting resources and reinjection and securing the renewal and evolution of a structured internal system can be considered as new analytical tools of the management of resources.

In the paper 'The power of sports marketing', Mitre and Ordoñez de Pablos state that prominent brands sponsor the most important sports clubs and form a strategic alliance, which results in cooperation that is mutually beneficial for both sides. The paper analyses the importance of sports marketing for companies today. In particular, it addresses the relationship between the companies and advertising in certain sports (football and motorsport, among others) and the implications for both the companies and clubs will be analysed.

The paper 'Factors and focuses in the strategic decisions of sporting organisations: empirical evidence in sports associations' by Soares and Correia analyses the guiding of the strategic decision-taking process in the sports associations of the autonomous region of Madeira (Portugal). Based on a qualitative research methodology, three techniques of gathering data are used in triangulation: the analysis of the contents of the documents concerning regulations and strategies, the observations of the board meetings of six sports associations and qualitative interviews with the six presidents. The results show that

access to and the control of information, experience and specific knowledge of the problems associated with a particular sport are highly important sources of power with regard to taking decisions, above all, on the part of the president of the board and the sport coordinator.

Finally, the paper 'The quality of the relationships between fitness centres and their customers' by Athanassopoulou and Mylonakis offers a review of the literature on relationship quality and services and presents the findings of a qualitative study in fitness centres offering a multitude of athletic services. The authors conclude that the customers' relational orientation, the customers' experience and expertise in athletic services, the similarity of the customer and provider and the relationship duration influence the relationship quality in that context. Additionally, a high relationship quality leads to higher customer retention and profitability and more positive word-of-mouth communications and references.

Before closing this special issue, we invite you to join us at the *1st World Summit on the Knowledge Society*, Athens, 26–28 September 2008,¹ to discuss further the challenges in sport marketing and management.

Reference

Mullin, B.J., Hardy, S. and Sutton, W.A. (2007) *Sport Marketing*, 3rd ed., Human Kinetics.

Note

1 <http://knowledge-summit.org>