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Editorial

Guest Editorial: Challenges and Opportunities in Sports Management and Marketing

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Abstract

This guest editorial introduces a special issue focused on the “Challenges and Opportunities in Sports Management and Marketing.” We’re exploring how the world of sports is changing and what that means for how we manage and market sports. The editorial gives an overview of what we’ll be talking about, like how technology is affecting sports and how we can make sports more sustainable. We will also look at things like how cities build places for sports and how sports can attract tourists. In this issue, we have three articles that dive deeper into these topics. The first article by Bojan Jorgič examines the challenges and opportunities in developing sports infrastructure in Bratislava, Slovakia, with a focus on sustainability. Then, Behnam Oboudi’s article investigates how gender influences attention to advertising during football matches. Lastly, Tianxiao Cao’s article explores the mutual development of sports brands and tourism, using the World Cup in Qatar as a case study. By bringing together different ideas and research, and proposing future research directions and perspectives, this special issue aims to help everyone involved in sports better understand what’s happening and what we can do about it.

Keywords: sports, digitalization, sport sustainability, sports infrastructure, sport fan behavior, sport marketing

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In contemporary discourse, the fusion of digital technology with sports management and marketing has emerged as a dominant force, significantly altering the landscape of the sports industry^[1]. This transformation, catalyzed by the rapid advancements in digitalization, necessitates meticulous examination due to its profound implications across various dimensions^[2-3]. Sports, as a cultural phenomenon^[4], transcends geographical and societal boundaries, serving as a unifying force that resonates with diverse communities globally^[5]. However,

the advent of digitalization has ushered in a paradigm shift in the operational frameworks governing sports, fundamentally altering the mechanisms through which they are managed, marketed, and experienced^[6]. Through the integration of sophisticated data analytics^[7], immersive virtual reality technologies^[8], and pervasive social media platforms^[9], sports entities are recalibrating their strategies to optimize athlete sporting performance, deepen and enhance fan engagement, augmenting revenue streams and commercial opportunities^[1-3].

Nevertheless, this digital revolution is not devoid of challenges. Pertinent issues, such as equitable access to technological resources and the safeguarding of data privacy loom large amidst the rapid technological progression^[3]. As stakeholders navigate the opportunities presented by digital innovation, it becomes imperative to remain vigilant in addressing these ethical and societal concerns to ensure the integrity and sustainability of the sports ecosystem.

Within the context of this special issue, which centers on “Challenges and Opportunities in Sports Management and Marketing,” together we delve into three seminal articles that offer comprehensive insights, innovative methodologies, and rigorous analyses. Through these scholarly contributions, we endeavor to elucidate the intricate dynamics at play within the field of sports management in the digital era, fostering a nuanced understanding of its multifaceted dimensions.

First, the article titled “*Overview of Sports Infrastructure in the City of Bratislava: Challenges, Opportunities, and Research Agenda*” authored by Bojan Jorgič^[10]. This article provides a comprehensive overview of the sports infrastructure in Bratislava, the capital city of Slovakia, within the framework of sustainability. Sport infrastructure stands as a crucial component of urban development, contributing significantly to the wellbeing of the populace, fostering social cohesion, and driving economic growth. Jorgič’s article sheds light on the multifaceted challenges confronting Bratislava in its efforts to enhance its sports infrastructure while highlighting recent endeavors aimed at improvement. A primary challenge outlined in the article is the scarcity of suitable locations for the development of sports infrastructure within the city. Despite the existence of numerous sports facilities, many are outdated and fail to meet the burgeoning demand for sports participation. Moreover, the concentration of sports infrastructure in specific areas presents accessibility challenges for citizens residing in other parts of Bratislava.

In response to these challenges, Bratislava has embarked on initiatives to promote an active lifestyle and sustainable transportation by investing in parks and bike paths. These endeavors align with the sustainability goals set forth by the city’s re-elected mayor, signaling a continued commitment to enhancing the quality of life for residents. Furthermore, the article underscores the long-term benefits of maintaining support and investment in sports infrastructure, not only for the sports community but also for the general public and sport tourists. The expansion and improvement of sports infrastructure have the potential to foster a more engaged and active population, bolster social cohesion, and contribute to improved public health outcomes when executed in a sustainable manner. Overall, Jorgič’s article offers valuable insights into the challenges, opportunities, and research agenda pertaining to sports infrastructure in Bratislava. It serves as a foundational piece for future

scholarly inquiry and policy development aimed at fostering sustainable urban development and promoting active lifestyles within the city.

Next, this special issue embraced an article “*Football Spectators Attention to Advertising: Gender Perspective*” authored by Behnam Oboudi^[11]. This study delves into the intriguing question of whether spectators’ gender influences their attention to advertising during a football match. The objective of Oboudi’s research is to quantitatively assess the role of gender in determining the intensity of spectators’ attention to advertising while watching football. Employing a semi-experimental research design, the study utilizes eye-tracking technology to gather data on viewers’ attention to advertisements. Subsequently, a mixed between-within ANOVA and t-test are employed to analyze the collected data and test the research hypotheses. The findings of the study reveal a significant effect of viewer gender on attention to advertisements during football matches. Surprisingly, the research indicates that women exhibit a higher level of attention to advertisements compared to men in this context.

This research makes a notable contribution to the field of advertising by shedding light on the often-overlooked role of gender differences in viewer attention, particularly in the context of football spectatorship. While previous studies have explored the impact of various advertising types and locations on viewer attention, this study adds a novel dimension by examining the influence of gender. Furthermore, Oboudi’s study lays the groundwork for future research endeavors by proposing a series of research agendas aimed at deepening our understanding of advertising effectiveness, with a particular emphasis on consumer attention. By exploring consumers’ neurophysiological responses to advertising messages, the study aims to advance our comprehension of the underlying mechanisms driving advertising effectiveness.

The third article of the special issue is “*Sports Brands and Tourism: Unexpected Perspectives of Mutual Development*” authored by Tianxiao Cao^[12]. It is dedicated to the dynamics between sports brands and sports tourism development, using the World Cup in Qatar as a compelling case study. The objective of Cao’s research is to explore the mutually beneficial relationship between sports brands and sports tourism, focusing on the development of sports tourism, the marketing strategies employed by sports brands, and the symbiotic relationship between the two domains. The study investigates the recent evolution of the global sports tourism market, analyzes the characteristics of sports tourism products and services, and examines the attractiveness and value-added effects of sports events as tourism destinations.

Employing the event analysis method, the study centers on the Qatar World Cup as a pivotal sports tourism event and sports brand marketing platform. By drawing upon citations from related articles, the research offers insights into the performance and impact of the integration of sports tourism

and sports branding at the Qatar World Cup, thereby making a significant contribution to the research field. The findings of the study underscore the immense potential for growth in sports tourism, particularly in the post-pandemic era. The combination of tourism and sports not only enhances the appeal of tourist destinations but also generates substantial economic benefits. In essence, the study concludes that the fusion of sports brands and tourism holds promising market prospects. Furthermore, the study highlights the pivotal role played by the integration of sports tourism and sports brands in the success of the World Cup in Qatar, emphasizing its profound impact on the promotion of sports tourism destinations and the dissemination of sports brands. The research elucidates how sports tourism serves as a vital platform for the promotion of sports brands, facilitating global communication and enhancing their popularity.

Each of these articles contributes to the field by offering unique perspectives and insights into key aspects of sports management and marketing, including urban sports infrastructure development^[10], viewer behavior in sports advertising^[11], and the interplay between sports brands and tourism^[12]. Collectively, they enrich our understanding of the complexities and opportunities within the dynamic landscape of sports management and marketing.

1 OTHER CURRENT CHALLENGES AND CONTROVERSIES IN THE SPORTS INDUSTRY: FUTURE PERSPECTIVE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

Sustainability has emerged as a pressing concern in the field of sports management, as stakeholders grapple with the environmental, social, and economic implications of their operations. Within this context, several challenges impede the adoption of sustainable practices, while also presenting opportunities for innovation and growth.

One of the foremost challenges lies in mitigating the environmental impact of sporting events and associated infrastructure^[3,10]. These events often entail substantial energy consumption, waste generation, and carbon emissions, necessitating the implementation of sustainable measures such as renewable energy adoption, waste reduction strategies, and efficient transportation systems. Moreover, the resource-intensive nature of sports facilities, particularly stadiums and arenas, poses a dilemma between modernization and sustainability. Balancing the imperative for state-of-the-art facilities with environmental considerations presents a formidable challenge, particularly in regions where resources are limited.

Addressing consumer behavior represents another significant hurdle in promoting sustainability within the sports industry. Encouraging fans to embrace eco-friendly practices requires concerted efforts to shift entrenched consumption patterns. Cultural resistance further complicates efforts to mainstream sustainability practices within the sports sector. Overcoming entrenched norms

and fostering awareness about sustainability issues demand sustained engagement and education initiatives aimed at catalyzing a cultural shift towards sustainability literacy at all levels and greater environmental responsibility^[13].

Despite these challenges, there exist ample opportunities for sports organizations to leverage sustainability as a driver of innovation and differentiation. Embracing sustainability can enhance brand image, attract environmentally conscious fans and sponsors, and foster deeper engagement with stakeholders^[14]. Furthermore, sustainability initiatives offer potential cost savings through energy efficiency measures and waste reduction strategies^[3]. Collaborations with sustainability-focused partners and sponsors can provide access to funding and expertise, while also enhancing the credibility and impact of sustainability efforts.

2 INSTEAD OF A CONCLUSION: RESEARCH AGENDA FOR SPORTS MANAGEMENT AND MARKETING RESEARCH

The proposed agenda for future research in the domain of sports management and marketing encompasses several critical areas of inquiry, necessitated by the contemporary fusion of digital technology with sports operations.

First of all, research efforts should prioritize the investigation of environmental sustainability measures pertaining to sporting events and infrastructure^[10]. This entails an exploration of strategies aimed at mitigating the environmental footprint of such events, encompassing initiatives like the adoption of renewable energy sources, waste reduction practices, and the promotion of efficient transportation systems. Furthermore, the challenge of reconciling the modernization of sports facilities with sustainability imperatives, particularly in resource-constrained regions, warrants thorough investigation.

Secondly, scholarly attention should be directed towards understanding and influencing consumer behavior within the sports industry to promote sustainability. This involves delving into methods to encourage fans to embrace environmentally friendly practices while addressing cultural barriers that hinder the adoption of sustainability initiatives^[13]. Additionally, the role of education and awareness campaigns in fostering sustainability literacy and promoting environmental responsibility among stakeholders merits exploration.

Moreover, sustainability should be viewed not merely as a constraint but as a potential driver of innovation and brand differentiation within the sports sector. Future research endeavors should assess the impact of sustainability initiatives on brand image, fan engagement, and sponsorship opportunities^[11,12]. Additionally, the potential cost savings associated with energy efficiency measures and waste reduction strategies should be scrutinized. Collaborative ventures with sustainability-focused partners and sponsors

should also be examined for their capacity to enhance the credibility and effectiveness of sustainability efforts.

Furthermore, there is a need for continued exploration of gender perspectives in sports marketing and advertising^[11]. This includes further investigation into the influence of gender on viewer attention to advertising during sporting events and the effectiveness of gender-targeted marketing strategies. Additionally, research should delve into the role of gender stereotypes and representations in shaping consumer behavior and brand perception within the sports marketing domain.

In parallel, the integration of sports brands and tourism presents a fertile ground for research inquiry^[14-16]. Future studies should explore additional case studies and examples of successful integration between sports brands and tourism, analyzing their economic and social implications. The role of sports tourism in enhancing the global visibility and popularity of sports brands and its impact on destination marketing and branding strategies warrants thorough investigation.

Last but not least, ethical and societal concerns inherent in the digitalization of sports management and marketing demand scholarly attention^[17]. This encompasses examining the ethical implications of emerging technologies such as data analytics, virtual reality^[18-20], and social media platforms in sports operations. Additionally, efforts should be directed towards addressing issues related to equitable access to technological resources and safeguarding data privacy to ensure the integrity and sustainability of the sports ecosystem in the digital age^[17-21].

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declared no conflict of interest.

Author Contribution

Ekaterina Glebova contributed to the manuscript and approved the final version.

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