

POSITIONING FEDERATED SPORTS IN PORTUGAL: HANDBALL, BASKETBALL, ROLLER HOCKEY AND VOLLEYBALL

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Context

Sport is constituted by a variety of activities with different purposes, concepts and cultural representations. Before increasing the supply, sports federations need to understand the practitioners in relation to their potential and to position themselves in relation to their competitors.

In this context, the purpose of this study is the positioning of federated team sports (handball, basketball, roller hockey and volleyball) by analysing the distinctive features of the sport's image which allow practitioners to place it in relation to others (Lindon et al, 2002).

Methods

An analysis model was constructed using five dimensions (resources, accessibility, attributes of the sport, image and personal motivations) with a total of fifty attributes. The data were collected by questionnaire formed by closed and open-ended questions sent to 47 sports managers and technicians from the Portuguese Federations of the four team games.

The answers to open-ended questions were treated through thematic, 'logical-semantic' content analysis as suggested by Bardin (1977), with the categorization being accomplished by combining the *a priori* and *a posteriori* process through analytical induction (Vala, 1990).

In the descriptive statistics, parameters of central tendency and dispersion were used. In the inferential statistics discriminant analysis was used to identify clusters of attributes on which the sports differed, and factor analysis to summarize the central dimensions of each sport (Aaker, Kumar, & Day, 2001).

Results

- The sports showed little differences in terms of dimensions and attributes
- The inferential analysis revealed two factors between the sports: One included international success and the ability to organize big events (image dimension); the other was the high degree of specialization of each sport (attributes of the sport dimension) and its tradition within Portugal's culture (image dimension)
- Handball appeared as a sport whose main differentials were the characteristics of the game, including pleasure in taking part, the self-esteem it provides (personal motivations dimension) and some ability in organizing events (image dimension)
- Basketball was also positioned by pleasure in taking part and by organizing events, but its main characteristic of differentiation seemed to be in the resources dimension, and specifically the attribute 'coaches with training'
- Roller hockey positioned itself via the attributes of international success, tradition in the country's culture and awareness (image dimension), which makes it distinct within the team sports. This sport also differed in the accessibility dimension, since it was the most expensive sport in terms of equipment
- Volleyball, like handball and basketball, had its positioning marked by the ability to organize big events (though with a higher average score). From the dimension personal motivations the attributes self-esteem and possibility of belonging to a group were important.

Discussion and Implications

In Portugal, handball, basketball, roller hockey and volleyball differ in a few attributes. According to the sample, these attributes belonged to the dimensions of personal motivations (self-esteem and pleasure in the practice) and image (ability to organize big events). Roller hockey appeared as a distinct sport because of the cost of its equipment and its tradition in Portugal's culture. Recognising these results, the Federations ought to reposition their sports, clearly differentiating their services to obtain real competitive advantages.

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