

(SP) EXPLORING THE NATURE OF OLYMPIC STUDIES: BIBLIOMETRIC ANALYSIS OF A CORE OLYMPIC JOURNAL

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Introduction

The Olympic Games represent arguably the pinnacle of both international sports and the greatest challenge in relation to the management and marketing of sports events. The marketing and management of the Games thus feature as part of the curricula of studies in sport management in universities, whether sport management is a stand-alone subject or a component of other sports-related courses. A number of universities have also established Olympic Studies Centres such as: the Centre d'Estudis Olímpics (CEO-UAB) at the [Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona \(UAB\)](#), Barcelona; the Australian Centre for Olympic Studies at the University of Technology, Sydney; the International Center for Olympic Studies at the University of Western Ontario in Canada; the Centre for Olympic Studies and Research at Loughborough University; the Centre for Olympic Studies at Beijing Sports University; and others.

These Centres investigate a range of topics related to the Olympic Games. For example, marketing is featured, as evidenced by an online public lecture - *Olympic Marketing: Historical Overview* by the Centre d'Estudis Olímpics (2006), described as “providing a historical overview on Olympic marketing programs, focusing on television rights, TOP sponsors and sponsorship programs, ticket sales and Olympic licenses”. CEO-UAB also posts other materials dealing with the Olympic Games and economics on its webpages.

The Olympic Centres also engage in publishing Olympic scholarship, for example the International Centre for Olympic Studies at the University of Western Ontario publishes *Olympika: The International Journal of Olympic Studies*, a key international journal dedicated to issues relating to the Olympic Games and Olympism.

In her discussion of sport management research, Frisby (2005) referred to the need to investigate examples of treatment of the negative aspects of sport, such as corruption, bribery, greed, the exclusion of women and minorities from positions of power, discrimination based on race, disability and sexuality and so on. She cites, as an Olympic Games example, environmental destruction resulting from the creation of sports facilities (Lenskyj, 2000).

This study is an exploratory investigation of the disciplines and sub-disciplines that are evident in an academic journal dedicated to the Olympic Games and Olympism, in order to gain a greater understanding of its interdisciplinary foundations. The prominence of sport management in the targeted scholarship will also be assessed. Finally, it investigates the degree to which negative aspects of the Olympic Games are explored in the targeted Olympic Studies research.

Methods

This study analyses a discrete collection of Olympic scholarship, namely the peer reviewed international journal *Olympika*, over a four-year period (2002-2005). It cannot

be said that there is a completely representative publication for any discipline. *Olympika* has been chosen predominantly due to its dedication to Olympic issues and its coverage of a larger range of disciplines compared to other journals such as the *Journal of Olympic History*, which have narrower foci. According to its editorial policy, *Olympika* considers for publication articles “incorporating sociocultural studies predominately related to historical, philosophical, sociological, anthropological and organizational dimensions of the Modern Olympic Games and the Olympic Movement” (International Centre for Olympic Studies, 2006). Also, *Olympika* has no affiliation to the International Olympic Committee, unlike *Message Olympique* and *Olympic Review*. Finally, informal discussion with experts in the field indicates that *Olympika* is a desirable source in which to publish. As such, it would be expected to attract high quality submissions.

The central method is the application of bibliometric techniques to construct a framework of the disciplines that underpin Olympic Studies as it is represented in *Olympika*. Bibliometrics is the application of quantitative and qualitative descriptive methods such as statistical analysis and cluster analysis to examine documents and document surrogates (Norton, 2000). Specialised bibliometric techniques can be used to identify the discipline and sub-disciplines of collections of documents representing a body of knowledge. Further, questions raised by Frisbee, specifically the relative prominence accorded to scholarship on the direct or indirect negative aspects of the Olympic Games, are explored using content analysis on the same data. Content analysis has its origins in analysis of propaganda during World War II. An early definition described it as “a research technique for the objective systematic and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication” (Berelson, 1952). It has “expanded to include the study of a range of qualitative issues, including stylistic, thematic, and ideological aspects of texts, as well as other media and genres” (Calhoun, 2002).

Olympika publishes some four to five research articles annually, so this study comprises a small sample of Olympic scholarship. It is intended to expand the research to analyse a larger corpus of scholarship including earlier issues of *Olympika* and research articles from other scholarly journals. The authors expect that this methodology, like other bibliometric techniques can be used to analyse other bodies of literature outside Olympic studies.

Results

Olympic research found in the journal *Olympika* is underpinned by a wide range of disciplines, most notably history. Politics, economics, philosophy and other social sciences also figure prominently. Science and technology, medicine, law, etc also feature, but to a lesser extent. The journal, reflecting the Editorial Board’s interests, thus concentrates more on socio-cultural aspects, rather than sport management.

The content of articles suggests that discussion of negative aspects of the Olympic Games is accorded prominence in this channel of Olympic scholarship, rather than a focus on the positive aspects that the International Olympic Committee emphasises.

Discussion

The results indicate that this channel of Olympic scholarship has a broad interdisciplinary foundation and critical treatment of controversial topics. Yet, there is an

obvious gap in sport management contributions to *Olympika*. It is not that sport management is not incorporated in the study of the Olympic Games. Many Olympic related articles appear in the prominent sport management journals. Further research may indicate whether these findings are replicated in other examples of Olympic research. The major focus of *Olympika* appears to be historical, supporting earlier findings by Toohey & Warning (2001), rather than concentrating on the positive aspects of the Olympic Games. Scholars often cast “a critical lens”, to use Frisby’s term, addressing controversial issues such as indigenous protest and Nazism, often placing them in a historical context and comparing them with the precepts of Olympism.

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