

Session: **Research for management and marketing X.**

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### **Strategic marketing planning for Sport for All Programs**

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#### **Background**

Local Sport Organizations (LSO) providing leisure activities in Greece, begun to recognize the contribution of marketing planning, although in many cases there are still fundamental perplexities. Collins et. all (1992) refers that many officers and members in public leisure services associate marketing with promotion, and some devalue or reject it for that reason alone. That requires much better awareness in order to remove this misapprehension.

Many authorities still face a substantial problem to comprehend the concept of marketing as an appropriate tool to public leisure services; however, many sport researchers have argued that the development of effective strategic marketing planning is important for the long term survival and development of sport organizations.

Moreover, many researchers consider that public organizations, which are active in sport recreation, have difficulties to perceive the importance of marketing and the marketing applications in public sector is in questioning (Collins et all, 1992; Gareth, 1998). However, public authorities have important reasons to develop marketing techniques as they are unaware for the needs and wants of consumers that use their public services (Walsh, 1994).

#### **Purpose of the study**

This study was designed to investigate the extent to which LSOs have adopted strategic marketing planning in their Sport for All (SfA) programs. More specifically, research questions included:

1. Do the LSOs have a strategic marketing plan developed for their SfA programs?
2. To what extent do the LSOs take into account the factors of external environment?
3. To what extent do the LSOs take into account the factors of internal environment?
4. To what extent does the LSO take into account the factors that are related with the marketing strategies?

5. To what extent do the LSOs take into account the factors that are related with the implementation of the strategic marketing planning process?

## **Methodology**

The research has been conducted in the prefecture of Attica in Greece where seventy- four (74) Local Sport Organizations have implemented Sport for All programmes. Each authority received a questionnaire, measuring strategic marketing planning issues in SfA programs, and almost sixty-seven (67%) percent of those surveyed returned the questionnaire and more than half requested a results summary, indicating substantial interest in the topic.

## **Results**

**Evaluation of strategic marketing planning for SfA programs in Greece:** The results from this analysis clearly indicate that the LSOs have determined and implemented their mission and vision statements as well as the values for their SfA programs. Furthermore, they try to identify marketing opportunities by evaluating the strengths and weakness of SfA programs and by monitoring the external environment in order to avoid the threats and exploit the opportunities. Almost sixty-seven (67%) percent of Local Sport Organizations established long-term objectives for their programs and almost fifty four (54%) percent have generated marketing objectives. The problem is that many of the Local Sport Organizations have not yet developed marketing strategies in order to support and achieve their marketing objectives.

Concerning **the level of marketing planning** that Local Sport Organizations apply to the SfA programs we found that:

- 43, 8% apply short-term structured marketing planning
- 20,8% apply marketing planning based on the intuition
- 20,8% apply non structured marketing planning
- 14,6% apply strategic structured marketing planning

The majority of LSOs do not have a marketing department, and in contrast, only twelve (12%) percent do have one. Moreover, only nineteen (19%) percent are planning to create such a department during the following two years.

**Financial sources:** At this point the incoming sources of the LSOs were closely examined. These sources include self-funding and governmental funding (General Secretariat of Sport). Self-funding consists of sponsorship, ticketing, organizing sports events, cultural and educational activities. The examination period of the study was for the years 2006-2007, 2007-2008, and 2008-2009. During these periods, most of LSOs obtained governmental funding 76%-100% while self-funding was 0-25%.

## **Conclusion/Application to practice**

Local Sports Organizations apply some of the strategic marketing planning activities, such as the establishment of mission statement, vision and values for SfA programs as well as the evaluation of strengths and weakness of SfA programs. Only 14,6% of the SfA programs can be considered as strategic marketing planners. The level of marketing planning that Local Sports Organizations apply is mainly short-term structured (43,8%) and non structured marketing planning or intuitive marketing planning (41,6%).

Finally, an important element is the fact that the income of Local Sport Organizations is mainly funded from government subsidies and does not include sources of self-financing.

## **References**

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