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Developing Sport and Physical Activity Participation through ‘Value-Matching’: A case study using Olympic and Paralympic Values..

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BACKGROUND

Practitioners seeking to promote participation in sport and physical activity use a process called ‘stage-matching’ to segment audiences. This process is underpinned by conceptual models, such as the Trans-theoretical Model (Prochaska, et al 1992) or the Psychological Continuum Model (Funk & James, 2001), based on the premise that the most effective way to develop sport and physical activity participation is to encourage increases in small steps, with early steps relating to generating positive attitudes and later stages relating to increasing participation levels. Thus initiatives are targeted to the current participation levels of target audiences.

However, while ‘stage-matching’ approaches are more effective than a universal approach to sport and physical activity promotion, they are not particularly sophisticated approaches as they pay no attention to the tastes and preferences of target audiences. This paper will outline an approach that focuses on ‘value-matching’ - the segmentation of target audiences on the basis of the values that they hold.

METHODS

This paper will draw on analysis from three projects: A worldwide systematic review of evidence for **O**lympic and Paralympic **P**hysical **A**ctivity, **S**port and **H**ealth (OPASH) legacies (Weed et al, 2009); an analysis of the processes by which the Olympic and Paralympic Games can be used to leverage sport and physical activity participation (Weed, Mansfield and Dowse, 2010); and a secondary analysis of Sport England’s sport satisfaction survey (n=44,287), its active people survey (n=363, 724) and its market segmentation research (Weed, 2010).

RESULTS

The worldwide review (Weed et al , 2009) showed that there is evidence for two distinct processes that can OPASH legacies: a demonstration effect, that can inspire those already participating in sport to participate more, and a festival effect, which can target the least active by building a sense of community involvement in the occasion to promote active celebration of the

Olympic and Paralympic festival However, the review also showed that these processes are not inherent, they need to be developed and levered if they are to impact upon sport and physical activity participation.

The evidence examined in Weed, Mansfield & Dowse (2010) suggested that developing OPASH legacies requires more than a process of ‘stage-matching’. This is because people were drawn into Olympic and Paralympic initiatives and interventions when the messages those interventions used had resonance with their personal values derived from their background, experiences, upbringing and their ideas and feelings about the community and society in which they live. Consequently, Olympic and Paralympic interventions and initiatives should target pre-existing ‘value-hooks’ within target audiences, a general principle that was re-inforced by the secondary analysis of Sport England datasets (Weed, 2010).

This paper will synthesise these perspectives to outline broad value hooks relating to sport, lifestyle, family, community and eco-issues that have been extracted from the evidence bases, and particularly from the Sport England datasets (Weed, 2010). It will show that leveraging physical activity participation using a festival effect among the least active is most likely to be effective if sport, health or exercise messages are avoided, as sport or health related value-hooks do not exist in these audiences. The paper will suggest that initiatives and interventions using a festival effect should focus on Olympic and Paralympic messages seeking to tap into family, community and eco value-hooks, and into lifestyle value-hooks that are not related to health. In this respect, Olympic and Paralympic ambitions relating to sustainable development can be matched to eco-values, whilst ambitions relating to multi-culturalism or altruism can tap into community values. Conversely, as value-hooks related to sport clearly do pre-exist in current or lapsed sport participants, the paper will show that strategies seeking to leverage a demonstration effect should use messages that seek to focus on sport and health-related lifestyle value hooks, supplemented by family value-hooks. In this respect, the Olympic and Paralympic motto, ‘faster, higher, stronger’ can be matched with sporting value hooks, as can the Paralympic values of determination and courage. The paper will present a model outlining these value-matching processes and will provide specific examples of initiatives that use these processes in practice.

CONCLUSION

Although this paper draws on the evidence base relating to the Olympic and Paralympic Games, the value-matching process that the paper will outline has significant potential to contribute more broadly to wider policy for sport and physical activity development and promotion. In particular, it can extend stage-based models to include a more sophisticated audience segmentation on the basis of values, tastes and preferences.

REFERENCES

Available on request