

A TYPOLOGY OF SPORT FEDERATIONS: DETERMINANTS OF SERVICE INNOVATION

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Abstract

Aim of abstract

Non-profit sport organizations (NPSOs), like sport federations, are being encouraged to adapt themselves to the expectations of their stakeholders. New sport and non-sport services should be implemented by them to retain and attract members. The (first) adoption of new services to satisfy their members should be considered as an innovation. It is preferable that sport federations innovate to (better) meet the expectations of their members or to create new needs. The present study aims to highlight an explorative typology of sport federations based on their attitude and perception of determinants of innovation. It contributes to the knowledge of (service) innovation in non-profit (sport) organizations.

Theoretical background

At the organizational level, innovation has been defined as the adoption of an idea or behaviour new for the organization (Damanpour, 1996; Damanpour & Schneider, 2006; Zaltman, Duncan & Holbek, 1973). It is a subset of organizational change (Damanpour & Aravind, forthcoming 2012) leading organizations to transfer from current to future state/practices (Nadler & Tushman, 1997). In the literature, three main determinants of innovation are put forward, namely managerial, organizational and environmental levels (Damanpour & Schneider, 2006, 2008; Frambach & Schillewaert, 2002; Hoerber, et al., 2008; Mohr, 1969). It is assumed that attitude and perception of these determinants are linked with innovation. However, no validated instrument could be highlighted to assess them, in a similar context of sport federations.

These NPSOs are open systems strongly influenced by their sport network and stakeholders in their willingness and capacity to innovate (Newell & Swan, 1995). They could implement initiatives or services which are considered to be innovative if they are introduced for the first time in order to increase the satisfaction of their

members, the effectiveness of the organization or the service quality to their members (Lee, Ginn & Naylor, 2009; Walker, 2008). Beach volley competition introduced as new way of playing is an example of sport service innovations adopted by volley-ball sport federations. Taylor (2004) identified two types of NPSOs that lie at opposite sides of a continuum, i.e., traditional/informal and contemporary/formal. Their response to innovation would be different.

Methodology

We focus on regional sport federations in Belgium, recognized by the public authorities. An online survey was developed to assess their attitude and perception of managerial, organizational and environmental levels and the number of their new initiatives. Respondents (one per sport federation) were asked to rate 28 items (i.e., statements) on a Likert scale (1=completely disagree to 5=completely agree) intended to assess the three levels of determinants. Principal component analysis is used to construct scales of determinants of innovation, validated by Cronbach's alpha. Standard normalization and clustering method (K-means) provide us with a typology of sport federations regarding determinants of innovation. Respondents also indicated the initiatives their sport federation implemented before and after 2006, according to a list of general categories. After 2006 (4-year time period), the latter were still considered to be new/innovative. The total number of new initiatives developed by a sport federation was computed with a differentiation between sport and non-sport initiatives, after they were first filtered using their descriptions. In total 144 sport federations have been contacted, of which 101 responded and participated in the survey (70.1%).

Results and discussion

Based on a principal component analysis on 17 items, five scales were constructed, i.e., attitude regarding (i) staff involvement and (ii) newness, perception of (iii) economic health and of (iv) regional and (v) national/international competitive environment. The different scales show good reliabilities (Table 1). The scales scores served as input for the cluster analysis. Three clusters could be distinguished: (1) 'traditional'(23%); (2) 'entrepreneurial'(44%); (3) 'resource competitors'(33%) (Table 2).

The results show that 53% of services provided by sport federations in Belgium were new or renewed these last four years. They implemented an average of 4.5 service innovations whom 1.7 were sport service innovations (37.8%). Resources competitors sport federations develop high perception of regional competitive environment and low perception of economic health. They are significantly more innovative (Table 3).

In line with Taylor (2004), clustering highlighted types of sport federations whose response to innovation differs. We assume highly perceived regional competitive environment, together with high staff involvement favor innovation in sport federations. Low perception of economic health might lead sport federations to find in innovation a way to solve their poor financial results, if they are resource completion oriented.

Managers of sport federations willing to be innovative should favor involvement of staff and raise awareness of their regional competitive environment and their need to attract financial and human resources.

References

Five suggested references

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