
AN EXAMINATION OF CANADIAN PARALYMPIC BRAND VALUE CO-CREATION PROCESSES AND OUTCOMES

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Abstract

The Paralympic Games are the largest sporting event exhibiting disability sport. For the International Paralympic Committee (IPC), these Games are the main vehicle for spreading the Paralympic Movement's values and message because they are the IPC's largest and most well-known associated property. Canada's Paralympic history started a few years after the first Paralympic Games in 1960, with its participation at the 1968 Paralympic Games in Tel Aviv, Israel. Canada's presence at the Paralympic Games has been rising steadily with approximately 280 athletes and support staff at the London Paralympic Games and 117 at the Vancouver Winter Paralympic Games. During this year's Sochi Winter Paralympic Games, one in four Canadians watched a portion of the English television broadcast of the Games ("CBC advises 8.8 million Canadians", 2014). With ever growing interest in the Paralympic brand in Canada, it is worth examining ways in which the Canadian Paralympic Committee (CPC) and its stakeholders can capitalize on this exciting time in Paralympic history.

Although brands are a well-researched topic, the Paralympic brand is particularly complex as it is a sport brand with an inherent associated social aspect regarding disability that must be balanced to increase its brand value. Brands have evolved and taken on different roles, whether they are used to communicate a firm's image to consumers, to differentiate a firm from its competitors, or to form relationships with consumers (Merz, He, & Vargo, 2009). The most recent interpretation of brands is where all of a firm's stakeholders should participate in the co-creation of brand value (Ind & Bjerke, 2007; Merz et al., 2009). Following this stakeholder approach to brand equity, Helm and Jones (2010) developed a conceptual framework outlining a value co-creation process that incorporates both the firm and its stakeholders; this model provides a more holistic way of interpreting brand value co-creation. Applying this model to the Paralympics in Canada, the CPC and its stakeholders

should coordinate to increase the brand value and/or value in general. As such, the purpose of my research is to understand brand value and/or general value co-creation processes and outcomes of stakeholders of the Canadian Paralympic brand. Two questions will be guiding this study: 1) What are stakeholders' perceptions of the Canadian Paralympic brand? and 2) Do stakeholders use the Canadian Paralympic brand to co-create their own brand value and/or value? If they do, how is this value co-created? If they do not, why?

Using the CPC as a case, the Canadian Paralympic brand will be examined through the lens of its various stakeholder groups associated to the Paralympic Movement. In-depth interviews with internal and external CPC stakeholders and the use of archival material will explore each of the CPC's internal and external stakeholders' points of view of the Canadian Paralympic brand, then examine the individual aspects of the Helm and Jones (2010) model. Content analysis will be used to analyze the collected data.

Attention to the Paralympic Movement and disability sport has been limited in both the academic and practical field (Burton, 2010). Since most disability sport research focuses on the social aspects, my research attempts to understand the Paralympic brand to further research in the sport management field on disability sport and the Paralympic Movement. Practically, knowing how a National Paralympic Committee (NPC) works with its stakeholders to co-create value might be useful to other NPCs hoping to expand their brand as well.

Please note: Results are not available at the time of abstract submission, but will be presented at the conference.

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