

(SP) SPORT MARKETING BY SPORT CLUBS FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNGSTERS- EXPLORING THE PRODUCTION PROCESS, RESOURCES AND COSTS OF CHILDRENS' AND YOUNGSTERS' SPORT ACTIVITIES

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Introduction

Recent research (e.g. Haasteena huomisen hyvinvointi, 2000, Lapset ja nuoret, 2005, Suuri kansallinen liikuntatutkimus 2001 - 2002) indicates an increase in the demand for sport aimed at children and youngsters, but particularly sport clubs have not been able to develop their production of sport activities quickly enough or in an affordable way. To understand and develop equal opportunities and sport club activities for children and youngsters, information on sport production, resources available, minimum and maximum costs per discipline to be covered and cost development during the last years was needed.

Methods

The present study has aimed at establishing the prerequisites under which *sport marketing* and *marketing through sport* would succeed and generate resources for sport club activities directed at children and youngsters. For this purpose the study addressed questions related to sport production and financial processes of sport clubs, resources available and costs to be covered during production, nature of markets, pricing and availability of sport activities, factors affecting the selection of sport activities and events, costs of activities, maximum and minimum costs of different sport events and their recent cost change. These issues were explored on the basis of a literature review and by surveying 1,572 households with 6-18 year-old children and youngsters involved in sport activities in sport clubs. The questionnaire was developed according to the information from previous studies related to the subject (Taks et.al 1994, 1995a and 1995b) and a structured questionnaire was constructed, including 44 open and 5 closed questions. The material was collected by research assistants, by physical education teachers and by internet questionnaires on national sport federations' internet pages. The sample selection came out through stage sampling, where for each stage of it stratified sampling was followed. The following statistical analysis (using the statistical program SPSS 12.0.1 for Windows) were used: descriptive statistics, like frequencies and means as well as Pearson bivariate correlations.

Results

Municipalities, business enterprises, children and youngsters themselves as well as their parents are the main actors involved in the sport production processes in sport clubs (Puronaho et.al. 2001). The main aim is to convert generated resources into sport activities while covering the costs caused by sport facilities, travelling, business activities and coaching and competitions. Factors behind sport demand are e.g. income and preferences of parents and children, prices, availability, and quality and marketing of sport activities (Belch, M.A. & Willis, L.A. 2002). The personal decision on sport participation or non-participation is affected by a complex set of constraints or filters, such as skill, motivation, time available and quality of previous sport experiences (Rodgers, B. 1977, Gratton, C. & Taylor, P. 2000).

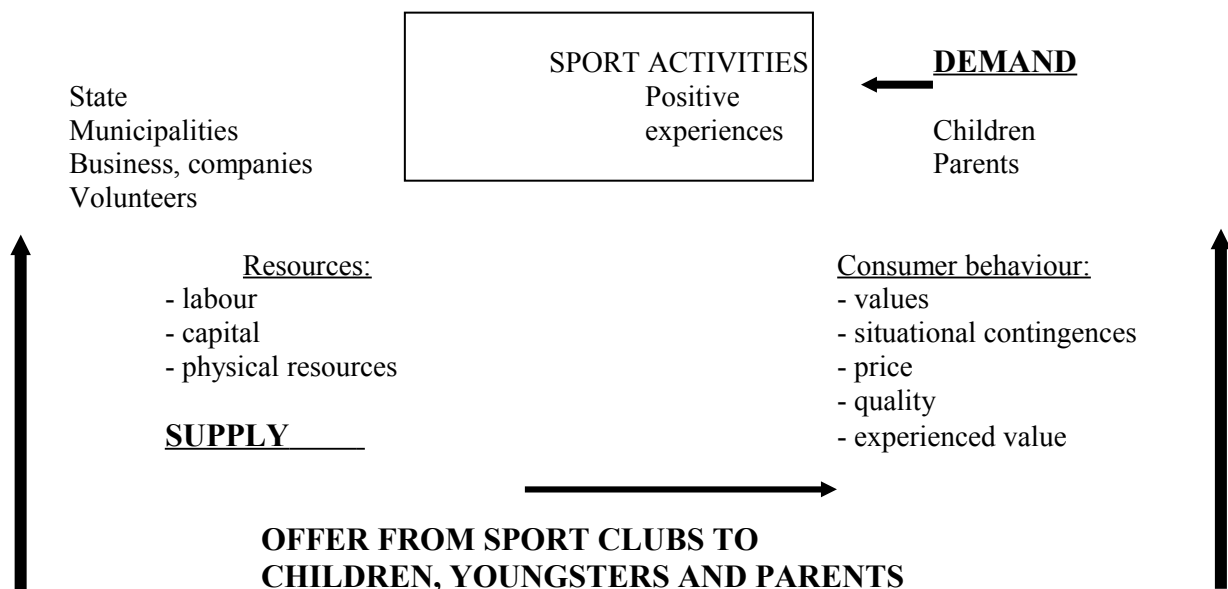
Many sport activities are today expensive due to obligatory costs like sport club fees, travelling, sport clothes and equipment. Positive correlations (Pearson) were found between the total income of households and cost of sport, frequency of activity and cost of sport (TABLE 1), as well as sums spent on sport clothes and equipment and the total costs of sport. Negative correlations were found between family size and number of activities and the cost of sport.

TABLE 1 Positive correlations (Pearson) between total costs and total income, the length of the season and the number of events during a season (p< 0.01)

	Total income	Length of the season	Number of events
Total costs	,100	,251	,446

Discussion

Sport marketing in sport clubs has succeeded well but marketing through sport towards resource holders (state, municipalities, companies, volunteers) is still problematic (PICTURE 1). In the near future all interest groups need to combine their forces to create positive sport experiences not only to physically active children and youngsters but also to all different resource holders with different expectations. Special attention must also be paid to volunteers (The Voluntary Power ! 1995) and to sport club professionalisation. The public sector, local and national, has an important role in regulating the quantity, quality and price of sport activities. What is also needed is a national plan for sport marketing (Grönroos, C. 1987).



Marketing through sport

MARKETING

Sport marketing

PICTURE 1. Marketing Through Sport and Sport Marketing

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