

Differences in the Elite Sport Development Programmes that Lead to a Competitive Advantage

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Abstract

Introduction

Although there is an increasing homogeneity of the training and support programmes for top performance athletes participating in the Olympic Games (O.G.) from countries such as Spain, United Kingdom (UK), France, United States (USA), Canada and Australia (Oakley & Green, 2001) the small differences are the ones leading to a competitive advantage.

Traditionally international sports success has been related to relatively stable macro-economic factors or socio-demographic factors. These factors contrast with the factors that can be influenced by integrated sport policies that include financial support, quality of coaches, training facilities, participation in sport, talent management, total support to athletes, international competition, and scientific research (De Bosscher et al., 2008). These controllable factors are part of our multidisciplinary study that also takes into account the characteristics of the organisation and the process of management.

The main objective of this research is to compare the organizational models of training and support programmes for top performance athletes in the UK, USA, Italy, Germany, France and Spain from a three-fold perspective:

- a) organization,
- b) sponsorship and
- c) athletes.

Methods

In order to evaluate the Spanish model three exploratory questionnaires were designed. These questionnaires were sent to:

- a) Representatives of the Olympic Sports Association (ADO) and the Spanish Olympic Committee (COE),
- b) the marketing executives of the sponsoring companies, and

c) a representative group of athletes and former athletes.

These questionnaires were based on a literature review regarding elite sport and international sporting success, and were validated by a panel of experts. The preliminary findings were confirmed by personal interviews.

The comparison of the Spanish model with other models was accomplished by interviews with executives from the NOCs studied. The guidelines of the interviews were based on the questionnaire sent to the Spanish Olympic Committee.

Results

In Spain, the CSD (High Council for Sport) manages the ADO Programme which is administered by ADO staff. The budget to 2008 is 252 million € from partner institutions, sponsors and supporters. The involvement of Spanish state radio and television (RTVE) in the ADO Programme, guarantees RTVE exclusive TV rights to the O.G. A total of 460 athletes and trainers are preparing for the Beijing 2008 O.G. with a 53.5% budget increment. Sponsors indicated the Madrid 2016 bid for the Olympic Games as a positive incitement for maintaining their support.

Unlike ADO in Spain, UK Sport is not exclusively dedicated to managing elite athletes. The BBC that is the Olympics TV rights holder does not participate in the WCPP. As a result of the celebration of the 2012 Olympic Games in London, funds which come from the Exchequer, the National Lottery, official partners and supporters, have rocketed. In Italy, elite sport is funded by the National Government and managed by the Italian Olympic Committee (CONI), and there is no specific sponsoring programme. These European models contrast with the American model that depends on the private sector.

Discussion

State financing is the main source of income of the Olympic teams studied, but private financing (or sponsorship) has permitted greater investment. The Olympic teams are governed by the NOCs which belong to the Olympic Movement. Olympic sports organizations (OSOs) are more and more focussed on economic efficiency. Thus to find a balance between their social and economic objectives, the OSOs should bear in mind that their clients are their athletes, and that they are continually exposed to public opinion (Ferrand & Torrigiani, 2005). The OSOs reveal particular characteristics which depend on their structure, internal policies, leadership and other factors (Chelladurai & Madella, 2006). The management process of this type of organizations centres on:

- a) strategy,
- b) resources, and
- c) performance, analyzing the environment, mission, vision, objectives, human resources, financial resources, information and evaluation methods (Chappelet & Bayle, 2005).

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