

Session: **Research for management and marketing IV.**

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## **Strategic marketing management and the marketing mix (4Ps or 7Ps) as essential components for marketing sport events in South Africa**

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### **Background**

In the South African sport industry it is common knowledge that for some time now, the bigger sporting codes (soccer, rugby, cricket) forms a larger segment of the market share than most of the smaller sporting codes or “cinderella codes” (hockey, basketball, netball) combined. The challenge facing all sport event marketers in this industry is to ensure and secure more funds (sponsorships and government funds) for survival and future growth of the events hosted in these sporting codes. Successful marketing offers an avenue in this regard, but if not done strategically focussed, much of the marketing efforts could be in vane (Mullin, Hardy & Sutton, 2007).

For any sport event marketer to be successful, strategic marketing management is essential, and too many event organisers neglect in acknowledging the important role effective and efficient marketing plays in the overall success of such an event, be it a mega, hallmark, major or local sport event (Kumar, 2004: xi-xv). Often the reason for this is not being able to relate marketing efforts with the benefits of, or return of investment (ROI) of the event. It is not surprising then that if a sport event organiser fails to recognise the relationship between marketing and these results, it will be very difficult for a potential sponsor to realise the value of being involved in a specific sport event, let alone government recognising the benefits of financial involvement. It is therefore the role of the marketer of a sport event to guarantee all stakeholders involved in ensuring the event’s success, is aware of the potential it holds, which can be achieved through successful marketing. Marketing is a way of operating and does not weigh solely on the shoulders of the marketers. All employees involved in the preparation and hosting of a sport event bear some marketing responsibility. Thus, through the inclusion of marketing in the overall strategic planning of the sporting organisation, but then specifically through a strategic approach to marketing (vision, mission, objectives, implementation and evaluation) can the involvement of all employees in the marketing success of the sport event, be assured (Thompson & Strickland, 2003: 3). The above becomes apparent when looking at the marketing mix in preparation for a sport event. Every aspect of the 7 Ps from the Product, Price, Place, Promotion, through to the People, Processes and the Physical Evidence, engage various employees in the sport organisation, each with a specific responsibility in assuring the success of the event, thus being essential to the marketing effort (Palmer, 2008).

### **Objectives**

This research study aims to determine the strategic marketing management efforts currently being implemented in sport organisations and sporting codes in South Africa. The objectives are to determine if strategic planning forms part of sport event marketing efforts; if so is it being supported throughout the organisation; and if all employees accept responsibility for the successful execution of the strategies. In successive research this information will offer support in the creation of a framework to assist sport marketers in their efforts to market their sport events.

### **Methods**

The research in this study is still being conducted and is thus a work in progress. The research is being conducted in two phases. In the first phase the researcher examined text and research on the topics of sport marketing, sport event marketing and strategic sport marketing management to determine current methods and models/frameworks for the marketing of sport events. In phase two the researcher conducts semi-structured interviews with sport event marketers/managers from both the bigger team sport codes (soccer, rugby, cricket), and the smaller team sport codes (hockey, netball, basketball) on provincial and national level in South Africa. These interviews aim to determine the current practices and use of the marketing mix (4Ps or 7Ps) and strategic marketing efforts, to effectively marketing their respective sport events and also secure sponsors (various funding sources).

### **Results**

The results of this study are still being finalised as this is a work in progress, but it will be completed and analysed by August 2010, in order to provide an account of the current practices in the marketing of sport events for various team sport codes in South Africa. Specifically indicating the extent to which strategic marketing management is being executed, and the extent to which the marketing mix is being applied in the marketing planning process for sport events.

### **Conclusion**

It is a well-known phenomenon in South Africa that not all sporting codes enjoy equal opportunities and support in the sport market. If sport marketers can overcome the challenges of marketing not being acknowledged for its benefits and potential return on investment, more sporting codes in South Africa could be provided the opportunity of fighting for a bigger market share and more sponsors, exposure and support. To address these challenges marketers need to focus marketing efforts on strategic planning and the application of the 4Ps/7Ps in their planning process. Through this study the researcher aims to offer more theoretical and practical knowledge and assistance to marketers of sport events in South Africa.

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