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Strategic marketing planning in Greek professional sport clubs

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Background

As the business environment becomes even more complicated and the needs of customers become increasingly sophisticated, there is a need for organizations and business companies to consider carefully the way they examine and carry out strategic marketing planning. Much of the planning literature acknowledges the necessity of marketing planning in the business, public and non profit sector. Marketing planning can help business companies to think strategically, to clarify future direction, to foresee the changes that happen to their external environment and to create proactive responses that will enhance the effectiveness of their organizations and consequently to deliver high economic benefits (Lee flank and De Mortanges, 1996; Dibb, Farhangmerh and Simkin, 2001).

The sport sector has also begun to recognize the usefulness of strategic marketing planning. Although there is little empirical evidence which proves the relationship between marketing planning and sport business performance, many sport researchers have argued that without the improvement of strategic marketing planning, sport organizations can not survive to the competitive sport environment (Shoham and Kahle, 1996; Stotlar, 1993).

McDonald (1989) stated that marketing planning is simply the logical sequence and a series of activities leading to the setting of marketing objectives and the formulation of plans for achieving them. More specifically, the strategic marketing planning process comprises the following:

1. Develop mission, vision and values of the club
2. Determine corporate long-term objectives
3. Evaluate external environment
4. Evaluate internal environment
5. Set marketing objectives
6. Develop marketing strategies
7. Formulate detailed action plans
8. Evaluate the performance of the marketing planning process

Purpose

The primary purpose of the research project was to examine the extent to which the strategic marketing planning process is being used by the Greek professional sport clubs (football and basketball clubs).

Methods

The sample of the particular research was 68 managing directors and administrative staff from 22 Greek professional sport clubs (football and basketball clubs). The questionnaire was developed by the researcher based on the reviewed literature on strategic marketing planning as well as on input and suggestions from reviews offered by a selected panel of experts. The questionnaire provided specific information concerning the strategic marketing planning process in the Greek sport professional sector and some demographic characteristics of the respondents. The reliability of the scale was found to be $\alpha = .96$. The results analyzed by using the SPSS.

Results

Demographics: 50,8% of the total population were persons that belong to Marketing Department (30,2% Managers and 20,6% staff of Marketing Department). In addition, the 91% of the total sample held graduate and postgraduate degree, while the 70% had more than three years working experience.

Extent of strategic marketing planning components:

1. 90% of the clubs develop mission, vision and values of the club.
2. 80% of the clubs determine long-term objectives.
3. 81% of the clubs evaluate their external environment.
4. 95% of the clubs evaluate their internal environment.
5. 100% of the clubs set marketing objectives.
6. 85,7% of the clubs develop marketing strategies.
7. 61,9% of the clubs formulate detailed action plans.
8. 61,9% of the clubs evaluate the strategic marketing process.

Level of marketing planning: Only 23,8 percent of the Greek professional sport clubs may be identified as strategic marketing planners, since only this percentage met the criteria of: (a) developing formalized, written, long-term marketing plans, (b) assessing the factors of external and internal environment, (c) establishing marketing strategies based on the club's mission and marketing objectives. The majority of the Greek professional sport clubs (76,2 percent) were identified as non strategic marketing planners due to the fact that their marketing planning efforts fell into one of the following categories: (a) operational marketing planners – 47,6%, (b) intuitive marketing planners – 19,1% and (c) no marketing planners – 9,5%.

Conclusions/ Application to practice

The discrepancy in the percentages between the separate strategic marketing planning components and the integrated application of the strategic marketing planning process raise queries relative to the way that the marketing planning process is being implemented by the Greek professional sport clubs. Even though the purpose of the particular research was to examine the extent of strategic marketing planning process, implementation issues are paramount. Managers need to think carefully issues related to effective implementation such as staff training in strategic marketing planning procedures and organizational culture. Both issues

are significant components of the strategic marketing planning process and must be managed effectively when determining implementation plans for marketing strategies and marketing planning programmes (Piercy and Morgan, 1994; Leppard and McDonald, 1991).

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