
Managing Reform Processes in Sport - Tracking Expectations and Acceptance of Key Actors in the German Golf League

Submitting author: Dr Christopher Huth

Bayreuth, 95444
Germany

All authors: Christopher Huth (corresp)

Type: Scientific

Category: 3: Governance of Sport(s) and Sport Organisations

Abstract

AIM OF ABSTRACT

The globalisation of all business in the twentieth century and the advent of television led to the situation that Golf enjoys immense popularity worldwide. Although no precise data exist, an estimated 80 million golfers play on close to 40,000 courses across the planet. This global development of golf's popularity leads to the reentry of golf in the 2016 Olympics in Rio de Janeiro. In order to have realistic chances to win a gold medal in 2020 the German Golf Association (DGV) implemented the so-called "vision gold" with two major projects – Golf Team Germany and German Golf League (DGL). The aim of this longitudinal study is now to detect the expectations as well as the acceptance of two stakeholders of the DGL. The study focuses on the question to what extent the new league system is accepted by two major stakeholders – the club management and the players.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In recent sports economics literature, some authors argue that the American method of organising leagues with franchise rights is superior to the European promotion and relegation system (Dietl & Franck, 2000). However, other economists argue that the system of promotion and relegation tends to raise consumer welfare by increasing effective competition among teams (Drewes, 2003; Roos & Szymanski, 2010). Regarding the DGL, the DGV decided to introduce the European league model with some American elements.

For the implementation of the DGL, the association has to take into account partly conflicting interests of the involved stakeholders as golf clubs, players, sponsors or spectators. Thus, the DGL is to be regarded as a cooperative system of different stakeholders. Following the stakeholder theory, Freeman (1984) defines stakeholders as "any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the

organisation's objective". For this reason, stakeholders must be seen as a group that has a significant influence on the organisation. Building upon relevant literature on the design and optimization of sports league as well as on stakeholder theory, the first season of the DGL is analyzed.

METHODOLOGY, RESEARCH DESIGN AND DATA ANALYSIS

For the present study, two standardized questionnaires – one for the clubs, one for the players – were developed. 5-point Likert scales, from 1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree, were used in most questions of the survey in order to get a meaningful evaluation (Li, Pitts, & Quarterman, 2008).

The questionnaires were implemented by qualtrics, an online questionnaire tool. Links were created via qualtrics. These links were mailed to all participating golf clubs (N=317) in the DGL. For this, a contact person in the golf clubs who fits best to the topic was identified. The survey link for the players was separately mailed to the identified contact person associated with the appeal to send it up to their players. In total, N=124 out of 317 golf clubs and N=619 players took part in the first survey. In the second survey the participation rate was slightly higher with N=147 golf clubs and N=643 players. 65% of the participating golf clubs and 25% of the players took part in both studies.

RESULTS, DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The results indicate that the two stakeholders are quite satisfied with the new league system. It is observed that the competition is more objective and precise but not more emotional. The evaluation of the characteristics of the new system shows that the two groups are especially pleased with the home match, the league size and number of singles matches.

However, less accepted is the number of foursome. A different opinion between the two stakeholders can be identified in the game modus.

While golf clubs prefer stroke play, players – especially in the first and second league – rather wish match play.

Golf clubs, moreover, face the challenge of dealing with their stakeholders – club members, sponsors and local media. The findings show that the new league has no impact on the interest of central stakeholders. Given the fact that in most cases the club budget is financed in a large part by membership fees, golf clubs may nonetheless run into trouble with their members. Therefore, especially the DGV but also the golf clubs have to think about how the new league can sustainably attract higher demand of different stakeholders in the future. A possible solution is the implementation of more exiting elements in the competition design as a match play in the foursome.

References

Dietl, H. M. & Franck, E. (2000). Effizienzprobleme in Sportligen mit gewinnmaximierenden Kapitalgesellschaften – Eine modelltheoretische Untersuchung. *Zeitschrift für Betriebswirtschaft*, 70, 1157-1175.

Drewes, M. (2003). Competition and efficiency in professional sports leagues. *European Sport Management Quarterly*, 3, 240-252.

Freeman, R.E. (1984). *Strategic management: A stakeholder approach*. Boston: Pitman.

Li, M., Pitts, B., & Quarterman, J. (2008). *Research Methods in Sport Management*. Morgantown: Fitness Information Technology.

Ross, S. F. & Szymanski, S. (2010). Open Competition in League Sports. In S. Szymanski (Ed.), *The Comparative Economics of Sport* (pp. 139-173). Chippenham, Eastborne: CPI Anthony Rowe.