
IT'S NOT JUST CRICKET – THE PORTFOLIOS OF THE ENGLISH /WELSH TEAMS

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Abstract

Aim of paper- The aim of the article is to examine the range of products and services offered by the professional cricket teams in the UK. To what extent have they added to their core activity of staging matches?

Literature review

The changing nature of sources of income in professional sport started to attract academic interest in the 1990s. Mason (1999) categorised income streams into four distinct groups: fans who attend games; media companies who purchase the rights to show games; communities who build facilities and offer support; and corporations who purchase teams and/or provide revenue through commercial association. A concurrent stream of research focuses on the marketing of additional products and services, as opposed to the sources of finance stemming from the match itself. It acknowledges that teams and leagues offer a portfolio of products and services that go beyond the core product of sports matches.

Apostolopoulou (2002) defines brand extensions as the offering of any additional products/services to the core. Arguing that these may help an organization strengthen its brand image, increase emotional attachment with the team, broaden its customer base and most importantly contribute to long term viability. The nature of extensions are classified using a typology of five categories: sport activities including training and coaching; match entertainment such as cheerleaders and music bands; media such as broadcasting; information related such as web sites and team publications; and those that are a low perceived fit to the core product, such as health clubs and credit cards. These may be operated with a clubs sponsor or partner. However, the term did not distinguish as to whether fit was to the organization's product/service range or customers. The typology also paid scant regard to activities which may involve use of the facilities but were not seeking to capitalize on the connection between fans and teams (Richelieu and Desbordes, 2013)

but targeting a different audience. In some sporting contexts practitioner research suggests this may be of significant importance (Wright, 2011).

Methodology- A case study approach was adopted using both quantitative and qualitative methods. The accounts of the 18 teams and the governing body were reviewed to analyse the flow of income within the sport and categorize its sources. Interviews were then held with senior commercial staff of twelve of the teams to investigate the range of brand extensions and their target market.

Results- The team were reliant on broadcasting income and non core activities for commercial viability. All had engaged in brand extensions, offering a category of products/services that were more concerned with facilities utilization. This category could be divided into Ongoing and Events. The former including activities such as hotels, shops and gyms providing a continuous income stream. The latter are of an ad hoc nature, this covers extensions such as music concerts, firework displays and conferences. These are targeted at markets within their geographical area of operation and function as regional brands (Couvellaere, and Richelieu, 2005).

These extensions are not aimed at fans of the teams; as with conventional sporting extensions; but at a different market. Though there was some overlap between customers. The use of alliances and joint ventures is common in the provision of these lines. They add a fifth source of income, facilities utilization to the four identified by Mason (1999): fans who attend games; media companies; communities who build facilities and offer team support; and corporations who purchase teams and/or provide revenue through commercial association. Though the research is limited to a single sport, the findings are likely to be relevant to other sports teams, particularly SMEs, where income from the sport alone is insufficient to maintain professional status.

References

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