

Business intelligence in professional Finnish sports clubs and federations

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Aim

Rapid growth and development of information technologies, internet based platforms and solutions along with digitalization of businesses in general has shifted the behavior of the consumers in many industries. Sport business is not an exception in this trend. The vast amount of unstructured and structured data pushes enterprises and companies under new challenges in managing their businesses and drives the sports organizations to plan their business strategies from a new perspective. Managing the data and utilizing the business information can create new opportunities to improve the organizations' business performance. The aim of this study was to examine the use of the business related information for the benefit of the strategic decision making and planning in the context of Finnish professional sports clubs and federations. Furthermore the purpose was to explore the maturity level of the current business intelligence and performance management in the sports organizations as well as the views concerning the importance of business information management in the future.

Theoretical background

Theoretical background of the study consisted of business intelligence models added with Gartner's Maturity Model for Business Intelligence and Performance Management. Additionally business intelligence is connected to the context of sport business. The history and evolution of business intelligence is relatively short which means that business intelligence definitions vary quite extensively. Azvine, Cui and Nauck (2005) loosely describe the business intelligence as a process to capture, access, understand, analyze and turn the most valuable asset of an enterprise, raw data, into information in order to improve the business performance.

Rajteric (2010) states that the Gartner's Maturity Model for Business Intelligence (BI) and Performance Management (PM) is developed for assessment of the input effort, BI and PM maturity in an organization. Assessment includes three key aspects; people, processes, and metrics and technology. The model recognizes five levels of maturity which are unaware, tactical, focused, strategic and pervasive. Aho (2010) adds that Gartner's model provides business oriented approach to organizational maturity assessment including both business and technical dimensions.

When defining Sport Business Intelligence (SBI) the idea is to combine rational and continuous development of sport events and organizations using advanced data collection and sophisticated analyses to support informed decisions and quality improvement (Rasku, Puronaho & Turco 2015). Troilo, Bouchet, Urban and Sutton (2016) are approaching the topic from business analytics perspective and define the use of analytics as the extensive use of data, statistical and quantitative analysis, explanatory and predictive models, and fact based management to drive decisions and add value.

Methodology, research design and data analysis

Target group of the research was professional sports clubs and federations which operate at the top level of the sport in Finland. The respondents were primarily operative business managers in the selected sports organizations. If the contact information of organization's business manager was unavailable secondary target respondent was the organization's board director. A quantitative survey research method was chosen to reach as many of the target organizations as possible. In total 208 respondents were contacted through e-mail, and 39 respondents eventually took part in the survey. Data was collected and analyzed with Webropol online survey and analysis software.

Results, implications and discussion

Results suggest that organizations use wide range of different business information sources to support their decision making processes. Sales reports, customer and member registers, board members and financial performance reports were the most important sources of business information mentioned. Regardless of the frequent use of the different sources of information less than half of the organizations have a proper tool for business data collection and less than 1/3 has a suitable tool for processing and analyzing the data. Clear majority believes that systematical collection and analysis of business related data and information will be essential in improving the financial performance of the sport organizations in the future. Many of the organizations view themselves moderately mature organizations when referred to their capability to collect, analyze and utilize the data and information. Addition to this the respondents implied that organizations' ability to systematical data collection from business environment together with business information management are the key areas where the organizations should develop themselves the most. Results also indicated differences between organizations' structures as business intelligence methods and solutions were more commonly in use in organizations that had more extensive financial and human resources.

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