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# MARKETING IN SPORT AND RELATIONAL MARKETING IN SPORT

Case  
Study

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## Keywords

*Sports marketing,  
Sports brands,  
Sports sector*

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## Abstract

*Due to the special attention it receives in society, sport has ceased to be a preoccupation like any other and started having a separate place in people's minds. As a consequence, sport marketing is also a hub of interest for both researchers and practitioners. Marketing in sport is one of the highly researched themes in the literature, noting the existence of a wide range of scientific journals devoted to this subject. The question that still raises debates is whether marketing of sport should be a distinct case of marketing or marketing remains the same irrespective of the product to which it is applied, whether it is sports, the sale of consumables, insurance, medicine, agro-food industry and others . It is less important which approach prevails, since it is essential for marketing to add value to the brand of the sports organization that practices it. A lot of people and organizations represent a part of the sport world, entering reciprocal relationships, from which value is produced, being offered to the market in the form of different products: matches, meetings, struggles, athletes (products of clubs where they are legitimate, as well as their instructors and the rest of the staff), palpable goods bearing their favorite club or athlete logo, such as balls, shirts or any other type of sports equipment, sports television shows, newspapers and specialised magazines, online platforms, music, movies and more.*

## INDRODUCTION

A lot of people and organizations take part in sport, entering reciprocal relationships that lead to value offered to the market in the form of different products: matches, meetings, struggles, athletes (products of the clubs they are entitled to, as well as coaches and the other employees), balls, shirts or any other type of sports equipment, sports television shows, newspapers and specialist magazines, online platforms, music, sportsbooks, movies and more (Tifrea, 2007).

Oprîșan (2002) identifies some of the sports organizations of the Romanian public sector:

County Youth and Sports Directorates responsible for managing good parts of table sport and even private, amateur or professional sports in each of the 41 territorial units of the country outside Bucharest. Often, state support reaches the local beneficiary through county directorates (Moreno & Cervello, 2010);

The Romanian Olympic and Sporting Committee, responsible for managing the national Olympic movement, financed by the state and by its own resources;

The responsible Ministry. Since the publication of Oprîșan (2002) and so far, sport has moved from the Ministry of Youth to the Ministry of Education, Research and Youth. The main role remained the same: developing a strategy of a national sport policy.

## DEFINITION OF MARKETING IN SPORTS

Prior to the definition, the English literature distinguishes between the terms "sport marketing" and "sports marketing". Marketing of sports deals mainly with mass sport. Mass sport represents the sporting activities that members of a community can do without being paid for, but by their own desire to move, either to lead a healthy lifestyle or a desire to socialize (Dick, 2007). Mass sports people are not professional, but may be any person who, as a pastime activity, takes part in activities such as jogging, cycling, swimming, or participating with friends in games such as football, tennis, basketball, volleyball, billiards, snooker, darts, bowls, chess, rugby or korfbal.

Marketing of sport is limited to this category, meaning:

- organizing competitions for free time athletes (with all stages, planning to control);
- promotion of some athletes, even non-professional;
- producing and selling articles to help athletes to perform activities such as tennis rackets, table tennis bats, badminton bats, trainers, bicycles,

basketball baskets, various balls and balloons, skates, fitness equipment or any other products useful in practicing your favorite sports (Delavier, 2010);

- raising funds for mass sport.

Marketing of sports operates with organizations and athletes taking part in the production of sport as a show, which is the professional sport offered to the supporters. In this role, marketing should help sports organizations that practice it to become more performing.

The specialized literature could not reach a generally valid definition of marketing in sport, as there is no definition of marketing as a whole. As both sports and marketing are two complex variables, most of the work so far has attempted to build a definition that responds to the problem.

The Romanian authors (Oprîșan, 2002, Constantinescu, 2007) attribute the emergence of the term "marketing of sports" to the American magazine Advertising Age, which, in an article from the late 1970s, referred to sport as a means of promotion and selling of the products of the companies on the market. The definition came in the context in which, for about three decades (Davis, 2005), the professional American sports had a strong media coverage, and in the opinion of Oriard (2007) the Super Bowl had become the perfect opportunity for businesses to advertise, both inside the arena, but especially on television, and to launch new products. This first definition has lost importance as marketing in sports, especially sports, has emerged as a specialization.

A further simple definition with general applicability is also provided by Mullin et al. (2007), who talk about sports marketing as the sum of activities that, after an exchange, have the capacity to meet the wishes and needs of sports consumers. The exchange is between the sportsman and the sports promoter, and they can take all imaginable forms. The consumer can be:

- The supporter who buys a ticket to the match;
- The supporter who buys a sports newspaper in which the favorite team is publicized;
- The supporter who visits the website of their favorite team;
- The supporter who buys clothing with the symbols of their favorite club;
- the athlete who is convinced by the coach's strategy and agrees to pursue it;
- the coach, athletes and employees who offer their services in return for a salary;
- the person who pays the value of a subscription to a fitness club to get the right to use his equipment;
- the person who rents a tennis court;

- cumpărătorul unei mingi de baschet etc.

### RELATIONAL MARKETING IN SPORT

The theme of relational marketing in sports has been studied by some researchers, but, according to Wakefield (2007), this specialization is still young, which is why the literature does not abound. However, Nufer and Bühler (2011) note that relational marketing has been used for a long time in sports, especially by merchants for the sale of sports equipment. For example, Rohm (1997) studies how a brand of athletic shoes can create links to connect with customers. Ferrand and McCarthy (2009) also identify the emergence of relational marketing in sports in the commercial sphere but notes that more and more professional sports associations are now using relational strategies to work with stakeholders (Wienek, 2008).

However, with regard to specialized literature, in the case of exclusion of manufacturers or sports equipment traders, there remains little work to address the issue from the point of view of a sports organization providing not equipment, but sporting performances (Pancorbo Sandoval, 2008). The explanation for the gap is also given by Ferrand and McCarthy (2009), who believe that relational marketing in sports was based, in its phase of appearance, on real cases experienced by marketing managers in sports organizations, and that theory was built only later, based on existing

### CONCLUSIONS

- Due to the special attention it receives in society, sport has departed from being a preoccupation like any other to have a separate place in people's minds. As a result, sport marketing is also a hub of interest for both researchers and practitioners.
- Marketing in sport is one of the topics researched in the literature, noting the existence of a wide range of scientific journals devoted to this topic.
- Seen as a special branch of study, marketing in sports has some peculiarities, created by the specifics of sport.
- The quality of the product offered to the supporters depends on the quality of the athletes, the coach and the work they submit. Thus, most of the marketing of a sports organization is influenced by the internal component, that is, by the way the coach, athletes, staff, employees and executives work together to produce the sporting result.

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