



Editorial

Promoting and celebrating sports marketing diversity

At a recent sports marketing book launch in London, it was a surprise, and a pleasurable one, to peruse the list of attendees: the geographic diversity of audience members was striking, as were their academic and career backgrounds. 'Marketing and football: an international perspective', by Michel Desbordes (ed.)*, was no less notable, delivering on its title promise with contributions from countries as diverse as Argentina, South Korea, Canada, Finland and the Republic of Ireland. Although sports marketing as both a science and a practice is still evolving, it seems that locally, nationally and internationally, its importance is accepted by academics and practitioners.

The pioneering contribution of US sports marketers to the development of our discipline is one that we should all continue to acknowledge and embrace. Yet there are now many new and exciting developments taking place outside the US. Exciting because not only do they add to the understanding and credibility of the discipline, but they also emphasise the diversity and the meaning of sport within different cultural settings. So much so, in fact, that we are witnessing the development of a rich mix of approaches to sports marketing rather than homogenisation of research according to some basic set of principles or themes.

In a world where large global sports brands have begun to emerge as dominating forces, this diversity in thought and practice is an essential feature of sports marketing's next phase. This is not to deny the international and global importance of sport, nor to criticise powerful sports brands. What this diversity actually means is that sport has an important part to play in our daily lives and in society in general, as well as in economics and commerce. The challenge, therefore, over the next five years will be for those involved in sports marketing to continue capturing and building on the essence of what makes sport special – wherever they are researching and working.

This issue of the *Journal* demonstrates the extent of the diversity that is now a feature of our discipline:

along with issues relating to football, swimming and ice hockey, the papers examine sponsorship, endorsements and fan behaviour; the studies focus on sport in the UK, Germany, South Korea, the US and Canada. In the coming issue we will be focusing on sport in Spanish-speaking countries, and in Volume 9 a whole edition will be devoted to one of the world's biggest events – the Olympic Games. I anticipate that the *Journal* will be playing a major part in the international development of sports marketing.

My one cautionary note is that imperialism in sport may ultimately dominate the growth of the marketing. That is, the sports that market themselves effectively and the sports that most people watch might begin to crowd out other sports and impose alien sets of cultural values on them. For example, there has been a lot of talk in the US and the UK recently about 'doing business' in China. Moreover, many people have commented on the massive growth in popularity of football (soccer), often to the exclusion of other sports. This is a real concern, not least because it potentially misrepresents what sports marketing is all about. Marketing in not-for-profit sports organisations is just as important as it is in sports businesses. Equally, the role of sports marketing is not to strengthen the global position of a small number of US and European-driven sports. Rather, we as sports marketers need to acknowledge the diversity of sport, its cultural context and the marketplaces within which it is consumed. Long may the *Journal* continue to celebrate this diversity!

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* Reviewed in Volume 7 Number 3, May 2006