Editorial: New contexts in family business research: sport, fitness and lifestyle

Family business research is currently based on research conducted on specific industry and segments of the economy. This means there is a preference in many published studies on certain contexts due to past research influencing current research trajectories. Whilst this is good and has produced much interesting insights into family business, new research contexts are needed.

In the sport, fitness and lifestyle sector there is a dominance of family businesses. These family businesses range in size from micro enterprises to large enterprises. In addition, there are different kinds of family dynamics existing from married couples partnering in a fitness centre to generational family members investing in a lifestyle enterprise. This means there is still much research needed on how family businesses in these sectors operate and whether they are different or similar to other sectors.

The sport sector encompasses a range of profit, non-profit and hybrid enterprises. There is an emotional connection to sport often passed down generations that makes it different to other sectors. Moreover, the high level of government funding for sport provides incentives for family businesses to emerge. The type and intensity of the funding help is based on social as well as market need. This makes it an interesting context due to the private and public sector partnerships that exist in the sport sector. More research is needed on the type of sport family businesses that exist in terms of what kind of businesses they are invested in. Traditionally bricks and mortar family businesses like gyms and recreational centres dominated the sector but due to the digital transformation that has taken place over the last couple of years there are more online and digital family businesses.

The fitness sector has increased substantially over the past decade as there has been more interest in health and overall well-being. Coinciding with this trend has been more family businesses being established in the fitness sector, particularly informal ones. This has led to business partnerships amongst various family members based on skillset and need. The relative ease of starting a fitness business has also made it a side business for many. Thus, it is a secondary way they can obtain money for their business ventures. The growth in social media has also led to more fitness entrepreneurs becoming well known figures. Posting videos and other content online has increased people's interest in the fitness industry.

The lifestyle sector incorporates a range of business ventures based on an individual's preference for mixing business with pleasure pursuits. As more people become interested in their quality of life, the lifestyle sector has increased. Many of the businesses in this sector cater to a specific niche category whether that is based on hobbies, interests or tastes. Family businesses in this sector tend to be small with many being family owned and/or managed.

In conclusion, it is important that more research is devoted to the sport, fitness and lifestyle sectors due to the proliferation of family businesses. Not much research has been conducted on these areas, so it is time that more attention is placed on the intricate nature of family businesses in new contexts.

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