Key Elements of Sports Marketing Activities for Sports Events

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Abstract

Sports marketing activities comprise people, activities, business and organisation in producing, facilitating, promoting or organising any product (as goods, services and events) for a demand of sports supporters. This theoretical paper aims to introduce and discuss the sports scheme, sports marketing mix, and sports supporters as three key elements which the sports teams need to focus on to implement sports marketing activities in sports events. By and large, sports teams have been implemented marketing principles as well as sponsorships to qualify a sports events as experience and entertainment focus on the supporters (as customers). Sports scheme refers to actors' network, marketing tools represents the tools to plan and perform marketing activities and supporters are those who support and purchase club goods. Thus, all of them are key relevant elements to organise a sports event (as a game or match). The professionalism of the sports events has required use the sports and non-sports stakeholders' skill to help sports teams to design and provide a sports experience and amusement by means sports marketing tools to format a suitable product and service to a supporter's audience.

Keywords: sports marketing, sports supporters, sports scheme, sports teams, sports business

1. Introduction

The expression 'Sport', as used in contemporary sports marketing and the sports business industry, is a broad concept to denote all people, activities, businesses and companies involved in producing, facilitating, promoting, or organising any sports business, activity or experience addressed to competitions, events, experiences, and entertainments. Sports marketing focuses on administrating sports activities and processes (Storm, Klaus & Nielsen, 2017). Thus, sports marketing has a function of organising a specific variety of activities in a sports area, such as: goods for practicing some sports activity as clothing, shoes, etc; equipment and apparel, as skates, bicycles, etc; electronic games, as FIFA (Fédération Internationale de Football Association), NBA (National Basketball Association) etc; promoting merchandise of sports goods in sports events, sports championships, etc.; sports facilities, e.g., managing a sports court or a stadium; services, as training, foods, drinks, ticketing, etc; retail, products in club's stores or sports magazines; media, selling merchandise and rights for broadcasting matches on radio, tv, internet, etc; leisure, as performances of artists or musicians pre-during-after games; and internal media, as managing relationship with supporters using website, social media, apps, etc (Bradbury & O'Boyle, 2017; McHugh, Bronson & Watters, 2015).

Managers have been required to coordinate actors' networks which should be composed of four groups of organisations or individuals: suppliers – athletes, coaches, etc.; competitors – other sports and leisure activities; customers – spectators, supporters and companies; and infrastructure – stadium, sponsors and other clubs (KPMG Reports, 2014). Sports marketing is crucial for managing a set of activities to meet needs and wants of supporters through exchange processes. Thus, sports marketing has been continuously evolving and undergoing profound changes with a view to deal with new expertise as design thinking, design sprint, business innovation and user experience to respond to competitive challenges as well as supporters who demand an elevated level of goods and services (Burden & Li, 2009; Yoshida & James, 2010; Yoshida, 2017). At large, two aspects draw attention: (a) analysing the sport as an event, experience, entertainment offer and the sports scheme to better understand the marketing potential associated to stakeholders – events, teams, partners, sponsors, media, players, supporters, public and private companies, etc.; (b) looking at the sports marketing as an application with specific particularities. These include the relevance and quality of stakeholders which are critical for designing and creating the sports offer, and

the emotional and captivating nature of the sporting performances (Foster, O'Reilly & Dávila, 2016).

Therefore, we defined the problem of the study in order to support our arguments: what are the key elements which the sports teams need to focus on to implement sports marketing activities in the sports teams? This theoretical paper aims to introduce and discuss the sports scheme, sports marketing tools, and sports supporters as three key elements which a sports teams need to focus on to organise sports marketing activities in sports events. In sport, marketing has been assumed that the original form of seeing the sports team, games and players have changed the exchange process and the relationship between sports team and supporters since the consumer needs perspective requires considered. Clearly, a marketer must identify what needs and wants are being satisfied through the exchange process with supporters. In this case, the process of exchange as the act of a supporter obtaining a desired object (matches, events, activities, goods, etc) from a sports team by offering something (passion, energy, enthusiasm, excitement and money) in return. Under these circumstances, understanding supporters as a customer; then, organising a sports scheme is another challenge; and, finally designing and carrying out a sports marketing tools are the three challenges inherent in the early phase of the sports marketing programme for sports events.

2. Understanding Sports Marketing

The expression "Sports Marketing" was first used in the United States by the Advertising Age in 1978 (Shilbury, 2009). Thenceforth it has been pointed out to describe several activities associated with sports promotion. Sports marketing is the process through which a contest with an uncertain outcome is staged, creating opportunities for the simultaneous fulfilment of objectives among sports customers, sports businesses, participants and other related individuals, groups and organisations (Masterman, 2004). From an international perspective, sports marketing is defined further as the opportunity for an organisation to advertise their services in sports-related context. This could include buying the naming rights to a sports stadium, sponsoring individual athletes or providing clothing and sports equipment (Fullerton & Merz, 2008). As international sports marketing includes both products and services it is important to know how these operate in the business environment (Ratten, 2016; Rundh & Gottfridsson, 2015).

Fullerton and Mertz (2008) describe two distinct streams in approaching the sports marketing in a sports entity. On the one hand, the marketing of sports, which adds marketing sporting events and equipment to supporters and participants. This sort of sports marketing is intrinsic in the introduction of new sports such as action sports and innovative sports products. First, marketing through sports is contemplated sports as media and broadcasting or a sponsorship alternative for organisations that market consumer, and to a lesser extent, enterprise products. For Shilbury (2009), while the marketing of sports is an approach to marketing activities and processes to market goods and services towards to sports supporters and spectators. Second, marketing through sports intents the promotion of non-sporting goods and services at sporting events and the user of athletes to support non-sports products and services.

Nevertheless, marketing concepts are suffering continually evolving. Sports marketing is also undergoing profound changes which require new expertise and skills for answering to competitive challenges and supporters demanding. Thus, two subjects need a reflexion (Foster, O'Reilly & Dávila, 2016): (a) assessing the sports as entertainment offer and its sports scheme to better understand the marketing potential associated to stakeholders (events, clubs, partners, media, athletes, supporters, public and private entities, etc.); (b) cogitating the sports marketing as an application and strategy with specific particularities, i.e., including the importance and qualification of the stakeholders are crucial for creating a sporting offer and an emotional and captivating nature of the sporting performances.

To propose a marketing strategy it is essential to overhaul the business model of a non-profit sports team organisation and adapt their marketing-oriented business taking into account a sports scheme model able to analyse five assumptions (Clemes, Brush & Collins, 2011; Rundh & Gottfridsson, 2015; Shilbury, 2009; Storm, Wagner & Nielsen, 2017): structuring marketing channels networks, professionalising the sports team, establishing a good relationship with stakeholders, dealing with actors to get resources, and managing the sports brand reputation with the audience on media. Notwithstanding, a sports team has obtained five sources of revenues and profits to afford their strategies: (a) players: acquired from South American, Asian or African clubs earlier, as an investment for selling them, later; (b) ticketing: which means selling all tickets available to watch a match at the stadium; (c) partners: which produce sporting clothes, and other products or services, have all rights for naming the arena; (d) media rights: the media and tv broadcasters pay for broadcasting rights around the world; (e) club membership: supporters which are encouraged to invest and help clubs to finance their structure in exchange for benefits, e.g., a discount on tickets, best places in the arenas, etc.

3. Supporter as a Customer

Supporters love an active and a lived experience. Then, for attracting, even more, sports supporters to events and making money, a sports team depends on a strong, a structured and an organised league, because a sports team is associated to leagues. However, for making feasible a commercial league, seven components required adjustment (Norris, Wann & Zapalac, 2014; 2011; Piipponen, 2011; Yoshida & James, 2010): (a) governance framework: need to be able to sustain and recognised by associated as an official sports federation for organising championships; (b) league timing: the tournament needs to be coordinated, respecting supporters, spectators, media rights and international time zone to attract more spectators around the world and positioning brand and team images and no competing with another league; (c) players: hiring and involving top players of the country or, still, the world to maximising the competition level within teams and, thus, attracting more supporters, spectators and media focus; (d) marketing: creating an effective marketing plan focusing on supporters, spectators and, still, quality services by sponsorships; (e) supporters base: designing marketing strategies for engaging sports supporters to join in sports event and experience, perceiving all of them as consumers; (f) arena facilities: qualifying all arrange of activities which are developed inside of the stadium, before, during and after sports experience; (g) match performance: improving the quality of games to capture supporters, spectators, media and sponsorship interests for applying new investments.

Observing the supporter (as a customer) behaviour as a consequence of product and service satisfaction, several attempts have been made to list the motives for sports event attendance (Bouchet et al, 2011; Yoshida, 2017): escape refers to one's diversion from usual life, some customers may also be driven by economic features, gained for example by betting, eustress is the result of obtaining excitement and stimulation in sport, sports events may also enhance one's self-esteem, group affiliation refers to event's social nature, sports customers often search for entertainment, family relates to the spending time with family, and aesthetic beauty concerns one's desire to see the artistic beauty and the grace in the sport. However, Shilbury (2009) summarise five motives considering psychological benefits that sports consumers desire from a sports experience.

- Social interaction represents a desire for sociability as individuals are motivated to seek a sports experience owing to opportunities for the enhancement of human relationships through external communication with other spectators, participants, friends, and family;

- Performance represents a desire for aesthetic and physical pleasure as individuals are motivated to seek a sports event experience due to opportunities to enjoy the grace, skill, and artistry of athletic movement and physiological movement;

- Excitement represents a desire for intellectual stimulation as an individual is motivated to seek a sports event experience due to opportunities for mental actions and exploration from the atmospheric created by the uncertainty of participation and competition and the spectacle of associated activities;

- Esteem represents a desire for competency as individuals are motivated to seek a sports event experience due to opportunities for achievement and challenge that produce a sense of mastery and heighten a sense of personal and collective self-esteem;

- Diversion represents a desire for mental well-being as individuals are motivated to seek a sports event experience due to opportunities do escape and remove from daily work and life routines that create stress.

On the other hand, it is recommendable follow four principles for ensuring a sports event to supporters, in marketing orientation (Giroux, Pons & Maltese, 2017; Norris, Wann & Zapalac, 2014; Piipponen, 2011):

- Developing an enhanced understanding of supporters: marketer should try to learn as much as possible of their consumers. It is essential to know supporter perceptions of the sports team brand. By enhanced relations responding to supporter needs will develop. Technology can assist in these efforts;

- Increasing the interactions between supporters/consumers and the sports team brand: indeed, teams should strive for enhancing regular interactions with supporters/consumer to encourage players, as well as coaches to attend, would be a significant improvement. Product extensions such as sports bar, restaurants, museum or supporter shops would also increase team's visibility;

- Reinforcing and rewarding loyalty to team brand: traditionally in sports environment customers are forced to pay for being loyal. Rather than forcing customers to pay, voluntary and symbolic offerings could be provided. Recognising and rewarding supporter loyalty is becoming more prominent;

▪ Consistent, integrated marketing communication to reinforce key brand associations: long-term vision should be employed in the planning of marketing activities. Instead of on-field performances, which are always uncertain, emphasis should be moved to the core values the sports organisation wants to promote and communicate.

4. Sports Marketing Tools

The marketing tools are the tactic to set the strategies into sports team customer-supporter oriented. These tools may be handled at any time with the purpose of fit 4 Ps (product, price, place and promotion) for tangible goods and 9 Ps (conventional 4 Ps, people, process, physical, performance and activities) for intangible goods, as services, matches and events. The first 'P' is the product. Sports products include goods, services, events, information and media, places, people and ideas. Hence, the product is understood as aught that can be offered to a market appreciation, purchase, use or consumption that might satisfy an expectation or a need. Furthermore, a product is a problem-solver in that is bought because of the benefits offered. Essentially, supporters buy benefits, not the products (Silva & Las Casas, 2017b).

In sport, the product is easily observable, however the performance of the core product is something over which the marketers have no control. Considering playing the game as the core product, and all the associated processes, for instance, food, beverage, merchandise, half-time entertainment, video screens and the facility itself as product extensions. Even matches receiving great audience and profits, such as Manchester United vs Arsenal, do not always guaranteed quality contest. Even with remarkable players in the game. It is at this point that resemblances are noticed between the relevance of performances service supply and quality performances extensions.

Often, most product extensions have a component of service supply, and then, performance is relevant (Bradbury & O'Boyle, 2017; Shilbury, 2009). Therefore, product extensions can ensure that spectator at the football has an enjoyable day irrespective of on-court results. Under these circumstances, sports tangible products as clothes, shoes, souvenirs, facilities, food and beverages, etc.; marketers can guarantee and ensure a quality pattern customers-supporters, yet, sports tangible product as events and services they cannot vouch for quality levels, because depend on stakeholders such: players, professionals, sponsorships, supporters and weather.

The second 'P' is a price. Pricing, as a process, may merely be described as setting and adjusting a price charged to a supporter in exchange for a good and/or service. Pricing a product or a range of products properly is of extremely relevant to a sports team. The level of pricing characterises how many supporters are encouraged to buy the sports team's goods and/or services. Pricing strategies are guided in relation to other parts of the sports marketing tools, for example, product tool, value proposition, brand sponsorship, place dependence, promotion tool, professional competence, physic facilities, technologies in processes, sports team position in leagues, talented athletes in the team (Lionel Messi, Cristiano Ronaldo, etc) and supporters' loyalty (members, light, medium and heavy users).

The customer adoption process involves making potential supporters aware of the product, giving them information, let them evaluate the product, then getting them to trial and finally commit to it and therefore become loyal. In effect, the strategic pricing process incorporates both external environment (e.g. competitors' pricing behaviour) and internal environment (goals and objectives). This will enable the marketers to create a pricing strategy beyond the short-term future of the sports team (Masterman, 2004; Fullerton, 2007). There are eight processes which a marketer needs to draw attention (Masterman, 2004; Bernstein, 2015): define pricing goals, identify market sensitivity to price, estimate the cost-volume-profit relationship, establish pricing strategies of major competitors, determine constraints on pricing behaviour, define constraints by other marketing tools, delineate time dependence, and determine purchase price.

The place is the third 'P'. Place (or distribution) decisions relate to how marketer gets the good and/or services to the supporters or how marketer get the customer to its good and/or service. It would not make sense to have great good and/or service if supporters could not access it. These decisions typically relate to getting the goods to the supporters when they want it and where they want it. Then, to make goods and/or services easier for its customers to attend matches, for example, the sports team a deal with the local transportation authority to include ride fares on the city's light rail system with ticket plans, parking, etc. (Greenwell, Fink & Pastore, 2002). Sports area as service emerges four aspects which a marketer requires planning: (a) facility: production and consumption of sports goods and/or services taking place in the facility, as a stadium, stores, point of sale, parking, etc; (b) physical evidence: sports facility design, promotion material and advertising and service provision; (c) process: it involves delivering goods and/or services to supporters, however, some processes are visible and others are not; (d) people: who those which will performance the processes. In general, the marketing channels have also roles in relation to exchange process between sports team and supporters: transportation and storage, communication of information via advertising and publicity, personal selling, sales promotion, feedback (marketing research), financing and services such as

installation, customisation and repair. Stadium, stores and internet are placed which a sports team (a) deliveries their value proposition, interacts with their supporters and (b) provides satisfaction to them.

The next 'P' is the promotion. For Smolianov & Shilbury (2005) and Maltese & Danglade (2014), promotion decision relates to communication with target supporters. In sports promotion decision, can relate a variety of goals such creating awareness, stimulating demand, encouraging product, service and experience, and getting and retaining loyal supporters. The promotional decision requires understanding five elements: promotional objectives, promotional budget, message content, promotional strategies (advertising, public relations, publicity, sales promotion, personal sale, product placement, digital marketing, direct marketing, customer relationship management, advertainment, buzz marketing, etc.) and media selection (television, radio, Internet – social networks, YouTube, etc –, newspaper, magazine, billboards, etc.). Promotion is a crucial and vital part of the sports experience, thus, how the marketer and promoters handle the promotion tools will be essential to the success of the event, and even the long-term viability of the sport.

Piipponen (2011) states that the real consequence of the communication process is provoking a certain encouragement to the event. In most instances, it is to incline the target audience towards the product, service, and experiences embedded in the message. However, marketers need to concentrate the promotional programme considering four categories of customers: indirect customers, light users, medium users and heavy users. Promotion strategies consist of use of tools to promote an institutional image; increase sales in ticketing (physical and/or virtual); increase sales in products and/or services; promote a new good and/or service; increase numbers of members; promote a new player or talent; promote a new sponsorship; promote an important and a decisive match; share supporters' feelings; promote an event, as a concert music, in its arena; promote the governance and social responsibility; and promote relevant announces, in general.

Physical is the fifth 'P'. Physical represents the atmosphere created by marketers for receiving supporters for sharing an experience of supporting their team in a match, an event or an activity. The physical evidence should be appellative, attractive and promote supporters' energies and feelings, for scaring opponent's teams. Thus, physical representation, if unique and engaging, can 'tangilise' the facility, giving it brand identity and inducing strong cognitive images. Hence, the marketer should offer the sports product with physical evidence (Bradbury & O'Boyle, 2017). Two elements require being developed for introducing an appropriated physical evidence to customer-supporters (Sawyer, Judge & Gimbert, 2015): First, facility structure is the most tangible and visible physical evidence marketers can have for their products. The name of the facility can be displayed and marketed as the place where exciting events occur. Also, banners, photographs of statues of sporting heroes can decorate the inside and outside and, still, inner walkways of the facility. Hight-tech scoreboards (as big screens) showing sports team's achievements and victories, as well as its history and tradition, may evoke feeling and enhance the tangibility of the event and atmosphere. Second, communication is possible using instant communication for promoting products and/or services using social networks and sports team website to interact with supporters before and during the games, events or activities inside the arena and creating games to entertain the audience using sponsorship goods and services.

The sixth 'P' processes. The processes are understood as the activities or tasks which are visible and non-visible. Being a service requires the definition of the processes to produce and deliver benefits and value to supporters. Processes in service are, also known, as service design or value chain. The process is the method as well as the sequence of actions in the performance of the services (Moore & Levermore, 2012). If a process is badly projected will create a delivery slow, bureaucratic and ineffective; and after will result in dissatisfaction of target audience around the service performance. Thus, if a process is not well aligned and designed can produce low performance of the service of the frontline team, before long the efficient and effectively of the service can be compromised, as effect of lack of synchrony between what has been offered and what has been 'sold', in terms of benefits, to target customers-supporters. The processes must be planned and designed continuously in seeking of (Ratten, 2016, Rundh & Gottfridsson, 2015).

People is the seventh 'P'. In a match, an event, an activity, etc., people) are essential and crucial to get the exceptional performance. In the view of supporters, the staff team of service represents the provider of services. The assessing the quality of the match, event and activity are based on the supporters' interactions with the frontline team. The skills in sports marketing increase the potential of success of given match, event or activity, since are the professional who will meet, interact, engage and understand the supporters and, then, communicate about the value proposition and benefits to supporters. Professionals' skills make the difference in a match, an event or an activity, because they produce the service, thus a sports team need to: first, hire professionals to get performance in service

processes with purpose of leverage their skills in favour of matches, events and activities; then, provide support, consistent infrastructure, guidelines, training, etc; finally, develop skills professional for sports marketing, as teamwork, knowledge around the processes, etc. Therefore, in the supporters' view, a qualified staff team guarantees a comfortable and effective service and, consequently satisfaction to them.

In a sports match, event, activity, etc, performance index must be measured, in view of the monitoring and adjustment of some processes. Then, the eighth 'P' is the performance, since is required developing quantitative and qualitative index – financial and non-financial – and the implication that pervades the sports team competence while planner and organiser of matches, events, activities, point of sales, such as: ethics pattern, respect customers-supporters and respect their free choices (since not all supporters want the same thing related to a good or service). In other words, the goal is measuring the ability of the provider to deliver the benefits in a given event. The quality and performance ensure the value proposition as well as benefits to supporters because are supporters who define the quality standard in marketing. Wherefore, it is worth mentioning the six gaps in service quality to be useful to marketers who prepare sports events: (a) difference between what the marketer considers that the supporters expect and their actual needs and expectations; (b) difference between marketer's sense about supporters expectation and quality standards delivered in a given sports event; (c) difference between performance promised and the performance delivered; (d) difference between what marketer promotes and what they delivery; (e) difference between what is actually delivered and what supporters realise as delivered; (f) difference between what the supporters expect to receive and their perceptions about what marketer delivered (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2011).

The last 'P' is the programme, i.e., which reflects all activities involved in the marketer's efforts to achieve the target customer-supporters in a sports match, event or activity. This document must describe each process of sports marketing plan (Silva & Las Casas, 2017b). Sports marketing plan assists professionals to get performance and quality for guaranteeing benefits to supporters, with purpose of mapping deficient processes and suggestion solutions; introducing the customers orientation in the entire circle to ensure the benefit; prioritising actions that achieve the supporters' satisfaction; controlling the performance of process to guarantee great results; ensuring the service performance and removing gaps which are affecting the performance as well as supporters' dissatisfaction; assessing the staff team at work with the target supporters and their expertise; and handling the marketing tools to achieve the mission, goals and results of the sports marketing plan in view to promote feelings, as happiness, emotion; and experiences to supporters to keep healthy relationships. The programme is a sort of descriptive action document to aim an intention plan for future achievements (Chadwick & Thwaites, 2005; Fullerton, 2007; Shilbury, 2009).

5. Sports Scheme

Maltese and Danglade (2014) introduce a sports scheme based on analysing of sports as an entertainment. The sports scheme has dimensions of a business action plan for designing, developing and delivering an offer to market made by supporters. For them, a league as a big event comprising matches, which are small events. Sports are entertainments, since, as events, sports matches are a sort of collective celebration which brings supporters together to take part in and enjoy a sport and cultural spectacle in one place. In addition, sport as entertainment involves mobilising and allocating tangible and intangible resources to meet goals and objectives. Thus, a league or a match is product and/or service which is created, sold and delivered for a group of supporters in an organised way to make them happy, cheerful and satisfied about paying for something where they can share their feeling and passion for a team. Nevertheless, to deliver a good and/or service to supporters, a sports team requires stakeholders to deliver these in an efficient manner.

Rundh and Gottfridsson (2015) believe that in delivering the sports event, there is a complex set of actors who must interact with each other to create the expected offering. This is clearly in line with the network view in which one of the central thoughts is that a great deal of today's value-creating is done between diverse business areas and companies and consumers. The sharing and combining of resources from several firms create new opportunities for delivering value to the supporter. Who those actors are, what they bring to the network and what they gain from it depends on whether one considers the network from a non-commercial sports point of view or the business side of the network. Besides, as explain Blumrodt, Desbordes & Bodin (2013), in a professional sport, there are difficulties associated with seeing the actors act alone as professional sport has become a business, i.e., the team and the sports event, where the team which is participating in the sport has become a big business. This situation has encouraged the sports teams to become even more professional regarding marketing strategies.

The sports scheme aims to guide marketers to propose, design and operate a marketing plan with the purpose of obtaining several sources of financial funding for undertaking new business strategies for their sports team. Indeed, sports teams use marketing strategies for offering benefits to supporters, but for creating goods and/or services

marketers need to select as well as apply strategic resources to produce expected outcomes in an effective way. Then, marketing proposes involving stakeholders' competence for adding value to activities chain for promoting and handing out the best goods and services to supporters. In general, a sports scheme proposes a typology based on resources level considering all stakeholders and the nature interdependence among them for preparing sports events using entertainment as a concept and considering supporters as consumers. These sports schemes reveal an actors' network which marketers need to understand to address these organisations to fit offers to supporters. Even before the begin working on their marketing plan, marketers need to organise and analyse all five sources of - supporters, media rights, leagues, brands and clubs.

Hence, for developing marketing strategies for sports teams, it is important that marketers to know the stakeholders' skills as well as the capacity to provide products and/or services lined-up of the supporters' expectations. Rundh & Gottfridsson (2015) have suggested the term ARA: actors (sponsors), resources (internal and external resources) and activities (ticket sales, the game, etc.). These three perspectives are relevant because they include different transactions, the flow of knowledge, creation of necessary resources and bonds shaped and drawn upon by actors. The overall behaviours that emerge in the network shape its development and how it adapts to incidents in the environment, which marketers to must consider at the time they develop the sports team's marketing strategy. In other words, a decrease in the number of supporters in the arena and/or watching on TV would make it necessary to reconsider different marketing activities. To plan their sports marketing activities, managers need to understand and consider which actors have the greatest impact on the actual network that they are to manage. Besides, sports like the ordinary business, must develop a relationship to allow a flow of exchange benefits among all actors. Synergies between actors may produce activities more aligned to target audience expectation, as part of an activity system managed by sports teams. It is in marketing activity that the value creation lies, which directly affects the level of supporter's satisfaction and encourages them to new exchange patterns to create new relationship perspectives and maximise the potential of the service marketing in the future.

Overall, a sports scheme should have business and marketing concepts embedded into it to ensure supporter satisfaction, revenues, and profits to a sports team. Sports is inspiring, engaging, immersive, emotion evoking and rapidly growing the revenues and profits; however, through a platform of market and customer orientation, it is possible to go further. Then, a sports scheme aims to encourage a sports professional to design a sports event in synergy with stakeholders to offer an enjoyable sports experience taking into consideration the customer orientation principles to provide revenues and profit for the sports team. Thus, seven axes were organised to achieve these goals (Silva & Las Casas, 2017b):

- Leagues: responsible for organising the seasons, leagues and tournaments. However, in most cases they also play an intermediary role in flowing revenues to clubs, particularly the media rights money; then, the leagues perform three relevant functions: organising competitions, creating valuable events, and structuring media rights tenders (Bradbury & O'Boyle, 2017; Storm, Wagner & Nielsen, 2017);

- Goods Suppliers: first, they are investors who put money into the business for promoting their brand, images or products and services through a sports team. Second, they may, also, associate their brands with a sports team and provide uniforms and sports goods for them, as t-shirts, shorts, shoes, cap, jacket, etc, and non-sports goods: foods, drinks, toys, etc (Fullerton & Merz, 2008; Giroux, Pons & Maltese, 2017);

- Supporters' Engagement: sports teams should create a customer-oriented strategy to transfer their excitations and passions for spending their money to buy packages of pay-tv, tickets for games, products and services associated with sports team, and to become a member (Norris, Wann & Zapalac, 2014; Piipponen, 2011; Yoshida & James, 2010);

- Stadium: it involves facilities, naming rights, architecture, advertising inside the stadium, etc., a sports teams can make money using several sorts of events (Leopkey & Parent, 2009);

- Club management: responsible for: designing its offers and benefits (embedding its value proposition and experience) articulated to the expectations of different targets, as supporters, supporters, enthusiasts and followers, managing their flow of money from ticketing, selling licensed products, sponsorships, and media rights, as well as ensuring the quality of the event value chain, pre, during and post-game, and purchasing and selling athletes, ensuring infrastructure and staff, executing governance strategies and managing its brands (Ratten, 2016; Foster, O'Reilly, Dávila, 2016);

- Partnerships & sponsorships: it aims to support supporters in sports events, guide and provide safety for the supporters inside the stadium, restaurants, parking, etc. In other words, partners are co-creators of the value chain offering facilities inside and outside the venue (Amorim & Almeida, 2015; Chadwick & Thwaites, 2005);

- Media & tv broadcasting: responsible for buying rights of matches for television for an audience of supporters, and offering to passionate supporters an alternative platform, as cable tv, pay-tv, websites, social networks and apps (Burden & Li, 2009).

6. Final Considerations

Every sports team handles a sports scheme with a limited number of stakeholders to aggregate and coordinate relevant resources to enhance the value proposition of the sports team. By and large, a performance of a sports scheme consists of multiple independent organisations and individuals interacting with each other to pursue shared goals such as supporter, sports organisation and media (Clemes, Brush & Collins, 2011). It notices three critical assumptions assist to understand the function of a sports scheme: the goal is improving the performance concerning the sports events, experiences or entertainments, consists of both organisations (sports and non-sports) and individuals, and it does not approach only one specific purpose in the sporting area. The sports scheme focuses on four elements: supporter interfaces, strategic heart, strategic resources and value chain. The sports scheme aims to propose a typology based on business as well as marketing using stakeholder's skills for creating sports events addressed to the entertainment and supporter perspectives for undertaking new products and services.

Looking at the business perspective, the marketers need to know three different perspectives of sports marketing. The first is advertising in relation to sports and sports associations such as the Olympics, Sports Leagues, such as English Premier League, which can be labelled "marketing of sports". The second is the promotion of the league to encourage the supporters to take part in the sports events, this is a job of the entity who organises and manages the league. Several means are used, such as sponsorships for the promotion of teams or athletes, tv and radio advertisement and advertisement in relation to the sports event and celebrations. Other means are billboards in the streets and promotions and publicity during major sporting events. The third is the promoting of products in relation to sports events such as "marketing through sports". In this sponsorship plays a key role. Sponsorship in relation to sports events is also an area that creates interest because a sponsorship is a powerful device for communicating with spectators attending at sports events as well as supporters watching events on tv at home. The marketing of sports products may be impacted in a positive manner via the incorporation of the sponsorship of a recognisable sports property within an integrated marketing communication strategy (Collignon & Sultan, 2014; Rundh & Gottfridsson, 2015).

However, to design, plan and carry out a sports marketing programme is required creativity, innovation and integrations of elements for preparing an appropriate product, service and benefit to customers-supporters. Sports marketing tools requires an immersion on the 9 Ps because they will model what a sports team intends to offer to market and supporters. The 9 Ps corresponds to structure the benefits in relating to the product (or service), price, place, promotion, physical (atmosphere), process, people (or professionals), performance and program (step-by-step plan). At this moment, which marketers define and establish how they will offer the sports benefits in terms of resource, capacity as well as competence considering sponsorship and partner skills as supporting them for design the appropriate activities and tasks in the sports marketing tools. It is recommended ongoing of planning an iteration for finding out eventual discrepancies among 9 Ps to enhance the offer. Therefore, sports marketing has as principle improving the process of exchange between sports team and supporters to guarantee satisfaction to both sides.

Marketing-driven strategies enable to sports to respond better to supporters' needs and to reach even more supporters and spectators (Silva & Las Casas, 2017a). Sports has turned in to be entertainment and economic success in becoming a more central element in sports. Indeed, the sports business has also become increasingly more consumer-oriented (Norris, Wann & Zapalac, 2014). Game facilities and other service-extensions have evolved; ticket process has increased significantly in recent years, and individual supporters may not be able to afford tickets and corporations are more often ticket-buyers. In fact, technological development has improved sport's availability and experience (McHugh, Bronson & Watters, 2015). Following a certain team or tournament or finding out information about specific sports is constantly easier. Sports has great spectator appeal, which gives sports a chance to gain revenues from many sources like ticket sale, media rights, sponsorships, licensing of products, etc. (Silva & Las Casas, 2017b). The representatives of all different interest groups are naturally client form sports teams' perspective. As several revenue sources exist, sports can employ business and marketing professionals who further develop commercial opportunities. The most important target market for all sports teams is still game-attending supporters. Due to people's willingness to follow sports performances on site leads to that other clients – sponsor,

media, etc., – consider sports goods as an interesting investment target (Silva & Las Casas, 2017a).

Thus, why sports scheme, marketing tools and supporters are the key elements of a sports marketing programme? First, because a sports scheme consists of a minimum sports infrastructure to organise sports events. Then, sports marketing tools comprises the tools (or tactics) that marketers use to design, plan and delivery offers from a sports team to sports supporters. Finally, sports supporters represent those customers who will consume products, services and events of a sports team and they expect to receive in return new experiences, sensations and emotions. The sports supporter should be the 'heart' (or the central element) of the business and marketing strategies of a sports team, see Figure 1. This article aims to emphasise that a sports scheme increases the chance of addressing a better sports marketing plan approaching the supporters as customers of a sports team. Therefore, these three key elements are the primary contributions of this study in order to support sports marketers in their decisions.
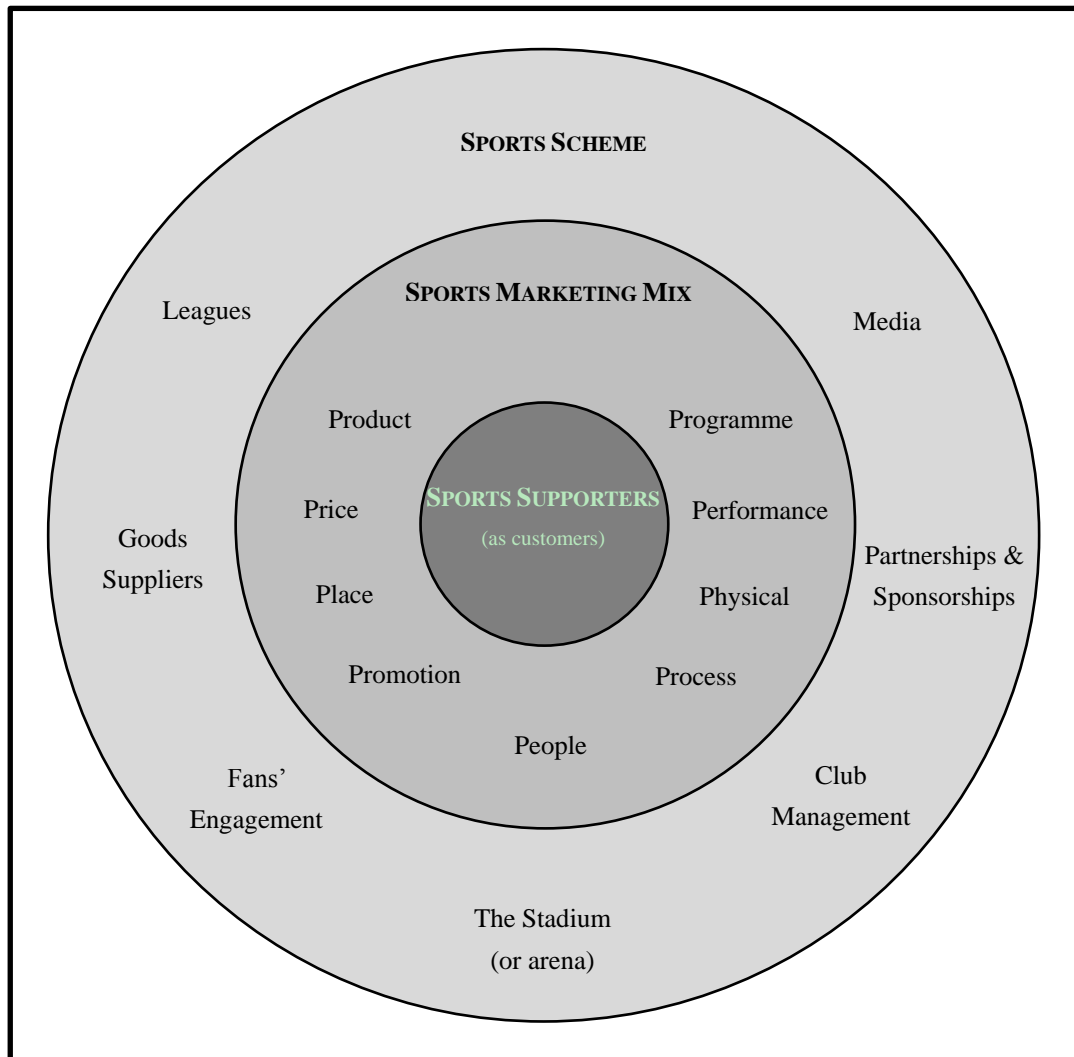

Figure 1. The key elements of a sports marketing activities

Source: authors.

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