

Sporting Activities – the Core of Sport Management

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There are various definitions of sport in academia and business. For example, according to McIntosh (1970, p. 553), sport “refers to all **physical activities** which are not necessary for the survival of the individual or the race and which are dominated by a compulsory element.” Ibrahim (1975, p. 37) states that “sport is basically a **human kinetic activity**.” In addition, another important element in many sport definitions is competition (Meier, 1981), i.e. **co-opetition as a constitutive characteristic** of sport events because sport teams and/or athletes compete with each other and at the same time cooperate in specific activities (Robert, Marqués, & Le Roy, 2009, p. 25). In the Cambridge Dictionary (2020), sport is defined as “a game, competition, or **activity needing physical effort and skill** that is played or done according to rules, for enjoyment and/or as a job” and as “all types of physical activity that people do to keep healthy or for enjoyment.” Although there is no universal definition of sport, **physical** or **kinetic activities** can be found in nearly every definition.

In sport management, there are models, e.g. the sport activity model of Li, Hofacre, and Mahony (2000), which describe sporting activities as being key in sport management. Accordingly, “**sporting activities and sport competitions are the core of sport management**” (Woratschek et al., 2014, p. 16).

Building on this assertion, Woratschek, Schafmeister, and Ellert (2019, p. 13) conceptualised sport events as platforms (see hexagon in Figure 1), where multiple actors, such as spectators, sponsors, media organisations, and athletes exchange resources to co-create value. The sporting activities represent thereby the **reciprocal links** between these **actors** and build the **pivotal point for actors’ value co-creation** in sport management (Woratschek, 2020). Without sporting activities, no sport event would occur; neither sport team brands nor sport league brands would exist, which provide a platform for actors’ resource integration in order to co-create value.

Furthermore, all brands in Figure 1 can be regarded as such platforms where actors are linked. In this connection, the essential task of the brand owner is to orchestrate and promote activities on the brand platform in a way that resource integration for value co-creation is facilitated based on the related sporting activities (Griebel, Ströbel, & Woratschek, 2020, p. 2).

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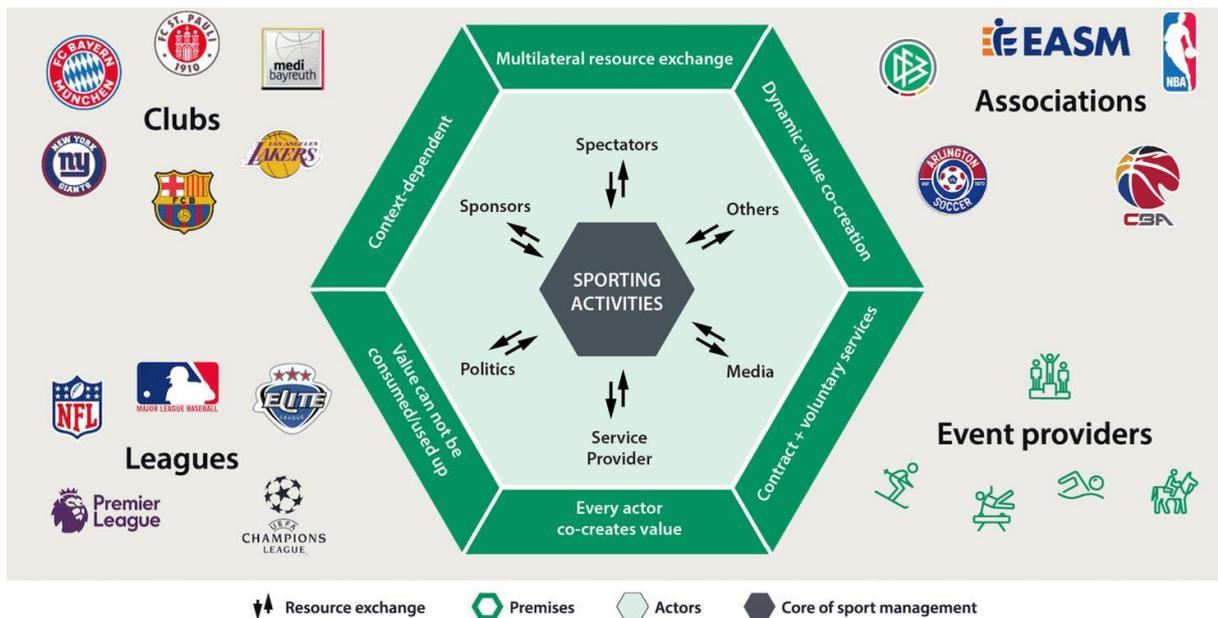


Figure 1: Sporting Activities as the Core of Sport Engagement Platforms (adapted from Woratschek et al., 2019)

Another platform that would not exist without sporting activities is the **sport sponsorship platform** (Woratschek & Buser, 2018, p. 35). Sport sponsorship without sporting activities is unimaginable as sponsoring is only made possible by specific sporting activities. **E-sport events can also be called platforms**, e.g. FIFA which is based on football as a sporting activity. This is also the case with all **fantasy sports**, which are **game event platforms** where every fantasy sport player chooses a team of real sport athletes and wins points depending on the real athletes' performance. More precisely, the sport related platforms are defined as **engagement platforms** (Buser, Woratschek, & Schönberner, 2020a; 2020b). Engagement platforms are “physical or virtual **touchpoints** designed to provide structural **support for the exchange and integration of resources**, and thereby co-creation of value between actors in a service ecosystem” (Breidbach, Brodie, & Hollebeek, 2014, p. 594).

Going a step further, we claim that sporting activities are not only the **basis of the whole sport industry** with its various sport platforms such as sport events, sport brands, and sport sponsorships, but also for a **service ecosystem** which includes links outside the sport industry, e.g. law firms and consultancies. Sport industry sectors, such as sports goods manufacturers, sports facility construction, sports technology companies, and sports consultancy are formed around sporting activities (Woratschek & Buser, 2018, p. 35). Without somebody doing sporting activities such as running in the forest, sporting goods manufacturers would not sell their sport products. Without athletes running a marathon, no marathon event could take place, so the sports goods manufacturers would not sell any sport goods, the sponsors would have no sponsees to sponsor, the sport media companies nothing to report,

fantasy sports would not exist, etc. In conclusion, **sporting activities are fundamental** to every kind of **sport engagement platform** and the whole sport industry. Therefore, they represent the pivotal point of the value co-creation core in sport management.

To put it in a nutshell:

1. Most definitions of **sport** refer to **physical or human kinetic activities**.
2. **Sporting activities** are the **core of sport management**.
3. Sporting activities **represent the reciprocal** links between actors.
4. Sporting activities build the **pivotal point for actors' value co-creation**.
5. **Sporting activities** differentiate the sport industry from other industries.
6. Sport events, e-sport events, sport sponsorship, sport brands, and fantasy sports are **sport engagement platforms**.
7. Sport engagement platforms are **physical or virtual touchpoints** for actors' resource integration to co-create value.
8. Sport engagement platforms determine a **service ecosystem based on sporting activities**.

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