1 Research on sport and business

Harald Dolles and Sten Söderman

The purpose of the handbook is to present the current frontier of research on sport and business in theory and in practice. It is designed to function as a catalyst for building and disseminating new ideas around the variety of methods being applied in research on the business aspects of sports as well as of sport-related industries. It can be read and used by academics, PhD students as well as sports practitioners looking for useful ways of expanding knowledge, conducting research or searching for insights into the challenges of managing sport. We have also attempted to make the handbook useful and accessible to master’s and bachelor students who prepare their thesis projects. Although such students will normally be expected to complete their thesis projects in months rather than years, they face the same problems of finding a thesis topic, how to design their research project, the choice of appropriate methods and summarizing their findings as analysed and demonstrated in the chapters in this handbook.

This introductory chapter explains how and why this handbook is structured in thematic clusters, and presents some of our thoughts and observations on cross-links between the research methods and chapter topics by introducing the chapters. We also provide graphs and summaries of the main research themes (see Figure 1.1), some of the main theoretical concepts being applied (see Figure 1.2) and the key research methods and approaches (see Figure 1.3) across all chapters in the field of research on sport and business. We hope this will enable the reader to make quick use of the handbook. Our concluding ‘outlook’ chapter at the end of this handbook provides a summary of future research areas on the nexus between sport and business.

1 STARTING WITH THEMATIC CLUSTERS IN SPORT MANAGEMENT RESEARCH

The handbook is divided into five thematic clusters ‘Governance and performance’, ‘Media and technology’, ‘Place, time and spectators’, ‘Club management and teams’, ‘Sport branding and sponsoring’ as well as an introduction and a reflection chapter cluster. Figure 1.1 provides the main areas of research covered in this handbook, which we will further explain in the following.

Chapter 2 by Andy Rudd and R. Burke Johnson, in the introduction cluster, explores how mixed methods have been applied in sport management research and demonstrates ways in which the application of mixed methods can help to improve the validity of research findings. The basic idea is to select, in a systematic way, a combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches that will effectively cover the objective of a study and to do it in a way that eliminates overall research design weaknesses associated with an either/or approach. As research in sport management is often concerned with causal questions, it is argued that mixed methods provide designs for improving
causal inference. Examples are provided from three areas of sport management research, including marketing, organizational behaviour and finance. Further examples of mixed methods approaches are to be found in other chapters of the handbook.

1.1 Thematic Cluster ‘Governance and Performance’

The first thematic cluster, on ‘Governance and performance’, includes seven chapters in a fast-expanding area of sport research. We might state that existing research into the comparison and analysis of top sport has led to a convergence in the design of top or elite sport systems, as many countries have attempted to copy what has been perceived to contribute to the performance of those nations who have a history of elite sporting success. This view dominates Chapter 3 by Leigh Robinson and Nikolai Böhlke. However, despite this, it is obvious there are countries that perform consistently better in
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some sports than other countries do, such as British cycling, German rowing, and so on. Thus, while most elite sport systems now have similar infrastructure and practices, it can be argued that the management and operational delivery of the factors that make up an elite sport system is now a more crucial differentiator for success. Thus, if a sport wish to improve its success, managers of elite sport systems should focus on improving the processes they follow, rather than simply increasing the support infrastructure they provide to athletes. Since its emergence in the 1980s, the concept of benchmarking has been used as a framework for researching best practice in a range of industries in an attempt to understand, compare and improve performance. Within sport management, for example, benchmarking has been used to compare public sport facilities, as a framework for investigating the management of sport teams or, in the context of elite sport systems, to identify the factors that need to be considered to facilitate international sporting success. In this chapter a number of the processes of the elite systems supporting the Swedish Athletics Association and the Norwegian Cross Country Skiing National Team are investigated using the process benchmarking methodology for comparative analysis.

In sport management literature, researchers need to understand and explain a phenomenon or outcome by comparing a limited number of cases. Comparisons between top-level sport clubs in a country (such as English Premier League football), same national sport organizations from different countries (such as cross-national study of national Olympic Committees) or staff behaviour in a specific sport organization (such as volunteers in a sport governing body) are examples of research areas where the maximum number of cases is, of necessity, quite limited. To address this gap, Mathieu Winand and Thierry Zintz in Chapter 4 suggest applying a mixed method design named qualitative comparative analysis (QCA). This innovative configurational comparative approach allows researchers to analyse small samples (that is, from three up to 60 cases) and to develop a conception of causality that includes complexity. Indeed, combinations of necessary and sufficient variables, rather than net effect of individual independent variables, are related to a phenomenon of interest (dependent variables). Winand and Zintz show how QCA is applied in the area of organizational performance of sport governing bodies in Belgium. They highlight patterns that are observed in highly performing organizations and illustrate the QCA approach and technique. Results show that three combinations of key determinants are linked with high performance of communities’ sport governing bodies.

Benchmarking is considered in Chapter 5 by Veerle De Bosscher, Jasper Truyens, Marten van Bottenburg and Simon Shibli. This chapter illustrates how a scoring system is developed in order to compare objectively elite sport policies of six nations and thus to move beyond the descriptive level of comparison. Mixed research methods were found to be the most appropriate approach with which to collect a wide range of data on elite sport policies whereby both qualitative and quantitative data are transformed into a score. This chapter exemplifies a scientific approach to measuring the determinants of competitiveness influenced by economic competitiveness measurements. In sport, the issue is even more convoluted because sports systems are closely enmeshed with the culture of a nation and, therefore, each system might be considered as unique. In the USA for example, sport is highly embedded in the school system, which is designed to feed athletes into the university system. There is no sport club tradition in the United States that is comparable to the kind found elsewhere in the world. These and other
differences between nations make comparison of sport determinants, and elite sport in particular, in an international context extremely difficult. Cultural factors shape the environment surrounding sports: they are integrated with the determinants and not isolated from them. Bearing in mind the arguments outlined above, the authors present a measurement system that allows objective comparison of quantitative and qualitative data on elite sport policies in different nations. This method is based on three essential features: (1) the development of a theoretical model of success determinants (or pillars) in elite sport with the identification of clear critical success factors that are used for international comparison (called SPLISS model); (2) the use of mixed methods research and the development of a scoring system to measure competitiveness of nations in elite sport for each dimension of the theoretical model and thus to move beyond the descriptive level of comparison, and (3) the involvement of the main stakeholders in elite sport – the athletes, coaches and performance directors – as the evaluators of policy processes in elite sport. This methodology is explained by comparing elite sport policies and systems in six nations: Belgium (separated into Flanders and Wallonia), Canada, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway and the UK.

Competitive sport in Ireland is largely played on a semi-professional or amateur basis, but there is a professional layer within rugby union and golf. The sports infrastructure in Ireland might be considered as less developed than that of other European Union (EU) countries, however, in recent years, facilities have been improved largely due to government and other funding. A key feature in this development is the role of national governing bodies (NGBs). Sports bodies are mainly trusts, and ownership is difficult to define, which complicates governance matters. Two other characteristics of NGBs, emphasized by Ann Bourke in Chapter 6, are that while NGBs operate on a not-for-profit basis, many transactions are completed with for-profit entities, and NGBs need to make effective use of organizational resources (financial, physical and human). This chapter outlines a research agenda on identifying governance procedures and principles, the main changes that have occurred and key drivers of these changes. Insights are gathered by taking Ireland as an example and using secondary and primary data. The chapter reveals a shift towards a corporate approach to governance, largely due to the competitive dynamics between the NGBs but also resulting from Irish government policy on sport. Within sports there are more than 60 NGBs in Ireland, and based on a comparative multiple-case study approach, evidence exists of good governance practice. Some governance areas which need attention include the selection and recruitment of board (executive committee) members, the assignment of roles and the evaluation of performance.

The use of cases as a teaching strategy has a long history dating back to the 1920s. At that time, Harvard Business School adopted the use of case studies as a way to prepare students for management roles by using case examples as a way to learn theories and principles relevant to business. The use of cases as a strategy to develop a research topic is also found in Chapter 7 by Geoff Walters and Sean Hamil. The authors emphasize how a case study approach contributes to knowledge and demonstrates the relevance of a particular theory. The chapter begins by providing an understanding of theoretical issues underpinning case study research. It discusses how the case study strategy can be applied across competing epistemological positions before demonstrating that a variety of different data collection methods can form part of a case study strategy. The chapter
also discusses reasons why the case study can be considered a relevant approach to sport management research. Following the theoretical discussion, this chapter uses the English football industry as an example. Through the use of interview data and documentary sources, Walters and Hamil present a descriptive case that provides a detailed background to the financial problems in the English football industry. This is followed by setting out the range of regulatory measures that have been introduced by the football authorities. The objective of this chapter is twofold. First, it illustrates when, why, and how the case study strategy can be a relevant approach for sport management research. Second, it discusses how a case study strategy can be applied across competing epistemological positions and how a case study can also draw on multiple data collection methods.

If governance is about influencing the fate of the game, then it is basically about intentions, initiatives, efforts, events and processes that impact on its well-being. The term ‘governance’, according to Hallgeir Gammelsæter and Benoit Senaux in Chapter 8, can be reserved for the intentional strategies, actions, structures and systems created by sports’ mandated organizations, directors, leaders and managers – which is usually the case in sport management studies. More broadly, governance can also be seen as the outcome of processes that designated managers do not always fully understand or control, although, or perhaps because, they are deeply immersed in them, for instance institutional organization theory. The most defining characteristic of competitive sport is the need to balance cooperation and competition. While the focus of contestants is to win competitions, competition is premised on the ability of contestants to cooperate in organizing the competition and to make sure that it is sustainable, that is, keeping a critical mass population of more or less equal competitors. The main purpose of governance, then, is to ensure the popularity of the game, which, as long as a balance between competition and cooperation is maintained, can happen in many ways encompassing different views of what the game should be. In accepting these terms it follows that the issue of governance in sport particularly pertains to two levels: the organization and management of the competing unit (the club and national team), and the organization and management of the sport which aims at ensuring continuous cooperation and competition between competing units (the football authorities). Although these two levels are closely connected, in this chapter the authors focus on the latter. This chapter provides a review of the literature on the governance of football at the national and international level (not the club level). It identifies key features and outlines the deviation from the idealized archetype set-up of football as a members’ game.

The case study approach in conducting research in sport management is emphasized and grounded in its epistemological and ontological dimensions in Chapter 9 by Eivind Å. Skille. He demonstrates the applicability of a case study approach by providing an example of a study of Norwegian sport policy-making and implementation through local sport clubs. The author first argues that case study research relies on phenomenological perspectives of individual perceptions and intentions of reality, and the researcher’s ability to focus on the phenomenon. Second, he argues that case study research relies on the hermeneutical acknowledgement of earlier understanding, and the ability to both explain and understand through interpretation. The empirical example shows how these philosophical ideas are utilized in real-life research, for example through purposive sampling and closeness to the field of study. Finally, the approach
presented and the utilization of it in the empirical example are discussed in relation to traditional concepts of construct validity, internal validity and external validity. The chapter conclusion is that the qualitative case study approach is particularly strong on internal validity. The strength of the approach when it comes to descriptions and explanations of phenomena of reality and society (and the lack of possibilities for creating controlled experiments of such phenomena), makes case study research specifically apt for research into sport management (for example, investigating sport policy and sport organization).

1.2 Thematic Cluster ‘Media and Technology’

Information technology and media have over past decades had an enormous impact on the development of the relationship between sport and business. Media has become a major source of income for all kinds of sport events, and the proliferation of information technology has made it possible to serve the needs of sport fans all over the world. They can consume an event either in real time or recorded from virtually anywhere. As a result of this, the opportunities for the promotion of sport, and the benefits for sport and its partners, are significant (Dolles and Söderman, 2011).

In the first of three chapters in this cluster James Santomier and Patricia Hogan discuss ‘Social media and prosumerism: implications for sport marketing research’ (Chapter 10). Web 2.0 and social media are making it possible for millions of sport fans to become prosumers. Fans, along with athletes and sport organizations worldwide, can directly correspond and interact using social media. For example, fans are empowered to participate on sport-specific organization or team wikis, homepages, blogs, microblogs, pictures, podcasts, video sites, Twitter, Facebook, iTunes, and so on. In the near future it may be possible for fans to use tele-immersion technologies to insert themselves into sporting events on their high definition/three-dimension (HD/3D) televisions or mobile devices, and, given empathetic social media now being developed, to actually feel the atmosphere in sports events. We might argue social media is changing the way businesses, including sport businesses, communicate in the pursuit of brand building and commerce, and is compelling these businesses to create new and innovative ways to capitalize on the prosumer (co-creator of value) economy. Yet, despite the rapid development and integration of social media into the marketing strategies of many sport and sport-related brands worldwide, many organizations have neither developed an efficacious social media measurement strategy nor determined how well social media compares to other marketing initiatives relative to important metrics (return on investment and return on objectives) of sport business. As such, there is a need to rethink approaches and metrics related to sport marketing with social media as it is proposed in this chapter. Based on the current frontier of research in theory and practice in social media and marketing, suggestions by the authors are made for research ideas in this fecund area. Social media and the techniques and processes related to marketing using social media are changing at an incredible rate and will require continual monitoring for those involved in social media research. As such, Santomier and Hogan identified the need for sport marketing researchers who are abductive thinkers who can design and use innovative research methodologies as stimulated by the continually evolving technology. Research prospects related to social media and sport marketing, however, are vast for
scholars and marketing professionals alike, and are replete with opportunities for using newer and newer technology and for designing new research methodologies.

Throughout the 1990s, the growth of pay-television (TV) channels raised concerns regarding the general public’s ability to watch popular sport. European politicians were alarmed in 1996, when News Corporation almost bid the Olympic rights away from the European Broadcasting Union. As Chris Gratton and Harry Arne Solberg explain in Chapter 11 the politicians’ fear increased when the International Federation of Association Football (FIFA) in the same year sold the 2002 and 2006 World Cup Soccer finals to the German Kirch corporation and the Swiss ISL marketing agency, and not to the European Broadcasting Union as in the past. As consequence of this, it was assumed that viewers in many nations would not be able to watch the entire tournament on free-to-air broadcasts anymore. This chapter focuses on direct regulations in sport broadcasting that control which channels are allowed to broadcast specific sport events. Examples of such regulations are the European Listed Events legislation and the Australian Anti-Siphoning List, which prevent pay-TV channels from broadcasting events that are of special value for society. The chapter specifically concentrates on the UK since in 2009 an independent review of the UK listed events legislation was carried out by a committee of experts appointed by the Minister for Culture, Media and Sport. One of the authors of this chapter was an invited member of this committee and was present at all the sessions where evidence was presented. This committee received evidence from broadcasters, national and international governing bodies of sport, and media experts over a four-month period. Qualitative and quantitative evidence on the views of the public was also collected by a major market research company. This chapter uses that recent evidence (or at least that part of it that is in the public domain) to examine the question of whether or not in the coming digital age of broadcasting it is still necessary for governments to intervene in broadcasting markets to ensure that major sports events are shown on channels available to the whole nation, or at least to a high percentage of it.

In recent years, many clubs, event organizers and sport governing bodies have earned substantial revenues from the sale of media rights. These revenues can be affected by many factors, where the strategy of rivalling buyers is one example elaborated by Harry Arne Solberg and Kjetil Kår Haugen in Chapter 12. The major reason behind the strong inflation of sports rights has been the fierce competition between commercial broadcasters. However we have also seen incidents where the rights fees have declined instead of continuing to grow. This chapter analyses the sale of media sports rights by applying game theory. First the authors look at a situation where there are two television broadcasters operating at the demand side. Both are interested in buying the media rights from upcoming events in two different sports. The popularity of the sports varies, and this also reflects the values of the rights. At the supply side are the event organizers in the two sports mentioned. The sellers and the buyers can choose between two alternative strategies: playing tough and playing soft. An event organizer who adopts a tough strategy will demand a high price and be unwilling to reduce it. A television broadcaster who follows the same strategy will offer the seller a moderate price, and be unwilling to increase the offer. A soft strategy indicates the sellers/buyers initially will come up with more moderate offers and will be willing to reduce/increase these offers. In the second situation there is only one broadcaster operating at the demand side, while there is only one event organizer; in other words, a bilateral monopoly. The authors assume the
broadcaster will compare its revenues from broadcasting the event with the revenues it can earn from other programmes. The event organizer will consider if sponsorship revenues are reduced if the event is not on television. Lastly, Solberg and Haugen also analyse to what degree the strategy of the event organizer will be affected in case television programmes from the event reduce gate receipts. Additionally, it can also help consumers (which in this case are television viewers) to understand when the sellers and/or buyers are bluffing as a part of the negotiations.

1.3 Thematic Cluster ‘Place, Time and Spectators’

In the new millennium the arena has become a centre of urban living, incorporating spaces for all kinds of leisure activities, stores, cafés, restaurants and offices, which ensued from a new way to manage the modern facility, regarded as a public area and open seven days a week. The new multi-purpose sporting venues also host shows, concerts, or even weddings, and the centre space is structured to accommodate multi-purpose use by different sports and other kinds of events. The sports competition, the show or concert itself is the centre of a ‘package event’ sold by event organizers: the pre-phase, break(s), and post-phase are occasions for a variety of attractions offered in the arena, intended to not only appeal to the single spectator or visitor but the whole family, to encourage the spectators/visitors to arrive earlier, leave later, and to consume more in merchandising shops or shopping areas and in bars or restaurants. Today’s modern arenas and large-scale events, and the perception of spectators and residents about arenas and events constitute an important field in sport management research – a thematic cluster comprising five chapters in the handbook.

Impacts of sport events, as explained by Tommy D. Andersson in Chapter 13 may appear in many forms, and research in the area of impact assessments is at present developing wider perspectives rather than being limited to economic impact assessments. Concepts like social and cultural capital, environmental care, ‘ecological footprint analysis’ and ‘triple bottom line’ are now appropriate, and traditional cost–benefit analysis is regaining momentum. Another important dimension for an analytical framework to research the impact of sport events is the subject of analysis, that is, from whose perspective impacts are assessed. A stakeholder analysis reveals a large number of stakeholders affecting and being affected by a sport event. The event-makers, the industry as well as the community are all relevant spheres of stakeholders for an impact assessment. The overall ambition of this chapter is to demonstrate how impacts of sports events can be assessed from a broad social science perspective with a focus on sustainability. The major objectives are, first, to examine analytical frameworks related to sustainability of sport events, second to discuss analyses related to the triple bottom line framework, that is, economic, sociocultural and environmental impacts, and third, to review implications and challenges for future research. Although focus in this chapter will be on sport events, a triple bottom line perspective is applicable to a wide range of sports and business activities.

French professional football is considered the fifth biggest in Europe for its economics and sports performances, according to Boris Helleu and Michel Desbordes in Chapter 14. Even though brand new sports facilities are reputed to increase revenues and retain fan loyalty, French stadia are old and poorly run. Consequently, French football clubs have less attendance than their German or English counterparts. The business model
remains, then, widely dependent on broadcasting rights. So, to be more successful economically and sportily, clubs have to consider their facilities as a new source of profit. That is why, the authors argue, France was bidding to host the final round of the UEFA Euro 2016 tournament and to take advantage of this opportunity to build or renovate stadiums. This chapter, bridging contributions of geography, marketing and economy, analyses the strategy of reform of French stadiums by focusing particularly on the process of political legitimization. Indeed, even if in the planning there is a will to favour private rather than public financing, the influence of central French government and regional bodies remains strong. A case study dedicated to the new Grand Stade of Lille in France concludes and illustrates this chapter.

In Chapter 15 Anne-line Balduck, Marc Maes and Marc Buelens examine the social impact of the arrival of the Tour de France in Ghent. More specifically, residents’ perceptions towards the impact of the arrival of the Tour de France in Ghent (Belgium) are studied before and after the arrival of the cyclists. In contrast to the Olympic Games and the World Cup in football which take place every four years, the Tour de France is a major annual cycling event and the majority of the stages starts in one city and ends in another hosting city. A stage of the Tour de France, therefore, lasts only two days (finish during the afternoon, start during the morning of the following day). There is strong competition between cities and communities to host one stage of the Tour de France. The main reason why cities compete against each other to host such events is that it is expected this will generate benefits for the community. Most impact studies have focused on the economic outcomes of hosting major sport events; however, more recently, the social and cultural impacts have gained interest. This chapter contributes to the latter line in research by exploring the perceptions of residents living along or near to the cycling route towards the impact of the arrival of the Tour de France. A quantitative research technique was applied using questionnaires. A drop-out analysis was performed to reveal whether there was a selection bias between respondents who participated in the survey ahead and after the event and respondents who only participated in the pre-event survey. Overall, results revealed that residents’ perceptions of impacts have changed over time.

Residents were also consulted in Chapter 16, by Alessandro ‘Chito’ Guala and Douglas Michele Turco, where the results of a longitudinal study of Torino residents are explained and presented to reflect the attitudes of the population towards the 2006 Winter Olympic Games. Four polls were conducted before the Games and two more polls followed after the Games. The questionnaire was divided into two main parts, with a conclusive appendix dedicated to socio demographic variables. The first part dealt with the Games, the bidding, the pride to have received the nomination, the expectations and the fears linked to the organizational problems, the concerns about the impact of the works for the Games on the everyday life of the population. The second part of the questionnaire was related to the future of Torino, its international image, its hopes and preparations for a new town devoted to culture and tourism. The authors discovered that public opinion changes, before, during and after the event, offering a wide sample of concerns and expectations; pride at the nomination, concerns during the works in preparation for the Games, happiness during the event and a more rational evaluation one year after the event. The ‘four steps’ evolution of the public opinion is discussed in the chapter, and is useful to predict the effects of the Games on local identity. Worth
noting also are shifts in public perceptions corresponding with the identity change for Torino from the ‘capital of the Fiat company’ to an Olympic city now devoted to culture, sport and tourism.

There are a number of reasons why sport businesses conduct market research. Sport spectator market profiles, economic impact studies and sponsorship effectiveness research allow organizations to understand consumer behaviours, quantify sport benefits and determine the value of their operations. Field research in Chapter 17 is explained by Douglas Michele Turco as the most direct approach to gathering data from sport consumers, and is conducted where the action is – at the sport setting. Spectator market profiles, economic impact assessments and sponsorship effectiveness measures are but a few of the sport business studies completed using field research. In this concluding chapter to the cluster on ‘Place, time and spectators’ the aim is to provide an overview of common research procedures, research issues and proper ways to address them. An array of sampling techniques for sport field research is described. Five key steps to field survey research for sport businesses are highlighted: (1) developing the problem (defining and delimiting it); (2) formulating hypotheses or research questions; (3) research design; (4) data gathering, treatment and analysis; and (5) reporting. Several mini-cases in sport business research are interspersed throughout the chapter to demonstrate the application of key steps in the research process, on, for example, the Pocono 500 NASCAR race, the Cricket World Cup Super Eight matches in Guyana; the Bassmaster Elite 50 Series fishing tournament, the Little Leagues Baseball World Series and the cycling race, Tour de Georgia. The research procedures presented in this chapter are based on several theoretical approaches including input–output and cost–benefit analyses, transaction-cost analysis, balanced scorecard and diamond framework.

1.4 Thematic Cluster ‘Club Management and Teams’

Why is European football of increasing importance to ongoing research in the nexus between sport and business? Because it is a huge and fast-growing business, operating worldwide – but still in need of more systemized knowledge. If this is a bold statement, it is backed by many arguments as argued earlier, for example by Söderman et al. (2010: 86):

Football is highly popular (this in itself should generate interest in research); it has rabid fans (whose sociology is well researched); it involves high uncertainty (the outcome of a game is not always the same as winning a game); and it is an activity where ethnic, gender, social, and economic backgrounds are irrelevant to its practice (but still of great interest to spectators). The skilful team or the talented football player are visibly obvious; this is intuitively perceived by all spectators. The game has become famous because it is generally linked to our childhood, and its professional teams are on top of pyramid-like organisations of several leagues, with amateur players at all levels, from silver aged teams to kid’s teams.

Football today has emerged to become an international business, as players are transferred frequently around the globe, international professional leagues are created and the European Cup finals or the FIFA World Cup finals are top media events. We might say the world of football has been referred to increasingly as an industry in its own right and with its own characteristics – which could be transferred to many other team sports.
Models of management are known to render decision making less complex and more certain when implemented properly and in a timely fashion by experienced managers, and have therefore been the topic of frequent discussion. Akin to other businesses, professional sport managers need to make complex decisions in a variety of areas. In Chapter 18 Norm O’Reilly explores how portfolio theory contributes to the management of professional sport clubs. Specifically, this chapter introduces an extensive case study on the largest sport entertainment organization in Canada, Maple Leaf Sports and Entertainment. The purpose of this chapter is to assess this professional sport conglomerate as a portfolio of assets. Based on six categories of organizational assets, the case study looks at the entire portfolio of assets of the conglomerate and assesses each based on the input of the senior management. At the end a management model for professional sport clubs is introduced, which considers the breadth of assets for such organizations, including players, management, contracts and facilities. It is argued by O’Reilly that team management personnel can use these risk assessments in order to optimize the team’s performance, structure their team around the salary cap, and build a strong brand image or market individual players.

In addition to earning profits, professional sport clubs have to satisfy the needs of the audience, whether this is an individual member’s idealistic orientation or more specific requirements by certain stakeholder groups, such as supporter associations or the local community. In Chapter 19 the analysis by Hans Jansson and Sten Söderman identifies and describes relevant marketing theories for sport clubs, which differ from those normally found for typical commercial organizations and firms. For non-profit organizations, it is a question of creating value for their members by living up to various expectations which aid the club in creating a legitimate image in the eyes of these stakeholders. The key issue is how to relate such profit and non-profit approaches to each other, that is, to solve the dilemma between being profitable and being legitimate. In this respect, marketing is not only of importance for sports clubs which offer experiences to various audiences, but also very complex. Major viewpoints on the relationship between the market, the organization and marketing are analysed in the chapter. From monopolistic competition to marketing practice the authors develop an overall relationship marketing theory for football clubs, which might also be relevant for other sports. There are four typical relationship designs for sport clubs: marketing management, customer-focused relationship marketing, network marketing and institutional network marketing. The logic of consequence and the logic of appropriateness are two important concepts assisting in the analysis concluding that all four designs are examples of logic of consequence and only the institutional network marketing is applicable as a logic of appropriateness.

The contribution by Harald Dolles and Sten Söderman in Chapter 20 is the systematic exploration of the business parameters in professional team sport, described as a network of value captures. Targeting a top performance on the football pitch, the handball field or the ice hockey rink is related to top management performance today. Driving forces are technology and the interplay between television and sponsors, as well as the increasing international impact. The proposed network of value captures supports the club management to analyse specific activities through which clubs in professional team sport
can create value and competitive advantage. By identifying eight value offerings and six customer categories, up to 48 value capturing activities are identified in professional team sport, reflecting the complexity of this industry. Competitive combinations of these value captures are preceded by the management’s strategy intent and strategies on different levels of aggregation. The chapter builds upon strategic management research on how to create and maintain competitive advantage as well as research in marketing on value and its co-creation. This chapter ends by providing conclusions for the management of professional team sport as well as ideas on how the network of value captures could be applied in further research.

Over the past decades, a large number of empirical studies on labour economics of the team sport industry have been published in leading economics journals. The evidence presented by Bernd Frick in Chapter 21 provides a critical literature review on the topic and demonstrates the potential of econometric analyses to answer two particularly important questions: first, is it possible to field a championship team by outspending competitors and, second, what are the factors that determine player salaries? The answers are not only of academic value, but have obvious managerial implications. Team owners and/or presidents wishing to maximize the sporting performance of their clubs are well advised to take the results into account when purchasing talent in the relevant labour market. The growing acceptance of sports economics research in the ‘mainstream’ of the discipline is certainly due to the high standards of both the theoretical contributions and the empirical papers. The combination of rigorous modelling and state-of-the-art econometrics is required to gain the recognition of the social science community. Presenting the findings in a way that is accessible to the public is another step that has yet to be taken. Moreover, a lot of research awaits to be done: individualistic sports (such as tennis, boxing, and track and field athletics) are interesting subjects to study, comparative analyses (across leagues and countries) are still scarce and the (economic) consequences of many rule changes (such as the recent ‘de-regulation’ of the labour market) still need to be analysed and documented. Advanced quantitative methods are used to analyse the very detailed and reliable longitudinal data that are available both at the club and the individual level. A particular study that uses longitudinal information on individual players in the German first professional league in football (the Bundesliga) is presented in the chapter.

Despite the fact that grounded theory is becoming a methodology with a growing appeal to mainstream business management research, it has somehow failed to penetrate the sport management field of study. Chapter 22 by Christos Anagnostopoulos addresses this issue by having three specific aims in mind. First, as an introduction to grounded theory methodology for sport management researchers, it hopes to encourage more grounded theory-based research projects. Second, the broader philosophical difficulties associated with the different variants of grounded theory have often brought early-career researchers up short; addressing these difficulties here should remove this potential stumbling block. The author attempts to address this shortfall. Third, by way of illustration, all these philosophical arguments are contextualized in the chapter, with reference to a project that looked at the ways managers in English football developed and implemented corporate social responsibility programmes. The discussion in the chapter is in dialogue with a consideration of the researcher’s role when employing grounded theory.
1.5 Thematic Cluster ‘Sport Branding and Sponsoring’

The area of marketing communications has experienced a quiet, yet significant transformation during the past three decades. Sponsorship has become a vital revenue source for sport organizations. It has also become a core marketing activity, often complementing advertising, of many companies and service providers (Söderman and Dolles, 2008). The sponsorship of sports, arts and charitable events today is a mainstream marketing activity no longer in need of extensive introduction or justification. There is, however, a recognized need to account for the progress made to date in the integration of sponsorship-linked marketing into management theory and research. Moreover, as emphasized by Cornwell (Chapter 24 in this volume) there is a need to open a discussion of realignment in our thinking regarding the role sponsorship and other indirect marketing communication currently play and will play in the future. Up to this point, sponsorship, product placement, advergaming and other new approaches have been considered as uniquely interesting areas at the intersection of advertising and entertainment. As argued in this thematic cluster on ‘Sport branding and sponsorship’ that holds four chapters, it is time to consider these trends holistically as a move towards a new era in communications, one that could be called ‘indirect marketing’. However some risks and uncertainties need to be considered and careful preparations are needed before strategic sport sponsorship investments are carried through (Söderman and Dolles, 2010).

Chapter 23 by Torsten Schlesinger examines the impact of fan identity with a sport team or club on consumers’ attitudes towards the sponsor and consumers’ purchase intentions. To evaluate this relationship, a cause-and-effect chain is developed by the author to show the triangular relationship between sport club, fan and sponsor. In the chapter, hypotheses derived from the model were proven empirically on the basis of two questionnaires among supporters and fans of two sport clubs in different top sport leagues and different form of sports (football and ice hockey). The empirical findings in both cases reveal that fan identity positively influences the attitude towards the club sponsor, but takes no direct effect on the purchase intention. In turn, the attitude towards the club sponsor correlates very strongly with the purchase intention. The results support the assumption that highly identified fans are more likely to exhibit several positive effects related to sponsorship. We might therefore conclude that sport fans are a highly attractive target group for marketers of sport clubs. However, as this study clarifies, this is only the case for products connected directly with the club and not whether these effects might also be found related to offers indirectly associated with the sports club.

Chapter 24 by T. Bettina Cornwell offers a summary of the development of sponsorship towards mainstream marketing communication. Arguments are made for the entrenchment of sponsorship in a new evolving indirect marketing mix, and the progress in understanding the art of management and the science of communication measurement is examined. There are many perspectives that can be taken on sponsorship. In this chapter the perspective of the firm or organization that might use sponsorship in a marketing and communications programme is considered. It concludes that advances in technology and changing lifestyles are also related to the growth of sponsor activities, such as product placement, viral marketing, buzz, ambient marketing and, even, guerrilla marketing. All these approaches stem from the need to be where the consumers are and the need to be embedded in experience, thus circumventing technologically enabled
avoidance on the part of the consumer. Cornwell argues for a need to open a discussion of realignment in thinking regarding the role that sponsorship and other indirect marketing communications play and will play in the future. She concludes by introducing a research agenda in the field of sponsorship-linked marketing focusing on the following issues: sponsorship and reconstructive memory, leveraging and activation of sponsorship, sponsorship portfolios, sponsorship’s role in market entry, sponsorship and social considerations, sponsorship policy as a company instrument, sponsorship termination and ambush.

The handling of promotional marketing issues, the structure and organizational culture of organizations in sport are identified by Mark Dibben and Harald Dolles in Chapter 25 as critical success factors in perusing entrepreneurial driven activities in motorsports. Based on a case of how a charismatic entrepreneur prepared for and finally was able to break the world land speed record for motorcycle and sidecar combination, the authors explore a close-knit team identity and a clear goal that translated vision, communication, planning, feedback and learning. Ongoing evaluation of goal achievement was a significant aspect of organizational learning and thus strategy development which ‘morphed’ successfully from a marketing organization (to gain sponsorship) into a manufacturing organization (to build the record-breaking vehicle) and then an event management organization (to actually run the attempt), all to deliver a unique and ultimately tangible ‘product’ of a world land speed record. Those insights are gained by applying a participant observation method in research, which enabled otherwise unavailable access to the complexities, privations and core values of the people involved. The chapter concludes by arguing that participant observation allows otherwise unavailable access to the ephemeral and the personal, where the value that is inherent within sports scenarios resides. Dibben and Dolles suggest a number of other related topics, notably sports volunteerism, that would benefit from studies utilising the method. This chapter furthermore aims to introduce the participant observation technique as a method taken from ethnography into the field of research on sports management. The vast majority of sport management research uses questionnaires and interviews or relies on secondary data. A careful observation of ongoing behaviour by the researcher is often ignored, in most cases due to the lack of access. It is emphasized that what an observer will see shall be conditioned by her or his personal knowledge, and will depend largely on his or her particular position in a network of not purely academic relationships.

The measurement of brand equities has a tradition of several decades and became one of the hottest topics in business administration literature during the last years according to Tim Ströbel and Herbert Woratschek in Chapter 26. Besides price determination in the case of mergers and acquisitions, the measurement of brand equity is, for example, essential in the context of international accounting standards. This becomes also relevant in sport business as more and more football clubs are changing their legal form to corporate entities looking for investors. Brand equity is a decisive figure for these potential investors, like sponsors, that still represent one of the most important income sources in sport business. Another field of interest for the measurement of brand equity derived from the so-called trademark piracy, since it must be possible to define the financial damage to a sport brand, for example. Recent studies about the brand equity of football clubs revealed very diverse results. According to this great variety of brand equities and the consequent uncertainty of the measurement techniques and its results, a critical
analysis of the existing brand equity models is necessary. Therefore this chapter presents a categorization of brand equity models. Each category is discussed by the underlying theoretical background, to give a basic understanding, and introduces representative models of each category. The authors provide some specific implications for the use of brand equity models in professional sport.

1.6 Concluding Cluster ‘Reflection’

Major changes have taken place in sport in recent years, which have led to the emergence and development of an associated sport management literature. A literature review is provided by Simon Chadwick in Chapter 27 exploring the multitude of opportunities existing today for academics and practitioners to address the most pertinent issues facing sport management. This chapter summarizes the following fundamental elements of sport that mark it out as being different from other products or industrial sectors: the uncertainty of outcome; competitive balance; contest management; collaboration and competition, and performance measurement. It also considers the management issues pertaining to the models of sport employed in, for example, the USA and Europe. Following on from this, the internationalization and globalization of sport, linked to developments in new media technology, are examined. The history of sport is arguably richer than any other form of human activity. Sport has variously developed across the world as a ceremony, a celebration, a physical pursuit, a leisure activity and now, increasingly, a business. In the world of contemporary sport it is claimed by the author that, at its elite end at least, sport’s management is complex because the product it delivers to participants and fans is so idiosyncratic. This claim is accompanied by the view that while professional sport is, in large part, just another form of business, it has a range of special features that demand a customized set of practices to ensure its effective operation.

The perspective that while professional sport is in large part just another form of business, it has a range of special features that demand a customized set of practices to ensure its effective operation is re-examined in Chapter 28 by Aaron C.T. Smith and Bob Stewart. It initially proposes that while both business and sport are concerned with widening market share, building profits and strengthening brands, the presumption that sport has a monopoly over the delivery of intense emotional experiences, tribal belonging and strong interpersonal relationships is difficult to defend. The chapter concludes that while sport’s economic and social progress has created an industry that is built around complex bureaucracies that turn over many thousands of millions of dollars every year, it has also created a more diverse and heterogeneous system of structures and experiences that are difficult to conflate to a handful of neat special features. The management of sport has traditionally been divided between two contrasting philosophical approaches. At one extreme, sport is viewed as a unique cultural institution with a host of special features wherein the reflexive application of standard business practices not only produces poor management decision-making, but also erodes its rich history, emotional connections, tribal links and social relevance. At the other extreme, sport is seen to be nothing more than just another generic business enterprise subject to the usual government regulations, market pressures and customer demands, and is best managed by the application of standard business tools that assist the planning, finance, human
resource management and marketing functions. Over time these divisions have been blurred because of sport’s corporatization, and through the emergence of sport management as an academic discipline. Sport is additionally complicated by the fact that it exists in both commercial and not-for-profit forms like other cultural services, such as theatre, art, music, health care and education. On the other hand, it is also distinctive in the sense that despite its growing commercialization and corporatization, it ostensibly possesses many special features thus challenging research in the field.

Chapter 29 by Harald Dolles and Sten Söderman concludes this section and the handbook. It, provides a research agenda in sport management research based on own research and the insights by the various authors contributing to this handbook.

2  **RETHINKING THE CHOICE OF THEORIES AND METHODOLOGY IN SPORT MANAGEMENT RESEARCH**

We choose to organize the handbook in thematic clusters in an effort to go beyond the ‘qualitative versus quantitative’ debate that takes place (not only) in sport management research, and take the approach that particular research methods needs to be chosen to suit a specific research problem. It is the research topic and the question by the researcher ‘what should be achieved by conducting this research?’ that leads to the choice of the theoretical approach and a suitable research method. There is no fixed preference or pre-defined evaluation of what is a ‘good’ or at least ‘appropriate’ and a ‘bad’ or ‘inappropriate’ theory and research method. No theoretical reasoning and no research method, qualitative or quantitative, is intrinsically better than the other, and in some cases we might end up in a struggle to choose between different theoretical approaches, multiple or competing methods, or might apply mixed methods to suit our research needs. As research problems are not neutral, the choice of theory and the research design depends on the problem and what the researcher wants to find out.

How a research problem is framed – and there are many examples to be found in the handbook – however, will inevitably reflect a commitment to a particular point of view as to how science is perceived, executed and evaluated. Two main approaches to theory-building that are not mutually exclusive need to be mentioned in this regard (see also Chapter 20 by Dolles and Söderman on value captures in football club management, in this volume, for further discussion).

The **model-based approach** to theory-building abstracts the complexity of the research topic to isolate a few key variables based on certain selection criteria of the researcher whose interactions are examined in depth in research. This implies the creation of a wide range of situation-specific scenarios or, in other terms, several mathematical models of limited complexity. The normative significance of each model depends on the fit between its assumptions and reality. Game theoretic models of competitive interaction seeking to understand the consequences of patterns of choices over a variety of strategic variables (for example, as applied by Solberg and Haugen, in this volume) or the applications of various economic concepts to sporting activities (for an overview see *Handbook on the Economics of Sport* by Andreff and Szymanski, 2006) might serve as examples for this approach.

Porter (1991: 97) argues on the limits of this approach ‘no one model embodies or
even approaches embodying all the variables of interest, and hence the applicability of any model’s findings is almost inevitably restricted to a small subgroup of firms or industries whose characteristics fit the model’s assumptions. It might be summarized, that this ‘classical view’ (Kjellén and Söderman, 1980) of theory-building and research is characterized by principles derived from the natural sciences and based on the language of mathematics. The emphasis on understanding the world using mathematical tools has often been used to argue against other approaches. Godfrey-Smith (2003) claims this has been done because people have thought that mathematics shows us that there must be another route to knowledge beside experience; experience might be a source of knowledge, but not the only important source. What makes science special is its attempt to quantify phenomena and detect mathematical patterns in the flow of events. And science is especially successful because it is organized, systematic and especially responsive to experiences – on the one hand, learning from experiments and, on the other, learning from practical life.

Based on a mere holistic understanding of contextual factors in which a research topic is embedded, the framework-based approach to theory-building is constructed as an alternative. A framework-based approach seeks to capture much of the complexity and it encompasses many variables. Michael E. Porters framework of the five competitive forces, the value-chain perspective of the firm or the diamond framework exploring the competitive advantage of nations are prominent examples of this approach. Porter (1991: 98) argues in favour: ‘frameworks identify the relevant variables and the questions which the user must answer in order to develop conclusions tailored to a particular industry and company. In this sense they can be seen as almost expert systems’. However, it needs to be mentioned that all relations among the variables incorporated in a framework cannot be rigorously drawn or calculated. A framework-based approach, on the contrary, does not even intend to do so; rather it seeks to help both the practitioner and the researcher to better analyse the problem by understanding the main actors and forces in a general research setting.

This principle is further explained by Godfrey-Smith (2003: 8) as ‘scientific thinking and investigation have the same basic pattern as everyday thinking and investigation. In each case, the only source of real knowledge about the world is experience’. But already Kant (1787) has argued that all our thinking involves a subtle interaction between experience and pre-existing mental structures that we use to make sense of experiences. Not everything can be derived solely from experience, because a person must already have key concepts in mind, like time, space or causation, in order to use experiences to learn about the world. When taking the framework-based approach to theory-building the researcher must therefore avoid overly simple pictures of how experience affects belief. The mind does not passively receive the imprint of facts. The active and creative role of the mind must be recognized. Gummesson (2003) argues, when we are dealing with complex research questions, we have to act ad hoc, both manually and intellectually, even if bits and pieces within a research project can be standardized. ‘We have endless options, none offering a self-evident choice. They all require judgment calls and the major source to excellence is our own experience, wisdom and inventiveness’ (ibid.: 483).

As a matter of consequence we need to be aware that, when taken, the framework-based approach might be considered trivial, as knowledge is based on experience, but
that tells nothing about what makes science different from other human thought. We also need to admit that the framework-based approach to the equilibrium concept is not precise. The development of frameworks embodies the notion of optimization, but not equilibrium in the normal sense of the word. Instead, and emphasized by Porter (1991) earlier, there is a continually evolving environment in which a perpetual competitive interaction between competitors takes place.

A constructive tension with each other could be stipulated between both approaches. The model-based approach is particularly valuable in ensuring logical consistency and exploring the subtle interactions involving a limited number of variables. Porter (ibid.: 98) writes:

Models should challenge the variables included in frameworks and assertions about their link to outcomes. Frameworks, in turn, should challenge models by highlighting omitted variables, the diversity of competitive situations, the range of actual strategy choices, and the extent to which important parameters are not fixed but continually in flux.

In the rather confusing landscape that confronts PhD students and novice researchers intending to employ a consistent epistemology in research, it might be added that the model-based approach to theory-building is commonly related to deductive reasoning, whereas the framework-based approach corresponds with inductive logical argumentation. In addition to both common approaches, ‘abductive reasoning’ or ‘systematic combining’ (Dubois and Gadde, 2002) gained attention as a combining third way to generate explanations.

The abductive approach corresponds to the intertwined nature of different activities in the research process and applies to research settings in which, seemingly parallel to data collection and guided by the empirical findings, the search for complementary theories continues. In real life a standardized conceptualization of the research process as consisting of a number of planned subsequent ‘phases’ might be difficult to execute. On the contrary, the researcher might constantly move ‘back and forth’ from one type of research activity to another and between empirical observations and theory aiming to expand his or her understanding of both, theory and the empirical setting. This continuous movement between the empirical world and theory might be the main characteristic of this approach, as emphasized by Dubois and Gadde (2002). During this process the research issues and the analytical framework are successively reoriented when they are confronted with the empirical world. Thus theoretical framework, empirical fieldwork and analysis evolve simultaneously in the research process.

This stems from the fact that theory cannot be understood without empirical observation and vice versa. The evolving framework directs the search for empirical data. Empirical observations might result in identification of unanticipated yet related issues that may be further explored in interviews or by other means of data collection. This might bring about a further need to redirect the current theoretical framework through expansion or change of the theoretical model. (Dubois and Gadde, 2002: 555)

We might conclude that abductive reasoning involves merging models or creating new frameworks to creatively develop new options for solving problems of the industry, addressing issues or creating opportunity especially in a fast-developing field of research like sport and business. An abductive approach is applied, for example, in the chapters
by Santomier and Hogan, and Jansson and Söderman – both in this volume – and implicitly used in all chapters in the final cluster on ‘reflection’.

One of the key assumptions of the ‘classical way’ and of methods based on natural sciences is that the researcher should be objective, aiming to maintain a complete independence from the object of study by applying ‘objective’ criteria and methods. Among others, the chapters by De Bosscher, Truyens, van Bottenburg and Shibli or by Schlesinger – both in this volume – might serve as examples. Obviously such claims of the researcher’s independence are much harder to sustain in research on sports, as we all have our own sporting experiences, interests and knowledge. Hence it is not surprising that a wide range of research methodologies exist in which the researcher are part of the research process itself. Such constructionist research designs seeks understanding through description of the continually changing social phenomena by applying research methods such as interviews, case discussions or direct observation. The objective is to gain rich descriptions of the subject of study by being as faithful as possible to the meanings attributed to the experience by the participants. The role of the researcher in this process is twofold: on the one hand, to assist the participants in the research to explore their experience and, on the other, without imposing his or her own biases and interpretations of the data, to seek to identify core themes and essences within the data gathered. This requires a sufficient degree of self-awareness of the researcher to be able to ‘bracket out’ those biases and preconceptions which might have caused his or her interests in conducting this research or redirecting the research process. Most of the chapters in this handbook might be summarized within this approach, and its benefits and shortcomings are especially discussed in the chapters by Anagnostopoulos, Dibben and Dolles, and Skille in this handbook.

The following questions (extensively amended from Punch (2005)) might be used in the beginning by the novice researcher to structure the decision-making process between frameworks and models, different theories and research methods:

1. What exactly do I want to find out?
2. What kind of focus on my topic do I aim at? Do I want to study this topic in detail or am I mainly interested in making standardized and systematic comparisons concerning this topic?
3. How have other researchers dealt with this topic? What limitations did other researchers face by applying particular theories or methods? To what extend is it necessary to align my research project with this literature?
4. Will certain theories help me to structure the research object? Consider the benefits/shortcomings when applying a model-based or a framework-based approach to theory development in research.
5. Will we learn more about the topic using qualitative, quantitative or mixed methods? What will be the knowledge pay-off of each method? Are certain theories aligned with specific research methods?
6. Will a deductive, inductive or abductive approach suit the generation of new knowledge on the research object? How can I ensure reliability (how far each research instrument can be relied upon to produce the same score for each occasion that it is used) and validity (will the same patterns observed in the data also hold true in other contexts and settings) in the research project?
7. What practical considerations are affecting my choice? For example, how long is my time budget to finalize the study? Do I have the resources to study it that way? Might I get access to the single case I would like to study in depth? Are databases readily available and affordable for being used in the proposed research?

8. What will work best for me? Do I feel comfortable with a particular method of data collection, such as developing a questionnaire or conducting interviews via telephone or face to face? Do I favour certain methods for data evaluation, for example statistical calculations versus qualitative content analysis?

This handbook aims to reflect the range of theories (see Figure 1.2) and research methodologies (see Figure 1.3) to be applied to research in the field between business and sports. It is obvious that the selection in the handbook just provides some insights and might be considered as an ‘appetizer’ to conduct research in certain areas, and
there might be other research methods and theories also available to be considered in the research on sport and business. The authors provide as much information on their approach as possible, and considered, in close cooperation with the editors when designing their chapter, for example: level of aggregation (individual level, team or group level, club or corporate actors level, national level, international or global level); theoretical framework or theory applied (such as input–output analysis, cost–benefit analysis, resource-based view, transaction-cost analysis, dynamic capabilities, network view and diamond framework); sampling technique applied (such as qualitative research and quantitative research); sample size (such as single case study, multiple case study and large-size sample), and originality and value of your contribution (method used and findings). The central approaches used in the chapters in the handbook can be clustered in a way to provide the reader/user quick access (see Figures 1.2 and 1.3). A brief overview on various research methods applied in the handbook is provided in the following.
2.1 Research Methods Applied in the ‘Introduction Cluster’

Andy Rudd and R. Burke Johnson point out that a popular objective in sport management research is to gain an understanding of cause and effect. When these causal studies are conducted they are almost always done with quantitative approaches based on a single method. Specifically, it is argued in the chapter that many sport management researchers seeking causal relationships may fail to recognize an important distinction between causal description and causal explanation. Causal description and causal explanation are both important for testing and unpacking causal relationships. Only a small percentage of empirical studies in sport management currently are adopting mixed methods approaches. Experiments should be designed to explain the consequences of interventions and not just to describe them. Causal description identifies an overall, molar causal relationship between an independent and dependent variable; however, such relationships tell the researcher little about the underlying causal mechanisms responsible for the causal relationship. Causal explanation is therefore an important route to the generalization of causal descriptions because it tells the researcher which features of the causal relationship are essential to transfer to other situations. This benefit of causal explanation helps to elucidate its priority and prestige in all sciences and helps explain why, once a novel and important causal relationship is discovered, the bulk of basic scientific effort turns towards explaining why and how it happens.

2.2 Research Methods and Selected Theories Applied in the Thematic Cluster ‘Governance and Performance’

The challenges in using benchmarking as a method for learning about the processes that may improve the management and delivery of certain sport systems are emphasized by Leigh Robinson and Nikolai Böhlke. Managers should understand process benchmarking as a method for innovation, idea generation and general inspiration based on the descriptive benchmarks that emerge from the research exercise. It appears crucial to employ an extensive and flexible data collection strategy, to carry out a careful and intensive data analysis, as well as a sensitive and critical evaluation of the observed best practices and their transferability, in order to bring a benchmarking exercise to a successful conclusion.

A mixed method research design summarized as qualitative comparative analysis (QCA) is introduced by Mathieu Winand and Thierry Zintz, and refers to the research subject with all its richness and specificity. QCA furthermore relies on the rigorous and transparent selection of conditions made by the researcher and supported by theoretical arguments. Reliability is considered according to the theoretical validation of QCA (that is, ratio between variables and number of cases, absence of contradictory configuration showing the coherence of the data and absence of contradictory simplifying assumption when using logical remainder(s)) and the proper interpretation of the solution (that is, confronting the solution with the narratives of cases and, when possible, with individuals’ own interpretation). The researcher is therefore able to refer back to the complexity of the case analysed and its narratives. There are methodological limitations to consider when taking this approach: the time dimension is not integrated by the QCA, researchers
therefore need to re-examine cases in a qualitative way. The dichotomous calibration of the measures, however, should not be seen as a limitation.

Based on critical success factors and standards, a benchmarking scoring system called SPLISS is developed by Veerle De Bosscher, Jasper Truyens, Marten van Bottenburg and Simon Shibli, enabling the researcher to deliver an objective comparison of nations and policies. This can be regarded as a potentially useful means of helping policy-makers and institutions to assess the performance of their sport system in comparable terms and to undertake appropriate remedial strategies. To date, however, in economic studies as well as in this chapter, there has been limited critical interrogation of how valid and useful these measurements are with respect to their ability to provide insights into what drives competitiveness and to generate robust predictions of future performance. While objective scores can be calculated in the elite sport climate survey, the definition of standards in the overall sport questionnaire is somewhat arbitrary because of the absence of clear standards to rate objectively an elite sport system. The survey is based on comparative country data (where more is often better) and on the opinions of experts. The small sample of nations does not allow statistical techniques similar to the economic studies to identify the standards for comparison and weights, for example the deviation between the four highest and lowest ranked nations (min-max method), quartiles, normalizations or other transformations. Therefore, the method needs to be further explored in terms of its construct validity. In contrast to existing sport studies, the unique feature of this study is that it assesses processes by means of an elite sport climate survey (both objective and subjective data) with the main stakeholders in elite sport and that these responses are included in the scoring system.

A comparative case analysis is applied by Ann Bourke as it forces the researcher to try to remain detached and throws up plenty of surprises on which to reflect. The resistance to making certain information available (confidentiality is always respected) was a surprise, but the author then tried other sources. The interviews ‘degenerated’ into conversations, at first the author was unhappy, but soon realized that to get insights on values, culture, processes, relationship management, power and hierarchy, a two-way discussion is more valuable (while difficult to write up). Following her ‘conversations’ (interviews) contact was made with a number of other informants to seek clarification and confirmation on certain matters. But the interviewees in the field of sports seem to be very passionate about their sport (not always the representing institution) which complicates data interpretation. There are more procedural issues which need attention in a comparative case analysis, that is, the use of external/independent sources to comment critically on or monitor key processes, web page management and resource availability.

To illustrate when, why, and how the case study strategy can be a relevant approach for sport management research is pointed out by Geoff Walters and Sean Hamil. The reason for undertaking a case study is not only to get insights into an individual sport’s organization, a group of sports’ organizations or a particular sport industry, but also to gain an in-depth contextual understanding of the research subject. The case study in the chapter builds on interviews and documentary sources of evidence, therefore it is hoped that the triangulation of multiple data sources reduces the potential for misinterpretation. It also demonstrates the flexibility of the case study strategy in that multiple methods can be used. However, the inability to gain access to the relevant people/organizations can be a potential weakness of the case study strategy. This case study is largely descriptive,
rather than explanatory or exploratory in regards to theory building, and is used to provide a deeper understanding of a particular industry addressing a specific issue of regulation, thus introducing the field for further research.

A critical literature review is provided by Hallgeir Gammelsæter and Benoit Senaux on football governance at national and international level (not at club level). The review is primarily based on empirical and conceptual studies in the field. It maps and coarsely classifies research areas, research questions and findings, by identifying key forms of governance and relate them to transnational and national levels of the organization of football. The review is focused on studies appearing roughly during the past decade, arguing on the development in football in the last era, and most of the academic material on the topic published in English, that also dates back to the last decade. The authors, however, admit, there are historical, sociological, and economic studies appearing before this time that have a bearing on governance, organization, and management issues. Whereas the authors hope their synopsis does right to the research that has been done in the field, their synopsis does not fully testify that research on this issue still has big leaps to take. To the extent that football governance constitutes a research field in its own right, it is fragmented and comprises as yet few studies which target football from a governance perspective. However, while many of the studies reviewed here suffer from not being situated in an explicit governance context, this does not mean that they are flawed. Rather it reflects that many of them happen to fill a vacuum by providing descriptions and analyses that are relevant for conceptualizing how football changes. It also reflects a lack of engagement in studying football in more typical governance disciplines such as management and organization studies. Therefore the contribution to the understanding of governance often comes from disciplines that are dedicated to pursue other research questions than governance, such as ethnography, sociology, history and, in part, marketing.

How a case study research might positively respond to the challenges of validity – construct, internal and external – is explained by Eivind Á. Skille. Construct validity asks whether the instruments are accurate measures of reality; internal validity asks whether research design is capable of eliminating bias and the effect of extraneous variables, and external validity requires definition of the domains to which the results of the study may be generalized. Construct validity, or measurement validity, is about how the terms used describe the reality in which we are conducting research. Internal validity, or credibility, may have slightly different meanings in qualitative research (about interpreting statements meanings and presenting different perspectives) compared with quantitative research (about causality), but overall it is about how to describe, explain and understand the object of study. External validity, or transferability, is about how the findings could be generalized to populations outside the sample from which the data is taken. This is particularly important in relation to case study research, because the logic of transferability differs from a classical notion of generalization. First, one might argue case study research is more about particularity and contextualization than about generalization. Second, case study research adheres to analytical generalization (and not statistical generalization, such as in quantitative studies). In that respect, prejudice comes into play again, in terms of the theoretical approach applied. Theory must be tested by replicating the findings from one case on other cases. Thus, one method of increasing external validity in case study-based research is to conduct a multiple case
study. In that respect, the sampling procedure – or, more precisely, the specific cases chosen – also increases external validity; the ideal types together probably represent a significant proportion of the total population of the research subject. Construct and internal validity are highly reduced in qualitative research in general, for two interrelated reasons. First, there is little reason to disbelieve the informants’ expressions of their understanding of their own environment or institution. Second, the constructs applied relate as much to the researcher’s approach to the analysis through a conscious use of prejudice.

2.3 Research Methods and Selected Theories Applied in the Thematic Cluster ‘Media and Technology’

The explorative chapter by James Santomier and Patricia Hogan discusses three basic types of research questions (descriptive, correlational and causal) that can be applied (usually in combination) to research in social media sport marketing:

1. Descriptive: when a study is designed primarily to describe what is going on or what exists. For example, ‘How are sport enterprises using social media in their marketing efforts?’
2. Correlational: when a study is designed to look at the relationships between two or more variables. For example, ‘What is the relationship between the level of social media used in a marketing campaign and team (or athlete) brand awareness or brand recognition?’
3. Causal: when a study is designed to determine whether one or more variables (for example, a social media campaign) causes or affects one or more outcome variables (such as ticket sales). For example, ‘What is the effect of a new pre-season social media campaign on the number of season tickets sold?’

According to the authors the basic research process may still be able to function as the fundamental framework for any research study related to social media and sport marketing, whether from the perspective of a scholar or a marketing professional. It is obvious, however, that the fast-paced, constantly changing, networked, integrated and relentlessly competitive (but simultaneously cooperative) business environment of today, in which the business of sport has to act, has changed and appears to demand a change in thinking in order to more successfully navigate through the current milieu in order to collect data, address problems and capitalize on opportunities. It is contended that deductive and/or inductive thinking are necessary but not sufficient for this rapidly changing world, and suggests the addition of abductive conceptualization – integrative or design thinking that builds its own way of understanding what is going on and then goes on to develop ways to address the research problem. As argued by the authors, the ‘webifying’ of the world ushers in the need for changes in the way that research is conducted and asks for innovative ideas to collect data using interactive media and for sparking new ideas for ‘what might be’.

Since the early 1990s the price of sports broadcasting rights for major sports events has increased tremendously. In 1984, whether an event was on the government’s list of public service or not made little difference to the income of the governing body.
Now, for many governing bodies the majority of their income comes from the sale of broadcasting rights, and therefore the listing has become an important factor. By means of a case study approach Chris Gratton and Harry Arne Solberg explain what the listed events regulation looks like across countries. The case study provides detailed insights into how the UK list was generated and reviewed, thus explaining the methodological steps applied in the process. In the UK, the main criterion for listing in the review in 1998 was that the event had a special national resonance, not just a significance to those who ordinarily follow the sport concerned; an event which serves to unite the nation, a shared point on the national calendar. For a sporting event, both the following categories were also considered: it is a pre-eminent national or international event in the sport; and/or it involves the national team or national representatives in the sport concerned. The terms of reference for the Independent Advisory Panel’s Role for the UK review in 2009 are explained in the chapter: (1) the principle of listing; (2) the criteria against which events were currently, or might in the future be listed, and (3) the events which make up the current list, and those which should do so in the future. The authors explain in detail the methodology applied by the Independent Advisory Panel to reach a recommendation, for example, launching a formal consultation, seeking information, reviewing other listing regimes and conducting focus group discussion.

The objectives of the stakeholders involved in sport and sporting activities have been thoroughly discussed in the sports economic literature. As for team sports, there has been a consensus that North American teams behave like profit maximizers, whereas in Europe and other continents, some kind of utility maximization seems to be the objective. In recent years, many clubs, event organizers and sport governing bodies have earned substantial revenues from the sale of media rights. These revenues can be affected by many factors, where the strategy of rivalling buyers is one example. By analysing this topic, Harry Arne Solberg and Kjetil Kåre Haugen argue that game theory has grown into a mature scientific toolbox to explore such situations. Central to game theory are concepts like players, preferences, pay-offs, strategies and information. Through careful definition of such concepts, best reply functions or correspondences can be derived as optimizing behaviour for each player as functions of all other players’ possible strategies. The central solution concept, ‘Nash equilibrium’, can then be defined as ‘intersecting points’ on such best replies. Game theory can help both the sellers and buyers to get an insight into the processes affecting the terms of trade. It can improve the ability to foresee the strategies of rivals, and also the consequences of these strategies. As for the case investigated, it can help the owners of sports rights to better analyse the alternative strategies of the television channel(s), as well as their consequences, and vice versa. Additionally, it can also help consumers (which in this case are television viewers) to understand when the sellers and/or buyers are bluffing as a part of the negotiations. For example signalling to ‘the outside world’ that there is a risk of not being broadcast can be used as instruments during the sales processes. Television broadcasters may hope it will put pressure on the seller to lower the price, and vice versa. Non-commercial and semi-commercial public service broadcasters may use the uncertainty whether the sports events will be broadcast or not, to persuade politicians to give them more favourable conditions, for example more funding. Indeed, such strategies have been observed on several occasions in Europe over the past decade.
2.4 Research Methods and Selected Theories Applied in the Thematic Cluster ‘Place, Time and Spectators’

The purpose of the chapter by Tommy Andersson is to discuss how impacts of sport events can be assessed from a wide social science perspective with a focus on sustainability. Sport events have impacts on individuals, social life and society at large in many different ways. Tangible impacts such as improvement of local infrastructure, urban regeneration or ‘architectural pollution’ are common for sport mega-events. But intangible effects may be at least as important. Sport events are manifestations and often celebrations of sports values such as competitiveness, fairness and loyalty. Such values are important for the social fabric and have an impact on social life not only in the short run, but also on the accumulated social capital of the community. The author introduces the triple bottom line approach, that is, a framework to analyse the economic, sociocultural and environmental impacts of events. The triple bottom line framework may owe part of its success to the magic number three and to the fact that three perspectives provide an acceptable complexity. It covers a great deal of perspectives on event impact analysis but does not provide a complete coverage, which is important to keep in mind when the scope of a triple bottom line approach is discussed. A cost–benefit analysis is all inclusive, but only implicitly so. A cost–benefit analysis should include all aspects and ‘externalities’ that are affected by the sport event, but for practical reasons all cost–benefit studies are limited and, unfortunately, in different ways. Thus cost–benefit analyses, although in theory more inclusive, lack the clarity of presentation that a triple bottom line approach has. The scope of a cost–benefit analysis is also related to the time horizon. An analysis of the complete life cycle of a sport event is desirable in order to describe not only cash flows over the life cycle, but also how other tangible as well as intangible impacts are distributed over time. Another issue related to scope is to what extent an impact assessment should describe not only direct but also indirect effects. This is explicitly discussed in economic assessments and, if calculated, there are theoretically well-developed methods to do so. Socio-cultural impacts, if measured by instruments using attitude scales, can be considered as direct impacts. The next question may be how these attitudes affect local residents’ peace of mind and happiness, which may later on also influence local residents’ desire to continue living in the area and so on. Although these chains of sociocultural impacts should be relevant for an impact assessment, it may be too difficult theoretically to describe with any certainty these chains of impacts. It is, however, worth pointing out this difference in scope between an economic and a sociocultural impact assessment.

A detailed analysis of the status of French football stadia is provided by Boris Helleu and Michel Desbordes. The aim of this contribution is to describe how a country negotiates its transition to stadia designed as true recreational spaces and profit centres. The marketing, economic, and political issues in refurbishing old stadia and building new stadia are identified and evaluated by using both second-hand quantitative data, and qualitative data obtained via discussions with experts. An inventory map of French league 1 and league 2 stadia is developed and explains, together with a case study on the Grand Stade Lille Métropole project to build a new stadium in Lille, the needs and the discourse that legitimizes the public support for new stadia in France. In order to strengthen the legitimacy of public assistance, the authors refer to studies of the impact on the economics of football clubs, and the additional income for the clubs as well as the
fiscal and social revenues for the State, which could be produced by the refurbishing of French stadia.

A social impact analysis is provided by Anne-line Balduck, Marc Maes and Marc Buelen by exploring residents’ perceptions of the impact of the arrival of the Tour de France in Ghent before and after the arrival of the event. As the city of Ghent hosted a stage of the Tour de France for the first time, researchers were aware of a possible novelty effect. Besides the strengths of the study, a number of limitations or concerns might be considered for further research in the field. First, although the sample strategy has a number of strengths (for example, demographic profile, survey ahead and after the event, drop-out analysis), the nature of the sample limits generalization of the findings. Since only residents of Ghent who lived in the selected survey area were allowed to participate, the findings could not be generalized to all residents of Ghent. Second, since only a quantitative approach was used, it was not possible to obtain a richer and in-depth data-set that could be obtained by using a mixed method approach by adding qualitative interviews. A qualitative approach might reveal other perceived benefits and costs that were not taken up in this survey. Researchers have stated that the social value of major sport events should earn more attention. Sport events are more than only entertainments, they are social events that allow for adding a social value to the event. Other researchers support this, arguing that social impacts are a core source of potential significance or a core source of potential troubles. The social impact of sport events should not be left to coincidence and should be managed. In this study, half of the residents indicated that the Tour de France was like a social event to them. The importance of the cultural interest and consolidation factor also indicated that the social aspect of hosting the Tour de France was the surplus value for residents, as they did not perceive any economic benefits.

In a longitudinal study on residents perception of mega-sporting events, Torino residents were asked by Alessandro ‘Chito’ Guala and Douglas Michele Turco between 2003 and 2007 to evaluate the overall experience of hosting the Olympic Winter Games. It included a series of studies that were conducted in the two primary areas that hosted the event in 2006: Torino and the Alp Valleys. The monitoring of public opinion involved information, recommendations and expectations which were acquired from the population by means of different techniques for collecting survey information from residents. They are implemented through interviews or questionnaires (telephone interviews are currently used, in particular) with respect to a representative sample of the population; in some cases, the samples may be ‘designed’ or ‘by quota’. In certain cases, surveys are conducted for specific purposes that are not connected to other studies; in other cases, longitudinal surveys are implemented in order to periodically gauge the moods of the population, and is generally the best solution. Surveys may be implemented with respect to the same population sample, monitored over time (a panel) or different samples may be selected each time so long as they are created on the basis of the same criteria. The latter solution – which is simpler from an organization aspect– is a real longitudinal study and allows the changing attitudes of the population to be verified over time. People were questioned about positive effects (urban regeneration, new infrastructures, sport facilities, public transportation system, new image and visibility, and tourism) and negative effects (heavy expenditures for new buildings, high costs for maintaining the ice facilities, political corruption and inflation). The questions were balanced between a new local
development, based on sport, tourism and culture, and the scenario of rust monuments and white elephants, considering the Games only an ‘intermezzo’. The general principle of social research – that the subject’s perceptions are a ‘moving target’ – also applies to research on public opinion on events that may change over time and must be captured through the use of new measurement tools, new questions and new response modalities.

To familiarize the reader with sport business field research, Douglas Michele Turco describes the following key steps to research success: (1) developing the problem; (2) formulating hypotheses or research questions; (3) research design; (4) data-gathering, treatment and analysis, and (5) reporting. Several data collection approaches for field research in sport business were described, including on-site interviews, door-to-door, e-surveys and the skier lift technique. It must be remembered that research in the field is fluid and dynamic, and requires, at times, flexibility by the researchers. The reader should also be aware that sport event economic impact studies are sometimes commissioned to justify a political position rather than to search for economic accuracy, resulting in the use of questionable procedures that produce bloated numbers. Questionable research procedures include: local resident spending; appropriate aggregation; inclusion of time-switchers and casuals; abuse of multipliers; ignoring costs borne by the local community; ignoring opportunity costs; ignoring displacement costs; expanding the project scope; exaggerating visitation numbers; and inclusion of consumer surplus. Regardless of the motives for conducting research, what is most important is that sound, systematic and ethical procedures are followed for data-gathering and analysis. Internal validity, or the extent to which an instrument accurately measures what it purports to measure, is critical to any field study. Estimates or projections of sport tourist activity generally come from attendance figures, room occupancy rates or some other system to measure tourism demand. Internal validity is threatened from poorly constructed and formatted questionnaires that produce responses of little worth. The accuracy of spectator studies may be limited by the amount of time that transpires between a subject’s event attendance and the survey, inducing what is termed recall bias. Recall bias is particularly acute in economic impact studies with mail-back surveys when a lengthy time lag between the event and survey has occurred. Visitors tend to underestimate their expenditures when asked for information after a considerable time has elapsed from their visit. They also tend to perceive their travel experiences more positively as time transpires. To address the issue of recall bias, visitors should be queried as soon after their experiences as possible; at least within one to two weeks of their visit. The flipside of recall bias is projection bias, which can occur when subjects are asked to estimate their spending early in their trip or visit. To address projection bias, visitor samples should be drawn near the end of, or immediately after, the event. A split-method research approach may also be employed, that is, on-site interview and post-event e-mail survey, permitting spending comparisons based on when the surveys were conducted.

2.5 Research Methods and Selected Theories Applied in the Thematic Cluster ‘Club Management and Teams’

The development of a management model specific to professional sport clubs is featured by Norm O’Reilly. More specifically portfolio theory is used to develop a professional sport club management model that considers the club to be a portfolio of assets.
The numerous assets of Maple Leaf Sports and Entertainment were articulated by the author in a detailed case study to support theory development. Applied in accounting, investment banking, finance and strategy, the portfolio theory uses the perspective of an investor and seeks to optimize investment benefits through the diversification and risk management of the investor’s portfolio. It considers the portfolio problem, where the risk of a given investment is determined based on each investor’s preferred portfolio. The level of risk is based on the investor’s risk aversion, the overall composition of the investor’s portfolio and sought return objectives. Over time, changes to a portfolio that maintain the same level of expected return, but with reduced risk, are sought. The separation theorem is an important aspect of portfolio theory that considers the implications of a riskless asset and how it compares to the risk/return outcomes of alternate investment options Optimization, or finding the optimal mix of high- and low-risk assets, is a common aspect of portfolio theory. In practice, portfolio theory typically guides investment portfolio decisions by considering the expected return and the unique risk of a given asset as part of a larger portfolio of assets. Defining a professional sport club as a series of assets forms the basis for applying portfolio theory as a foundation for a model for professional sport club management.

Marketing is important for sports clubs which offer experiences to various audiences. A major purpose of a professional elite club is to earn money and be profitable, but clubs also have to satisfy non-profit needs. In practice it is difficult to separate profit issues from non-profit or social issues. Hans Jansson and Sten Söderman offer, as a conclusion taken from industry and the literature review, four typical relationship designs for sport clubs, thus applying an abductive reasoning to theory-building: marketing management, customer focused relationship marketing, network marketing and institutional network marketing. In order to market a sport product, a marketer has to consider several influencing factors that are unique to sport marketing. The most distinctive and challenging factors are that sport is product led. A sport is all about the uncertainty of outcome, and sport customers help to produce the product (or service) and sports fans are unlikely to purchase products from a rival sport organization. A coherent link exists between the market as a social arena and marketing activities. The institutional-network model focuses on factors which influence the happenings within a specific market, while the practice-based approach focuses on creating the market and its opportunities through the marketing practices. It is important to note that there is no hard and fast rule about adopting a specific approach. In fact, the adoption of approaches varies with the task/activity at hand, and considering a hybrid approach might be the most beneficial: first, marketing management theory and, second, customer-focused relationship marketing theory which caters to a narrow range of stakeholders and activities. Pivotal attention is only aimed at relationships and making profits through them. Access to multiple markets enables an enterprise to cover a broader spectrum of stakeholders and activities as it includes relationship marketing. The networking marketing theory is another broad relationship marketing theory, where marketing takes place through a set of network relationships. Since it is based on the markets as networks approach and sociology, the market is viewed as a social arena. The decisions are made on the basis of actual happenings in the market and outside it. In the institutional-network theory, the logic of appropriateness and logic of consequence go hand in hand. The logic of appropriateness is used to find alternatives to a problem as the word ‘appropriate’ rightly suggests.
On the other hand, the logic of consequence plays a critical role in solving the problems outlined and maximizing the social values from an economic point of view. This logic therefore goes a step further by translating social values into economic consequences, for example, the competitiveness of the club. It is therefore concluded by the authors that the logic of consequence is valid for all four marketing theories, while the logic of appropriateness is only included in the institutional network marketing theory.

A framework-based approach to theory-building is applied by Harald Dolles and Sten Söderman in developing the network of value captures as a management model specific to professional team sport clubs. Built on multiple-cases, a critical literature review and interviews with experts the authors construct three dimensions of professional sport club management: (1) the product and its features; (2) the customers, and (3) the business process, strategic vision and intent. The following possible 'offerings', termed 'value captures' are explored and it should be noted that all value offerings are interlinked and might also be considered as bundles of a club’s value captures: team; sporting competitions; club; players; team-sport services; event, facilities and arena; merchandise; and other commercial activities. This broad consumer approach addresses the following customer groups: spectators and supporters (fan base); club members (club membership); media; sponsors and corporate partners; local communities, and other clubs. Combining the eight ‘offerings’ with the six groups of ‘customers’, 48 relationships appear, showing the competitive scope of a professional club in team sports. Each of these relationships constitutes a value-capturing activity through which a club can create value and competitive advantage. This understanding of value captures is founded in strategic management and the resource-based view. A club’s resources can only be a source of competitive advantage when they are valuable and recognized by the customer. Resources are considered to be value captures when they enable a particular club to implement strategies (value-capturing activities) that improve its efficiency and effectiveness. Valuable club resources possessed by a large number of competing clubs cannot be sources of sustained competitive advantage, if a club is not differentiating upon them. A club only enjoys a competitive advantage when it is implementing a unique value-creating strategy combining bundles of valuable club resources (value captures) recognized and accepted by the customer (by the customer’s groups).

The potential of econometric analyses to answer two particularly important questions that arise in the context of the team sports industry is featured by Bernd Frick: first, is it possible to field a championship team by outspending the competitors and, second, what are the (main) determinants of player salaries? The answers are not only of academic value, but have obvious managerial implications. Team owners and/or presidents wishing to maximize the sporting performance of their clubs are well advised to take the results into account when purchasing talent in the relevant labour market. Advanced quantitative methods are used in this chapter to analyse the very detailed and reliable longitudinal data that are available both, at the club and the individual level.

Grounded theory, featured next by Christos Anagnostopoulos, is a systematic inductive and comparative methodology for conducting inquiry with the purpose of developing theory. Three main reasons are often given for why grounded theory has proved popular in management research: (1) it is useful for developing new theory or fresh insights into old theory; (2) it generates theory of direct interest and relevance for practitioners, and (3) it can uncover micro-management processes in complex and unfolding scenarios.
Surprisingly, the application of grounded theory in the sport management field has been relatively sparse. Sport management research that wishes to employ grounded theory methodology needs to specify from the outset the unit of analysis the inquiry will use. A grounded theory-based inquiry (in particular one that adopts the Straussian variant) should not be considered as an a-theoretical research engagement. The example used throughout this chapter and based on interviews gathered through snowball and purposive sampling, for instance, is located in the broad field of organizational strategy. The decision-making by the author to concentrate on corporate social responsibility in English Football was an emerging sense-making process developed over a period of time, shaped by a series of (non-)intentional choices and actions by various actors and influenced by a changing set of conditioning and intervening factors. Thus sport management researchers must always keep in mind that their ‘substantive theory’ lies in a broader field of study, and this is why, for example, a modest review of the literature can be justified; it can actually provide the platform upon which further ‘knowledge’ on the matter can be acquired.

2.6 Research Methods and Selected Theories Applied in the Thematic Cluster ‘Sport Branding and Sponsoring’

A theoretical model of the influence of fan identity on the attitude toward sponsors and the intention of purchasing the sponsors’ products is developed by Torsten Schlesinger. It introduces several concepts and models which analyse different psychological (attitudinal and behavioural) facets and components for assessing the connection between spectators and fans with their team or club. A strong bond between fans and their teams or clubs can be described by different dimensions: emotional achievement, self-connection and intimate commitment. Emotional achievement represents the feeling of personal achievement and pride of the fans when their team is successful. In this context the effective influence of fan identity on parameters crucial for success like attitude or purchase intention of sponsor’s products is of special interest. The sponsorship effect model is empirically tested by two quantitative single case studies with sport clubs in different top sport leagues and one of its sponsors (sponsors are dealt with anonymously). An online survey is generated, having the advantage that it is possible to generate a big sample within a very short time. However, it is only possible to question persons with a specific interest in a discipline and specific habit of media use, so that a control on representativeness with regard to age and sex is limited. The data is tested in a two-staged process. First, the measurement model is assessed via confirmatory factor analysis to evaluate the reliability and unidimensionality of the scales used in the studies. Further, a structural model is estimated to allow for an assessment of the overall model fit and the hypothesised relationships. Owing to the fact that there are two different sponsoring situations on hand, the established model is analysed for each sport club separately.

A critical literature review is applied by T. Bettina Cornwell offering the reader a summary of the development of sponsorship as a mainstay of marketing communications, exploring the theoretical propositions made in research and how sponsorship works, and making arguments for the entrenchment of sponsorship in a new evolving indirect marketing mix. Managerial implications are discussed and a future research agenda is proposed.
Participant observation as a legitimate method of engaging in sports management research is highlighted by Mark Dibben and Harald Dolles. It is notwithstanding the limitations of sample size that are inevitably associated with participant observation that the sorts of insights sought in the adoption of participant observation as a research method are different to those feasible through more traditional methods. It is argued that participant observation allows otherwise unavailable access to the ephemeral and the personal, that is where the value inherent within sports scenarios resides. The sorts of insights gained from applying participant observation are not readily available from more traditional studies of sports business; there is a degree of intimacy required to yield such sensitivities. In the case investigated, the implications of the hard financial reality for the World Landspeed Record Attempt project were felt every day; there was no prospect of obtaining materials without having the necessary cash and it was being run on a ‘hand-to-mouth’ basis. Yet to the outsider there would be nothing to suggest anything other than a paid team working in a well-funded environment. Indeed, it was not in the project’s interests to make the privations known; this would have caused sponsors and officials to doubt the potential success of the project to the extent it would have ceased to retain the necessary credibility. As such, it seems that it is only through participant observation that one is able to discern just precisely what the drivers are behind a sports project or event; the data is not as readily available from more traditional methods as it is in other ventures with (for example) publicly available financial information. Further, sports events, teams and projects exist precisely as a result of a camaraderie among the individuals that is not fully observable from the outside. Particularly in motorsport, the true raison d’être is held within the team; it is a fallacy to believe that all teams are only there to win, because teams are realistic as to their chances. Getting behind the sponsorship and the vehicle, to sit ‘inside the caravan’ of the team and, indeed, each member of the team in ‘the circus’ is the only way to access the personal lived reality of the participants and their families. It is for this reason that participant observation is suggested as a valid method for sports management research and the authors argue that the standard normative scientific methodological questions regarding ‘objective validity’ and ‘replicability’ are rendered obsolete in those research settings.

The discussion about the evaluation of brand equity should, according to Tim Ströbel and Herbert Woratschek in the next chapter, be referred to two main issues: (1) one should always differentiate between brand equity and brand strength. Although this separation is not entirely persevered in literature and the expression brand equity dominates the discussion, there is a common understanding of the existence of both finance-oriented and customer-based brand equity. (2) Based on that first conclusion, one should distinguish between the three main models of brand evaluation: finance-oriented models, customer-oriented models and integrative models. With reference to those two main issues it can be summarized that the evaluation of brand equity belongs to one of the most discussed and most important management topics, and this is specifically apparent in the field of sport. It is extremely important for sport organizations to evaluate both brand strength and brand equity. This is practically proven by the increasing numbers of evaluations done in several sports. By following that discussion, the reader should keep in mind that finance-oriented models usually ignore the influence of different stakeholders, especially the sport spectators’ perspective. In that case, psychological variables like fan loyalty or image are completely out of scope. Customer-oriented models include, on
the other hand, those psychological variables, but ignore more or less financial figures. These two perspectives are combined in integrative models that measure brand equity by scoring models where the weights of brand key drivers are subjectively determined. This is the reason why the results of different brand evaluations of one and the same brand usually differ extremely. Therefore, it is important to differentiate brand strength and brand equity.

2.7 Research Methods and Selected Theories Applied in the Concluding Cluster ‘Reflection’

Sport has today emerged as an industrial sector in its ownright, with a number of studies and estimates that it makes a major contribution to economic and commercial activity both within and across national boundaries. At the same time, sport continues to have a profound influence on the social, cultural, health and psychological spheres of human existence. The literature review by Simon Chadwick reveals that the appeal of sport might even increase in the future and a wide range of institutions, organizations, bodies, clubs, teams and individuals are both affected by and involved in sport. As such, there is a multitude of challenges facing managers in sport, many of which have only emerged over the last two decades. There is a real need to understand the challenges faced by sport managers, and what the most effective ways of managing them are. The author encourages the starting of a debate – and we are sure this handbook contributes to this process – about the extent to which sport should draw from existing theories and concepts in the management literature. At one level, this implies that sport is an industrial sector similar to any other and that the generic implications of the established management literature are equally as applicable in the sports setting. Adopting such a viewpoint would clearly be beneficial, as it would allow those with an interest in sport to engage in a process of applying established management theory to sport. However, this rather denies the specificity of sport, most notably the importance of managing in the essential context of uncertainty (of outcome). Given this core characteristic of the sector, some argue that sport requires special attention and is not a vehicle to which one can simply apply management theory that is evolved in other, often less distinctive, settings.

Over the past 10 to 20 years professional sport has been interrogated from various perspectives, with sociologists, historians, lawyers and management theorists leading the charge. On balance they found that sport is both commercially special and culturally unique. The review of these special and unique features of sport by Aaron C.T. Smith and Bob Stewart indicates that (1) the distinctiveness of some of them have been overstated, (2) a number of new and novel features have emerged, while (3) other features have been eroded in line with sport’s relentless corporatization. While it is inappropriate to conclude that the features discussed above demand a specialized form of management practice, the analysis here suggests that sport leagues and competitions still have many idiosyncrasies that demand considered and strategic responses. First, sport is still characterized by fierce, loyal and passionate fans, who experience a strong, vicarious identification with their favourite players and teams. It remains one of the few products to deliver engaging experiences that become part of our collective memory. However, even the most strident sport fans are also motivated by other benefits of the sport product,
including aesthetic appeal, entertainment and social interaction. It is further argued in the chapter that, traditionally, the major difference between business and sport was the importance of profit and return on investment for business, and the preference for winning and on-field success for sport. While it is clear that winning is sovereign in professional sport, there is a growing recognition that revenue and profits, and the resources that money attracts, are the keys to successful performance. Moreover, the evidence suggests that winning is also the fastest route to profitability. This means that it is no longer a case of either or, but of both aims being met through an interdependent managerial strategy that builds a strong platform of quality resources from which to launch a high win–loss ratio.

While the corporatization of sport over recent years may have resolved the dilemma of how to balance profits against performance, no such solution has been secured for the issue of quality in sport. The ambiguous nature of sport quality is exemplified in the ways in which different stakeholders approach it. For example, many club officials and diehard fans view quality primarily in terms of consistent winning, whereas regulators and run-of-the-mill sport followers are more likely to perceive quality in terms of competitive balance and outcome uncertainty. Added to this ambiguity is the complicating fact that the core sport product is now surrounded by services and merchandise that are used to provide a more consistent and multifaceted sport experience. Finally, professional sport is embedded in a fundamental structural and operational paradox which complicates its management at every strategic turn. It arises out of the fact that sport’s commercial progress and subsequent corporatization is a two-edged sword. While, on one hand, it allows sport to tap into new markets by changing its shape and features, on the other hand it fractures all those traditions that made it attractive to fans in the first place.

3 OTHER AIDS TO SEARCH IN THE HANDBOOK

An additional figure which aims to aid the reader when searching for specific content of the handbook is Figure 1.4. It will assist the search for specific sports featured in the chapters. As future research in the field strongly benefits from bridging or comparing different sports settings as well as contextual factors, such as regions or different forms of how sport is organized, we strongly encourage the readers to take the indications mentioned in the chapters merely as a starting point to develop their own research journeys by exploring changes in sport and/or contextual settings.

4 CONCLUSION

This handbook provides a substantial overview of the range of theories and methodologies applied in the five thematic clusters on current frontiers in sport management research. It encourages reflection by established scholars, practitioners, novice researchers and students on the different stages of the research cycle – selecting a topic, research design, data analysis and interpretation – and represents the diversity in approaches as practised by sport management researchers. As with other handbooks aiming to
summarize theory and research in a certain field, this handbook is also more than simply that; it involves careful analysis and rethinking, by ourselves and all chapter contributors, of how a particular area of research is constituted. The following chapters in the handbook therefore not only provide insights into different research topics, theories and methodology, but also different conceptions about the sub-areas of research on the nexus between sport and business by the community of sport management researchers. Our aim in assembling these contributions is not to advocate a single methodology or one particular theoretical approach; rather it is to explore existing practices and alternative paths to advance the understanding of the research field. An outlook and research agenda on sport and business will be provided in the concluding chapter as a further attempt to provide inspiration for future research in the field.

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