

From sport to 'sportainment': The art of creating an added-value brand experience for fans

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André Richelieu has been a university professor for nearly 20 years now and has over 25 years of experience teaching in universities. He specialises in brand management and sport marketing in the context of globalisation. His research relates to: (i) how sport organisations can leverage their brand equity by capitalising on the emotional connection they share with their fans; (ii) how sport organisations and athletes can internationalise their brands; (iii) how cities and countries can leverage their brands abroad through a sport-oriented place branding strategy; and (iv) how effective Sport for Development and Peace (SDP) initiatives are. Besides the numerous journal articles Prof. Richelieu has published, he is the co-author of *Sport Marketing* (in French; De Boeck Publishers, 2011, 2018), *Global Sport Marketing* (in English; Routledge Publishers, 2012), *International Sport Marketing* (in English; Routledge Publishers, 2019) and *Sport Marketing* (in Chinese; Sun Yat-Sen University Press, 2014). Prof. Richelieu has given around 2,000 interviews to the Canadian and international media on sport marketing and sport business. He has lived in and travelled to over 60 countries or territories in the Americas, Europe, Africa and Asia, for both leisure and professional purposes. He speaks five languages. An overview of his work can be found at <http://www.andrerichelieu-sportsmarketing.com/about/biography/>.

Abstract

Sport, by itself, ceased to exist a long time ago. We are now living in the era of 'sportainment', the merger of sport and entertainment. On the one hand, 'sportainment' epitomises a major trend, or process, that is reshaping the boundaries of the industry, which aligns with Schumpeter's 'creative destruction' theory. On the other hand, 'sportainment' is a potential strategic leverage for sport organisations and sport industry stakeholders in order to create an added-value brand experience for fans. Therefore, the objectives of this conceptual article are to articulate the concept of 'sportainment', identify strategic branding implications and present a set of guidelines to managers who work in the sport industry. If 'sportainment' can fit naturally in some cases and contribute to broadening the fan base, as well as deepening customer loyalty, in some others, finding a balance between the product on the field and entertainment can become challenging. In this vein, the article examines the four pillars that can help generate an added-value brand experience via 'sportainment' and how a stakeholder can deliver its brand promise through sport, spectacle and technology.

Keywords

'Sportainment', sport, entertainment, added-value brand experience, customer lifetime value, 'creative destruction', NBA, e-sport

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INTRODUCTION: WHAT IS 'SPORTAINMENT'?

As far as we can remember, entertainment has been an integral part of the world of sport. In Ancient Rome, the Colosseum

and the Circus Maximus were hosting gladiator fights, charioteers' races, executions, animal hunting, theatre plays, etc., with the purpose of entertaining, or distracting, the masses, and this led