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ARTICLE

A Framework for Understanding the Performance of National Governing Bodies of Sport

EMMANUEL BAYLE* & LEIGH ROBINSON**

*University of Bourgogne, France, **Loughborough University, UK

ABSTRACT Although much research exists on the performance of organizations little literature exists that allows understanding of the performance of national governing bodies (NGBs) of sport. The research in this paper aims to facilitate this understanding and presents the results of a programme of research carried out with French NGBs. In the main phase of the research, utilising an adaptation of Lawrence and Lorsch's theoretical framework, case study research was carried out with 11 French NGBs in order to understand their strategy and management practices in relation to their organizational performance. Analysis of these case studies, alongside previous research that has focused on the relationship between strategy/organizational structure and performance, leads to the proposal of a framework through which to explain NGB performance in the field of sport. This framework seeks to accommodate the relationship between strategy, management and operational performance.

Introduction

The notion of organizational performance can be considered from a number of perspectives, such as economic, financial, organizational or social utility perspectives. A review of existing literature shows that any appreciation of organizational performance requires a multi-criteria approach. Most relevant approaches to organizational performance in the sport management literature (Bayle, 2000; Bayle & Madella, 2002; Cheladurai et al., 1987; Frisby, 1986; Koski, 1995; Madella, 1998; Papadimitriou, 1994, 1999; Papadimitriou & Taylor, 2000; Vail, 1986; Wolfe et al., 2002) are based on simple and normalized procedures consisting of the identification of dimensions of performance, such as sport, financial, organizational and social, and within them, a range of criteria or performance indicators for

Correspondence Address: Leigh Robinson, School of Sport and Exercise Sciences, Loughborough University, Loughborough LE11 3TU, UK. Email: l.a.robinson@lboro.ac.uk

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these different dimensions. However, little research in this field has focused on the holistic notion of the performance of organizations. This gap means that it is difficult to understand how organizational elements of national governing bodies (NGBs) act and interact to produce performance. This paper aims to address this gap by proposing a framework that uses a number of strategic and operational factors to explain the performance of French NGBs. In order to do this, a synthesis of the literature on the relationships between strategy, management and organizational performance in sports organizations is presented, followed by an explanation of the research method. From this, a framework for understanding the performance of NGBs is proposed and discussed.

The focus of this paper is on French national governing bodies which make a significant contribution to the not-for-profit voluntary sector in France. French NGBs have access to over 3.5 million volunteers who devote about 300 million hours a year to service, amounting to the equivalent of 160,000 full time jobs (French National Institute of Statistics, 2002). Sport generates 24.6 billion Euros of expenditure, which amounts to 1.7% of GDP (Andreff & Nys, 2001). Consequently, there is massive state intervention in sport, in France, and to help promote the activities of NGBs, the government provides substantial direct and indirect subsidies. Indirect subsidy is primarily through the provision of 1700 technical experts who are civil servants put at the disposal of NGBs by the government, which amounts to indirect subsidy of 75 million Euros. This strong and direct intervention in the running of NGBs makes the French context different from that of many other countries whose governments are traditionally far less interventionist. However, French NGBs exhibit a number of organizational characteristics that are similar to the NGBs of other countries, which affect the way they can operate. This means that research carried out with French NGBs can further understanding of the operations of all such sport organizations. National governing bodies can be considered as 'hybrid' organizations due to four characteristics. First, they have a social orientation that is different from the prioritization or systematic search for profits that characterizes commercial organizations. Second, the personnel of NGBs are made up of paid staff and volunteers, although in the French context some of these are made available by secondment from civil service jobs by the state. NGBs have a mixed economy in terms of their financing and finally these organizations are regulated by both national and international sport systems. NGBs are also 'network' organizations in that they operate via a network of regional structures and clubs. This means that when studying their performance, it is necessary to analyse the role and management of other organizations in the network, as well as the head quarters of the NGB.

A Review of the Literature on Organizational Performance

A review of the existing literature suggests that approaches to organizational performance can be classified in three ways. The first classification can be termed *micro-analytical* because of the focus on actors' behaviours inside

the organizations to be found in this literature. The second body of literature is concerned with the relationships between the environment and the organization, or between the environment and the actor's behaviours and can be characterized as *macro-analytical*. Finally, a large body of literature, primarily in the area of strategy, adopts a systemic analysis of key factors that affect performance, such as the environment, strategy, organizational structure, management systems and organizational culture. This literature can be classified as adopting a *configurational* approach to explaining performance. A review of the literature follows.

Micro-analytical Approach

This approach encompasses a number of diverse themes, such as organizational behaviour, power, conflict and decision-making. The focus of this literature is on individuals within the organization and their effect on sporting organizations. For example, the complexity of management approaches typified by conservatism and strategic and organizational inertia, sclerosis and conflicts noted by Loreit (1989, 2004) and Chifflet (1995, 2005) when analysing French NGBs, can be explained by the presence of three families of actors whose status and interests are different, at times even opposed. These actors are volunteers, technical experts made available by the French state and paid staff. In addition, Welch (1994) showed that paid staff seek the satisfaction of volunteer leaders often to the detriment of effectiveness and efficiency (see Cusckelly *et al.*, 1999).

Micro-level research has also showed the presence of structural conflict situations, specific power coalitions, the emergence of an autocratic and the undemocratic use of power, or inertia (Amis *et al.*, 1995; Chelladurai *et al.*, 1987; Ramanantsona & Baslé, 1989; Thibault *et al.*, 1991). These organizational characteristics have been the source of problems or difficulties faced by the sports organizations, such as slow or poor decision-making, which impact on organizational performance. The relevance of this body of research to understanding the performance of sport organizations is to demonstrate the importance of the centralization of power and the role of political games in non-profit sport organizations. However, although it explains organizational performance using a specific aspect of the organization, it does not offer an explanation of performance from more than one perspective. The limits of these studies have promoted new ways of thinking, which adopt a more systemic, environmental stance and can be considered as a macro-level approach to understanding performance.

Macro-analytical Approach

For Pfeffer and Salancik (1978) organizational performance depends on the organization's capacity to gain and maintain its main resources. In support of this, Horch (1994) carried out a study of 397 volunteer organizations in four different sectors, which shows the importance of the influence of the objectives of the Sport Ministry and the weak influence of volunteer

organizations. Studies of change in Canadian (Slack & Hinings, 1987) and Belgium (Witlock *et al.*, 1996) NGBs showed that as a result of a state planning system, the process of change is better accepted by paid staff than volunteer leaders. Both pieces of research showed that change and performance management methods in NGBs are mainly imposed by external actors, most notably by the Sport Ministry.

The review of literature suggests, however, that there are also limits to these macro analytical perspectives, notably in regard to their direct connection with organizational performance. Consequently, the consideration of literature which links micro and macro analytical approaches is of value when trying to understand the performance of NGBs.

The Configurational Approach

The research classified as configurational has not explicitly attempted to explain organizational performance, but has tried to understand the functioning of the organization. This understanding can then be used to explain performance. Outside of the sports arena, the work of Lawrence and Lorsch (1973) Miller (1988), Mintzberg (1986, 1990) and Rumelt (1974) led to a framework constructed first, of an analysis of the coherence of strategy and structure of an organization, and second, of its effect on organizational performance. Known as the configurational approach, this corresponds to a specific epistemological and methodological approach which seeks to articulate the relationships between internal variables of the organization and those within the environment.

The configurational approach has found favour with sport researchers. The research of Mintzberg (1986, 1990) has been applied to sport organizations by Kikulis *et al.* (1989) who demonstrated that the consequence of the professionalization of Canadian NGBs was the emergence of a professional bureaucracy. Also based on Mintzberg, Theodoraki and Henry (1994), through quantitative research on 34 English NGBs, proposed a taxonomy of mechanical bureaucracies; professional bureaucracies; simple professionalized structure; atypical simple structures; simple bureaucracies; and simple professionalized bureaucracies. This research permits the understanding of change and also the conditions of performance regarding strategic and structural arrangements in NGBs.

The research of Wernicfelt (1984) has underpinned the research of Thibault *et al.* (1993, 1994), who defined a framework of strategies and applied it to 32 Canadian NGBs. From this, they proposed six dimensions which can be considered to be at the origin of the competitive advantage of NGBs. Four dimensions explain the level of attractiveness of programmes and two dimensions explain the competitive position of the organization. Thibault *et al.* (1993, 1994) highlighted four strategic groups of NGBs that they called *refiners, enhancers, explorers* and *innovators*. Institutional variations in the archetypes (Greenwood & Hinings, 1988; Miller & Friessen, 1980) have also been applied to Canadian NGBs. Based on this work, Kikulis *et al.* (1992,

1995) proposed three type forms of organizational change which they termed *kitchen table, boardroom* and *executive office*.

The previous research on volunteer organizations has shown that for organizations such as NGBs, it is difficult to legitimize strategy and organizational arrangements with the research of organizational performance because of political functioning within the internal and external operating context of NGBs. If the configurational approach appears attractive, the perspective used by researchers often proposes a static vision of organizational reality which makes it difficult to connect it with organizational performance. In most cases, research in the sport environment that utilizes the configurational approach uses this approach to explain organization change, rather than organizational performance. In order to address this gap, the research presented in this paper attempts to use a key configurational theory (Lawrence & Lorsch, 1967) to explain organizational performance in NGBs.

Research Method

The operating context affecting French NGBs is characterized by increasing professionalism and customer orientation, diversification of activities, modernization of management and greater accountability and transparency in using public funds (see also Green & Houlihan, 2006). Although the response to these elements has been heterogeneous, it has led to an increased focus on performance within the French sport sector. These characteristics are part of the operating context of NGBs across most western societies and therefore, as suggested before, an understanding of the performance of French NGBs may contribute to an understanding of the NGBs of other countries.

The performance framework to be presented here is based on data collected between 1988 and 2005. The research was carried out in two phases: the first was an exploratory investigation of management practices and tools; and the second was case based research which focused on 11 national governing bodies.

In order to understand NGB performance, an analytical framework, adapted from Lawrence and Lorsch (1967) was employed for the research. This framework was chosen because of its particular abilities to explain organizational performance from a holistic perspective through the study of the differentiation and integration within an organization. The relationship between these two factors is often at the origin of organizational dysfunction and internal and external crisis. It can also have an impact on specific aspects of organizational performance and on the performance potential of NGBs.

Lawrence and Lorsch (1967) have argued that units or departments of organizations are differentiated across four attributes. The first attribute is orientation differences between executives; the second is the time span allocated to actions (short-term/long-term); the third is differences in interpersonal orientations and the fourth is the differentiation between functional units of the organization as set out in the formal organizational structure. Lawrence and Lorsch (1973) have defined integration as "the

quality of collaboration which exists between departments (units) who have to join their efforts to satisfy the exigencies of the environment and organizational strategies to reach the aim" (Lawrence & Lorsch, 1973, p. 33). Integration mechanisms are based on specific management tools, such as plans, mechanisms for control and coordination and specific organizational culture. Their research demonstrated that the more an organization is differentiated, the more difficult it is to reach good integration and that this has an impact on organizational performance. From this it can be argued that the more the environment is varied and uncertain, the more organizations are generally differentiated, leading to an increased need for integration procedures to be drawn up.

The organizational structure of NGBs is functional with lesser or greater differentiation of tasks across three major areas. The first area is *administration*, which includes the administrative arrangements of the NGB and its network. The second area is *sport*, which includes the management of high level teams and sport affairs. The third area is *communication and development* which includes promotion and marketing. The differentiation of the NGBs in this research was defined by the organizational chart that was in place during the period of the research. The formal structure was analysed by horizontal differentiation which was made up of the number of units or departments and committees created inside the organization. Other indicators such as staff costs as a percentage of the budget and the number of administrative staff compared to sport sector staff were also used to analyse differentiation. Vertical differentiation of the formal structure was indicated by the number of hierarchical levels.

Prior to the primary research, environmental changes which may have affected the organizational performance of the NGBs were identified. This was achieved through a documentary analysis of press articles, government reviews and study reports, and also reports from the General Assembly of the boards of a variety of NGBs.

The first phase of the research was a survey carried out to identify the management practices and management tools used in NGBs. The questionnaire was divided in four parts. The first was strategy, which asked questions regarding the operating environment and the formal nature of strategic planning. The second dealt with the organization of activities and governance, such as the span and diversification of activities, the professionalization of the organization (measured by the number of salaried staff and self assessment of management practices) and the composition and role of the executive board. The third part considered relationships with public and private partners, such as the number and type of agreements and their length. The final part dealt with control and evaluation in the organization including strategic and organizational control, the persons or bodies in charge of control and the aspects of performance evaluation. The concepts included in the questionnaire emerged from a review of the performance management literature (Frisby, 1986; Chelladurai *et al.*, 1987; Koski, 1995; Papadimitriou, 1994; Vail, 1986). In 2005, this questionnaire was sent to the 94 NGBs affiliated with the French National Olympic Committee. This had

a 67% response rate (63 answers/94 NGBs). This research repeated a survey carried out in 1996 which had a 57% response rate (40/70 NGBs answers). The comparison between 1996 and 2005 permits an identification of the evolution of management practices.

For the second phase, utilizing the chosen research framework, 11 NGBs case studies were chosen for detailed study. These NGBs were basketball, canoeing, cycling, gymnastics, handball, hiking, judo, orienteering, table tennis, tennis and weightlifting. These case studies were selected on the basis of differences in size, such as the number of paid staff, size of budget, number of participants; whether they were an Olympic or non-Olympic, team or individual sport; and differences in organizational performance across sport results, financial performance and turnover and number of professional staff. Characteristics of the chosen NGBs are presented in Table 1.

These 11 case studies allowed the development of the framework, presented in Figure 1 that aims to facilitate understanding of performance in NGBs. The case study research utilized an embedded, multiple case design (Gatton & Jones, 2004; Yin, 2003, 2004). Approximately 100 interviews with employees, directors, elected volunteers and key stakeholders of the NGBs were carried out. The range of interviewees allowed an understanding of performance from many perspectives. Interview questions were based on the dimensions covered by the Lawrence and Lorsch (1967) framework. The interviewees were semi-structured, and two to four hours long. Respondents were selected as a consequence of the alternative viewpoints they could offer on important events or interpretation of the performance of the NGB, such as NGB directors and the Director of the Sport Ministry. In addition, several weeks were spent observing these NGBs in order to gain an understanding of the running of these organizations including attending General Assemblies and Board of Directors meetings.

In terms of analysis, the interviews were recorded and later transcribed verbatim for analysis. Data from both primary and secondary were analysed according to Miles and Huberman (1991) who argued that qualitative analyses of data should consist of three interlinked sub-processes that occur iteratively before and after data collection. The first sub-process, data reduction, refers to the way in which the "potential universe of data is reduced in an anticipatory way" (p. 224). In this case, data was reduced through the selection of a conceptual framework. Once interviews had been transcribed, primary data, as with the secondary archival data, were subjected to the second of Miles and Huberman's (1991) sub-processes of data analysis—data display. In line with Miles & Huberman (1991) the data were collated and presented as themes. Thus particular phrases, incidents, or words that were seen as indicative of performance vectors or constraints and that explained differentiation/integration equilibrium were categorized as such.

Thus, as with all qualitative research, the analysis was an iterative process, constantly moving back and forth between theory and data. This 'open coding' process facilitated the third of Miles and Huberman's (1991) analytical sub-processes which is the drawing of verifiable conclusions.

Table 1. Characteristics of the selected NGBs

Name	Size	Olympic NGB	Level of performance	Members/clubs	Number of full time employees	Turnover in 2005 (euros)
Tennis	Large	Yes	High	1,000,000 members/9000 clubs	350	200,000,000
Judo	Medium	Yes	Good	550,000 members/ 400 clubs	50	20,000,000
Canoeing	Medium	Yes	Good	40,000 members/800 clubs	30	8,000,000
Handball	Medium		Good	350,000 members/3500 clubs	50	15,000,000
Basketball	Big	Yes	Medium	400,000 members/ 4000 clubs	50	25,000,000
Gymnastics	Medium	Yes	Medium	250,000 members/ 1500	50	20,000,000
Table tennis	Medium	Yes	Medium	200,000 members/1600 clubs	40	15,000,000
Weightlifting	Small	Yes	Poor	10,000 members/700 clubs	10	2,000,000
Hiking	Medium	No	Good	170,000 members/1100 clubs	50	8,000,000
Orienteering	Small	No	Medium	10,000 members/560 clubs	10	2,000,000

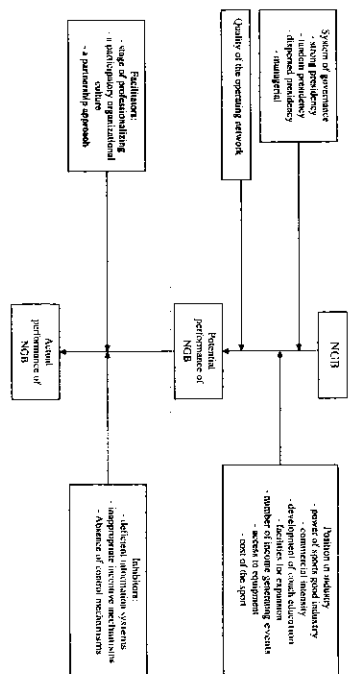


Figure 1. Factors affecting the performance of NGBs

The interrelationships between the data helped facilitate the formation of theoretical conclusions. These conclusions and the themes and issues that emerged formed the empirical findings of the study, which are presented and discussed below.

A Framework for Understanding the Performance of National Governing Bodies of Sport

The results of the above research process allowed the development of a framework that facilitates an understanding of the *strategic performance mix* which affects NGB potential performance. The strategic performance mix is made up of factors that act to determine the possible strategic focus of a NGB. It also allows the identification of the *operational performance mix* that enhances or inhibits the actual performance of NGBs as this mix is made up of factors that impact on the operation of an NGB. An awareness of these mechanisms aids an understanding of the evolution of the integration/differentiation balance discussed earlier and of the key elements which favour performance. Results of this research can be found in Bayle (1999, 2000), Bayle and Bruzek (2005) and Bayle and Madella (2002). What follows is a detailed discussion of the performance framework that emerged from the results through a grounded theory approach to analysis.

The Strategic Performance Mix

It was evident from the research that there are three major strategic principles upon which NGB potential performance depends. These are the system of governance present in the NGB; the quality of the NGB's network in terms of relevant clubs and leagues (integration mechanisms), and

the positioning of the NGB within the industry of its particular sport (a differentiating factor).

The System of Governance

The research showed that the system of governance, most notably the permanence and position of the main unpaid executives (volunteer leaders), are one of the keys to an NGB's success (Lawrence & Lorsch, 1973). The length of time a senior volunteer is in post and the role they carry out in the NGB affects a number of factors such as strategic reactivity and organizational adaptability; the quality of collaboration within the sport and the performance criteria that are finally determined.

Systems of governance are linked to contextual factors, but more importantly, to the profile of the President of the NGB. As noted by Lorez (1989, 2004) and Chifflet (1995, 2005), the President's professional background, personality, charisma and career within the NGB's system are critical in explaining a number of performance related factors. It explains choices made regarding the management methods of the NGB, such as strategic direction, political functioning, relations with volunteers and paid staff, and recruitment policy. These factors also affect the President's position within the operating environment in terms of personal contacts, networking and legitimacy within the NGB's system. Finally, these factors explain the President's desire to control decisions in relation to paid executives, or elected officials (Welch, 1994; Cuskelly *et al.*, 1999).

The analysis of the case studies permitted the definition of four main systems of governing NGBs. The first system of governing identified by the research is the *strong presidency* where the President takes the major decisions affecting the performance of the NGB. In this case the President controls the functioning of the NGB and usually surrounds himself with two close colleagues to implement these decisions, such as the National Technical Director and Director of Administration in the case of gymnastics and hiking. The second system of governing is the *tandem presidency* whereby the authority to take decisions is shared almost equally between the National Technical Director and the President. This was evident in the cases of weightlifting and orienteering.

The third system of governing is the *dispersed presidency* where the President co-ordinates the work of the directors, thus positioning himself in the situation of a General Director. This situation was present in the NGBs for basketball, tennis, cycling, handball and table tennis. Finally, the *managerial system* of governing was found where a National Technical Director or a paid director controls decision-making either formally or informally. This system is characterized by confidence being placed on the paid director by the main elected officials who tacitly accept this authority. This was the case in judo and canoeing.

The strong and tandem presidential systems of governance are characteristic of NGBs whose administrative structure is still modest with generally less than 20 paid administrative staff at the NGB headquarters and an

inactive Board of Directors. The dispersed governance and managerial systems were found in more complex systems with over 50 paid staff. Thus, it appears possible to argue that there is a cycle of the evolution of these four types of governance. Further examination of these systems of governance shows that these are rarely expressed in pure forms, and that they are also subject to evolution and degeneration. Nevertheless, they constitute a fundamental component of the strategic and organizational behaviour of the NGBs and thus affect performance (Lawrence & Lorsch, 1973; Miller, 1988; Mintzberg, 1986, 1990; Runnell, 1974).

The Quality of the Operating Network

One of the main roles of a NGB is to create solidarity between the units which make up its sports system as the sport system itself is inherently competitive, with clubs competing for members and resources. Thus an NGB needs to work with regional and area structures to ensure that these do not compete among themselves and undermine service delivery. This solidarity, an integration mechanism, must be forged between the NGB and its International Federation, its regional structures and its club and league structures. The term *quality of the operating network* should be understood as the quality of the relationship among actors within the NGB's sport environment, in terms of reactivity, reliability and the solidity of the links that create the relevant sport system. The research shows that two strategies are used to improve the quality of the operating network. The first of these is the use of service level agreements established with organizations in the network. The second is through the certification of quality for the clubs and leagues that provide the sport to members or participants.

The case studies reveal the necessity, if the NGB's role in its network is to be maintained, of ensuring that the NGB is aware of, and has some control over local sports club activities. This ensures that NGB policy is delivered at the local level, but also allows the verification of the quality of the service supplied within the club and thus the capacity to maintain and grow the number of club members. Strategies to create a quality certification system, usually through licensing, that have been developed by some NGBs aim to improve and control the quality of services offered to those participating in the sport. The bodies affiliated with the NGB are awarded quality management certification if they satisfy a list of conditions developed by the NGB, which are usually specific to their sport.

The sailing, rowing, canoe and water-skiing NGBs have such a system, although with considerable heterogeneity in the criteria used (Pigeassou & Chaze, 1999). In return for the investment and commitment to quality made by the network bodies, the NGBs offer various types of technical support, such as promotional material and financial support. The quality management certification acts as a guarantee of a reliable organization and can be an accelerator of promotional activity, a vector of external communication, and a stabilizing element within managerial behaviour. The quality certification, an integration tool, leads to an improved operating network

as it creates the emergence of a system that is close to that of franchising, which unifies and favours the development of the sport based on a more qualitative, uniform approach.

The Position of the NGB System within the Industry of its Particular Sport

The NGBs under study occupy varying positions within the industry of their particular sport. This is a differentiation attribute, and should be understood in a broad sense in that it means the economic wealth created within a specific sport's sector (football, tennis) by, for example, equipment manufacturers, professional structures of the sport, the sport's reputation and organized sports events. The actors at the origin of this economic wealth can be public actors (central and local government), commercial (television, manufacturers of sports goods and equipment and service companies for the sport) and voluntary (the clubs, the NGB itself).

A synthesis of research into NGB strategy (notably by Thibault *et al.*, 1993, 1994) plus the qualitative analyses carried out in this research suggests that there are seven factors that determine the size of the industry of a sport and a NGB's positioning within it. The first of these is the power of the sports goods industry analysed by turnover, which has a significant impact on the economic potential of a sport. The commercial intensity surrounding the sport is also a factor, and this may vary according to factors such as the season, the sport's attraction to sport tourists and its potential for leisure activity. These are factors that determine the potential attractiveness of the sport. Third is the extent of the development of the coach education system, which determines the capacity for delivering services in clubs.

The facilities available for expanding the sport (municipal, school, club or commercial) determines the potential of how much opportunity is available, such as the capacity of clubs in terms of members, and thus the intensity of the competition that the NGB faces. The fifth factor affecting the size of the industry is the number of events that can be commercialized, such as its potential for events. The quantity and accessibility of the equipment necessary for this sport is a factor, as is the cost of participating in the sport.

These seven factors determine a combination of strategic resources that favour the organizations concerned to varying degrees, and which explain the NGB's position within the sport's economic industry. For example, the tennis federation raises significant income due to a central position in the industry created by the fact that the federation organizes and controls the Roland Garros tennis venue. This creates approximately 160 million euros in cash and 70 million euros in benefits, which has a direct impact on what it is possible for the NGB to do—its potential performance. The more a NGB appears central within the industry of its particular sport, the more its system can benefit from the financial impact of this. A central position helps with the development of coaching activities for elite athletes, the implementation of services for its members and more globally, engagement in diversification projects. Its position will also determine the interest of both public and private partners and thus its capacity to obtain resources (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978).

The research suggests that there are two key factors for determining the position of a NGB within its industry. The first of these is that the NGB needs to benefit directly from any revenue that is raised by staging events. This often constitutes the major revenue stream for those NGBs that have control of their leagues and events. Second, the extent to which the NGB benefits directly from leisure participation affects its position in the industry. For example, it is clear that sports such as cycling and swimming cannot control, or benefit from, leisure participation whereas the temporary memberships made available to the leisure market for sailing and golf places these NGBs in a central position in their industry.

The three principles presented above create a potential for performance by impacting on the differentiation and integration equilibrium of each NGB. Actual performance is, however, determined by the operating factors identified and discussed in the following section.

The Operational Performance Mix

The research revealed that the actual performance of the NGBs is dependent on a number of specific characteristics, some of which facilitate performance, while others inhibit it.

Factors Facilitating Operational Performance

Within NGBs, there are three main factors that facilitate organizational performance. These are the forms and levels of professionalization of the NGB, the presence of a participatory organizational culture and the adoption of a partnership approach to delivery.

Forms and levels of professionalization. The delegation of management to paid and unpaid staff facilitates the progression and implementation of projects. It requires, however, a number of differentiating structures, such as a clear division of work, with associated responsibilities and well structured accountability and reporting systems between unpaid and paid staff, and between Board of Directors and executive managers. The legitimacy of paid staff becomes apparent when the competencies they offer are essential for the development or functioning of the NGB, in particular when they have skills that are not present among the elected executives. In this way, they have a direct impact on the performance of NGBs.

The research provided evidence of four stages in the professionalization of the NGBs under study.

- Stage 1: *The first restructuring.* This stage, evident in weightlifting and orienteering, is characterized by initial recruitment in the areas of secretarial staff, accountants and those in charge of the administrative handling of memberships. Strategic functioning is determined by elected officials, with sports policy defined together with the technical experts made available by the state. This first stage is characterized by a low level

of delegation to paid administrative staff and by a balance of power that is favourable to volunteers or the technical experts made available by the state when compared to the power of the paid administrative staff. Paid staff number between 5 and 10 and often the National Technical Director runs the NGB in a manner similar to that of a CEO. Specific tasks that cannot be carried out by volunteers and paid staff are sometimes externalized to specialist service providers, such as communication and marketing agencies, law and accountancy consultancies.

● *Stage 2: Functional specialization.* This stage of professionalism found in table tennis and canoeing is characterized by the recruitment of paid or volunteer specialists in communication, law, information technology, and the recruitment of paid technical experts. In this second stage the paid administrative staff and the specialists become important advisors to the elected officials. It marks the first technical delegation of management and can bring with it a separation between the sports delivery and administration sections of the NGB. Paid staff number between 15 and 40 and an Administrative Manager or Director is usually in post, although the National Technical Director may still assume overall coordination of the NGB. The arrival of specialist managers makes relationships with elected officials, previously responsible for these tasks, more complex. The President or the dominant actor has a key role in managing compromises of power that are necessary between the paid director(s) and main elected officials.

● *Stage 3: The co-ordinators.* This stage of professionalism was found in the NGBs of handball, gymnastics, judo, cycling, basketball and hiking. This is characterized by the recruitment of project managers at a headquarters level, an increase in the level of support staff, and the hiring of marketing experts and management and coordination staff. Recruitment of paid staff is also apparent that the level of the leagues, with administrative and technical posts being part financed by the NGB. The ratio of power between unpaid and paid staff now favours the paid staff, to the point where elected officials may feel dispossessed of the NGB's management and decision-making process. This stage is one of changes, balances and compromises of power between unpaid staff, technical experts and paid staff. The number of paid administrative staff in the NGB is over 40 the NGB has several departmental directors, and sometimes a Chief Executive Officer may be in post. The role of volunteer administrators is generally more focused on strategic management and control and less on operational tasks which have been delegated to paid staff.

● *Stage 4: Professionalization has evolved throughout within the NGB's network.* Found in the tennis NGB, the differentiated structure continues to increase with the appearance of Departmental Heads and Directors and a corresponding increase in the levels of support staff. Professionalization is beginning to take place throughout the NGB's operating system, with the presence of paid coaching staff occurring in clubs. It often signifies independence of the NGB from the Ministry of Sport, which is often indicated by the appointment of a National Technical Director exclusively

paid by the NGB. The number of paid staff at the NGB's headquarters is now above 100, the leagues have between 5 and 10 paid employees and the regional bodies begin to structure themselves around some paid, non-management staff and coaching specialists.

The presence of a participatory organizational culture. Managing NGBs during a period of growth is often characterized by a participative system of management, based on involvement and personal commitment, where the feeling of belonging to, and identifying with, the organizational goals becomes strong among unpaid executives and paid staff. This leads to the emergence of a *participatory culture* where all stakeholders are involved, or feel they are involved closely in the operation of the NGB and have some responsibility for performance. The evolution towards participative management has developed in a number of NGBs, but the mechanisms have been developed more greatly by tennis by encouraging the participation of all management executives in the board, the implementation of an incentive system for the staff and high levels of remuneration for managers.

The impact of a participatory culture on performance is explained by the intensity of work and time devoted to the NGB. The feeling of belonging to a *family* can explain the actors' investment in a system that they contribute towards creating. Previous research has found that 73% of Presidents of NGBs give more than 21 hours per week to the NGB, and 30% more than 41 hours per week. Thirty-six per cent of General Secretaries give more than 21 hours per week and 22% of Treasurers give more than 21 hours (Bayle & Bruzek, 2005). This clearly has a positive impact on the quantity of work that can be delivered by volunteers, thus affecting actual performance.

Adopting a partnership approach. The approach adopted by many NGBs to providing satisfaction to stakeholders is often reactive. In order to overcome this, and for there to be a greater positive impact on performance, NGBs often need to adopt a strategy of multiple partnerships which make it possible to establish a framework for achieving performance and favours the acquisition of knowledge. For a NGB, formal partnerships need to operate on several levels, all closely inter-linked:

- vertical partnerships with clubs and leagues;
- horizontal partnership with other NGBs with whom strategic and financial synergies for development appear possible;
- systemic partnerships with the French National Olympic Committee, the Ministry of Sports or other ministries, and with sponsors and private partners.

NGBs can derive benefits from formal, horizontal partnerships with other NGBs if they have interests in common. This is often the case for sports that use the same natural environment, such as water, the same sites or equipment, such as sport pitches, or that use the same equipment supplier. Even if they are competing bodies, it is in the interest of NGBs to act as

partners in order to strengthen their negotiating power or their lobbying, for example, among local authorities. It will also improve their ability to achieve joint projects or initiatives, such as the staging of multi-sport events. Partnerships have a favourable impact on the performance of NGBs in that they often lead to synergies in service provision, decreases in costs, and a general improvement in relationships and subsequent service delivery, in the operating context.

Factors that Inhibit Performance

There are four inhibitors to integrative management and thus optimal performance, which were identified by the research. These are a lack of, or deficient information systems, inappropriate incentive mechanisms, deficient or absent control mechanisms and political sclerosis present in the NGB system.

Deficient information systems. The research shows that the NGBs under study, even the more developed NGBs, have poor knowledge of their market and its evolution. Reflecting the findings of Bayle and Bruzek (2003), analysis of the case studies showed market and competition research is rare, inhibiting performance as NGBs may fail to take advantage of opportunities open to them, or avoid threats facing them. This situation poses a problem, since the failure to identify pertinent external variables constitutes a threat to the organization where the gap that forms between it and its environment can provoke a crisis of adaptation.

Inappropriate incentive mechanisms. The specific nature of the voluntary world is characterized by complex and diverse financial and non-financial incentive mechanisms which are used to motivate those working for such organizations. Methods of incentives differ greatly according to whether the actors involved are paid, or unpaid, but usually the attention paid to financial incentive mechanisms should be less than one might expect in sectors where all staff are paid. Where emphasis is on financial incentives, performance is often inhibited as unpaid staff will not be motivated by such a method.

In fact, the research shows that incentive mechanisms only need to be essentially financial for paid staff when their system of values appears not to strongly reflect the values of the sport concerned, or when a participatory organizational culture is low or diffuse. The need to motivate by monetary payment may create conflict between paid staff and the non profit orientated strategy and values of the NGB leading to poorer performance.

In terms of unpaid staff, incentive mechanisms need to reinforce the reasons why people choose to be involved with the NGB. In judo, the strong culture of serving clearly affirmed values that are *a priori* shared by the judo family as an incentive mechanism. In tennis, political unity is important; in hiking, it is the major involvement of the executives on the management team in strategic decisions. Social recognition is essential for the Board of Directors in basketball and gymnastics. These are all incentive mechanisms

that are appropriate and particular to each NGB. It is the appropriate and particular nature of incentive mechanisms that is important otherwise staff will either leave the NGB, or perform less effectively. Both of these responses will have a direct impact on the actual performance of the NGB.

Absence of control mechanisms. Organizational control generally operates at three levels: operational control, management control and strategic control. However, organizational control appears to be taboo in the associative sector where the desire to control and evaluate the work of the unpaid executives in an objective way can sometimes be taken negatively given the volunteer elected democratic legitimacy.

The lack of a precise analysis of tasks, the poor organization of functions and information systems and unclear working regulations and control mechanisms in the NGBs studied leads to the conclusion that a high degree of autonomy is left to non executive staff. The control system, even when it exists, can thus be lacking in terms of motivation to use it and its legitimacy in the eyes of the staff. Unclear objectives and lack of clarity in the use of the NGB's resources tends to favour objectives in qualitative or ideological terms, which also make it difficult to measure operations. A consequence of this is that it is possible to maintain a strong culture of unspoken issues and of ambiguity that is often a guarantee of political stability (Chifflet, 1995, 2005; Loret, 1989, 2004). This directly inhibits the effective performance of NGBs.

Political sclerosis. The research showed that political sclerosis operates at two levels in NGBs. First, conflict can exist between the bodies in the NGB system and between members of the Board and paid management staff (Amis *et al.*, 1995; Chelladurai *et al.*, 1987; Ramamanusa & Baslé, 1989; Thibault *et al.*, 1991). Deficiencies and dysfunction in the NGBs' electoral systems (differentiating mechanism) explain the inertia and the absence of democratization that was evident in a number of NGBs. The NGBs' elected directors who usually represent their league tend to defend the interest of the structure from which they come, sometimes even against the interests of the NGB, clearly inhibiting performance. A manipulation of the electoral systems makes it possible to ensure that mandates are renewed without any real democratic debate and also explains, in certain cases, the discouragement of unpaid staff. More globally, dissociation of personal and general interests within the NGB system appears to be particularly difficult to achieve, suggesting that this factor should always be taken into account when trying to understand the performance of NGBs.

Conclusion

The research reported in this paper allows the proposal of a framework of performance which is based on the strategic performance mix and operational performance mix which are at the origin of the differentiation/integration balance of NGBs. In terms of the case studies presented above, the framework provides a number of explanations for NGB performance.

For example, the strong performance of canoeing can be explained by the position of the NGB in its sport system and a high level of professionalization. However, the NGB's network quality is not good enough primarily due to heterogeneity in area and regional committees, which means the NGB has failed to develop its potential in the leisure canoeing market. The development of basketball is limited by a dispersed presidency system and political sclerosis in the system leading to difficulties in professionalization and service delivery. Finally, although cycling has a high quality network and a strong economic channel, the federation is not in the centre of its channel, which means it has lost opportunities to increase revenue and membership.

This framework allows a clearer understanding of the performance of NGBs as it first, suggests that potential performance may differ from actual performance, and secondly, that actual performance will be affected to a greater or lesser degree by a number of factors and mechanisms in the NGB context. Although the framework will not always fully explain why some NGBs achieve more, or less, than others, it does improve understanding of how NGB performance emerges and identifies factors that have to be considered when accounting for performance.

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ARTICLE

Sport Commitment, Participation Frequency and Purchase Intention Segmentation based on Age, Gender, Income and Skill Level with US Tennis Participants

JONATHAN CASPER

North Carolina State University, USA

ABSTRACT The purpose of this study was to examine how demographic market segments differ based on three constructs: commitment to the sport, participation frequency and purchase intention. Data were gathered via a web-based questionnaire from community tennis association members ($N = 537$). Significant differences were found with sport commitment based on age; participation frequency significantly differed based on ability level; purchase intention significantly differed based on income and ability level. Theoretical implications are discussed and practical implications are forwarded.

Introduction

As sport participation opportunities expand, the competition between individual sport industries for consumer spending and continued participation increases. For example, expenditures on sporting goods for participatory sports in the US exceeded \$45 billion dollars in 2003 (Sporting Goods Manufacturers Association: SGMA, 2004), yet many traditional participatory sports, such as tennis with 83 million global participants (Sport Marketing Surveys, 2005), have not seen increases in consumer spending and participation frequency over the past four years (Tennis Industry Association: TIA, 2005). This decrease in spending can be attributed from

Correspondence Address: Jonathan Casper, Box 8004, 4012E Biltmore Hall, Parks, Recreation and Tourism Mgt., North Carolina State University, Raleigh, NC 27695-8004, USA. Email: jonathan_casper@ncsu.edu

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For example, the strong performance of canoeing can be explained by the position of the NGB in its sport system and a high level of professionalization. However, the NGB's network quality is not good enough primarily due to heterogeneity in area and regional committees, which means the NGB has failed to develop its potential in the leisure canoeing market. The development of basketball is limited by a dispersed presidency system and political sclerosis in the system leading to difficulties in professionalization and service delivery. Finally, although cycling has a high quality network and a strong economic channel, the federation is not in the centre of its channel, which means it has lost opportunities to increase revenue and membership.

This framework allows a clearer understanding of the performance of NGBs as it first, suggests that potential performance may differ from actual performance, and secondly, that actual performance will be affected to a greater or lesser degree by a number of factors and mechanisms in the NGB context. Although the framework will not always fully explain why some NGBs achieve more, or less, than others, it does improve understanding of how NGB performance emerges and identifies factors that have to be considered when accounting for performance.

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