

# Sport Marketing Quarterly: A Journal Designed for the Business of Marketing Sport

Dallas Branch

## "Where have you gone Joe DiMaggio?"

Since the birth of sport management programs in the 1970s, large numbers of the original faculty members have retired or moved onto other fields. Since the founding of the North American Society of Sport Management (NASSM) and the launch of the first dedicated sport management professional publication, the *Journal of Sport Management (JSM)*, sport management and/or administration has seen vast changes in the nature and context of this specialized business-management and marketing-related field. Some may posit that these changes have been for the better, as physical education programs have received a much-needed FTE (full-time equivalent) shot in the arm,

keep them close to their passion—sport. The sad truth, however, is that with nearly 200 programs averaging over 100 students each, the vast majority of hopefuls will never make it "to the show." While we may have indeed "saved" (for the moment) the dying (some say it is already dead) discipline of physical education, we have made the most classic of marketing *faux pas* and, in the process, violated the most basic of all marketing principles—promising something to these young people that we have little chance, and in some cases intention, of delivering. We have nobody to blame for this but ourselves.

One may ask what this indictment of our discipline has to do with publishing in the field of sport management in general and with *SMQ* in

sport. There was no interest on the part of the editor, the associate editor, or the Editorial Board to redefine the field of sport marketing. The journal's intent was to strengthen sport and to develop the body of knowledge in this field. Sport mar-

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with tens of thousands of undergraduate and graduate students around the world desperate to find an opportunity that will forever

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particular. Quite simply, we have permitted and even demanded that our basic sport business-related discipline be fundamentally transformed into an array of disciplines barely recognizable to the professional sport manager and marketer—academician and practitioner. *SMQ* started its journey with this basic mission and "program concept" in mind—to serve the need of the professional in the business of marketing

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Others have attempted to redefine sport marketing into what they wish it to be. It is unfortunate that the discipline has moved away from its original discipline cores—business management and marketing. It is also unfortunate that the field is still replete with a faculty retooled from the physical education and recreation disciplines. With the retooling of careers came the opportunity to redefine the discipline. As a result, the core discipline is no longer recognizable as business management and marketing. Today, it is something akin to an in-bred montage of the aforementioned fringe disciplines, mated with those other "closely related" disciplines of exercise physiology, kinesiology, and tourism. The question is not where we are going, but

rather how far we plan to drift from the business of sport marketing.

### Keeping the Faith

The first issue of *SMQ* was published in the third quarter (September) 1992. This meager issue consisted of five articles culled from the five submitted original manuscripts, an acceptance rate of 100%. These articles were good—very good, whether the Editorial Board liked them or not. As this was the first issue of the first journal of its kind in the world, it was felt that critics and supporters alike would ever notice the difference. The mission of this journal was a simple one:

*The Sport Marketing Quarterly was conceived to provide a publishing outlet for the dissemination of sport marketing information. The publishing concept is unique for profes-*

*sional in the private sector as well as academicians. These two important professional marketing constituencies now have an opportunity to develop a relationship that is intended to be mutually beneficial. For sport marketers, the *SMQ* provides a vehicle to share mar-*

Through its early years, the journal remained true to its mission. It was never conceived “to be all things to all people” and it was not published to include or incorporate the multi-faceted sport management and marketing mosaic we “enjoy” today. It was designed for those in the business of marketing sport—pure and

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**To wit, subscriber survey results reported in 1993 indicated that *SMQ* was read by professional practitioners (34%) and academicians (44%), males (72%) and females (28%), and was translated and read in 15 different countries worldwide.**

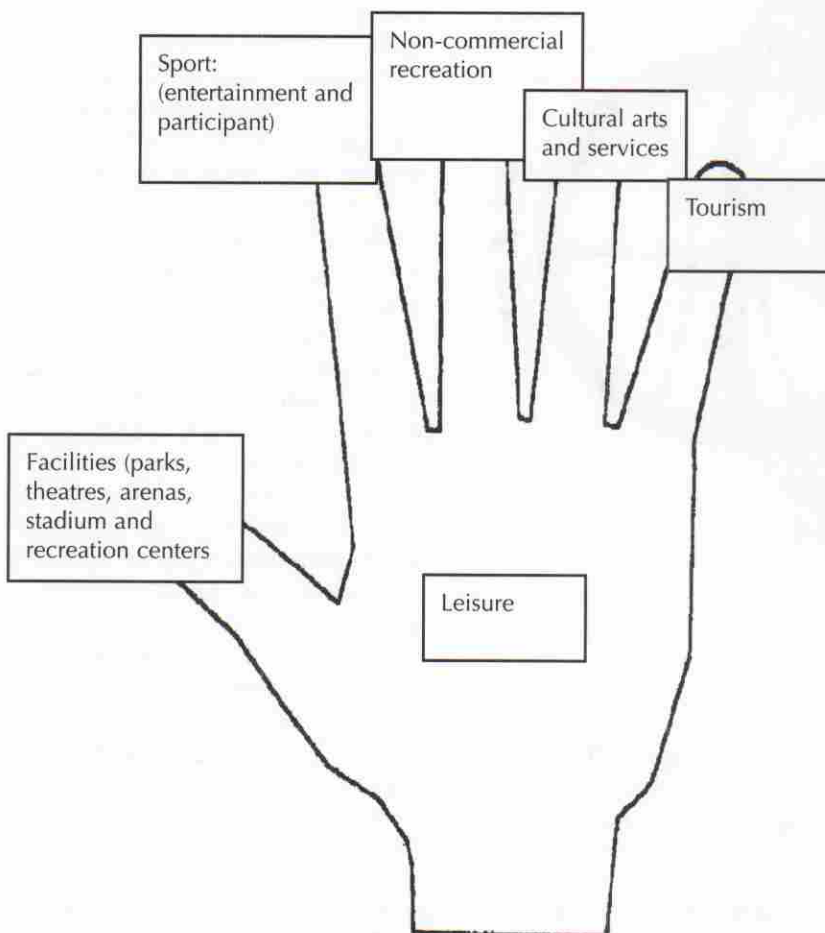
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*keting successes with peers. For academicians, the *SMQ* provides an opportunity to work closely with the practicing sport marketer in developing a mutually beneficial professional relationship. (“Mission Statement,” 1993, p. i)*

simple. Some may take issue with this narrow focus. If so, it is not due to the dishonor or unfaithfulness we brought to our mission—quite the contrary. Criticism may focus on our unwillingness to become a journal that included disciplines with which the professional sport marketer shares nothing. The editorial staff of *SMQ* never once gave any consideration to including the “five-fingers of the leisure/recreation/sport management model” offered by Neal (1999). Instead, we intentionally focused on intercollegiate sport, and professional sport (major and minor), as well sport-related business.

In short, *SMQ* enjoyed early success because it did what it set out to do—it was true to its stated purpose, its readership, and the core disciplines of sport management and marketing. To wit, subscriber survey results reported in 1993 indicated that *SMQ* was read by professional practitioners (34%) and academicians (44%), males (72%) and females (28%), and was translated and read in 15 different countries worldwide. In addition, 90% of the respondents indicated that marketing information in *SMQ* was relevant, 57% of the readers enjoyed most the variety and diversity of articles, and 72% of the readers were interested in writing an article for publication in *SMQ* (Branch, 1993).

This new journal offered some interesting and unique segments, including the “Conference Calen-



**Figure 1.**  
*Neals “Five Finger Model of Recreation Management.”*



dar", the "SMQ **PRO**file" featuring a prominent sport marketing professional practitioner, "Research Highlights", "**PRO**pinion", "Book Review", "Conference Program", and "Letters to the Editor". The survey also indicated readership wanted to add additional segment entries including "Job Opportunities", "Current Issues in Sport Marketing", and "Marketing Trends." All in all, the editorial team was very pleased with how effectively we hit the mark in meeting identified needs of the journal's readership early on.

### David vs. Goliath

The journal's creator and first editor designed the original logo that adorned the cover of *SMQ*. After

to discontinue the use of the *SMQ* logo, designed as four interlocking rings illustrating Philip Kotlar's "4 Ps" (Product, Price, Promotion, Place) marketing construct (see Figure 2). Instead of fighting the order, as encouraged by the journal's editor, the president of FIT acquiesced and a new logo had to be designed and placed into emergency service for the fourth issue (second quarter 1993). The editor saw taking on the USOC over the logo "issue" as a means to promote *SMQ* and bring attention to the fact that if the USOC was reading and paying attention to what we were doing, maybe others should as well. As indicated in Figure 3, the new logo had much less appeal and was totally incoherent with the inte-

Virginia University requested his service to assume a unique position as a Resident Faculty Leader (RFL), requiring him to live and work with freshmen students in the residence halls. The "Operation Jump-Start" program, based upon the Oxford, England model of having "head masters" live and work with students, has since received international acclaim as the first program of its kind at a large, public university in the U.S. Thus, editorship of *SMQ* was passed to Drs. William Sutton, University of Massachusetts (Amherst), and Steve Hardy, University of New Hampshire, after the third quarter publication in September 1995.

### To Thine Own Self Be True

The flap over what sport management and/or marketing is, means, or what it should be goes back to its very foundation of our discipline. One may recall the contention surrounding the establishment of the North American Society of Sport Management (NASSM) in the first place. This author will never forget the argument that took place between the Canadian and American contingents on the very subject of what the nature of this discipline should be at the first NASSM conference at the University of Illinois (Champaign) in June 1988. The Canadian representatives argued for a very research-focused discipline based on "theoretical" constructs, and the American representatives argued just as strongly for more "practical" underpinnings. To some extent, this argument is still unresolved and is still being waged today among sport management/administration faculty representing these two "camps". We have merely found a convenient way to coexist. Yet, our professional association still largely ignores the very sport industry we are pledged to service, as professional practitioners from our



**Figure 2.**  
*Original SMQ logo.*

publication of the journal's third issue in the first quarter of 1993, the president of Fitness Information Technology, Inc. (FIT), publisher of *SMQ*, received a certified letter from an attorney representing the United States Olympic Committee (USOC). This missive contained an immediate "cease and desist" order

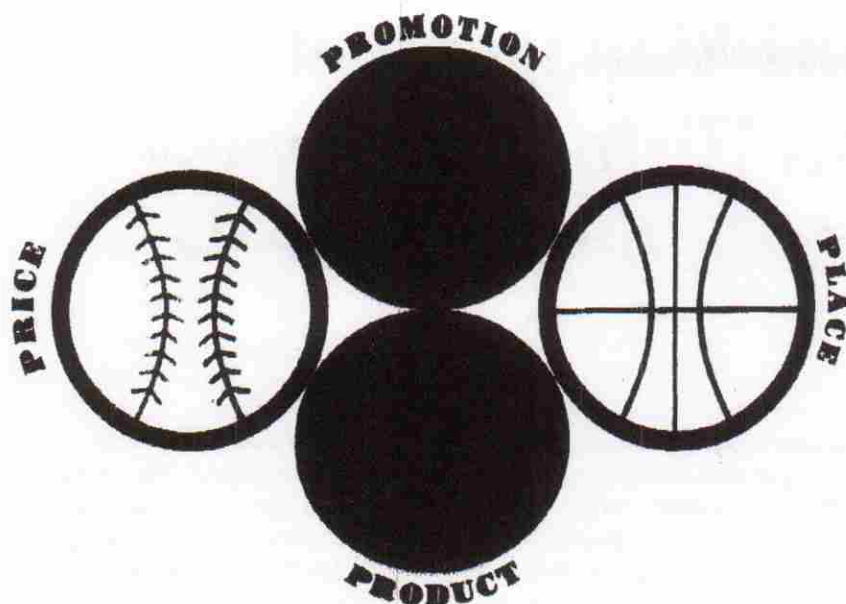
grated and interdependent conceptualization of the 4 Ps.

The original editor served in this capacity until the president of West

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**We are guilty of violating the most sacred of all marketing tenets—nurturing the very industry customers we serve.**

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**Figure 3.**  
*Revised SMQ Logo After USOC Reprimand.*

field continue to be uninvited guests come conference time. We are guilty of violating the most sacred of all marketing tenets—nurturing the very industry customers we serve.

This “theory vs. practice” debate

physiology onto our collective plate. In essence, we can’t decide what it is we want to be or do: our reason for being. This presents the real problem of a disjointed, diversified beyond recognition, and totally incoherent

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is symbolic of a much greater issue that threatens our discipline’s future. We have yet to collectively agree on what this discipline is and is not. The field of sport marketing has become as wide as it is long. We have diversified the core marketing and management discipline to the point where we can’t even decide among ourselves what should be included within a body of knowledge. If we can’t agree on what should be included as a context to study, how in the world can we expect to know how and when we have expanded the “body of knowledge” in the field of sport marketing? Instead, today we must rephrase the question as, “How many bodies of knowledge do we want to expand?” In addition to sport marketing and management, we have heaped recreation, tourism, arts and entertainment, fitness, and

“program concept” or “product position” for our discipline.

Drs. Mullin, Hardy, and Sutton (1993) may have stated it best in their seminal *Sport Marketing* text on why our inability to clearly articulate our position presents our discipline with such a potential problem:

*Certainly each segment of the sport industry does currently operate independently and with minimal sharing of managerial practice. However, if standardized management and marketing practice is ever to come to the sport industry, then the industry segments need to be treated as a homogeneous entity. (p. 6)*

This author would certainly agree that as we move forward, the most important single issue for the disci-

pline of sport management and marketing is to define our discipline in a more homogenous manner. Unfortunately, this effort will be very difficult, as programs abound internationally that are still finding their way in the alphabet soup we have prepared at the sport management and marketing table. Yes, we have saved, for the moment, the basic “house” in which most of us were born—that of physical education. However, with more and more programs increasingly cohabitating and collaborating with schools of business, the mixed message we continue to send to the world of sport only exacerbates the confusion we have created for the industry we serve. Our discipline can’t afford to allow some of us to continue to get it wrong for the rest of us. There is an old saying, “If you don’t define yourself, others will do it for you.” For certain, we must be clear what we, as a discipline, are trying to be. If not, the sport marketplace will ultimately decide for us.

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