

Effect of Commercialization on Sporting Events and Influence of Media

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Abstract – The commercialization of sport is not a cultural universal, but a product of unique technical, social, and economic circumstances. The commercialization of sport is that aspect of the sports enterprise, that involves the sale, display, or use of sport or some aspect of sport so as to produce income. Professional sports, a big business that has grown rapidly over the last three decades. The commercialization of sport has evolved over decades, from the 1950's advertisements of athletes pitching shaving cream to the multi-million dollar shoe endorsement deals of today. Influences of Mass Media in Sport when communication is spread not just between two individuals but rather between tens of millions of people. Sports have exploded across the globe in every aspect to the game. While there are probably more positive than negative impacts of commercialization in sports, there are still some negatives worth mentioning. It is argued that commercialized sports, when used to display social status, effectively divides society. The author mentions that commercialization changes the ways that sports are controlled.

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HISTORY

The commercialization of sport is not a cultural universal, but a product of unique technical, social, and economic circumstances. Sports in the colonial United States were usually unstructured, spontaneous activities that the participants initiated, coordinated and managed only in the latter part of the 19th century.

However, by the 1920s, women began to take an interest in both watching sports and participating in sports. Although the commercialization of sports slowed during the Great Depression and World War II, by the early 1950s it had solidly established itself as feature of modern Western culture.

THE COMMERCIALIZATION OF SPORT

The commercialization of sports is that aspect of the sports enterprise that involves the sale, display, or use of sport or some aspect of sport so as to produce income. Some experts prefer the term "commodification of sport" as a label for the same process. Interest in the commercialization of sport has existed for several decades, but only in recent years it has the phenomenon which has been taken seriously on a larger scale. The first attention came from a small group of critical, mostly leftist writers, who have now been joined by people from all political and social perspectives.

PROFESSIONAL SPORTS

Professional sports, a big business that has grown rapidly over the last three decades, may be the essence of commercialization, its influence persistent throughout. Athletes, support personnel (managers, coaches, officials, media persons, lawyers, and agents), and sports team owners benefit handsomely from the willingness of sports fans, to pay to watch their favorite sports, and to purchase the commodities endorsed by sports personalities. Hundreds of professional athletes earn over million a year.

OLYMPIC GAMES

The ideal of the modern Olympic Games stands in harsh opposition to the commercialism of sports. However, many commentators have argued that this idealism has been compromised to the point that the Olympics are currently the essence of commercialism. In the early part of the 20th century 98 percent of the Games, amateur competitors made no money from their participation. In contrast, today's Olympic athletes are far from amateurs. The International Olympic Committee recognized the inevitable creep of commercialism and professionalism, and instead of requiring participants to be amateurs they merely ask that participants have an "amateur spirit."

INTERCOLLEGIATE SPORTS

Sports at the university and college level, many argue, are big-time entertainment businesses, not collections of students striving merely to achieve physical, mental, and moral health. Over the past 140 years, student control has been replaced, and the commercial aspect of the activities has grown immensely.

GAMBLING

A rise in gambling on sporting events has been an indirect consequence of these phenomena. Great Britain and Las Vegas permit some legal gambling. However, it is likely that more money is betted on sports illegally. According to McPherson, Americans lose an estimated \$200 million on sports bets annually. The link between sports and gambling is complex. For example, the profits from legalized gambling are often used to build sports facilities and to operate many youth sports programs.

HOW ADVERTISING IMPACTS THE PURITY OF SPORTS

The commercialization of sport has evolved over decades, from the 1950's advertisements of athletes pitching shaving cream to the multi-million dollar shoe endorsement deals of today. Much like other aspects of capitalism, when a profit is to be gained by promoting a consumer product, sport is not exempt from commercialization. However, even when adjustments for inflation are figured, the astonishingly lucrative field of sport commercialization has become a staple of product promotion and corporate gains.

EFFECT OF MEDIA ON SPORTS

Influences of Mass Media in Sport when communication is spread not just between two individuals but rather between tens of millions of people it is known as mass media. Mass media is known as the central nervous system of society. "Mass media has many different purposes, such as providing information, entertaining, persuading and also by carrying a vague general function of culture to millions of people.

COMMERCIALIZATION AND MEDIA IN SPORTS

Sports have exploded across the globe in every aspect to the game. While there are probably more positive than negative impacts of commercialization in sports, there are still some negatives worth mentioning. Personally, the biggest negative aspect of commercialization is the craziness of advertising in sports. Racing is the biggest; you can barely tell the color of some of the cars because of all the decals on

the cars. It is believed that advertising and sponsors are necessary, but it gets carried away in some instances. The author mentions that commercialization changes the ways that sports are controlled. When sports depend on the revenues they generate, the control center in sport organizations shifts away from the athletes and toward those who have the resources to produce and promote sports. Players have started to learn that they must answer to the sponsor first.

EXPENSIVE AND SCANDAL-RIDDEN

The three Olympic medals and the recent world billiards championship won by Pankaj Advani of Bangalore suggest that India's best performances are in individual events and that we are severely wanting in games which need team spirit. The Olympic medal tallies in the last several years show that countries with high gross domestic product (GDP) or totalitarian countries are on top. But India, with all the talk about being an emerging superpower, has done worse, than poor African and Caribbean countries. Even in cricket, India with all its disproportionate investment in the game has fared poorly and was knocked out of the World Cup at a preliminary stage in 2007. And this in a game played by only a handful of countries in the world, mostly former British colonies.

We need to look afresh at our sports policy. Unfortunately, even the left parties do not seem to have any alternative view of sports. The Communist Party of India (Marxist) leaders in West Bengal show the same fascination for the expensive, time-consuming, scandal-ridden game of cricket and seek to control the Cricket Association of Bengal.

PUMPED-UP BODIES AND EGOS

Ironically, it is the market forces which sponsor cricket that are grabbing the public grounds. Ordinary citizens do not have enough space to breathe, let alone play. Mumbai, India's most market-dominated city has 0.03 acre space per 1000 people, the lowest ratio among cities in the world. Even the few available open spaces are grabbed by the clubs of the rich.

In Bandra (east) in Mumbai, citizens have been waging a prolonged battle against the grabbing of a large ground by the MIG Club (which is very upper class, though its name stands for middle income group). The ground is situated in a prime location. At the same time there is a proliferation of gyms -- privatised, expensive places for largely macho, narcissistic, artificial body building. The cult of the gym has spread rapidly, fuelled by the equipment industry.

SOCIAL CONSEQUENCES

How does this commercialization affect the individual and society? Proponents of modern sport argue that capitalist systems have made more sports available to more people. They contend, too, that the owners, producers, and distributors of sports are simply responding to the demands of sports consumers. Critics of commercialization reject this view and argue that in reality only a small segment of society-the wealthy-have access to many sports. In addition, some critics also argue that commercialization via television especially has turned sport yet another form of passive entertainment. In addition, it is argued that commercialized sports, when used to display social status, effectively divides society. Finally, critics complain that commercialized sport is another way of defining life in terms of the purchase price rather than an inner sense of meaning and achievement. Despite these criticisms, there is little doubt that sports continues to become more and more commercial and the process is spreading to the non-Western world.

THE NEED FOR STUDYING THE COMMERCIALIZATION CRITICAL ANALYSIS

In some ways paralleling the increased commercialization of sport has been the emergence of academic interest in the business and management of sport. Much of the work in this area, including some of my own, has been concerned directly or indirectly with issues of effectiveness and efficiency and has the implicit or explicit aim of improving managerial practice and the functioning of organizations. From this perspective, sports goods and services are commodities which, like other goods and services, are subject to market forces. The managers of sport organizations are presented as purveyors of rationality and the management of a sport organization is considered to be a socially valuable technical function that is carried out in the general interest of athletes, employers, sponsors, and spectators alike.

SUMMARY

The sporting events like the Olympic Games, the Football World Cup, the European Champion League and the Tour de France, are becoming even more commercialized then it used to be in the past. Thus, the commercialization of sport is an old and obvious phenomenon. In fact, they are, in particular, a fantastic marketing advertisement opportunity for several companies which have enough money to sponsor this kind of events. Taking into consideration these events, it is likely to say that the sporting industry is a growing area for three reasons.

In the first place, sport is an emotional thing. Hence, it involves everybody. In fact, during the Football World

Cup fans feel a great involvement. Furthermore, people supporting a team are completely faithful to it. As a consequence, emotions and sense of attachment generated by sport play such a relevant role in the marketing strategy. Secondly, sport is a good thing because it is extremely important for health and mind and, in fact, sport is advised by every doctor. So, the association of health and sport may be a perfect combination for those companies which, sponsoring a sporting event, want to become more appreciated by the large audience. As a matter of fact, sporting events can change the image of products, thus it may modify the perception of brands in the global audience. In the third place, nowadays, TV advertisement is not effective enough because audience is getting far more fragmented. Because of the variety of audience, it is important to find a way of reaching the mass audience. Sport is one of the few instruments, sometimes the prime, which is able to gather millions people together. For instance, during the Super Bowl in America the average view is 97.5 million fans.

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