The commercialization of sport: A challenge to the traditional organization of sport?

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Starting out – basic assumptions:

1. One often combines the commercial aspects of sport to the elite-sport-discussion where sport becomes entertainment for the audiences/crowd. However, in participation-based 'sport for all' we also see a process of commercialization.

2. To understand the commercial success in participative based sport activities, one must understand the difference between the many diverse logics of sport (exercise vs. elite sport).

Leisure – fun & health  Aesthetic  Competition
Traditional approach to the commercial sport for all:

Commercial success in sport is often accompanied by the idea of serious threats to the **core values and credibility** of sport as a driver of social, cultural and educational progress.

*Why is this?*
My thesis – a PhD-study

3 different disciplines:

The history
Understand

The size and scope
Describe

Evaluation
The politics
Key question:

How is the commercial participative sport culture challenging the traditional organization of sport in associations?
1900 - 1970

Traditional sport activities organized in voluntary sport associations

1970 - 2009

Exercise activities organized by others - including the commercial sector
2015?
The struggle for members/customers
– who will organize members in the future?
The commercial sport for all characteristics

Question 1: Where do we see commercialization in sport for all?

Question 2: What is commercialization and where does it come from?

Question 3: What are the criteria of the commercialization process?

Question 4: What is the logic of commercialization?
Where do we see **commercialization** in the sport for all-field?
Where do we see **commercialization** in the sport for all-field?
One early example of commercialization – from bodybuilding to the gym

Professor Attila was one of the true innovators of the ‘Iron Game’. He invented the bench press and other training methods.

Attila invented flexible training equipment - a bar which could be loaded with discs to increase the weight.

Did the investment pay off?

Investment or not?

Marked Feedback

Product Development

Marked launch

New product

The Concept: Flexible progressive training

The Health Studio, 1894 NY

Attila’s student Sandow the Magnificent increased the Demand of the concept via testimonials.
What are the criteria of the **commercial** sport for all activities?

The activities that have success in turnovers and members are:

- activities that are easy to arrange
  - individual activities

- activities where the individual can choose when, where and how to “play”
  - flexibility in organization

- activities that do not demand specific techniques or motor skills
  - easy to start activities
When activities reach the mass consumer

If this three criteria are met, the commercial ‘sport for all’ can result in the process of commercialization.

Huge commercial success on the marked:
- **Golf** – easy-to-play par 3 holes
- **Fitness activities** - easy to start activities

But also tendencies to commercial activities in:
- **Swimming** – 586 facilities in Denmark
- **Bowling** – 122 facilities in Denmark
- **Squash** – 196 facilities in Denmark
- **Nordic walking** – walking becomes a sport
- **Dancing** – commercial discos
What is the logic of commercialization

Playing-logic
- The fun of the activity itself - culture

Working-logic
- The outcome of the exercise - health

Easy to organize - individual sport activities
- Organized individual sport
- Individual sport and exercise

Hard to organize - team activities
- Organized sport on teams
- Exercise on teams

Organized sport on teams
Individual sport and exercise
The fun of the activity itself - culture
The outcome of the exercise - health
THE LOGIC OF 'PAY & PLAY'

Easy to organize - individual sport activities

Playing-logic
- Organized individual sport
- Individual sport and exercise
- The fun of the activity itself - culture

Working-logic
- Organized sport on teams
- Exercise on teams
- The out-come of the exercise - health

Not so easy to organize - team sports
Why is it important to understand this process of commercialization?

1. The Nordic voluntary sport sectors are challenged by a commercial sector, where activities are produced, organized and sold to the customer on a marked.

2. The core values of the voluntary sector are under pressure, i.e. the voluntary principles itself.

3. Members are becoming customers.

4. Product development will continue - presenting new activities to new customers.

5. Somehow the marked seems more sensitive to changes in demand – and it can also create demands by bringing new products to the marked.
Questions?

Thank you for your attention