

**NASSM Presentations: An Analysis of Conference Abstracts by Diverse Research Topics 2002-2006**

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In their effort to promote quality sport management programs the North American Society for Sport Management (NASSM) and National Association for Sport and Physical Education (NASPE) created the Sport Management Program Review Council (SMPRC) in the early in 1990's. Their standards identified nine undergraduate and ten graduate content areas. At the same time, there have been some scholarly efforts to present the diversity in research topics of dissertations, conference abstracts, and journal articles within sport management discipline (cf. Soucie & Doherty, 1996; Stephen, Phelps, & Mahony, 2005), and some have discussed about new ways of categorization for the sport management research (cf. Parkhouse, Ulrich, & Soucie, 1982). However, despite these attempts to create diversity in interest, there is a general lack of diversity among scholarly research activities in the field of sport management (Slack, 1996; Pitts, 2001). Just a few of research topic areas, including sport marketing, have given heavy attention (Stephen, et al., 2005). However, it is interesting to note that from 1986 to 1993 the most accepted topic area of NASSM abstracts was not "marketing" but "curriculum & professional preparation" (Soucie, et al., 1996). At present time, no attempt has been reported as to the recent trend of accepted abstracts at sport management conferences. It is important to note that examining recent conference abstracts as preceding reports can provide a general tendency among various proposed or newly completed research, and that it can also be compared with the trend in the past. Therefore, the purpose of this investigation is to identify the notable trends in accepted NASSM conference abstracts in recent years as a function of their diversity in content.

The data for this study consisted of 752 abstracts appearing in the NASSM conference abstract booklets or CDs in 2002 - 2006. On average, 150 abstracts were observed in each year at the annual NASSM conference; however, this was slightly different than the total number reported each year by NASSM. This is due to each part of a congruent format presentation like a symposium which was presented by different researchers. Therefore, each section of the symposium was counted separately. Various research areas were identified in adopting the general topic categories of the NASSM, and those categories corresponded closely with the SMPRC (2000) standards. The research topic areas in sport management discipline which this study adopted consist of 14 different areas including "marketing," "leadership & management," "organizational theory", "governance," "finance," "economics," "ethics," "legal aspects," "communications," "tourism", "socio-cultural aspect," "teaching & professional preparation," "research & method," and "others." Despite adopting the topic categories set by NASSM, this study did not use the categorization designated for each abstract. That is because not only some year conferences did not provide the information, but also the level of consistency in categorization between the years has not been reported. Therefore, it became necessary to establish a high level of consistency in categorizing the abstract. Given that, a coding sheet was developed for this study to re-categorize every abstract by the topic. Every coder was controlled not to see the abstract list or any categorization information of the abstract in order to prevent pre-recognition about the topic category of the abstract preset by the NASSM for most of the years. Also, the abstracts were given to the coder out of their listing orders to minimize the pre-recognition influence. Given the controlled circumstances for coding the data, the coder could categorize the abstracts regardless the NASSM's categorization in advance. The inter-coder reliability was 90.7 % and intra-coder reliability was 96.5%. Both numbers are greater than the general standards which is 80% for each as suggested by Tan (1985). To evaluate the statistical significance of difference in observed numbers among the topic categories, a set of chi-square tests was conducted.

The result indicates that all chi-square tests were significant ( $p < .01$ ). The overall proportion (26.5%) and proportion in each year of "marketing" were greater than those of any other topic areas. It is corresponding to the finding in diverse dissertation topics (Stephen, et al., 2005). However, compared to the trend in 1986-1993 (Soucie, et al., 1996), this result clearly shows that the number one accepted topic area was changed from "teaching & professional preparation" to "marketing." Thus, along with some previous literature, the result of this study supports the idea that "marketing" has recently stood as the most researched the topic area within sport management discipline. In addition, "leadership & management" became the second highest accepted topic area (14.5%). According to Soucie, et al. (1996), "leadership & management" was ranked as the 10th (4%) among 12 topic areas. However, in considering only the most recent five years, "marketing" has tended downward slightly and irregularly while staying at the top ranking anyway. Along with "marketing," "teaching & professional preparation" shows an identical downward tendency, too. On the other hand, "leadership & management" as well as "socio-cultural aspects" have shown the opposite tendency to the tendency of "marketing," and each of them turned into the second (17.3%) and the third (11.9%) most

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researched topic areas in 2006 after their constant upward tendencies. Notably, the result reflects two important aspects. First, compared to the previous years (Soucie, et al., 1996), more business-theory based topic areas become more visible, and, second, still much more efforts are required for less-researched topic areas such as "communications," "ethics," and "finance" in order to contribute to the healthy and well-balanced sport management discipline. That leads us to reconsider the current sport management curricula as well.