

A trend analysis of the NASSM Conference abstracts from 2002 to 2007

Joon Young Han, University of Connecticut

Gregory Kane, Eastern Connecticut State University

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It is generally accepted that students of sport management benefit from programs that offer a topics across the breadth of this discipline. This is evident in the North American Society for Sport Management's (NASSM) and National Association for Sport and Physical Education's (NASPE) creation of the Sport Management Program Review Council (SMPRC). Their purpose is to prepare students from a variety of different perspectives and disciplines to create a well-informed student. In their effort to do so, the SMPRC identified nine undergraduate and ten graduate content areas.

Despite the general acceptance of the importance of a diverse field and the SMPRC's attempt to encourage a well rounded sport management programs, there has been a lack of diversity in the research from this discipline (Slack, 1996; Pitts, 2001). In addition, it is suggested that the main outlet for sport management publications, the Journal of Sport management, also lacks diversity in a number of content areas (Pitts, 2005). Speaking of disparity, the majority of textbooks (63 out of 129) in sport management tend to focus on either management or marketing (Pitts & Danylchuk, 2007).

Pitts and Danylchuk (2007) point out that most of the previous studies analyzing research publications included dissertations, research, and journal articles. However, there were only just a few investigations (e.g., Soucie & Doherty, 1996; Mowrey, 2003) that analyze conference abstracts. Lastly, Han and Kane (2007) presented recent trends in NASSM conferences indicating that the areas of marketing, management/leadership, socio-cultural aspects, and education/professional preparations had been exceedingly studied. However, their study had a couple of inexactitudes in presenting the results afterwards. Therefore, as a follow-up attempt, this investigation purports to indicate the most updated trends in accepted NASSM conference abstracts, and compare this to trend results in previous years.

This study analyzed 1,001 NASSM conference abstracts from 2002 to 2007. The total number of the abstracts is slightly different than the total number reported each year by NASSM. This difference can be attributed to each part of a symposium format presentation. Research topics were identified in adopting the SMPRC (2000) standard, consisted of 14 different areas: marketing, management/leadership, organizational theory, governance, finance, economics, ethics, legal aspects, communications, tourism, socio-cultural aspects, education/professional preparation, research/method, and others. However, this study did not use the original categorization designated for each abstract to establish a high consistency in categorizing the abstracts. Coders were controlled from pre-recognition effect which might influence on the categorization process for this study. Given the controlled circumstances for coding, the coders could categorize the abstracts regardless of NASSM's categorization. Both inter-coder and intra-coder reliability test scores were greater than acceptable score (80%) by Tan (1985). To evaluate the statistical significance, chi-square tests were conducted on the overall observed cases.

The chi-square test was significant ($p < .01$). Adding new data of 2007 did not make differences in general tendency from 2002-2006. Speaking of the general tendency of 2002-2007, marketing (25.9%) was more accepted than any other topic areas were, followed by management/leadership (14.5%), socio-cultural aspects (10.7%), and education/professional preparation (10.2%). As discussed in the previous report (Han & Kane, 2007), it is a similar trend to the study as to dissertation topics reported by Stephen, Phelps, and Mahony (2005); but it is different from the trend in 1986-1993 reported by Soucie and Doherty (1996) in which education/professional preparation was the most reported topic area. Also, current findings agree upon the general trend in textbooks reported by Pitts & Danylchuk (2007), in which marketing and management are two most published areas. Thus, along with some previous literature, the result of this study supports the idea that marketing and management/leadership have been placed as the two most focused areas in sport management discipline in recent years.

Interestingly, for last six years, marketing has shown the exactly opposite trend to management/leadership, while marketing, teaching & professional preparation have shown an identically irregular downward tendency except in 2007, in which marketing bounced back to an upward tendency. In the meantime, socio-cultural aspects have risen constantly and steadily; it (14.9%) took the second place in 2007 over leadership/management (14.5%). Also, in 2007, research/method (7.2%) jumped up to the fourth, tied in education/professional preparation. In addition, the other prominent difference in 2007 was the number of accepted abstracts. It was 249 in 2007, while the average from 2002 to 2006 was 151.

Becoming a balanced sport management discipline, as a multidisciplinary study, is still remaining in abeyance. Thus, more research efforts will be required for such topic areas as communications (3.3%), ethics (2.6%), and finance (2.0%). More

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detailed complete results with tables and graphs for each year will be presented and discussed, the implications will be addressed.