Mapping the Idea Space of the Sport Marketing Literature: A Reflective and Critical Perspective

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Poster

Scholars in a wide variety of academic disciplines recognize the need and importance of reflecting upon, critiquing, and empirically examining the idea space (i.e., content and knowledge circulating) of fields; including scholars in the field of sport management. For example, Pitts and Pedersen (2001) and Pitts and Pedersen (2005) conducted content analyses examining the body of literature published in the Journal of Sport Management and Sport Marketing Quarterly. Among the assertions from these authors (as well as a number of others who have conducted critiques and similar studies in the field), is the notion that such analyses can reveal weaknesses and voids in a field’s body of knowledge. In particular, scholars have noted the salient need for the greater development in sport management's content area of sport marketing (e.g., Mahony & Pitts, 1998; Pitts, 2002).

Despite the contributions of previous work in improving the idea space in sport marketing, we contend that this understanding can be significantly improved through the employment of several novel methodological strategies. Recent advances in methodology as well as advances in computer technology now provide more inclusive sampling procedures (i.e., an actor-based approach) and more sophisticated analytical methods (i.e., co-keyword analyses and contour sociograms) that can provide a more comprehensive view of the idea space in a field. For instance, instead of being limited to a couple of specific journals, new technology allows for an inclusion of a wide variety of journals where sport marketing studies are also present (even if only sporadically). Furthermore, the technology allows for a more in-depth view of the idea space, avoiding some common problems associated with aggregation and separation of data (e.g., loss of data information by aggregation).

New methodological approaches to examine the idea space are grounded heavily in the literature on the social construction of knowledge and the sociology of scientific knowledge (SSK). Among the findings in the SSK literature include indications that everything from the topics that researchers choose to study, the works they choose to cite, and the methodological paradigms that are implemented to the work that ultimately gets published and read, are tied to the social connections and interactions scientists have with other people in their field of interest (e.g., Crane, 1988, Kuhn, 1970; Moody, 2004). More importantly, however, is the notion that social, political, and historical factors inevitably shape the idea space of a discipline (e.g., Kuhn, 1970). As a direct result of these forces, it is often noted that the social structure (and in particular the social networks) of the community of scientists in a discipline are likely to produce a body of knowledge which exhibits distinct (and in many cases unfavorable) structural features in the idea space such as a structure that represents a slow progress (e.g., Kuhn, 1970; Light, 2005) or fragmented sets of ideas (e.g., Light, 2005; Moody, 2004).

Because unfavorable structural features can be rather detrimental to the advancement of a field’s body of knowledge (e.g., Kuhn, 1970; Moody, 2004), it can be quite beneficial for scholars to engage in empirical studies specifically addressing the structure of a field’s idea space. Through some unique and innovative methodological procedures (e.g., network modeling, co-keyword analyses, and contour diagramming), a numbers of studies suggest that it is possible to produce a mapping of the relative ebb and flow of ideas within a scientific discipline. The mapping can then be explored to identify such things as the overlaps between the topics and ideas circulating, points of saturation, and structural voids that are present in the idea structure of a scientific discipline (e.g., Light, 2005; Moody, 2004). In particular, one approach uses the overlap of keywords between articles to operationalize the “ideas” and topics that comprise a particular field’s idea space asserting that keywords are a relatively representative and observable indicators of the contents of studies.

As such, the purpose of this poster presentation is to analyze the idea space of the sport marketing literature using co-keyword analyses and contour diagramming. The unique contributions of this study are twofold: 1) a sample of publications that focuses on the people contributing to the field first and archival data collection from specific journals subsequently (an approach suggested by an extensive literature review); and 2) the use of two novel approaches (i.e., co-keyword network analyses and contour sociograms) to analyze and interpret the data. The intent of this study is not to critique earlier works, but rather to extend the findings by providing a more robust illustration of the sport marketing body of knowledge.

Embracing the perspective of co-keyword analyses and contour diagramming, we empirically explored the underlying structure comprising the sport marketing literature's idea space. Specifically, we addressed the following questions: 1) What does the idea structure look like in the sport marketing literature? 2) How has this structure evolved over time? 3) Are there apparent points of saturation or structural gaps in the structure? and 4) What do the theories and implications from the SSK literature suggest in...
regard to the obtained results?

The data for the study consisted of a compilation of 2,120 sport management and marketing publications during the period between 1985 and Fall of 2006. The articles were obtained through participant sampling of curriculum vitae and supplemental archival collection. The articles were initially coded by three independent reviewers into two categories: sport marketing-related articles and non-sport marketing-related articles. Only the sport marketing-related articles with 100% agreement between the coders were included in the analysis.

Using a special software program, a network model of co-keywords and publications was created, which analyzed and constructed the overlaps (called sociomatrix) between all keywords in all articles. In turn, the derived sociomatrix was used to create a contour sociogram (essentially a 3-dimensional mapping) of the overlaps of keywords between all of the articles in the sample to show trends, and structural features of the idea space such as idea saturation and voids. This poster presentation will show the results of this analysis and will provide the theoretical and pragmatic suggestions about how voids can be overcome.

References