Investigating Sport Management Literature: A Summative Content Analysis of the International Journal of Sport Management

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Examination of the literature (journals, books, conference content) in a field is critical—it provides an analysis of what exists and reveals strengths, weaknesses, and gaps. This essential research provides guidance to the field in a number of ways such as, researchers can see completed research and gaps on a subject; educators can know where there are gaps in content in the body of knowledge; and to journal editors and publishers in planning for filling gaps in the literature. Literature analysis in the field of Sport Management has included studies on dissertations, conference abstracts, sport management papers in non-sport management journals, and analyses of some sport management journals. There are now over one hundred sport management related journals (Shapiro & Pitts, 2014), yet to date only a handful of them have been examined. The most popular journals included in these studies have been the Journal of Sport Management (Pitts & Pedersen, 2005; Quarterman, Jackson, Chen, 2006), Sport Marketing Quarterly (Pedersen & Pitts, 2001; Peetz & Reams, 2011; Quarterman, Pitts, Jackson, Kim & Kim, 2005), and the European Sport Management Quarterly (Pitts, Danylchuk, & Quarterman, 2014). One study focused on the International Journal of Sport Management (Quarterman, Hwang, Han, Jackson, & Pitts, 2013); and a few studies included three or four journals for analysis (Ciomaga, 2013; Shapiro & Pitts, 2014; Shilbury, 2011; Smucker & Grappendorf, 2008). One study examined sport management books (Pitts & Danylchuk, 2007). To date, research has included primarily general content analysis, author counts, collaboration analysis, bibliometric measures, and research methods utilization analysis. Certainly, there is much work to be done to complete the puzzle for a full and complete analysis of the literature. Thus, the purpose of this study was to analyze a sport management journal, the International Journal of Sport Management, for a summative content examination. This study makes a significant contribution to the body of knowledge in this area of research in that it will add a missing piece of the puzzle, thus helping the field with objective examination of the literature.

Method

To properly examine and analyze the state of this journal, content analysis methodology was used. Content analysis methodology was deemed as the most appropriate method to provide an explicit examination of the journal—it is a powerful data reduction technique (Stemler, 2013). This method has been used successfully in previous studies in this area of research in the field of sport management (Mondello & Pedersen, 2003; Pitts, Danylchuk & Quarterman, 2014; Pedersen & Pitts, 2001; Pitts & Pedersen, 2005; Shapiro & Pitts, 2014) and is used widely in many fields for this purpose. Five graduate students were trained for coding. Each collected data within a specific time period. The primary researcher (author) checked for coding consistency, which was determined to be above a 90% level, an acceptable level for reliability. Coding a sample of every student coder’s work and calculating for consistency was based on Cohen (1960). Additionally, Cohen’s Kappa was used to calculate coder reliability and agreement. This calculation was $K = .86$ and on the Landis and Koch (1977) strength of agreement scale falls in the “Almost Perfect” category. All 56 issues of the journal from its inception in 2000 through 2013 were examined. Measures selected for examination included the following: the journal elements (number of issues, papers, authors, etc.); authors; editors; and research type and focus elements.

Results

Results show this journal has contributed 324 papers (5,391 pages) to the body of knowledge. In regard to Editor demographics, this journal appears to be unique in that it has had one editor for its life up through the year 2013, the years of this particular study (it began in 2000). Additionally, results reveal a heavy male administrative, reviewer, and author focus: 78% of the editorial review board opportunities are male; 76% (634) of the 835 authors are male, whereas only 24% (201) of the authors are female. In relation to the geographic location of authors, 85% of the authors identify the USA as their country of residence. This was a surprising finding because the title of the journal
suggests an international perspective. In regard to the research, research methods were 28% qualitative and 72% quantitative, the sport management focus of the papers were heavily in the ‘social context of sport’ (48%) content area, while the second most studied focus was ‘organization management’ at 15%. Results of research sport industry focus showed college athletics (37%) and professional sport (21%) were by far the sport business industry segment studied while other segments were at 8% (sport management education) and below. Further, research focus in regard to a gender focus of the papers showed a focus on 51% Both, 23% Male, 21% Nonspecific, and 6% Female.

Discussion and Implications

Understanding what is in journals in a discipline has far-reaching implications for the field. An analysis shows the state of a set of literature revealing what is there, focus, direction, trends, and what is missing. This information is vital because it is needed in providing guidance for everyone involved in the discipline in addressing the strengths and weaknesses of its literature. The current study reveals the state of one of the many journals in sport management and thus adds a missing piece to the puzzle in this area of research. Overall, this study shows this one journal’s strengths while revealing there are glaring weaknesses, or gaps, that need attention of the researchers in the field, as well as the journal’s managers. Of course, while authors and topics of research reveal the favorite topics of personal interest to academicians and researchers in the field, these are the same individuals who must take notice of the weaknesses and gaps in the literature and find ways to address them. Perhaps as the field expands in both number and depth, there will be many more academicians and researchers who take up research that will address the past and current gaps. Finally, while this study was limited to one journal and one methodology, it is similar to the findings in other studies on other journals in the field in that the editors and authors are heavily male, the sport management topics are similar and not inclusive of all sport management content areas, focus heavily on a limited number of sport industry businesses, and focus heavily on males in those businesses. Thus, as more studies include more journals a more complete picture of the overall state of the sport management literature will begin to emerge. Researchers and the journal editor benefit from this research in that they can use this information to help guide their choices for future research topics in order to address the gaps found in the body of work in this journal.

References


