Forecasting Spectator Sport and Population Health Research: A Delphi Study

Brennan Berg, University of Memphis
Matt Bowers, University of Texas at Austin
Packianathan Chelladurai, Troy University

Sport for Development - Other (Other)
20-minute oral presentation (including questions)
Session: Population Health/Civic Engagement

The importance of understanding the relationship between spectator sport and population health has been recognized within the sport management field (Inoue, Berg, & Chelladurai, 2015, 2019). However, there is a lack of consensus about how this relationship should be investigated by future scholars. The purpose of this study is to facilitate leading sport management scholars establishing their points of agreement about the present status and future needs for spectator sport and population health research.

Delphi studies are useful for understanding decision making and generating expert opinion (Jacobs, Dehue, Völlink, & Lechner, 2014), and have been established as a viable research approach in the sport management field. Studies such as Costa (2005) and Bowers, Green, and Seifried (2014) used the Delphi method to examine the future of the broader sport management field. Other Delphi research has studied specific issues in the sport management discipline (e.g., Anderson et al., 2019; Leonard & Schimmel, 2016). Consequently, using the Delphi method, the following research question is addressed in the current study: What are the opportunities and challenges future sport management scholars will face in investigating the relationship between spectator sport and population health?

Sport management scholars whose research was linked to or directly addressed spectator sport and population health were invited as potential participants. This included NASSM Research Fellows as well as other sport management scholars who have published research on spectator sport and population health. Twenty participants from the sport management field agreed to serve on the expert panel. The 20 panel members worked for 19 universities, held various research interests, and were based in four countries (i.e., USA, UK, Canada, Australia). Ongoing data collection will conclude early in 2020.

This Delphi study includes three rounds of data collection. In Round One, the participants will respond to open-ended questions via an online Qualtrics questionnaire. The research team will analyze the data collected in Round One to generate the open-ended questions given in Round Two. The results of Round Two will determine the survey used in Round Three, in which participants will rate the most important themes or issues that have been raised in Rounds One and Two. Rather than selecting an a priori theoretical framework, this study will use an ex post facto interpretive lens to allow the expert panel to guide the research questions and resulting perspectives on the topic, which the Delphi method necessitates (cf. Bowers et al., 2014). Using Nvivo, the qualitative data will be analyzed independently by three members of the research team to code responses and identify central issues emerging from the panel feedback. The quantitative data collected in Round Three will be analyzed using descriptive statistics and t-tests.

The theoretical and practical implications generated from the data will serve as a call to action to help identify the most relevant opportunities and challenges for advancing the body of knowledge on this topic within the sport management field. This will help demonstrate the distinctiveness of sport and its linkages with other disciplines, as Chalip (2006) encouraged NASSM members.