

Guest Editorial. The business of now: the future starts here – best papers from the Managing Sport SIG at the EURAM Online Conference in 2020

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The 2020 edition of the European Academy of Management (EURAM) conference marks a turning point in everyone's private and professional life. The arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic in the world has changed the way we live, work and more importantly, the way we interact. Home office, video conferences, and online teaching have been part of our daily life as scholars and teachers. Students have learnt to organise their learning from home and even entire internships had to be held remotely.

With regards to the traditional annual meeting of the EURAM community, and included here the small but tight community of the Managing Sport Strategic Interest Group (SIG), the pandemic has brought about the era of "online conferences". This has led to more flexibility, accessibility, and presumably lower carbon footprints; however, it has also deprived us from social interaction, networking, collaborative, and collective work on our scientific projects and finally from having a good time together as it is traditionally the case at the occasion of the annual meeting of the EURAM conference members.

A general uncertainty about the future and time consumed by home schooling, childcare and sickness in some cases has unfortunately caused a drop in paper submissions for the overall EURAM 2020 conference but also for the Managing Sport SIG. Hence, I am even more proud than usual to have managed to put together this Special Issue with five very interesting and high-quality papers. As it is tradition for this Special Issue the umbrella is the EURAM conference and not a particular theme. Therefore, the topics of the papers in this Special Issue cover a variety of topic areas.

The papers cover traditional sport marketing topics like purchase behaviours in sport sponsorship contexts but also newer sport marketing topics like value co-creation in eSports service systems. In the field of sport economics, this Special Issue covers an article on the impact of money prize on clubs' national performances as well as a piece on value creation and measurement in professional football clubs. Finally, the

Special Issue closes with an article on the social side of sports, a literature review on the accessibility of sport stadia for people with disabilities.

Sponsorship is a powerful tool of marketing communication for businesses and organisations and a crucial revenue source for sport entities (Cornwell, 2020). Much literature on sport sponsoring focuses on implementation issues such as planning, execution and measuring sponsorship and its outcomes. However, in the first article of this Special Issue entitled "*Not Just Intentions: Predicting Actual Purchase Behavior in Sport Sponsorship Context*", Koronios et al. (forthcoming) highlight the need of a comprehensive sponsorship framework that analyses various factors influencing not only purchase intentions of fans and spectators but more specifically actual purchase behaviour. For this, the authors analyse six independent factors (sport involvement, sincerity, team attachment, beliefs about sponsorship, team performance, sponsor image) that influence sponsor awareness and attitude toward sponsors as mediating variables which in turn determine future and actual purchase intentions. The findings of this study provide an additional understanding of the way sport sponsorship can affect fans' attitude toward the sponsor's brand and how it can drive fans to purchase a sponsor's merchandise. The authors of this paper were awarded with the Emerald Best Paper Award for 2020 that is traditionally handed out at the Annual Meeting of EURAM in the Managing Sport SIG.

The second article of this Special Issue, titled "*A Perspective on Value Co-Creation Processes in eSports Service*", also centers a sport marketing topic but rather than investigating concrete economic outcomes of sponsoring as in the previous paper, it focuses on value co-creation processes from a more holistic perspective in the context of eSports service ecosystems. The authors, Kunz et al. (forthcoming), investigate selected cases of eSports service ecosystems to understand the different roles, relationships, and multiple interactions of actors involved in value co-creation processes. The contribution of this paper is a conceptual framework that illustrates how various actors in eSports service ecosystems co-create value. Investigating three case studies, the authors outline similarities and differences in the value co-creation process of three different international large scale eSport competitions that represent the eSport service ecosystem. The authors illustrate how different actors of the eSport service ecosystem integrate resources from each other to create value. While extending the empirical application of the Service-Dominant-Logic through the value co-creation paradigm, this piece of work also demonstrates the power of digital devices, new technologies and IT-based innovation to transform the sport sector.

The Special Issue then transitions to sport economics and football clubs for the third and fourth papers. Both papers were Best Paper Runners-up for the Emerald Best Paper Awards in the 2020 Managing Sport SIG. In their paper entitled "*Influence of Stakeholders' Perception on Value Creation and Measurement: The Case of Football*", Perechuda and Čater (forthcoming) develop a model to identify and classify value factors that influence the value of football clubs from the stakeholder perspective. To accomplish this, they utilise a mixed method approach to obtain a holistic understanding of value creation, value factors and value measurement. Principal findings show that intellectual capital and asset-based methods should be privileged to measure football club performance within a stakeholder network.

The fourth article in this Special Issue is entitled "*Impact of Money Prizes from UEFA Competitions on Clubs' National Performance*. The objective of this study was to analyse how money prizes awarded during European football club competitions impact football clubs' performance in their respective National Leagues. The authors find that UEFA monetary awards received by football clubs affect the level of the competitive balance within their respective leagues in a specific and significant manner. The results support the theory of the vicious circle between money prize received by the clubs participating in international competitions like the UEFA Champions league and the sport performance of that same team in its respective national league. The authors draw interesting conclusions on new developments like the European Super League, arguing that this kind of league could provide more stability in terms of competitive balance and revenues.

The final paper of the Special Issue is entitled "*Exploring the accessibility of sport stadia for people with disability: Towards the development of a Stadium Accessibility Scale (SAS)*". In this paper, Salcines et al. (forthcoming) address a highly topical issue, which is to what extent people with disabilities are excluded from sport events due to limited accessibility of sport venues. The authors conduct a critical review of the literature and make propositions to develop a Stadium Accessibility Scale. Furthermore, they highlight research gaps to further develop research and practice in this area. Overall, this article shows how under-researched this topic area is and that more research should be done.

As I am coming to an end of this editorial, I would like to acknowledge some more people that have helped to make this year of unprecedented circumstance still full of valuable experiences within the Managing Sport SIG community. I would like to congratulate and thank the Best Reviewer Award winners of the EURAM 2020 Managing Sport edition: Geraldine Zeimers (winner) and Cleo Schyvinck (runner-up) for their valuable contributions. Furthermore, I would like to acknowledge the loyal support of Emerald with regards to supporting

the SIG awards and this Special Issue. Throughout this disrupted year, we created a new online event and I thank Teresa Hurley for organising it and Liam Harbison for sharing his experience obtained at Paralympics Ireland and Sport Ireland. Furthermore, I thank Kwame Agyemang, editor of this journal, for his participation in the Managing Sport SIG's first edition of a "Meet the editors event" that we organised during the EURAM 2020 online conference. Finally, I thank all the contributors whether as authors, reviewers, SIG officers or loyal members and friends of the Managing Sport SIG for their participation and support. With the hope of meeting you in person in the next or the following year, I can just encourage you to stay tuned on our social network accounts (Facebook: @euramsportsig ; Twitter: @sportEURAM).

Anna GERKE (former SIG chair, guest-editor)