
KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION ON SPORT ECONOMICS: A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW

PRODUÇÃO DO CONHECIMENTO SOBRE ECONOMIA DO ESPORTE: UMA REVISÃO SISTEMÁTICA

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RESUMO

O estudo analisa a produção científica que versa sobre a atividade econômica do esporte. Trata-se de uma revisão sistemática que avalia artigos científicos publicados no último ciclo olímpico (2012-2016) em periódicos nacionais e internacionais, em língua inglesa, espanhola e portuguesa, indexados ao Portal de Periódicos da Capes (Coordenação de Aperfeiçoamento de Pessoal de Nível Superior). Foram analisados, a partir da análise de conteúdo, 355 estudos que, a despeito de sua diversidade, foram agrupados em 15 categorias. As considerações sugerem um amplo processo de comercialização do esporte enquanto uma mercadoria cultural e, também, veículo de venda e propagação de outros produtos.

Palavras-chave: Economia esportiva. Indústria esportiva. Publicações periódicas como assunto.

ABSTRACT

The study analyzes the scientific production that deals with the economic activity of the sport. This is a systematic review that evaluates scientific papers published in the last Olympic cycle (2012-2016) in national and international journals, in English, Spanish and Portuguese, indexed to the Portal of Journals of Capes (Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel). From the content analysis, 355 studies were examined that, despite their diversity, were grouped into 16 categories. The considerations suggest an ample process of commercialization of the sport as a cultural commodity and, also, vehicle of sale and propagation of other products.

KEY WORDS: sports economics. Sports industry. Periodical publications as subject.

Introduction

Capitalist consumer society has gradually transformed sports into a highly profitable and economically dynamic sector over the 20th century. This transformation, guided by the great capital and orchestrated by an industry that promotes and produces entertainment,¹ forged what we know today as the sports spectacle – a multifaceted phenomenon with high symbolic importance² that mobilizes athletes, professional sports teams, workers from various areas, corporations and sports management business entities, as well as a great consuming public that follows (live) sports coverage through varied media channels. For that reason, the industry's establishment requires complex organization and planning, as well as an efficient business management and high operational control.

Closely associated to that establishment are the commercialization of services, equipment, technologies, brands, events, as well as the shaping of broadcast networks (TV channels, newspapers, magazines, internet etc.) and the search for sponsorship, announcers and [compulsory] consumers. The result is the construction of actual business conglomerates, capable of transforming sports into an integrating pole of technology and innovation.²

Profits, in this context, work as an engine for the sports commercial system, a kind of driving force or center of gravity³ around which a wide, productive chain, avid for new consumer niches, is organized. Moreover, with the aid of new technologies, it permanently reinvents itself, incrementing “older” forms of sports and feeding “new” modalities – niches of leisure schedule, contested by big media corporations that feed segments of tourism, advertising, varied equipment, clothing, gaming, and food⁴.

Thus, the expansion and growth of this market occur closely related to the “[...] creation, destruction and recreation of health models, of victorious athletes or of social and personal distinction, that characterizes main channels of the media [...],” which stands in “[...] relation to the logic of production and commercialization of sports events.”^{1:154}

Because of its extension, expansion and its complex and contradictory nature, such processes must be known, problematized and scientifically studied. Thus, to understand how the specialized literature has been addressing this question is fundamental to collect factors and elements that go beyond the issue. For that reason, this study aims to analyse knowledge production conveyed in Spanish, English and Portuguese – through national and international journals – on the economic activity in sports.

Methodology

This study is characterized as a systematic review, a research that uses as data source the literature on a given subject; then, we gather knowledge, (re)build thoughts and concept webs, in addition to selecting, characterizing and evaluating studies.⁵

To that end, we gathered themes, objects and approaches found in sports economics literature, using as material for analysis scientific articles published in national and international journals – in Spanish, English and Portuguese – indexed by the Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel (Capes) Periodicals Portal, an electronic database that groups and provides, through more than 100 thousand referential bases, national and international scientific productions for Brazilian research and education institutions.

The choice for scientific articles was made because they represent, to a great extent, the most general production. Nowadays, they constitute the main communication medium for science diffusion⁶.

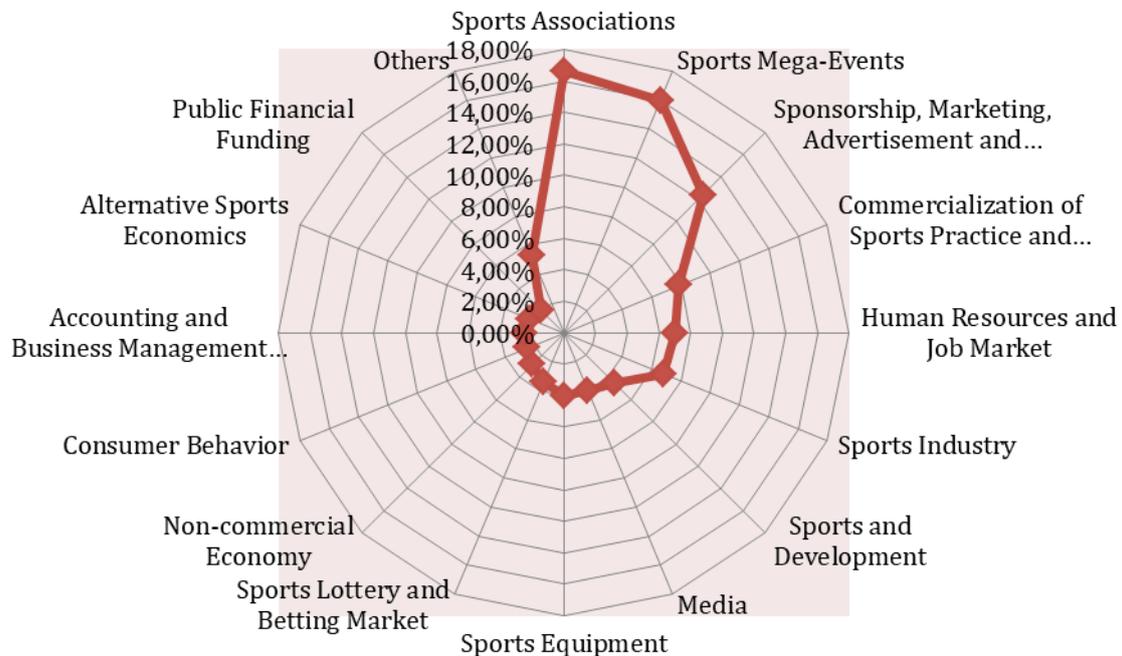
The analysed articles were selected from the descriptors “sports economics” and “sports industry”, along with their respective translations into Portuguese and Spanish. For time constriction, the timespan of the last Olympic cycle (2012-2016) was used, since, for each sports (Olympic) cycle, there are changes in the organizational structure and in the social and economic architecture of a given modality,⁷ as the Olympic Games consist of an important emulator of sports economics – it often works as an investment catalyst for urban infrastructure, and it helps stimulate tourism and creates job opportunities.⁸ It can also provide the option to build a panoramic study on the most recent period, working with a relatively short time span, but circumscribed to a current bibliography.

The electronic search on the portal in question resulted in 3.356 articles, adding the result of both descriptors and their translations. The first analysis, performed while still on the portal, filtered 434 articles that thematized/discussed and/or reflected on any economic/industry aspect of sports in said time span (inclusion criterion). The second phase, developed from careful, attentive and strict reading, considering the classification/categorization of the previously selected *corpus*, caused the exclusion of 79 articles – repeated entries, results from theoretical researches, out of the thematic scope and/or the format of the scientific article (exclusion criterion).

These procedures led to the effective analysis of 355 works. This discussion, developed from content analysis, which, according to Bardin,⁹ encompasses: systematic procedures and description goals on the content of messages aimed at critical comprehension of communications; its manifested or latent content; and its explicit or hidden meanings resulted in 15 analytical categories, disposed in sequence, according to percentage of occurrence.

Results and Analysis

The categories, developed from analysing the same empirical material, inform the general themes of production being studied. They are: Sports Associations (16.6% of the total produced), Sports Mega-Events (16%), Sponsorship, Marketing, Advertisement and Product Sales (12.4%), Commercialization of Sports Practice and Spectacle (7.9%), Human Resources and Job Market (7%), Sports Industry (6.8%), Sports and Development (4.5%), Media (4%), Sports Equipment (4%), Sports Lottery and Betting Market (3.4%), Non-commercial Economy (2.8%), Consumer Behavior (2.5%), Accounting and Business Management of Sports Companies (2.5%), Alternative Sports Economics (2.3%) and Public Financial Funding (2%). The remaining “Others” (5.3%) did not meet this classification. The following image illustrates this distribution:



Graph 01. Sports Economics – recurring themes in scientific production (2012-2016)

Source: The authors (2018)

These categories represent, in the context of sports economics, more than an informative display about present/recurring themes in knowledge production for this matter, because they can work as an important resource for the indication of elements that, nowadays, make up this same productive chain.

Sports Associations

The Sports Associations category includes projects that address questions related to leagues, federations, confederations and related sports administration entities that, considered “global governors,”¹⁰ act as commercial societies committed to the conversion of sports into products compatible with the broadcasting market. Based on modern marketing and advanced stages of capitalization, these “associations” negotiate their own brands, transforming licensing, broadcasting and sponsorship in important sources of revenue.

The studies on Sports Associations discuss a set of problems that goes beyond the economic production of the sports spectacle. In this production, the central element is the economic impact of these “associations” in the sports spectacle in local, regional, national and international markets, as well as in those sports companies themselves.

In the production set, regulation and interference of sports entities by national States are discussed, as well as protectionist policies, consequences from new ways of marketing, the matter of ticket offices, ticket prices and fan satisfaction. In addition to this, there are discussions about the importance of business management and corporate sponsorships.

The concern with the workers of the sector is also notorious, especially regarding the athletes. Such concern is related to the formation and promotion of new talents and even to managing such “labor”. Therefore, salary issues appear occasionally as an obstacle for profit expansion and maximization, sometimes as a fundamental issue for the workers’ living conditions or, yet, as an indicator of sports productivity. There is, in this aspect, problematizations on salary transferences and variations between nationalities, ethnicities, gender and performance.

The behavior and the satisfaction of the consumer/spectator show up as determining factors for economic production in sports. It is not by chance that the correlations between the number of fans, spectator demands, betting markets and club financial feedback, for example, are investigated. Moreover, themes such as the monopoly of sports teams, alcohol consumption and the implications of fiscal austerity are observed.

Sports Mega-Events

The Sports Mega-Events category contains studies that measure aspects related to big events. Those works reflect on the sports economics from mega-events – a global phenomenon that, in most articles, operates as a great consumption stimulator, an investment catalyst, responsible for the regeneration of urban areas and the diffusion and production of brands from various cities and global regions.¹¹

In these works, the economic impact of mega-events is measured. To that end, researchers examine ripples in the tourism sector, job creations, new business opportunities, media coverage and spectator/consumer behavior.

In a broad sports commercialization process, the economic management of the free market is presented as a mechanism to guarantee the neoliberal development disguised as modernity in times of globalization. That issue implies attention to socioeconomic conditions of the host country, economic spending plans, the construction of cutting-edge sports arenas, and particularly the “sale” of economic legacies that attract big markets and national States.

Sponsorship for big events also receives special attention within the production set, along with product sales, sexual tourism, and prostitution, in addition to matters of investment in urban policies and legislation. Moreover, debates on viewing rights and the issue of transmission exclusivity appeared in the results. The discussion of sustainability as a brand in mega-events, its geopolitical implications and the thematic of volunteer workforce is also present.

Sponsorship, Marketing, Advertisement and Product Sales

In the studied production, the Sponsorship, Marketing, Advertisement and Product Sales category gathers articles that discuss a set of resources (advertisement, market participation, profit, financial and material benefits) used by big companies to improve the image of certain brands (alcoholic beverages, food supplements, clothing, soft drinks, fast foods etc.), as well as to expand their advertising range. As a result, analyses of advertising strategies and commercialization of sports leagues, clubs, gyms and advertising activities from companies of the most varied sector make up this category.

The search for the expansion of markets is responsible for the increase in sponsorship, marketing and publicity in sports, as it is cheaper and more efficient to associate a brand to an event of interest to the media (preferably one of international credibility), compelling one's competitor to do the same.¹² Corporations inserted in highly competitive globalized markets began to see sports competitions as an excellent advertising tool. For that reason, there is an evaluation of the ripples on marketing/advertising starting from the consumption in ticket offices and of products, the increase in fan numbers, to the establishment of sponsorships, until the commercialization of financial actions related to sports.

In the current stage of capitalization for the sports spectacle, such investments are made upon evaluation of their impact popularizing consumption of certain brands. Therefore, the volume of sponsorships, marketing and advertising depends on the size/span of a club and/or sports team's market. Eventually, this corroborates the production of certain consumer behaviors.

Thus, there are investments on the popularization of lifestyles adjusted to demands of market expansion in the construction of a brand's supposed Social Responsibility, in the association between the sports consumer and the consumer of products related to it.

Despite the discussion on the impact of sponsorship, marketing and advertising in the economic production of the sports spectacle, the majority of the concerns displayed in the articles is about public health and ethical issues. In other words, there is a judgment/contestation of what is called "unhealthy sponsorships and advertisements," that is, investments on companies producing alcoholic beverages, tobacco, soft drinks, fast foods and betting games in modalities consumed by, overall, children.

Commercialization of sports practice and spectacle

The articles in the Commercialization of Sports Practice and Spectacle category discuss the commercialization processes of the spectacle and sport activities as a kind of cultural commodity. They are articles directed towards the issue of ticket sales, the attraction of new consumers/spectators, as well as the price of spectacles for the generation of revenue and sales of sports-related products and services.

Sports commercial markets appear as spaces for spectator appreciation and for the experience attached to the commercialization of healthy lifestyles, that is, cultural behavior aimed at caring for one's body and appearance, which, nevertheless, is related to the fitness sports industry.

The scientific production presents the challenges that go beyond the search for new global markets for a set of also global brands.¹³ It is about the use of sports and its potential for selling varied products. This casts on researchers the burden to discuss the impact of marketing and strategic management of communication for the rendering sales viable.

Moreover, in the production set, there are also concerns about the consequences of the recent economic recession/crisis for the project of globalizations/transnationalization of a sector that intends to cover all corners of the world. On the other hand, the evaluation of sports programs sales is visible, along with behavior analysis in the stock market about stocks related to the sports sector and the discussion on responsibility and corporate identity. There is also room for debates on gender inequality and the commercialization of women's soccer. There is, in a smaller scale, scientific production that questions the new ways commercial production affects sports spectacle and its practices.

Human Resources and Job Market

In the context of lowering industrial work and increasing the importance of "service" activities in the occupation set, in addition to the dynamism of sports economic activity resulting, especially, from the entertainment industry's expansion, the Human Resources and

Job Market category presents publications about issues that go beyond the work and the worker in the sphere of the sports job market.

In the production set, the issue of athlete purchases and sales appears as a prevalent theme. Thus, as an expression of the globalized sports market, the dynamic of the sports job market, global nets of athlete transfers, migratory routes, sports labor migration, as well as professional sports migrants receive special attention from the set of researchers, as global value chains configure a true economic geography.¹⁴ In this context, there are analyses about personal and professional relations, acculturation processes and transnational production/export of that labor.

Moreover, the issues around salary appear as an important subject, because the formation of competitive teams (both in sports and commerce) presumes the recruitment of efficient athletes. In the set, researchers discuss salary differences between foreigners and “natives,” the market’s own volatility, disparities/discriminations raised by gender and ethnicities, as well as the confirmation of the thesis that the salary is an important regulator of said market.

On a smaller scale, there are discussions about the participation and exploitation of college athletes, including volunteer workforce and their motivation, the qualification and payment of new athletes, business management in human resources, the correlation between investments on sports talents and their corresponding financial feedback; finally, there is the issue of stress/satisfaction/overload of the worker of that sector.

Sports Industry

The notion of sports industry includes the production and commercialization of sports spectacles, fitness, recreational or leisure practices, activities, goods, services, people, places or ideas. However, the Sports Industry category examines articles that only discuss the production/commercialization of sports-related products. The Commercialization of Sports Practice and Spectacle category contemplates questions related to services. In that sense, these studies analyse nuances that shape the production of sports equipment, clothing, footwear, beverages, food and videogames, for example.

The sector of sports products is characterized by great volumes of production, high levels of consumption and short life cycles, resulting in high rates of waste. The fabrication of these products is globally distributed, through a supply chain based on levels and complex logistic systems.¹⁵

In the production set, the exploitation of the industry worker, the violation of labor rights and work regulations appear as important discussion points, since the complex organization of the productive sector, structured in multinationals (global companies) found in local contexts, where there are weak labor and environmental legislation, challenges human rights and the defence of sustainable development. In this category, the debate on production outsourcing, market globalization, the relation between production nets, suppliers and consumers can also be found.

There also are analyses about business management in these industries and the importance of marketing for the diffusion and expansion of consumption. Moreover, there are questions on the intense international competition, ethical issues, consumer well-being and the (local) economic development in a perspective of generation and expansion of business associations’ revenue, in a liberal perspective of development.

The management, planning, organization, direction and monitoring of products in the sports industry are examined under the light of capitalization of that same production, in such a way that the use value is present to enable the exchange value.

Media

The notion of Media, in this study, as a category of analysis, reflects the understanding that the expansion of sports economics in the world was a result of technological increments in the most varied means of communication that, nevertheless, appropriated the sports spectacle to themselves, aiming at securing and commercializing sports superproductions.¹⁶ That process occurs in such a way that it propagates and even determines the operation of sports commercial activities, acting as an operational arm of the cultural industry. In this context, the term media designates a series of means of communication that includes different vehicles, resources and digital, electronic and printed techniques.

In the analysed scientific production, the discussion on media implies the acknowledgement that it is responsible for substantial changes among production, delivery and the consumption of sports, creating new dynamics between fans, athletes, clubs and related sports administration entities.

Still regarding production, issues about transmission and viewer rights, of sports organizations property and their arenas, including sports content, are linked to the emergence of new digital platforms and to the fight for cultural citizenship, sparking legal conflicts, dilemmas and inaccuracies that, nowadays, go beyond media performance in the sector. For that reason, viewer rights depend on the presence of public radio broadcasters with the ability to broadcast sports events of national importance. Their absence feeds exclusivity clauses that, despite restricting public access, are responsible for the expansion of profits in the sector.

There are also analyses on the coverage of mega-events, the effects of that coverage in the betting market and alcohol consumption, the consequences caused by upholding commercial interests of paid TV operators and dominant sports organizations, the commercialization of new games and, finally, the marketing presence of sports brands on social media.

Sports and Development

The Sports and Development category groups articles that propagate the notion of development through sports as a complex process of economic, political, human and social changes and transformations. In this sense, this category presents studies that point sports as the motivation for such transformations.

Local economic development is one of the most present themes in the works from this category. These are publications that analyse the issue of economic impact. As a result, sports are treated as a tool with potential to leverage economic development of certain cities, regions and countries. That development would result in sports activities and in other related practices.

In this scenario, tax collection, the consolidation and operation of sports product industries, commercialization webs, transport and consumption of these products, sports tourism, preparation, organization and execution of sports events and mega-events are factors that would boost economic development, being responsible for the economic recovery of communities and regions.

However, in the analysed literature, in a smaller scale, there is room for contestation of the premise that sports are factors for economic development. There is an article that foresees, for example, the relativization of these claims, since this correlation depends on several factors and conditions.¹⁷ In that sense, the rhetoric of economic legacy can silence social, geographic, cultural and political problems. There are also reflections on sports as a public health strategy, enabling the construction of economically productive bodies.

Sports Equipment

Sports Equipment show up in the literature as edifications or facilities where sports-related activities, events, projects and actions take place. Those are elements that are part of urban geography and, therefore, participate in local development; therefore, they are responsible for the sports policy of a city, state or a nation. They are composed of clubs, gyms, cultural sports centers, pools, parks, courts, cycling/athletics tracks and other locations, public or private, that enable the practice of sports.

The debate around sports equipment exposes the dilemma of using public funding for the building and producing that equipment, with the corresponding issue of economic feedback, local development, as well as the exploration of these public goods by private initiatives based on business management.¹⁸ Therefore, such equipment is considered business, distant from the notion of public estate, despite their appeal for sports participation/appropriation for the most diverse population layers.

There are also analyses about the construction of said equipment and sustainable and environmental development, as well as social responsibility. That equipment is considered a space for the development of sports tourism, which gives the theme commercial, cultural and political value.

Sports Lottery and Betting Market

The Sports Lottery and Betting Market analysis category gathers articles that aim to evaluate the fan behavior regarding the purchase of sports lottery. In other words, there is a concern in the literature about understanding the association between the amount of betting and the gambler's feeling. In this context, there is also a concern regarding the responses by these consumers to appealing strategies by the lottery industry's marketing.

The lottery industry and the betting market are important fundraising sources for the sports sector. Sports betting games – a lottery modality always associated to sports events, for example soccer, baseball or Formula One – make up the productive web of sports, responsible for a meaningful portion of its administration entities' revenue. It is a field that has incorporated new technologies, releasing mobile and digital platforms that favor the increase in the number of gamblers and, consequently, in the amount of bets.

Moreover, there are debates regarding the quantity of bets, the probability of victory, the effects of uncertainty and attendance/monitoring of sports spectacles when the consumer takes the role of a gambler, investing money on their passion for sports.¹⁹ There are also articles on manipulation and the efficiency of probability apps, and the value of lottery industries/sports betting on financial markets.

Consumer Behavior

The sports market globalization allowed the expansion into unexplored territories. This same globalization induced the association between varied products and sports brands, with the intention to influence buying behavior by the sports consumer. In this sense, the Consumer Behavior category embraces investigations that raise questions on this topic. In other words, it seeks to understand a set of elements that produces a new type of fan – a fanatic that consumes because they identify with and are committed to a certain sport, that is, a corporately responsible fan.

This way, in the context of the market economy, sports economics should not need their fans. Therefore, the evaluated literature aims to closely analyse the factors that motivate consumption and connect sports fans to the sector market. Variables such as age, education and income are investigated and considered as factors that go beyond/shape this behaviour.²⁰

The client, a term commonly present in the market economy, is investigated, from their preferences and disposition to buy sports spectacles that, not by accident, must be

prepared to strengthen the bond between the sports team and the fans. This last one, taking into consideration the maximization of commercial transactions that it may enable, must be managed/treated from the notion of well-being, the idea of satisfaction with the “services” offered and, more recently, the possibility of participation in decision making.

Non-commercial Economy

The Non-commercial Economy category gathers studies that treat sports economic production without commitment to the direct generation of commercial value. They are, above all, studies that discuss sports produced by Non-Governmental Organizations (Sports NGOs), by clubs and other non-profit entities that, being non-profit, do not adopt other governmental resources, as is the case of shared management, volunteer work and partnerships.

This type of economy has been ignored by the specialized literature. The reason is exactly its specificity: it is not focused on the production of commercial value.²¹ They are projects that question the financial design of sports NGOs and other correlated entities, as well as the issue of informal work and volunteer motivation. In addition, there is the role of donations for the generation of sports as cultural goods that, in this perspective, tends to be taken as a factor of social integration and combats the vulnerability and social risks, exemplified in the softening of violence cases.

Moreover, debates of external factors is present in the literature, that is, the pressure for the identification and production of new talent. This constitutes a factor which influences donations and generates tensions so that the formation tends to yield highly in these cases.

Accounting and Business Management of Sports Companies

The Accounting and Business Management of Sports Company category gathers works that take management and accounting, or rather the financial situation of management entities/sports administration, as their research object. Those are studies that, for the sake of financial efficiency/profit maximization, discuss management strategies, revenue diversification and the construction/operations of strategic business plans.

This debate presents, at least, two axes, that are: Accounting and Business Management of Sports Companies. However, these points establish a close relation between each other, since there are considerations regarding the effects of business management on the financial condition of these entities. The financial “health” of sports administration entities/sports companies depends, in the production set, on their assets, equipment, types of property, number of supporters/fans, income and sports performances.²²

To these indicators matters of violence in sports arenas are added as elements that interfere in ticket office results and, consequently, in the financial condition of sports companies. Revenue diversification, by hosting big sports events and optimizing costs, are taken into consideration as factors that have a positive effect in this matter. The creation of an operational system allowing the use of resources in a more effective way is present as an inevitable challenge for the improvement of the activity.

Alternative Sports Economics

The idea of Alternative Sports Economics is based on the sale and consumption of new lifestyles based on alternative sports (mountain bike, surfing, snowboarding, sports tourism in places with abiotic resources of great singularity and high outdoors recreational/leisure potential). In other words, alternative sports economics is tied to the construction of “authentic” and countercultural identities that suppose transactional flows and body mobility in the scope of physical culture.²³

This notion is presented in the literature as a local economic development generator because, despite their primary concerns of sustainability – the protection and preservation of natural resources –, such resources are treated from the vision of income generation, that is, the potential to attract tourists and sportspeople attributes commercial value to waves, rivers, mountains, glaciers, trails, cliffs and other natural resources.

The literature indicates the lack of studies in the field, especially when it comes to the sports use and/or exploration of ecosystems and biodiversity systems. Consequently, there is a lack of research on the economic impacts of these practices on the maintenance, preservation and conservation of said systems. These concerns – fed by the sustainable development paradigm – invite new ways of managing and planning and social associations that explore these commercial niches in the name of social and environmental responsibility.

Public Financial Funding

The use of tax rebates, which compensates flaws in the market with the intention to encourage private investments by reducing marginal cost of additional spending, is generally common in the industrial production sector. Its use in the sports field, with the same aims, is emblematic of how commercialized sports activities have become. In this sense, Public Financial Allowances, considered a category in this study, focus on professional sports teams or entities that are property of private business entrepreneurs.

These rebates are justified, in the sports sector, by the promise of financial returns and the expected tourism, as well as by the increment in sports facilities and professional teams that would represent (nationally and/or internationally) certain cities, states or nations.²⁴ These rebates are, in this sense, mechanisms that expand revenue sources and, in similarly, competitive conditions of professional teams in the competitive battle for personnel and new technologies, in the scope of the free market economy.

The analysed studies evaluate local government justifications for granting rebates to private sports entities, as well as the economic impacts on local economies from tax breaks given to sports leagues. They also approach the issue of cooperation between sports entities and municipal governments, the correlation between government funding and Olympic success, sports public finances in light of searches for diplomatic collaboration opportunities, market opening and international transit, the exploration and/or use of equipment subsidized by the public powers and issues of tax breaks in unfavourable political and economic conjunctures.

Others

Articles that did not fit in the presented categories and those that did not meet the minimum percentage of 2% were grouped into the Others category that, strictly speaking, does not constitute an analytical category, because it is constituted by a diversity of themes that does not necessarily establish a close relation among one another, except for the general theme. Those are publications whose themes involve: tourism; family expenses; impacts of economic crises; globalization and internationalization processes; financing sources; regulation of sports economic activities; and, finally, corruption, illegal markets and unethical businesses.

Conclusions

This article offers an analysis of qualitative-descriptive character, regarding the scientific production in sports economics during the last Olympic cycle (2012-2016). To that end, we employed a set of scientific articles published in journals indexed by the Capes Periodicals Portals as a research source.

The organization and accommodation of the scientific articles into 15 categories of analysis announce the issues to which the scientific community has been dedicated. It helps to understand the field, its priorities within the research schedule, its gaps and, overall, the possibilities for new projects.

In the scientific production set, the researchers' concern with the production of sports spectacle was clear. Maybe because of this, management entities and sports mega-events make up more than 32% of publications. This special attention seems to dialogue with the need of improvement in regulating systems and managing sports commercial societies. It also evinces the search for legitimization of the sport-spectacle as an agent of economic transformation – given its promise to encourage consumption, to spread brands, to recover urban territory and to catalyse investments.

The commercialization of sports practices and spectacle evinces a comprehensive process of sports commodification as a cultural product inside a niche of commercial production. On the other hand, the analysis of sponsorships, as well as of sports industry and marketing, advertising and product sales confirms the premise of sports as an important advertising vehicle.

New communication technologies interfere in the production, delivery and consumption of this “new” sport. Sports lotteries and betting markets expand fundraising for sports companies. These matters focus directly on fan behaviour, which, as a consumer, is encouraged for the financial and competitive success of the clubs or other sports business entities and liable for them. Accounting, when examined from the logic of profit efficiency and maximization, depends, in the last instance, on this same consumer-fan, as the market value of sports clubs, teams and matches depends on their range and size. However, public rebates, as mechanisms that make up for market flaws, also play an important role in capitalist sports production.

The matters of job market and human resources, be it in sports companies or industries of the sector, denounce the presence and exploration of migratory routes that feed global markets with a labor that is also globalized. The sports industry, as an equipment and product supplier, exploits labor and raw materials with the aim to meet the demand of the global market.

Alternative sports economics is responsible for the commercial production of new bodily practices that undergo commercial transformation into sports, although it still preserves traits and discourses focused on socio-environmental responsibility. On the other hand, non-commercial sports economics allows sports NGOs to occupy, with countless limits, the gap left by lack State support of public policies. In this context, the notion of development from sport dialogues with the expansion of investments and the increase of commercial opportunities, almost always disregarding human and social dimensions.

Finally, this observation suggests the development of a substantial, thriving, complex and diversified productive chain, responsible for production value in the scope of sports economics that, not accidentally, tests traits of internationalization and globalization never seen before. Therefore, it deals with a sector that presents its own dynamics, because it experiences a process of double commodification: the sale of the spectacle and of the sports activity itself, as a product and service, with its corresponding use as an advertising vehicle for other products.

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