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THE ROLE OF PUBLIC RELATIONS IN THE ORGANIZATION OF SPORTS EVENTS

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Abstract: This essay aims to familiarize the reader with the connections between public relations and sports, including best practices, analysis of PR's potential in sports, and the promotion of a favorable image that might lead to increased exposure in public. A company's ability to build and manage enduring relationships with athletes, fans, sponsors, and the community determines how effective its operations are. Public relations is a marketing communication strategy that benefits the firm conveying the message as well as other groups interested in its success. It may be used to reach any of these four shareholders. The main goals of public relations overlap with the goals of promotion, but in cases of crisis communications it should be emphasized that this element of promotion is a priority choice and the main goal is to support the solution of the problem.

Key words: Public relations; Sport; Media; Communications

Introduction

Public relations is a strategic communication discipline that focuses on building and maintaining a positive image for an organization or individual. It encompasses various communication techniques, including media relations, social media management, crisis management, and event planning. The goal of public relations is to create a favorable public perception, enhance public awareness, and manage any potential reputation threats.

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One crucial aspect of public relations is media relations, which involves engaging with journalists to secure positive media coverage for a client or organization. This can be achieved through press releases, media pitches, and maintaining relationships with journalists. Social media management is also essential in today's digital age, as it allows organizations to communicate directly with the public and create a brand presence online (Dašić, et al., 2023). Public relations professionals need to be adept at crafting compelling content and managing online communities effectively.

Another critical role of public relations is crisis management. When a crisis occurs, such as a product recall or a public scandal, public relations professionals step in to protect and repair the organization's reputation. They develop crisis communication plans, handle media inquiries, and work to mitigate any negative consequences. Effective crisis management can help restore public trust and minimize long-term damage to an organization's reputation.

Sport provides a forum for discussion and conversation about elites, resource distribution, privilege, deprivation, exploitation, nationalism, racism, gender, age, the body, ideologies, and religion. In the modern day, sport is both politics and commerce (Ratković, Dašić, 2023). Whether it is technically recognized as such or not, public relations work helps to advance national and worldwide discussions on these topics. Sports PR is fundamentally political and transcends sports in many ways. (Vasić, Heler, 2020).

Media and sport have always had a symbiotic relationship, with each influencing and shaping the other. The media has played a crucial role in promoting sports and athletes while providing a platform for fans to stay connected and informed. Furthermore, media coverage has transformed sports into a global phenomenon, enhancing its popularity and commercialization. However, with the rise of social media and online platforms, the impact of media on sports has become even more pronounced, raising pertinent questions about the influence and ethics of sports journalism (Penezić, 2022).

Regardless of their size, sporting events have a favorable impact on the local economy, public perception, and the establishment of good connections with the host location (Dašić, Gavrilović, 2023). Sports events may help cultivate a favorable image, and this image has the power to draw investments. A positive reputation has a direct impact on investments, tourism, and getting sporting events organized. Should we just focus on the impacts of athletic events, without considering any corresponding expenditures and national branding initiatives, the advantages are likely to be fleeting. Thus, the benefits of the games lie more in the correct

rebranding of the nations hosting the sporting events, since this enhances the destination's or the nation's overall image, recognition, and attractiveness. Sports events could serve as a springboard and a justification for nation-building, but ongoing efforts should be focused on highlighting the nation's culture, customs, natural resources, tourism offerings, etc.

PR and sport

Serious sport has nothing to do with fair play, Orwell claimed. It is bound up with hatred, jealousy, boastfulness, disregard of all rules and sadistic pleasure in witnessing violence. (Orwell, 1945, p. 10) In the present day, sport is both business and politics. Public relations is a useful strategic and tactical weapon in the mix of politics, commerce, hatred, envy, and boastfulness that Orwell depicts, where everyone strives to attain his goal while disobeying all the laws. Success is not just based on on-field performance; it is also influenced by headlines from newspapers, television, computers, and bank accounts. (Ilan, et al., 2015).

In sports, public relations is not only necessary, but essential. The main challenge confronting public relations in the sports sector is building a positive image that might result in more exposure in public spaces. One way to think about public relations is as the professional and proactive management of an organization's audiences to preserve a favorable corporate image. From this angle, we might be able to derive more practical definitions and applications for public relations in sports. Public relations' main objectives are to promote empathy and a positive image of the business and its products. This may be achieved by fostering positive perceptions of the company's activities and developing a solid corporate reputation. Having a solid understanding of public relations may help the company change public attitudes and views. (Dašić, Ratković, 2022). Public relations may have measurable effects on strengthening an organization's bond with its audiences when it is treated and managed as a well-rounded part of overall communication (Petrovici A., Dobrescu, 2013).

Media coverage has undeniably propelled sporting events and athletes to new heights of popularity. In addition to using new media for PR, advertising, and marketing, clubs are now embracing it to receive feedback from target consumers regarding their opinions of their brand, corporate reputation, organizational culture, and products. Sports teams' usage of modern media opens up new channels for communication, but it also raises a number of new problems. Social media provides clubs with a direct line of connection with target audiences and helps clubs

communicate effectively inside the club, but it can also rapidly and readily disseminate misinformation, rumors, and prejudiced viewpoints, which can occasionally lead to major crises (Göksel, Serarslan, 2015).

Through live broadcasting of matches and tournaments, sports have transcended geographic boundaries and reached a global audience. As a result, athletes have gained unprecedented exposure, leading to lucrative sponsorship deals and endorsements. The soaring popularity of sports, facilitated by media coverage, has also led to a boom in sports tourism, with individuals traveling across the world to witness iconic events like the Super Bowl or the Olympics. The media's ability to bring sports into the living rooms of millions has undeniably played a crucial role in the development and growth of various sporting endeavors.

However, with the advent of social media, the influence of the media on sports has become even more profound. Athletes, coaches, and fans are now active participants in shaping the narrative through their online presence (Dašić, Jeličić, 2016). On one hand, this democratization of sports media has allowed for better fan engagement, with athletes sharing behind-the-scenes insights and interacting directly with their supporters. On the other hand, it has also raised concerns about the invasion of privacy and the spread of misinformation. Fake news and rumors can easily circulate, impacting an athlete's reputation or even affecting the outcomes of crucial events. Moreover, the constant scrutiny and pressure from the media can have detrimental effects on athletes' mental health, as they become subject to intense public scrutiny.

Sports public relations is a vital component of the sports industry that focuses on managing and promoting the image of athletes, teams, and sports organizations. It involves creating strategic communication plans, organizing media events, and maintaining positive relationships with the media and fans. Sports PR professionals serve as the intermediaries between athletes and the public, ensuring that their clients are portrayed in the best possible light. This field requires a high level of intelligence and comprehension to navigate the complexities of the sports world and effectively communicate messages to various stakeholders.

One of the primary responsibilities of sports public relations is managing the reputation and image of athletes, teams, and organizations. PR professionals work closely with their clients to develop personalized strategies to enhance their public image. This may involve coordinating interviews, press conferences, and media appearances to provide positive exposure and create a favorable perception among fans and sponsors. A strong understanding of the sports industry is crucial in order

to identify potential risks to a client's reputation and take appropriate measures to mitigate any negative impacts.

This essay recognizes that public relations has a far more complex function to play in the world of sport, despite the fact that public relations literature has historically seen PR as a promotion and communication tool (Șerbănică, Constantinescu, 2016).

Furthermore, sports PR professionals must have excellent communication skills to effectively relay messages to various stakeholders. They are often the primary point of contact between athletes and the media, ensuring that accurate and positive information is shared. This requires strong comprehension skills to interpret complex issues and communicate them in a concise and easily understandable manner. Additionally, understanding the target audience is essential to tailor messages appropriately and engage fans and supporters.

PR in the function of organizing sports events

Public relations has not received the same level of attention as other areas of the sports business, such as the financial, political, social, and even personal facets of it, aside from the sports itself. In actuality, research on sports relations has been very patchy, with the majority of studies focussing on certain topics or having a narrow emphasis, such as sports and celebrities (Dašić, et al., 2021), particular sports leagues, or particular teams. (Jensen & Butler, 2007; Xifra, 2008; Le'tang & Hopwood, 2008; Summers & Johnson-Morgan, 2008; Anderson, 2004; 2008; Hopwood, 2005; Trosby, 2010). Public relations in sports is not always obvious, but it has a lot to offer the modern sports industry (Hopwood, 2005, p. 174).

The creation of positive communication connections with individuals and the intended audience is a key outcome of efforts to develop and foster effective relationships. This outcome significantly influences the perception of the host of large-scale sports events. Establishing a strong connection with the general population is vital in this context. Event communication functions as a strategic tool for managing both internal and external communication, aiming to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of these interactions. The goal is to create a favorable foundation for the relationship between the event organizer and the target audience, ultimately leading to more successful business outcomes. The company's reputation is intricately linked to its participation in specific events, and the perception of various groups involved in planning, executing, and evaluating events

holds special significance in garnering public approval and affection towards the events and organizers. (Perić, et al., 2019).

Traditionally, affluent nations have hosted major athletic events, but in recent years, cities and nations classified as "developing countries" have started to vie to host these events. One instance of athletic tourism is marathon running. When deciding whether to hold an event that requires the use of government funding, local organizations (a province, county, city, etc.) sometimes employ economic impact evaluations as a decision-making tool. When large numbers of domestic and foreign tourists attend marathon events, two things happen. To begin with, it momentarily raises local demand. This covers the cost of travel, accommodations, food and beverages, sporting items, event memorabilia, and regular city shopping. These are the economic effects that are frequently considered when evaluating the economic impact of a marathon event. Second, when a large number of domestic and foreign visitors attend and participate in a marathon event, it affects the publicity of the event both during and after it. If participants and attendees enjoy themselves, there's a good chance they'll return to the marathon event and, because of the positive word-of-mouth effect, get others to participate as well. (Papanikos, 2015)

In the event that a sports organization does not have a ready response to a certain situation (e.g. a bad result in a football match), mass media can generate bad publicity. Through the communication strategies and programmes adopted, public relations may represent a strong promotion tool for building a favourable attitude from the part of supporters. By associating themselves to sports, the organizations may raise the public's awareness of their products, services and brands, may engage in public relations activities and enjoy the advantage of image transfer (Beech, Chadwick, 2007, p. 5).

As for the informative preparation of sports organizations, it includes the following activities (Tomić, 2001, p. 302):

- Information for journalists (press release) - which consists of an announcement that has the character of news about current or other events, activities, engagements of athletes and sports organizations.
- Press conferences - represent meetings between representatives of sports organizations and representatives of mass media.
- Briefings with mass media - instructive meetings, short consultations that have the character of mutual information, with the presentation of the sports organization's position on various issues and relate more to the desire to better understand complex strategic directions of action, such as in periods when athletes are transferred.

- Catalogues, books, brochures and publications of a similar nature.
- Periodic, informative printed editions for mass media and the general public, such as the club's monthly newspaper.
- Regularly updating information on social networks, as well as other places in the online environment where the sports organization is located.

The special importance of public relations, both in the case of sports organizations and athletes, and in the case of other participants in the sports industry, is when it comes to crisis communications. Public relations is a priority means of promotion, but also an independent tool in dealing with crisis situations, both in the case of sports organizations and all other participants in the sports industry. Also, public relations is a basic marketing tool when we want to create the image of a socially responsible company (Ratković, Dašić, 2018, 176).

Conclusion

Good public relations include good relations with the media, since they are intermediaries in the distribution of information, and are especially important when they are in the role of producers of publicity. The main goals of public relations overlap with the goals of promotion, but in cases of crisis communications it should be emphasized that this element of promotion is a priority choice and the main goal is to support the solution of the problem.

The relationship between media and sports is complex and multi-faceted. The media plays a vital role in promoting and commercializing sports, bringing them to a global audience and enhancing their popularity. However, the advent of social media has further magnified the influence of the media on sports, raising ethical concerns and impacting athletes' personal lives. Ultimately, striking a balance between media coverage and the integrity of sport will be crucial in maintaining the spirit and authenticity of athletic competition.

Public relations plays a vital role in shaping public perception and maintaining a positive image for organizations. The field requires a diverse skill set, including media relations, social media management, and crisis communication. With the ever-growing influence of the media and the increasing importance of online presence, public relations professionals are essential in managing public perception and ensuring the success and longevity of an organization.

In conclusion, sports public relations is a dynamic field that requires intelligence and comprehension to effectively manage and promote the image of athletes,

teams, and sports organizations. It involves creating communication strategies to enhance a client's reputation and coordinating media events to provide positive exposure. Excellent comprehension skills are necessary to navigate the complexities of the sports industry and communicate messages to various stakeholders. Overall, sports PR professionals play a crucial role in shaping and maintaining a positive public image for their clients.

Large-scale athletic events serve as a fantastic platform for the execution of public relations strategies, and special events are among the greatest ways to interact with most social groups. Additionally, one of the most crucial aspects of marketing sports is leisure time activity, and practitioners of sport communication must keep this in mind. In addition to generating revenue, the goal of planning large-scale or small-scale events is to encourage participation in sports and a healthy lifestyle. These chances are also used to build new sports facilities and renovate existing ones, which are then utilized by neighborhood sports teams. In conclusion, this field merits consideration and will only become larger in the future given the current trend and rate of development in the sports industry.

Conflicts of inerests

The authors declare no conflict of interest

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