

# Sport Marketing

Paul Blakey



LearningMatters

interesting environment for sport marketers to manipulate and use as a context to reach the broader sport market (see Figure 1.1).

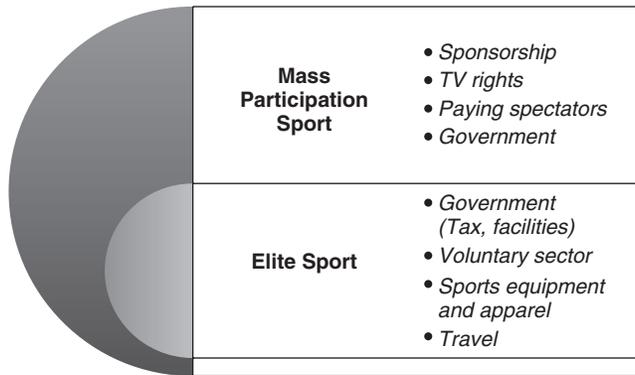


Figure 1.1 The sport market (adapted from Gratton and Taylor, 2000)

## The special nature of sport marketing

At the professional level, sport is entertainment; where hard cash and chunks of our time are exchanged for a suspension of our real lives. Consumption of sport at this level is an investment in a special human experience. Professional sport has special characteristics that create unique experiences for each sport spectator, as identified by Mullin et al. (2007):

- *An intangible, ephemeral, experiential, and subjective nature:* sport is live not bottled; sport is open to interpretation and debated; sport trades on memories; the benefits of sport are difficult to consume.
- *Strong personal and emotional identification:* sport fosters high levels of passion and commitment from its supporters. Team and player attachment emerges once a passion for sport takes hold.
- *Simultaneous production and consumption:* seats that are not sold for a live sport event are lost forever, so pre-sales are very important. This perishability means that creative ways to 'sell out the stadium' are vital to generating revenues.
- *Dependence on social facilitation:* how frequently do you practise sport or go to a sport event alone? Sport brings people together in a public setting and generates interaction which enhances enjoyment of the activity.
- *Inconsistency and predictability:* the outcome of the game is always in doubt right up until the end of the game (well almost). Competitive sports leagues try to engineer this element, but weather, rivalries, crowd response, injuries, refereeing decisions and form can all create uncertain outcomes which result in an enhanced level of excitement for the crowd.
- *Core-product control beyond sport marketer's hands:* sport creates winners and losers, but who wants to see a losing team perform each week? Making rule/safety changes to sports shows a minimal level of control if it results in excitement gains, but it is a major challenge to present an entertainment experience in an activity where there can only be one winner.