

Andrzej SMOLEŃ

Józef Piłsudski University of Physical Education in Warsaw

Zbigniew PAWLAK

Warsaw School of Economics

Marketing Strategies of Professional Sports Clubs^{*}

Abstract

The aim of the work was recognition of marketing strategies realized by professional football, basketball, volleyball and speedway clubs. During identification of marketing strategies we made use of achievements and assumptions of the so-called evolutionary school of strategic management, which show that the strategy of an organization emerges during its activity and is conditioned by history, influences from the environment and organization members' interests. The basic research method applied in the study is analysis of sources concerning activity of 52 professional clubs. As a result of the study there have been distinguished a number of functional strategies used by the clubs in the areas of product, price, distribution and advertising.

Keywords: marketing strategies, strategic management, professional sports clubs.

Introduction

At the beginning of the 1990s, marketing was a new issue for the majority of Polish sports clubs. The scientific literature lacked comprehensive studies in relation to sports marketing. Currently, professional sports clubs use various general, business, relational (behavioural) and functional strategies to carry out the activities of marketing the sport, where 'functional strategies are programmes concerning the functions of an enterprise that are developed on the level of the departments of a corporation and the strategic economic units' [translated from Polish]¹.

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¹ A. Stabryła, *Zarządzanie strategiczne w teorii i praktyce firmy* [*Strategic Management in Company Theory and Practice*], Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warszawa – Kraków 2000, p. 69.

Functional strategies overlap with both the general strategies and the strategies of individual businesses. They do not have strategic autonomy, as their purpose is to support a general strategy. The types of functional strategies include: marketing strategies, financial strategies, personal strategies, organisational strategies, logistical strategies, etc.

The aim of this study was to identify the marketing strategies used by professional football, basketball, volleyball and speedway clubs.

In order to identify the marketing strategies, the study used, first and foremost, the achievements and assumptions of the evolutionary school of strategic management, according to which the strategy of an organisation emerges during operation of the organisation, and is determined by its history, as well as influenced by the environment and the interests of the persons involved with the organisation². The basic research method used in this study was the analysis of the source documents indicating the functioning of 52 professional clubs between 2001 and 2011, and an analysis of the literature on the subject of the strategic management techniques.

Marketing of professional sports clubs in scientific literature

In the United States and the countries of Western Europe, many comprehensive papers on topics such as sports marketing have appeared³. Numerous publications also include papers written from a strategic perspective, e.g. *Sports Marketing: A Strategic Perspective*⁴ and *Strategic Sport Marketing*⁵. In the West, sports marketing has developed very dynamically which is why, apart from the works the reception of which is fairly easy, there are also papers that are dedicated to readers with a more advanced knowledge of this issue⁶.

In Poland, the interest in the topic of the marketing of sports clubs has increased, primarily thanks to the 'Sports Marketing Days' have been organised

² K. Oblój, *Strategia organizacji: w poszukiwaniu trwałej przewagi konkurencyjnej [Organisation Strategy: In Search of a Lasting Competitive Advantage]*, PWE, Warszawa 1998, p. 52.

³ B.G. Pitts, D.K. Stotlar, *Fundamentals of Sport Marketing* (2nd Edition), Fitness Information Technology 2002; J. Beech, S. Chadwick, *The Marketing of Sport*, Prentice Hall, Harlow 2007; B.J. Mullin, S. Hardy, W.A. Sutton, *Sport Marketing* (3rd Edition), Human Kinetics Publisher, Champaign 2007; S. Fullerton, *Sports Marketing* (2nd Edition), McGraw-Hill, Maidenhead 2009; J. Berbeka, *Marketing w sporcie [Marketing in Sport]*, AE, Kraków 2004; A. Ferrand, J.L. Chappelet, B. Séguin, *Olympic Marketing*, Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, London – New York 2012.

⁴ M.D. Shank, *Sports Marketing: A Strategic Perspective* (4th Edition), Prentice Hall, New Jersey 2008.

⁵ D. Shilbury, H. Westerbeek, S. Quick, *Strategic Sport Marketing* (2nd Edition), Allen & Unwin Academic 2004.

⁶ E.C. Schwarz, J.D. Hunter., A. Lafleur, *Advanced Theory and Practice in Sport Marketing* (2nd Edition), Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, London – New York 2013.

cyclically since 2002, and are considered to be the most important conferences on this topic in Poland.

Among the outcomes of these conferences were the following scientific publications: *Sports Marketing: Opportunities, Potential, Benefits and Threats*⁷; *Sports Marketing: Theory and Practice*⁸; *On Sport from the Marketing Perspective*⁹; *Sport & Business*¹⁰; *Marketing for Sport*¹¹; *Marketing Sport Management*¹² and *Developing a Brand in Sport*¹³.

As far as the topic of sports marketing is concerned, the publications by A. Sznajder and Z. Waśkowski are particularly noteworthy. A. Sznajder's publications are directly related to the marketing activities of professional sports clubs, and include: *Essence and Scope of Sports Marketing* (co-written with J. Mazur)¹⁴; *The Characteristic Features of the Professional Sports Market*¹⁵; *Marketing Alliances – A New Form of Business-Sport Relationship?*¹⁶; *Sports Marketing*¹⁷; *Competitive Balance in Professional Sports*¹⁸ and *Sponsorship: From a Form of Promotion to a Marketing Alliance Based on Sport*¹⁹.

⁷ H. Mruk (ed.), *Marketing sportowy – szanse, możliwości, korzyści zagrożenia* [*Sports Marketing: Opportunities, Potential, Benefits and Threats*], Prodruk, Poznań 2002.

⁸ Idem (ed.), *Marketing Sportowy – Teoria i Praktyka* [*Sports Marketing: Theory and Practice*], Impact Consulting Sp. z o.o., Poznań 2004.

⁹ H. Mruk, P. Jordanowski, P. Matecki, K. Kropielnicki (eds.), *Marketingowo o sporcie* [*On Sport from the Marketing Perspective*], Sport & Business Foundation, Poznań 2005.

¹⁰ Eidem (eds.), *Sport & Business*, Sport & Business Foundation, Poznań 2005.

¹¹ K. Kropielnicki, P. Matecki, H. Mruk (eds.), *Marketing dla sportu* [*Marketing for Sport*], Sport & Business Foundation, Poznań 2006.

¹² K. Kropielnicki, P. Matecki, H. Mruk, P. Przybylska, R. Śliwowski (eds.), *Marketingowe zarządzanie sportem* [*Marketing Sport Management*], Sport & Business Foundation, Poznań 2007.

¹³ H. Mruk, M. Chłodnicki (eds.), *Kreowanie marki w sporcie* [*Developing a Brand in Sport*], Sport & Business Foundation, Poznań 2008.

¹⁴ J. Mazur, A. Sznajder, *Istota i zakres marketingu sportu* [*Essence and Scope of Sports Marketing*], "Myśl Ekonomiczna i Prawna" ["Legal and Economic Thought"], WSHiP, 2007, No. 1/16.

¹⁵ A. Sznajder, *Charakterystyka rynku sportu profesjonalnego* [*The Characteristic Features of the Professional Sports Market*], "Gospodarka Narodowa" ["National Economy"], 2007, No. 10.

¹⁶ Idem, *Alianse marketingowe – nowa forma powiązań biznesu ze sportem?* [*Marketing Alliances – A New Form of Business-Sport Relationship?*], "Marketing i Rynek" ["Marketing and Market"] 2007, No. 7.

¹⁷ Idem, *Marketing sportu* [*Sports Marketing*], PWE, Warszawa 2008.

¹⁸ Idem, *Równowaga sił konkurentów na rynku sportu profesjonalnego* [*Competitive Balance in Professional Sports*], "Gospodarka Narodowa" ["National Economy"] 2010, No. 10.

¹⁹ Idem, *Sponsoring – od formy promocji do aliansu marketingowego na przykładzie sportu* [*Sponsorship: From a Form of Promotion to a Marketing Alliance Based on Sport*], [in:] B. Sojkin (ed.), *Uwarunkowania zarządzania sportem w Polsce* [*Determinants of Sports Management in Poland*], "Zeszyty Naukowe Uniwersytetu Ekonomicznego w Poznaniu" ["Scientific Journals of Poznań University of Economics and Business"], Poznań 2011, No. 197.

The sports marketing issues discussed by Z. Waškowski are more diversified and refer to: e.g. marketing orientations in the activities of sports clubs²⁰; building the position and the competitive advantage of clubs²¹; managing the products of sports clubs²²; shaping the image and using the brands of sports clubs²³ and the relational model of the sports market²⁴.

Extensive and important publications, due to their clear references to the activities of sports clubs in relation to the topic under discussion, also include

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- ²⁰ Z. Waškowski, *Orientacja marketingowa w działalności klubów sportowych* [*Marketing Orientation in the Functioning of Sports Clubs*], [in:] H. Mruk (ed.), *Marketing sportowy: możliwości, szanse, korzyści, zagrożenia* [*Sports Marketing: Opportunities, Potential, Benefits and Threats*], Prodruk, Poznań 2003; idem, *Marketing w sporcie – sport w marketingu* [*Marketing in Sports, Sports in Marketing*], [in:] L. Garbarski (ed.), *Kontrowersje wokół marketingu w Polsce. Tożsamość, etyka, przyszłość* [*Controversies around Marketing in Poland. Identity, Ethics and Future*], WSPiZ im. L. Koźmińskiego, Warszawa 2004; idem, *Uwarunkowania oraz metody wdrażania orientacji marketingowej w klubach sportowych w Polsce* [*Determinants and Methods of Implementing Marketing Orientation in Sports Clubs in Poland*], "Marketing i Rynek" ["Marketing and Market"] 2006, No. 4; idem, *Uwarunkowania i sposoby wdrażania orientacji marketingowej w klubach sportowych* [*Conditions and Methods of Implementation Marketing Orientation in Sports Clubs*], "Akademia Ekonomiczna w Poznaniu. Prace habilitacyjne" ["Academy of Economics in Poznań. Habilitation Theses"] 2007, No. 32.
- ²¹ Idem, *Budowa przewagi konkurencyjnej klubu sportowego* [*Building a Competitive Advantage of a Sports Club*], [in:] D. Dąbrowski (ed.), *Marketing. Rozwój działań* [*Marketing. Development of Actions*], Wydział Zarządzania i Ekonomii, Politechnika Gdańska, Gdańsk 2010.
- ²² Idem, *Zarządzanie produktem sportowym na przykładzie KKS Lech Poznań* [*Product Management Based on Case Study of the KKS Lech Poznań*], [in:] J. Kall, B. Sojkin (eds.), *Zarządzanie produktem: teoria, praktyka, perspektywy* [*Product Management: Theory, Practice and Perspectives*], Wydawnictwo Akademii Ekonomicznej, Poznań 2008.
- ²³ Idem, *Determinanty skuteczności zarządzania sponsoringiem sportowym w kontekście kształtowania wizerunku organizacji* [*Determinants of the Effectiveness of Sport Sponsorship Management in the Context of Shaping the Image of an Organisation*], [in:] G. Rosa, A. Smalec (eds.), *Marketing przyszłości: trendy, strategie, instrumenty: media w kreowaniu wizerunku* [*Marketing of the Future: Trends, Strategies and Tools: Media in Creating an Image*], "Zeszyty Naukowe Uniwersytetu Szczecińskiego" ["Scientific Journals of University of Szczecin"], Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu Szczecińskiego, Szczecin 2005, No. 414; idem, *Licencjonowanie marki sportowej – istota i warunki sukcesu* [*Licensing a Sports Brand: the Essence and Conditions of Success*], "Marketing i Rynek" ["Marketing and Market"] 2005, No. 9; idem, *Marka sportowa – kształtowanie i możliwości jej wykorzystania* [*Sports Brands: Shaping and Possibilities of its Use*], [in:] J. Kall, B. Sojkin (eds.), *Zarządzanie produktem-wyzwania przyszłości* [*Product Management: Challenges of the Future*], Wydawnictwo Akademii Ekonomicznej, Poznań 2006.
- ²⁴ Idem, *Relacyjny model rynku sportowego i jego implikacje* [*Relational Model of the Sports Market and its Implications*], "Świat Marketingu" ["World of Marketing"], February 2005; idem, *Architektura relacji biznesowych na rynku sportowym* [*Architecture of Business Relations on the Sports Market*], [in:] P. Kwiatek, G. Leszczyński, M. Zieliński (eds.), *Wyzwania dla marketingu sprzedaży na rynku B2B* [*Challenges for the Marketing of Sales on the B2B Market*], Wydawnictwo Advertiva s.c., Poznań 2005.

a work by R. Panfil entitled *Managing the Products of a Sports Club*²⁵ a collective work edited by K. Perechuda entitled *Marketing Management in a Sports Organisation*²⁶; J. Klisiński's book *Marketing in the Sports Business*²⁷; *Theory and Practice of Marketing in Sport and the Sports Business* edited by J. Klisiński²⁸ and *Public Relations in Sport* edited by P. Godlewski, W. Rydzak and J. Trębecki²⁹.

Furthermore, two books with the same title, *Marketing in Sport*, written by J. Berbeka³⁰ and by R. Misiolowski³¹, can be found among the published materials.

General characteristics of the sports market in Poland

In order to identify the strategies and principles of the professional sports clubs functioning in Poland, it is necessary to understand the nature of the sports market. The sports market, according to A. Sznajder, is a peculiar market whose 'peculiarity is manifest though the following traits:

- sports organisations, as entities operating in the sports market, are heavily diversified in terms of their supplies;
- the aims of a sports organisation are significantly more diversified than the aims of an enterprise operating in another industry;
- professional sports clubs, on the one hand, are in strong competition with one another, but on the other hand they are dependent on one another;
- the decisions made by the managers of sports organisations are very quickly judged by both fans and by the media;
- the sports market is a doubly dual market, i.e. sports organisations operate simultaneously in the sports market (where the buyers of products are individual consumers) and in the advertising and sponsorship market (with institutional buyers) – thus, they are applying two different business models: B2C (Business-to-Consumer) and B2B (Business-to-Business);
- the sports market is a regulated market, that is, the clubs (enterprises) not only have to take into consideration the general regulations, but also the regulations that apply to their particular sport;

²⁵ R. Panfil, *Zarządzanie Produktem Klubu Sportowego [Managing the Products of a Sports Club]*, Wyższa Szkoła Edukacji w Sporcie, Warszawa 1995.

²⁶ K. Perechuda (ed.), *Zarządzanie Marketingiem w Organizacji Sportowej [Marketing Management in a Sports Organisation]*, AWF, Warszawa 2003.

²⁷ J. Klisiński, *Marketing w biznesie sportowym [Marketing in the Sports Business]*, WSEiA w Bytomiu, Bytom 2008.

²⁸ Idem (ed.), *Teoria i praktyka marketing w sporcie i biznesie sportowym [Theory and Practice of Marketing in Sport and the Sports Business]*, WSEiA w Bytomiu, Bytom 2008.

²⁹ P. Godlewski, W. Rydzak, J. Trębecki (eds.), *Public relations w sporcie [Public Relations in Sport]*, Sport & Business Foundation, Poznań 2010.

³⁰ J. Berbeka, *Marketing w sporcie [Marketing in Sport]*, AE, Kraków 2004.

³¹ R. Misiolowski, *Marketing w sporcie [Marketing in Sport]*, Promotor, Kraków 2005.

— sports fans, as buyers, have specific traits – they are characterised by an attachment to and loyalty towards their club, and usually want to have an influence on the club’s functioning’ [translated from Polish]³².

Equalising the sports levels between clubs leads to an increase in the clubs’ profits from ticket sales. ‘The initial complementary nature of the sport and economic goals may become transformed into competitiveness. Striving to achieve increasingly higher sports aims involves the necessity of incurring larger costs, e.g. transfers of sportspeople, which may lead to a decrease of the financial fluidity and to the sports club becoming indebted’ [translated from the Polish]³³.

The factors that influence the power balance between competing sports clubs include: market potential, organisation of a league, number of clubs in a league, clubs’ profits from participating in international competitions, system for the sales of broadcasting rights to the media, type of sport discipline, etc. ‘If a club continues its deliberate excessive spending in order to improve its competition results, this may lead to a huge debt or even bankruptcy’ [translated from Polish]³⁴.

The conditions of a market economy also cause sports clubs to change their manner of functioning. ‘A fairly short time that the studied entities had to carry out their reorientation caused them to use the marketing in a random and uncoordinated way. There is a lack of well-thought-out and systemic solutions to enable the decomposition of the functions, both the previous ones and those that had to be undertaken due to changes in the club environments’ [translated from Polish]³⁵.

Marketing strategies of professional sports clubs in light of the research

The marketing strategies of professional sports clubs can be divided into: product strategies, pricing strategies, distribution strategies and promotion strategies.

Product strategies

The basic products of a professional sports club include: sports services in the form of sporting events, advertising services, media services (sales of the

³² A. Sznajder, *Charakterystyka rynku sportu profesjonalnego* [*The Characteristic Features of the Professional Sports Market*], “Gospodarka Narodowa” [“National Economy”] 2007, No. 10, p. 62–63.

³³ Idem, *Równowaga sił konkurentów na rynku sportu profesjonalnego* [*Competitive Balance in Professional Sports*], “Gospodarka Narodowa” [“National Economy”] 2010, No. 10, p. 84.

³⁴ Ibidem, p. 93.

³⁵ Z. Waśkowski, *Uwarunkowania i sposoby wdrażania orientacji marketingowej w klubach sportowych* [*Conditions and Methods of Implementation Marketing Orientation in Sports Clubs*], “Akademia Ekonomiczna w Poznaniu. Prace habilitacyjne” [“Academy of Economics in Poznań. Habilitation Theses”] 2007, No. 32, p. 203.

broadcasting rights for sporting events) and transfer services (sales of the rights to a sportsperson).

The sales of these products (services) bring in a profit to the sports club. Due to the importance of each source of income for the activities of the club, it can be concluded that football, basketball, volleyball and speedway clubs aim to obtain high profits from: advertising activities, sales of the rights to television broadcasts, sales of tickets and passes for sporting events, and transfers of sportspersons.

The profits from the sales of advertising services to sponsors and advertisers constitute the foundation for the existence of a considerable number of clubs. In the case of the top football clubs, these profits can amount to approximately 50% of the club's overall profit, and in the case of some basketball and volleyball clubs, the share is even higher than 80%.

The income from the sales of tickets, passes and gadgets constitutes anything between several to about a dozen percent of the overall profit. This share of the profit depends on the sports discipline, the club's placement in competitions, the popularity a given sports discipline in the region, the weather conditions, etc. In team sports, the income from the sales of tickets and passes for matches in team sports is usually much lower than the income gained from advertisements.

The income from transfers is also considerable and exceeds 20% of the entire income.

The highest long-term income obtained from transfers was primarily achieved by the biggest football clubs, such as: Legia Warszawa, KKS Lech Poznań, Wisła Kraków, Zagłębie Lubin and KSP Polonia Warszawa. In some years, this income exceeds ten million zloty. Other types of clubs that obtain considerable long-term income from transfers include the Wrocław Basketball Society and the Polonia Bydgoszcz Speedway Club.

The income from the provision of other services was the highest in Hutnik Kraków S.A., BKS Bełchatów S.A., KS Piotrcovia and Amica Sport S.A.

The strategy of obtaining income from selling the rights to the television broadcasts of international competitions was effectively carried out only by the strongest clubs. However, some of the large football clubs, such as Legia Warszawa, obtained 20–40% of their income by selling these rights.

Club fans constitute a group of special importance for a club as the direct viewers of the sporting events. Efforts to increase the income from the sales of tickets and passes was one of the reasons for a merger between Amica Sport and WKP Lech Poznań and the transferring of the company headquarters from Wronki to Poznań, where many more people would come to watch the matches.

Some sports clubs increase their income from ticket sales by organising spectacular sports competitions. For instance, Unia Leszno organised the European Grand Prix and the Team World Cup Qualifications, as part of an agreement with BSI Speedway Ltd. Another entity, the Zielona Góra Speedway Club, obtained income by organising the Polish edition of the Speedway Grand Prix.

However, the strategy of obtaining income through sales of tickets, passes and club souvenirs can only be conducted successfully by the strongest clubs that have modern sports facilities (stadiums, halls), as well as strong and well-organised fan clubs.

Almost all clubs engaged in sportsmen transfers. The strategy of obtaining an income through such transfers is particularly characteristic of football clubs.

The product strategies of professional sports clubs can also be divided according to the number and the quality of the products.

In terms of the number of the offered products, we can distinguish:

1. the strategy with few services; and
2. the diversified strategies.

In the case of the first type of strategy, the clubs mainly focus their attention on one or two products, e.g. on sales of tickets and passes for sports matches.

In the case of the strategy featuring diversified product offers the number of services is not limited to sales of tickets and passes, but also includes advertising services, media services, services not related to the sport, etc.

Furthermore, in terms of the quality of the offered products, we can distinguish:

1. the strategy with fairly low quality services oriented towards mass recipients; and
2. the strategy with a fairly high quality of service that are aimed at more demanding (most often wealthy and important) recipients.

The strategy that involves high quality products can be applied to various products (sporting events, advertisements, etc.). Increasing the quality of the service often takes place through the development of a product. Some clubs approach the strategy of product development (offering advertising services) in a very professional manner due to the crucial share of the clubs' profit structure that derives from advertising income.

The products not related to sport, but sold to natural and legal persons by sports clubs in various markets include: production activities, maintenance and renovation activities, staffing of outdoor sports facilities, marketing activities, hotel and catering services, rentals of sports facilities, security of people and property, sales of payment cards and credit cards, renting fixed properties not related to sport, transportation services, etc. Some companies (usually those that do not have advertisers) carry out business activities that involve rentals of premises and sports facilities. Choosing the right product strategy can have a significant effect on the financial condition of a club. For example, the strategy oriented towards a quick profit from the transfer of a sportsman could lead to a loss of valuable human capital and a decrease in the club's sporting achievements, and consequently could even cause the club to become indebted and go bankrupt.

Pricing strategies

In the area of the marketing activities of professional sports clubs, the prices for the services are also of great importance. In the case of ticket sales, sports clubs take into account a number of criteria for the price diversification. The prices are usually diversified according to: the place (seating section and area) that a fan occupies during a match; the purchase time (the earlier fans make a purchase the less money they pay); and the class of a match, i.e. the class of the rival (Polish Ekstraklasa or Ekstraklasa TOP). Furthermore, reduced-fare tickets are distributed which, in the case of some clubs, can variously be used by children up to a certain age, schoolchildren and students up to 26 years old, seniors over 60 years of age, persons with disabilities and women.

In the case of the sales of passes, the prices are diversified according to seating section, purchase time and repeated purchases (fan loyalty).

In the case of football clubs, a VIP area is usually sectioned off from the main viewing space. Marking off such places around the spectator areas of football stadiums usually does not cause organisational problems. In speedway, and in basketball and volleyball clubs, the sections are marked with colours (e.g. green, blue, yellow and red areas) or a letter of the alphabet (e.g. A, B, C and D). The prices of the services for the fans in each section differ according to the quality of the view that is provided. In speedway clubs, the most expensive tickets are for seats in the main stand, which is the best viewing spot for speedway races.

In practice, professional sports clubs carry out the following pricing strategies:

1. prestige pricing strategy;
2. low pricing strategy; and
3. diversified pricing strategy.

The prestige pricing strategy is carried out in the case of sales of high quality prestige and luxury products, e.g. VIP tickets for the best and most comfortable seating locations in sports facilities (in the stands and the central sections), as well as through the sales of prestige immaterial and legal content, e.g. the rights to a club's name, logos, etc.

The strategy of offering low prices is applied to increase the number of sales (penetration of the environment), e.g. the sales of tickets for sports matches with a low level of prestige in order to raise the public's interest in a local club, and the sales of club gadgets and souvenirs for the same purpose. This strategy is carried out by newly-created clubs and by clubs with a lower ranking in competitions, especially in environments without an established tradition of participating in sporting events. Low prices are also applicable to children, persons with disabilities and carers assisting the disabled.

The strategy of differentiation through prices (diversified pricing) is widely used to differentiate the offers according to various criteria (the attractiveness of the seating location, the rank of a sporting event, etc.). In general, one can say that the price depends on the quality of the provided service.

Practically none of the studied sports companies used the neutral pricing strategy, which is normally applied when the criteria for the pricing diversification in the same market are not taken into account, e.g. the sales of tickets or passes for sporting events are sold for the same prices. However, this type of strategy is used by clubs that sell their services for a symbolic price to the disabled and their carers.

Distribution strategies

Distribution is a process that involves the planning, execution and control of a physical flow of materials and end-products from the place of manufacture to the place where they are sold. In the case of professional sports clubs, distribution encompasses, first and foremost, the actions that are connected with overcoming the spatial and temporal differences between the areas of a product's manufacturing and its sales location. This primarily takes place through the following processes: the flow of tickets and passes for sports matches; the flow of club gadgets, souvenirs and magazines from the producers to their outlets; and the distribution of food products to the people that attend sporting events from their place of manufacture to the place of their consumption (e.g. to the VIP box). Furthermore, a specific form of distribution at sports clubs involves the transport of the 'actors' and the equipment for the event itself (e.g. the motorcycles for speedway racers).

Just as in other enterprises, three distribution strategies can be observed in professional sports clubs: the intensive distribution strategy; the selective distributions strategy; and the exclusive distribution strategy.

The intensive distribution strategy involves offering the products of a club (mainly tickets and passes; but also club gadgets, souvenirs and magazines) at as many points of sale as possible (e.g. in points near the club facilities; through specialised sales offices and kiosks; at schools and work places; in the streets, etc.).

The selective distribution strategy occurs when a given product is offered in a limited number of places (e.g. the distribution of selected club gadgets and certain food products only in areas accessible to special guests and VIPs).

The exclusive distribution strategy takes place when the sales are carried out by only one seller (e.g. in the office of a club). This also concerns products that are purchased by clients fairly infrequently (e.g. credit cards and payment cards that some clubs prepare in collaboration with banks)³⁶.

The strategies for product distribution (mainly tickets, passes, club souvenirs and magazines) are oriented at minimising the distribution costs through, for example, distributing the products on the Internet.

³⁶ For instance, in 2006, KP Legia Warszawa S.A. prepared credit cards and payment cards for the first time in collaboration with Dominet Bank S.A.

Promotional strategies

The promotional strategies used by professional sports clubs involve various activities aimed primarily at building a good reputation.

Traditionally, a promotional activity is oriented towards building a positive image of the club and, sometimes, also a stronger brand. This is achieved by such means as: using an Internet site; the sales of club gadgets and souvenirs; issuing club magazines; and meetings between the representatives of a club and the local community, including children and young people from schools and orphanages.

The official Internet site of a sports club contains essential information about the history of the club and their sports achievements over the years, including their performance in international competitions. These websites also offer essential information for the fans that want to use the services rendered by the club, e.g. information about purchasing tickets and passes.

Alongside the traditional promotional activities for the purpose of building an image and a strong brand of a club, some sports clubs extend the actions that are aimed at expanding their brand to other industries through selling the right to use their names, emblems, logos and colours. As a result of such commercial agreements with companies representing other industries, a strong sports brand can be transferred to products in the clothing, food and banking industry.

The main promotional strategies of professional sports clubs include:

1. the strategy of building a positive image of the club through various public relations techniques;
2. the strategy of building (shaping) a brand through sports achievements, increasing the club's reputation and increasing the fan attachment (loyalty) to the club; and
3. the strategy of expanding a strong club brand to other industries.

Practically all clubs employ the traditional strategy of creating a positive image, which can involve using various PR methods. One of the indicators of the effectiveness of a PR strategy is the number of publications that appear in the media (in the press and on the Internet). The majority of clubs considered owning a professionally-created website as an important asset, and some clubs also post videos on their websites.

Another popular means of shaping a positive image involves the clubs' participation in various social and charitable actions (e.g. the Great Orchestra of Christmas Charity [Polish: Wielka Orkiestra Świątecznej Pomocy]; the commemoration of the Warsaw Uprising; the 'Safe Stadium' action [Polish: Bezpieczny stadion]; the 'Let's Kick Racism out of the Stadiums' campaign [Polish: Wykopmy rasizm ze stadionów]; the 'One Club, One Team' action [Polish: Jeden klub, jedna drużyna]; other outdoor actions; and educational actions in schools and orphanages), etc.

The strategy of building (shaping) a strong brand can be carried out by any club, with the reservation that it can involve building the brand from a different perspective (e.g. a brand in a local perspective or a regional perspective). Building a brand in a national perspective is only carried out by top-ranking clubs, and is usually done by applying the strategy of attachment (loyalty) to the brand or through the strategy of the club's reputation. Only the clubs that have achieved significant successes in international tournaments can afford to build a brand in an international perspective.

The strategy of building a club with a strong brand is carried out through spectacular sports achievements, building an image of an ethical company (corruption-free and financially transparent) and through collaborations with the local external environment. In order to build a strong brand, some clubs have decided to ensure full financial transparency by making their debut on the stock market (Ruch Chorzów S.A., Gieksa S.A.).

The best known examples of the strategy of expanding a sports brand to other areas include the manufacturing of common credit and payment cards, which has been performed as part of an agreement between some clubs from the Polish Ekstraklasa league and Dominet Bank.

Conclusions

1. This study showed that the basic products of professional sports clubs include: sports services in the form of sporting events, advertising services, media services (selling the right to broadcast sporting events), transfer services (selling the rights to sportsmen) and trade services (selling club souvenirs and sports gadgets). The product strategies that are applied vary according to the quantity and quality of the products.
2. In practice, all professional sports clubs carry out the strategy of diversified pricing for the services they offer. In the case of selling prestige and luxurious products of a high quality, the prestige pricing strategy is also applied.
3. In the process of selling tickets and passes for sports matches, as well as club gadgets and souvenirs, and in the sales of catering products, the strategy of intensive, selective or exclusive distribution is carried out in order to minimise costs, e.g. by distributing these services through the Internet.
4. The clubs included in this study used the following promotional strategies: building a positive image through various PR techniques; shaping a sports brand through sporting achievements; raising the reputation of the club and the fan loyalty, and expanding (transferring) a strong club brand to other industries.
5. Based on an analysis of the selected cases, three basic strategies for organising the marketing activities in sports clubs can be distinguished: strategies

carried out by an organisation on its own (e.g. directly by the management of a club, or by a marketing unit and the staff of a club including its sportsmen and sportswomen); strategies carried out as part of the external services system (for example, pertaining to the outsourcing system, or the stakeholders of a club (e.g. VIPs, or devoted fans)); and mixed strategies (performed by an organisation on its own and with the help of the external environment).

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