

IPC Sport Classification Systems and the Public Perception of the Paralympic Games: Implications on Marketing, Media Coverage and the Management of the Games

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OUTLINE

- Overview of Sport Classification Systems
- Defining Brand Equity
- Public Perception (Image)
- Implications on Marketing, Media Coverage and Management
- Critical Issues
- Recommendations

Common Categories - Regarding Classification Systems in Sport

- Gender
- Age
- Size (Weight/Height)
- Rank (Performance – Ability)
- Equipment
- National Grouping
- Pro – Amateur
- National Grouping
- Minimal Disability (Qualification Criteria)

Paralympic Quiz #1

How many 100 meter dash Paralympic champions were there at the 2000 Sydney Paralympic Games?

Paralympic Quiz #2

How many short distance Paralympic champions in cross country skiing will there be at the 2006 Torino Paralympic Games?

Quiz #3

- How many gold medal teams were there in the Paralympic Sled Hockey competition of the 2002 Salt Lake Games?



Defining Brand Equity

- Brand equity has been defined as a set of assets such as name awareness, loyal customers, perceived quality, and associations that are “. . . Linked to a brand, its name and symbol, that add to or subtract from the value provided by a product or service” (Aaker, 1991).

Defining Brand Equity

- Perceived Quality
 - Customers judgments of a product's overall excellence relative to its intended purpose (Aaker, 1991).
 - Concept of “bestness”
- Brand Awareness
 - Is the likelihood and ease with which a brand name will be recalled (Keller, 1993). The anchor from which other associations can be attached (I.e., brand associations)
- Brand Loyalty
 - Ability to attract and retain customers.

Antecedents of Equity

NATIONAL TEAM RELATED ANTECEDENTS

- Success
- Major Personalities
 - High Profile Coaches
 - Star Athletes

ORGANIZATIONAL – RELATED ANTECEDENTS

- Reputation and Tradition
- Event Schedule
- Entertainment Package/Product Delivery

Consequences of Brand Equity

- National/International Media Exposure
- Merchandise Sales
- Donor Contributions
- Corporate Support
- Atmosphere (intangibles)
- Ticket Sales

Branding & Perception

- Who are we?
- What do we do?
- How do we do it?
- Who knows this?

Challenges to the Paralympics as a Brand

- *Perceived Quality* of Competition
- *Brand Awareness* of Paralympics in the “Shadow” of the Olympic Games
- Confusion in *Brand Association* between Special Olympics and Paralympics
- Development of *Brand Loyalty* given Olympic “Fatigue Factor” for Media and Spectators Interested in Paralympics

Common Perceptions of Paralympic Classification Systems: Sources

Secondary Sources

- Media clippings (print and electronic)

Primary Sources

- Interviews with sport managers from national, international sport federations, and National Olympic Committees

Common Perceptions of Paralympic Classification Systems

- Negative
- Lack of Understanding/Confusion
- Funding Concerns
- Legitimacy Concerns

Common Questions Raised About Paralympic Classification Systems

- Why so many classifications?
- Can classifications be combined?
- How is this elite sport?

EXAMPLE: Conflict of Perception

....And while the USOC does pay Paralympic Athletes smaller bonuses for winning medals, Seibel said that's because of the Paralympics 100 meter race, the USOC wants to stay within budget.

Quote from Daryl Seibel, Director of Public Relations, US Olympic Committee in Denver Post article regarding recent lawsuit brought by three Paralympic athletes over equity of funding and athlete support related to rationale of USOC funding formulas for Paralympic sport

Critical Context of Paralympic Sport as Elite Sport

Marginalization

vs.

Legitimatization

Implications on Marketing, Media, Management

- Difficult to market so many classifications
- Difficult to attract corporate sponsorship
- Difficult to market a "sport" focus rather than inspirational
- Media has difficulty covering so many classifications
- Managing so many classifications is difficult and expensive

Critical Contextual Factors Influencing Public Perception of Paralympic Sport as a Brand

- Perceived Level and Quality of Competition
- Critical Mass (e.g., # of Competitors)
- Athlete as Specialists vs. Generalists
- Athletes able to compete in open competition within chosen sport

Re-Branding?

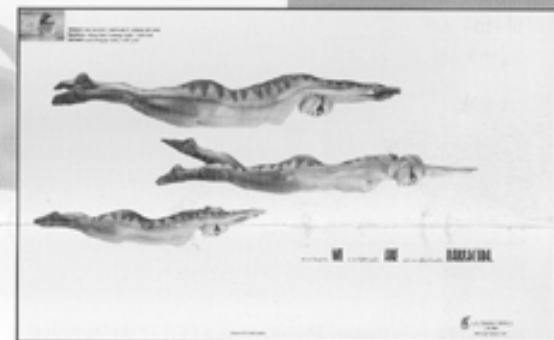
- Paralympic Ad Campaign – US Paralympics
- Paralympians are Cheetah, Barracuda and Avalanche
 - Produced by Russ Haan:
After Hours Creative



Sprinter Marlon Shirley painted a cheetah



Skier Chris Waddell turned into an avalanche



Swimmers Kendra Berner, Erin Popovich and Trisha Zorn portrayed as a school of barracuda

Critical Issues

- How to balance the marketing of Paralympic sport while accommodating the needs and interests of different disability groups?
- Can a classification system (e.g., the percentage or factor-system used in nordic skiing) be developed and meet the standards of fair play?

Recommendations

- Education of Critical Stakeholders
- Further Research on Classification Systems with respect to issues of fair play (e.g., Add Biomechanical and Exercise Physiological Studies to Longitudinal Performance Regression Data)
- Brand-related Research (Marketing and Media of Paralympic Sports)

What is the Point of All This?

Respect

&

Understanding

**Any
Questions
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