

A Service Ecosystem Experience-Based Framework for Sport Marketing

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Abstract

Traditional theories in sport marketing limit the context of the sport experience to firm–customer encounters or the consumer’s individual sphere of practices. Our paper responds to recent calls for developing conceptual frameworks that better explain sport market exchanges. Specifically, we aim to contribute to sport marketing by attempting to provide a deeper understanding of sport experiences and the context that frames exchanges in sports. To accomplish this objective, we propose an integrative framework that combines the service-dominant logic ecosystem perspective with consumer culture theory. We broaden the context of the sport experience by applying a service-ecosystems perspective and identify five factors that influence sport experiences from this extended context – historical meaning; tribal logics; rituals and socialization processes; value-in-subcultural-context; and the co-construction/co-destruction of context. The proposed integrative framework directs researchers and managers toward an extended, rich context that is reproduced through the co-creation of value and influences evaluations of sport experiences.

Keywords: Sport experience, Service-dominant logic, Consumer culture theory, Value co-creation, Value-in-context

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'We don't sell the game; we sell unique, emotional experiences. We are not in the business of selling basketball. We are in the business of giving you a chance to create shared experiences'.

Mark Cuban, Owner of Dallas Mavericks

INTRODUCTION

Sport marketing, as a relatively new and dynamic field, is trying to find its position in the epistemological sphere to guide managerial practices by either adapting traditional marketing theories (Alexandris & Tsotsou, 2012) or by integrating theories and models from various other fields, such as economics, management, and sociology (Downard, Dawson, & Dejonghe, 2009; Chelladurai, 2013; Cunningham, 2013; Amestica, 2015).

Traditional sport marketing theories are still product-centered (products include both tangible goods and intangible services and are considered units of output – known as goods-dominant logic, GDL). According to these perspectives, sport is a product (good, service, or both) produced by sport organizations/businesses. Sport organizations are considered the producers and the providers of sport products, and sport consumers are the receivers and purchasers of these products (Fullerton & Merz, 2008; Mason, 1999; Schaaf, 1995). Woratschek et al. (2014) also recognized that “most approaches to sport economics and to sport management

are grounded in GDL, as they interpret sport as something that is ‘produced’” (p. 8). Thus, much of the sport marketing literature has taken a GDL approach, disregarding the evolution of the service literature (Vargo & Lusch, 2004, 2016).

Moreover, conventional sport marketing theories focus on sport firms’ value propositions and therefore neglect how value co-creation is derived and sport experiences are shaped among multiple actors. For example, it has been suggested that because the “core” sport product (game outcome uncertainty) cannot be controlled, sports marketers should focus on game-related factors that appeal to all potential customers (Kochman 1995; Sutton & Parrett, 1992) (e.g. the customer experience for fans who attend games (Branch, 1992)). Although research shows that team performance or fan loyalty depend upon spectators’ experience at a stadium (Wakefield & Sloan, 1995), the role of sport fans in creating these experiences somewhat has been overlooked (Mason, 1999).

In addition, although sport is a social/cultural phenomenon (Jarvis, 2006), sport marketing research is mostly confined to studying sport consumption experiences at the individual level, disregarding their historical, social, tribal, and cultural context. Thus, various studies in the sport marketing literature have focused on individual sport consumers (Alexandris & Tsotsou, 2012; Kochman 1995; Sutton & Parrett, 1992; Wakefield & Sloan, 1995) while limited attentions has been given to the collective nature of sport and the historical, social, tribal, and cultural aspects of sport experiences (Canniform & Shankar, 2011).

We argue that sport marketing needs an integrative framework that will a) be in line with the evolution of sports, sport marketing, and service literature; b) approach market exchanges in sports holistically and encompass its dual idiosyncratic role (marketing of and through sports); and c) enable deeper understanding of co-created sport experiences. We aim to contribute to sport

marketing theory by deliberating it from traditional views. Therefore, we propose an integrative framework for sport marketing by approaching it from the service-dominant logic (SDL)-based service ecosystem perspective informed by consumer culture theory (CCT).

Recognizing the limitations of traditional marketing and the emerging and challenging trends in the marketplace, Vargo and Lusch (2004) advanced a service-centered view known as SDL as an alternative and more comprehensive approach in explaining value co-creation in market exchanges. A basic tenet of SDL is that value is co-created among multiple social/economic actors, including the beneficiary, who also determines it, rather than it being embedded in the offering by the firm (Vargo & Lusch, 2004, 2008a). Thus, SDL informs sport marketing that a service is exchanged in sports and the distinction of sport products into goods and services does not reflect the evolution of value propositions in sports. Over the years, SDL has evolved into a more systemic and dynamic view by introducing the concept of a service ecosystem, which focuses on the interactions and exchanges of service among various stakeholders (Vargo & Lusch, 2011). The SDL-based service ecosystem perspective provides an ideal conceptual framework for a holistic view of sports, where interactions and exchanges of service (marketing of and through sports) occur among various stakeholders (e.g. sport organizations, sponsors, media, customers) at various levels of the sport service ecosystem (micro, meso, and macro). *Service ecosystems* are “relatively self-contained, self-adjusting systems of resource-integrating actors connected by shared institutional arrangements and mutual value creation through service exchanges” (Vargo & Lusch 2016, p. 11).

SDL has extended the concept of “value in use” to “value in context” (Edvardsson et al., 2011; Vargo, 2009; Vargo, Lusch, Akaka, & He, 2010), while recent works informed by CCT point to “value-in-cultural-context” (Akaka, Vargo, & Lusch, 2013; Akaka, Vargo, & Schau,

2015). The “value-in-cultural-context” view describes the culturally rich and complex contexts of the service experience in which value is co-created by multiple beneficiaries and delineates the idiosyncratic nature of value in dynamic social and cultural contexts in service ecosystems (Akaka et al., 2015). Sport as a social and cultural phenomenon provides an ideal context where experiences are co-created; therefore, CCT could inform SDL on the historical, social, and cultural aspects of sport experiences.

The objectives of the paper are twofold: a) to propose an experience-based integrative framework for sport marketing and b) to identify and examine all aspects that frame service exchanges in sports to better understand how value is determined and experiences are evaluated in this context. We accomplish our goals by: a) proposing the application of an SDL ecosystem-based perspective in sports; b) identifying major differences between traditional sport marketing approaches and SDL; c) providing an understanding of the extended context of sport experiences by integrating SDL and CCT; and d) identifying all relevant aspects of sport experiences that frame value co-creation in sports. We argue that an SDL ecosystem-based view provides a more holistic understanding of sport markets by approaching sport marketing on all levels (micro, meso, and macro) and from various types of relationships (marketing of/through sports; dyadic, triadic, and complex). In addition to the *social and cultural aspects* addressed by Akaka et al. (2015), CCT informs SDL regarding the *historical (nostalgia) and tribal aspects* of consumption (e.g. temporary escape, between-member identification, shared experiences and emotions, and lack of formal structures and membership) and explains value co-creation in sport experiences in greater depth. Moreover, drawing from CCT, we use the term “*value-in-subcultural-context*” because it precisely defines the level of analysis of sport experiences (meso level) and argues

they are an amalgam of historical, tribal, social, and cultural elements, which all contribute to the richness and complexity of the context and value co-creation in the sport service ecosystem.

Following, we provide an overview of sport marketing and SDL and the implications of SDL's main axioms for sports in understanding co-created sport experiences. Moreover, we link SDL to the service ecosystem theoretical framework and integrate both with CCT to explain how the influences and relationships developed among actors create the meaning of consumption in sport experiences and co-create value through resource integration in this particular subcultural context. Finally, we analyze and explain the role of social, cultural, historical, and tribal aspects of consumption to gain an in-depth understanding of sport experiences.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The Field of Sport Marketing

Sport marketing has been recognized as distinct and complex marketing as far back as the initiation of the discipline in the 1970s. Early marketing scholars separated the study of sport marketing from general marketing because of its seemingly unique features, including no control over the outcome of a sport/event, the collaboration and competition between sport organizations, and consumers' fanaticism, which goes beyond loyalty (Fullerton & Merz, 2008; Mason, 1999; Parkhouse, 2005). Sport marketing refers to "an ongoing process through which a contest with an uncertain outcome is staged, creating opportunities for the simultaneous fulfilment of objectives among sport customers, sport businesses, participants and other related individuals, groups and organisations" (Chadwick, 2005, p.1). Gray and McEvoy's (2005) broad definition states that sport marketing is "the anticipation, management, and satisfaction of consumers' wants and

needs through the application of marketing principles and practices” (p. 229). Fullerton and Merz (2008) point out that a definition of sport marketing should account for its unique feature: the marketing of sport products and marketing through sports. Sport marketing, therefore, is characterized by its dual role. Thus, sport marketing has been defined as the application of marketing concepts and processes to sport products and services and the marketing of non-sport products through association with sports (Fullerton & Merz, 2008). The definitional inconsistencies identified constitute a deficiency in the sport marketing literature. “This conceptual weakness illustrates the need for including both the marketing of sports and marketing through sports in a broader sports marketing platform that encompasses the entire realm of sports marketing practice” (Fullerton & Merz, 2008, p. 91). We support that SDL is an ideal framework that accounts for all the services exchanges that take place in sports; consequently, it encompasses both roles of sport marketing.

In addition to the lack of a common definition of sport marketing, the available theories have not followed the transformation of sport “products” into hybrid service and consequently, the evolution of sport marketing. Over the past few years, several scholars have recognized the need to develop more solid theories in sport management and extend sport marketing (Chelladurai, 2013; Cunningham, 2013). Most sport marketing literature focuses on very specific aspects of sport consumption by borrowing theories from disciplines, such as management, economics, and marketing, and integrating them into existing models. Concrete theories (Cunningham, 2013) and new perspectives are currently missing in sport marketing to enable a better understanding of contemporary service exchanges in sports. However, we do not suggest that the available sport marketing research lacks theoretical foundations, but a solid and comprehensive approach in explaining current sport exchange phenomena.

Recognizing the above theoretical deficiency, Woratschek et al. (2014) applied SDL in sports and proposed the sport value framework. Sport value framework consists of ten foundational premises of value co-creation in sports and provides a theoretical basis in explaining sport phenomena. Similarly, embracing an SDL view, Stieler et al. (2014) studied how value can be co-destructed by spectators of football games and concluded that interactions that co-create value for one actor can co-destroy value for another. Their study confirmed SDL's assertion that value is determined by the beneficiary, and consumer groups are not homogeneous by definition. Finally, Bove and Hodkinson (2013) applied SDL in studying how value is co-created in sport communities of the Australian Football League. To our knowledge, only these three publications have taken a new approach in delineating value co-creation and co-destruction in sports, and they are the first to apply SDL as a new theoretical framework in explaining service exchanges in this context.

It has been suggested that sport is subjective, idiosyncratic, and heterogeneous because the impressions, experiences, and interpretations about the sport experience vary from person to person (Holt, 1995; Horn, 2008). The evolved sport marketing literature considers sport (spectator or participatory) as an experiential product (Kao et al., 2007; Helleu, 2012) where experience-seeking is a major motivator and the “spectator/actor increasingly becomes a stakeholder of the sporting event” (Helleu, 2012, p. 147) and co-producer of the experience (Helleu, 2012). In line with this view, sport has the features of an experiential good that is co-produced, involves emotions (drama, excitement, or joy), and is shared to satisfy socialization needs (Pons & Richelieu, 2004). Since experience is pivotal in sports, a general theory of sport marketing should focus on explaining how experience is co-created in this context and not co-produced, as the majority of sport marketing literature suggests (Helleu, 2012). Such a theory

could provide a framework for understanding sport experiences, a research foundation that will guide research questions, and direct managerial practice in explaining, predicting, and controlling sport experiences.

Sport is a social experience and depends on social facilitation (e.g. friends and family). Although sport is recognized as a social and cultural phenomenon (Amestica, 2015), few studies have considered the social and cultural context of sport experiences (Kao et al., 2007; Helleu, 2012; Pons & Richelieu, 2004). Thus, a new perspective is required that explains value co-creation in sport experiences by considering contextual aspects of sport consumption. We argue that an SDL service ecosystem perspective combined with CCT provides a more holistic view of how value is co-created in sport experiences in complex social and cultural contexts.

Overview of Service-Dominant Logic

SDL, proposed by Vargo and Lusch (2004, 2008a, 2016), constitutes an alternative paradigm of social and economic exchanges to the traditional view, usually called goods-dominant (G-D) logic. SDL has eleven foundational premises (FPs), which clarify not only terminology-related issues, but also the central tenets of its reasoning (see Vargo & Lusch, 2004, 2008b; Lusch & Vargo, 2014; Vargo & Lusch, 2016). Of these, five have been recently proposed by Vargo and Lusch (2015, 2016) as axioms of SDL from which the other FPs could be derived (Table 1). We relate these axioms to sports later on the paper (Table 3).

The most important contribution of SDL is the substantial shift of the academic and managerial agenda to service and institutionalized ecosystems and their pivotal role in exchange phenomena. Service is exchanged for service and value co-creation and process orientation, and relationships are important elements of market exchanges. Another contribution of SDL is the

recognition of all actors, including customers, as resource integrators, value co-creators, and experience evaluators (Axioms 2, 3 and 4). SDL is inherently customer-oriented because it redefines the customer's role and recognizes their power in market exchanges. SDL views customers as major actors who play multiple and significant roles (e.g. operant resources, resource integrators, value co-creators, and value beneficiaries) in exchanges and not just receivers of offerings. According to SDL, firms do not create value, but only offer value propositions, which are evaluated exclusively in relation to, if not by, the beneficiaries (e.g. customers) (Axiom 4).

“Please insert Table 1 here”

All actors are resource integrators that co-create value (Axiom 3). Thus, exchange and service development processes are viewed in a unique way by each actor (Chandler & Vargo, 2011) depending on the context. Therefore, the initial concept of “value-in-use” has been replaced by “value-in-context” (Vargo et al., 2010; Vargo, 2009) to show that value-co-creation is bound to its context. This implies that firms are not able to deliver value by themselves, but only offer value propositions to various social (e.g. friends, family, sport fan communities) and economic actors (e.g. sport event organizers, sponsors, media) (Axiom 3), which co-create value and enhance their consumption experiences through resource integration (Axiom 2 and Axiom 3) and uniquely evaluate it based on their idiosyncrasy, experience, context, and meaning (Axiom 4) (Arnould & Price, 2006; Baron & Harris, 2008; Merz et al., 2009; Vargo & Lusch 2008b). Thus, value must be understood in the context of complex networks that are part of dynamic service

ecosystems, comprising not only firms and customers, but their contextual communities and other stakeholders (Lush & Vargo, 2014; Vargo & Lusch 2011).

Value creation is no longer viewed as a purely personal and subjective experience, but as a shared and collective experience that takes place in the presence of other actors (e.g. providers and customers). Thus, value is co-created by multiple actors for their direct or indirect wellbeing. In sports, this means that a competition cannot solely be produced by an event organizer; a valued sport event experience can only be created through the integration of resources (knowledge and skills) of various parties, such as sport teams and performing athletes (technical skills), event organizers (facility management), police and security service personnel (safety knowledge and skills), and sport fans, who create enthusiasm and a festive atmosphere in the stadium.

Increasingly, SDL has taken a more holistic and dynamic approach to value creation by considering a wider and more comprehensive configuration of actors and contexts, such as institutions and service ecosystems. The term “ecosystem” denotes actor–environmental interaction and energy flow, while Vargo and Lusch (2016) propose the term “service ecosystem” to identify a particular kind of critical flow–mutual service provision. According to SDL, service ecosystems are dynamic and evolutionary in nature and constitute a context where service-for-service exchanges create value. This means that every change in resource integration, service provision, and value co-creation results in changes in the nature of the system to a certain degree; thus, this develops the context for the next iteration and determination of value creation. The ecosystem approach emphasizes the social context, the interaction within and among service systems, and the integration and re-combination of resources in value co-creation and service exchange (Akaka & Vargo, 2015). Accordingly, sports can be seen as a service ecosystem comprising complex networks (e.g., sport event organizers, sport teams, sport fans, sport

authorities) and contexts (e.g., social, cultural, historical and economic) that are dynamic and interact with other ecosystems (e.g., sponsors, media, suppliers), which might result in changes in the nature of the system. For example, to accommodate advertisers, media, and U.S. TV audiences, competitions in the Olympic Games are often scheduled to certain times. Moreover, sports rules have been changed (e.g. the 4 quarters of 10 minutes a rule in basketball) to make games faster paced and more exciting, especially for TV and Internet audiences.

Recently, SDL added institutions as a mediating element in the dynamic formation and stabilization of service ecosystems (Akaka et al., 2013; Lusch & Vargo 2014). The origin of the term “institution” has a long history in the social sciences and can be traced back to Giambattista Vico’s *Scienza Nuova* in 1725 (Hodgson, 2006). Institutions shape interactions between actors and their economic, social, or ecological environment. In marketing, institutions have been considered norms, rules of transactions (Hunt, 1983), rules, policies, and technical standards (Sheth & Parvatiyar, 1995) that govern exchange relationships. According to SDL, service ecosystems consist of *institutions* (the shared norms, rituals, meanings, symbols, and practices in value co-creation) and *institutional arrangements* (assemblages of interdependent institutions) (Vargo & Lusch, in press). Institutions as “socially embedded systems of rules” (Hodgson, 2006, p.8), refers to “the rules of the game” (North, 2000, p. 3) and offer a structure for value co-creation and resource integration in service ecosystems (Axiom 5) (Akaka, Vargo, & Lusch, 2012; Edvardsson et al., 2014; Vargo & Akaka, 2012). In sports, the rules, fan rituals, and players’ contracts are examples of institutions that govern the sport service ecosystem.

SDL has extended the concept of “value in use” to “value in context” (Vargo et al., 2010; Vargo, 2009). According to SDL, context is a significant component of value co-creation because it provides a framework for the exchange, service, and capability of resources as uniquely

perceived by each actor and the service ecosystem (Axiom 4) (Chandler & Vargo, 2011).

Contexts are heterogeneous and distinctive sets “of unique actors with unique reciprocal links” (Chandler & Vargo, 2011, p. 40). Chandler and Vargo (2011) proposed a three-level conceptualization of context based on the exchange scheme: a) The micro-context refers to direct service-for-service exchanges between actors; b) the meso-context denotes the triadic indirect service-for-service exchanges between dyads of actors; and c) the macro-context concerns complex and simultaneous direct and indirect service-for service exchanges among triads of actors. For example, in sports, the micro-level could include exchanges between a sport fan and their beloved team, the meso-level could refer to the triadic relationships between sport fans, their beloved team, and other sport fans, and the macro-level could illustrate the complex relationships between sport teams, sport fans, sport media, sponsors, sport authorities, and other entities.

To increase understanding of market experience context, Akaka et al. (2013) integrated CCT (e.g., Arnould & Thompson, 2005) into SDL by considering their complementarity regarding resources and value. They proposed the term “value-in-cultural-context” to denote the culturally rich and complex contexts of the service experience within which value is co-created by multiple beneficiaries (Akaka et al., 2015). The “value-in-cultural-context” perspective explains how value is phenomenologically determined and/or evaluated by individual beneficiaries in dynamic social and cultural contexts in service ecosystems. Four social and cultural factors of the service experience need to be considered: a) sign systems and service ecosystems; b) the multiplicity of structure and institutions; c) value-in-cultural-context; and d) the co-construction of context. In the following, CCT is explicated in issues related to this paper.

Consumer Culture Theory

Arnould and Thompson (2005) named their research on the role of culture on consumption “consumer culture theory” (CCT) to develop a “disciplinary brand” (p.868). According to CCT, culture can be conceptualized as a dynamic network of boundary-spanning connectivities (Hannerz, 1992; Wilk, 2006) in which social actions are embedded in institutional structures (Granovetter, 1985). CCT considers culture the frame of experience, meaning, and action (Geertz, 1983); thus, it concerns “the heterogeneous distribution of meanings and the multiplicity of overlapping cultural groupings within the broader sociohistoric frame of globalization and market capitalism” (Arnould & Thompson, 2005, p. 869). Research on CCT focuses on how marketplace resources and shared consumer sympathies create collective meanings, systems, and identities (Muniz & O’Guinn, 2001; Schouten & McAlexander, 1995). The consumption object is perceived as a means of constructing “practices, identities and meanings to make collective sense of their environments and orient their members’ experiences and lives” (Arnould & Thompson, 2005, p. 869). Similarly, in sports, sport fans use their support of and attachment to a sport team and community to construct their self and social identity (Alexandris & Tsotsou, 2012).

We have identified four aspects in the CCT literature of consumption: social, cultural, historical, and tribal aspects. Arnould and Thompson (2005, p.868) provide a synthesis of “the sociocultural, experiential, symbolic and ideological aspects of consumption,” while consumers are conceived as social actors who participate in multiple cultural contexts, enacting subculturally specific identities and values in each. The tenets that actors participate in various contexts and co-create experiences and that value is contextual are in line with SDL’s axioms. Arnould (2007) proposed an alliance between CCT and SDL because there are significant conceptual overlaps between ongoing CCT work and the premises and axioms of SDL. To our knowledge, the recent works by Akaka et al. (2015) on surfing subcultures and Penalosa and Mish (2011) on triple-line

firms are the first scientific endeavors that bridge the two perspectives and confirm their complementarity. Accordingly, sport fans as social actors represent and communicate multiple symbolic meanings laden with cultural values and social relationships by manipulating objects and activities (Holt, 1995) by securing valuable traditions and anchoring behavior in cultural and social orders. For example, rituals assist sport fans in developing their identities linked with traditional, cultural, and social values through sports consumption (Chun et al., 2005).

In addition to the social and cultural aspects, CCT recognizes the historical aspects of consumption as integral to understanding consumption experiences. Arnould and Thompson (2005) state that CCT “strives to systematically link individual level (or idiographic) meanings to different levels of cultural processes and structure and then situate these relationships within historical and marketplace contexts” (p. 875). Historical aspects, such as cultural narratives, myths, and ideologies, constitute, sustain, transform, and shape consumer culture. Historical contexts and institutional forces that shape the marketplace and the consumer as a social actor have been proposed by Arnould and Thompson (2005) as the new frontiers of future CCT research. The literature on brand communities and consumption subcultures has underlined how consumer identity processes as well as their consumption patterns are mostly influenced by social institutions of a historical and cultural nature (Askegaard & Linnet, 2011). Askegaard and Linnet (2011) argue that if we are interested in studying consumer culture, then we should acknowledge the cultural, historical, and societal conditions that influence consumer actions and motives. They consider brand communities and consumer subcultures “close contexts” (meso level), and introduce the term “context of contexts” (macro level) to encompass the social, historical, and cultural aspects of consumption experiences. In sports, halls of fame, sport museums, and heritage sporting events are reflections of the historical meaning of sport experiences. For

example, the Heritage Classic ice hockey event demonstrates the historical meaning (legacy) related both to the competing teams (celebration of past players and championships), as well as to the role of outdoor ice hockey in the history and identity of Canada (Ramshaw, 2011).

Another aspect of consumption experiences that dominates CCT research and thinking is tribal behavior. Cova, Kozinets, & Shankar (2007) argued for the usefulness of the tribal aspects of consumption in understanding consumer behavior from a collective perspective because they are universal (Arnould & Thompson, 2005). Tribal aspects of consumption have been linked to ephemeral and informal relationships developed in consumer groups. In tribes, consumers build transient collective identifications and participate in rituals of solidarity based on common lifestyle interests and leisure activities (see also Cova, 1997; Muniz and O'Guinn, 2001). Studies on consumer tribes illustrate how experiential consumption activities, such as skydiving (Celsi, Rose, & Leigh, 1993), fandom (Kozinets, 2001), countercultural lifestyles (Kates, 2002; Thompson & Troester, 2002), and temporary consumption communities (Arnould & Price, 1993; Belk & Costa, 1998; Kozinets, 2002) cultivate collective identities based on shared meanings, beliefs, narratives, mythologies, rituals, social practices, and social status systems.

Research on tribal behavior is often linked to the historical developments of tribes. For example, Canniford and Shankar (2011) studied surfing tribes and identified how colonial discourse constructed surf culture through tribal tropes and how commercial culture later re-appropriated this tribal symbolism to instill service offerings with a sense of “otherness” (wild or natural human state), excitement, and danger. Otnes and Maclaran (2011) studied British Royal Family followers and concluded that their behavior illustrates a tribal reconnection with history and tradition. Schouten, Martin, and McAlexander (2011) examined the historical evolution of consumption meanings within the Harley-Davidson tribe. In all these studies, the historical aspect

goes hand in hand with the tribal aspect of consumption to provide a comprehensive view of experiences in the marketplace and a deeper understanding of service exchanges.

Research on Sport Subcultures

Subcultures in sports have been studied in various contexts to understand (Table 2) deviant behavior in rugby (Young, 1988); identity formation in bodybuilding (Klein, 1986); the subculture of mountain climbers and rugby players (Donnelly & Young, 1988); the process of group affiliation in windsurfing (Young, 1988), running (Nash, 1977); Little League Baseball (Fine 1987); the ritualization process in baseball (Chun, Gentry, & McGinnis, 2004); the environmental consciousness of disc golfers (Trendafilova, 2011); and the cultural context of surfing (Akaka et al., 2015). The focus of the above studies has been on the investigation of the values, norms, beliefs, and identity formation of individuals and groups and behavioral modifications.

“Please insert Table 2 here”

Young (1988) studied rugby teams through extensive participant observation in a cross-cultural study in the United Kingdom and North America. He found that the group was highly ritualized and internally policed by specific values, behaviors, symbols, and rituals. Specifically, he identified values (e.g. amateurism, sportsmanship, loyalty, and “esprit de corps”); behaviors (e.g. excessive beer drinking); symbols (e.g. T-shirts and other garments bearing crude and profane slogans, such as “Rugby Players Eat their Dead!” and “Elegant Violence!”); and rituals (e.g. the “Zulu Warrior,” a ritualistic rookie ceremony for one’s introduction to the subculture).

Donnelly and Young (1988) studied the construction and confirmation of the identities of mountain climbers and rugby players. They suggest that the roles and identities of members of subcultures should not be viewed as static positions and entities, but as constantly changing due to a variety of processes both within and outside the subculture. Furthermore, they argue that the active processes of cultural production in sport subcultures ensure that socialization is an ongoing process, while acceptance/ostracism is likely to be repeated. The key contingencies in the subcultures studied are the construction/reconstruction of an appropriate subculture identity and the confirmation/reconfirmation of this identity by other members of the subculture.

Akaka (2012) studied the surfing and stand-up paddle boarding subcultures and found that this market emerged from the surfing market. Although the surfing and stand-up paddle is a separate market with different cultural components (e.g. practices, resources, and meanings), it shares similarities with the surfing market in certain aspects (e.g. norms). Her study suggested that the focus should shift from the customer to the context to identify and (re)contextualize new or emerging markets.

In the following section we present our integrative framework and explain sport experiences with the lenses of the SDL service ecosystem perspective and CCT. Furthermore, we identify key elements of the context of sport experiences and explain their role.

AN EXPERIENCE-BASED INTEGRATIVE FRAMEWORK

Sport Marketing through the Service Dominant Ecosystem Lens

SDL has been applied to various contexts and industries, such as branding (Merz, He, & Vargo 2009; Payne, Storbacka, Frow, & Knox, 2009), logistics (Randall, Pohlen, & Hanna,

2010), information technology (Yan, Ye, Wang, & Hua, 2010), hospitality and tourism management (Gareth, Bailey, & Williams, 2011; Park & Vargo, 2012), and sports (Stieler, Weismann, & Germelmann, 2014; Woratschek, Horbel, & Popp, 2014). Recent studies have applied SDL to sports to explain value co-creation (Stieler et al., 2014; Woratschek et al., 2014) and co-destruction (Stieler et al., 2014). However, an integrative framework is still required to give a comprehensive sport marketing perspective and shed light on co-created sport experiences.

The SDL approach to sport marketing does not just focus on understanding and trying to fulfill sport customers' needs, but on engaging, collaborating with, and learning from all actors involved (including the beneficiaries) and including them in processes of service provision directly in person (e.g. sport game) or indirectly via goods (e.g. sport team merchandising) (Table 3). Accordingly, SDL challenges the focus of sport marketing, which is based on a conventional marketing approach, regarding the supplier's unidirectional role of creating and adding value, which is delivered to sport customers. SDL also helps sport businesses expand their market from narrowly defined "target" markets to dynamic markets that recognize the value proposition and utilize their resources to benefit them within the embedded socio-cultural context. This expansion is a critical shift in the basis of sport marketing of defining the "primary" customers, some of whom may not be reached when focusing on target markets to generate repeat patronage.

"Please insert Table 3 here"

The first axiom of SDL (Axiom 1) suggests that service constitutes the common denominator of all social and economic activities and goods are vehicles for service distribution. For example, although a sport arena's seat features are undoubtedly important, spectators do not

pay for their physicality, but for the temporary use of the service they render (i.e., seating). Moreover, value (e.g., comfort, relaxation, view of the sport field, self-image, socialization) is determined by the spectators depending on the situation (e.g. team win or defeat). To the sport team, value would be financial feedback (i.e., game ticket revenue) and learning (e.g., the spectators' complaints, compliments, and/or word-of-mouth to their social networks online and/or off-line), which would impact the team's future financial survival. The spectators' contribution to the value co-creating experiences of other spectators would also play a part in the sport experience and team's value. This value is co-created between the team and the spectators during the spectators' usage of the arena seats for their goals and contextual circumstances, such as to watch a game, relax, and socialize with family and friends (i.e., value-in-context). It also provides a platform for exploring, integrating, and experiencing other resources, such as other arena attractions (e.g. sport team museum) and meeting new people (other sport team fans).

In sport, the categorization of sport products is a common practice in the literature. Thus, the dichotomy of tangible sport goods (e.g., sport team merchandising and sport facilities) "versus" sport services (e.g., ticketing, transportation, entertainment, and sport team performance) is often used, although it is not easy to divide them. For example, Schaaf (1995, p. 22) suggested that "in the context of sports marketing, the 'product' is either the entertainment of competition [the uncertainty], or a product/service associated with the excitement of the event, or both." Fullerton and Merz (2008) have categorized sport products into a) spectator sports (e.g., sport competitions), b) participation sports (sport activity participation), c) sporting goods, apparel, and athletic shoes, and d) sports-related products. Perhaps because of this difficulty and arguably futile attempt in separating what is actually exchanged in sport, many different terms have been created, particularly for marketing purposes (e.g. amateur sport, professional sport,

nonprofit sport, sports tourism, spectator sport), although each form consists of an abundance of social/economic actors, interactions among them, and various resources and phases, all contributing to value co-creation and sport experiences. This fragmented view of sport experience based on the conventional separation of tangibles vs. intangibles is often associated with sport sectors (e.g. sport media, sport sponsorship, sport tourism, and sport suppliers), which may hinder the marketing effectiveness of any sport firm, because from the sport customers' perspective, all these resources are part of their entire sport experience. Therefore, although current sport marketing literature recognizes that sport products are a mixture of tangible (goods) and intangible elements (services), we support that what is exchanged in sports is service, which is the common denominator of all social and economic activities. Thus, in line with SDL, sport goods and services are only the vehicles for creating valued sport experiences and not the outcomes of sport exchanges. For example, the purchase of a pair of sport shoes (good) for participating in a marathon (participation service) is for creating valuable experiences for the athletes, spectators, marathon organizers, sponsors, and others through the application of operant resources (sport knowledge and skills) and not for the good or the services per se (Axiom 1).

SDL shifts from outputs to the processes of mutually beneficial interactions among multiple actors and their resource integration for value co-creation. The basic role of the sport service provider is participation in the co-creation of valued sport experiences with customers and other beneficiaries (e.g. opposing teams, sponsors, and media) by making events and processes as unified as possible and beneficial to all actors involved. Reframing sport offerings in terms of their service potential, expressed through a value proposition that recognizes the resourcefulness of the firm and that sport consumers draw on to achieve desired value from experiences, can help sport firms discover novel and unique marketing strategies.

According to SDL's Axiom 2, value is co-created by multiple actors that always include the beneficiary. The customer always co-creates value with all other actors involved, and the firm can only offer value propositions, but cannot deliver them. Both sport customers and firms are part of the service ecosystem in which various social/economic actors create value (e.g. other sport customers, opposing teams, sponsors, media, and suppliers). All actors in value co-creation are interdependent because they specialize in providing different kinds of resources (i.e., services) (Lusch & Vargo, 2014). For example, in a gym setting, value is not co-created only by the gym serviscape and machines provided by the firm, but by its customers and the social and cultural gym aspects, such as specialized personnel (trainers) and other customers. Specialized personnel might monitor customers' exercise programs, while other customers might create a friendly atmosphere or help other customers exercise. Thus, all social and economic actors provide and integrate resources in co-creating value and determining their sport experience.

Sport as a Service Ecosystem

A service ecosystem perspective redirects attention to the ultimate drivers of complex social, economic, and ecological systems and provides an understanding of the dialectic dynamics arising in sport service exchanges. We argue that a service ecosystem SDL-based approach a) provides an understanding of the sport ecosystem at all levels and relationships developed within each level and between levels; b) considers the pivotal role of institutions and institutional arrangements in securing both the stability and the dynamism of the sport ecosystem; and c) provides guidance in structuring research in sport marketing.

The service ecosystem in sports enables a deeper understanding of value co-creation and resource integration in this context by allowing researchers to zoom both in and out to see actors

in all of their inter-relationships developed by a network of service-for-service exchange relationships (Lusch & Vargo, 2014). Sport service ecosystems are complex because they consist of other subsystems (e.g. sport media and sport sponsorship subsystems) and the reciprocal service exchanges that take place among them. For example, on top of individual actors (e.g. sport fans) are structures composed of multiple individuals (e.g. friends, other sport fans, sport clubs, and sport federations), which in turn, might be part of larger structures, such as international sport federations and communities (Ostrom, 2005). Hence, a sport service ecosystem has multiple nested “levels” of contexts that frame resource integration, service exchange, and value co-creation (Chandler & Vargo, 2011). As mentioned, resource integration is highly contextual (dependent on connections between actors), as the usefulness of any particular potential resource from one source is moderated by the availability of other potential resources from other sources (Vargo & Lusch, 2011). Individual actors cannot access and integrate resources and co-create value on their own, but they need to be part of the sport ecosystem (Lusch & Vargo, 2014). The sport ecosystem is a relatively self-adjusting system in which resources are integrated by all social and economic actors (Axiom 3).

In the sport ecosystem, service exchange relationships and value co-creation processes are shaped by institutions and institutional arrangements (Axiom 5) at all levels – micro, meso, and macro (Lusch & Vargo 2014; Vargo & Lusch, 2015). In a gym, hygiene-related issues (e.g. having clean shoes and towels) might be rules, while wearing sport outfits might be a norm followed by all actors involved in the sport experience and the value co-creation process.

Delineating Sport Experience

Consumer experience is “a complex, moment-by-moment, situated occurrence. Lived experience is never simple and binary, but ever-shifting, full of adjustments and hybridizations” (Cova et al., 2007, p. 8). The context of consumption experiences and its level of analysis are important in understanding service exchanges and value co-creation. Thus, based on CCT, we use the term *value-in-subcultural-context* to denote the level of analysis of sport experiences (meso level) and identify their aspects in the complex sport service ecosystem. In line with CCT research and SDL, we argue that the social and cultural aspects of this ecosystem are pivotal in understanding the frame of sport exchanges and how value is co-created in sport experiences. In addition to *social and cultural aspects*, our paper supports the conceptual framework of experience proposed by Akaka et al. (2015) and extends it to include *historical and tribal aspects of consumption*.

We take a dynamic view of the subcultural context that underlines the complexity of sport ecosystems consisting of tribal logic influences (e.g. the multiplicity of networks, structures and institutions, ritualization and socialization processes), phenomenological and historical views on value co-creation, and the co-construction and co-destruction of sport experiences (Table 4).

Value is co-created through the meaning negotiation (Schouten, McAlexander, & Koenig, 2007) and resource integration (Akaka et al., 2013) of all participants in a sport subculture and through social exchanges and interactions (Edvardsson et al., 2011) at a given place and time. Sport customers enact practices to co-create value for themselves and other beneficiaries (e.g., other sport customers, sport teams, media, and sponsors), while they draw on and contribute to their sport subculture, through which value is derived by influencing and being influenced by the tribal, cultural, social, and historical aspects of the sport experience.

“Please insert Table 4 here”

In the following, we examine how the five aspects of sport consumption influence value co-creation and experience in sport subcultures.

Value-in-Subcultural-Context

To understand how value is co-created in sport experiences, we first need to identify the level of analysis. Sport can be considered a subculture and therefore examined at a meso level of the service ecosystem. “The prefix ‘sub’ in subculture signifies the level of analysis which is below the macro level and focuses on an intermediate level of society. An intermediate analysis can make explicit the everyday meanings of society by investigating how people interpret and respond to interactions within groups as well as investigate how dominant relations are reproduced, challenged, and negotiated on a daily level” (Crosset & Beal, 1997, p. 74).

Yinger (1960) uses the term “subculture” to illustrate the normative system by which groups demonstrate the ways they “differ in such things as language, values, religion, diet, and style of life from the larger social world of which they are a part” (p. 626). Dawson (2010) defines subculture as an ethnic, regional, economic, or social group exhibiting characteristic patterns of behavior sufficient to distinguish it from others within an embracing culture or society. Subcultures exist and interact within a broader cultural context that affects them and which they, in turn, affect. For example, the “soccer mom” subculture in the US refers to mothers who often drive a sports-utility vehicle or a minivan and take their children to sport practices and games (originally, the term was used for mothers of children playing soccer), carry snacks and orange juice for the children, and sometimes take along extra lawn chairs. They often collaborate

with their neighbors and split their weekly transportation duties to sport fields while they create camaraderie with the parents of all the other children playing for the team (Safire, 1996).

Canniford (2011) has identified three qualities that characterize subcultures: cohesiveness, dedication, and resistance. All three qualities can be found in sport subcultures. Group homogeneity, such as wearing one's favorite team's T-shirt and/or hat, is a manifestation of group cohesiveness in sport subcultures. Season ticket sales and game attendance indicate sport fans' dedication to a team. For example, in 2015, game attendance for NFL football games reached an average of 68.2%, with the Dallas Cowboys' home attendance leading all teams at 91.5%. An article by *The Wall Street Journal* titled "The One Thing You Can't Do in Britain: Change a Soccer Team's Name" shows how sport fans resist changes in the team's name and colors. For example, fans of Hull City Tigers (a British soccer team) have made it their mission to convince its owner that the name of the team is sacred and any change will be considered a blasphemy. The owner, Assem Allam, has been trying to drop the word "City" for marketing purposes and rebrand the team simply as "Hull Tigers." Fans resisted this change and formed a group called "City Till We Die" that protested against any changes.

Subcultures depict enduring social orders, interpersonal relationships, ritualistic behavior, and unique sets of beliefs that impact member identification with the subculture and impede other social group affiliations. Moreover, subcultures are characterized by acculturation processes through which members develop long-term commitment and deviant or resistant behavior. While these qualities are helpful in distinguishing subcultures, research shows that they might not be reproduced over time. For example, Kates (2002) challenges the cohesion characteristic of subcultures and considers it a "kaleidoscopic assortment of social arrangements that shift in response to external and internal challenges" (Canniford, 2011, p. 60). Similarly, Beverland et al.

(2010) suggest that neophyte members are only temporarily committed to the consumption subculture. Martin, Schouten, and McAlexander (2006) show that contemporary subcultures have abandoned social resistance, robust social structures, marginal status, and gender hierarchies, while Elliott and Davies (2006) suggest that nowadays, the bonds between members are weak.

A sport subculture develops as individuals identify and develop relationships with specific sport brands or activities of consumption and, through those sport brands or activities, identify and develop relationships with other customers (Schouten & McAlexander, 1995; Tsoutsou & Veloutsou, 2012). Experience is no longer viewed as purely personal and subjective, but as shared and collective, taking place in the presence of other actors. Thus, consuming with others might be a good “excuse” for consumers to be with other consumers and give meaning to their lives because sometimes the relationships with others might be more important than the consumption of products itself (Cova, 1997). Similarly, imagine a stadium that is empty or with only a few spectators during a football game and a stadium full of spectators cheering for their favorite football team. Only the latter scenario allows all the actors involved to co-create value and have unique sport experiences. The supplementary events and experiences of a sport event are often more important than the actual game itself and its outcome. This is evidenced by fan groups of sport teams with poor winning records. Although those teams do not win often, their fans continue to support them, attend home games, or even travel to away games. Thus, studying sport consumption at the subcultural (meso) level allows us to better understand value co-creation and sport experience in this context. In the following, the tribal elements of sport subcultures are identified and explicated.

Tribal Logics: Multiplicity of Networks, Structures, and Institutions

Currently, the terms “subculture,” “brand community,” and “tribe” or “neo-tribe” are used interchangeably. The studies on sport subcultures presented in the previous subsection illustrate the tribal aspect of a sport experience. According to Bazaki and Veloutsou (2010), tribes are groups of individuals that exhibit tribal behavior; participants have not necessarily joined the group in a formal manner, but they demonstrate such behavior. The sport team followers or participants engage in group actions to accomplish collective goals and/or to express mutual sentiments and commitments (Stokburger-Sauer, 2010). They may even choose their friends because of their commitment (Redden & Steiner, 2000) to the sport team or sport activity. Some consumers are not just sport team followers, but they might go so far as to become active participants within a fandom as a social, cultural, and interpretive institution (Kozinets, 2001).

Multiplicity of networks and institutions. Thus, tribal behavior has become an important aspect of sport subcultures, where subcultural identity is centered on emotional and not rational commitment and sociality is grounded on informal associations of cultural expression depicting affective commitment, free choice, and ephemeral membership (Maffesoli, 1996). According to Maffesoli (1996), humans participate in many tribes at once and in rapid sequence, and such fluidity is a unique feature of neo-tribes. Membership in these tribes is often expressed through “secret” signs, such as dress code (e.g., wearing T-shirts of the favorite team) or language (e.g. usage of certain expressions to show emotional commitment to the favorite team – Go Sox!). The explicit formal contract of the social associations is replaced by secrecy. Each tribe constitutes a network of actors; however, tribes overlap both in people and public interactions. In this overlap, a network of networks is formed, which is in line with the SDL service ecosystem-based view. The SDL ecosystem perspective suggests that value co-creation should be understood in the context of complex networks comprising various actors and contextual communities (Lush &

Vargo, 2014; Vargo & Lusch, 2011). This network of networks within and among tribes then institutes a social order that arises from within the mass, contrary to the mechanical structure of the order that is enacted from above (Maffesoli, 1996). In sports, an individual might be a fan of the New York Yankees in baseball as well as the Boston Celtics in basketball, or they might participate in the hiking subculture as well as the rafting subculture.

Another common denominator between tribal behavior and SDL is the role of the actor (consumer) and the relationships between actors (consumers and marketplace). Cova et al. (2011) support the idea that consumer tribes “rarely consume brands and products – even the most mundane ones – without adding to them, grappling with them, blending them with their own lives and altering them [...] Consumers are people, yes, but people who live in a specific social and historical situation. This places them in a co-dependent relationship with commercial culture” (p. 4). This is in line with Axiom 2 (FP6) of SDL, which suggests that value is co-created by multiple actors, including the beneficiary, and indicates the active role of the consumer in consumption experiences. Moreover, it supports Axiom 3 (FP9) of SDL because it illustrates that all social and economic actors are resource integrators. Furthermore, in line with CCT, it recognizes the social, historical, and cultural aspects of consumption experiences. In sports, sport spectators might play a significant role in a game outcome by actively encouraging and supporting their favorite team or blend their sport fandom into their lives by, for example, painting and decorating their rooms with the colors or symbols of their favorite team. Uhrich and Benkenstein (2012) show that in addition to the perceived physical properties of a sport venue, favorable perceptions of other customers – especially their behavioral patterns – exert a strong positive influence on favorable overall affective responses, which in turn have a positive impact on spectators’ on-site spending and positive word-of-mouth behaviors.

Social structures. CCT research examines social structures that systematically influence consumption. Specifically, it is concerned with the influence of gender, social class hierarchies, ethnicity and formal groups (e.g., families and households) on consumption behavior. The evaluation of experiences determines whether value is created; participants learn what works, is appropriate, and is expected in a particular subculture. They decide to repeat or discontinue their actions/interactions depending on whether they want to remain members of a subculture.

At a meso level, social structure refers to the collection of “unifying consumption patterns that are governed by a unique ethos or set of common values” (Schouten & McAlexander, 1995, p.48). Social structures are (largely) institutional arrangements that not only guide the co-creation of experience in subcultures, but also are guided by the interaction among actors and the determination and evaluation of experience. Moreover, the roles of the actors involved are not static, but change over time along with their practices, which in turn influences value co-creation and evaluations of experience (Akaka et al., 2015; Akaka & Chandler, 2011).

Studies on sport subcultures show that there are hierarchical social structures based on relative membership status (Schouten & McAlexander, 1995), seniority (Young, 1988), sport experience (Donnelly & Young, 1988), or gender (Gosling, 2007), and there are informal rule structures (Donnelly & Young, 1988) that the members should follow. For example, Young (1988) reported that senior players determine the initialization process of rookies in rugby teams. Booth (2004) describes how older surfers in Narrabeen regularly tied younger surfers to the “grommet” pole, locked them in the “rage cage” (a wire basket used by lifeguards to detain stray dogs), or simply buried them to their head in the sand as an initiation process for new members. Donnelly and Young (1988) studied climbers and state that “experienced climbers have been

known to take advantage of the novice's tendency to display by allowing them to carry all the equipment, particularly if the approach to the cliff involves a long, uphill walk" (p. 230).

Moreover, the sport ecosystem is considered highly colonized due to the marginal role and presence of women. Women's role in sport subcultures (e.g., sport fan communities) is still often confined to traditional gender roles (e.g., wives, girlfriends, or mothers) as supporters of male fans (e.g., watching the children while their husbands are chanting or buying beers) or as exaggerated sexualized objects. For women to fit into sport subcultures, they are often required to perform masculine roles by acting like their male counterparts (Crawford, 2009; Glosling, 2007).

Another probably unique tribal aspect in sport subcultures is that the social hierarchies and structures found in the day-to-day lives of customers do not determine the interrelationships among members. The CEO of a company does not dictate the interrelationships and behaviors of other members in a sport subculture (e.g. charter yacht). Although sport subcultures do not have the same hierarchical social structures found in other parts of their members' lives, there is often a hierarchy within the subculture (Donnelly & Young, 1988) that might be formal or informal.

Finally, membership codes, such as the "Spirit of the Game" in ultimate Frisbee might be used as codes of conduct that separate ultimate players from extreme competitiveness. "The 'Spirit of the Game' is an important aspect of Ultimate players' claims to being different from other sports. The bases for the claims made by Ultimate players to difference and their (apparent) subversion of sporting norms is defined by the Spirit of the Game in combination with the ways in which it and the rules structure the culture" (Thornton, 2004, p. 184).

Co-Construction and Co-Destruction of Context

Sport subcultures might also exhibit collective modes of resistance against the imposed rationalization of sports by sport authorities. In other words, members of sport subcultures might resist behavior imposed from above their context level (from the macro to the meso level). Thus, in parochial contexts, sport spectators might not always behave or agree with the “appropriate identity” (e.g., ban the display of racist or nationalistic paraphernalia) that a sport team or authority tries to impose on them (Hughson, 2002).

Sport subcultures that are either submissive or resistant to sport authorities reproduce their context. However, the reproduction/recontextualization of the context might sometimes lead to value co-creation only within the group and to value co-destruction of other sport subcultures (Stieler et al., 2014). An example of re-contextualization that results in the co-destruction of value (at the macro level) is hooliganism in soccer. Soccer hooliganism refers to a social phenomenon involving fan subcultures characterized by engagement in regular and collective violence, primarily with rival peers (Giulianotti, 1999; Spaaij, 2005; Stieler et al., 2014). These subcultures aim to provide expressive and active support to their team at all costs. Therefore, they are not necessarily concerned with defeating or humiliating their peers through intimidation or violence (Giulianotti, 2001; Mignon, 2001). These subcultures have evolved into militant groups (often configured as paramilitary groups) that are often organized in a formal way, while their inclinations to violence vary substantially (Giulianotti, 2001, p. 142; Spaaij & Viñas, 2005). Hooligans are called “ultras” in Europe and “barras bravas” or “hinchadas” in Latin America and feature elements of formal organization, such as official membership and recruitment campaigns (De Biasi, 1998). Although hooligans in Latin America resemble European hooligans in aspects, there are also important differences. Latin American hooligans are involved in political activity

and organize violent confrontations with rival supporters (Duke & Crolley, 1996), perform illegal actions, and are manipulated by sport and political leaders (Alabarces, 2002).

In this case, value co-creation should be interpreted based on the context being examined. At a meso level of analysis, interactions and actions taken within these groups could determine the value co-creation and evaluation of experiences by their members. Thus, for their members, hooligan subcultures provide value co-creation and fascinating sport experiences. Moreover, there are sport organizations that support the “ultras” and often encourage violent behaviors to intimidate the players of opponent teams, distract them from the game, and influence their performance. However, when analyzing the role of these subcultures in conjunction with other sport fan subcultures or sport service providers, hooligan subcultures not only do not co-create value, but they might cause the value co-destruction of sport experiences (e.g. starting a fire in the stadium, creating fear among other spectators, interrupting the game, or imposing financial penalties on the home team). Therefore, sport organizations often ban or do not welcome hooligans or antisocial behavior at their events. For example, National Basketball Association banned Donald Sterling, the owner of Los Angeles Clippers, due to racist comments. Sterling was banned for life from any association with the league or the Clippers, was fined \$2.5 million – the maximum allowable amount under the National Basketball Association constitution – and was forced to sell the team he had owned since 1981. His comments resulted in players’ reluctance to participate in the team’s games until he sold the team, sponsors withdrawal from their sponsorship deals, and significant criticism on social media from basketball fans (National Basketball Association, 2014).

In sum, sport subcultures might co-create value, but also can be recontextualized and/or transformed into subcultures that co-destruct value, in line with SDL (Plé & Chumpitaz, 2010).

Rituals and Socialization in Sport Ecosystems

CCT and SDL specify that customers create value for themselves by integrating resources and interpretations of symbolic meaning in specific cultural contexts (Akaka et al., 2015). It has been proposed that the ritualization process in sports could assist in understanding sport experiences (Chun et al., 2004). For example, sport fandom has been considered a ritualized experience characterized by “symbolized, role-assimilated, and self-enacted sports-related consumption experiences” (Chun et al., 2004, p.503). Ritualized behavior is symbolic-laden (Rook, 1985), role-assimilated, and self-reflected mundane repetition across time and place (Tetreault & Kleine, 1990). Sport fans derive ritualized experiences from the subculture to which they belong and the cultural values of their society. Rituals provide order, community, and transformation through shared emotional experiences (Arnould, 2001).

Sports fans employ several ritualization strategies, such as formalism, symbolic performance, traditionalism, and social interaction, to legitimize their sports consumption as a meaningful ritual practice and thus to connect themselves to a cultural identity in society (Chun et al., 2005). For example, the consumption of alcohol has become an intrinsic part of the soccer culture, starting from its players and continuing to the spectator experience in most sport subcultures. In the UK, few soccer players felt obliged to look after their bodies before the mid-1990s. Many of the best soccer players, such as George Best, “Gazza,” Jimmy Greaves, and Jim Baxter, were alcoholics. English soccer actively encouraged drinking. On cold days, soccer players passed a whisky bottle around the locker room before kickoff and afterward had beers. These were methods of male bonding in British soccer. Access to drink at all hours was a reward for being a soccer player. They could afford it, it relieved the pressure to perform, and it filled the

empty afternoons. Binge drinking was also considered a hobby and part of soccer players' subculture. However, drinking became part of the sport fans' culture as well, which evolved through the years into a formal declaration of this consumption. Drinking alcohol (usually beer) with male friends and family members or other sport fans while watching a game in a stadium, at a pub, or at home is considered a ritualistic initiation into "manhood," a sign of sport fandom and masculinity, and a way of having an "extraordinary" sport experience (Crawford, 2009). Thus, on several occasions sport fan groups have used alcohol-related banners or are named after a drink. For example, sport fans in Atalanta Bergamo (Italy) use banners indicating that they are the Beer Group, whereas the fanatic fans of the Serbian club Rudar call themselves the Alcohol Boys. Possessing clothes and scarves of their favorite sport team, wearing their favorite team colors on a game day, tailgating before a game, and using a plastic megaphone to participate in collective cheering are some of the rituals found in sport experiences. Moreover, sport fans develop a communitas experience with the other supporters of their team, where there are established roles.

Sport rituals provide a vehicle through which individuals can connect their identities to the social and cultural values of the sport subculture. The rituals of a sport subculture are usually performed for novices by experienced members, and novices are expected to demonstrate the appropriate attitudes and behaviors. Moreover, the expected behaviors are continually emphasized in the gossip and narratives that become the legends of the subculture (Donnelly & Young, 1988). However, it has been reported that the social context of spectatorship might alter sport spectators' behavior and rituals. Sport spectators might feel shy at actively joining in cheering activities in a stadium when they go to games with their girlfriends and/or family members because they are concerned about their partner and family members' feelings about their activities, which are very different from their normal behavior (Chun et al., 2005).

Rituals in sport subcultures offer members a chance to maintain and celebrate the cultural meanings embedded in sport consumption. Rituals and traditions have been considered “vital social processes by which the meaning of the community is reproduced and transmitted within and beyond the community” (Muniz & O’Guinn, 2001, p. 421). Rituals and traditions involve shared consumption experiences and help maintain the culture of the sport subculture (Muniz & O’Guinn, 2001). Sport consumption is a way to acquire and maintain a cultural sense of identity by attaching symbolic meanings to products and activities, securing valuable traditions and anchoring behavior in cultural and social orders. Several types of ritual activities can be identified in sport subcultures, such as sport fans throwing back the visiting team’s homerun ball to the field, wearing certain clothing (e.g. team’s cap), and celebrating patriotism at international games by decorating their bodies with national flags. Chun et al. (2005) show that sport fans actively ritualize their sport-related consumption activities to acquire and maintain their cultural identities.

Collective rituals and traditions contribute to the enhancement of sport experiences (Chun et al., 2005) and lead to the development of a “collective consciousness” (Giulianotti, 2002). Collective consciousness refers to “the intrinsic connection that members feel toward one another and the collective sense of difference from others not in the community” (Muniz & O’Guinn, 2001, p. 413). Sport fan subcultures develop this sense, where the fans of one team (the in-group) deprecate those of other teams (outgroups) because they believe their group is better than others.

In sport subcultures, rituals are also largely influenced by national or regional cultures and customs. For example, tailgating before a game is a ritual found only in American culture, a “wave” encircling the stadium is a ritual performed in western societies, and standing during the whole game is a behavior found only in English soccer fans. In Scotland, the Glasgow Rangers and Celtic soccer teams represent the Protestant and Catholic faiths, respectively. Chun et al.

(2004) studied the rituals of baseball fans in the US and Japan and found that most differences in ritualized sport fan behavior derive from their cultures (individualistic vs. collectivistic).

In addition to rituals, the socially, historically, and culturally constructed meanings of consumption are cultivated through the socialization process, where consumers learn the meanings of symbols and engage in symbolic interpretations. In sport subcultures, in the early socialization process, members undergo training (formal or informal) in the structure, institutions, and values of the subculture. Members learn to take on new roles and modify others, to adopt the values and perspectives of the group, and establish a valuable new identification with the institutions and symbols of the group. In turn, all the above elements of the subculture will function to cement a new concept of self in the actors, which will continue to develop and guide the actor in the subculture. Sport subcultures not only reproduce their context, but sometimes impose on new members behaviors in recontextualizing this context. For example, overt display is considered a rookie misbehavior or error in the climbing subculture because values such as coolness and understatement are embraced. Although display is an anticipated behavior from novices, it may be mocked as the member becomes more experienced. Usually, the most common signs of display are removed ropes and climbing boots. As a novice becomes more experienced, they are expected to place ropes inside a backpack and replace climbing boots with more comfortable shoes worn when not climbing. As a result of gradually reproducing the context of the subculture, interactions and conversations with other climbers become more natural (Donnelly & Young, 1988). Reproduction or (re)contextualizing the context could lead to the development of new or emerging markets, such as the stand-up paddle boarding sub-culture that emerged from the surfing subculture in Akaka's study (2012). Furthermore, socialization processes have evolved into new and modern contexts, such as the Internet and social media.

These are alternative platforms of sport consumption experiences where value is co-created. For example, the Barcelona football club has almost 90 million fans on Facebook (almost 2 million fans talk about the club daily) and 16.7 million followers on Twitter. In 2014, Catalyst, a marketing and communications company, surveyed fans of professional and college sports in the US on social media. The study involved interviews of more than 2,100 16–64 year olds who identified as fans of National Football League, National Basketball Association, Major League Baseball, National Hockey League, or college football and college basketball. Their study showed that 73% of sport fans shared their excitement with others before a game and 77% did after the game, while 68% shared photos and videos of the games and 65% shared historic and nostalgic photos and videos.

In sum, ritualized and socialization processes can be considered a manifestation of the structures and institutions embedded in a sport subculture.

Value Determined by Historical Meanings and Grounded in Specific Sport Ecosystems

According to Arnould and Thompson (2005), the cultural meaning of consumption regards “how particular manifestations of consumer culture are constituted, sustained, transformed, and shaped by broader historical forces (such as cultural narratives, myths, and ideologies) and grounded in specific socioeconomic circumstances and marketplace systems” (p. 869). SDL also specifies that institutions influence value co-creation by guiding actors to what is perceived as a valuable resource in a particular time and place and provide a reference point for value appraisals (Axiom 5). Thus, the evaluation of experiences (negative or positive) within specific socio-historic contexts determines value co-creation (Akaka et al., 2015). However, there is an ongoing (re)evaluation of experience through interactions that influences the co-creation of value and the

socio-cultural context through which it originates. Value co-creation can occur at any level of interaction in social contexts; therefore, it should be examined at multiple levels (micro, meso, and macro) (Akaka et al., 2015). In other words, a reproduction or recontextualization of the context shapes exchanges and value co-creation at all levels (Penaloza & Mish, 2011) and, over time, could produce new contexts. This indicates that value is determined by historical forces and grounded in a specific socioeconomic environment and service ecosystem. Thus, as well as social and cultural aspects, we need to consider the historical frame of value co-creation and experience evaluation to fully understand the meaning of consumption in a specific context and time.

Sports are important to society as they not only provide highly emotional experiences, but also a link to social and cultural traditions through supporting a team or participation in a sport activity that holds individual and collective historical meaning. Sport traditions and history play a significant role in the legitimization process of consumers' actions. For example, the Olympic Games have historical meaning for contemporary Greeks. A study conducted in Greece after the 2004 Olympic Games in Athens showed that consumers bought Olympic merchandising because of their symbolic meaning primarily related to the Athens Olympic Games and their authentic meaning (e.g., solidarity, amity, and peace) and, to a lesser extent, to the recently developed Olympic Movement and Ideals (Apostolopoulou, Papadimitriou, & Damtsiou, 2011). The historical meaning of the Koshien Stadium (the first baseball stadium in Japan, built in 1924) has led Japanese baseball fans to resist a possible upgrade of the facility even though the seats and aisles are narrow and the amenities are basic. Baseball in Japan is linked to the westernizing of the country and modernity. Thus, baseball has been embedded in the Japanese tradition and has a nostalgic meaning to baseball fans. "Nostalgia for the past is essential for sports fans in enhancing their enjoyable sports consumption. This sense of the past in sport consumption plays

a role in the construction of a shared collective identity among the fans” (Chun et al., 2005, p. 334). Thus, historical forces shape consumer culture and are shaped by it. This is in line with the SDL and CCT perspectives on reciprocity between the cultural context and its aspects.

In addition, sport experiences might be seen by actors as a way to experience history. Resource integration among the actors of a sport sub-culture not only provides an opportunity to connect with others, but also to relive and celebrate historical roots and traditions (Chun et al., 2005). For example, Real Madrid is a soccer team in Spain with a long winning history. In a recent study (Haider, 2012, p. 60), one of its fans stated, “Traveling to Madrid and the Santiago Bernabeu is an adventurous journey for all the passionate Madridistas, it is where all the sixth senses of being a Madridista comes together as we experience history in the making while supporting our team and is thereby more filled with action.”

Nostalgia can be considered a manifestation of the historical meaning of experiences in sports; therefore, many scholars have suggested that nostalgia plays a role in the sport tourism experience. For example, Fairley (2009) studied Australian football fans and found that nostalgia played a facilitative role in forming fans’ group solidarity during their transportation experiences to and from their favorite teams’ matches. Kulczycki and Hyatt (2005) also found that nostalgia was the impetus in fans’ decision to attend hockey games after their local National Hockey League franchise relocated to a different city. Snyder (1991) considered nostalgia an emotion and studied Baseball Hall of Fame attendees. His research revealed that nostalgia is a part “of the collective memories of a society as well as the lived emotion of individuals” (p. 229). Accordingly, Nauright (2003) argued that sport is a “highly nostalgic practice” for remembering and reconstructing past achievements to forge individual and collective memories (p. 36).

Durkheim (1915) maintains that a core communalism that signifies consumer communities is the rituals and shared history that set up visible social solidarity. Furthermore, the literature on brand communities and subcultures of consumption has underscored how consumer identities, as well as their consumption patterns, depend on socially instituted factors of historical and cultural character (Askegaard & Linnet 2011). In sum, it becomes evident that the historical aspects of sport experiences play an important role in understanding their symbolic meaning and collective memory; therefore, they should be considered when studying sport subcultures.

CONCLUSIONS

In response to recent calls for new perspectives in sport marketing (Chelladurai, 2013; Cunningham, 2013), we propose and describe an integrative framework by combining SDL and its service ecosystem view with CCT as an alternative lens for developing, strengthening, and advancing the conceptual development of sport marketing. Our integrative framework transcends the conventional firm-centered and goods-oriented perspectives in sport marketing and conceptualizes the complexity of the contexts that frame value co-creation and experience in sports. We argue that sport marketing research should move beyond debates on definition and engage with more progressive literature to examine sport exchange phenomena holistically.

The proposed experience-based integrative framework provides a holistic approach to understanding sport exchanges encompassing both roles of sport marketing (marketing of and through sports). To our knowledge, this is the first integrative framework in sports that does not distinguish between the two roles of sport marketing, but encompasses both and recognizes their complementarity in sport exchanges. SDL informs our proposed framework on the complexity of

the sport service ecosystem and assists us not only in examining it, but also in understanding its dynamic nature. Our framework does not view sport exchanges in isolation from other exchanges like previous conventional perspectives nor consider the sport service ecosystem in isolation from other subsystems (e.g. sport media and sponsors) or ecosystems (e.g. social, political, national). It recognizes that various exchanges exist among social and economic actors at all levels of the sport service ecosystem, which, over time, transform sport subcultures into value co-creators or co-destructors through reciprocal service exchanges. Thus, in line with SDL, we show that sport service ecosystems are dynamic and evolutionary in nature and constitute a context where service-for-service exchanges create value and sport experiences. Changes in resource integration, service provision, and value co-creation result in changes in the nature of the sport service ecosystem to a certain degree; thus this develops the context for the next iteration and determination of value creation (e.g. value co-creation or co-destruction).

The development of a service ecosystem approach in sports based on SDL strengthens the theoretical foundations of sport marketing and provides directions for future research. The service ecosystem approach of SDL can help academics understand the nature and complexity of the context that frames sport service ecosystems at all levels (micro, meso, and macro) and relationships (dyadic, triadic, and complex). Since sports are experiential in nature, an experience-based service ecosystem approach provides an ideal framework for explaining sport exchanges. In addition, CCT sheds light on the creation of meaning in these systems by defining the cultural context in sports. We identify *historical and tribal aspects* in addition to *social and cultural aspects* of sport experiences that need to be considered when studying service exchanges in this context. Moreover, borrowing from CCT, we contribute to SDL literature by introducing

historical and tribal aspects of experiences as integral elements in understanding value co-creation in a subcultural context and how experiences are evaluated at this level of analysis.

Our paper supports the proposed integrative framework of the SDL service ecosystem view and CCT and confirms that value co-creation and sport experiences are contextually laden; therefore, they should not be examined or understood in isolation from the social, historical, tribal, and cultural context within which they take place. The paper contributes theoretical understandings and informs research and practice regarding value co-creation and experiences in sports by synthesizing insights from SDL on the co-creation of value and CCT on the production of meaning. Both frameworks focus on meaning-laden, contextual, experiential, phenomenological, and operative views on value and extend the context of sport experience with a service ecosystem approach to markets. The combination of these two “natural allies” (Arnould, 2007) emphasizes the recursive relationships between resource integration among actors and value co-creation and provides a deeper understanding of the context through which value is determined and sport experience is evaluated and re-evaluated (Akaka et al., 2013).

The paper provides an understanding of how sport actors draw on various resources to create value for themselves and determine or evaluate sport experiences in conjunction with multiple actors within the sport service ecosystem. CCT and the SDL service ecosystem perspective suggest that sport experiences should not be viewed at the individual level, but at a broader meso level. Although sport experience might be phenomenological – a subjective experience and constructed reality of symbolic meanings (Thompson, Locander, & Pollio 1989) – a systemic perspective of the actors participating in the social, historical, tribal, and cultural context of sports provides a clearer view of how a single actor can participate more effectively (Vargo & Lusch, 2011). Therefore, value co-creation and experiences in sports are always

contextual; they are grounded on a phenomenological viewpoint and depend on historical, tribal, social, and cultural contexts that influence access to internal and external resources.

In practice, it is challenging for sport marketing to ensure satisfying sport experiences for sport actors. SDL can assist all sport actors in recognizing the joint roles of all actors involved in the value co-creation process (e.g. sport firms, fans, participants, media, suppliers, and sponsors) and CCT in identifying all aspects that shape sport experiences (historical, tribal, social, and cultural) and from which value is derived. Moreover, the SDL service ecosystem approach can provide a comprehensive perspective of the role and influences of the actors involved in sports at all levels of this system, and CCT could indicate the level of analysis of sport experiences (e.g., sub-cultural context). These are important insights for managers struggling to better understand individual evaluations of sport experiences and the context of these experiences.

We propose that the next stage of research in sport marketing is to move beyond the focus of a limited set of elements under the control of sport firms to a broader understanding of the multiple actors and various factors both within and outside the firms' control that impact sport experiences. Additionally, empirical research should focus on a richer conceptualization of the sport experience that not only includes cognitive evaluations (e.g., sport facility evaluations) and affective responses (e.g., sport team attachment), but also social, cultural, tribal, and historical components. Furthermore, theorizing on and empirically investigating the relative impact of various aspects of sport experiences are critical research priorities in sport marketing.

The proposed conceptual framework represents the first step in extending the context of sport experience by broadening the scope of analysis to a systemic view for understanding how sport experiences emerge and evolve over time. Thus, future empirical research is needed to provide a better understanding of the cultural, historical, tribal, and social aspects of sport

experiences and how they influence the creation of value at all levels of the sport service ecosystem (micro, meso, and macro). Moreover, the contemplation of multiple networks, structures, and institutions suggests that their overlapping might influence value co-creation and the evaluation of experiences. Therefore, future studies should examine how multiple institutions converge and diverge and how positive and negative sport experiences might emerge through the intersections of these dynamic networks and structures.

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