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Transformative Sport Service Research: Linking Sport Services With Well-Being

Yuhei Inoue

Manchester Metropolitan University

Mikihiro Sato

James Madison University

Kevin Filo

Griffith University

The performance of sport organizations has been traditionally examined from the perspective of attaining strategic and operational goals (e.g., profitability, sporting performance). However, contemporary examples point to a need to expand sport organizations' goals through consideration of their contributions to well-being outcomes. The current special issue addresses this need by advancing the theoretical and empirical understanding of transformative sport service research (TSSR), which seeks to understand how personal and collective well-being can be improved through a range of services offered in the sport industry. This introduction article clarifies the scope of TSSR scholarship and then provides a synthesis of findings and implications from the eight articles included in the special issue. The overview concludes with a call for collective efforts to establish a focused body of knowledge that leads sport organizations to integrate the goal of optimizing consumer and employee well-being into the core of their operations.

Keywords: happiness, health, transformative consumer research, transformative service research, TSSR

Services compose a major portion of products offered by sport organizations (Chelladurai, 2014). Meanwhile, there is a growing recognition that the production and consumption of services, in general, play a critical role in determining the well-being of individuals and collectives (Anderson & Ostrom, 2015; Anderson et al., 2013; Ostrom, Parasuraman, Bowen, Patrício, & Voss, 2015). In relation to sport services, specifically, the close connection with personal well-being is demonstrated by the International Olympic Committee's consensus paper (Reardon et al., 2019) calling for comprehensive management strategies for promoting mental health among elite athletes. The potential capacity of sport services to influence collective well-being is alluded to in the National Football League's (2020, para. 2) mission statement: "We unite people and inspire communities [emphasis added] in the joy of the game by delivering the world's most exciting sports and entertainment experience." Traditionally, the performance of sport organizations has been examined from the perspective of attaining strategic and

operational goals including increased profitability, superior sporting performance, and customer and employee retention (Lee & Cunningham, 2019; McDonald, 2010; Winand, Zintz, Bayle, & Robinson, 2010). While these goals remain important, the contemporary examples highlighted earlier point to a need to expand the goals of sport organizations through consideration of their contributions to well-being.

The current special issue addresses this need by advancing the theoretical and empirical understanding of *transformative sport service research* (TSSR). This emergent area builds on a transformative research paradigm through which we seek to understand the role of consumption and services in producing personal and collective well-being outcomes; the paradigm was developed originally in consumer behavior (transformative consumer research; Mick, 2006) and adapted more recently to service research (transformative service research; Anderson et al., 2013). As an integral part of this broad paradigm, TSSR strives to create a body of knowledge exploring how personal and collective well-being can be improved through a range of services offered in the sport industry.

There is a relatively established line of sport management research investigating topics related to the relationship between sport services and well-being (e.g., Dixon & Warner, 2010; Inoue, Sato, Filo, Du, & Funk, 2017; Jang, Ko, Wann, & Kim, 2017; Kim, Kim, Newman, Ferris, & Perrewé, 2019; Sato, Jordan, & Funk, 2015; Westberg & Kelly, 2019). However, due to the absence of a coordinated effort to synthesize this line of research, it has not reached its full potential to make a distinctive contribution, as indicated by a lack of reference to sport services in the broader transformative service research literature (Alkire et al., 2019; Anderson & Ostrom, 2015; Russell-Bennett, Fisk, Rosenbaum, & Zainuddin, 2019). By introducing the terminology of TSSR and displaying high-quality TSSR scholarship through the flagship sport management journal, we have aimed to provide

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Inoue is with the Sport Policy Unit, Department of Economics, Policy and International Business, Manchester Metropolitan University, Manchester, United Kingdom. Sato is with the Hart School of Hospitality, Sport, and Recreation Management, James Madison University, Harrisonburg, VA, USA. Filo is with the Department of Tourism, Sport, and Hotel Management, Griffith University, Southport, Queensland, Australia. Inoue (y.inoue@mmu.ac.uk) is corresponding author.

an overarching framework for this research area and to facilitate coordination to produce knowledge that is highly impactful within and beyond the sport management literature.

Against this background, in the remainder of this introduction article, we clarify the scope of TSSR scholarship by defining key terms and proposing an overall framework. This is followed by a synthesis of findings and implications from the articles included in this special issue. We conclude with a call for collective efforts to establish a focused body of knowledge concerning sport services and well-being.

Defining the Scope of TSSR

In this special issue, we advance the following definition of TSSR: *TSSR is an area of research aiming to enhance or improve the well-being of sport consumers and employees (both paid staff and volunteers) by generating knowledge that has implications for the optimal production and delivery of sport services.* Understanding this definition of TSSR requires further defining two key terms: sport services and well-being. First, we define the former using five categories of sport services proposed by Chelladurai (2014). These include spectator services (e.g., professional and elite sport events); participant services (e.g., participatory sport events, community sport programs); donor services (e.g., charity sport events, donations to nonprofit sport organizations); sponsorship services (e.g., event sponsorship, athlete endorsement); and services for social ideas (e.g., corporate social responsibility initiatives of professional sport organizations, sport-for-development programs). This broad definition of sport services would enable future TSSR scholars to consider the influence of sport services on well-being from a holistic standpoint. For example, as a spectator service, the FIFA World Cup may promote the well-being of local residents who watch the event on television or by attending in person (Kavetsos & Szymanski, 2010). Meanwhile, this uplifting in residents' well-being may be offset by their increased exposure to, and consumption of, event sponsors' (e.g., McDonalds and Budweiser) products that could have detrimental health consequences (Kelly, Ireland, Alpert, & Mangano, 2014).

Second, in line with the broad transformative research paradigm (Anderson et al., 2013), we define well-being as encompassing both hedonic and eudaimonic well-being. *Hedonic well-being* relates to the experience of happiness and pleasure (Ryan & Deci, 2001). In the academic literature, this type of well-being has been commonly assessed in terms of four components of subjective well-being (Diener, 2000; Ryan & Deci, 2001): life satisfaction (i.e., an individual's overall judgment of his or her life); satisfaction with important life domains (e.g., work satisfaction, family satisfaction); positive affect (i.e., experiencing pleasant moods and emotions); and negative affect (i.e., experiencing unpleasant moods and emotions).

While hedonic well-being is concerned with what makes one's life pleasurable, *eudaimonic well-being* refers to the realization of people's potential that makes their lives meaningful or productive (Ryan & Deci, 2001; Waterman et al., 2010). This type of well-being is best described by Ryff's (1989) six dimensions of psychological well-being: self-acceptance, autonomy, purpose in life, environmental mastery, personal growth, and positive relations with others (see also Misener, 2020 in this special issue for descriptions of each dimension). Compared with research on hedonic well-being (Inoue et al., 2017; Sato et al., 2015; Schlegel, Pfitzner, & Koenigstorfer, 2017), less attention has been given to understanding the contribution of sport services to eudaimonic

well-being. Nevertheless, a recent study of competitive athletes demonstrated the application of eudaimonic well-being to sport contexts (Kouali, Hall, & Pope, 2020). Evidence also suggests that watching sport events may stimulate individuals' productivity in the form of increased work motivation (Doerrenberg & Sieglöch, 2014). Because hedonic and eudaimonic well-being are associated with different predictors (Baumeister, Vohs, Aaker, & Garbinsky, 2013), it is essential that future researchers distinguish between these two types of well-being and explore how each type is separately influenced by sport services.

Another key issue in defining well-being is that both hedonic and eudaimonic well-being can be observed not only at the individual level but also at the collective level (Keyes & Lopez, 2001). For example, in relation to hedonic well-being, the hosting of a sport event may influence subjective well-being of local residents (Schlegel et al., 2017), as well as their social well-being, indicated by engendered feelings of pride in the host city and nation (Chalip, 2006; Waitt, 2003). Similarly, regarding eudaimonic well-being, in addition to impacting the meaningfulness and productivity of individual participants and spectators (Doerrenberg & Sieglöch, 2014; Kouali et al., 2020), sport services may contribute to building a meaningful and productive community where individuals with different attributes feel integrated and valued (Trussell, 2020). This is, for example, reflected in the Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic Games' official motto of "United by Emotions," which underscores "the power of sport to bring together people from diverse backgrounds . . . to connect and celebrate in a way that reaches beyond their differences" (International Olympic Committee, 2020, para. 1).

TSSR Framework

By synthesizing the aforementioned discussions, we propose a framework illustrating the scope of TSSR (see Figure 1). In this framework, four facets of well-being—personal hedonic, personal eudaimonic, collective hedonic, and collective eudaimonic—are

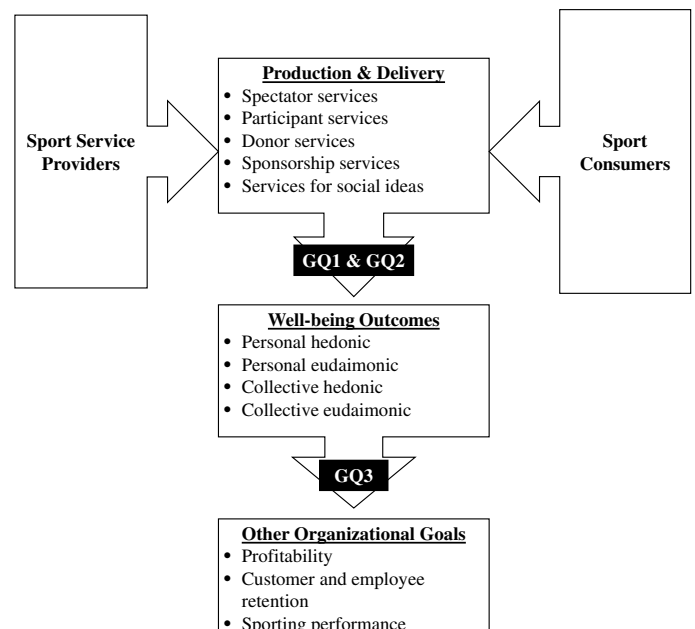


Figure 1 — A framework for defining the scope of transformative sport service research. GQ = guiding question.

specified as central well-being outcomes to be examined by future TSSR scholars. In addition, two focal entities are identified as being relevant to TSSR: sport service providers and sport consumers. *Sport service providers* include sport organizations and their employees (both paid and unpaid staff, such as managers, coaches, professional/elite athletes, and event volunteers), whereas *sport consumers* include amateur athletes, recreational sport participants, fans, spectators, and donors. Then, the production and delivery of sport services (as defined by Chelladurai's [2014] five categories) occurs through the interaction between sport service providers and sport consumers, and—during this interaction process—members of both entities experience changes to their well-being. This framework further illustrates that upward or downward changes in well-being may influence the achievement of other organizational goals, such as profitability and sporting performance. Finally, three guiding questions (GQs) are advanced in the figure to help organize extant and future TSSR scholarship. Each of these questions is explained in the next section along with descriptions of related articles included in this special issue:

GQ1: What well-being outcomes are susceptible to sport services?

GQ2: How can the effects of sport services on well-being outcomes be optimized?

GQ3: How do changes in well-being outcomes influence the achievement of other organizational goals?

Special Issue Articles

This special issue contains a collection of eight manuscripts addressing one of the three GQs of TSSR listed above. These manuscripts employ different methods (quantitative or qualitative), focus on either spectator or participant services, and examine both hedonic and eudaimonic well-being outcomes.

GQ1: What Well-Being Outcomes Are Susceptible to Sport Services?

Given the broad scope of sport services and well-being outcomes examined in TSSR, some facets of well-being may be more readily influenced by a given category of sport services than others. For example, previous researchers have suggested that spectator services are more closely associated with well-being outcomes at the collective level than at the personal level (Inoue, Funk, Wann, Yoshida, & Nakazawa, 2015; Wann, 2006). The first GQ is concerned with ascertaining which facet(s) of well-being is (are) susceptible to each category of sport services among members of both sport service providers and sport consumers.

In this special issue, Wicker and Downward (2020) examine the role of volunteering in relation to individuals' life satisfaction, a key measure of personal hedonic well-being. Although researchers have identified several benefits of volunteering in sport (e.g., Kumnig et al., 2015), its causal effect remains unknown. Additionally, benefits from volunteering may vary depending on types of sport volunteer roles, including administrative (e.g., board or committee member); sport-related (e.g., coach, referee); and operational roles (e.g., organize sport events, support day-to-day club activities; Wicker & Downward, 2020). The authors use a large data set of individuals living in 28 European countries. The results provide confirmation of the positive association between the three volunteer roles—administrative, sport-related, and operational—and life satisfaction. Using an instrumental variable approach,

Wicker and Downward further demonstrate that the number of operational roles has a significant positive effect on life satisfaction, whereas administrative roles and sport-related roles negatively influence life satisfaction. The authors conclude that negative experiences when performing administrative or sport-related roles might offset potential benefits from volunteering in sport.

Trussell (2020) investigates youth sport as a potential site for social change that facilitates a sense of inclusive community for diverse family structures (i.e., collective eudaimonic well-being). In particular, the author explores the complexities of lesbian-parents' experiences in a community youth program through thematic analysis on semistructured interview data provided by nine lesbian parents from Australia, Canada, and the United States. Trussell shows the significance of sexual stigma, heightened visibility, and judgment from the participants' communities. The results also highlight the importance of community youth sport in fostering social relationships and positive role models for the family unit as well as of creating shared understanding toward building an inclusive sport culture. Trussell identifies factors that contribute to the eudaimonic well-being of lesbian parents through examination at the collective level (e.g., families, social networks, communities).

GQ2: How Can the Effects of Sport Services on Well-Being Outcomes Be Optimized?

Sport services, if poorly managed, can have detrimental effects on the well-being of spectators, athletes, and employees (Chalip, 2006; Goodger, Gorely, Lavalley, & Harwood, 2007; Kelly et al., 2014; Wakefield & Wann, 2006). In addition, the current sport system tends to benefit those in the positions of power, limiting access to sport services among vulnerable populations (Frisby, 2005). Hence, the second GQ is posed to provide insights on how sport organizations can improve the way by which sport services are produced and delivered to optimize the effects of these services on well-being outcomes.

Five of the manuscripts in this special issue focus on identifying ways to promote well-being through sport services. Katz, Mansfield, and Tyler (2020) investigate how emotional support is embedded within—and activated through—the networks of sport spectators. Although prior scholars have noted the potential for sport spectatorship to yield social support that is crucial to well-being (Inoue et al., 2017), little is known about how fans' social support is developed through sport spectatorship. Through the lens of network theory, Katz et al. (2020) highlight the social connection that influences the relationship between sport spectatorship and well-being outcomes. They conduct a season-long study involving 70 National Football League fans and examine their consumption networks over the course of the season. Katz et al. find the connection between sport spectatorship and emotional support—one dimension of social support—is a multilevel phenomenon explained by both ego (i.e., focal actor) and alter (i.e., individuals with whom ego shares a tie) factors. Although prior work has primarily investigated the well-being benefits of sport spectatorship from ego-level attributes (i.e., team identification), Katz et al. conclude that emotional support depends on the interpersonal ties and network structures within which sport fans are embedded.

Wicker, Dallmeyer, and Breuer (2020) examine the role of socioeconomic factors and sport variables that contribute to well-being of elite athletes in less commercialized sports in Germany and compare the effects with German residents (i.e., the general

public) of a similar age. Previous researchers have identified various factors that contribute to the production of sporting success (De Bosscher, De Knop, Van Bottenburg, & Shibli, 2006). Meanwhile, Wicker et al. focus on identifying off-field determinants of athletes' well-being, a topic that has emerged as a key policy debate among sport organizations. Wicker et al. look at a range of personal hedonic well-being outcomes, including life satisfaction as a whole and satisfaction with four life domains (health, income, leisure, and family). They find that athletes tend to score lower on well-being than the German residents of a similar age group. Significant differences were also reported between athletes and young residents in terms of the effects of age, income, education, and hours allocated to sport on well-being. Wicker et al. conclude that elite sport policies and high-performance managers should consider the off-field life of athletes, as this could affect athletes' well-being and, in turn, their on-field performance.

Using an autoethnographic approach, Misener (2020) provides an insightful discussion of TSSR as it relates to parental well-being within the youth sport context. Although parents play an important role in the youth sport experience, there has been limited research in sport management regarding how the youth sport environment can influence the well-being of parents who are key stakeholders and customers in community youth sport. In favor of their children's sports pursuits, parents are often expected to be present during training or competitions at the expense of other personal and family routines, which results in the loss of parent leisure and sport participation opportunities (Bean, Fortier, Post, & Chima, 2014). The author explores her own experience as a youth sport parent attempting to challenge the traditional role of parent-spectator by engaging in sideline physical activity simultaneous to her children's sport activities. Misener's findings highlight various facets of eudaimonic well-being through simultaneous participation. Based on her own experience, Misener further suggests the design attributes within community sport that may facilitate or inhibit well-being of parents.

Kim, Oja, Kim, and Chin (2020) explore how the services provided to student athletes improve their school satisfaction and psychological well-being. Academic success and well-being of student athletes are top priorities in the college athletic sector (National Collegiate Athletic Association [NCAA], 2019). The authors highlight the importance of studying academic psychological capital and student athlete engagement that may result in enhancing the student athletes' school satisfaction and well-being. With a sample of 248 NCAA Division I student athletes, Kim et al. find that academic psychological capital contributes to school satisfaction and psychological well-being and that its effect on psychological well-being is mediated by student athlete engagement. The authors conclude that providing services to enhance student athletes' engagement will represent a potential resource for collegiate sport organizations to develop psychological well-being among student athletes.

Mulcahy and Luck (2020) focus on identifying the dimensions of transformative value in sport that can generate uplifting change and greater well-being. In addition, they examine the resources integrated to co-create or co-destroy transformative value. For these purposes, the authors conduct in-depth interviews with 20 elite and Olympic rowers. Their findings support the multidimensional transformative value in sport and sport services. Mulcahy and Luck also uncover two resources that co-create transformative value (i.e., social support, restorative resources); two resources that co-destroy transformative value (i.e., interpersonal misbehavior, sport misbehavior); and one resource that contributes to both the co-creation and co-destruction of

transformative value (i.e., co-performance). Drawing from the literature and the current findings, the authors develop a conceptual model of co-creation and co-destruction of transformative value in sport and sport services, which makes a valuable contribution to the TSSR literature.

GQ3: How Do Changes in Well-Being Outcomes Influence the Achievement of Other Organizational Goals?

In order for organizations to make sustained efforts to improve consumer and employee well-being, an understanding of how those efforts positively affect the organizations' bottom line and competitive advantage is essential (Porter & Kramer, 2011). Although previous researchers point to the relationship between the promotion of well-being and business returns for sport organizations and sponsors (Inoue & Havard, 2014), both empirical and theoretical understanding of this relationship is lacking. Consequently, the third GQ seeks to establish business cases for organizational efforts that correspond to TSSR by linking changes in well-being outcomes with improvements in other organizational outcomes, such as profitability, customer and employee retention, and sporting performance.

MacIntosh, Kinoshita, and Sotiriadou (2020) address this GQ by applying TSSR to the context of an international sport event. Although past researchers have investigated the effect of sport event services on athletes' event satisfaction (MacIntosh & Parent, 2017), this study is the first to examine how the event service environment is associated with athletes' event satisfaction (as a well-being outcome) and, in turn, how their event satisfaction affects their sporting performance, which is central to producing a successful sport event. Data from 430 athletes who participated in the 2018 Commonwealth Games were examined. The results provide evidence that four service environment factors (out of 10 factors) are positively associated with athletes' event satisfaction, which further contributes to subjective evaluation of their performance. Given that athletes represent co-creators of the service delivery in sport events, MacIntosh et al. conclude that the athlete interaction and evaluation of the environment itself is a key management consideration.

Conclusions

In summary, the theoretical and empirical insights produced by the eight articles included in this special issue provide implications that can transform how sport services are produced and delivered to optimize the personal and collective well-being of elite athletes (MacIntosh et al., 2020; Mulcahy & Luck, 2020; Wicker et al., 2020), student athletes (Kim et al., 2020), volunteers (Wicker & Downward, 2020), spectators (Katz et al., 2020), and parents of youth sport participants (Misener, 2020; Trussell, 2020). The authors of these articles also examine a variety of sport service contexts, ranging from community youth sport programs to an international sport event, and adopt both hedonic and eudaimonic approaches to understanding the well-being outcomes of sport services. The diversity and breadth of the special issue articles is encouraging and points to the notion that a focus on well-being outcomes is widely applicable across the field of sport management.

Notably, the timing of this writing coincides with the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, which has led sport organizations across the globe to decide on the suspension, postponement, or

cancellation of their events and programs (BBC Sport, 2020). While these decisions have made many sport services temporarily unavailable, we contend that, in the long term, topics concerning the relationship between sport services and well-being will become more relevant as the global community continues to respond to—and recover from—the pandemic. For example, consider the detrimental impacts that disruptions due to the pandemic can have on mental health (Mental Health Foundation, 2020). To mitigate such impacts, scholars must assist sport managers to develop innovative ways to produce and deliver sport services through advanced technologies (e.g., virtual software, social media applications, connected fitness equipment; Pavitt, 2020) so that the well-being benefits of these services can be leveraged even in times of social distancing. In addition, when social distancing measures are lifted, opportunities will exist to understand how traditional sport service delivery (e.g., live events or programs) can help people recover from mental distress caused by the pandemic.

However, this increasing relevance of well-being topics as well as their broad applicability to the sport management field, as noted earlier, may also present future scholars interested in this subject with a challenge similar to the one Chelladurai cautioned the field about in his 1991 Zeigler Award speech: “We spread ourselves too thin to be able to specialize in any one aspect and create a unique body of knowledge in that specialization” (Chelladurai, 1992, p. 216). It is our hope that the definition and framework of TSSR advanced in this introduction article, as well as the three GQs, will enable future researchers to make collective efforts to establish a focused body of knowledge that leads sport organizations to integrate the goal of optimizing consumer and employee well-being into the core of their operations.

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