



Mind games: The inclusion of trivia as a sport in the Pan Pacific Masters Games



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ABSTRACT

This case follows Shane Walters, who was successful in his proposal to have trivia included as a sport in the Pan Pacific Masters Games. Shane is now tasked with planning, programming, and delivering a sport programme, as well as marketing the programme to potential participants. The case is particularly relevant for courses that cover event planning, event marketing, and event tourism. The case is applicable to both undergraduate and postgraduate courses.

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1. Teaching note and overview for class use

This case explores the complexities of marketing and promotion for a non-traditional sport. The case is focused on the inclusion of trivia as a sport in the Pan Pacific Masters Games (PPMG) and provides instructors with an opportunity to discuss and debate the fundamental definitions of sport (and whether trivia is a sport) before tackling more complex marketing issues that flow from it being included in the PPMG. The case narrative allows students to follow Shane, an advocate and stakeholder for advancing trivia as a sport, as he plans for, and prepares to host the first ever trivia event at the PPMG. The case could be used in either undergraduate or postgraduate courses that discuss sport or event marketing. The discussion questions included as part of the teaching note are applicable for either undergraduate or postgraduate students. It might be expected that postgraduate students provide more in-depth analysis and critique, and therefore additional readings and guidance for instructors to tailor the use of the case accordingly is provided.

The PPMG has approximately 12,000 participants aged 30 and over in 42 sports. After an email to various stakeholders soliciting interest in new sports to be added, the PPMG announced that trivia was to be included in the 2014 Games. Shane, a regular participant in the PPMG and board member of Quizzing Australia (the governing body for trivia), was elated, as he had successfully proposed the addition of trivia. As the case describes, after his successful bid, Shane was faced with many decisions on how to appropriately market and stage a trivia event at the PPMG. Shane's success hinged on securing at least 100 participants in trivia for the inaugural event, as it would be excluded from any future PPMG if the 2014 event (upon which this case is focused) was unsuccessful. Participation was therefore a key driver for any of Shane's marketing actions in planning and preparing for the event.

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Students are invited to assume the role of Shane as he develops a marketing plan to ensure trivia is successful at the PPMG. While it is noted that the case is written in an Australian context, the case could be used in international classrooms as trivia has similar contextual relevance in both the USA and the UK. For example, in the USA, trivia nights started in the 1980s after the success of the board game Trivial Pursuit. Currently, it is estimated that 2000 weekly trivia nights are held in the USA. Further, it is estimated that approximately 22,445 weekly trivia events are held in the UK (Pagels, 2014). Suggested readings are provided in the subsequent sections of the teaching note that instructors can use in order to further develop contextual relevance.

2. Understanding the product

One of the key tasks in developing a marketing or promotion plan is to understand the product that is being taken to the market. For Shane, this is a particularly challenging issue because trivia, which is not traditionally considered a sport, is to be marketed and hosted within a larger multi-sport event.

2.1. Understanding trivia in a sport context

In order to orient student thinking and engage them in the topic area, an activity for either undergraduate or postgraduate students that instructors can use this case for stems from challenging our assumptions and definitions of sport in order to understand trivia as part of the broader sport event (the PPMG). In this case, a practical background for initiating such a discussion about trivia as part of a larger sport event is provided. Instructors are encouraged to allow students to discuss and debate how Shane might define trivia given that it is an event within a broader sport context.

While a precise and universal definition of sport is difficult to find, as demonstrated in the case, many sport organisations have developed their own definitions. This provides an opportunity for instructors to facilitate discussion about who defines sport and who benefits or is disadvantaged by particular ways of defining sports, and for students to challenge their own underlying assumptions about what sport is or is not.

For both undergraduate and postgraduate students, it is useful to start with sport management textbooks that provide definitions of sport in introductory chapters. Instructors can use textbooks that are appropriate for their context or geographic location. Examples of texts might include, but are not limited to Hylton (2013), Masteralexis, Barr, and Hums (2011), Pedersen and Thibault (2014), Robinson, Chelladurai, Bodet, and Downward (2013), Shilbury and Kellett (2010), and Smith and Nicholson (2012).

For postgraduate students, further critical discussion can be encouraged by assigning readings such as Chalip, Schwab, and Dustin (2010) and Deery, Jago, and Fredline (2004). Specifically, Chalip and colleagues (2010) examine how sport is defined differently in sport management compared with sport recreation. The lens through which one views sport impacts which activities are included as important and legitimate sports and which are not – and ultimately how sports are supported in society. Deery et al. (2004) address defining sport in the context of tourism and events—which is important to discuss in the case of the PPMG.

The following questions could be used for either undergraduate or postgraduate students as a discussion guide for lessons related to defining sport. Of course, the depth of student analysis will depend on the student's education level and background knowledge. Questions include:

1. How do you define sport?
 - a. Does your definition of sport differ from the IOC's or SportAccord's definition? If so, how?
 - b. Does your definition of sport encompass trivia?
2. Many people (such as Ian in this case) are critical of trivia being defined as a sport. If you were Shane, how would you defend trivia as a sport to others?

Class activities can include:

1. Ask students to research different definitions of sport offered by various sport organisations. Facilitate a discussion on the commonalities and differences found among various definitions. If the instructor requires students to research definitions of sport prior to coming to class, it is estimated that the discussion would take 20 minutes. However, the instructor may also choose to have students research definitions during class time. In this case, it is expected this activity would take up to an hour.
2. Trivia was included in the PPMG as a result of Shane's written bid to the PPMG when it solicited interest in the inclusion of additional sports. Ask students to write a convincing letter to the PPMG proposing to include trivia or another sport of interest. Students should research the sport and provide participation rate data and facts that might convince an event organiser to add the sport to the event programme. This could be used as the foundation for a class debate. Students could debate the topic of "Trivia is a sport". Students could be assigned to a group either for or against the statement. Students should use their research and existing facts to debate the topic. The time required for the debate would be dependent on the number of students in the class. It is recommended that students be allotted no more than 5 minutes to state their position.

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