The tennis socio economic activity in France.

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ABSTRACT
With almost 5000 positions equaling full time employment in the French Tennis Federation, (FFT), and its network (mostly technicians, 3300 are involved in training and entertainment), and with 26000 voluntary directors working for a time that represents the « equivalent of full time workers » of approximately 6000 positions, apart from the thousand tennis related positions, tennis is a game that has also become an industry… and an industry of no minor importance considering also the benefits for education, health and social relations involved. In general, and since the ’90s, leisure and sport event economic development have been subject to a strong economic growth in France and in the world, while the practice and purchasing of tennis equipment have been considered, during these last fifteen years, as an economic activity that has reached its mature stage, and, for some, it is beginning to decline. However, in France, tennis is still the second sport as regards practice with a federation license and media exposure, and it is the first tennis equipment market in Europe. So the question is whether this sport still has a real socioeconomic development potential. If so, what actions can be projected? In economics, the word sector is used to understand and explain the structure and work of a sector of activities, in our case, a sport: tennis, and to understand its weight and its influence.

Key words: Economic activity, Impact, Innovations, Prospective, Strategies.

INTRODUCTION
While there are more and more statistic papers related to the sport (please read the data provided by the statistic mission of the State Sport Secretary), there is very little research or study to analyze the socioeconomic impact of a sport; however, it is possible to read some golf related outlines (2007), and horse riding (2006). Both, economists and specialists on sport statistics center their analysis mostly on practice, employment, sport tourism and events, and even on the impact of these different dimensions. (Barget 2002, 2006).

One of the great peculiarities of the sport as a market has to do with its intrinsic capacity to exist in the multiple and diverse sectors of the activity. This is the reason why the economic aspect can be really broad and have a huge impact on the creation of economic value and social benefits. Economists as well as national and international statistics usually differentiate:

• the essential aspect of the activity which includes practice and events;

• all tennis related activities, court construction, builders, manufacturers and distributors of tennis equipment, then, the media, the sponsors, and marketing agencies, emerging sectors such as sports gambling and videogames, to name just a few.

The diversity, the quantity and the importance of the different subsectors are important for tennis socioeconomic potential, as well as for its related activities and its appeal.

THE THREE BIG TYPES OF SUPPLIES
Tennis global supply and demand can be analyzed considering the following "production" lines: the products, the services and the sport events (consumption experiences).

There exist tennis related products in the textile and shoe industry, the indispensable equipment (racquets, balls, strings, bags...). Sales in this market follow the fashion trends1, and amount to 300 million euros a year (Journal du net Economie 2007). There are other associated products like drinks and energizing and nutrition products or treatment and health products. (...). This is a highly diversified sector, as far as suppliers is concerned, with different leaders according to the type of product. In other words, unlike other sports, there is no strong global concentration of supplies but an atomization of each product type. As to distribution, in tennis, there are some peculiarities with the presence of the great general distributors of sport products together with the specialized distributors of licenses and clubs. This can perhaps be considered as the first strong symptom of potential in terms of proximity.
Unlike the event market, product and practice markets have been stagnant for about fifteen years in spite of the technologic innovations and marketing contributions from the companies. (Sport première, 2007).

The services can enter the market as « Business to Consumer » (« B to C ») and « Business to Business » from the company to the company customers (« B to B »). As to personal services, the clubs of the federations are in the first place, followed at a distance in volume of activity and employment by the specialized recreational centers (Forest-Hills...) and the renowned excellent centers devoted to specific expertise for the highest levels. (Team Lagardère, whose business volume amounts to 9 million euros for 27 employees, the Mouratoglou center...). The FFT club, a leading service provider, offers multiple possibilities to its consumers, with an almost unique range of sport services from mini- tennis to junior club competition and tennis for adults, internal and external tournaments, individual and team tournaments for all levels and ages with different kinds of entertainment, restaurant services and multisport courses during the school holidays.

As to "B to B", services can be characterized by tennis sponsorship market either at a local (club and local competitions), regional (professional events) or national and international level (Roland Garros and BNPP Masters in particular). The supply is quite diverse in this case, and it can be personalized depending on the communication needs of the company and the communities: classic sponsorship (visibility), activation – participation of the sponsors on the development or organization of the events (interactivity), public relations ("B to B" relational proximity), ticket office ("B to C" relational proximity).

The experiences include sport event consumption; when considering the population in France, it is comparatively, the most productive country in the world as far as organization of ATP, WTA and ITF events. Sport experience consumption happens in stadiums (indoors and outdoors. France is a bit outdated as regards facilities, so its main actors (FFT and Canal Plus Events) are currently working on the revamping of Roland Garros stadium and on a new project for a new stadium in Lyon. The evolution and the development of sport events are marked by the support of the media as well as the information and communication technologies which have helped the classic television rights and new actors and markets to develop specifically for tennis as a sport. The new video umpiring system, ("Hawk Eye"), the direct scoring and statistics go straight from the umpire’s palm to be distributed through the different media (internet, TV, commentators, press...), on site shows are retransmitted by the internal and external media of the event (wide screen, closed circuit television), internet in particular (official sites, sport and tennis portals, federation sites) event sites, internet television). It is this way that a whole range of new experiences crop up together with a new commercial axis to add to the communication products that the event organizers offer.

In this experience centered axis, it is possible to introduce at least two complementary dimensions which match the sport event with other types of entertainment in the stadiums, thus strengthening and enlarging consumption with a logic similar to that of the American leagues (NBA, NFL, MLB and NHL).

Análisis de los caracteristicas de la actividad

The socioeconomic specificity is related to the importance of the FFT at the core of this activity. Its strategic positioning has contributed to capturing an important part of the recreational and event related activities mainly in relation to Roland Garros (RG) and to a lesser extent, to the BNPP Masters. It is due to the 112 million euros generated (with a 40% margin), that RG granted the FFT a business volume of 152 million euros in 2007, -an amount that has slowly been increasing in the last thirty years- and 36 leagues (21 million euros allocated in 2007).

The "Chatrier model" (Bayle, 2005) of the years 1970-1980 encouraged this success which stands on three pillars:

- RG, a promotion and funding tool for federated tennis;
- a top level training activity that is almost unique in the world for its performance,
- a professionalism of the federation network with which the FFT efficiently helps its clubs through its leagues.

The model has been adjusted in these last fifteen years with a fourth key element that was developed in relation to new learning methodologies (mini-tennis and tennis evolving pedagogies, adult tennis programs) improving the conditions of reception and activity at the clubs (courts, club house ). In spite of the real success of mini-tennis programmes in particular, there seems to be a recreational activity potential to be exploited at the clubs, which are still very concerned (too?) with the competitive aspect but lack professionalism in development and services on the different tennis related aspects: education, insertion, disabilities, tourism, sport in the companies.

The current evolution of tennis market shows the presence of a new operator with the generic strategy of the Lagardère group, which develops a "sports" polo (3rd world operator in sport marketing). This group seems to be a new competitor in top performance level for the FFT (with the Lagardère Team ) and event related activities (with the Canal Plus Event strategy). This competition, with a concentration of tennis related event market, generates a new challenge for the FFT and the tennis elites.
“A sport for all”: where does its appeal stem from?

Thus, tennis is a very diverse sport which can be exploited at different levels, from practice to product consumption, services and sport experiences. The historic tennis association between the FFT and BNP Paribas provides an excellent example since the BNP Paribas’ decision to make a strong investment to support tennis (some 30 million euros per year) can be explained in different ways: its mixed character (first mixed sport in practice with a license), the power of diversity, the international dimension and, above all, the proximity which can be developed with customer related strategies from the global (Roland Garros, Davis Cup, Fed Cup, great ATP tournaments) to the local level (clubs and licenses and local events).

The socioeconomic activity of French tennis is highly attractive from the point of view of market diversity and the development potential at all levels for the actors in the sport. Finally, the virtuous circle of the activity develops around six main pillars: “Leisure-Fashion-Fun-Association-Professionalism-Service”, which can generate a new tennis dynamics through charismatic celebrities and emblematic results such as Grand Slam, Davis Cup and Fed Cup titles.

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