



Tennis teaching as business: coaches as creators of added value

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this article is to promote tennis and tennis teaching as a business, and share some strategies that coaches can use to add value to the services and products they provide. In short, it presents four main areas in which coaches may add significant value for their clients: service quality; variety in the tools used; interaction with clients; and, adaptation of services to clients.

Key words: marketing, promotion, business, economy.

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INTRODUCTION

Tennis is a very popular sport all over the world; 87 million people play tennis in over 200 countries, there are over half a million tennis courts and more than 150.000 coaches (ITF, 2019). During the period between the 1970s, and the end of the century, there was a considerable increase in the number of recreational players and clubs (Barget, 2006). Some authors note a social and institutional crisis in tennis starting in this period due: clubs starting to consider their members as clients, rather than partners; and, due to greater inter-sport competition starting (Waser, 1995). Large wage disparity between players at the professional level as well as the economic difficulties encountered by some clubs and federations added to this crisis.

In the 21st century, tennis has become an activity that provides a number of business opportunities, all of which have come to be as a result of the economic, social and cultural evolution of the current world. Possibilities are huge, from “big data” to electronic sports, social media, the internet of things (IoT), virtual reality and many other technologies that contribute to tennis evolution and its adaptation to new trends (Infosys, 2020).

The economic impact of tennis has given rise to a great number of businesses over the last years. And not only does it happen in professional tennis (tours, organizations,

events, etc.) but also from federations, clubs and free-lance professionals. In fact, in Europe in particular, it is consumer demand that has become the main driving factor for change in the business. Thus, new activities are appearing in the industry, in fields such as sport psychology and conditioning, organization and event management, and marketing and communication management, among others. The business initiatives that coaches have developed also reflect the new market trends (Euroseen, 2006).

TENNIS ECONOMY AND RECREATIONAL PARTICIPATION ACTIVITY

It has already been stated that in general, and since the 90s, tennis economy has experienced a huge growth all over the world. Tennis practice and equipment purchasing are an economic activity that has already reached its maturity (Bayle & Maltese, 2009).

The world tennis equipment market is expected to reach US\$ 845.7 million by 2022; in the racket market alone, some seven million rackets are sold annually all over the world. The world tennis racket market will grow by approximately 0.9% over the next five years, from USD 330 million in 2019, to USD 350 million in 2024 (Absolute Report, 2019).

Van Wyk y Davies (2009, p. 12) state that: *“The tennis business implies understanding certain components of the business which, once understood, can be adapted to the game of tennis. The main objective for clubs and federations is the*

general promotion of tennis. There is a commercial incentive for both clubs and federations in making more people play. The principles included are the AIDA (Awareness, Interest, Desire, Action) and the 4 P's of the marketing mix" (Price, Promotion, Place and Product).

When analysing the tennis global supply and demand, and studying the three 'production' axes of products, services and sport events (consumer experiences), we agree with Bayle and Maltese (2009, p. 25) who state: "

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 the professionalism in development and services to cater the various different tennis related aspects: education, insertion, disabilities, tourism, corporate sport."

Therefore, the more modern tennis increasingly operates in the corporate sector, the more customer satisfaction with tennis products and services contributes significantly to the sustained competitiveness of tennis organisations.

In fact, the tennis participation sector, made up of recreational or amateur players, plays a crucial role in the economy of our sport. However, as Barget (2006, p. 430) points out, "*there has never been a global valuation in monetary terms of the whole external effects of tennis participation. It would be of interest to determine the net social benefit or cost of amateur tennis for society – a controversial question*".

COACHES AS AGENTS OF VALUE CREATION IN THE TEACHING TENNIS BUSINESS

Tennis teaching as a business can be included in the service sector, and as such it calls for continuous social interaction. Thus, coaches interact with many people, from amateur players and the media to sport directors, other professionals (coaches, managers, for instance) and tennis players. For example, for coaches who work in junior tennis, parents are one of the most important groups of people they interact with (Knight y Harwood, 2009).

Research suggests that there is a relationship between the quality of tennis coaching, learner success and satisfaction and finally, willingness to stay in tennis (Crespo, McInerney & Reid, 2006). Even though the quality of tennis coaching is not the only variable in continuous participation, it significantly contributes to player development and retention (Misener and Danylchuk, 2009).

Tennis coaches play a key role in the process of creating added value to the business, they are an important agent in the creation of this added value. As Tennant and Marklow (2009) say: "*coaches must think and work in a professional way in order to develop a successful and profitable business*".

The role of coaches is key from the tennis business and economic point of view, so much so, that Mäenpää, Jobson and Löffler (2009) state that "*coaches are taking on the role of*

the consultant and advisor in equipment and sponsorship issues".

This article highlights four main areas in which coaches may create added value for their clients: service quality, variety in the tools being used, interaction with the clients and adaptation of the services to the clients.

In this context, we are including among the clients, all the learners and other stakeholders who are present in the "client path/experience".

Table 1 summarizes some ideas that may help coaches to create value in their business proposition.

ASPECT	EXAMPLE
Quality of service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Analysing the players' strokes more accurately, by means of electronic devices (cameras, tablets, smart phones...) - Video recording their strokes and sending them to their phones. - Suggesting they use their phones to control their heart rate and other physical parameters.
Variety of tools used	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Offering cardio tennis lessons and other modalities - Setting up a beach tennis court or using an existing court - Having a set of updated exercises available and using them continuously.
Interaction with clients	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Organizing social activities before, during or after the lessons for interested pupils, parents, children and friends to attend. - Asking learners to evaluate and share ideas regarding training sessions and exercises
Adaptation of the services to the clients	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Programmes for children under 4 years of age - Programmes for juniors 17 – 35 years of age - Programmes for adults 40 – 65 years of age - Programmes for wheelchair players, persons with visual difficulties.

Table 1. Ideas to create value in the tennis business proposition.

CONCLUSIONS

Regardless of the popularity and the benefits that top professional tennis entails, it is important to understand that amateur tennis, within the framework of participation and massification, is an immense business opportunity for all those involved.

Further to the example of coaches discussed in this article, CEOs, managers and others involved in tennis, in any responsibility area, should develop programmes, projects and

initiatives that create value in the tennis business proposition.

We hope that the ideas shared in this article will help to foster creativity and inventiveness in order to adapt the supply of tennis products and services to satisfy customer demand.

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