

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION TO SPORT MANAGEMENT RESEARCH

OBJECTIVES FOR COMPLETING THIS
CHAPTER ARE THAT STUDENTS WILL
BE ABLE TO:

Define research and sport management research

Understand the role of research for sport business

Understand the role of research for the academic field
of sport management

Understand the value of research for students
in sport management

Understand the characteristics of sport
management research

Understand the purpose of sport management
research

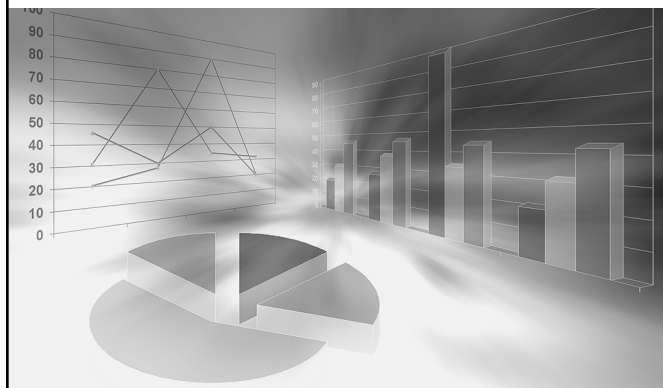
Differentiate the philosophical approaches
to sport management research

Differentiate the applied sport management research
vs. basic sport management research

Describe each of the three types of sport management
research: exploratory research, descriptive research,
and causal research

Understand the evolution of sport
management research

Discuss the future of sport management research



THE PURPOSE OF THIS CHAPTER is to provide an overview of sport management research and its significance to the field of sport management and to the sport industry. Specifically, the chapter will first define sport management research and substantiate the importance of research to the academic field of sport management and to the sport industry. The chapter will then discuss the characteristics of sport management research and the different types of research that sport management researchers can use in solving their research problems. The evolution and future of sport management research will also be reviewed.

NATURE AND SCOPE OF SPORT MANAGEMENT RESEARCH

At its most basic level, the purpose of research is to generate information. This information will be used for a variety of purposes. Information is critical for making decisions and developing strategies in every part of the company. Research can provide basic answers to simple questions, and it can uncover information needed in complicated situations.

As an academic field of study, sport management is relatively new. Compare this field to such fields as law, medicine, or education. Yet, for all of millennia, sport management is an activity that humans have been doing ever since we started playing. That is, once a human started to play a game, someone was there to provide management. Even though sport management is something we have been doing forever, it is only recently that it is a labeled academic field of study. In fact, the first sport-related administration program has been traced to 1949 when Florida Southern University offered a curriculum titled “Baseball Business Administration” (Isaacs, 1964). The origins of the words used to describe this field have not yet been traced. However, the earliest use of the label “Sports Administration” comes from a book entitled *Careers and Opportunities in Sports*, in which a variety of jobs in sport business are presented and one chapter is labeled “Sports Administration.” As a field of study in current decades, sports administration has been traced to a program at Ohio University in 1966.

Research in Our Daily Lives

Research touches us every day. Whether we reach for something in the fridge, get into our cars, turn on our cell phones, or put on our running shoes, each one of these items has been created, developed, manufactured, and marketed with the help of research.

Staying current with the knowledge of today is a demanding task. Information, old and new, is produced and flows at amazing speeds. When an incident happens on the other side of the world, we can read about it, hear about it, and see it within seconds. Additionally, information technology, the invention, production, and distribution of high technology equipment that allows us to access and manage information, improves daily at a blinding pace—we can surf the web, manage email, watch

Consumer	Demographics Psychographics Lifestyle Geodemographics Purchase behavior
Competitor	The industry and marketplace Product differentiation Pricing strategies Financial strategies Positioning Promotion strategies
Company	Mission & objectives Strengths Production Product management Distribution strategies Promotion strategies Weaknesses
Climate	Economic Legal Social and cultural Political Ethical Trends Technology Education Community Corporate

Source: Pitts, B. & Stotlar, D. (2007). *Fundamentals of sport marketing* (3rd ed.). Morgantown, WV: Fitness Information Technology.

FIGURE I-1. The 4 Cs: What the Sport Business Must Study Constantly to Stay Informed and Make Good Decisions and Successful Strategies

TV or movies, listen to music, and check our GPS for directions on a gadget that fits in the palm of a hand. And, oh, by the way, it's also a phone.

In the world of sports, research affects every part of the industry. In sporting apparel, the athlete's clothing is lighter, warmer, faster, safer, and basically whatever the athlete needs to maximize performance. In goods, advances in equipment have caused many sports to change rules to either restrict the technology, or to embrace it. In golf, for instance, golf course designers have had to lengthen courses because the technology of golf clubs and golf balls allow the average player to hit the ball farther.

In every sport business, information is critical. Sport managers need information to make informed decisions and to generate strategies. The nature and scope of sport management research is limited only by one's definition of business and of research. Research provides information needed about the consumer, the competitor, the company, and the climate—the 4 Cs of marketing—as presented in Figure 1-1 (Pitts & Stotlar, 2007).

Sport Management Research Defined

How is “sport management research” defined? Sport management is the study and practice of all people, activities, businesses, or organizations involved in producing, facilitating, promoting, or organizing any sport-related business or product (Pitts & Stotlar, 2007). Research, at its most basic level, is the generation of information. Other common definitions of research are “to examine carefully to help build a scientific body of knowledge,” “the systematic investigation of phenomena (behavior, events, people, things, etc.),” and “a diligent systematic inquiry or study to gain new knowledge or refine existing.”

One of the most comprehensive definitions of research is offered by Kerlinger and Lee (2000). They regarded research as “a systematic, controlled, empirical, amoral, public, and critical investigation of natural phenomena. It is guided by theory and hypotheses about the presumed relations among such phenomena” (p. 14). McMillan and Schumacher (2006) defined research as “the systematic process of collecting and logically analyzing data for some purpose” (p. 9).

The authors of this book define sport management research as a scientific, purposeful, systematic and rigorous method of collecting, analyzing, and interpreting data objectively or subjectively about some characteristic (individual (s), group(s), organization(s), idea(s), demographic(s), concept(s), model(s), theory(ies), etc), in order to gain new knowledge or add to the existing knowledge base of the field of sport organization management studies. For the purpose of this book, sport management research is defined as *an orderly investigative process that involves purposeful and systematic collection, analysis, and interpretation of data (units of information) to gain new knowledge or to verify already existing knowledge within the specific domain of managing human and material resources in organizations of the sport industry.*

RESEARCH FOR THE BODY OF KNOWLEDGE IN SPORT MANAGEMENT

Sport management is an emerging and expanding field of study as a science. Science involves systematic study for the development of new information or ways to validate existing information. Such systematic study leads to the creation of a scientific body of knowledge for sport administration education. As shown in academic journals in the field, such as *Journal of Sport Management*, *Sport Marketing Quarterly*, and *International Journal of Sport Management*, there has been a refinement of a variety of field surveys within the past 10 years that has made the study of sport management more scientific.

The study of sport management still needs much progress before its academic scholars will be able to describe appropriate behaviors for all situations. However, by virtue of the advances already achieved by such scholars, sport management can be identified as a rapidly growing science.

Value of Research for Students in Sport Management

Students in sport management are in a unique position to learn the value of research, why to conduct research, and how to conduct research. Knowledge and skill to conduct basic research are valuable to organizations. When the students gain the knowledge

and skill while in college, they attain a major skill-set that future employers will value. The following outlines the value of research to the student in sport management:

- It enhances the development of critical thinking of students for study of supervisory management of firms (enterprises) of the sport industry.
- It helps students to become more authoritative in research procedures for the study of supervisory management in the sport industry.
- It helps students to become authorities in their designated fields or options of study, (i.e., sport promotion, professional sport management, sporting goods manufacture, etc.)
- It helps students to identify problems that need to be investigated in their designated fields or options of study.
- It helps students to masterfully apply research findings to the practice of the sport business.
- It help students to share more research findings with their colleagues and instructors about the study of sport management in the sport industry
- It motivates students to become involved either as principal investigators or as participants in research about the study of sport management in the sport industry.

Value of Research for the Practice of Sport Management

As has already been established, research is needed for information purposes. In business, research is used in a number of ways to solve problems, answer queries, and develop strategies for the organization. The desired end result is to move the company forward to successful strategies for competitive advantage.

Characteristics of Sport Management Research

Van Doren, Holland, and Crompton (1984) identify a number of general characteristics of leisure research, based upon the analysis of articles published in six volumes of the *Journal of Leisure Research*

and *Leisure Sciences*. Using the same analogy, three general characteristics of sport management research are recognized:

Sport management research is interdisciplinary in nature. This characteristic implies that the foundation of sport management research is built upon several related disciplines including physical education, recreation, business management, public administration, hospitality management, sport psychology, and tourism. In addition, the behavioral sciences (psychology, sociology, social psychology, and anthropology) and social sciences (economics, political science, and history) also lend support for research in the new and emerging field of sport management.

A wide variety of topical specialty areas are included in published reports. Twenty-six different subject areas were found to exist, ranging from general leisure behavior (number one) to facility management and sports (the last two) (Pederson & Pitts, 2001).

Most of the studies conducted by sport management researchers are quantitative in nature. Quarterman, Jackson, Koo, Kim, Yoo, Prugger, and Han (2006) conducted a content analysis of the statistical data analysis techniques used in the *Journal of Sport Management (JSM)* from its starting issue in 1987 to the last issue of 2004. Quantitative research articles accounted for more than half (165 or 55.0%) of the articles published in *JSM*. Qualitative research articles accounted for 27 (9.0%) of the articles, and essay or conceptual articles accounted for 101 or one-third (34.0%) of such publications. Six (2.0%) of the studies used mixed methods, including both quantitative and qualitative research techniques. It was also reported in this study that 151 articles revealed that percentages and one-way ANOVA were the most frequent basic techniques used by sport management researchers; correlations and post-hoc multiple comparisons were the most frequently used intermediate techniques; and factor analysis was the single most advanced technique used.

A second study conducted by Quarterman,

Pitts, Jackson, Kim, and Kim (2005) showed that quantitative data-based articles accounted for nearly two-thirds (159 or 63.3%) of the articles published in the *Sport Marketing Quarterly* (*SMQ*) from its first issue in 1992 to the last issue of 2004. Qualitative data-based articles accounted for less than one tenth (6.4%) of the articles, and conceptual articles accounted for nearly one-third (29.5%) of such publications. It was also reported that, of the data analysis techniques used in 159 articles in the *Sport Marketing Quarterly*, half (50.6%) used descriptive statistics, more than one-third (41.7%) used parametric statistics, and less than one-tenth (7.7%) used nonparametric statistics.

Riddick, DeSchrive, and Weissinger (1984) found that more than 90% of reported research in the field used the survey research approach. At the same time, few experimental studies were published. As has been argued elsewhere (Iso-Ahola, 1986), this has largely been a result of research training of graduate students in sport management programs.

Major Purposes of Sport Management Research

Why is research important in sport management? At its most fundamental base, the purpose of sport management research is to generate information. Let's take this fundamental purpose and look at the detailed reasons for research in different settings.

The need for research in sport management has never been greater than it was during the 1990s. Several reasons can be listed to validate the importance of research in sport management. It is paradoxical that more than 200 colleges and universities offered undergraduate and graduate degrees in sport management and produced a large number of graduates, despite a limited amount of empirical data-based research directed at problems and issues occurring in the field itself.

The primary rationale for research is to explicate a scientific body of knowledge that will eventually define and describe sport management as a unique field of study. The problem is that sport management exists as a field of study and as a field of

practice without a scientific heritage. Therefore, a scientific body of knowledge is needed to give autonomy and provide direction for the study and practice of sport management in such areas as intercollegiate athletics administration, the sporting goods industry, sports marketing, and so on.

There is need to expand the knowledge base through scientific studies about management processes, management skills, management roles, organizational structures, and organizational behavior that will help those who are now studying in undergraduate and graduate programs, as well as those who now practice leadership and management in the various segments of sport management.

A second reason for research is to substantiate a body of knowledge that will lend support for the development of ideas, concepts, and theories unique to the field of sport management. Currently, much of sport management education functions from an untested theoretical (atheoretical) base. At the time of this writing, there are no known theories unique to the field of sport management. All of the theories are borrowed from other fields and disciplines. The field is in poverty for conceptual and theoretical frameworks unique to sport management.

A third reason for research is to substantiate a body of knowledge that will lend support for teaching students in undergraduate and graduate degree programs. Too much of the literature utilized in classroom teaching is speculative and generally unsubstantiated by empirical evidence.

A fourth reason is to advance the emerging field of sport management as a credible practicing profession. As sport management strives to establish itself as a profession, it must develop, through empirical research, a unique body of knowledge—one of the primary criteria of a profession.

A fifth and final rationale for research is to ensure survival of sport management as a part of the higher education enterprise. Currently there are more than 200 sport management programs at the undergraduate level; therefore, more faculty find themselves challenged and encouraged to conduct research not only because of the demands of the evolving field of sport management, but also because of the promotion/tenure requirements of colleges

and universities. Research is one way to ensure survival of the sport management programs of undergraduate and graduate programs in higher education.

PHILOSOPHICAL APPROACHES TO SPORT MANAGEMENT RESEARCH

The philosophical nature of research is captured under what is known as a paradigm. According to Patton (1990), a paradigm is a world view, a general perspective, a way of breaking down the complexity of the real world. Guba (1990) also told us that a paradigm is an interpretative framework, which is guided by “a set of beliefs and feelings about the world and how it should be understood and studied” (p. 17). This perspective is used as a way to guide research and practice in academics for the study of sport management.

There are two major research paradigms that guide the approach to inquiry in research: the posi-

tivist paradigm and the naturalistic paradigm (Creswell, 1994; 2005). It is important for sport management students to understand the assumptions of both paradigms. It is these two paradigms that provide the philosophical foundations and assumptions for the research process in the field of sport management. The two paradigms underlie psychological and sociological research and have different assumptions about the nature of reality as well as different research objectives. The logic of these paradigms provides direction for sport management research. Figure 1-2 and Figure 1-3 provide detailed explanations on the differences of these two philosophical approaches to sport management research.

Positivist Paradigm

The positivist paradigm refers to a philosophical doctrine that asserts that scientific knowledge is logically embedded in the traditional scientific method,

Positivist Paradigm	Naturalistic Paradigm
— Values objectivity; there are strategies to keep the researcher independent of the participant so as not to influence the findings (reality is objective and exists independently of human influence)	— Accepts subjectivity; it is recognized that the findings are created as a result of the researcher’s and informants’ interactions (reality is subject to human influence)
— Is rooted in deductive logic	— Is rooted in inductive logic
— Uses analysis of numerical data by statistical techniques for meaning	— Organizes narrative data into themes or conceptual models for meaning
— Utilizes quantitative research designs (experimental, quasi-experimental, non-experimental descriptive)	— Utilizes qualitative research designs (ethnography, phenomenology, grounded theory)
— Draws out quantitative (numeric) information	— Draws out qualitative (verbal) information
— Examines research from a general theory to determine how it applies to a specific area of interest	— Examines research about a specific phenomenon of interest to see how it applies to a larger conceptual or theoretical framework
— Utilizes quantitative statistical analysis tools and techniques	— Utilizes qualitative analysis tools and techniques (constant comparative procedures)
Sources: Creswell, J. (1998). <i>Qualitative inquiry and research design</i> . Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications. Currier, D. P. (1990). <i>Elements of research in physical therapy</i> (3 rd ed.) Baltimore, MD: Williams and Wilkins. Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1995). <i>Naturalistic inquiry</i> . Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications. Morse, J. M. (Ed). (1994). <i>Critical issues in qualitative research methods</i> . Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications. Robbins, S. P. (1996). <i>Organizational behavior</i> (7th ed.). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall Publishers.	

FIGURE 1-2. Philosophical Assumptions of Sport Management Research

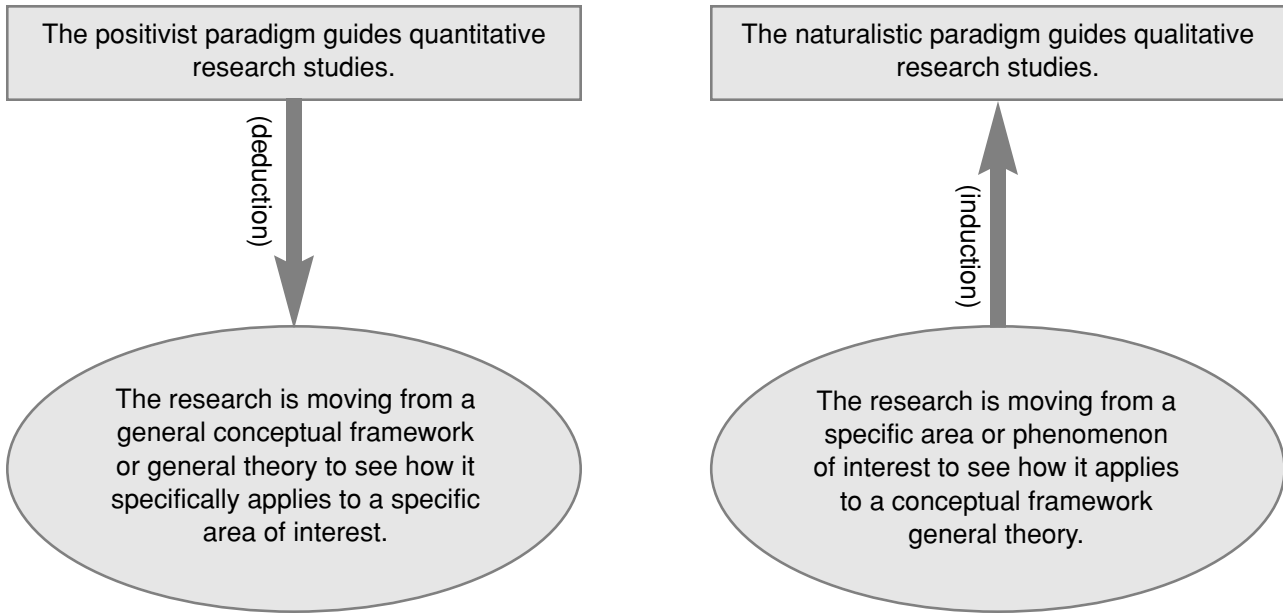


FIGURE 1-3. Positivist and Naturalistic Research Paradigms

and because of this it is the only kind of factual knowledge. The positivist paradigm is rooted in deductive logic. It is the process of using rigorous empirical tools and techniques to discover generalizable explanations. In other words, it takes the view that if something can't be proven in the laboratory or "field setting," it is not useful because it was not derived from scientific methods. Figure 1-4 shows deductive logic or reasoning.

The research that embraces this paradigm is often considered "hard science." The logic of the positivist paradigm underscores the premise that the quantity (numerical) of a measurable phenomenon gives rise to quantitative research. The positivist approach relies heavily on the quantitative research approach. The researcher is independent of what is

being researched and does not influence the findings, Definitions are set at the beginning of the study, and deductive reasoning focuses on specific discrete concepts isolated before the inquiry.

Most research in sport management has embraced the research paradigm of positivists. The paradigm provides objective reality that allows for researchers in sport management to claim and ascertain truth.

Naturalistic Paradigm

The naturalistic paradigm refers to the subjective nature of research. The naturalists believe that there are multiple interpretations of reality, and the goal of researchers working within this perspective is to understand how individuals construct their own reali-

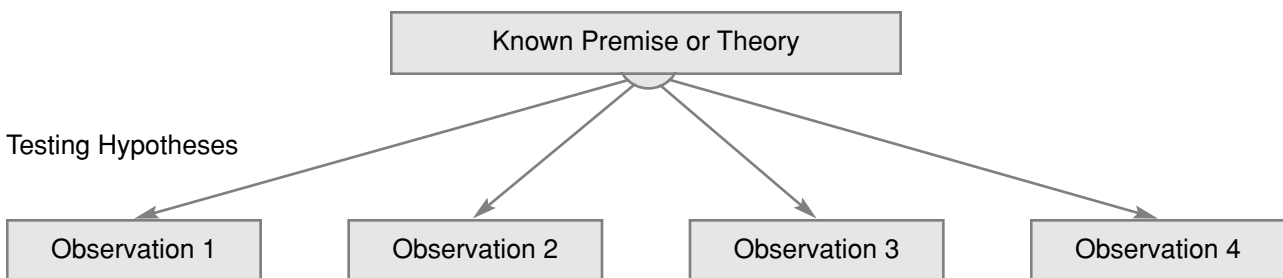


FIGURE 1-4. Deductive Logic or Reasoning

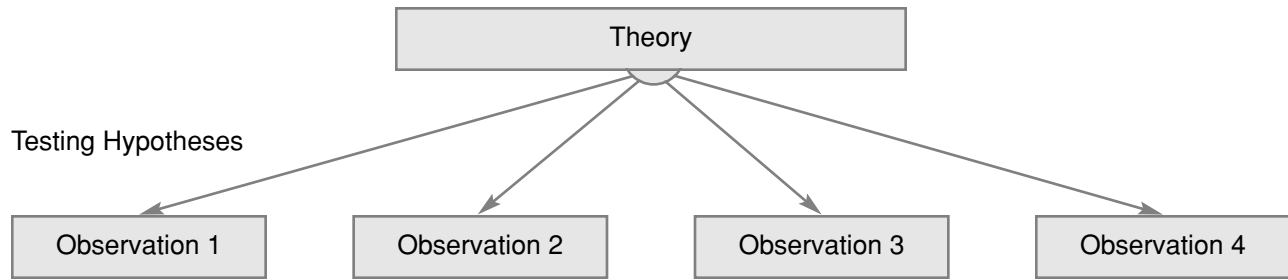


FIGURE 1-5. Inductive Logic or Reasoning

ties within their social contexts. It is logically embedded in a non-traditional approach to scientific inquiry and is primarily subjective in nature. The naturalist paradigm is primarily rooted in inductive logic. It is a complementary approach to positivism. It is often viewed as “soft science.” Figure 1-5 demonstrates inductive logic or reasoning.

The naturalist paradigm underscores quality (nonnumerical) of phenomenon. As such, it relies heavily on the qualitative research approach. The researcher interacts with what is being researched; the interaction process creates the findings. Definitions evolve during the course of the study, and inductive reasoning focuses on the entire phenomena as they emerge during the inquiry.

MAJOR APPROACHES TO SPORT MANAGEMENT RESEARCH

Approaches to and methodologies of research consist of several methods. Not all research is conducted in a laboratory with chemicals. Much research is conducted in numerous settings and involves a variety of methods. This section provides an overview of research methodologies.

Basic and Applied Research in Sport Management

Basic research. Basic research (also known as pure research) is primarily theoretical in nature. Its primary purpose is the development of new knowledge or knowledge to validate existing knowledge for theory development. In other words, it aims at the “knowledge for the sake of knowledge.” Basic research is the main vehicle to substantiate further research in sport manage-

ment. The results of this type of research have no immediate practical applications, and in fact it may be years before the results of basic research are used in practical applications (Baumgartner, Strong, & Hensley, 2002).

Applied research. Applied research is also known as practical research. It is primarily concerned with the development of new knowledge or with the validation of existing knowledge that can be applied immediately in practical settings in sport management. Unlike basic research, the primary purpose of applied research is the solution of an immediate practical problem. The results of applied research are less likely to be published in peer review or scholarly journals. Often the results are not published and a report is given to a committee or a board of directors. Unlike basic research, applied research is not conducted within an academic department of a college or university. It is usually conducted in the workplace, where immediate decisions can be made in terms of effective and efficient job satisfaction and work performance and production of goods and services. It really is “knowledge for the sake of practical application.” For example, Zhang, Pease, Hui, and Michaud (1995) conducted an applied research to determine the variables affecting the spectators’ decisions to attend NBA games. The major finding revealed that NBA teams should consider fans’ socio-demographic backgrounds (age, economic, status, ethnicity, education, and occupation) when developing and implementing marketing strategies to lure spectators to the games.

Quantitative and Qualitative Research in Sport Management

Qualitative and quantitative are two distinctive and complementary approaches to research. Each has its own functions and characteristic activities. These approaches originate from different philosophical perspectives and use different methods for collection and analysis of data. Qualitative research is rooted in the fields of anthropology, sociology, and philosophy. Quantitative research is rooted in the fields of psychology, economics, and management. The differences between the two approaches are based on the extent to which the analysis can be done by converting observations into numbers or using narrative text to describe human experiences. It is best to think of the qualitative-quantitative distinction as dualistic in nature. Qualitative research is a method of research designed for discovery rather than verification; this type of research is used to explore little-known or ambiguous phenomena. Quantitative research uses numbers to measure variables and is a method to verify if there are differences or relationships about phenomena.

Quantitative research. Sport management research also can be classified as either qualitative research or quantitative research. Qualitative research is referred to the type of research methodology that attempts to explain the phenomenon to be investigated without the use of quantitative measurements to describe the phenomenon (e.g., its characteristics). Quantitative research, on the other hand, is a type of research practices that employ measurements and statistically analyses to explain the phenomenon that is under investigation. The contents of this book are arranged along this classification of research methods in sport management.

Since the 1980s quantitative research has been the predominant research methodology used in sport management research studies. Based on the positivist paradigm, this methodology emphasizes the search for the facts and causes of human behavior through objective, observable, and quantifiable data. The researcher is viewed as an objective scientist whose

main tasks are to manipulate the external environment and observe the effects on the subjects (Stainback & Stainback, 1984). The field of sport management has been greatly influenced by the quantitative-positivist view of the world. For example, of 782 articles published in the *Journal of Sport Management*, *Sport Marketing Quarterly*, *International Journal of Sport Management*, and *European Sport Marketing Quarterly* from each of their initial issues to 1994, quantitative research articles accounted for more than half (440, or 56.26%) of the total articles. Conceptual articles accounted for the second highest amount of articles published in the four journals (249, or 31.84%). Seventy (8.95%) were classified as qualitative articles and 23 (2.04%) as mixed, including both quantitative and qualitative data analysis (Quarterman, 2006). This may be attributed to such reasons as those discussed here.

Sport management researchers adopted the prevailing quantitative-positivist model as the primary base for the research activities because they wanted to be accepted and respected by other academic fields in the higher education enterprise. Also, because almost all of such researchers were responsible for establishing the first doctoral programs in sport management, they instituted the quantitative positivist model as the primary research model within these programs. In addition, it may have been that the primary sport management research publication outlets would accept only quantitative research reports for publication. Federal funding for research projects was awarded only to quantitative research projects. Thus the quantitative approach is the most prominent research model within the field of sport management.

There is no debate of the fact that sport management researchers using quantitative research methodology have contributed greatly to the advancement of the field of sport management. However, in the past few years there has been increasing recognition in nursing and in other disciplines that relying solely on the quantitative approach to answer research questions

has serious limitations. Sport management researchers have been frustrated and disenchanted with trying to use only quantitative methods to gain a better understanding of the sport management discipline and the sport industry. Leininger (1994) noted that individuals are not reducible and measurable objects that exist independently of their historical, cultural, and social contexts. To treat them as such, as quantitative research does, reduces them to machine-like figures that are only a sum of their parts. Sport management researchers are urged to think anew and to keep an open mind for new ways to collect, analyze, and interpret data for the betterment of the field of sport management.

Qualitative research. Qualitative research is another major research method for investigating diverse phenomena. Chapter 3 of this book provides a detailed description of this type of research method.

Qualitative research is a popular methodology and is being used with increasing frequency in sport management. The qualitative method, which has enjoyed a long and rich tradition in sociology and anthropology, is anchored theoretically in the naturalist paradigm (Creswell, 2005). Within the past two decades researchers have been challenged to guide research and sport management and have supported the use of qualitative methodologies to take research beyond the traditional quantitative designs (Paton, 1987; Olafson, 1990; Inglis, 1992). Qualitative studies are now appearing with increasing frequency in sport management research.

Exploratory, Descriptive, and Causal Research in Sport Management

Exploratory research. Exploratory research involves preliminary activities to find answers or to refine the problem or question into a researchable form. The purpose of this type of research is to progressively shape the scope of the research into a well-defined project with specific, measurable, and appropriate objectives.

Descriptive research. Descriptive research describes characteristics of a population or a phenomenon. A study conducted to acquire information about the season ticket holders in terms of their household income, education level, size of family, age, occupation, and so is a typical example of descriptive research. Data collection usually includes the use of surveys, interviews, or observations (Gay, 1992; McMillian & Shumacher, 2004). Descriptive research is commonly used to collect detailed descriptions about existing demographic variables such as age, sex, marital status, ethnicity, income, occupation, or religious status.

Descriptive research has a number of advantages. The major advantage is that it is used to describe the state of something. Often, descriptive research is needed as a base on which other research can be conducted. On the other hand, there are several noticeable disadvantages, including:

- independent variables cannot be manipulated the way they are in laboratory experiments,
- inappropriate wording or placement of questions within a questionnaire can bias results; and
- potential problem of talking to the wrong people (e.g., telephone studies).

Causal research. Causal research identifies cause-and-effect relationships among variables where the research problem has already been narrowly defined. A study conducted to examine ticket pricing and attendance or a study conducted to examine the effect of various marketing and promotion strategies on consumers' perception of an athletic product are good illustrations of causal research in sport management. If organizational commitment scores for African-American female office workers of the Nike Corporation are significantly different than those of white female office workers, a relationship exists between the two groups of workers and their commitment to the Nike Corporation.