FROM PARTICIPATION TO CONSUMPTION?

Consumerism in voluntary sport clubs

Jan-Willem van der Roest

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Consumerism in voluntary sport clubs

VAN PARTICIPATIE NAAR CONSUMPTIE?

Consumentisme in sportverenigingen

(met een samenvatting in het Nederlands)

Proefschrift
ter verkrijging van de graad van doctor aan de Universiteit Utrecht op gezag van de rector magnificus, prof.dr. G.J. van der Zwaan, ingevolge het besluit van het college voor promoties in het openbaar te verdedigen op vrijdag 4 december 2015 des ochtends te 10.30 uur.

door
Jan-Willem van der Roest
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Abe Menken: *Can't I keep what I have and just build on it?*
Don Draper: *Well, honestly, the unpleasant truth is, you don't have anything. Your customers cannot be depended on anymore. Their lives have changed. They're prosperous. Over the years, they've developed new tastes. [...]. They know full well what they deserve and they're willing to pay for it.*

Mad Men, series 1, episode 10.

CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

1.1 Voluntary sport clubs and the consumerist attitude

In many Western European and Scandinavian countries, sport is organised in voluntary sport clubs. These local nonprofit associations play an important societal role by making sport accessible to the general population. They offer people the opportunity to play and exercise in their own neighbourhood for a reasonably low fee. In the Netherlands, the country where this study was conducted, 39% of the total population of approximately seventeen million regularly takes part in the activities of a voluntary sport club (Hover, Romijn & Breedveld, 2010). This means that a large share of the population meets within these clubs on a day-to-day basis and therefore that these organisations also have a significant social function for many people (Verweel & Wolterbeek, 2011).

However, in recent years dark clouds seem to have gathered over the institution of the voluntary sport club. General societal developments such as individualisation and commercialisation have given rise to concerns regarding the transfer of such attitudes to sport clubs. Many people who are involved in and around these clubs, both professionally and personally, increasingly refer to a growing consumerist attitude among members of voluntary sport clubs and are worried that their organisations will have difficulty in overcoming this new challenge. It has been suggested that a consumerist attitude contrasts with the fundamental organising principles of voluntary sport clubs and therefore threatens the future of these organisations.

References to this growing consumerist attitude in voluntary sport clubs can be found in a number of contexts. For example, academics in the voluntary sector have identified that this kind of attitude could indeed be starting to emerge among members of voluntary sport clubs. Enjolras (2002, p. 373) was among the first to observe that 'social changes, and particularly the trend toward increased individualization' might transform 'members' participative attitude into customer behavior'. The growing concern about consumerist attitudes in voluntary (sport) organisations seems to be directly related to the changes that have occurred in society in recent decades. According to Lorentzen and Hustinx (2007), the member-consumer is:

> *an individual who assumes membership will give her access to a product, and that the balance between costs (membership fees) and outcomes will be in her favour. In cases like this, the will to submit to collective goals (what can I do for the association?) is gradually replaced by demands for 'products' (what can the association do for me?). Not only material goods and services, but also collectively produced goods (such as sports, leisure and cultural activities) are increasingly perceived as 'products' of civil associations. (p. 107)*

This manner of portraying member-consumers (in other words: members with consumerist attitudes) is not only to be found in academia. In recent years, the discussion among professionals in the voluntary sport sector in the Netherlands has often converged around the member-consumer and the significance of this phenomenon for the future development of voluntary sport clubs. Many conferences and meetings have been organised in recent years in which the member-consumer or sport consumer has featured as the central theme (see for example NOC*NSF, n.d.; Van den Brink, 2015; Volkers, 2011), and policy documents on grassroots sports are loaded with stories of the emerging member-consumer (e.g. NOC*NSF, 2007; 2012). However, many meanings for the member-consumer exist, and the

exact implications of a rise of the member-consumer for voluntary sport clubs are unclear. Therefore, for this dissertation I have joined policy makers in the voluntary sport sector as well as trainers, administrators, managers and members of voluntary sport clubs in their quest to determine the significance of the rise of the member-consumer has and how consumerist attitudes towards voluntary sport clubs affect life in these organisations. The main focus of this dissertation is to see what a consumerist attitude means in relation to voluntary sport clubs and how voluntary sport clubs deal with this attitude. In this first chapter I begin by exploring the organising principles of voluntary sport clubs. Following this, I look at what developments have given rise to the concerns about the future of voluntary sport clubs and investigate how the consumerist attitude is understood in other sectors. I do this because the meaning of the consumerist attitude in voluntary sport clubs and its implications for them are yet unclear, but these things might be connected to the wider societal discourse surrounding consumerism. At the end of this chapter I elaborate on the possible consequences of the consumerist attitude in relation to the voluntary sport club. I furthermore discuss the ways in which a mixed methods research approach can help to understand this question. The chapter concludes with a layout of the chapters in this dissertation.

1.2 Research questions

In order to understand how the processes of individualisation and commercialisation affect voluntary sport clubs and how these organisations ultimately might be able to deal with them, people involved in and around voluntary sport clubs speak of an emerging consumerist attitude among members. Academics from a number of countries across Europe have mentioned the growing presence of the 'member-consumer' in voluntary sport clubs, and there are signs that this trend also exists in the Netherlands. However, the larger significance of this consumerist attitude is yet unknown, and it is unclear whether and how voluntary sport clubs are dealing with this attitude. Therefore, this thesis focuses on the following questions:

1. What does the consumerist attitude mean in relation to voluntary sport clubs?
2. How and why do voluntary sport clubs deal with the perceived consumerist attitude in their organisations?

The chapters in this thesis represent my research on these questions and have been published separately in scientific journals. These chapters constitute a coherent whole that will be explained in Section 1.7. Before turning to the debate on the member-consumer I will now discuss the organising principles of the voluntary sport club.

1.3 Organising local sport: voluntary sport clubs

Ever since the end of the nineteenth century, grassroots sport in Western and Nordic Europe has been organised through voluntary sport clubs. These organisations have specific characteristics and differ from other organisations in a number of ways. For the definition of voluntary sport clubs, I will use Smith's (2000) definition of grassroots associations. In the literature, the terms voluntary organisation, voluntary association, grassroots association and voluntary club are all used to describe what Smith indicates as:

> *locally based, significantly autonomous, volunteer-run, formal nonprofit (i.e., voluntary) groups that manifest substantial voluntary altruism as groups and use the associational form of organisation, thus, having official memberships of volunteers who perform most, and often all, of the work/activity done in and by these nonprofits. (2000, p. 7)*

In this dissertation, different terms for these organisations are used because of their publication in different outlets. In this chapter I keep to the term 'voluntary sport club', also when the original sources use other terms to describe these organisations.

The Dutch context

Voluntary sport clubs are embedded in a structure that is organised for the most part in nonprofit organisations. In the Netherlands, there are about 27,000 voluntary sport clubs, and these are connected to circa 80 sport-specific national sport organisations. As the majority of sport clubs are single-sport oriented, most clubs fall under one national organisation for that sport. Most of these organisations are in turn represented in the Dutch umbrella organisation for all sports, the Netherlands Olympic Committee * Netherlands Sport Federation (NOC*NSF) (Waardenburg & Van Bottenburg, 2013). The structure of Dutch sport is similar to that in other Western European countries and Scandinavia (cf. Heinemann, 1999; Enjolras and Steen-Johnsen, 2011; Ibsen and Seippel, 2010), although regional structures are largely lacking in the Netherlands because of the country's small geographical size. Also because of this limited size, lengthy travels to a club are not necessary for the majority of the Dutch population. Reports by Dutch researchers have shown that for most sports, the average distance that members travel to a voluntary sport club in the Netherlands is less than 2.5 kilometres (Hoekman, Wezenberg-Hoenderkamp & Van den Dool, 2015).

There is great variation in size, location, type of sport, etc. among the approximate 27,000 Dutch voluntary sport clubs. The average Dutch sport club has about 190 members, but club size varies greatly. The majority of clubs can be classified as relatively small, with not more than 250 members (Smink & Van Veldhoven, 2011; Breedveld, Kamphuis & Tiessen-Raaphorst, 2008). On the other hand, one-third of the clubs are large (more than 250 members), and large clubs represent a majority of the total members in voluntary sport clubs in the Netherlands. This is very similar to the situation in Scandinavia (Ibsen and Seippel, 2010) and in Germany (Heinemann and Schubert, 1999). In terms of financial structure, Dutch sport clubs are quite homogenous, as almost all clubs depend on a mix of membership fees, commercial revenues and governmental subsidies (Van Kalmthout, De Jong and Lucassen, 2009). The most important difference here is that clubs that possess their own sport facilities receive more income from commercial revenues than clubs which have to rent facilities.

Characteristics of voluntary sport clubs

Although the Dutch context has its own specificities, the literature on governance practices in voluntary organisations stresses that there are many similarities to voluntary sport clubs in other countries. Already in 1998, Horch (1998, p. 55) found that 'it is surprising to see how much scholars from different disciplines and nations working independently on different types of voluntary associations agree on many of the particularities that distinguish this type of organisation from others'. Most of the factors in the literature that indicate why voluntary sport clubs are different from other organisations were also brought forward in Smith's (2000) definition of grassroots associations. The factors that set voluntary sport clubs apart from other organisations in terms of management are: (1) they are autonomous

organisations, (2) they rely heavily on volunteers and (3) membership in these sport clubs is voluntary. From the literature on the management of voluntary sport clubs a fourth distinctive element is apparent: (4) the decision-making processes in voluntary sport clubs are democratic. In this section I reflect on these four factors and consider their implications for the governance of voluntary sport clubs.

First, clubs have a great degree of autonomy in pursuing the interest of their own members and do not need to cater to the interests of outsiders, such as market actors or governments. Horch (1994) argues that voluntary sport clubs are more autonomous than for-profit organisations, because members finance the clubs' activities themselves, whereas for-profit organisations are financed by outsiders by their very nature. According to Horch (1994, p. 221), 'an organisation depends on those from whom it draws its resources. The less dependent the organisation is on non-members, the more the organisation can orient itself to the interests of its members'. This fact is of great importance to voluntary sport clubs, which are aimed at organising sport activities in which the members are interested. In the words of Cole (1920, p. 37), associations pursue 'a common purpose or system or aggregation of purposes by a course of co-operative action extending beyond a single act'. Without this significant degree of autonomy, it would be much harder for voluntary sport clubs to pursue their common purpose.

Second, voluntary sport clubs rely heavily on the work of volunteers. Smith (2000) mentions altruism as a core principle in getting the work done within this type of association. For Dutch voluntary sport clubs, this is certainly the case, as they exhibit high percentages of volunteer work. Dekker and De Hart (2009) have shown that thirteen percent of the Dutch population volunteers for sport clubs. No other type of organisation reaches comparable figures when it comes to volunteering. The Eurobarometer report on sport and physical activity (Eurobarometer, 2014) shows that the Dutch rank second when it comes to this figure as compared to other European countries, and when it comes to the proportion of volunteers who volunteer more than six hours per week the Netherlands even comes in first place. Consequently, the number of paid staff members working in voluntary sport clubs is relatively low in the Netherlands (Daamen, Veerman, Van Kalmthout & Van der Werff, 2013). This is also the case in other countries where sport clubs mainly rely on volunteers, such as Australia (Cuskelly, 2005), Belgium (Scheerder & Vos, 2009), Denmark and Norway (Ibsen & Seippel, 2010), Germany (Breuer, 2011), Great Britain (Nichols et al., 2005; Taylor et al., 2003) and Switzerland (Schlesinger, Egli & Nagel, 2013).

Third, membership in a voluntary sport clubs is, as was noted in Smith's (2000) definition, voluntary. This means that participation in these organisations is not forced by means of financial or legal mechanisms or any other form of coercion (Van Ingen, 2009). Rather, membership is commenced and continued because the member is (still) interested in the common purpose of the organisation. In the case of voluntary sport clubs, people are likely to remain with the organisation as long as they are still willing to participate in the specific sport the club offers and can still relate to the other members in the organisation. They can also maintain their membership as a non-sporting member if they are in any other way connected to the organisation. Voluntariness then also implies the freedom of any individual to exit the association at any time (Van Ingen, 2009).

Fourth, the decision-making in voluntary sport clubs is democratic. In addition to the exit option that is key to the voluntary nature of these clubs, voluntary sport clubs also have a strong 'voice' option in the sense that members can decide on the club's strategy and activities in the annual general meetings (cf. Hirschman, 1970). In these meetings the boards

of voluntary sport clubs are elected and key decisions are taken. Although few members participate in these meetings in most voluntary sport clubs, resulting in oligarchic tendencies (Enjolras, 2009; Thiel & Mayer, 2009), members do at least have the opportunity to hold board members accountable for their decisions regarding the club's strategy and operations.

Governance of voluntary sport clubs

The four key characteristics of voluntary sport clubs that were presented in the previous section have significant meaning for the way voluntary sport clubs are governed. These specific characteristics imply that most regular governance and management practices are not directly transferable to voluntary sport clubs (Thiel & Mayer, 2009). Moreover, voluntary sport clubs lack clear organisational objectives that can be pursued, and they operate in complex environments between state and market (Boessenkool, 2011). In this section I discuss the governance challenges that managers and administrators of voluntary sport clubs face by considering the four characteristics. In the next section I will show that a consumerist attitude in relation to voluntary sport clubs might trouble governance practices in these clubs even further.

The position of voluntary sport clubs as autonomous organisations operating between state and market might in itself not hold much significance for the clubs. However, their position implies that neither profits nor public values are clear organisational objectives (Boessenkool, 2011; Thiel & Mayer, 2009). This makes governance practices in such clubs difficult. After all, what precisely should administrators and managers aim for, and how is organisational success defined? Thiel and Mayer (2009, p. 87) note that '[i]n contrast to economic enterprises, whose purpose programs can always be derived from an underlying profit orientation, sport clubs have no explicit guidelines for formulating and achieving aims'. Rather, voluntary sport clubs are aimed at practicing sport, but the motive for practicing might not be the same for all members. For example, for some members the most important goal might be sporting success, whereas for others the social function of the club is more important. This absence of organisational goals means that monitoring the success of clubs is also difficult.

Boards of voluntary sport clubs also have to deal with the fact that members can exit the organisation at any time. Boards do try to maintain as many members as possible within the club. However, increasing the number of members in voluntary sport clubs and organisational growth is not necessarily a goal for clubs, because 'a sports club with many members does not necessarily serve its purpose better than one with only a few members' (Thiel & Meier, 2004, p. 100 in: Thiel & Mayer, 2009). Nonetheless, the successful recruitment and socialisation of new members is crucial for the continuity of voluntary sport clubs (Stokvis, 2011). Clubs do not necessarily have to grow, but they do need to refresh their member stock to stay relevant and viable. They must also incentivise their members to become active in volunteering activities by making them integral to the club.
Still, many clubs will seek to acquire and retain a large number of members, as the number of members is widely regarded as an indicator of success. Furthermore, for clubs with a clear (elite) sporting objective, more members means a higher chance of bringing talent to the club. Finally, there is some evidence that bigger clubs have higher chances of survival (Wollebæk, 2009), and a high membership number is believed to increase the capacity for action in the institutional environment of the club (Fahlén, Stenling & Vestin, 2008). Dealing with the voluntariness of membership thus involves managing to keep members satisfied while at the same time continually attracting new members.

In order to obtain these goals, it is important for clubs to have a sufficient workforce. However, many authors have indicated that recruiting and retaining volunteers is one the most difficult tasks for voluntary sport clubs (Breuer & Wicker, 2010; Seippel, 2004; Østerlund, 2013). Østerlund investigated the way sport clubs should be governed in order to recruit volunteers for both formal positions and ad hoc tasks. His findings suggest that sport club governance should be aimed at involving members in decision-making, rewarding volunteers, and following specific strategies with regard to volunteer recruitment and communicating electronically with members. Schlesinger, Egli & Nagel (2013) come to similar conclusions in their article on retention of volunteers. They note that an orientation towards collective solidarity is the most important prerequisite for long-term volunteer retention. It is questionable as to whether clubs' governance practices in recent years have been aimed at these goals. For example, usually little effort has been made to promote democratic decision-making in voluntary sport clubs. Instead, oligarchisation and autonomisation processes have taken place, because boards or even professionals operate as the ultimate decision-makers (Horch, 1998). Horch explains that through commercialisation processes members have become detached from their organisations, which leads to a situation in which the members no longer feel part of the organisations. In light of these apparent trends, it is useful to figure out how the consumerist attitude in relation to voluntary sport clubs affects involvement and solidarity. In the next section I will analyse how societal developments which arguably have an impact on voluntary sport clubs are connected to the rise of the consumerist attitude within these clubs.

1.4 Dark clouds over voluntary sport clubs

Now that we have seen why an emphasis on involvement and solidarity is important for the governance of voluntary sport clubs, it is interesting to see how the consumerist attitude relates to these principles. At first glance, this attitude seems to clash with concepts like involvement and solidarity. After all, individuals looking for products with optimal cost-benefit ratios (Lorentzen & Hustinx, 2007) probably do not hold solidarity as a first priority. Moreover, if voluntary sport clubs are indeed becoming aggregates of loosely connected members with consumerist attitudes, recruitment and socialisation of new members would prove to be difficult, as the chances that existing members would be willing to commit themselves to recruitment and socialisation processes would diminish (cf. Stokvis, 2011). These threats have made the consumerist attitude a central element in the debate regarding the development of voluntary sport clubs. In this section I examine how the member-consumer is put forward and what societal developments have given rise to concerns about this attitude.

Ideas about the consumerist attitude

As indicated earlier, many actors involved with voluntary sport clubs have brought forward concerns regarding the growing consumerist attitude in relation to these organisations. Social scientists, policy makers and club administrators have all been dealing with questions surrounding changing patterns in society. From these patterns, they have distinguished the emergence of a consumerist attitude in voluntary sport clubs. In this section I will describe some of the concerns that have been brought forward and will then examine the changing patterns that have given rise to these concerns.

The first time that considerable attention was given to the emerging consumerist attitude

in voluntary sport clubs was in 2002. In that year two publications from Scandinavian scholars were the first to mention consumerism and behaviour with regressing involvement and solidarity as specific challenges for voluntary sport clubs. Enjolras (2002) noted that customer behaviour could be a major threat to these organisations, and Seippel (2002) signalled that the need for individuals to express themselves had led to a shift towards participation outside of traditional sport organisations. In turn, this has given rise to the assumption that people 'show less solidarity and less willingness for committing themselves to the organisations or institutions where sport is practiced' (Seippel, 2002, p. 254).

The alarming message of these publications might lead one to expect an overwhelming number of publications on the consumerist attitude in the voluntary sport clubs, but the topic has remained rather marginal in sociology of sport and sport management research. Nichols et al. (2005, p. 46) indicate that the questions put forward by Enjolras (2002) and Seippel (2002) are key questions for all countries that have many voluntary sport clubs, as 'it appears that the voluntary sector in sport is being affected the same way in other countries'. Byers (2009, p. 220) makes a similar observation in her research agenda for voluntary sport organisations (VSOs), noting that '[t]aking the external pressures of VSOs into consideration (increase in professionalisation, commercialisation, increase in competition), it appears that the impact of these processes is increasingly important and of interest to sport management scholars'. However, scholars in the voluntary sport sector have performed no empirical research to date into these behaviours and processes, and consumerism has so far only been mentioned as a side note to other research efforts (Boessenkool, 2011; Ibsen & Seippel, 2010; Pilgaard, 2012; Thiel & Mayer, 2009; Wicker & Breuer, 2011; Wicker, Breuer & Hennigs, 2011). This paradoxical observation leaves much room for uncertainty surrounding the significance of the consumerist attitude for voluntary sport clubs. It is acknowledged as an important topic, but no data is present to substantiate the claims of its significance.

In the world of sport policy and sport management a similar observation can be made, at least in the Netherlands. As was noted at the beginning of this chapter, many conferences and meetings are organised on consumerism in relation to the voluntary sport sector, and policy documents are loaded with various ideas of what the new member-consumer means for sport clubs. According to Meijs and Ten Hoorn (2008), the idea that members should become customers in Dutch voluntary sport is widespread. However, why researchers and policy makers keep hinting at the emergence of the member-consumer is not yet clear. So far, no empirical research that clearly demonstrates the characteristics of this attitude for voluntary sport clubs is available. It is therefore worthwhile to dig further into what this attitude means for voluntary sport clubs and to determine whether the doubts of those who are involved with voluntary sport clubs are correct. In the next section, I will reflect on the societal developments that arguably have led to the increase in attention for the emergence of the member-consumer in relation to the voluntary sport club.

The Voluntary sport club in danger?

Hard evidence that a consumerist attitude is emerging in voluntary sport clubs is lacking. After all, no empirical research has been conducted on this topic. Societal developments such as individualisation and informalisation, concurrent with a rising number of memberships in voluntary sport clubs in recent years, provide mixed information regarding whether the future of the voluntary sport club is in danger. In this section I examine what developments have led those who are involved in the voluntary sport sector to indicate a possible emergence of the member-consumer. The consumerist attitude and the way this

attitude is constructed seem to have three components: (1) wider societal developments in Western countries, which have led to (2) the increased popularity of fitness and informal sport in the Netherlands, which in their turn have instigated (3) changes within the voluntary sport sector. After an overview of these developments, I will show how this construction is connected to and part of a wider discourse on consumerism.

Societal developments in western countries

One of the most prominent societal developments in Western countries in recent decades is arguably the process of individualisation (cf. Bauman, 2001; Beck, 1992; Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2002; Giddens, 1991). Although processes of informalisation, informatisation, internationalisation and intensivisation can also be observed in modern Western societies, individualisation is the most prominent development (cf. Schnabel, 2004b). Schnabel argues that 'individualization is the most important social-cultural force' of change in recent decades, as was also predicted by The Netherlands Institute for Social Research in its preview of the period 1994-2010 (SCP, 1994, p. 612), at least in a discursive sense. Theories and research on individualisation, attention for processes of individualisation in popular media and the presence of the concept in social policies is widespread (Brannen & Nilsen, 2005).

When it comes to the individualisation thesis and voluntary associations, many scholars have argued that individualisation processes lead to a decline of participation in these organisations and, eventually, a decline in community (cf. Paxton, 1999; Putnam, 1995, 2000; Sckocpol, 2003). Strong arguments for this decline have been made, but research results have not pointed unambiguously in the same direction. Many researchers have shown that a pattern of membership decline in traditional organisations can indeed be found, which 'fits fairly well with Putnam's thesis, and also with the popular interpretation that across the world people are becoming more individualistic' (Halpern, 2005, p. 223). However, for the Netherlands, the subject country of this study, these patterns can only be found in churches, women's organisations and political parties (De Hart, 2005; Halpern, 2005). For leisure organisations such as voluntary sport clubs, a decline is barely visible. Rather, Van Ingen and Dekker (2011) showed that membership and participation in voluntary sport clubs showed stable patterns in the period 1975-2005. However, they also found evidence for a strong rise in informal and individual sport activities. Thus, the individualisation thesis is not a satisfactory explanation of what is happening in the voluntary sport sector, although individualisation still seems to contribute to the concerns about the future of voluntary sport clubs. These concerns are also caused by developments in the sport sector itself. In the next section, I will reflect on the increased popularity of sport activities outside voluntary sport clubs.

Increased popularity of commercial, informal and individual sport

Further concerns about the future of Dutch voluntary sport clubs stem from the increasing popularity of commercial, informal and individual sports. The most important form of organised commercial sport in the Netherlands can be found in the fitness sector. Since the 1980s, these organisations have grown considerably, forming serious competition to voluntary sport clubs. Other forms of commercial sport also exist, but the fitness sector is by far the largest provider of commercialised sport activities (cf. Hover, Hakkers & Breedveld, 2012). Commercial sport has always existed, even before the era of voluntary sport began in the late 19th century, but in the past these initiatives had a temporal and informal character. For example, sport and sport-like activities were organised by innkeepers in the 19th century

to provide some entertainment to locals and travellers. After the popularisation of sport at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century, Dutch sports were mainly organised in voluntary sport clubs (Van Bottenburg, 2001). This lasted until the early 1980s, when the first forms of large-scale fitness and aerobics became popular (Stokvis & van Hilvoorde, 2008). Since the early 1990s, the fitness market in the Netherlands and other Northern and Western European countries has grown considerably, as can be seen in Figure 1.1.

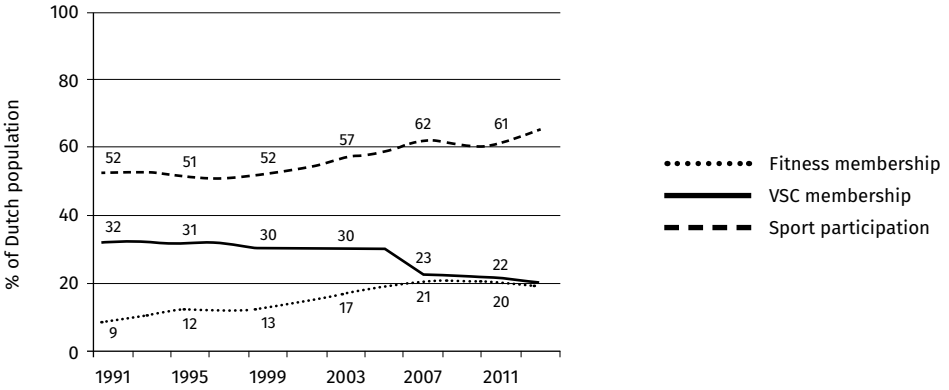

Figure 1.1 Sport participation and sport memberships in the Netherlands 1991-2013.
Combined data from AVO and OBiN (Pulles, 2015) and Eurobarometer (EU, 2014), edited by author.

Currently, around 18% of the Dutch population is active in a commercial sport organisation. In many cases, this is a commercial fitness centre, but it can also be a commercial swimming pool or another commercial organisation (Tiessen-Raaphorst, 2015). In 2011, there were approximately 1,650 fitness centres in the Netherlands (Hover, Hakkers & Elling-Machartzki, 2012).

The emergence of the fitness culture is also apparent in the growing popularity of sporting for health motives, such as running, cycling and walking (cf. Van 't Verlaat, 2010). Often, these sports are also practiced in non-organised ways: individually or in informal sport groups (cf. Van 't Verlaat & Van den Dool, 2009). In 2012, individual and informal participation were by far the most popular forms of sport for all age groups above 20 years of age (Tiessen-Raaphorst & Van den Dool, 2015). Self-organised sports have been on the rise in Western Europe, as was shown by Scheerder & Vos (2011) for the Flemish context. In their analyses, non-organised sport grew from 9% in 1969 to 56% in 2009. In comparison, club-organised sport grew more moderately, from 4% to 27% in the same period. Although the numbers for the Netherlands are not particularly clear, it is obvious that non-organised sport has grown massively as well. This can be deduced from Figure 1.1, which shows that sport participation has increased but that this growth particularly takes place outside of organised settings such as fitness centres and voluntary clubs.

Changes in the voluntary sport sector

The strong emergence of fitness and healthy, informal sports has had its effects on the voluntary sport sector. This has been expressed in three ways. First, the market share of the voluntary sport sector has decreased in recent years. Second, the voluntary sector itself

has begun to offer individual memberships, as will be explained in this section. Third, the character of voluntary sport clubs might change under influence of these developments.

The first development that can be recognised as consequence of the emergence of healthy and informal sports is the decline of the market share of voluntary sport clubs, although the absolute number of participants is relatively stable. As was noted earlier in this chapter, the market share of voluntary sport clubs among children has grown in the past 35 years. However, the market share among the adult population decreased dramatically between 1979 and 2007 (Van 't Verlaat, 2010). As can be seen in Figure 1.2, the voluntary sport sector's share dropped by nearly twenty percentage points between those years for weekly participants. The numbers for this same sample after 2007 are not available, but for monthly participants the decrease in market share has continued.

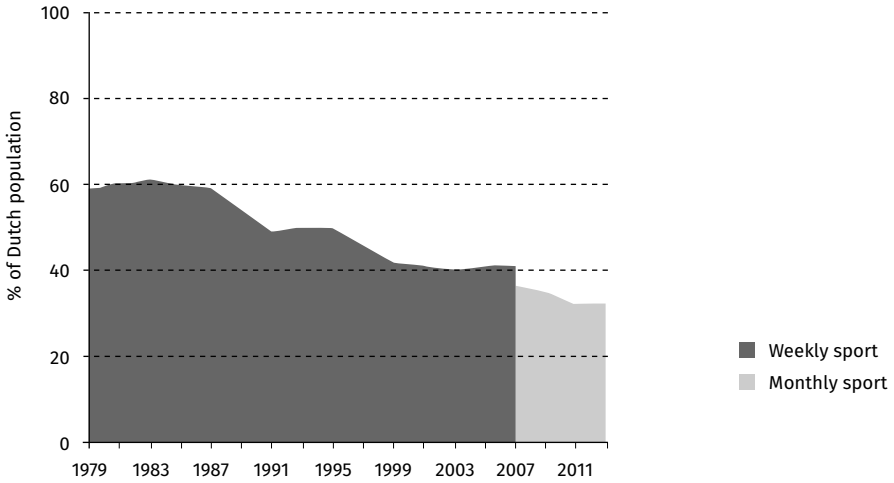

Figure 1.2 Market share of voluntary sport sector in sport participation among Dutch population 18-79 years between 1979 and 2013. Source: Combined data from AVO, CBS and OBiN (Pulles, 2015) and Van 't Verlaat (2011), edited by author.

Second, the voluntary sport sector itself has also changed, due to the emergence of informal sport. National sport organisations have begun to offer direct individual memberships to sport participants, outside of voluntary sport clubs. These memberships give people the opportunity to become a member of a national sport organisation directly, without needing to become a member of a local voluntary sport club. This type of membership allows people to enjoy some of the advantages of membership in a voluntary sport club without having the obligations that come with membership in these organisations. Individual memberships provide relatively inexpensive access to participation in matches or events, insurances and information related to a specific sport. Table 1.1 provides an overview of the number of memberships in the voluntary sport sector in the period 2004-2011. The number of individual memberships has grown almost ten times as quickly as the number of memberships in voluntary sport clubs.

Table 1.1 Differences in membership NOC*NSF between 2004 and 2011

	2004	2011	Difference	Difference in VSCs	Difference outside VSCs
Number of members	4,332,754	4,529,702	221,269	21,979	199,290

Third, concerns about a declining number of people volunteering can also be found in the way people think about the voluntary sport sector. As mentioned earlier, the consumerist attitude does not fit with solidarity and involvement. These concepts are, however, closely related to volunteering. It is therefore clear that worries about the consumerist attitude are closely related to worries about a decreasing number of volunteers in voluntary sport clubs. However, as can be seen in Figure 1.3, there was no visible decline in the number of volunteers in voluntary sport clubs between 1997 and 2008. More recent numbers suggest that the percentage of Dutch people who volunteer for a voluntary sport club still lies at around fifteen percent (Arends & Flöthe, 2015).

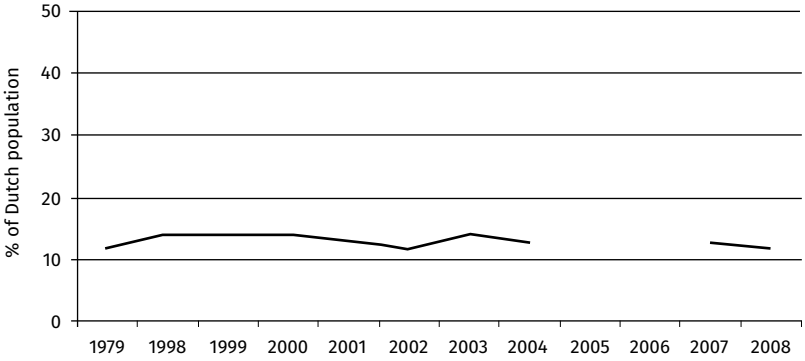

Figure 1.3 Percentage of Dutch population volunteering for a voluntary sport club between 1997 and 2008. Source: CBS Statline (2012).

Taken together, there are signs that sport participation increasingly takes places outside of voluntary sport clubs, although the absolute number of participants in voluntary sport clubs has been quite stable over time and the number of volunteers has not declined. Much is therefore still unclear about the consumerist attitude in relation to the voluntary sport club. It is even questionable as to whether there actually is a consumerist attitude emerging in Dutch voluntary sport, or whether this notion is disputable and itself the subject of a discourse. In order to know what the current case is, we first need more information about the contents of a consumerist discourse. Therefore, I will look at how the consumerist discourse has been constructed in another nonprofit sector, namely the public service sector. This could provide information about how concepts related to consumerism are presented, which would be valuable in the quest for the meaning of the member-consumer in the voluntary sport sector.

1.5 The consumerist discourse

The emergence of consumerism in the twentieth century has received a lot of attention in a variety of ways. With respect to other societal developments, consumerism is considered to be an important development in people's private lives (e.g. Featherstone, 2007, Sassatelli, 2007; Slater, 1997). Scientific literature has interpreted consumerism in two ways. From one perspective, the rise of the consumer is described as an empowering development. The autonomy of the individual consumer and the increasing rights and possibilities to decide about one's own life have been portrayed as merits of industrialisation and large-scale production that have made a whole range of products accessible to many. On the other hand, criticism about the emerging consumer culture is also often heard, both in mainstream media and in scientific literature. Critical theory and pessimistic postmodern strands of literature have denied any form of consumer agency and have emphasised the manipulative force of producers (Sassatelli, 2007, p. 74).

In public service research, there is still much conceptual fuzziness surrounding consumerism. Researchers have identified consumerism, consumerist discourses, consumerist paradigms and consumerist agendas. All of these concepts have been used to describe roughly the same development: the increasing tendency by researchers and policy makers to describe social phenomena in terms of rising consumerist attitudes among groups that are normally not depicted as consumers. These groups can be, for instance, groups of citizens or groups of members of nonprofit organisations.

Clarke, Newman, Smith, Vidler and Westmarland (2007) note that citizenship and consumerism seem to be complete contradictions. However, their analysis shows that with the rise of the citizen-consumer the distinctions between these two categories are becoming blurred. Citizens are addressed more and more as consumers as a result of public reform by governments. These reforms have emerged because policy makers have portrayed consumerism as a desirable and inevitable development. Needham (2003) argues that the desirability of consumerism is put forward as an outcome of the wants and needs of citizens, whereas the inevitability derives from the experiences people have in other contexts of their lives. Clarke et al. (2007) use different perspectives to explore the concept of the citizen-consumer. They distinguish four distinct concepts that describe consumerism in public services from the perspectives of the sociology of modernity, governmentality studies and political economy. Choice, inequality, challenge and responsibility are the key dimensions in what Clarke et al. (2007, p. 28) identify as a discourse that is constructed 'in relation to other social, cultural and political movements, tendencies and discourses'. Other researchers use a simplified version of these four dimensions to provide a comprehensible picture, focusing on the choice and voice dimensions (cf. 6, 2003; Jung, 2010; Powell et al., 2010; Simmons, Birchall & Prout, 2012). In the following sections these two dimensions will be explored in order to see how they are expressed in public service studies.

Choice

Choice is defined as 'giving individuals the opportunity to choose from among alternative suppliers, whether or not entirely within the public sector' (Public Administration Select Committee, 2005, p. 5). This concept is very closely related to the marketisation of the public sector. By definition, markets function by providing people with the opportunity to choose between different alternatives. According to the consumerist discourse, the market model

is the basis for value creation in public services and an improvement of the public sector in general. As in the private sector, citizens are deemed to expect high quality service delivery. If a service does not fulfil the needs of these customers, they easily switch to another provider (Kelly, 2005). Thus, citizens operate as if public services are markets, which in turn provides public service providers with an incentive to offer the best service possible.

However, conceptualising consumerism as a phenomenon in which citizens operate as economic agents is too abstract and simplistic (Powell et al., 2010). Instead, choice is probably one of the most prominent dimensions of consumerism, and it entails more than simply having multiple options in public service provision. Choice is directly related to the individualisation thesis and the increased room for flexibility in making choices and decisions in one's own life (Brannen & Nilsen, 2005). When referring to public service provision, it is claimed that people want choice (Clarke et al., 2007). This sentiment is also reflected in an often-quoted speech by former UK Secretary of State for Health Alan Milburn (2002), who acknowledged that 'we live in a consumer society. People demand services tailor-made to their individual needs. Ours is the informed and enquiring society. People expect choice and demand quality'. Choice, then, is the key driver of service improvement. It is defined as providing consumers with 'another positive option. Although difficult to represent formally, choice requires at least two positive options, a and b, rather than the negative choice between alternatives a and not-a' (Dowding, 1992, p. 303). 6 (2003, p. 241) notes that choice is translated by public service providers in 'institutionalised arrangements that provide opportunities to make decisions expressing preferences between a defined menu of options'.

Choice does not only refer to having the opportunity to choose between a number of alternatives. It is also about the personalisation of services, customer-friendliness (Leadbeater, 2004) and having a say over the manner of access to a public service (6, 2003). According to 6 (2003), public managers introduce choice options in order to meet demands by users of public services or to improve the supply side of public services in itself. Choice seems to be at the core of public service consumerism and entails more than simply offering citizens multiple opportunities to put their preferences into practice. The introduction of choice is often intended to improve public services, and '[w]ithin the consumerist discourse, choice is widely perceived as a positive and empowering idea' (Jung, 2010, p. 442). However, improving elements of choice within public services has also received criticism from a number of scholars. One of the most important points of criticism concerned with the choice agenda is the danger of inequality. Many scholars believe that offering choice opportunities to citizens will particularly benefit citizens with higher levels of economic, social and cultural capital (cf. Bourdieu, 1986). 'It is possible that the effective or successful exercise of choice involves skills or habits that are unevenly distributed (information gathering, assessment, calculation and articulation)' (Vidler & Clarke, 2005, p. 33). Moreover, choice can even disempower (groups of) users of public services, as it is associated with uncertainty and risk (Fotaki, 2009; Greener & Mannion, 2009; Jung, 2010). Finally, it can also lead to polarisation between organisations, as is demonstrated in the following quote by 6 (2003):

> *Polarisation can be defined as the situation in which the market separates into a 'sink' sub-sector of underperforming suppliers located in disadvantaged areas unable to attract good staff and for which there are falling levels of consumer demand and no competition between consumers for access, and an "élite" sub-sector of high-performing suppliers*

located in wealthy, leafy areas able to attract good staff, with high levels of applications, where there is congestion, and where in effect the suppliers choose the consumers. (p. 252)

Advancing choice in public service settings can thus lead to extraordinary improvement in these services, but it can also lead to major problems of inequality and, ultimately, polarisation between two kinds of public sectors. Pollit (1988, p. 122) argues: 'the dominant value of private sector consumerism, is important but, by itself, inadequate. The concept of the citizen-consumer suggests additional values, such as equity, equal opportunities and, of course, representation and participation themselves'. It therefore seems important that the voice of the public service user also be heard. This last point refers directly to the concept that is adjacent to choice in consumerism, being voice. This concept is a somewhat double notion of the greater responsibility and the greater say users have or should have in public service provision. In the next section, I will discuss the merits and possible harms of voice, before I turn to the question of what choice and voice mean for the voluntary sport sector.

Voice

Clarke et al. (2007) distinguish challenge and responsibility as factors that have gained prominence in the public sector. Other researchers have used the word 'voice' to indicate that users of public services have a greater say in the provision of these services than a few decades ago.

Voice is an expression of the unwillingness of people to take power and authority for granted. Because of developments like informatisation, people are better informed and better aware of their rights. Public services providers and policy makers have developed an agenda to deal with well-informed, critical citizens. In the words of Clarke et al. (2007, p. 68), voice, or challenge, is defined as the public becoming 'less deferential, less trusting, more willing to challenge authority and to make demands'.

Voice cannot be separated from choice, as both concepts are part of an holistic consumerist discourse. The next quote by the Public Administration Select Committee (2008, p. 6) illustrates how the both have become intertwined: 'Increased choice (or the promise of it) has encouraged people to expect a greater say or even control over service provision. User voice is equally important, however, for public services where a choice of service provider is not feasible'. The reception of challenging authorities in public service research is still somewhat double, though. Some public service scholars argue that 'the "bottom up" perspective implied by a customer-orientated system of public administration appears highly democratic and participatory' (Christensen & Lægreid, 2002, p. 283), whereas others emphasise the possibility of voice as a growing unsettlement between public services and its users, or as narrowing democratic possibilities of citizens (Clarke et al., 2007; Simmons, Birchall & Prout, 2012). When the classic conception of voice by Hirschman (1970) is considered, it becomes clearer as to why voice can also cause problems to public service providers. He notes that one's voice can be used as a residual to exit strategies, in which 'the discontented customers or members could become so harassing that their protests would at some point hinder rather than help whatever efforts at recovery are undertaken' (p. 31). A problematic relationship between authority and voice is also apparent in educational settings in which the relationship between educators and students becomes troubled because of students acting as sovereign customers (Delucchi & Korgen, 2002).

A problem with voice is the tension between individual voice and collective voice. In relation to individualisation there are growing concerns about the willingness to take

up collective responsibilities and show solidarity, while at the same time governments request citizen-consumers to take up their collective responsibility as a counterweight to individualisation (Malpass, Barnett, Clarke & Cloke, 2007). This point explicitly refers to one of the problems that a consumerist attitude could cause in the voluntary sport sector.

Choice and voice in the voluntary sport sector

From the discussion on choice and voice in public service consumerism, several points arise that could be relevant for the debate on the emerging consumerist attitude in the voluntary sport sector. First is the distinction between introducing choice options because of user demand or because of improvement on the supply side of the organisations that provide the services. The organisational context of voluntary sport clubs could exclude sport participants who do not have an interest in the mutual support character associated with it. Improving the supply side of voluntary sport clubs by increasing choice options could attract new members. However, this could also pose a threat to members who are currently active in voluntary sport clubs. Second, on the first page of this introduction chapter I stated that one of the characteristics of voluntary sport clubs is that they make sport accessible for a reasonably low fee. Introducing choice options and the inextricable professionalisation that comes with that process could be harmful to this accessibility, at least in a financial sense (Boessenkool & Verweel, 2004). The development towards increased choice and increased professionalisation could thus possibly lead to polarisation in voluntary sport clubs. Finally, the improved possibilities for expressing individual voice in voluntary sport clubs could have major implications for the collective voice opportunities that are at the core of these organisations. For example, general annual meetings could become less relevant if voluntary sport clubs and their members embrace individual voice options. After all, the need for expressing one's opinion in these democratic structures is less necessary when one can voice her or his opinion directly to board members or through individual complaint structures.

1.6 New ways of organising: an institutional perspective

In order to serve the member-consumer, it is believed that voluntary sport clubs should adopt new ways of organising. According to NOC*NSF (2012), clubs need to make their activities more flexible, and they need to market these activities in order to serve the member-consumer. Ibsen and Seippel (2010) have argued that a market logic in voluntary sport clubs is slowly replacing the association logic because of consumerist tendencies in the environment of voluntary sport clubs. The association logic in voluntary sport clubs is based on the four principles identified in Section 1.2.2. Voluntary sport clubs are autonomous, volunteer-based, voluntary and democratic organisations. The increasing importance of the member-consumer that has been introduced in this chapter challenges these principles, as a focus on choice and voice options is likely to clash with the solidarity and involvement that is needed for committed, volunteering members (Schlesinger, Egli & Nagel, 2013). This might change the very nature of voluntary sport clubs, or it may even destroy the central features of these organisations (cf. Horch, 1998). If the association logic is to be departed from, this will probably be a slow process, as Ibsen and Seippel (2011) already observed. They note that institutional theory might explain how such a market logic could develop in the voluntary sport sector.

Institutional theory: the emergence of a consumer logic?

Institutional theory departs from the idea that organisational arrangements often lack traditional, rational explanations such as economic and competitive patterns. Rather, these arrangements are explained through social and cultural rules that are based upon normative and cognitive understandings of social exchange (Greenwood, Oliver, Suddaby, & Sahlin-Andersson, 2008; Washington & Patterson, 2011). The starting point of institutional theory can be found in the mid-twentieth century. Selznick's (1957) definition of an institution as 'an organisation infused with value' has long served as main focus for scholars working in the field of institutional theory. They have tried to explain how values that are adopted in an organisation influence behaviour in such an organisation. According to Scott (2008, p. 22), maintaining such an organisation is no longer 'simply an instrumental matter of keeping the machinery working, but becomes a struggle to preserve a set of unique values'. Since the 1970s, the focus of institutional theory has shifted towards the ways in which organisations and organisational behaviour are influenced by values in their external environment. A good example of these latter studies is DiMaggio & Powell's publication in 1983, in which they demonstrate how organisations become more similar over time in their quest towards legitimacy. According to DiMaggio & Powell (1983), three different forms of isomorphism shape the organisational structure and the practices of organisations in a particular field. Coercive, mimetic and normative isomorphism leads to the homogenisation of organisations, which in turn explains the stability and similarity of the organisations in any given field. Coercive isomorphism is the pressure that external forces lay upon organisations to shape them in a particular way. Mimetic isomorphism involves imitation of another organisation's structure or practices as a response to uncertaintity. Finally, normative isomorphism occurs when shared beliefs and practices emerge in a particular field because of the shared education and training programmes of actors in that field.

In the last decades institutional theory has widened its focus to include, among other aspects, different institutional logics. Various authors have asked how these logics affect individual and organisational behaviour in different contexts (Thornton & Ocasio, 2008). Friedland and Alford (1991) note that logics can be referred to as belief systems that affect what organisations look like in specific organisational fields. Thornton and Ocasio (1999, p. 804) provide a more elaborate definition. They define institutional logics as 'the socially constructed, historical patterns of material practices, assumptions, values, beliefs, and rules by which individuals produce and reproduce their material subsistence, organise time and space and provide meaning to their reality'. Institutional logics are, to some extent, shaped by organisational and individual behaviour in larger contexts and, in turn, also shape organisational and individual behaviour (Thornton, 2004). In this sense, they bridge the gap between institutions and organisational actions (Thornton & Ocasio, 2008) which was troublesome in previous forms of institutionalism.

Earlier case studies in the field of voluntary sport have shown how institutional processes can account for organisational change by explaining logic shifts in these organisations (Fahlén, Stenling & Vestin, 2008; O'Brien & Slack, 2004; Skirstad & Chelladurai, 2011). This is particularly interesting, as Ibsen and Seippel (2010) also point to a logic shift when it comes to the new ways of organising in voluntary sport clubs. In the next section, the emergence of a consumer logic in voluntary sport clubs is considered in relation to isomorphic processes and the introduction of choice and voice options in the voluntary sport sector.

From an institutional perspective, studies by Fahlén, Stenling and Vestin's (2008), O'Brien and Slack's (2004) and Skirstad and Chelladurai's (2011) offer valuable insights in how

voluntary sport clubs change their logics. They have provided insights in how professional logics related to elite sports can emerge from association logics, but their findings might also provide usable ideas to explain a shift from the association logic to a consumer logic. The association logic, then, can only change when new patterns, practices, values and beliefs are constructed at different levels in the voluntary sport sector (cf. Greenwood, Suddaby, & Hinings, 2002; Stenling, 2014). Undoubtedly, there are signs that the sector is undergoing changes, but the question remains as to whether a logic shift is indeed happening. Therefore, this thesis investigates the meaning of the member-consumer and the consumerist attitude for voluntary sport clubs. If indeed people construct new patterns, practices, values and beliefs related to marketisation, choice and voice, a new logic may gain ground in an organisational field.

1.7 Mixed methods for researching social phenomena

In order to research the consumerist attitude I have deployed a number of qualitative and quantitative methods in this thesis. The results of both modes of research are tied together, and one stage of research informs the other stages. In this sense, the thesis is a mixed methods study, and this approach helps me to gain a deeper understanding of the topic of consumerism (Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, & Turner, 2007).

Using both qualitative and quantitative methods to research social phenomena might seem striking to some, as the domain of social constructions are usually associated with the exclusive use of qualitative methods. However, in this thesis I challenge the idea of the 'coherent whole' of ontology, epistemology, methodology and methods that need to be consistent along fixed lines (Greene, 2008, p. 12). Instead, I believe that a mix can be made of traditional paradigms, where social constructions can, to a certain extent, be understood using quantitative methods such as surveys. These surveys use representative samples, accurate responses and thoroughly operationalised measures. Hereby, this study still offers a coherent way of approaching the study using clear measures. After all, a 'strong inquiry logic is substantiated by coherence and connection among the constituent parts. The separate parts need to fit together and work together to enable—from the perspective of a given inquiry approach—defensible data gathering, analysis and interpretation' (Greene, 2006, p. 93).

In order to fit together the separate parts of this thesis, it is crucial to give attention in this first chapter to its overall design, and this will be provided in the next section. A key principle in mixed methods research is to clearly identify and explicitly formulate reasons for combining qualitative and quantitative research methods (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). The added value of conducting mixed methods research is that it can offer deeper understanding of the studied phenomenon, but only if there is a specific reason to use it. This study is performed with mixed research methods for a number of reasons. First, every level that is identified in the research question can best be researched with different methods. The level of policy making, for example, is better suited for study by qualitative methods. The limited number of policy makers and the need for a deep understanding of the way they construct consumerist attitudes calls for a qualitative research method. On the other hand, the club level is better understood if a wider picture of what is happening in respect to consumerism is grasped. Second, the use of mixed methods enables me to see whether social constructions of a rather small group are shared among larger groups of respondents. This is crucial to this study, because the construction of the consumerist attitude in itself

contains assumptions about the behaviour of large groups of people in voluntary sport clubs.

In this study, a number of methods have been used. Qualitative document analysis, analysis of panel data, focus group interviews, questionnaires and an analysis of secondary quantitative data provide a picture of the consumerist attitude in voluntary sport clubs and the consequences this attitude has for these clubs. The methods were applied in order to answer the research questions on different levels, but the sequence and priorities given to each method are also designed to take information from one level to the other. For example, the thesis starts with a qualitative document analysis in order to provide more information on how policy makers interpret trends in society, but it also provides data that can help with coding and analysing the panel data in Chapter 4. The total scheme of data gathering and analysing applied in this thesis is illustrated in Figure 1.4 in a graphical version of the notation scheme as proposed by Morse (1991).

Overall, the use of mixed methods can lead to a better understanding of the consumerist attitude in voluntary sport clubs. However, little is known about the exact contributions such an approach can make in a sport management study like this. Therefore, in Chapter 2 I review the use of mixed methods in previous sport management studies and examine the merits of this approach in other fields. Such a review helps me to evaluate the added value of mixed methods for the study of voluntary sport clubs and assists me in the design of my study.

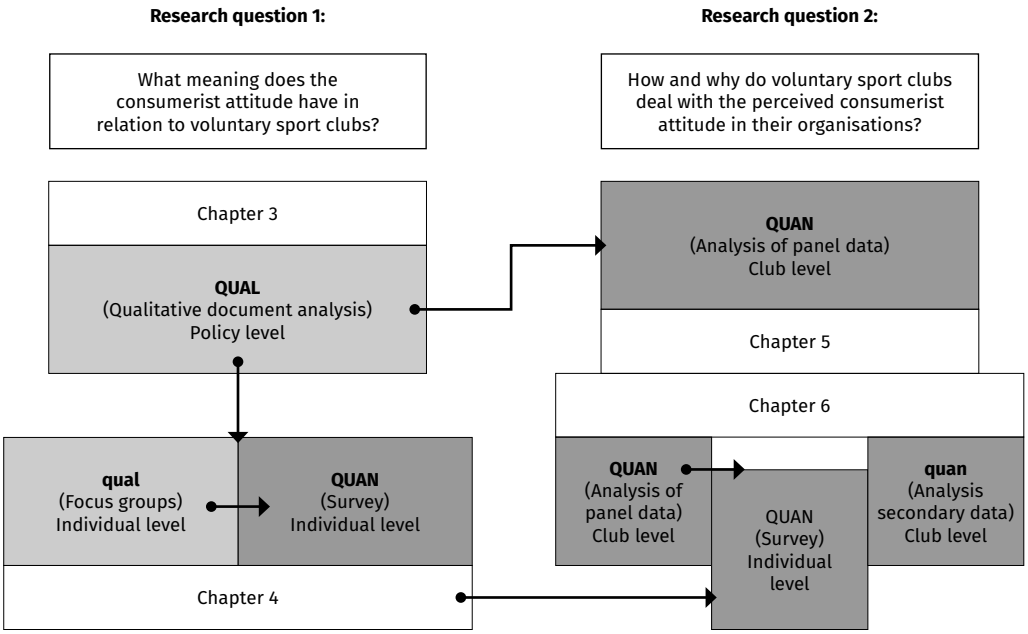

Figure 1.4 Timing and priority of research methods in the thesis.

1.8 Structure of the thesis

In Chapter 3 I review policy plans of the fifteen biggest national sport organisations in the Netherlands and NOC*NSF to see how policy makers construct consumerism in their policies. The chapter is entitled 'Creating Sport Consumers in Dutch Sport Policy.' In that chapter I find that policy makers have constructed a consumerist discourse in sport policy by identifying societal changes that are related to consumerism as a threat to voluntary sport clubs and by presenting the rise of the consumer as a window of opportunity if voluntary sport clubs treat their members as consumers. Policy makers use this to pressure voluntary sport clubs to modernise their activities. However, they do so without presenting any empirical evidence that there is an emergence of the consumerist attitude in voluntary sport clubs.

In Chapter 4, entitled 'Consumerism in Sport Organisations: Conceptualising and Constructing a Research Scale', I present a research instrument that is able to measure the consumerist attitude in sport organisations. On the basis of focus groups and a survey among 303 sport participants, I find that the consumerist attitude consists of five sub-dimensions, resulting in a 25-item scale. This scale can assist sport management scholars, sport policy makers and sport administrators and managers in determining consumerist attitudes in a sport organisation.

Chapter 5 focuses on the organisational level of the relationship between consumerism and voluntary sport clubs. In that chapter, entitled 'A Consumerist Turn in Dutch Voluntary Sport Associations?', I examine changes in the organisational arrangements of clubs. Using a two-wave dataset from 2007 and 2012 (n=337) I find that there is little evidence that a consumerist turn is truly taking place at the organisational level of voluntary sport clubs. Moreover, the chapter suggests that clubs that have changed towards a more consumerist logic experience no decrease in commitment and volunteering among their members.

Chapter 6, entitled 'Consumer Logic vs. Association Logic: A Tale of Two Worlds?' focuses more in depth on the differences between association logic and consumer logic. I selected eight clubs spread over four sports to research why some clubs move towards consumer logic while other clubs retain an association logic. The chapter argues that, contrary to what is often expected, the presence of consumer logic in a voluntary sport club cannot be explained by the demand of its members, nor by the socio-demographics of the members or the environments they operate in. Rather, the presence of consumer logic is related to the composition of the institutional environment and the characteristics of the board of a voluntary sport club.

In Chapter 7, the conclusion of this thesis, theoretical and empirical insights from this study are brought together. I discuss the findings of all empirical chapters in synthesis with each other, and I finish with concluding remarks about the relationship between consumerism and voluntary sport clubs.

CHAPTER 2

MIXED METHODS IN EMERGING ACADEMIC SUBDISCIPLINES: THE CASE OF SPORT MANAGEMENT

Summary

This chapter examines the prevalence and characteristics of mixed methods research in the relatively new subdiscipline of sport management. A mixed methods study is undertaken to evaluate the epistemological/philosophical, methodological, and technical levels of mixed methods design in sport management research. The results indicate that mixed methods research is still rarely used, poorly legitimized and often weakly designed in this field. Our conclusions lead to the hypotheses that the more central a research field is, the higher the prevalence of mixed methods, and that mixed methods only slowly trickle down from central to more peripheral subdisciplines. Implications of the research findings for both mixed methods scholars and sport management researchers are discussed, and directions for future research are proposed.

This chapter is based on an article published together with Ramón Spaaij and Maarten van Bottenburg:

Van der Roest, J., Spaaij, R. & Van Bottenburg, M. (2015). Mixed Methods in Emerging Academic Subdisciplines: The Case of Sport Management. Journal of Mixed Methods Research, 9(1), 70-90.

2.1 Introduction

Mixed methods (MM) research has become an increasingly influential research approach in the social and behavioral sciences. Proposals for the integration of quantitative and qualitative methods have been advanced in several pure and applied disciplines (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003, 2010), including psychology, sociology, education, nursing and management. Yet, our understanding of the adoption of MM research within less established disciplines remains limited. A major purpose of this chapter is to add to the knowledge base by ascertaining the extent to and ways in which MM research is undertaken within one emerging academic sub-discipline, that of sport management. This knowledge would help us determine how MM penetrates this relatively new sub-discipline. This will be done by assessing the prevalence rates of MM in the sport management field as well as the characteristics of MM design in this sub-discipline.

Sport management offers a significant case study because since 1990 a number of calls for MM research have been made in this academic sub-discipline. In that year, Olafson (1990) encouraged sport management researchers to 'consider the use of more than a single data source' and 'multiple data gathering methods' (p. 117). There is a lack of evidence as to whether this and subsequent calls for MM (Millington & Wilson, 2010; Rudd & Johnson, 2010) have been taken seriously by sport management scholars, but the limited data that are available suggest that this may not be the case (Quarterman et al., 2006; Rudd & Johnson, 2010). This chapter addresses that knowledge gap by producing a comprehensive understanding of MM research in sport management. In so doing, we seek to draw lessons for both the MM research community and the field of sport management as well as formulate directions for future research.

Although there is no agreed upon definition of MM research, in a broad sense MM can be defined as the combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches within a single study. A frequently cited definition is that MM is 'the type of research in which a researcher or team of researchers combines elements of qualitative and quantitative research approaches … for the broad purposes of breadth and depth of understanding and corroboration' (Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, & Turner, 2007, p. 123). This definition stresses that MM research includes the standpoints of both qualitative and quantitative research. A key characteristic of MM research is that it replaces the either-or dichotomy with continua that describe a range of options from across the methodological spectrum (Teddlie, & Tashakkori, 2009). MM research invites dialogue between qualitative and quantitative approaches, however it can involve mixing also at the level of method or methodology when there are paradigmatic differences (Greene, 2012; Johnson, & Onwuegbuzie, 2004).

Drawing on an in-depth assessment of MM research in sport management, this chapter will show that MM is still under-used, poorly legitimized and often weakly designed in this sub-discipline. It is further argued that MM designs can enhance the quality of sport management research, and we will demonstrate this by drawing on examples of good practice. The chapter is structured as follows. In the next section, the methodology used in our study is discussed. We then examine the prevalence rates of MM research in the sub-discipline of sport management. The remainder of the chapter presents and reflects on the research findings in relation to six key dimensions of MM design (i.e., paradigm, rationale, data collection methods, priority, timing, and integration, respectively), and connects these findings to contemporary issues and debates in the MM literature. The chapter concludes by reflecting on the implications of the research findings for both MM scholars and sport management researchers.

2.2 Mixed methods design employed in this study

This study asked to what extent and how is MM research adopted in the sub-discipline of sport management. This overarching mixed research question was broken down into two sub-questions: (a) What is the prevalence rate of MM designs in studies conducted in sport management, and (b) How are MM used in the published sport management studies that could be identified as mixed? These questions were investigated using a combination timing MM design with three stages. Below we elaborate on each of these stages and their interconnections. As will be shown below, our approach can be described as QUANT → QUANT+qual in the notation system proposed by Morse (1991). The emphasis in our approach was on the quantitative component, which was complemented by qualitative methods. The design was mixed in the research question formulation (as noted above), sampling procedures, data analysis, and data interpretation stage (inferences and explanations). The strategies used to mix quantitative and qualitative approaches in these different stages of the study are discussed in detail below.

Sampling employed in this study

The sampling process in this study was multilayered involving the selection of journals within the discipline of sport management, and specific articles within these journals. The unit of analysis in this study was the individual articles from research journals in the field of sport management. This approach was selected because it was best suited to examine prevalence rates (Alise & Teddlie, 2010), which here refers to the proportion of sport management studies using a MM approach. A broad search of relevant articles using databases did not retrieve a valid sample. The search of the ISI Web of Science, using 'sport management' and 'mixed methods' as the search terms, retrieved 33 articles for the period 1950-2011. Content analysis of these 33 articles found that only two could be classified MM studies in sport management. Furthermore, we searched four MM journals (Journal of Mixed Methods Research, International Journal of Multiple Research Approaches, Quality and Quantity, and Field Methods) for studies in sport management, using the search term 'sport'. This search retrieved 8 articles for all journals. Content analysis found two studies could be classified MM research in sport management. It would not be possible to determine prevalence rates specific to sport management from the ISI Web of Science or the MM journals as the vast majority of articles recorded in these publication outlets were not related to sport management. As such, we purposively selected journals that were specific to the discipline of sport management.

The selection of journals

The purposively selected journals represented the most prestigious journals within the discipline of sport management. Although publications reporting MM research in sport management might also be found in books and conference papers, we concur with Bryman (2006) that journal articles are 'a major form of reporting findings [which] have the advantage that, in most cases, the peer review process provides a quality control mechanism' (p. 100). To keep the sample sizes manageable, only the top four sport management journals were selected to provide articles for the study sample. The four selected journals were the Journal of Sport Management (JSM), Sport Management Review (SMR), Sociology of Sport Journal (SSJ) and International Review for the Sociology of Sport (IRSS). These journals were identified as the four elite journals in terms of prestige, contribution to theory, contribution to practice

and contribution to teaching in the multidimensional rating scheme developed by Shilbury and Rentschler (2007). SSJ and IRSS are not solely dedicated to sport management but also publish articles in the field of sport sociology, however they are considered 'important outlets for sport-related research and ... directly relevant to sport management' (Shilbury & Rentschler, 2007, p. 34). Three of the journals are rated in the 2010 Journal Citation Reports (Thomson Reuters, 2011). With impact factors of 0.917 for SSJ, 0.827 for ISSR and 0.814 for JSM, they were rated at 54th (SSJ) and 66th place (ISSR) out of 137 sociology journals and 112th place (JSM) among 166 management journals. These journals can be described as the most prestigious journals of a minor subfield.

The selection of articles

All articles from the specific sport management journals were selected for this study. The articles were searched and accessed using the publishers' websites, ISI Web of Science, Scopus, and ProQuest Sociological Abstracts. For JSM the search covered the period 1987-2011, for SMR the period 1998-2011, for SSJ the period 1984-2011, and for IRSS the period 1966-2011. The total number of retrieved articles was 2,536. These 2,536 articles represented the sampling units that were distinguished for selective inclusion in the analysis.

Data collection and coding procedures

The first stage of the research involved the designation of the article type as either a MM, qualitative or quantitative study. This was determined in two phases. First, building on the approach taken by Bryman (2006), we searched the 2,536 articles for those studies in which the words or phrases 'mixed method,' 'multi-method,' 'triangulation,' 'quantitative AND qualitative,' 'survey AND interview,' 'survey AND focus group,' 'survey AND participant observation,' 'survey AND document analysis,' 'survey AND discourse analysis,' 'questionnaire AND interview,' 'questionnaire AND focus group,' 'questionnaire AND participant observation,' 'questionnaire AND document analysis,' or 'questionnaire AND discourse analysis' appeared in the title, keywords or abstract. This meant that the sample comprised articles which to some degree foregrounded the fact that the study was based on a combination of quantitative and qualitative research (Bryman, 2006).

The decision to include a range of search terms was based on the fact that there has been little consistency in the use of terms such as MM or multi-methods. In recent years there have been attempts to sort out some of the different terms scholars use to describe multiple and mixed methods. For example, Tashakkori and Teddlie (2003) argue that MM research combines qualitative and quantitative methods, while multi-method research uses more than one method but restricted to either qualitative or quantitative approaches. However, we expected that older studies in particular would be less likely to use the term 'mixed methods' consistently as it has only come to be used more frequently in recent decades (Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, & Turner, 2007; Small, 2011). By expanding the search terms to include more widely used methodological terms that to some degree still foregrounded the fact that the study was based on a combination of quantitative and qualitative research, we were able to locate such studies. We found that there is still little consistency in the use of the term 'mixed methods' in sport management research, as indicated by the fact that only five studies in the sample actually used the term 'mixed methods' to describe their research design. This suggests that the specific terminology that is now commonplace among specialist MM researchers is still not fully accepted in the relatively new sub-discipline of sport management. The decision to include search terms with diverse methodological connotations

meant that whilst a more exhaustive sample was produced, this sample had to be rigorously scrutinized to determine which studies comprised MM (as opposed to a multi-method or mono-method research).

Ninety-one articles matched the search terms and therefore to some degree foregrounded the use of MM. The content of these articles was analysed in depth using researcher triangulation. The data collected from each article included information that identified the article and detailed information about the methods employed in the article. These data were recorded on a code sheet specifically developed for this study. The designation of the article type was determined using the evaluation criteria proposed by Creswell and Plano Clark (2011). First we examined the methods section for evidence of the combined use of qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis techniques. We then searched the introduction, results and discussion for evidence of combining of quantitative and qualitative methods, as well as for the use of MM terminology. This process was done independently by two coders for each article. The coders recorded the key information and indicators and then made a global assessment of the methodological nature of the article. The articles were coded similarly 93% of the time. Those not coded similarly were resolved in consultation; they were further discussed as well as independently reviewed and coded by the third author.

The vast majority of research articles assessed in this study were clearly identifiable as either MM, qualitative or quantitative. In some cases, however, it was it was more difficult to determine the methodological nature of the article, for example in the case where the researcher claimed to have used qualitative methods but the only qualitative data gathered were brief responses to open questions in a questionnaire. Articles in which these responses were the only traces of a qualitative strand were excluded on the grounds that such an approach cannot be regarded as genuinely qualitative (Bryman, 2006). Non-empirical studies that matched the search terms but did not present original research were also excluded. Given the high degree of inter-coder reliability, we feel confident that our evaluation is empirically reliable. The final MM sample contained 43 articles: eleven articles from JSM, six from SMR, eight from SSJ, and eighteen from IRSS.

The findings from stage one (QUANT) acted as input into the second (QUANT) and third (qual) stages of the study (Morse, 1991). These stages involved quantitative (stage two) and qualitative (stage three) content analysis of the 43 MM articles to answer the second part of the research question: how MM are used in the sport management studies that could be identified as mixed. The sample of the qualitative method (stage three) was nested within that of the quantitative method in stage one in order to maintain a single, integrated MM study (cf. Yin, 2006). The articles were analysed in relation to six key dimensions of MM design: paradigm; rationale; data collection methods; priority; timing; and integration.

Paradigms

While we ourselves worked in this study from a pragmatic stance (discussed below), we attempted to categorize articles in the study by their underlying paradigmatic basis. For each article the research paradigm was recorded, based on the noted presence of designated elements of that paradigm (Alise & Teddlie, 2010). To facilitate the identification of the philosophical assumptions guiding the studies, a broad typology was used: purist stance, pragmatic stance, dialectical position, other paradigm stance, paradigm not stated. These categories were derived from key contributions to the debate on philosophical justifications for MM research (e.g. Harrits, 2011; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Mertens, 2012; Morgan, 2007; Onwuegbuzie, Johnson, & Collins, 2009).

Rationale
The rationale for combining qualitative and quantitative approaches was coded and analysed using the typology proposed by Bryman (2006), which identifies 18 rationales. Bryman's scheme enabled a detailed analysis of the rationales and actual practices in each research article. It also facilitated comparison of the rationales for mixing quantitative and qualitative approaches in sport management to those in other areas of social science research.

Data collection methods
The data collection methods used in each article were coded using an inductive approach. Common categories of data collection techniques were constructed based on the empirical data obtained from the articles. Common data collection techniques included questionnaires, qualitative interviews, observation, focus groups and secondary data.

Priority
Each article was examined to determine the priority or status afforded to quantitative and qualitative methods in the research strategy, sampling procedures, data gathering methods, data analysis, and interpretation. The priority was coded using a basic three-item typology: quantitative dominant, qualitative dominant, and equal status. These items relate to different positions on the qualitative-MM-quantitative continuum (Johnson et al., 2007; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). The articles were defined as 'quantitative dominant' where most aspects of research design were classified as predominantly quantitative, and vice versa for 'qualitative dominant'. The articles were defined as 'equal status' where the priority afforded to quantitative and qualitative approaches was (roughly) the same for all the aspects of research design.

Timing
The timing component of the MM designs used in the journal articles was coded using four categories derived from the work of Creswell and Plano Clark (2011), Small (2011) and Teddlie and Tashakkori (2009). The codes employed were: concurrent (or parallel), sequential - qualitative first, sequential - quantitative first, and multiphase combination timing (i.e., a combination of 1 and 2/3). These methodological terms are further discussed below.

Mixing
The mixing component of MM design refers to the degree to which quantitative and qualitative methods are combined in different inquiry phases (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011; Yin, 2006). To facilitate evaluation of the integration of qualitative and quantitative methods in the articles, we examined whether quantitative and qualitative methods were brought together or kept separate in each of five inquiry phases: research question formulation, sampling procedures, data collection, data analysis, and data interpretation.

Contribution of qualitative analytical techniques
This study used a combination timing design with an emphasis on the quantitative component. The qualitative strand was important for ascertaining the ways in which MM are used in the published sport management studies that could be identified as MM. Qualitative data pertaining to the six dimensions of MM design were recorded and analysed in order to generate rich descriptions of the studies' MM strategies and procedures. The qualitative analysis provided deeper understanding to the broad-pattern findings uncovered through

the quantitative analysis. To further enhance the mixing of quantitative and qualitative analyses, in the data analysis stage we used data conversion techniques. Collected qualitative data were converted into numerical data that could be analysed statistically for prevalence and characteristics, providing numbers, sums and percentages by type of article and by dimension. Qualitative data were converted into narrative categories, which were then converted into numeric codes, which were then analysed statistically.

The integration of the quantitative and qualitative strands enabled us to produce a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the research question. In the data interpretation stage, the mixing of quantitative and qualitative analyses was done to elicit convergent and divergent evidence for the research question. This was achieved through synthesis of the inferences that were obtained on the basis of the quantitative and qualitative strands of the study. The findings elicited through these methods, and the patterns of convergence and divergence across the findings from the different strands, are presented in the next sections.

2.3 Prevalence of mixed methods studies

The first stage of the study identified the prevalence rates of MM research published in the four sport management journals during the period 1966-2011. The term 'prevalence rate' refers to the proportion of articles using a particular methodological approach (Alise & Teddlie, 2010). In our study, it referred specifically to the proportion of articles in the sample (n = 2,536) using a MM approach. The overall prevalence rate of MM articles in the four journals combined (1966-2011) is 1.7%. As Table 2.1 shows, the prevalence rates vary greatly from journal to journal. The highest rate is 3.1% in SMR, followed by 3.0% in JSM, 1.8% in IRSS and 0.8% in SSJ. It should be noted, however, that there is a large difference in running time between IRSS (1966-present) and, to a lesser extent, SSJ (1984-present) and the other journals. The number of published articles in these particular journals is relatively stable over the years, and the total number of articles in our sample only increases after the introduction of JSM (1996) and SMR (1998). Prevalence rates from 1998 to 2011 are 3.1% for SMR, 2.5% for JSM, 2.2% for IRSS, and 0.8% for SSJ.

Table 2.1 Prevalence of MM articles in four leading sport management journals

	Total articles	MM articles (%)
SMR	192	6 (3.1)
JSM	367	11 (3.0)
IRSS	992	18 (1.8)
SSJ	985	8 (0.8)
Total	2536	43 (1.7)

Direct comparison with prevalence rates in other disciplines as found in previous research is not possible due to methodological differences (e.g. Alise & Teddlie, 2010). However, a broad comparison with the discipline of management, the mother discipline of sport management, is possible because of the broadly similar search criteria used in our study compared to Molina-Azorín (2011).[1,2] This comparison suggests that MM research is strongly under-represented

in the sub-discipline of sport management. Molina-Azorín (2011) studied four management journals between 1997 and 2007, and found prevalence rates varying between 6.7% and 14.6%. Prevalence rates for sport management in the same period vary between 0.0% and 3.7%. The highest prevalence rate in our overall sample is 4.9% in 2008, which is lower than the lowest prevalence rate found by Molina-Azorín. This discrepancy is even more striking given the more inclusive nature of our search criteria compared to Molina-Azorín's (see note 1). More advanced statistical procedures using prevalence ratios revealed that sport management articles were about seven times less likely to be a MM study than management articles.[3]

Our quantitative findings further indicate that no clear trend can be observed in the development of prevalence rates over time. Figure 2.1 shows that while the number of articles published in the four journals has increased over the years, the number of MM articles has only slightly gone up. Because the number of journals in our sample varies over the years, the prevalence rates are not well comparable over time. However, even a look at the last 14 years (1998-2011), when all four journals were in circulation, shows a relatively low prevalence of MM articles and no increase in the proportion of MM articles published in the four journals; in spite of the increase in the number of MM studies in the social and behavioral sciences, marked by specialized MM handbooks, textbooks, journals, special issues, and conferences (Onwuegbuzie, 2009). These findings lead us to conclude that the use of MM research in the sub-discipline of sport management is under-represented compared to more established disciplines such as management.

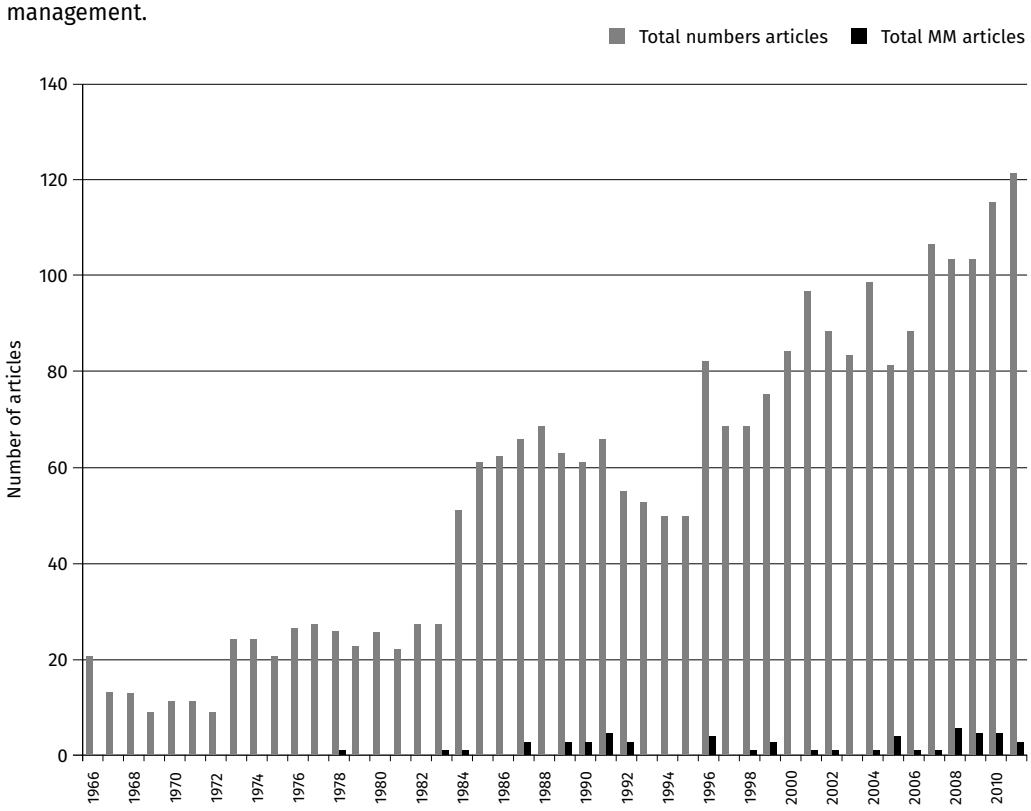

Figure 2.1 Total number of mixed methods articles in sport management journals compared to all articles in these journals.

The identification of MM designs in studies published in the four most elite sport management journals served as input for the second and third stages of the study, which sought to ascertain the ways in which MM are used in the published sport management studies that could be identified as mixed. As noted, this involved examining the articles in relation to six key dimensions of MM design using quantitative and qualitative techniques. The findings for each dimension are discussed below.

2.4 Paradigms

Questions regarding the possibility and sensibility of combining different philosophical frameworks when we mix methods are a contested area in MM research (Greene, 2008). To make sense of this debate, it is important not to confuse methodological issues with philosophical assumptions. In this context, Greene (2012) distinguishes between 'mixed methods lite' and 'mixed methods heavy'. 'MM lite' is a research strategy that – as is employed in this chapter – involves mixing only at the level of method or methodology, within the same paradigmatic philosophical assumptions. 'MM heavy', on the other hand, also concerns the crossing, mixing or matching of the philosophical underpinnings of research strategies.

Greene (2007) contends that most advocates of MM research arguably work within one philosophical paradigm. They thus enter a MM lite discussion to justify the use of both quantitative and qualitative methods from for example a post-positivist, interpretive, transformative or dialogic position (Deetz, 1996; Mertens, 2012). However, there is a group of MM researchers who go beyond this level and challenge and cross philosophical paradigm borders as well (Gioia & Pitre, 1990; Greene, 2012; Schultz & Hatch, 1996). These researchers shift to a 'mixed method heavy' discussion on how to integrate, combine, utilize or connect different philosophical paradigms in order to take advantage of the diversity of perspectives that social science has to offer.

Schultz and Hatch (1996) distinguish three different metatheoretical positions for doing multi-paradigm research. The first position is paradigm incommensurability. This position departs from the separate development and application of each paradigm because their assumptions about the nature of social reality and our ability to know it prevent combinations of concepts and theories. It is also called the 'purist stance' (purely postpositivist, purely interpretivist, or purely constructivist). The second position is paradigm integration. This position enables researchers to assess and synthesize a variety of contributions. It often leads to a framework that mixes and combines aspects of different paradigmatic assumptions, but is vulnerable with respect to its consideration of the relationship between the assumptions themselves. The third position is paradigm crossing. This position recognizes and confronts multiple paradigms, and can be found in various versions in the MM literature, like the pragmatic stance and the dialectical stance.
The pragmatic stance is quite popular among MM researchers. They interpret philosophical assumptions as logically independent that can be mixed and matched, in conjunction with choices about the mix of methods most appropriate for the given inquiry problem (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Morgan, 2007). According to the dialectical stance, differences between philosophical paradigms should not be ignored or reconciled, but must rather be honored in ways that maintain the integrity of each paradigm. Researchers should dialogue 'across [paradigm] differences respectfully and generatively toward deeper and enhanced understanding' (Greene 2007, p. 14). Moreover, the differences should be deliberately used

both within and across studies toward a dialectical discovery of enhanced understandings, new and revised perspectives and meanings.

From a research strategy point of view, this paradigm crossing can be further subdivided into sequential, parallel, bridging and interplay crossing strategies. The sequential strategy allows one paradigm to influence the other, but always in one direction only. In the parallel strategy, the researcher applies different paradigms on equal terms but separately. The bridging strategy assumes that the boundaries between paradigms are more permeable and that second-order concepts can act as bridges between them. The interplay strategy allows the researcher to move back and forth between paradigms. This strategy respects differences in research paradigms and wishes to take advantage of this diversity by the simultaneous recognition of both contrasts and connections between paradigms. This strategy thus searches for cross-fertilization and resists the incommensurability as well as the integration position (Schultz & Hatch, 1996). The interplay strategy is closely related to the dialectic stance, which requires from researchers to make Gestalt switches from one lens to the other, going back and forth, multiple times (Greene, 2007; Johnson, 2008).

From this short overview, two things become clear. First, MM research is not a separate epistemological paradigm. Different research paradigms are involved in the ways MM research is justified and carried out (Harrits, 2011). Second, it is important that MM researchers are aware of and explicit in their paradigmatic positioning because this legitimates the use, order and relative priority of MM in their studies (MM lite) and their stance towards paradigm integration or crossing (pragmatic or dialectical) and the best way to do so (sequential, parallel, bridging, interplay) (MM heavy).

In spite of this cutting-edge theoretical discussion in the MM literature, our study identified only five sport management articles (11.6%) that paid attention to their paradigmatic position. Four of those articles represented a purist stance; one a pragmatic stance. All other articles did not state their paradigmatic position.

The five articles that explicitly paid attention to their paradigmatic position could all be classified as MM lite. They discussed the methodological aspects of mixing methods, but they all stayed within one and the same philosophical paradigm. Not a single article could be found in our sport management literature sample that explicitly tried to integrate or cross different paradigms, either from a pragmatic or a dialectical stance.

Our qualitative data further suggest that those articles that did pay attention to their paradigmatic position poorly legitimized their MM design. The work of Koukouris (1991) on disengagement from elite sport is a case in point. Koukouris' research was undertaken from within a phenomenological perspective. The study sought to combine qualitative and quantitative methods despite taking a paradigm stance that is typically associated with qualitative methods with minimum structure. The standardized questionnaire featured centrally in the study, which suggests a discrepancy between the philosophical framework and the research design of the study. The use of MM was neither legitimized nor reflected upon in the study.

The study by Müller, Van Zoonen and De Roode (2008) on the integrative power of sport is exemplary for a 'MM lite' article that explicitly pays attention to its paradigmatic position but does not reflect on the 'MM heavy' discussion. The authors adopt a cultural studies methodological approach, called the 'circuit of culture'. This approach conceives cultural phenomena as the end result of the combined actions and mediations of a set of social actors. To investigate the various actors that were central in their study, Müller et al. collected and analysed four different sources of data, based on a discourse analysis,

a survey, in-depth interviews, and ethnographic fieldwork which included participant observation.

Their analysis offers an outstanding case to demonstrate how the use of MM can contribute to the understanding of a complex social phenomenon in sport; in this case the social integration value of sport participation. The authors pass with flying colors in that respect. However, their case also offers an invitation par excellence to discuss their philosophical assumptions and to explore or discuss the issue of paradigm crossing and what position they take in that regard. For example, the subtitle of their article is: 'imagined and real effects of sport events on multicultural integration'. Can we know 'real effects'? And can we know 'real effects' with the use of a critical discourse analytical perspective? Which of the methods used (discourse analysis, interviews, participant observation, survey) contributes to our understanding of imagined and real effects respectively?

Questions like these remain untouched in the article of Müller et al. (2008). But that goes for all of our sample articles. A paradigm-sensitive use of MM can hardly be found in the sport management literature; a discussion of their philosophical stances and paradigm integration or crossing is completely absent. This is a striking example of how cutting-edge debates in MM research may not easily penetrate scholarly sub-disciplines, in this case sport management.

2.5 Rationales for mixed methods research

A key principle of MM design is to identify and explicitly formulate the reason(s) for combining quantitative and qualitative approaches (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). This principle derives from the premise that quantitative and qualitative approaches should only be mixed when there is a specific reason to do so. The overall rationale of MM research is that the combined use of quantitative and qualitative approaches can provide a fuller understanding of research problems than a mono-method approach. The added value of MM research is often expressed in terms of its superiority in addressing confirmatory and exploratory questions simultaneously, providing stronger inferences, and offering the opportunity for a greater assortment of divergent views (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). In recent years a variety of reasons for mixing quantitative and qualitative approaches have emerged (Bryman, 2006; Collins, Onwuegbuzie & Sutton, 2006). However, we know that the principle of formulating the reason for combining quantitative and qualitative approaches is not always met, and that even where such a rationale is identified, there can be a mismatch between the rationale and how it is used in practice (Bryman, 2006).

Our assessment of MM designs used in sport management studies found that more than one third of the articles (34.9%, or 15 articles) did not contain any explicitly formulated justification for combining quantitative and qualitative approaches. This percentage is higher than that found by Bryman (2006) for social science research in general (26.7%). This finding suggests that the rationale for using MM research is quite often not thought through sufficiently in the area of sport management, a tendency that reflects MM designs in social science research (Bryman, 2006).

The stated justifications for combining quantitative and qualitative approaches are shown in Table 2.2. Completeness was presented as rationale in 13 articles (30.2%). These studies sought to combine quantitative and qualitative approaches in order to generate a more comprehensive account of the research problem. This rationale was stated more than twice as often in the sport management articles than in the social science research analysed

by Bryman (2006) (13%). Instrument development was the second most cited reason for combining quantitative and qualitative approaches, in 7 articles (16.3%). The majority of these studies used qualitative findings to develop questionnaire or scale items. The purposes of triangulation, process and context were each found in 5 articles (11.6%). Triangulation refers to the traditional view that quantitative and qualitative research can be combined for mutual corroboration and to produce stronger inferences. The process rationale views qualitative research as providing an account of developments, whereas quantitative research provides an account of structure. Finally, in the articles that justify MM in terms of context, qualitative data are seen to provide contextual understanding to the generalizable, broad-pattern findings uncovered through quantitative methods (Bryman, 2006).

Table 2.2 Justifications for combining quantitative and qualitative approaches – Bryman scheme

Category	**Rationale**		**Practice**	
	Number of articles	% of all 43 articles	Number of articles	% of all 43 articles
Triangulation or greater validity	5	11.6	6	14.0
Offset	1	2.3	0	
Completeness	13	30.2	14	32.6
Process	5	11.6	5	11.6
Different research questions	1	2.3	2	4.7
Explanation	2	4.7	1	2.3
Unexpected results	0	0		
Instrument development	7	16.3	7	16.3
Sampling	3	7.0	5	11.6
Credibility	1	2.3	1	2.3
Context	5	11.6	4	9.3
Illustration	1	2.3	3	7.0
Utility	0	0		
Confirm and discover	0	1	2.3	
Diversity of views	0	0		
Enhancement	2	4.7	5	11.6
Other/unclear	1	2.3	4	9.3
Non stated	15	34.9	0	

Among the articles that provided an explicitly formulated reason for combining quantitative and qualitative approaches, we found some examples of good practice. A noteworthy example is Bradbury's (2011) research on Black and Minority Ethnic participation in amateur soccer clubs in England, which used a context rationale. The survey found differentiated patterns of participation and a concentration of Black minority ethnic players, coaches and administrators at a small number of clubs. Through subsequent qualitative interviews with participants, Bradbury was able to interpret the survey findings in terms of the socio-historical development of these clubs as sites of resistance to racisms and exclusions within pre-existing White soccer networks, and as 'symbols of positive cultural identity production'

(Bradbury, 2011, p. 24). This study exemplifies how quantitative and qualitative methods can be combined to produce stronger inferences. A further rationale for MM in this particular study would have been that of 'different research questions,' where the quantitative survey is better equipped to address the what question (i.e. the extent of Black and minority ethnic participation in soccer clubs), and the qualitative interview to answer the how or why question (e.g. why their participation is concentrated in a small number of clubs). However, this rationale was neither stated nor practiced as such in this study.

Whereas Bradbury's (2011) study only used one explicitly formulated rationale, Walker and Kent's (2009) MM design employed multiple rationales. Their study examined how National Football League (NFL) fans perceived and reacted to corporate social responsibility activities. Specifically, the study sought to explore the relationship between corporate social responsibility activities and fans' evaluation of reputation and patronage intentions, and the moderating effect of team identification therein. The first rationale for MM was completeness, where qualitative data were used to expand and enrich the quantitative findings derived from a questionnaire completed by 297 fans of two NFL teams. The qualitative component involved eleven semi-structured interviews with fans. The second rationale was sampling. The quantitative findings were used to facilitate the purposive sampling of respondents for the qualitative interview and to 'achieve a sample representative of the overall respondent pool' (Walker & Kent, 2009, p. 752). This sampling procedure is known as nesting, where the samples of each method are nested within that of the other. The sampling procedure used by Walker and Kent is the most common nested design: the survey of individuals in which some respondents are purposively selected for additional interviewing (Yin, 2006).

When the MM articles are examined in terms of practice and compared with rationales, some differences become apparent. Completeness was slightly more likely to occur as practice than as a rationale (32.6% versus 30.2%). Three other reasons for mixing quantitative and qualitative approaches were also used more frequently as practice than as a rationale: enhancement (11.6%), sampling (11.6%) and illustration (7.0%). These findings suggest that when MM research is employed in the area of sport management, practice does not always reflect rationale, if indeed a rationale is given at all. However, overall the differences between rationale and practice are less striking than those reported by Bryman (2006) for social science research.

2.6 Data collection methods

Philosophical frameworks and rationales for mixing quantitative and qualitative approaches are an essential part of strong MM design, yet the heart of MM research remains the integration of qualitative and quantitative methods. The combination of multiple methods is the fundamental principle of MM research. For data collection strategies this means that 'data collection methods should be combined so that they have different weaknesses and so that the combination used by the researcher may provide convergent and divergent evidence about the phenomenon being studied' (Johnson & Turner, 2003, p. 299).

Our study found that a small range of data collection methods were being mixed in the identified sport management studies. Table 2.3 shows that the most frequently used data collection methods in MM research published in the four sport management journals were questionnaires (86%) and qualitative interviews (67.4%). This is in line with Bryman's (2006) assessment, which found similar percentages for MM research in the social sciences. Other

methods were less popular among sport management researchers using MM. With the exception of observation and ethnographic data collection methods (27.9%), no other method was used in more than one quarter of the articles. The combination of questionnaires in the quantitative strand and interviews in the qualitative strand dominated the MM designs.

Table 2.3 Research methods employed

Category	Number of articles using method	% of all 43 articles
Questionnaire	37	86.0
Qualitative interview	29	67.4
Observation/ethnography/field notes	12	27.9
Qualitative analysis of documents and archival records	4	9.3
Content analysis	10	23.3
Focus groups	6	14.0
Discourse analysis/language-based analysis	2	4.7
Other method	3	7.0

An exemplary approach to mixing questionnaires with qualitative interviewing is Maclean, Cousens and Barnes' (2011) research on linkages in a network of community basketball providers. Because the authors identified critical cases in the quantitative strand of the research (questionnaire), they were able to obtain crucial information about why organisations did or did not connect with each other. After the linkages were identified in the quantitative phase, in the qualitative strand (interviews) respondents were asked for 'explanation and confirmation of why organisations link or refrain from doing so' (Maclean et al., 2011, p. 567). Another example of the combined use of multiple data collection methods is Pelak's (2005) study of women's soccer in South Africa. Pelak used interviews, a questionnaire, document analysis, and field observation to study the barriers, identities, and practices of women in the male-dominated world of soccer. The study sought to advance the understanding of the research problem through adding direct observation, with the dual purpose of obtaining empirical data and building rapport. These examples illustrate how quantitative and qualitative methods can be combined advantageously. However, the actual strength of MM design will largely depend on the integration of the different methods. It is to this issue that we now turn.

2.7 Level of interaction

A crucial aspect of MM design is the integration of quantitative and qualitative methods. MM research by definition includes at least one quantitative and one qualitative strand, which need to be combined in at least one inquiry phase (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). Greene (2007) conceives of the interaction between methods and the status and timing afforded to these methods as 'the most salient and critical dimensions of mixed methods design' (pp. 120-121). Creswell and Plano Clark (2011) refer to the combination of these issues as the 'level of interaction' (p. 65): the degree to which the different methods are conceptualised,

designed and implemented interactively. Below we examine how the identified MM studies address the interaction between quantitative and qualitative methods.

Priority

The status of qualitative and quantitative methods is an important issue to take into consideration when analysing and evaluating MM research. Often connected to the epistemological paradigm, rationale and specific questions guiding the research, the priority afforded to a particular methodological approach in a MM study reveals much about the way the study has been conducted. MM researchers are likely to choose an equal status design because such a design is most closely associated with MM logic and philosophy. Equal status is believed to be 'the home for the person that self-identifies as a mixed methods researcher' (Johnson et al., 2007, p. 123). In equal status design the relative importance given to quantitative and qualitative methodologies is the same so that both play an equally important role in addressing the research question.

Our quantitative findings indicate that the equal status design was not the typical MM design in the identified sport management articles. As shown in Table 2.4, only 34.9% of the articles used an equal status design, while in 39.5% the quantitative strand dominated. This finding raises further questions about the use of MM in sport management studies. If, as Johnson et al. (2007) suggest, equal status is the true home for the MM researcher, it appears that many sport management scholars still have a long road to follow in this respect.

Among those studies that did employ an equal status design, Carter and Carter's (2007) study on deviant behavior in the NFL stands out as an example of how assigning equal priority to quantitative and qualitative methods can enhance a study's capacity to address the research questions and generate new insight and knowledge. The study sought to explain why some NFL players participated in deviant or law-breaking behavior, while others did not. The authors described their study as a blended form of research, 'which first began as an open-ended inquiry and qualitative field research, then formed into a more quantitative format that allowed for a more comprehensive look into the lives of NFL players' (Carter & Carter, 2007, p. 251). Quantitative and qualitative methods were given equal status to increase the validity and inference quality of the findings. There was a strong convergence between the qualitative and quantitative findings, with both showing that anomie was a significant predictor of law-breaking behavior among NFL players.

Table 2.4 Priority of research methods

Category	Number of articles using method	% of all 43 articles
Quantitative dominant	17	39.5
Equal status	15	34.9
Qualitative dominant	11	25.6

Timing

The timing of data collection is a relatively straightforward process. A study is undertaken either in a concurrent fashion, in a sequential design, or in a combination of these options.

We found that MM research published in the four most elite sport management journals did not have a strong preference regarding the timing of quantitative and qualitative strands. As shown in Table 2.5, concurrent and sequential designs were used in 44.2% and 46.5% of articles respectively, whereas only three articles (7%) used a combined design.

The study by Hamm, Maclean, Kikulis and Thibault (2008) is an example of MM research that used a combination of sequential and concurrent timing. Their aim was to explore the value congruence between employees and their nonprofit sport organisation. Document analysis and observations were followed by surveys and interviews. Results from the document analysis and observations were used to inform the other stages of data collection, but also continued on their own throughout the data collection period. The value of their multiphase combination timing design was that it created opportunities for the repeated validation and falsification of the findings, thus enabling stronger inferences. The wealth of data gathered by such an approach can also lead to unexpected and unanticipated results (Bryman, 2006).

Table 2.5 Timing of research methods

Category	Number of articles using method	% of all 43 articles
Concurrent	19	44.2
Sequential - qualitative first	9	20.9
Sequential - quantitative first	11	25.6
Multiphase combination timing	3	7.0
None *	1	2.3

* One article used only one data collection method.

Mixing

Strong MM research seeks as much integration of methods as possible across different inquiry phases (Yin, 2006). Creswell and Plano Clark (2011) refer to these phases as 'points of interface' where the quantitative and qualitative strands are mixed (p. 66). The main points of interface are the research question, sampling procedures, data collection, data analysis, and interpretation. The stronger the mixing of methods throughout these five inquiry phases, the more that researchers can derive the benefits from using a MM design (Yin, 2006). In contrast, a study that uses quantitative and qualitative methods without integrating them in some phase of the study cannot be considered genuine MM research (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009).

Most articles in our sample fell well short of this ideal, again suggesting that MM designs in sport management research are not as strong as they could be. Table 2.6 shows that not a single study integrated quantitative and qualitative methods in all inquiry phases. Two studies (4.7%) did not mix methods in any stage of the inquiry and are therefore best understood as multiple, related studies rather than MM research (Yin, 2006). Only 11.6% of the articles stated a MM research question. In 34.9% of the articles the quantitative and qualitative methods were kept separate throughout most of the inquiry phases and were only brought together in the interpretation stage. This typically involved the researcher

drawing conclusions or inferences that reflected what was learned from the combination of results from the quantitative and qualitative strands, such as by comparing or synthesizing the results in the discussion (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). In these articles, this was the only interface point where genuine integration occurred.

Our data suggest that one possibility for strengthening MM research in the sub-discipline of sport management is the way data analyses are performed. MM data analysis involves the procedures whereby quantitative and qualitative data analysis strategies are combined, connected or integrated (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). Data conversion strategies have arguably become a staple of MM research (Sandelowski, Voils & Knafl, 2009). This occurs when qualitative data are converted into numbers (quantitizing) or quantitative data are transformed into qualitative data (qualitizing). Such data conversion is one of the unique characteristics of MM data analysis (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009), yet it is rarely used in sport management research. Only 26.8% of MM articles in our sample performed MM data analysis (Table 2.6).

Still, the qualitative strand of our study identified some examples of strong MM data analysis in sport management research. One study that performed data conversion is Cunningham, Cornwell and Coote's (2009) work on sponsorship policies. In this study, qualitative data on sponsorship policies and mission statements gathered from websites were analysed through quantitative procedures. Several steps were taken to ensure that quantitative analysis was suitable for these qualitative texts. The researchers formed different categories that were coded into dummy variables to enable statistical analyses of these data. Another study that effectively used data transformation techniques is Földesi's (1978) investigation of cooperative ability among Hungarian rowing teams. The data were gathered from one data source, from which then two types of data were generated: first in the form of the original source (qualitative), which was converted into the other form (quantitative). During the investigation the rowing team members' verbal and non-verbal communication was recorded (audio and written notes), and in the data analysis stage these recordings were analysed in both a qualitative and a quantitative manner. The quantitizing of the data was achieved through counting the number and frequency of communications sent out and the distribution of communications among crew members.

Table 2.6 Mixing of research methods

Category	Number of articles mixing methods	% of all 43 articles
Research question formulation	5	11.6
Sampling procedures	10	23.3
Data collection	9	20.9
Data analysis	12	27.9
Data interpretation	37	86.0
All of the above	0	
None of the above	2	4.7

2.8 Discussion and conclusions

Working with a mixed methods lite design ourselves, based on a pragmatic philosophical perspective, we asked to what extent and how is MM research adopted in the emerging sub-discipline of sport management. The mixing of quantitative and qualitative analyses provided convergent and divergent evidence for this research question. The findings from the qualitative strand of the study, which sought to ascertain how MM are used in the published sport management studies that could be identified as mixed, indicate that strong MM designs can enhance the quality of sport management research by enabling a more comprehensive understanding of the research problem and providing stronger inferences. Several actual examples were provided in relation to key dimensions of MM design. These qualitative descriptions suggest that MM research at least partly penetrates this relatively new sub-discipline. However, our quantitative results paint a different picture by showing that, overall, MM designs are only rarely used in research published in the four most elite sport management journals. The prevalence rates of MM studies in the four journals are very low and have not increased over the years. This finding is in line with previous, more confined, analyses of MM in the field of sport management (Quarterman et al., 2006; Rudd & Johnson, 2010).

There are clear points of convergence between the quantitative and qualitative strands of the study. Both sets of data show that when MM designs are used in research published in the four journals, their rationale and philosophical underpinning are often not thought through sufficiently and their design is often poorly legitimized and weakly mixed. A paradigm-sensitive use of MM is virtually absent in the sport management literature, whereas a discussion of paradigm integration and crossing ('MM heavy') is inexistent. This finding lends support to Alise and Teddlie's (2010) recommendation that researchers should consider making their paradigm preferences more explicit to their readers. Moreover, our study found that the basic principle of formulating a rationale for combining quantitative and qualitative approaches is not met in over one third of the studies. With regard to the level of integration, the MM designs examined in this study were typically weakly mixed with relatively few interface points. Not a single study integrated different methods in all inquiry phases, and more than one third only did so in the data interpretation phase. In sum, our empirical assessment of the adoption and use of MM research in sport management concludes that there is still little integration of contemporary insights from and debates in MM research within this sub-discipline.

The origins, size and institutional embeddedness of sport management are all factors that might explain why sport management scholars hardly profit from advances made in MM research. Prevalence rates of MM research do not automatically follow from the size or maturity of a sub-discipline. However, it can be argued that scholars in a relatively new and minor sub-discipline face more constraints to strong MM research as they are likely to have fewer possibilities to work in teams with sufficient expertise, skills and resources to conduct such research. In fact, such constraints can be valid reasons to decide not to engage in MM research. As Greene (2012) puts it, MM should not be an end in itself, but should only be considered if it involves strong qualitative as well as strong quantitative research. This requires researchers to acquaint themselves with both quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis techniques, to be part of a research team, and/or to collaborate with scholars from other disciplines or methodological traditions. It can be postulated that scholars in relatively new and peripheral sub-disciplines, like sport management, often

work in relative isolation or in research groups with a small number of staff, and that they are generally less centrally embedded in the academic world than scholars working in more established and central fields of study. This resonates with Creswell and Plano Clark's (2011) argument that it is often difficult for individual scholars to develop MM research due to the required skills, time, resources and efforts on the part of the researcher.

What, then, can sport management scholars do in order to advance the use of MM in their research? We know that there is ample room for improvement and expansion in emerging sub-disciplines, as Rudd and Johnson (2010) argue with regard to sport management. Even though there may be significant constraints on researchers in such sub-disciplines, they can profit greatly from theoretical and methodological advances made in mainstream disciplines and adjacent areas. This, however, asks for a critical, reflexive attitude towards one's own sub-discipline, and in fact, towards one's own research as well.

The low prevalence of MM research in sport management might hint to the fact that sport management scholars are looking for a comfortable position in mainstream methodology and are rather hesitant about moving to the forefront of scholarly research where methodological innovations take place. Relatively new sub-disciplines might thus be inclined to perform mono-method research, because they are already vulnerable to criticism. This can especially be the case if they work in a sub-discipline that is judged implicitly or explicitly as a rather obscure field of study, or within which the paradigm wars still hold sway. Playing the safe option in the design of their studies might be the most natural attitude in such a situation. A key challenge, then, is educate and convince self and others within the sub-discipline of the utility of MM research so that MM will be increasingly valued and accepted (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011), leading to better designs and justifications. To this end, MM advocates will need to cross and build bridges between the sometimes adversarial divide between quantitative and qualitative researchers in their field of study. This would also require them to engage in a 'MM heavy' discussion on how different philosophical paradigms can be crossed and connected in order to take full advantage of the diversity of perspectives that the social sciences have to offer (Greene, 2012).

Limitations of this study

Considering that these issues are beyond the scope of the empirical study presented in this chapter, we posit the above explanations as hypotheses for further research. Specifically, we use them to formulate the hypotheses that the more central the field of study and its dominant journals are in the scientific community, the higher the prevalence of MM is likely to be, and that MM only slowly trickle down to peripheral sub-disciplines. Further research should reveal whether these hypotheses offer sound explanations for the findings in this study and whether they hold true for other relatively new academic sub-disciplines as well. Such research would help offset an important limitation of this study, namely that the findings were obtained in a concrete context (cf. Molina-Azorín, 2011), specifically in one relatively small academic sub-discipline and in selected journals within that discipline. Analysis of the prevalence and characteristics of MM research should be carried out in other emerging sub-disciplines to compare results. Another limitation of this study is that only the most elite, prestigious journals in sport management were included in order to keep the sample size manageable. Further research is needed to determine whether the prevalence rates found in this study are consistent with those of less prestigious journals in the sub-discipline of sport management. It should also be reiterated here that publications reporting MM research in sport management might also be found in books and conference papers, which were not included in the study.

Lessons for mixed methods scholars

As noted, sport management scholars can do more to improve the use and value of MM in their field of research. However, the low prevalence rate of MM research and the very limited consideration of cutting-edge insights from the MM literature in this sub-discipline also suggest that advocates of MM research should seek to disseminate advances in their work to a broad community of social scientists. If one of the key challenges for sport management researchers is to educate and convince their peers of the utility of MM, then MM scholars can lead the way by promoting and sharing exemplary MM designs to educate their colleagues in emerging sub-disciplines.

The accessibility of MM in the broader social science community has already improved in recent years. MM textbooks and handbooks such as Tashakkori and Teddlie's (2003, 2010) and Creswell and Plano Clark's (2011) have provided class instructors and researchers with tools to better understand the ways in which MM can and should be employed. The introduction of the Journal of Mixed Methods Research in 2007 has further advanced the knowledge and understanding of strong MM design. Creswell and Tashakkori's (2007) editorial on how to develop publishable MM manuscripts is illustrative of the efforts made by MM scholars to make their work accessible to a wider community of researchers.

In spite of this, we found no increase in the prevalence rate of MM research in sport management in recent years, and the use of MM in this sub-discipline rarely gets below the surface in terms of recognizing and engaging with the subtleties and complexities of what MM research has to offer today. We therefore encourage MM scholars to increase the dissemination of their efforts to scholars in emerging sub-disciplines. Furthermore, we believe that the visibility of innovations in MM research can be further improved. The MM community should be stimulated to publish their work in mainstream social science journals even more often in order to increase their visibility. The recent special issue on MM in the American Behavioral Scientist (2012) can serve as good practice here. In this way, it will become easier and more accepted for scholars in emerging sub-disciplines to adopt MM in their work and enhance the quality of their research.

Notes

[1] *The search criteria and strategies used by Molina-Azorín (2011) to identify whether an article reported a MM study were broadly similar to ours, but differed in some respects. Whereas our search terms included the terms 'participant observation,' 'focus groups,' 'document analysis' and 'discourse analysis' to indicate a qualitative approach, these terms were not included in Molina-Azorín's study. Instead, Molina-Azorín included the term 'case studies' in the article search. This term was not included in our search terms due to the fact that case studies can be either qualitative or quantitative, or both, and the term was therefore considered too broad for the purpose of identifying MM.*

[2] *The search strategies used by Molina-Azorín (2011) differs from the strategy I have taken in this chapter. Instead of reading and content-analysing all articles in our sample, I based the first selection on an electronic search of title, key words and abstracts. Molina-Azorín read and content-analysed these parts himself, without using electronic search strategies. This has to be taken into account when comparisons are made.*

[3] *The prevalence ratio was calculated by comparing our sample to Molina-Azorín's (2011) sample. The following calculation for the prevalence ratio was made: (prevalence rate sport management studies) / (prevalence rate management studies) = (43/2536) / (152/1330) = 0.15.*

CHAPTER 3

CREATING SPORT CONSUMERS IN DUTCH SPORT POLICY

Summary

This chapter deals with the tension between the association logic and the market logic that appears in the domain of voluntary sport clubs. We present a qualitative analysis of sport policy texts of fifteen Dutch national sport organisations and the national umbrella organisation to examine how they discursively construct the market logic with respect to their policies towards voluntary sport clubs. In this chapter we argue that although there is no empirical evidence for an increasing consumerist attitude among Dutch sport participants, the policy makers of Dutch national sport organisations nevertheless pressure voluntary sport clubs to modernise their activities according to a consumer logic that contrasts with their traditional values. We found that their policy texts construct a consumerist discourse by (1) identifying societal changes that are closely linked to consumerism as a possible threat for the future development of sport clubs and by (2) presenting the emergence of the consumer as a window of opportunity if sport clubs succeed in treating their members as such. We discuss the implications of portraying members of voluntary sport clubs as consumers and conclude with a research agenda.

This chapter is based on an article published together with Jeroen Vermeulen and Maarten van Bottenburg:

Van der Roest, J., Vermeulen, J. & Van Bottenburg, M. (2015). Creating sport consumers in Dutch sport policy. *Journal of Sport Policy and Politics, 7(1), 105-121.*

3.1 Introduction

Sport in the Netherlands is, like in many countries, organised in voluntary sport clubs that follow an 'association logic' (Ibsen & Seippel, 2010). According to Ibsen and Seippel (2010, p. 605), an association logic can be seen as an orientation towards ideals and sporting objectives by members of a club that is democratic and is run by volunteers. This association logic can be seen as a defining element of the way sport clubs are organised. However, the association logic seems to be under pressure in civil associations worldwide, and numerous authors have expressed their worries about this trend (e.g. Putnam, 2000; Skocpol, 2003). One of the most important threats for the association logic is the emergence of a 'market logic' or 'consumer logic', a view in which members of voluntary associations behave as 'customers' or 'consumers' of the organisation (cf. Enjolras, 2002; Lorentzen & Hustinx, 2007; Pilgaard, 2012; Seippel, 2002). The increasing customer behaviour that scholars and policy makers ascribe to members of voluntary associations is predominantly based on a number of societal developments like individualisation and informalisation (Lorentzen & Hustinx, 2007). According to Meijs and Ten Hoorn (2008) this idea is widely spread in the Dutch sport sector, and Ibsen and Seippel consider the shift of identifying members as consumers to be part of a 'market logic' that gradually replaces the association logic in sports.

The implications of departing from the association logic could be far reaching. The character of voluntary sport clubs is largely drawn on the elements Ibsen and Seippel (2010) identified: democracy, volunteering, ideals and sporting objectives. A shift from these values of mutual solidarity towards a consumer-centred market logic could endanger the foundations of the way voluntary sport clubs function (cf. Enjolras, 2002, p. 373).

The purpose of this chapter is to argue that Dutch national sport organisations pressure voluntary sport clubs to modernise their activities according to a consumer logic that stands in contrast to their traditional values, although no empirical evidence for an increasing consumerist attitude among Dutch sport participants is presented. We base our argument on an analysis of sport policy texts of these national sport organisations. By demonstrating how this argument is established we contribute to the debate on the tensions between the association logic and the consumer logic.

3.2 The consumerist discourse: choice and voice

Before we consider how a consumerist discourse is constructed in Dutch sport policy texts, we will identify how the emergence of 'consumerism' has developed in public services policy. We do this because it is relevant to see how such a discourse resides in a sector that traditionally is organised around collective values such as solidarity and equality (cf. Clarke et al., 2007; Needham, 2003). From the beginning of the twentieth century, consumerism has predominantly been used to describe 'the expansion of capitalist commodity production which has given rise to a vast accumulation of material culture in the form of consumer goods and sites for purchase and consumption' (Featherstone, 2007, p. 13). Alongside the growing importance of material culture, Sassatelli (2007, p. 1) notes a variety of discourses and institutions that define this context as a 'consumer culture' in which people are addressed as consumers. This might not be surprising, as consumerism has proved to be a 'compelling story' (Vidler & Clarke, 2005, p. 19).

Researchers on public services, particularly from Britain, have paid attention to the growing salience of the consumerist discourse among politicians and policy makers.

The interest of Thatcherite (1979-1990) and New Labour (1997-2010) governments in connecting citizenship to consumerism led British scholars to consider the pivotal role of the consumer in public services. The first notion of connecting the figure of the consumer to that of the citizen can be traced back to the 1980s, although some scholars point to earlier accounts of public service consumerism (see Kroen, 2004; Trentmann, 2006). In the 1980s, neo-liberalist governments in European welfare states introduced choice and voice to individuals in the provision of public services (6, 2003; Gabriel & Lang, 2006; Jung, 2010; Needham, 2006; Powell, et al., 2010). From then onwards, the consumer gained importance in the public debate in the UK as well as in other parts of Europe and the US (Clarke et al., 2007; Vidler & Clarke, 2005). According to Vidler and Clarke (p., 20) it is appropriate to see the increased importance of the consumer in policies as a discourse, because consumerism is put as a 'generic organising principle for public service reform. In doing so, [policy makers] have joined up large historical, social, cultural and political themes in ways that both demonstrate the need for public service reform, and tell a story about why the consumer is the archetypal "modern" figure'.

The ability to choose is an important part of the consumerist discourse. Choice in the way services are provided should, in the consumerist discourse, be left to the consumer. An often-cited speech by former UK Secretary of State for Health Alan Milburn (2002) claims that 'we live in a consumer society. People demand services tailor made to their individual needs. Ours is the informed and enquiring society. People expect choice and demand quality'. It is exactly this notion that is at the heart of the way neo-liberal governments in European welfare states have constructed a consumerist discourse (see Clarke et al., 2007, pp. 15-16). These governments have reacted on societal developments by anticipating and promoting consumerist attitudes in their policies. The use of the concept of consumption in public services is closely related to 'watchwords of choice, individualisation and personalisation' (Powell et al., 2010, p. 324). The introduction of choice in public service has helped providers to service the individual in a better way, but can also cause organisational problems in public service organisations. The consumerist discourse starts from the conception of informed and proactive users, however not all users might have the required skills and knowledge that enables and empowers them to make the choice that are offered (Clarke et al., p. 107).

The concept of voice refers to the emergence of the critical consumer, who challenges authorities and organisations if he or she does not agree with the way services are provided (Hirschman, 1970). Voice is recognised in the consumerist discourse as opportunity for members or customers to advocate their needs to the organisation, but Hirschman notes that voice can be viewed in two ways. Voice can be used either as an alternative to exit strategies in organisations. By providing feedback to the organisation, the members can help the organisation to become more effective in its practices. However, voice can also be used as residual to exit strategies, which is more problematic for the organisation. According to Hirschman 'the discontented customers or members could become so harassing that their protests would at some point hinder rather than help whatever efforts at recovery are taken' (Hirschman, 1970, p. 31).

3.3 A consumerist discourse in sport policy?

So far, we have identified characteristics that can be distinguished in the consumerist discourse in political and governmental notions of public service reform. In these reform attempts, civil society organisations have taken a more prominent place in the

delivery of services to citizens, and governments have ensured that the delivery of these services became more market driven (Carmel & Harlock, 2008). While marketisation and commercialisation of civil society organisations have been topics of interest in earlier research (e.g. Dart, 2004; Eikenberry & Kluver, 2004; Enjolras, 2002; Nickel & Eikenberry, 2009; Salamon, 1999; Toepler, 2004; Weisbrod, 2004; Williams, 2004), the consumerist discourse is under-exposed in research on civil society organisations. Kendall (2009) is among the first to identify a consumerist based approach in governmental pressures to modernise the voluntary sector. It is, however, unknown whether the voluntary sector itself postulates a more consumerist approach in the same way as governments have done in public services. In the remainder of this section, we will evaluate how the translation of 'choice' and 'voice' to the voluntary sport sector can construct a consumerist discourse.

In order to make the distinction between commercialisation on the one hand and consumerism on the other, it is important to understand the mutual relationship of the member and the organisation in these discourses. Within the discourse of commercialisation, the role of the member remains largely unchanged while the organisation changes. Within the commercialisation discourse, nonprofit and voluntary organisations pursue commercial activities to generate resources (Toepler, 2004). However, as is illustrated by Enjolras' (2002) article on the commercialisation of voluntary sport clubs in Norway, these activities do not change the character of the core activities of the organisation. The different types of commercialisation that he distinguishes are 'revenues from competitions, revenues derived from renting (hiring) infrastructure facilities, revenues from ancillary activities, and revenues from sponsors' (p. 362).

By contrast, the consumerist discourse is concerned with a change in the way sport participants experience their activities in a voluntary sport club. Bodet (2009) argues that all sport participants should be treated as sport consumers who operate in a system of supply and demand. In this view, the activities organised by voluntary sport clubs are characterised as services that are distributed by an organisation to a user. This conceptualisation marks an important change because voluntary sport clubs are no longer seen as the sum of activities deployed by its members, but as providers that supply sport activities to its customers.

The concept of 'choice', then, treats the consumer as individual that is only loosely connected to an organisation. The voluntary sport sector traditionally is organised with commitment as a principle, but the increased possibilities for choice that are embraced within the consumerist discourse could, in this respect, function as a fruitful base to provide tailor-made solutions that can satisfy particular needs of individuals (cf. Clarke et al., 2007). In their sport activities, users would pay directly for a service (Needham, 2006), instead of having a membership in a voluntary sport club. For example, an athletics club could charge people for a running course instead of offering them a membership in the club.

The concept of 'voice' deals with the say users have in the way their activities are provided to them 'by means of representative bodies, complaints mechanisms and surveys of individual preferences and views' (Public Administration Select Committee, 2005, p. 5). In itself, voice is a natural concept for voluntary sport clubs. After all, voluntary sport clubs are democratic organisations in which people can actively discuss the organisation's issues with key persons and use their democratic voting rights. However, if a more business-like conception of 'voice' emerges in voluntary sport clubs this would be likely to replace the democratic decision structure into individual complaint structures. Horch (1998, p. 50) identifies this trend as 'turning members into customers', which results in a self-destroying

process. He argues that by introducing these structures, voluntary sport clubs lose their particularities that made them successful.

Adams (2011) argues that these self-destroying processes can also be found in sport policy. In his article on modernisation in the voluntary sport sector, Adams finds that modernisation processes lead to unresolved tensions with respect to the mutual support character of voluntary sport clubs. He argues that neo-liberalist pressures to modernise voluntary sport clubs have changed clubs not only in their functions, but also in their reasons to function. The increased attention given to choice and voice in the provision of sport activities could well be compared to the modernisation processes that Adams has outlined. However, we lack an understanding of the way national sport organisations construct discourses of consumerism in their policies towards voluntary sport clubs. We would like to stress the importance of such an analysis, because the use of a consumerist discourse in sport policy could be troublesome for a number of reasons that will be discussed in the next section.

3.4 Is consumerism problematic?

Already in the late 1980s Pollitt (1988, p. 122) noted that the 'linking of consumerism with citizenship prompts a further question as to what kind of values might drive a distinctively public service model of consumerism'. The same question can be asked for the introduction of the consumerist discourse in sport policy. As opposed to citizens or (sport) club members, Gabriel and Lang (2006, p. 174) note, consumers 'need not to be members of a community, nor do they have to act on its behalf. Consumers operate in impersonal markets, where they can make choices unburdened by guilt or social obligations.' The field of voluntary sport clubs is therefore an intriguing case to study consumerism.

The Dutch voluntary sector has been acknowledged to be well-organised, and its relative size has proven to be among the biggest in the world (see Dekker & De Hart, 2009; Salamon & Sokolowski, 2004,). The voluntary sport sector accounts for the largest part of the total Dutch voluntary sector (Tiessen-Raaphorst, Verbeek, De Haan & Breedveld, 2010), which makes it of high interest for Dutch society. Almost one third of the Dutch population was a member of a voluntary sport club in, 2007, while ten percent regularly volunteered for a sport organisation (Tiessen-Raaphorst, Verbeek, De Haan & Breedveld, 2010).

Clarke et al. (2007) found that linking consumerism to citizenship is problematic, but the links between membership and consumerism might appeal to even larger contradictions. Because most voluntary sport clubs operate as face-to-face, mutual support organisations, the social relations between their members are quite the opposite from impersonal. Social obligations and expectations are key to the way voluntary sport clubs are organised, and they seem to contrast with a consumerist attitude. Kendall (2009, p. 14) contends that linking voluntary organisations' activities to a more consumerist approach 'has tended to favour consumer choice over citizenship-related activities, implicitly bracketing the intrinsic or existential significance of voluntarism as a quantitatively different way of forming social relations.'

The obligations and responsibilities that stem from membership in a voluntary sport club are evident when the formal decision making structures are considered. Other than in public service consumerism, members of voluntary sport clubs have the responsibility to govern their own activities. Although the extent to which people participated in decision-making in the past should not be overestimated, the consumerist discourse could have profound

consequences for members of clubs. In some cases the introduction of flexible membership forms takes away people's right and it might decrease the willingness to participate in the democratic structure of clubs.

3.5 Methods

To research how policy makers of national sport organisations deal with the tension between sport participants as consumers and as members in the context of voluntary sport clubs, strategic policy plans of the national umbrella organisation and the fifteen biggest national sport organisations[1] in the Netherlands were analysed using qualitative content analysis (Bryman, 2012, p. 557). In total, the fifteen federations accounted for over 3.8 million memberships, out of an overall number of almost 5.2 million officially registered club members and a total of 16.6 million inhabitants in the Netherlands. Almost all documents were obtained by downloading them from the organisation's websites. One policy plan was sent to the first author after a phoned request. For all organisations the most recent policy plan was selected, and if available the second most recent document was also included. The policy plan that was formulated by NOC*NSF, the national umbrella organisation is deemed to represent all national sport organisations and was accepted as guide for the period between 2012 and 2016 at the General Assembly of sport federations on 24 January 2012. In total, twenty-four documents with a total of 1018 pages were collected.

After gathering the documents, sections on sport for all and sections on voluntary sport clubs were selected for analysis. Most policy texts hold strong divisions between elite sport sections and sport for all sections. Sections on sport for all tend to predominantly focus on the individual sport participants and on sport organisations. After this selection procedure, texts were transferred to NVivo 9, after which (partly) open coding and axial coding took place (Boeije, 2010).

Coding

The open coding process retrieved a total number of eight main codes. In the coding process, we sought to answer the following question: what signs of a consumerist discourse are constructed in the policy texts? Answering this question, any topic that could be related to a consumerist discourse as found in the literature review, was coded in an open way. The eight topics that were constructed were: 'flexibilisation', 'growth of the voluntary sport club', 'marketisation', 'professionalisation', 'shortcomings of the voluntary sport club', 'societal changes', 'sport participants central', and 'supplier-customer relationship'. After this first phase of coding took place, the text was axial coded. In this process, quotes from the first phase were being restructured in order to indicate differences and similarities between codes (Boeije, 2010). The coding process eventually yielded three main themes, which will be discussed in the results section, illustrated by quotes from the policy texts. The quotes used in this chapter were translated from Dutch by the first author.

3.6 Results

Although the performed analysis is qualitative in nature, it is appropriate to give an indication of the range of policy texts that to some extent hold the characteristics of a consumerist discourse. In total, 13 of the 16 policy texts contained words and phrases that construct such a discourse. In the coding process three overarching themes were found.

First, policy makers emphasise a number of societal changes that are closely linked to images of consumerism and are presented as possible threats for the future development of voluntary sport clubs. Second, policy makers identify opportunities for voluntary sport clubs if they succeed in treating their members as consumers. Third, policy makers present policy measures to modernise voluntary sport clubs in order to enhance their attractiveness for the modern sport consumer. We will argue here that with these three themes a coherent story of the consumer in the Dutch voluntary sport sector has emerged. Because of the mix of an alarming sound on the one hand and an attractive alternative on the other, the policy texts invite voluntary sport clubs to change their practices. However, our analysis will also show that in these policy texts, little empirical evidence is brought up, resulting in a rather rhetorical argument in favour of the member as consumer.

By demonstrating how the consumer has become an important figure in the analysed policy texts, we demonstrate that policy makers have constructed a coherent narrative, or as Vidler and Clarke (2007) argue, a consumerist discourse. In our analysis, we focus on the way this discourse is constructed. However, we deem the context in which national sport organisations operate in is an important issue to consider. A number of researchers have already discussed tensions between the aims of national sport organisations and voluntary sport clubs and the context that these organisations operate in (cf. Garret, 2003; Harris et al., 2009).

Societal changes

As was found earlier, the Dutch voluntary sport sector is relatively well-organised and it is characterised by high degrees of participation and volunteering. However, in the policy texts it is put forward that the voluntary sport sector has become under pressure, due to broader societal changes. Observations like the one presented here, by the Bridge Federation can be found in a broad range of documents, with half of the documents explicitly stating that voluntary sport clubs deal with 'individualisation'.

> *Society is rapidly changing. Postal services have almost entirely disappeared. Transport is more and more a head of expense. Time and space are scarce. The Dutch are ageing, we grow older in good health. A life without a computer is almost impossible. Flat screen televisions and smartphones have become standards over a short period of time. Online shopping is increasing. Wellness and fitness seem to be individualised alternatives for the voluntary sport clubs. These are all facts to keep in mind. (Nederlandse Bridge Bond, 2012, p. 2)*

The changes that are described in the policy texts are reflections on wider societal changes, not just changes in the way sports are practiced. The transition of a traditional society into a modern society and the establishment of modern institutions can also be observed in public service consumerism. Although different, sometimes contradictory, versions of modernity can often be observed, discourses around consumer culture often hint at some variation of modernity (Clarke, 2005, Clarke et al., 2007, Edwards, 2000). The notions of modernity and individualisation are embedded in a larger debate that connects affluence and informatisation of society to increasing individualisation. At the same time, an increasing relevance is ascribed to the informalisation of relationships between people.

> *On the one hand individuals become independent and demands are preconceived: 'what's in it for me' (individualisation). One the other hand, there is a need for collective experiences, but with an ad hoc and informal character (informalisation). (Koninklijke Nederlandsche Schaatsenrijders Bond, 2011, p. 11)*

Individualisation is seen as a threat to participation in voluntary sport clubs. Both the participation of people in sport as well as volunteering in voluntary sport clubs is, according to the policy plans, under pressure because of these developments. In these plans, policy makers present a discourse which premises that people are expected to behave in a more selfish way and that individualisation leads to sport participation outside traditionally organised clubs.

> *Because of individualisation and self-interest, the support for the Bridge Federation is crumbling away and associational life is threatened. (Nederlandse Bridge Bond, 2012, p. 10)*

Here, the policy plan of the Bridge Federation echoes a similar perspective as was identified in the previous quote by the Skating Federation. Individualisation and self-interest seem to be large threats to voluntary sport clubs. According to the Equestrian Federation, increased choice between opportunities based on the interest of sportsmen have changed the position of voluntary clubs as the natural organisation for sport participation to take place.

> *The facilities and the supply of sport are increasingly important for sportsmen in their choices and their behaviour. Participants in sport do not automatically pick the voluntary sport club as sport organisation. (Koninklijke Nederlandse Hippische Sportfederatie, 2011, p. 58)*

However, a decreased interest in membership in voluntary sport clubs is not the only threat that is brought to the fore in the analysed policy texts. Many national sport organisations believe that these developments occur outside as well as inside their own membership base. According to the national sport organisations, participants that do choose the voluntary club as 'locus' of their sport participation, also have different motives to participate in these organisations. Therefore, they observe the individualistic attitude not only as an external, but also as an internal threat.

> *Individualisation is a trend that not only occurs with potential members, but also with those people that already affiliated in a tennis club and the tennis federation. (Koninklijke Nederlandse Lawn Tennis Bond, 2008, p. 13)*

Individualisation, informatisation and informalisation are explicitly presented as 'facts', as can be seen in the first quote from the Bridge Federation. These facts are presented as the outcomes of solid sociological analyses that can hardly be ignored in constructing the policy. Here, it is where the consumer first enters as a figure that might be asking for a different method of sport participation. In this respect, the sport participant as consumer acts as a link between societal changes and the modernisation of voluntary sport clubs.

The earlier mentioned observation by Powell et al. (2010) illustrated that keywords as individualisation, choice and personalisation can be found in policies that reside around a

consumerist discourse. We also found many policy documents explicitly stating that sport policy should be organised around the consumer, with many national sport organisations mentioning the terms consumer, customer or consumerism. In these texts, sport participants are not just found behaving individually; they are expected to behave as consumers who buy sport products in a market of sport providers. In total, thirteen of the sixteen researched organisations use the word consumer or customer in some way to describe the relationship with their members.

> *(Winter) sport is subject to change because of trends in society and consumers that act upon these trends. Consumers are increasingly looking for experiences, variation and adventure in their sport. (Nederlandse Ski Vereniging, 2010, p. 13)*
> *Sport participants are increasingly changing from participating club members into consuming customers. This calls for a different approach. (Koninklijke Nederlandse Lawn Tennis Bond, 2008, p. 6)*

Having introduced the emergence of the consumer as outcome of many societal changes, the national sport organisations immediately assess this development in terms of its consequences. This means that the sport consumer is mainly seen as a threat for voluntary sport clubs. As was stated in one of the citations by the Bridge Federation, national sport organisations see the interest in clubs crumbling away.

> *Because members commit themselves in a less durable way and increasingly behave like customers (they pay a price for a sport service without doing any volunteering), long-term commitment of volunteers has become less self-evident. (Koninklijke Nederlandsche Schaatsenrijders Bond, 2011, p. 16)*

Departing from the assumption that voluntary sport club members are increasingly behaving as consumers, most national sport organisations directly shift to the question how these consumers should be served in order to retain their membership. In this shift, the existence of the consumer is taken for granted. No single national sport organisation shows any empirical data of their members actually becoming more 'consumerist' and many national sport organisations do not seem to have the means nor the desire to investigate whether there is indeed a changing attitude among members and potential members of voluntary sport clubs. Nevertheless, they do postulate the existence of members as consumers as starting point of their policy plans.

This line of reasoning serves a rhetorical purpose: first, the transition of a changing society is presented as an inevitable development. Second, the rise of the consumer is seen as a threatening development for the future of voluntary sport clubs. By constructing this twofold argument, national sport organisations create room for themselves to suggest organisational changes. In the next section, we will show how they make the consumer a central figure in their policies.

The suggested measures in these policy plans are likely to have profound consequences for the way sport and voluntary sport clubs are organised. It raises the question whether the policy plans are built on nothing more than a belief that people develop consumerist attitudes towards voluntary sport clubs. But it also raises the question why the discourse on consumerism is embraced in an environment that traditionally had been organised around access for all and community building (Horne, 2006, p. 101). After all, the voluntary sport club is a somewhat unnatural environment for the consumer to be around.

Making the consumer central

The construction of the member-consumer is central in the societal changes that policy makers observe in their analyses of changes in society. A striking finding in our analysis is the fact that consumerism, contrary to individualism, is not only seen as a threat to voluntary sport clubs. Paradoxically, the rise of the consumer is also seen as an opportunity to strengthen voluntary sport clubs and to obtain growth in the number of sport participants, which is one of the main goals of the Dutch national sport federation (NOC*NSF). In the policy texts it is suggested that if national sport organisations capitalise on the needs of consumers, they have chances to realise these goals. This is illustrated in the following quote by the national umbrella organisation in which the notion of sport participants functioning in a system of supply and demand (cf. Bodet, 2009) is introduced.

> *Strengthening the market share will follow from quantitative and qualitative growth. A better link between sport supply and the demands and needs of different sport participants will lead to an increase in club members. (NOC*NSF, 2007, p. 5)*

In order to reach these goals, the policies identify a role for clubs to serve the customer in a better way. Under the cloak of the term 'the sport participant central' (e.g. Koninklijke Nederlandse Hippische Sportfederatie, 2011, NOC*NSF, 2012), almost every single national sport organisation urges their affiliated voluntary sport clubs to adapt to the 'needs' of the consuming member.

> *The voluntary sport club is under pressure because of societal developments like consumerism and individualisation. People join clubs because of more diverse motives. There is an increasing demand for diversity. Voluntary sport clubs have to develop themselves in this direction. Other ways of getting people to participate in sport and other forms of committing people to the club are needed. (NOC*NSF, 2012, p. 16)*

It is remarkable to see that the notion of the demanding sport consumers is not just seen as a threat, but also as an opportunity. Apart from the struggles that an emerging consumerist attitude seems to cause, a more refined and positive view of the consumer is used as a stimulus to change voluntary sport clubs into more diverse sport environments.

> *Our goal still is to enable sport participants to practice their sport in a way and on a moment that fits their wishes and needs. (NOC*NSF, 2007, p. 4)*

In this citation, the notion of sport participants significantly differs from the previous accounts of a selfish and individualised consumer. Still, the sport participant is seen as someone who wants to practice sport in his own way, but in this quote this is seen as an opportunity rather than a threat. The Dutch Sports Federation (NOC*NSF), the umbrella organisation that sets the agenda with its policy documents, has instigated this view, which is copied by the national sport organisations in their policy plans (cf. Van 't Verlaat, 2010). This gives the consumerist discourse a dualistic character. On the one hand, consumerism is observed as a threat for voluntary sport clubs, while on the other hand national sport organisations try to reform the voluntary sport clubs by making the consumer a central element in their policy plans. The Bridge Federation, for example, observed a declining support and a diminishing interest in associational life because of individualisation and

self-interest. However, they think that a more central role for the self-interest of participants can turn this trend around.

> *Competitions should be brought to the attention and, if possible, be attuned to the demands. A more 'marketised' approach is needed to bend the tendency towards the declining interest. (Nederlandse Bridge Bond, 2012, p. 17)*

This dualistic view of the sport consumer as a threat and an opportunity has profound consequences for the way membership in sport organisations is viewed. Within the consumerist discourse that is constructed in the policies it is doubted whether the voluntary sport clubs can still fulfil the needs of member-consumers. This is striking, because in the past clubs were seen as 'natural' environments in which members could produce their own sport. However, within the consumerist discourse, clubs are seen as autonomous entities that should serve participants.

> *Sport consumers are willing to pay extra for sport accommodations if they match their demands. Clubs do not have a fitting answer to this yet. (Koninklijke Nederlandse Hippische Sportfederatie, 2011, p. 37)*

In this citation the demands of sport consumers are placed against the ability of clubs to fit these demands. Here, a process of autonomisation of the voluntary sport club as described by Horch (1998, p. 49) can be observed. Because of processes of consumerism, the activities in voluntary sport clubs have to fulfil the expectancies of its members by becoming 'selective, secure and equivalent'. This results in oligarchic tendencies within the voluntary sport club; because members are expected to behave as consumers they are excluded from decision making ex ante. This does lead to questions as to who can still be seen as a member of the club. Apparently, the entity marked as 'club' in this sense cannot be seen as a collection of members who are gathered around their own interest. After all, the club is placed against the demands of the member-consumer. Does such a conception imply a divide between members and member-consumers? And would the preferences of these two separate groups completely differ from each other? The observations made in the previous section pointed at societal differences entangled with consumerism, but apparently these findings do not apply in the same extent to all sport participants.

The organisational consequences for voluntary sport clubs are also considered in the policy plans analysed. Policy makers suggest that if the demands of the critical sport consumer become central, the present organisational form of voluntary sport clubs is no longer sufficient. Because traditional clubs lack the required capacity to serve consumers, modernisation of these clubs is presented as a necessary step of action.

> *The switch towards a market orientation has brought many good ideas for new sport supply. The implementation of these ideas proves to be difficult in a number of cases because of a lack of knowledge and capacity. (NOC*NSF, 2007, p. 1)*

In this respect, it is also important to note that in the analysed policy texts, notions of consumerism significantly differ from commercialisation tendencies like Enjolras (2002) observed. No longer, it is argued in these policy texts, does the association logic live up to the expectations of members and potential members of voluntary sport clubs. Instead, they

should operate in a system of supply and demand. This conception can well be compared to the way that neo-liberalism has introduced choice and voice in the public sector. Clarke (2005) notes that:

> *The view of citizens as consumers of public services has been a consistent and expanding focus, based on the claim that social changes towards a 'consumer culture' have created both experiences and expectations of individualised choice among the population. Against these standards, public services are judged backward, inadequate and dominated by producer paternalism. (p. 449)*

For the voluntary sport sector this means that national sport organisations suggest organisational change as an answer for the challenges that voluntary sport clubs face. They should modernise their activities in order to serve the consumer in a way that appeals more to his or her preferences and demands. In the next section we will show how in the analysed policy texts a fruitful base for modernisation measures in voluntary sport clubs is constructed.

Modernizing the sport club: ditching old values?

Even though the participation in Dutch voluntary sport clubs is still quite high compared to other countries, the commercial sport sector has experienced a firm growth over the last decades. Policy makers have noticed the fact that commercial sport suppliers, such as health clubs and gyms, have gained a larger 'market share' in the Dutch sport sector. The answer to the increased competition with commercial parties lies, according to the analysed policy documents, in the marketisation of voluntary sport clubs.

> *The marketisation of sport first of all requires a valuable sport supply. The bigger the perception of value by the sport consumer, the better this can be marketised. The better the understanding of the sport consumer, the easier the development of a valuable sport supply is. (NOC*NSF, 2012, p. 87)*

The link between the sport consumer and the marketisation of sport is connected to keywords in the market discourse, such as 'value' and 'supply'. However, competing for a market share seems to be unnatural for mutual support organisations that are not allowed to make profits (cf. Enjolras, 2002). The market orientation of national sport organisations means a break with the old values of the bottom-up membership structure of clubs and federations, but it also illustrates the position of national sport organisations as organisations that have to compete with each other for sponsorship and lottery funding. National sport organisations see themselves as promoters of sport for the general public instead of membership-based organisations, which opens up a range of commercially interesting possibilities for the national sport organisations.

> *The free runner should no longer be seen as new member for the future, but should be approached from the position of the Athletics Federation as authority in running. By offering a commercially interesting supply of products and services the Athletics Federation can strengthen its position. (Koninklijke Nederlandse Atletiek Unie, 2004, p. 43)*

Apart from a commercial and market-driven model of sport supply, the Athletics Federation suggests that they are no longer a traditional membership organisation, but rather an authority in the running industry. Such a change is visible in more (individual) sports, with individual membership of national sport organisations as the most important expression of this development. The traditional, bottom-up model of organising sport in the voluntary sector, with sport participants being members of clubs that are united in an national sport organisation, is set aside. Other ways of making membership in the voluntary sport sector more flexible are suggested to be implemented at the club level. national sport organisations encourage their clubs to introduce short-term memberships and subscriptions to sport courses in order to increase the possibilities for flexible sport participation.

> *Field hockey is no 'one size fits all'. By tuning the field hockey supply to the demands of members, customer satisfaction will increase. This will retain important members in the club, so that they will be better usable in volunteer tasks. To achieve this, the Field Hockey Federation modifies league systems and introduces new –mostly flexible- forms of field hockey (Koninklijke Nederlandse Hockey Bond, 2010, pp. 10-11)*

The Field Hockey Federation stresses field hockey clubs should adjust their traditional forms of organising sport into forms that fit the emerging consumer. In order to retain the consumerist member in the club, other national sport organisations similarly try to create a new structure in which clubs can offer flexible and custom-made services to sport participants. This is also stressed by the Athletics Federation, who are looking to bring free runners into the voluntary sport club.

> *Establishing relations between free runners and voluntary sport clubs and between voluntary sport clubs and several market players should lead to strengthening the voluntary sport club and an increase in the number of members. (Koninklijke Nederlandse Atletiek Unie, 2008, p. 29)*

The need for flexibility fits well in broader developments in sport. Pilgaard (2012) argues that there is indeed a need for flexible possibilities in voluntary sport clubs. She argues that voluntary sport clubs should behave more as light community settings that 'structure the activities in ways that allow for a certain kind of flexibility' (Pilgaard, 2012, p. 88). This argument can also be found in some of the analysed policy texts.

> *[In 2020] clubs have reoriented themselves on the sport market and have created a fitting supply (concerning training, activities and membership forms) for the Dutchman anno 2020, who needs custom-made services and quality. (Koninklijke Nederlandsche Schaatsenrijders Bond, 2011, p. 20)*

In line with Pilgaard (2012), the increased need for flexibility can certainly be recognised in the analysed policy texts. However, the need for flexibility is often mixed with a suggested need for 'services' in which sport participants are portrayed as consumers. This is an important difference from the flexibility that Pilgaard suggests, a type of flexibility that still resides within the association logic. She argues that voluntary sport clubs could benefit from an approach 'that allows members to stay connected to a well-known social setting, giving a feeling of security, and structures the activities in ways that allow for a certain kind of

flexibility' (p. 88). However, within the consumerist discourse the social setting of voluntary sport clubs seems to be set aside. Here, the flexibilisation of membership forms, the creation of a 'fitting supply' and the call for quality requires clubs to organise their sport in a different way. Adapting to demands of consumerist sport participants asks for extended opening hours of clubs and an active role of sport instructors or coaches. The profile of professionally led health clubs serves as an example to voluntary clubs here. As a consequence, clubs are pressured to professionalise their management and coaching staff, because many volunteers will not be available during business hours and might lack expertise that the modern voluntary sport club should offer.

The introduction of professionals and professionalisation in clubs is presented as an all-embracing answer to the challenges that voluntary sport clubs face. The suggested decline of volunteering, as well as the perceived emergence of the demanding and critical consumer are seen as incentives for bringing in professionals in voluntary sport clubs. Professionals are thought to bring quality, flexibility and stability in voluntary sport clubs. Contrary to volunteers, who are often seen as being too noncommittal, professionals should be able to create an environment of high-standing conditions. While national sport organisations used to portray volunteers as the mainstay of the voluntary sport club, they are described in today's policy texts as a barrier to the further development of sport.

> *Volunteerism does not mean that one is without obligations. Volunteers do make a serious contribution to the professionalisation of a field hockey club. Still, for reasons of required competencies and expertise, available time and continuance, the introduction of professionals is an essential condition to achieve professional development. (Koninklijke Nederlandse Hockey Bond & Ten Have Change Management, 2009, p. 20)*

> *In the pursuit of further improvement of the quality of club supply, mutual collaboration and the extension of professionalisation of voluntary sport clubs are essential conditions. (Koninklijke Nederlandse Atletiek Unie, 2004, p. 13)*

The discourse of consumerism is so powerful that professionalisation is presented as an unavoidable step in improving services to fulfil the needs of the member-consumer. This suggests that clubs are left with little choice with respect to professionalisation. Although the implications for voluntary sport clubs are far-reaching, policy makers present professionalisation as an inevitable development.

> *Increases in scale and professionalisation are needed to restore the central position of gymnastics in society. (...) Provision of a broad and deep assortment of products and services, professionally and attractively organised, in every town, in every neighbourhood. (Koninklijke Nederlandse Gymnastiek Unie, 2011, p. 13)*

The direct link between an increase in scale and professionalisation in this quote is not coincidental. The legitimacy of small-sized clubs is widely questioned in Dutch sport policy. Policy makers argue that small clubs are not as effective as big clubs and that they are vulnerable to organisational problems. Clubs are encouraged to achieve an increase in their number of members, to merge with other clubs and to look for societal partners like schools (Koninklijk Nederlands Korfbal Verbond, 2009, Koninklijke Nederlandse Hockey Bond, 2010), even though it is acknowledged that this will have unintended consequences.

If voluntary sport clubs cooperate on a local level this can lead to quality improvements, to expansion of the sport supply and to joint activities that provide better quality. (Koninklijke Nederlandse Atletiek Unie, 2004, p. 5)

Growth and professionalisation of a club – which result in a necessity of commercialisation – do influence the atmosphere and the culture. By the way, this could turn out positively. But it is the duty of the club director to manage possible tensions that could come along with growth. (Koninklijke Nederlandse Hockey Bond and Ten Have Change Management, 2009, p. 28)

It is yet unknown whether the discourse in policies is translated into actual organisational practices in voluntary sport clubs. It is striking to see that, other than some nods to professionalisation and growth, actual organisational changes are not suggested in the analysed policies. However, the rhetorical power of the discourse should not be underestimated, as the story that underlies the consumerist discourse is a story that is 'pragmatic, positive and forward looking' (Adams, 2011, Lister, 2000). From this perspective the association logic has been put under pressure, but it is yet unknown what consequences this will have for voluntary sport clubs. After all, changes in the way clubs are organised are actively contested and negotiated, so it is not a simple process of policy implementation (Vidler & Clarke, 2005, p. 32). Thus, so far we can only guess what implications the use of the discourse will have on voluntary sport clubs.

Still, the pressure to organise clubs according to a 'consumer logic' is apparent in policy texts, which might turn out to be a novel example of the classical Thomas theorem (Thomas & Thomas, 1928, p. 572), which describes that 'if men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences'. This way, perceived consumerism could turn out to be causing premature policy actions. These policy actions might in turn put pressure on club administrators to reorganise their club, without knowing whether the public indeed demands a more consumerist-driven model of sport participation. In fact, according to the Thomas theorem, a more consumer-oriented policy could subsequently invite people to behave as consumers.

3.7 Conclusion

In this chapter, we have argued how a consumerist discourse is constructed in Dutch sport policy. Views on how to serve consumers dominate the way sport participants and voluntary sport clubs are seen in these policy texts. Within the consumerist discourse two kinds of consumerism can be found. First, a threatening kind of consumerism in clubs is identified. This notion of the consumer is characterised by individualistic behaviour and self-interest, which would lead to a loss in the number of members in voluntary sport clubs. The second account of the consumer serves as a window of opportunity for policy makers to improve sport activities.

3.8 Future research and limitations

First and foremost, our study shows that it is unclear whether there is indeed evidence of a consumerist attitude among (potential) club members. In our view, this is the most

important implication of our chapter. We challenge researchers and policy makers to provide empirical evidence on a consumerist attitude within the voluntary sport sector. If there is indeed evidence of consumerism in this sector, the consequences can be considered with respect to the 'association logic' (Ibsen & Seippel, 2010) and the future of voluntary sport clubs as mutual support organisations. But first, we need to develop an instrument that can determine whether people that practice sport and potential sport participants indeed change from club members into sport consumers.

Second, we think the relationship between national sport organisations and voluntary sport clubs deserves more attention in sport policy research (cf. Garret, 2003; Harris et al., 2009). Our analysis shows that voluntary sport clubs face pressures from national sport organisation policy plans, but it remains unclear to what extent these pressures indeed lead to changes in the structure and activities of voluntary sport clubs.

We would also like to stress the importance of an international perspective on consumerism in the voluntary sport sector. The Dutch case of a consumerist discourse among sport policy makers can be seen as an exemplary case for other countries that have voluntary sport clubs as the dominant organisational form in grassroots sport. An international perspective could help to understand the empirical tenability of claims made within the consumerist discourse by national sport organisations and what meanings and consequences this discourse has for voluntary sport clubs at the local level.

Notes

[1] The biggest national sport organisations based on their total number of members in 2010 (NOC*NSF, 2011) were researched. The policy plans of the national sport organisations in the following sports were gathered and analysed: Athletics, Bridge, Equestrian Sports, Field Hockey, Football, Golf, Gymnastics, Judo, Korfball, Skating, Skiing, Swimming, Tennis, Volleyball and Yachting.

CHAPTER 4

CONSUMERISM IN SPORT ORGANISATIONS: CONCEPTUALISING AND CONSTRUCTING A RESEARCH SCALE

Summary

The rising influence of consumer culture on sport participation is arguably one of the most influential trends in sport participation in the last decades. However, little is known about how such an attitude can be understood and what its consequences for everyday life in sport organisations are. This chapter asks how a research scale for consumerism in sport organisations should be conceptualised and constructed. Using a mixed methods approach, a research scale consisting of five subdimensions was developed to measure consumerist attitudes in sport organisations. The scale was tested on 303 sport participants in various sport organisations. The resulting 25-item research scale for consumerism in sport organisations can be of use to sport management scholars, sport policy makers and sport administrators and managers who want to have a better understanding of the relationship between sport participants and sport organisations.

This chapter is based on an article under review:

Van der Roest, J. (submitted). *Consumerism in sports organisations: conceptualizing and constructing a research scale.*

4.1 Introduction

'The critical sport consumer of nowadays asks increasingly louder for flexibility in sport possibilities. He wants to exercise at the moment that the children are at school or directly after he finished his working day. One week one time, the other week perhaps three of four times' (NOC*NSF, n.d.). Dutch umbrella sport organisation NOC*NSF leaves no doubt in its observation of the contemporary sportsman. He is a critical consumer asking for flexibility and 'customer-based, new and refreshing offers' (NOC*NSF, n.d.). The emergence of a consumerist attitude among sport participants is not only observed by national sport organisations like NOC*NSF (cf. Van der Roest, Vermeulen & Van Bottenburg, 2015), but it has attracted interest from researchers in sport studies as well (cf. Bodet, 2009; Horne, 2006; Ibsen & Seippel, 2010; Sassatelli, 2010; Smith Maguire, 2001). The consumerist attitude has been associated with a growing popularity of commercial sport organisations and the commercialisation of nonprofit sport organisations (Enjolras, 2002; Ibsen & Seippel, 2010; Sassatelli, 2010).

Despite the growing attention for the emergence of a consumerist attitude among sport participants, little is known about how such an attitude can be understood and what its consequences for everyday life in sport organisations are. Indeed, researchers have expressed their worries about the rising consumerist attitude, predominantly related to voluntary sport organisations, but the concept has yet been overlooked in empirical research. Policy makers in the voluntary sport sector have described the rise of the consumerist attitude, but they have done so in rather vague terms, leaving much room for interpretation. Moreover, they have not shown empirical evidence that such an attitude is present in sport. This has resulted in an ambiguous elaboration on the concept and its consequences for sport organisations (Van der Roest, Vermeulen & Van Bottenburg, 2015).

The aim of this article is to conceptualise the consumerist attitude among sport participants and present a reliable instrument for the measurement of this concept. With such an instrument, it will be possible to quantitatively determine the consumerist attitude of members in sport organisations. This can assist researchers in a better understanding of the nature and degree of consumerism in a particular sport or geographical location. It can also help policy makers and sport managers in the decisions they have to make concerning a specific sport organisation.

The article will proceed as follows: in the theoretical framework consumerism in sport organisations and its background will be discussed. Then the methods of this mixed methods study are described, after which the results of the study are presented. This includes a presentation of the final 25 questions in the Consumerism in Sport Organisations scale that was developed using three focus group interviews and was tested in a survey of 303 sport participants. Finally, the article concludes with a discussion on the added value of the scale for researchers, policy makers and sport managers.

4.2 Consumerism in sport organisations

Much work on consumption in sport has been focused on the commodification of spectatorship and fandom (e.g. Giulianotti, 2005; Moor, 2007). However, since recent years the attention has been drawn on the influence of consumer culture on active sport participation as well. Roughly, three lines of research that deal with this influence can be distinguished. First, theories of consumer culture have concentrated on consumption of sport activities as

a cultural practice. Second, sport management scholars have given attention to the effects of consumerism on expectations around service quality in sport organisations. Third, multiple authors have expressed their concerns about an increasing consumerist attitude among members of voluntary sport organisations. In the following sections, I will briefly review these three lines of research.

Consumer culture and the meaning of sport as a cultural practice

Since the 1970s, fitness and health clubs have been typical examples of consumer marketplaces in which consumers can express their identity and lifestyle through commodified practices and relationships (Smith Maguire, 2001). According to Sassatelli (2010), the mix of market relations, commercialized discipline and social relations are key to the way consumer culture has shaped attitudes and behaviours in fitness and health clubs. However, these behaviours and attitudes are not limited to the gym. Llopis-Goig (2014) showed that post-materialist and individualistic tendencies are related to runners' attitude towards their sport and Harvey and St-Germain (1998) noted that the commodification of sport transforms it to a standardized product. The standardisation of sport is for example evident in the commercialisation of lifestyle sports, that have become more accessible in order to serve as many consumers as possible (Beal & Smith, 2010; Celsi, Rose & Leigh, 1993; Edwards & Corte, 2010; Salome, 2012).

Accessibility is needed, according to Bodet (2009, p. 231), because 'sport consumers have become increasingly impatient in their quest for sensations and pleasure', which has made accessibility one of the most important aspects of sport demand. This is in accordance with Pilgaard's (2012) analysis of flexible sport participation. She contends that: 'commercial fitness or self-organised exercise like running or biking are more accessible activities for adults leading to high participation rates in such activities today' (Pilgaard, 2012, p. 157). However, the standardisation and commercialisation of these sports have also raised concerns about how genuine such sport experiences are and whether the lines between sport and consumer culture have become blurred to an extent where it can be questioned whether sport activities still have the same meaning today as was intended in advance (Salome, 2012).

For this stream of research, a measurement instrument would be valuable to evaluate the extent to which a consumerist attitude exists in sport and it could help to compare this attitude in different sport settings with each other. This way, it becomes possible to determine to what extent consumer culture has become mixed up with different sports and to what extent sport participants have indeed developed a consumerist attitude.

Service quality and the consumerist attitude

A second stream of research in consumerism in sport has been concerned with the management of sport organisations and the question how to improve consumers' experiences with and in sport organisations. This research approach has merely problematised the influences of consumer culture in sport. Rather, it has sought to improve sport services' quality and generate more profits in sport. (Slack, 1998). An overview of such research is provided by Robinson's (2006) article on customer expectations of sport organisations. She shows that, along with a rise in consumer rights and education of consumers, the expectations of service quality of all sort of products and services in the Western world have gone up and that sport organisations are no exception to that. She also notes that sport organisations are most likely not to meet these expectations, which leaves

room for improvement (cf. Bodet, 2009). Within sport management research, attempts have been made to measure customer satisfaction and how this relates to the attendance, the customer-organisation relationship and loyalty in gyms (Alexandris & Palialia, 1999; Bodet, 2012; Bolton, 1998; Ferrand, Robinson & Valette-Florence, 2010; Hennig-Thurau & Klee, 1997; Pedragosa & Correia, 2009).

Although these articles provide valuable insights in attitudes and behaviour of sport consumers in gyms, they do not provide any information about whether a consumerist attitude can be found in different sport organisations, nor do they explicate how expectancies around service quality are linked to a consumerist attitude. A measurement instrument could inform researcher about this puzzle. It could assist sport managers in getting to understand how the attitude of consumers in the fitness and health sector can be understood and it could, for example, help them to compare different fitness clubs on different subdimensions to know what emphasis to put on in each club.

A threat to voluntary sport organisations

Finally, the consumerist attitude has often been described as a possible threat to voluntary sport organisations. Consumerism is believed to contrast the traditional values of reciprocity and solidarity in these organisations (Enjolras, 2002; Schlesinger, Egli & Nagel, 2013). Yet, many researchers, policy makers and sport managers believe that this attitude is emerging in voluntary sport organisations (Enjolras, 2002; Ibsen & Seippel, 2010; Lorentzen & Hustinx, 2007; Meijs & Hoogstad, 2001; Van der Roest, Vermeulen & Van Bottenburg, 2015). Lorentzen and Hustinx (2007) describe the rise of this attitude as an emergence of the identity of the 'member-consumer'. They define this person as 'an individual who assumes membership will give her access to a product, and that the balance between costs (membership fees) and outcomes will be in her favour' (Lorentzen and Hustinx, 2007, p. 107).

According to Bodet (2009) there is an increasing gap between the expectations that members of voluntary sport organisations have and the offerings in these organisations. First, an increasing need for flexibility urges voluntary sport organisations to change their activities in order to stay attractive to members with a consumerist attitude. Bodet (2009) argues that their activities need to be quickly consumable and Pilgaard (2012) contends that voluntary organisations are indeed in need of making their structures more flexible. Second, the increasing consumerist attitude also urges voluntary sport organisations to improve the quality of their services (Janssens, 2011). These changes in voluntary sport organisations are deemed to have fierce consequences (Enjolras, 2002) and they are believed to undermine solidarity and reciprocity (Schlesinger et al., 2013).

Yet, no author has investigated the impact consumerism has on voluntary sport organisations and no one has evaluated what this attitude actually looks like in these organisations. A measurement instrument could therefore assist this stream of research by providing insights in the nature and degree of the consumerist attitude in voluntary sport organisations. Such an instrument is now lacking in the international literature.

4.3 Methods

In order to develop a reliable measuring instrument, the eight steps for scale development described by DeVellis (2003) were followed. These steps are: (1) determining clearly what it is you want to measure, (2) generating an item pool, (3) determining the format for measurement, (4) having the initial item pool reviewed by experts, (5) considering inclusion

of validation items, (6) administering items to a development sample, (7) evaluating the items and (8) optimizing scale length.

Because consumerism in sport is a relatively new topic, it was necessary to conceptualise sport consumerism in focus group interviews before developing the scale. The results from the focus groups provided direct input for the development of factors and items in the consumerism scale. Therefore, this study can be described as a mixed methods study. Mixed methods research can be seen as 'the type of research in which a researcher or team of researchers combines elements of qualitative and quantitative research approaches...for the broad purposes of breadth and depth of understanding and corroboration' (Johnson, Onwuegbuzie & Turner, 2007, p. 123). Following Van der Roest, Spaaij and Van Bottenburg (2015), it is deemed important to formulate a rationale for conducting mixed methods research. The adoption of a mixed methods research approach was considered suitable in this case because it provided a more comprehensive account of consumerist attitudes in sport organisations. The first rationale for mixing qualitative and quantitative research in this case can thus be described as completeness (cf. Bryman, 2006).

The second and most important rationale of this article was the development of a measurement scale for consumerist attitudes in sport organisations, which relates to a second rationale for mixing qualitative and quantitative methods, this being instrument development. According to Bryman (2006) this rationale is suitable for use in the improvement of questionnaires.

The data collection consisted of two sequential phases. First, the focus group interviews were used to research participants' understandings of and meanings given to consumerism. Second, a quantitative study was conducted among a group of sport participants in The Netherlands in order to develop a reliable and valid scale for measuring consumerism in sport organisations. Following Morse (1991), the timing and priority of the methods can thus be described as qual -> QUAN, which means that the emphasis in the research was on the quantitative aspect.

4.4 Study 1: Focus groups

Focus Group Methods

As consumerism in sport organisations is a relatively new topic of research, it was crucial to decide on the indicators for developing the questionnaire (De Vaus, 2002). In order to do so, focus group interviews were held to understand the meanings behind consumerist attitudes. According to Morgan (1997), focus groups are a good device for creating survey items, because they 'provide preliminary research on specific issues in a larger project' (Morgan, 1997, p. 17). Therefore, focus groups were used to fill in the first step that DeVellis (2003) prescribes, namely the determination of what it is that needs to be measured.

Three focus group interviews were organised. Respondents were approached by e-mails sent out to voluntary sport clubs and commercial sport organisations in a large city and a mid-sized town in the middle of The Netherlands. In addition, the author promoted the group interviews on social media outlets such as Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn. In order to encourage people to join, participants had a chance to win a 50-euro gift voucher for a sport equipment store. To gain as complete as possible an understanding of sport consumerism, focus group interviews were organised for sport participants as well as sport administrators and instructors. Two of the three focus groups consisted of participants (seven and four respondents, respectively), while one focus group was made up of administrators and

instructors (seven respondents). The total of eighteen respondents included twelve male and six female respondents, with ages ranging from 21 to 63 (average age: 33.6 years).

The respondents were asked to fill out a short questionnaire in which they were asked to write down the sport and the organisational setting they participated in. Respondents were able to fill in up to three different sports and organisations. In total, a number of 20 sports were mentioned, which can roughly be divided into four different categories: ball sports (e.g. soccer, volleyball and basketball), endurance and recreational sports (e.g. running, cycling, skiing, equestrian sports) and exercise sports (e.g. fitness, dancing). These sports were practiced in different organisational settings: voluntary sport club (16 times), commercial sport organisation (13 times), unorganised (12 times) and at the workplace (2 times).

The focus group interviews took place in a conference room and the respondents were seated around a table, with the moderator at the head of the table. An assistant moderator was present to record or film the interviews that were fully transcribed by the author. The focus group interviews were semi-structured, using four main questions (see Table 4.1) and other questions that arose from the discussion, and they ranged in duration from 75 to 120 minutes. All respondents participated more or less equally in the group discussions.

Table 4.1 Questions used during focus group interviews (translated from Dutch)

1	How would you, in your own words, describe sport consumerism?
2	What do you expect from your voluntary sport club or your sport organisation?
3	What commitment do you have towards your voluntary sport club or sport organisation?
4	What do you do if you are dissatisfied with your voluntary sport club or sport organisation?

Coding of the focus groups

The focus group interviews were transcribed verbatim, after which the data was analysed and coded in order to be able to identify indicators. This process was done in two phases. The first phase contained a coding process based partly on insights from the literature and partly on open coding. The second phase consisted out of an axial coding process (Boeije, 2010) in which a ladder of abstraction (De Vaus, 2002) was formed.

First, data that identified a definition of consumerism or consumerist attitudes and data that identified motives for participating in sport were coded as such. Then, different themes were coded because they either were recognized as accounts of consumerism as presented in consumerism literature (including that on public service), or because they frequently appeared following an open coding process.

Second, the themes that were derived in the first phase were coded in an axial coding process in order to restructure them. All the codes that were derived in the first phase of coding were read again and coded with a more detailed description in order to create subdimensions that could be used in the ladder of abstraction. This step was deemed necessary for developing questions in the questionnaire.

Focus group results

After having identified the main themes in the open coding process, the axial coding process made clear that the meanings given by the focus group participants to consumerism in sport organisations could be reduced to six subdimensions. In this section, the results of these

six subdimensions are presented, using direct quotes from the focus group interviews to illustrate how meanings of sport consumerism are constructed.

Choice

One of the most important subdimensions of consumerism found in the literature was choice, meaning the ability to choose between different organisations or to choose how a service is delivered. In the focus group interviews, choice was also one of the main themes. First of all, the respondents paid considerable attention to the flexibility that can be found in a consumerist way of participating in sport. Meanings given to this subdimension included positive accounts of people underlining their autonomy in practicing their sport, but also more negative accounts of sport participants being independent in a very self-centered way. The following quote illustrates the independence that was found among some focus group participants.

'I would like to be able to be exercising within, say, half an hour. And maybe now I am up to it, but tomorrow I might not be and the day after tomorrow also not, but the next day I will be up to it again.'

The autonomy of consumers making their own decisions is closely connected to the feeling that a consumer does not want to be attached to any obligations. This relates to the observation by Gabriel and Lang (2006) that a typical consumer is not really embedded in a community and can be understood from societal trends like individualisation and informalisation. The modern sport consumer, so it seems, likes to participate without having to depend too much on others.

Detachment

These noncommittal forms of sport participations are among the most typical forms of consumerism that comes to mind when people describe a consumerist attitude among sport club members. Interestingly, meanings related to detachment emerge both with people who describe themselves as consumers and those who describe other people as consumers. One volunteer in a voluntary sport clubs stated:

'For example, I coordinate the club's cafeteria, and there are always too few volunteers. That means that sometimes we have to close the kitchen. And people can get very upset about that. (...) And I do invite them to take a role in the kitchen themselves...but that is something they don't want to do.'

From the perspective of the consumer, the above view is confirmed, as volunteering is not something a typical sport consumer would do. Some respondents in the focus group interviews indicated that they normally check whether membership in a certain sport organisation is free of obligations such as volunteering. For some people, volunteering in a sport club is really out of the question. However, volunteering is not the only obligation that is undesirable from a consumerist perspective. One of the things that was stated very often during the focus groups was that a sport consumer wants to have sport activities without any strings attached. This includes the flexibility of choice when to practice sport without additional obligations, but respondents also stated that the genuine consumer would not like to be fixed to any contract.

Unsociability
Another aspect of the fact that a consumer would not like too many obligations in his or her sport activities is the limited presence of social contact during sport activities. According to the respondents, being a consumer also means behaving quite individually, although there will always be some social contact. Exemplary of unsocial consumerist attitudes, according to the respondent in the next quote, is the way people interact in health clubs.

'I think that the gym is the ultimate place to go "shopping", it is rather impersonal for most people. I do meet a lot of people, I do chat with them, but that is it.'

Health and fitness centers are seen as 'impersonal' and an ultimate place for 'shopping'. Many respondents in the focus groups stated that the less social an activity is, the more likely it is to be a consumerist activity. Schlesinger and Nagel (2015) have acknowledged that the members of voluntary sport clubs that support sociability consistently show higher levels of commitment towards the club.

Transaction
For the feeling of being a consumer in sport, many respondents think that some kind of transaction and a financial aspect should be involved. Many respondents use words like 'buying' and 'paying' to describe their view of the sport consumer, as is illustrated in the next quote.

'I think that that is a typical example of a sport consumer, just somebody who sees it and thinks: "I will buy that" without having any commitment, someone who thinks: "I pay for it and that's it".'

The difference between consuming the sport activity and seeing it as a financial transaction rather than an activity that is jointly organised by the participants seems to be at the heart of consumerism in sport organisations. It also seems that these kind of transaction-like acts also focus on the outcomes of the activity. For example, health motives are more and more a reason to participate in both commercially organised sport and voluntary organised sport (Seippel, 2006; Van 't Verlaat, 2010). This focus on health also means that service quality gains importance, as becoming or staying fit requires specific medical knowledge.

Service quality
According to the respondents in the focus group interviews, expectations of the service mainly concern quality. If a consumer is buying any other type of service in exchange for money, a certain quality standard is also required of that organisation. First of all, according to the respondents, there are some basic demands that anyone in a sport organisation has. Many respondents state that safety is an important responsibility of any sport organisation, even if that organisation is a traditional voluntary sport clubs. Alexandris & Palialia (1999) also found high scores for the importance of clean and attractive environments in health clubs. However, the respondents also find that in a more consumerist mode of practicing sport, the demands of the sport participant go beyond these basics. Demands in quality are divided into three main categories. First, the respondents indicate that the staff of a sport organisation should have sufficient knowledge to help them during their sport activities. A second point in which consumers expect quality from their organisations is the facilities

themselves. Both the sport-related facilities and the non-sport facilities are seen as important prerequisites for a good consumer experience. Or, as one of the respondents put it: 'What you want, basically, is good coffee'. The third aspect people expect when behaving as consumers is a high quality of the sport offering itself. Although this seems obvious, respondents underline the fun aspect of practicing sport from a consumerist point of view.

The above demands stemming from the consumerist perspective may seem like demands that any sport participant would have. However, the respondents in the focus group interviews clearly made a distinction between a consumerist perspective and a traditional perspective. Some respondents think that from within a traditional perspective, members of sport organisations can be less demanding, or can even cherish low levels of quality. One of the respondents explicitly illustrated this by saying:

'Everything that has to do with these terms: 'professionalization, service delivery, customers, commercial, customer-friendliness…' I just do not want those things! I just want it to be an amateur football club that is being led by people who like to do so and who are volunteering in the bar. If my club starts to talk about becoming more customer-friendly… I do not want that.'

Criticism

Respondents clearly link negative attitudes to the presence or absence of quality in the services offered to members of any sport organisation. They indicate that there are two different reactions consumers can have when they are unhappy about the services that are provided to them. Many respondents describe typical responses by consumers as 'nagging' or 'complaining'. The other response described is exit behaviour. According to some respondents, consumer behaviour in sport organisations is caused by the fact that people do not know how to resolve dissatisfaction, whereas in a traditional club this was much easier. To summarize, according to the focus groups, sport consumerism is a multidimensional construct that can be divided into six subdimensions: choice, detachment, unsociability, transaction, service quality and criticism.

4.5 Study 2: Questionnaire

Steps 2 and 3: Generate an item pool and determine the format of measurement

After having completed the focus group analysis, items for a scale were generated on the basis of this analysis and the format of measurement was determined. These actions are in line with steps 2 and 3 in the guidelines in scale development as prescribed by DeVellis (2003). The subdimensions that were generated in the qualitative part of this study were used to formulate the components of the item pool. For every subdimension, a number of items were formulated, using wording that closely resembled that used by respondents in the focus group. The initial item pool consisted of 41 items, divided over the six subdimensions that are presented in the focus group results. The format of measurement for all items is a five-point Likert scale, ranging from [completely disagree] to [completely agree]. The methods and results of the subsequent steps in the process of scale development that were taken are described in greater detail in the following paragraphs.

Step 4: Have initial item pool reviewed by experts
The generated item pool was administered to an expert panel, as DeVellis (2003) suggests. The expert panel consisted of three faculty members and one doctoral candidate with experience in sport research. They were asked to deliver their comments on three questions for all 41 items, as DeVellis recommends. First, the experts were asked to 'rate how relevant they think each item is to what you intend to measure'. Second, the 'items' clarity and conciseness' were reviewed, and third, the experts were asked to point out 'ways of tapping the phenomenon that you have failed to include' (DeVellis, 2003, pp. 85-87, emphasis in original). Based on the comments provided by the experts, several items were reworded, two items were omitted from the pool of questions and one question was added, yielding a total of 40 questions. After this step was taken, four persons tested the online questionnaire with respect to the clarity of the questions and the routing of the questionnaire. Some of the four persons who carried out this step had research experience, while others did not. Based on this step, some slight modifications in the routing were made and one question was reworded due to poor clarity.

Step 5: Consider inclusion of validation items.
DeVellis (2003) recommends that researchers who want to develop new measuring instruments include scales that have already been validated, as this can help the researcher in detecting problems or flaws. Also, the inclusion of validation items can assist in determining the construct validity of a scale. For the consumerism questionnaire, a validation scale on organisational commitment was included.
As argued earlier in this article, organisational commitment is an important factor in the continued existence of sport organisations. For this questionnaire, a modified Dutch version (Jak & Evers, 2010) of Meyer, Allen & Smith's (1993) scale for organisational commitment (Allen & Meyer, 1990) was used. The Dutch version has minor differences compared to the English version, as some negatively formulated items have been reformulated (Jak & Evers, 2010, pp. 163-164). Subsequently, slight alterations in the Dutch version were made to make the scale relevant for sport organisations (e.g. the Dutch word for 'quitting' is different in an employee context than in a membership context – see Table 4.3 for the items). All constructs in the Dutch version of the organisational commitment questionnaire were administered in order to assure comparability within the Dutch context, although previous studies in sport organisations have found little support for continuance commitment (Cuskelly, Boag & McIntyre, 1999; Engelberg, Zakus, Skinner & Campbell, 2012).

Step 6: Administer items to a development sample.
The sixth step in the development of a scale is to administer the items to a development sample (DeVellis, 2003). He suggests having a study with approximately 300 respondents, although a sample with fewer respondents can also be sufficient (DeVellis, 2003, p. 78). The total scale was administered to a development sample through an online questionnaire (Couper, 2008). The questionnaire was administered in August 2013 and was open to respondents for a period of three weeks. In the survey, there was a different routing for sport participants with and without a sport organisation, as some questions in the scale are specifically meant for participants in sport organisations. The validation items were only gathered for sport participants in sport organisations, as these questions measure organisational commitment. The questionnaire was sent out to different sport participants in the personal and professional network of the researcher, where snowballing techniques

were applied to obtain as many as respondents as possible. In addition, national sport organisations promoted the questionnaire on their websites, in newsletters and on online social media. In the announcement sport participants were asked to fill out the questionnaire.
The web survey yielded a response of 303 fully completed questionnaires, which according to DeVellis (2003) should be sufficient. The final steps he suggests in his model (evaluation of the items and optimizing the scale length) will be discussed in the results section below.

4.6 Questionnaire Results

Steps 7 and 8: Evaluate the items and optimize scale length
In this section the results of the quantitative study will be presented. For the development of the scale, a factor analysis and a reliability analysis on the Consumerism in Sport organisations (CSO) instrument and organisational commitment were carried out.

The sample of the study consisted of 45.80% women and 54.20% men, and the average age was 32.06. Two hundred eighteen respondents were active in a voluntary sport clubs, 41 in a commercial sport centre, 28 are individual participants, and 16 participate in another organisation (for example in school or the company they work for). Two hundred fifteen respondents reported that they participate in sport in a team or a fixed group. As can be found in Figure 4.1, active sport participants are overrepresented in the sample. Furthermore, as the survey is intended for sport organisations, the share of people active in a voluntary sport clubs is also higher than the average in the Dutch sport participation population, while individual sport participants are underrepresented (cf. Hover, Romijn & Breedveld, 2010).

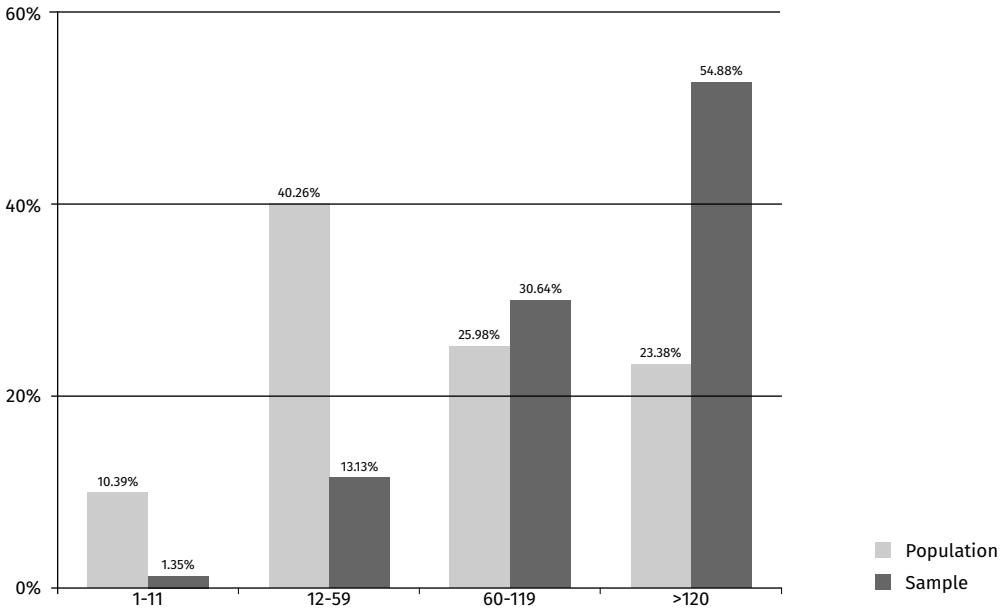

Figure 4.1 Frequency of sport participation in the last 12 months among Dutch population and among respondents in the sample

Factor analysis and reliability analysis CSO scale

In order to evaluate the number of latent variables in consumerism in sport organisations, an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was carried out. First, six items with a non-response rate above 5% were dropped from further analysis. A principal axis-factoring analysis of the remaining 34 items was performed in SPSS 21 to evaluate the factor structure of the administered items. Direct oblimin rotation was used, because factors were expected to intercorrelate. Based upon the qualitative findings, the number of factors was set at six. KMO (.86) and Bartlett's test ($p < 0.05$) yielded satisfactory results. Items with communalities lower than .35 were dropped, which resulted in deletion of four items. The remaining 30 items were analysed in a new factor analysis (see Table 4.2). The results suggest that a six-factor structure is indeed suitable for the measurement of consumerism in sport organisations, as there were six factors with an eigenvalue higher than one. For the factor loadings, a cut-off of .35 was used (Hair, Tatham, Anderson & Black, 1998). Three items were deleted because they did not make the cut-off, or because they loaded on two factors. Closer inspection of these items revealed that they lacked clarity. Table 4.2 provides a full overview of the remaining factor loadings on each of the six items, which account for 63.78% of the variance.

The six factors differed slightly from the results in the focus groups, because the choice subdimension appeared to deal with independence and the questions in the transaction subdimension were not recognized as a factor. An explanation for this might be a low tendency among sport participants to compare products and organisations, as three items in this subdimension had high non-response rates. The service quality subdimension was separated into a service quality and a coping subdimension, in which coping related to the reaction when a certain level of quality was not delivered by the sport organisation. Finally, the criticism factor mainly dealt with exit behaviour, while the positive accounts of criticism were part of the detachment factor as reversed item. The factors that are part of CSO are: independence, detachment, unsociability, service quality, coping and exit behaviour. These factors were all analysed using a reliability analysis. Table 4.2 therefore also reports Cronbach's α (DeVellis, 2003). Almost all factors were found to be internally consistent with Cronbach's α, ranging between .67 and .86. The coping subdimension was found to be too inconsistent for further use. As this factor was already a subdimension of the service quality factor, it was decided not to include this factor in further analyses.

Table 4.2 Factor loadings and internal consistency for consumerism in sport organisations

Item	Factor (F) loadings					
	F1	F2	F3	F4	F5	F6
Independence – eigenvalue 2.42, 8.97% variance explained						
I find it important to be able to choose at which moment in the week I participate in sports.			.67			
I find it important to be able to shape the substance of my sport lessons/activities myself.			.58			
I like participating in sports at moments that are determined by a sport club/organisation. (R)			-.46			

Item	Factor (F) loadings					
	F1	F2	F3	F4	F5	F6
I want to be able to decide myself how long I actively participate during my sport activities.			.69			
When I'm doing sports, I do not want to have to consider the wishes or interests of others.			.46			
Detachment – eigenvalue 1.29, 4.77% variance explained						
I do not want to have to do volunteer work for my sport club/organisation.					.81	
I do not want to have to meet obligations to a sport club/organisation other than the sports activities themselves.					.62	
I find it normal to have to perform additional tasks/activities for my sport club/organisation. (R)					-.61	
If there are things about this sport organisation that can be improved, then I will actively try to contribute that where possible. (R)					-.63	
When I do not agree with how things are managed within this sport club/organisation, I will actively try to improve these issues. (R)					-.59	
I often discuss with key people (board members/managers) about how things are going within this sport organisation. (R)					-.53	
Unsociability – eigenvalue 8.10, 30.00% variance explained						
I enjoy participating in the social activities organised by this sport club/organisation. (R)	.54					
When I am at this sport club or facility, I also seek contact with people who are not part of my team/group. (R)	.49					
After I am finished exercising or playing my sport, I often stay around to talk to others. (R)	.63					
I do not find it necessary to maintain contact with other people in this sport club/organisation.	-.45					
I meet up at other locations with people who I know exclusively through this sport club/organisation. (R)	.82					

Item	Factor (F) loadings					
	F1	F2	F3	F4	F5	F6
I come to this sport club/organisation solely to exercise or play my sport.	-.57					
I often talk with other members about current issues regarding this sport organisation. (R)	.63					
Service quality – eigenvalue 2.75, 10.18% variance explained						
I find it important that my sport activities are led by qualified trainers/coaches/instructors.		.68				
The quality of the trainers/coaches/instructors determines to a large extent whether I will continue to participate in sports with this sport organisation.		.74				
I find it important that the activities that are offered to me by this sport organisation are of high quality.		.66				
The quality of the sports on offer determines to a large extent whether I will continue my activities with this sport organisation.		.62				
Coping – eigenvalue 1.48, 5.50% variance explained						
I can accept it if the sports that are offered by this sport organisation are not at the highest level.				.63		
I can accept it if the facilities that are offered by this sport organisation are not of the highest quality.				.78		
Exit – eigenvalue 1.18, 4.38% variance explained						
If I become unhappy about how things are going with this sport organisation, I will leave.						-.68
If this sport organisation does not meet my expectations, I will find another organisation where I can exercise or play sports.						-.69
I will continue to be a member of this sport organisation, even if I am discontented. (R)						.50
Cronbach's α	.85	.79	.80	.67	.86	.77

Factor analysis and reliability analysis of Organisational Commitment

To evaluate the validity of the CSO scale, the previously mentioned validation items were also analysed using EFA and reliability analysis techniques. Principal axis factoring (eigenvalue set at 1) with direct oblimin rotation was used for organisational commitment. KMO (.88) and Bartlett's test ($p < .05$) indicated that factor analysis was suitable for the data. Five items were dropped because they produced non-response rates of over 5% or communalities under 0.35. The new run of the factor analysis resulted in a 2-factor structure for organisational commitment. Two items were dropped because of low factor loadings, resulting in a confirmation for affective and normative commitment in sport organisations, accounting for 84.20% of the variance. As was expected, continuance commitment did not emerge as a latent variable (cf. Cuskelly et al., 1999; Engelberg et al., 2012). Table 4.3 reports factor loadings and Cronbach's α for organisational commitment.

Table 4.3 Factor loadings and internal consistency for organisational commitment

	AOC	NOC
I feel a strong sense of "belonging" to this sport organisation.	.84	
I feel "emotionally attached" to this sport organisation.	.89	
I feel like "part of the family" at this sport organisation.	.91	
This sport organisation has a great deal of personal meaning for me.	.83	
I feel obliged to remain with my current sport organisation.		.85
Even if it were to my advantage, it would not be right to leave this sport organisation now.		.94
It would be indecent to leave my sport organisation now.		.90
Cronbach's α	.92	.93

Construct validity tests

Finally, to evaluate whether the CSO scale is valid for measuring consumerist attitudes in sport organisations, the relationship between the CSO factors and the two organisational commitment factors was analysed. First, in Table 4.4 the descriptive statistics for the separate factors are given. Table 4.4 shows that most factors have scores around the mathematical mean of the scale, although service quality has a score that is considerably higher than the other factors.

Table 4.4 Descriptive Statistics for factors in CSO and OC

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Independence	276	1.00	5.00	2.86	.80
Detachment	232	1.00	5.00	2.37	.81
Unsociability	229	1.00	4.86	2.21	.72
Service quality	239	1.50	5.00	3.59	.80
Exit	241	1.00	5.00	2.96	.86
Affective commitment	243	1.00	5.00	3.67	.94
Normative commitment	238	1.00	5.00	2.47	1.00

Table 4.5 presents a correlation matrix of scores on all CSO factors and organisational commitment. Here it is found that almost all CSO factors significantly intercorrelated, while at the same time almost all CSO factors had a significant negative correlation to organisational commitment. None of the intercorrelations were problematically high, indicating good discriminant validity. Detachment and exit behavior were negatively correlated with affective commitment, which relates well to earlier studies into commitment in sport organisations (cf. Cuskelly, Harrington & Stebbins, 2002). The service quality subdimension seems to be problematic in the sense that it does not correlate well with other CSO factors, indicating low convergent validity. It has no significant correlation with independence and has relatively low correlation coefficients with all the other factors in CSO. The factor is also uncorrelated with normative commitment. The implications of the findings on this factor will be considered in the discussion section.

Table 4.5 Correlations among factors of CSO and OC

	IND	DET	UNS	SERV	EXIT	AOC	NOC
Independence	1.00						
Detachment	.29**	1.00					
Unsociability	.49**	.66**	1.00				
Service quality	.12	.14*	.20**	1.00			
Exit .37**	.49**	.49**	.35**	1.00			
Affective commitment	-.34**	-.53**	-.62**	-.14*	-.46**	1.00	
Normative commitment	-.20**	-.37**	-.34**	-.12	-.32**	.42**	1.00

*p<0.05; **p<0.01;

Comparisons with CSO and OC

In order to demonstrate the usability of the CSO, it would be interesting to see what differences can be found when the respondents' characteristics are compared. An independent samples t-test was conducted to compare the level of consumerism and commitment between men and women. No significant differences in the scores for independence, detachment, unsociability, exit, affective commitment and normative commitment were found. However, for the service quality subdimension there was a significant difference; women tend to rate service quality higher than men (see Table 4.6). Furthermore, ANOVA-analyses for each subdimension revealed that there are significant differences between age groups (<25, 25-35, >35) in the Independence [F (2, 245) = 10.38, p = 0.00], Unsociability [F (2, 213) = 3.81, p = 0.02], Exit [F (2, 223) = 3.83, p = 0.02] and Normative Commitment [F (2, 224) = 5.40, p = 0.01] subdimensions. Post hoc tests using the Bonferroni correction indicated that the mean for Independence for the under 25 years group (M = 2.60 SD = 0.74) significantly differs from the 25-35 years group (M = 2.90 SD = 0.74) and the over 35 years group (M = 3.16 SD = 0.80), the mean for Unsociability for the under 25 years group (M = 2.06 SD = 0.73) significantly differs from the over 35 years group (M = 2.39 SD = 0.65), the mean for Exit for the under 25 years group (M = 2.77 SD = 0.90) significantly differs from the over 35 years group (M = 3.17 SD = 0.76), and the mean for Normative Commitment for the 25-35 years group (M = 2.17 SD = 1.06) significantly differs from the under 25 years group (M = 2.65

SD = 0.99) and the over 35 years group (M = 2.62 SD = 1.06). Finally, an independent samples t-test was conducted to compare the level of consumerism and commitment between participants in a voluntary sport club and participants in a commercial sport organisation. For all subdimensions of CSO and OC there was a significant difference; sport participants in a commercial sport organisation tend to score higher on consumerism and lower in commitment than sport participants in a voluntary sport club (see Table 4.7).

Table 4.6 Independent samples t-tests for CSO and OC

	Men	Women	t	df	Sig.
Independence	29.56	27.66	-1.89	245	.06
Detachment	22.64	24.59	1.76	217	.08
Unsociability	22.27	21.82	-.45	214	.65
Service quality	34.81	37.26	2.24	218	.03
Exit	29.12	29.78	.57	224	.57
Affective commitment	36.69	36.99	.24	227	.81
Normative commitment	24.93	24.25	-.49	225	.63

Table 4.7 Independent samples t-tests for CSO and OC

	Voluntary sport club	Fitness centre	t	df	Sig.
Independence	2.62	3.54	-7.40	238	.00
Detachment	2.21	3.27	-7.56	226	.00
Unsociability	2.04	3.31	-8.40	30.96	.00
Service quality	3.54	3.86	-2.13	233	.03
Exit	2.79	3.78	-6.92	235	.00
Affective commitment	3.85	2.76	7.22	236	.00
Normative commitment	2.64	1.60	7.82	70.15	.00

4.7 Discussion and conclusion

The aim of this article was to conceptualise the consumerist attitude in sport organisations and to develop a reliable instrument for the measurement of this concept. Three focus group interviews and quantitative test of the concepts have resulted in the CSO scale. This scale is made up of five subdimensions that represent the consumerist attitude in sport organisations: 1) independence, 2) detachment, 3) unsociability, 4) service quality and 5) exit. Construct validity tests and comparisons with a validated scale (organisational commitment) show that the CSO scale is a reliable and valid scale that can be used by researchers, policy makers and sport managers.

The CSO scale can be used for numerous reasons. First, researchers can find out to what extent consumer culture has permeated a particular sport to research the meaning of sport as a cultural practice, or they can compare the consumerist arrangements in a sport

organisation with the consumerist attitude of its members to improve service quality or to determine whether voluntary sport clubs are in danger of an emerging consumerist attitude. Second, the scale can also be employed in large-scale surveys to determine the general level of consumerism in a particular geographical area or within a particular sport. For example, policy makers in a particular sport are now able to see to what extent they should encourage their clubs to modernize their activities. Third, sport administrators and managers can use the scale to evaluate the extent to which the members of their sport organisation have adopted a consumerist attitude and which subdimension(s) are most relevant for that organisation. For example, managers in the fitness and health industry can employ the scale in their organisations to inform themselves what role service quality should play in their organisation. Or administrators in a voluntary sport organisation can inform themselves about what attention they should give to flexibility of their membership offers.

Because the CSO scale contains five subdimensions, a detailed picture of any sport organisation, sport or geographical area can be obtained by applying the scale. For example, in the quantitative results of this study, it has become visible that women tend to rate service quality higher than men. This has implications for sport organisations that serve a high number of women. For sport organisations that exclusively focus on women (for example the worldwide Curves franchise), it seems appropriate to give considerable interest to this aspect in their sport activities. Through applying the CSO scale, sport managers can improve the performances of their organisations.

To conclude, the CSO scale is a useful instrument to measure consumerist attitudes in sport organisations. Further improvement of the scale can be obtained by testing it in a large-scale survey of sport participants. A confirmatory factor analysis can then further validate the scale for future use in sport organisations.

CHAPTER 5

A CONSUMERIST TURN IN DUTCH VOLUNTARY SPORT CLUBS?

Summary

This chapter focuses on the changing organisational arrangements within voluntary sport clubs. It has often been suggested that members of sport clubs are increasingly adopting consumerist attitudes towards these organisations, in which they might become less emotionally committed to the club and consequently might be less inclined to volunteer. Although it is still contested whether there is actually an increasing consumerist attitude among members, national sport organisations pressure associations to become more flexible and service-oriented. However, it is yet unknown whether these clubs are indeed changing their membership arrangements into more customer oriented arrangements in response to this pressure. Using a two-wave dataset from the Survey of Dutch Voluntary Sport Clubs (n = 337), we researched whether voluntary sport clubs are adapting practices to a supposed consumerist attitude among members and what the possible consequences of such a shift are for the involvement and commitment of members in these organisations. Our findings suggest that there is no evidence of an increasing number of voluntary sport clubs becoming more flexible and service-oriented in their membership arrangements. Moreover, we did not find support for a negative effect of consumerist forms of membership on formal involvement and emotional commitment in the clubs that have adapted their membership arrangements. We therefore conclude that there is yet no evidence for an actual consumerist turn in voluntary sport clubs.

This chapter is based on an article under review, written together with Janine van Kalmthout and Lucas Meijs:

Van der Roest, J., Van Kalmthout, J. & Meijs, L.C.P.M. (submitted). *A Consumerist Turn in Dutch Voluntary Sport Associations?*

5.1 Introduction

In the second half of the nineteenth century, self-organised voluntary sport clubs with a non-profit character started to develop in many countries. Until that time, sport and sport-like pastimes had been organised in other, often more commercial, settings. However, since the international standardization of sport in the beginning of the twentieth century, voluntary clubs have been the dominant form in which sport activities have been organised (Van Bottenburg, 2001). Since then, these organisations have steadily gained popularity and have become deeply rooted in sport culture throughout Europe (Heinemann, 1999), but also in other countries such as South Korea, Australia and New Zealand (Hover, Romijn & Breedveld, 2010). Voluntary sport clubs are defined by providing sport activities to members in a local context at a grassroots level. One of the most important aspects of the voluntary sport club is the prohibition of distributing any financial rewards among the members (Enjolras, 2002; Knoke, 1986; Van Ingen, 2009). Furthermore, voluntary sport clubs are, to a large extent, independent from state or market forces; power within these organisations is divided equally amongst its members through the use of a general assembly in which each member has voting rights (e.g. Enjolras, 2009; Heinemann, 1999; Ibsen & Seippel, 2010; Seippel, 2002; Smith, 2000; Thiel & Mayer, 2009; Wicker & Breuer, 2011). Finally, these clubs rely on the voluntary participation of their members.

However, it has been suggested in recent years that the attitudes of members toward their sport clubs are changing as a consequence of an increasing consumerist behaviour in sport participation (Bodet, 2009; Enjolras, 2002; Ibsen & Seippel, 2010) and an increasing demand for flexible sport provision (Pilgaard, 2012). These developments led Bodet (2012, p. 30) to the observation that there is a 'mismatch between sport organisations' traditional services and contemporary sport participants' expectations' which can lead to a call for voluntary sport clubs to 'soften up their tradition-bound ways of thinking' (Pilgaard, 2012, p. 157). Ibsen and Seippel (2010, p. 605) describe these trends as the emergence of a 'market logic', which might be replacing an 'association logic'. In the 'market logic' people are considered to be consumers that pay a fee in return for a service that essentially is produced by others, in the 'association logic' people see themselves as members of the collective that organises the sport.

This change is also reflected in policies formulated by national sport organisations regarding voluntary sport clubs. Whereas calls for modernization and pressures from sport policies upon voluntary sport clubs are not new (cf. Adams, 2011; Nichols et al., 2005), recent policies in e.g. the Netherlands have increased the pressure on clubs to adapt to a supposed consumerist attitude of current and potential members, underlining possibilities for improving the flexibility of sport clubs' activities (Van der Roest, Vermeulen & Van Bottenburg, 2015).

However, little is known about the extent to which voluntary sport clubs actually follow this advice and pressure and adjust their practices. In this chapter, our focus is on the change in the arrangements voluntary sport clubs offer in order to react upon this supposed rise. Our research question therefore is: Are voluntary sport clubs in the Netherlands changing their membership arrangements to adapt to a supposed rise of a consumerist attitude among members and potential members, and what are the consequences of such a shift for involvement in these clubs? We will answer this question with two-wave data from 2007 and 2012 from the Survey of Dutch Voluntary Sport Clubs, a longitudinal panel study that is conducted to evaluate the state of affairs in voluntary sport clubs.

5.2 Theoretical framework

Marketization and commercialization have been important research issues in the nonprofit and voluntary sector (cf. Dart, 2004; Eikenberry & Kluver, 2004; Enjolras, 2002; Toepler, 2004; Williams, 2004), but so far little research has been concerned with the changes that are caused by the suggested emergence of a consumerist attitude amongst members and the consequences of such an attitude for people's interests in participation in face-to-face civil society organisations (Lorentzen & Hustinx, 2007). This is striking, because a changing relationship between members and civil society organisations could have a big impact on the way civil society organisations operate and, as a possible consequence, also on levels of social capital that are produced within these organisations (cf. Putnam, 2000).

In order to research a consumerist turn in voluntary sport clubs, it is important to clarify the changes that might arise at the organisational level from the emergence of the consumerist attitude. As stated in the introduction, our focus in this chapter is on changes on the organisational level, which means that we are not concerned with the question of whether there is actually an increasing consumerist attitude on the individual level of sport club members. We are investigating the changes at organisational level, regardless whether they are to prepare for or react on a rise of consumerism amongst members. We do so by researching membership arrangements that flow from turning from an association logic towards a consumer logic.

In our theoretical framework, we will first discuss the principles of the association logic that is traditionally found within voluntary sport clubs. We will then proceed to define the pressures on voluntary sport clubs to reshape their activities, giving consideration to the ways in which these organisations might react to these pressures. We will conclude by discussing how a new consumer logic within voluntary sport clubs might affect the involvement and commitment of members.

Voluntary sport: the association logic

As was pointed out in the introduction, sport participation is organised in many countries in voluntary sport clubs. These organisations follow an association logic, a term introduced by Ibsen and Seippel (2010) to point out how voluntary sport in Denmark and Norway is organised. This term seems to be appropriate to describe the way voluntary sport clubs function in general, although Ibsen and Seippel do not provide a set definition of the association logic. They do acknowledge that one of the most important characteristics of voluntary sport clubs 'is their democratic legal structure, meaning that associations act according to democratic principles and formal (written) rules' (p. 594), an observation that holds for most countries in which sport is primarily organised in voluntary organisations. However, an association logic probably also includes the way people behave in these face-to-face mutual support organisations, because social relations appear to be important for these associations as well. In order to evaluate a possible change in the nature of these organisations, it is important to further examine this type of organisation.

First, a sound definition of association is needed in order to determine what organisations we refer to with this term. In everyday life, the term 'voluntary sport club' or 'voluntary sport association' [1] is sufficient, but for research purposes it has been suggested that a sharpening of the notion of 'association' would be beneficial (Van Ingen, 2009, p. 14). Many definitions have been given since Cole (1920) introduced a workable definition of association (Van Ingen, 2009). As our focus is on voluntary sport clubs, we have chosen to incorporate Smith's (2000)

definition of grassroots associations. We concur with Smith that the local scope of grassroots associations is one of the defining elements of these organisations. Smith's definition points out that grassroots associations are:

> *locally based, significantly autonomous, volunteer-run, formal nonprofit (i.e., voluntary) groups that manifest substantial voluntary altruism as groups and use the associational form of organisation and, thus, have official memberships of volunteers who perform most, and often all, of the work/activity done in and by these nonprofits (2000, p. 7).*

In order to get the work done in these organisations, voluntary sport clubs have developed a strong culture in which it is ascertained that there are 'club-specific norms and values include the view that voluntary support of club work is a matter of course and that supporting the work of the club is quite simply part of being a member of this interest community' (Schlesinger, Egli & Nagel, 2013, p. 36). This characteristic of supporting fellow members including yourself is common for mutual support or benefit organisations, including, for example, self-help organisations, collectors' associations and amateur brass bands (Meijs & Ten Hoorn, 2008). It is the opposite of service delivery organisations where clients are not part of the organisation such as in regular health care (Meijs & Ten Hoorn, 2008). It seems important for the survival of these associations that they have well-working recruitment and socialization processes amongst their membership. However, this also means that most associations have become self-selective and homogeneous to a large degree (Warren, 2001, p. 104).

An association logic, then, can be defined as a set of structures, norms and values within in an organisation that enables the members of that organisation to pursue a common interest and to manifest voluntary altruism. In general, these goals are obtained through participation in sporting activities, volunteering, social activities and events.

Departing from an association logic, it can be difficult to introduce a more open and consumerist way of providing services and organising activities to (non-)members. As Warren (2001) noted, associations are quite monocultural, which might imply that there are hardly any internal incentives for these organisations to change. Moreover, a consumerist approach could exclude people with lower levels of economic, social and cultural capital, because they can have troubles coming along in organisations that have taken such an approach (cf. Clarke, Newman, Smith, Vidler & Westmarland, 2007). Yet the growing attention for the consumerist attitude in sport policies pressures these organisations to adjust their approach towards their members. In the next section, we will review the way academic literature and policy texts describe contemporary developments in voluntary sport clubs and how these developments are linked to consumerism. In doing so, we show how the pressure to adjust to a consumerist attitude in voluntary sport clubs is constructed.

Pressures on voluntary sport clubs to change

In recent studies, there has been a group of authors who have suggested a shift among members of voluntary sport clubs toward more consumerist attitudes because of societal developments like individualization and informalization. Among the first authors to note such a development was Enjolras (2002). In the concluding remarks of his article on the commercialization of voluntary sport clubs, Enjolras stated that:

> *[voluntary sport clubs] are vulnerable to any form of disengagement of their members (...). Further research efforts are needed to determine whether the contemporary social*

> *changes, and particularly the trend toward increased individualization, which may contribute to transforming members' participative attitude into customer behaviour, do not gradually undermine the foundations of such a community-based economy. (2002, p. 373)*

This concern has been echoed in the years since Enjolras' publication and is not restricted to the sport sector. Lorentzen and Hustinx (2007) noticed that the concept of member-consumer is emerging in the broader context of the civil society organisations. They define the member-consumer as 'an individual who assumes membership will give her access to a product, and that the balance between costs (membership fees) and outcomes will be in her favour' (Lorentzen & Hustinx, 2007, p. 107). As a result of this proposed shift, Lorentzen and Hustinx observe the emergence of a market in which clubs need to compete with non-profit and for-profit actors. A similar observation is shared by Ibsen and Seippel (2010, p. 605) in their understanding of the emergence of a market logic in voluntary sport, in which 'financial calculations are replacing ideals and sporting objectives, and the people actively involved in sport are increasingly considered to be "customers" rather than "members"'.

In Dutch sport, "the idea that members (should) become clients or even customers is widely spread" (Meijs & Ten Hoorn, 2008, p. 39). According to Meijs and Ten Hoorn, this has resulted in a normative pressure on voluntary sport clubs to change their mutual support organisation towards a model of service delivery. Van der Roest, Vermeulen and Van Bottenburg (2015) note that because sport participants are increasingly seen as consumers, national sport organisations are urging local voluntary sport clubs to become more flexible and more service oriented. Yet, as a result of the above-mentioned pressures, voluntary sport clubs might be expected to organise according to a consumer logic. In such a logic, clubs increase the possibilities for flexibility by introducing short-term memberships with a clear price-quality ratio that can easily be terminated and increase their service orientation by providing a number of non-sport related services.

In sport sociology and sport management research, some authors have argued that voluntary sport clubs indeed should make their activities more flexible. Bodet (2009) noted that the expectations of recreational sport consumers are urging sport providers to adapt their services into quickly consumable offerings, while Pilgaard's (2012) dissertation is entirely devoted to the link between late-modern everyday life and the trend towards increasingly flexible sport participation. She concluded that voluntary sport clubs should move in the direction of making their activities more flexible, but that they also need to stay true to their traditional values of offering a well-known social setting and a feeling of security.

However, criticism on instigating more flexibility and service orientation in voluntary sport clubs is also heard. If voluntary sport clubs indeed begin to offer flexible, short-term membership forms oriented towards service, this would mean a break with the way they have always functioned; this orientation toward service is quite alien to the spirit of mutual support that has traditionally characterized most voluntary sport clubs (cf. Handy, 1988; Meijs, 1997). More precisely, the focus towards activities that are best for individual members, with a good price-quality ratio, could be contrary to the "collective action" that is needed to run voluntary sport clubs (Enjolras, 2009). Even though the precise consequences of consumerist membership arrangements for clubs are yet unknown, little argument is required to show that these arrangements are aimed at fulfilling the needs of individual members rather than promoting reciprocity and solidarity within the club. This therefore

raises the question of what these new organisational arrangements mean for the collective commitment of the members of voluntary sport clubs towards these values.

Involvement and commitment in voluntary sport clubs

As voluntary sport clubs are governed with a democratic decision-making structure (Seippel, 2002) and depend on the collective action earlier discussed in this paper, two basic forms of commitment to this type of clubs are needed to run one successfully (cf. Thiel & Mayer, 2009). First, the democratic model requires that members be involved in formal decision-making processes. A certain number of members need to attend the annual general meeting to make official decisions about the club's development, and the members need to take up several (leadership) volunteer tasks to keep the club running. Second, a certain amount of emotional or affective commitment is needed for people to retain their membership and for people to be willing to volunteer in a diverse set of functions for their club (Engelberg, Zakus, Skinner & Campbell, 2012; Schlesinger et al., 2013).

The consumer-oriented organisational arrangements described in the previous section might not be the ideal conditions for inspiring members to become and stay involved in a voluntary sport club. As forms of membership become more flexible, it will be harder to socialize new members in associational life, simply because people are present at the club on different times. Furthermore, the new forms of membership will probably attract people who are looking for an easily accessible sport organisation that carries no extra obligations next to paying a fee (cf. Bodet, 2009). This possibly means these members might be less inclined to be involved in democratic decision making processes and volunteering in the club (cf. Schlesinger et al., 2013).

The emotional or affective commitment in voluntary sport clubs could also decrease as new forms of membership are introduced in these clubs. When the membership forms in a sport club predominantly focus on satisfying the individuals' needs, it is harder to build a relationship with the other people in that club, because sporting objectives and ideals in the club are replaced by financial calculations (Ibsen & Seippel, 2010, p. 605).

5.3 Data and methods

Data source

The data in this chapter are derived from the Survey of Dutch Voluntary Sport Clubs, performed by the second author. The survey has been performed on a yearly basis from 2000 and it provides Dutch researchers and policy makers with a plethora of information about voluntary sport clubs. The survey deals with different topics, including the association's management, finances and human resources. For this chapter, longitudinal data from the panel was used to evaluate the consequences of introducing "consumerist" arrangements in voluntary sport clubs. The first time in which useful questions on this topic were collected was in November and December 2007. In December 2012, the questionnaire was set out to repeat the measurements performed in 2007. This means the variables that are used in this chapter are based on the exact same questions asked in 2007 and in 2012.

In 2007, the questionnaire was sent to 1,332 voluntary sport clubs. The questionnaires were sent to board members, often the secretary of the association. 870 out of the 1,332 completed the questionnaire, a response ratio of 65.3%. In 2012, the questionnaire was sent to 1,156 associations and was completed by 493 associations, which resulted in a response ratio of 42.6%. The response ratio in 2007 was higher because we were able to send out

more reminders and even made phone calls to non-participants that year. Because all clubs within the panel hold a unique identifier, we were able to select a sample that completed the questionnaire both in 2007 and in 2012. In total, 337 clubs completed both questionnaires. The average size of the voluntary sport clubs in our sample was relatively stable, this being 277.14 members per club in 2007 and 270.95 in 2012. Because there was a slight overrepresentation of outdoor sport clubs and team sport clubs in our sample, we weighed our data according to the data in the NOC databases (NOC*NSF, 2008; 2013).

Variables

As noted, the club survey consists of different elements to measure the situation of voluntary sport clubs. Questions in the survey cover the following topics: facilities, members and activities, organisation and management, volunteers, external support and finances. The background variables in the analyses include the club size in terms of the number of members, the age of the organisation in years, single vs. (semi) team sport, large city index (for cities over 50,000 inhabitants), and the percentages for members in formal competitions and for the youth members in the organisation. All of these are chosen on the basis of previous work on voluntary sport clubs (cf. Enjolras, 2002; Ibsen & Seippel, 2010; Schlesinger et al., 2013; Seippel, 2002; Thiel & Mayer, 2009; Wicker, Breuer, Lamprecht & Fischer, 2014; Østerlund, 2013). The independent and dependent variables need a little further elaboration, so they are presented in the following section.

Consumerist membership forms

In order to measure the introduction of new, "consumerist" membership forms, an index score was created. Because we define these membership forms as (a) short-term, (b) flexible, (c) with a clear price-quality ratio and (d) service-oriented, we include the questions measuring these indicators. Table 5.1 provides an overview of the ten items that were used in this index, with possible scores for each item being '0' and '1'. The total index ranges from 0 (non-consumerist) to 10 (consumerist).

Turnout at annual general meeting

This variable is the percentage of members present at the annual general meeting of the club, as opposed to the total number of members. If an club scored '0' in this variable it was omitted from the sample for that particular question, because that club either has no annual general meeting or the meeting was not organised in the previous year for some reason.

Volunteer percentage

This variable is a percentage of volunteers in the association, as opposed to the total number of members. Percentages above 100% were omitted from the sample for this question.

Emotional commitment to the club

For this variable, a single proposition was stated: 'The members of this club feel strongly committed to the club'. Respondents were able to rate this proposition on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (Not at all) to 5 (Completely).

Non-playing membership percentage
This variable is a percentage of non-playing members in the club, as opposed to the total number of members. Non-playing members are often people who are not involved (anymore) in sporting activities but who are still member of the voluntary sport club. This can be seen as a sign of financial and emotional solidarity with the club.

Table 5.1 Number of voluntary sport clubs offering consumerist services

	2007	2012
Gym	9	13
Student supervision	5	3
Office facilities (e.g. fax, Internet)	12	19
Physiotherapist	26	31
Children's day care centre	2	11
Work/homework/meeting facilities	15	19
Sport store	15	14
Total number of clubs with service-oriented activitites	84	110
Activities for non-members	240	255
Introduction of new sports and play activities	174	154
Flexible forms of membership	176	145
Total number of clubs with flexible activities	590	554
N	337	337

5.4 Results

In this section we present the empirical results that answer our research questions. We start with a comparison between the levels of consumerist forms of membership in 2007 and 2012 before shifting our attention to the consequences of introducing consumerist membership forms in voluntary sport clubs. As our panel data permits us to see both the cross-sectional and the longitudinal consequences of having consumerist membership forms, all questions are answered with cross-sectional and longitudinal analyses. First, Table 5.2 shows the development of relevant measures in our sample between 2007 and 2012.

Table 5.2 Development of relevant variables between 2007 and 2012

	2007	2012
Club size	284.45	280.63
Degree of consumerism in membership form	2.29	2.03
Turnout at annual general meeting (%)	27.08	28.35
Members volunteering (%)	14.03	17.10
Emotional commitment	3.49	3.79
Non-playing memberships (%)	8.64	14.25

Membership forms

Based on supposed societal developments like individualization and informalization and the pressure on voluntary sport clubs that has been mentioned in this chapter, it might be expected that an increasing number of voluntary sport clubs will offer short-term, flexible membership forms with a clear price-quality ratio. We took this expectation into account by measuring the levels of "consumerist forms of membership" on a zero-to-ten index score, as shown in the previous section. As reported in Table 5.1, the number of clubs with a service orientation slightly grew over the years between 2007 and 2012. However, the number of clubs with flexible activities dropped. To answer our first research question, we tested the level of "consumerist forms of membership" in 2007 and in 2012. A paired samples t-test was conducted to compare the level of consumerist forms of membership in 2007 and in 2012. We found no significant difference in the scores for 2007 (M=2.30, SD=1.30) and 2012 (M=2.21, SD=1.28); $t(262)=1.03$, $p = 0.306$, which means that, contrary to our expectation, the number of voluntary sport clubs with consumerist membership forms did not grow.

Even though the level of consumerist membership forms did not rise, it is still interesting to see what consequences a rise of these forms could have for individual clubs. Therefore, we shift our attention to the consequences for formal involvement in voluntary sport clubs, as formulated in the second part of our research question.

Formal involvement

In Table 5.3, the results of the cross-sectional and the longitudinal regression analysis are presented. The control variables included in the model are known to influence dependent variables such as turnout at the annual general meeting and volunteering, as was indicated in the methods section. It is clear that club size negatively influences the turnout at the annual general meeting, while the percentage of youth members also has a negative influence. On the contrary, the percentage of members in a competition influences the turnout positively. The cross-sectional model and the longitudinal model show no significant negative influences of the level of consumerist membership forms. For volunteering (Table 5.4), a different pattern was found. Again, club size negatively influences involvement in voluntary sport clubs in the cross-sectional model, but the longitudinal model shows that club size is a positive determinant for volunteering. This means that large clubs have lower levels of volunteerism, but they have been more successful in volunteer recruitment over the last five years. Interestingly, the level of consumerist membership forms also has a significant positive relationship with the number of members who volunteer, both in the cross-sectional and the longitudinal model.

Table 5.3 Regression of logged turnout at Annual General Meeting on background variables and level of consumerist membership forms (cross-sectional results for 2012 and longitudinal results 2007-2012). Coefficients and standard errors.

	Cross-sectional model	Longitudinal model
Independent variable	Turnout at AGM (log)	Turnout at AGM (log)
(Constant)	2.648*** (.102)	1.103*** (.178)
2007 level of AGM turnout (log)	-	.568*** (.062)
Club size (log)	-.627*** (.048)	-.255*** (.052)
Age of the organisation	-.001 (.001)	.000 (.001)
Team sport index (team sports =1)	-.002 (.054)	-.043 (.044)
Large city (large city=1)	-.002 (.039)	-.013 (.032)
Percentage of members in formal competitions	.002* (.001)	.001* (.001)
Percentage of youth members in the club	-.007*** (.001)	-.003* (.001)
Degree of consumerism in membership form	.005 (.017)	-.001 (.013)
Adjusted R^2	.669	.789
N	215	183

Note: Regression coefficients included in the table are non-standardized.
*p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001

Table 5.4 Regression of percentage of members volunteering on background variables and level of consumerist membership forms (cross-sectional results for 2012 and longitudinal results 2007-2012). Coefficients and standard errors.

	Cross-sectional model	Longitudinal model
Independent variable	Members volunteering (log)	Members volunteering (log)
(Constant)	1.545*** (.138)	-.085 (.288)
2007 level of members volunteering (log)	-	.513*** (.086)
Club size (log)	-.230** (.065)	.326** (.105)
Age of the organisation	.001 (.001)	.001 (.001)
Team sport index (team sports =1)	.078 (.070)	.105 (.065)
Large city (large city=1)	-.058 (.052)	.006 (.047)
Percentage of members in formal competitions	.000 (.001)	-.001 (.001)
Percentage of youth members	-.002 (.001)	-.002 (.001)
Degree of consumerism in membership form	.058* (.022)	.047* (.019)
Adjusted R^2	.070	.274
N	206	158

Note: Regression coefficients included in the table are non-standardized.
*p<.05; **p<.01; ***p<0.001

Emotional commitment

Tables 5.5 and 5.6 provide an overview of the results for the cross-sectional data and the longitudinal data for both variables that measure emotional commitment. First, club size is a negative determinant of commitment, like it was for both measures of formal involvement. In the cross-sectional model, clubs with team sport have higher emotional commitment, whereas the level of youth members in the club is a negative determinant of commitment. The degree of consumerism in a club's membership form has a positive influence on the commitment of its members. The longitudinal model shows that only the 2007 level of commitment influences the 2012 data. Finally, the degree of consumerism in membership form is not related to lower numbers of non-playing membership. Club size and the age of the organisation do have a significant effect on the number of non-playing memberships in a voluntary sport club.

Table 5.5 Regression of emotional commitment on background variables and level of consumerist membership forms (cross-sectional results for 2012 and longitudinal results 2007-2012). Coefficients and standard errors.

	Cross-sectional model	Longitudinal model
Independent variable	Emotional commitment	Emotional commitment
(Constant)	4.512*** (.251)	3.001*** (.445)
2007 level of emotional commitment	-	.322*** (.084)
Club size (log)	-.422** (.123)	-.149 (.131)
Age of the organisation	-.003 (.002)	-.003 (.002)
Team sport index (team sports =1)	.304* (.137)	.214 (.154)
Large city (large city=1)	.009 (.104)	.093 (.113)
Percentage of members in formal competitions	.002 (.002)	.002 (.002)
Percentage of youth members	-.009** (.003)	-.006 (.003)
Degree of consumerism in membership form	.104* (.045)	-.024 (.046)
Adjusted R^2	.151	.137
N	228	190

Note: Regression coefficients included in the table are non-standardized.

*p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001

Table 5.6 Regression of non-playing memberships on background variables and level of consumerist membership forms forms (cross-sectional results for 2012 and longitudinal results 2007-2012). Coefficients and standard errors.

	Cross-sectional model	Longitudinal model
Independent variable	Non-playing memberships	Non-playing memberships
(Constant)	1.271*** (.172)	.823*** (.231)
2007 level of non-playing memberships	-	.457*** (.082)
Club size (log)	-.257** (.083)	-.185 (.098)
Age of the organisation	.006*** (.001)	.005** (.002)
Team sport index (team sports =1)	.310** (.095)	.139 (.108)
Large city (large city=1)	-.007 (.073)	.050 (.080)
Percentage of members in formal competitions	-.002 (.001)	.000 (.002)
Percentage of youth members	-.002 (.002)	-.002 (.002)
Degree of consumerism in membership form	.019 (.031)	-.012 (.031)
Adjusted R^2	.151	.349
N	173	106

Note: Regression coefficients included in the table are non-standardized.
*p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001

5.5 Discussion

This chapter is one of first to present longitudinal data to understand the development of voluntary sport clubs as reaction on (supposed) changes in the society (cf. Wicker, Breuer, Hennigs, 2012). Our main goal with this article is to shed light on the consequences of, a by academics and national sport associations proclaimed, consumerist turn of members in local voluntary sport clubs on the formal involvement and emotional commitment of members of these clubs. Based on the data, we have presented the development of a sample of voluntary sport clubs in the Netherlands over the past five years (2007-2012) both cross-sectional as longitudinal. Because we did not research associations that disappeared in these years, our sample is biased towards the clubs that survived these past five years.

With this limitation or feature of our sample in mind, it is even more surprising to see that the surviving clubs in our study have not made much effort to respond to the proposed emergence of the consumer. In spite of modernization and consumerist calls from national sport organisations (see Van der Roest, Vermeulen & Van Bottenburg, 2015), very few clubs in our study have become more oriented towards flexibility and service. In contrast, in the whole sample they even have become less flexible in their membership services. This means that, based upon our study, an actual consumerist turn at the local organisational level is not taking place in voluntary sport clubs. This is remarkable, because we had expected such a turn, based on the literature on the development of voluntary sport clubs and the content of national policies in this field. Unfortunately, our study does not provide any conclusive information about the existence or non-existence of a consumerist attitude at the individual

level. Based upon our organisational level findings, members of voluntary sport clubs are perhaps just not asking for a change towards consumerism.

Clubs are often reproached for not modernizing their activities, but whether this is justified if members are not requesting a change is questionable. From this observation the question emerges as to whether voluntary sport clubs might be immune to consumerist pressures because of the way they are organised. Perhaps in sport, the traditional "association logic" is still stronger than the "consumer logic".

This would be in line with Salipante and Golden-Biddle (1995), who claim that traditionalism is a mechanism of continuity in nonprofit organisations. They note that 'the continuity of practices that has led to reliable mission-based performance in the past is to be valued' (Salipante & Golden-Biddle, 1995, p. 4). Because many voluntary sport clubs offer competitive sport to their members, the organisational practices, mission, expertise and identity of these clubs are quite clear to their environment. This has made them reliable and accountable to their members and their resource providers (cf. Hannan & Freeman, 1984; Salipante & Golden-Biddle, 1995). Salipante and Golden-Biddle (1995) therefore recommend that nonprofit organisations capitalize on their traditionality. In their view, these organisations 'are well advised to maintain their core practices and identity through constancy of their practices, understanding and exploitation of their histories, and strengthening of their traditionality' (p. 16). They do note that this last recommendation is the most problematic one, as the pressure on nonprofits to become more business-like is high.

However, anecdotal evidence from large membership organisations, particularly in Europe, suggests that the first contours of a countermovement against consumerism are already becoming visible. For example, the Dutch Royal Touring Club ANWB is trying to once again infuse its brand name with the connotations of commitment and enduring support that has been part of its membership tradition. One example is the re-introduction of volunteerism as part of the clubs (Algemene Nederlandse Wielrijders Bond Vrijwilligers, n.d.) and the introduction of membership communities on different topics (Algemene Nederlandse Wielrijders Bond, n.d.). Likewise, commercial brands are creating "friendship" and more commitment among their consumers. In the voluntary sport sector in the Netherlands, this countermovement is also becoming apparent, for instance through a new advertising campaign by the Royal Dutch Football Association that underlines "togetherness" and stresses the importance of football as 'the biggest social network in the Netherlands' (Koninklijke Nederlandse Voetbal Bond, 2014).

Because there was no large increase in voluntary sport clubs adapting their organisational arrangements, the effects on the involvement and commitment of members has also proven to be limited. Still, our study shows some interesting results. First, the 2007 level of the dependent variable showed to be highly significant in every longitudinal analysis, indicating that changes indeed come about slowly in voluntary sport clubs. Second, size of the organisation remains one of the most important determinants in explaining differences between voluntary sport clubs in all of our analyses (cf. Ibsen, 1992; Wicker et al., 2014; Østerlund, 2013). Remarkably, the effect of organisational size over time showed some mixed results. In the longitudinal analysis on member turnout to the AGMs, size was a negative determinant, whereas it was a positive determinant for the percentage of members volunteering. Third, the level of consumerist membership forms can have positive effects on voluntary sport clubs. Clubs that did introduce new and innovative membership forms have more positive attitudes towards the future and a higher percentage of volunteers within the

organisation. This suggests that modernizing the association to a limited extent might have positive consequences for voluntary sport clubs, which is again in line with Salipante and Golden-Biddle (1995), who claim that gradual change that incorporates continuity is the most successful strategy for the survival of these organisations.

That last observation deserves some extra attention. Some authors have noted that consumer instead of membership behaviour in sport clubs might have detrimental effects on the community character of these organisations (e.g. Enjolras, 2002; Ibsen & Seippel, 2010). Our study shows that this might not necessarily be the case, as "consumerist" associations do not show lower levels of commitment. However, the question remains as to what extent customer behaviour actually is present in these organisations. Do people really relate to (sport) clubs as they would do to consumer-supplier relationships, or is there still some sense of commitment in being a member of a club? Based upon our research, there is little evidence that a consumerist turn is actually taking place, and it is yet unknown whether such a turn will happen at all. Yet we do have a reservation regarding that observation. Our results do not show any evidence of decreasing numbers of volunteers in sport clubs. However, our study offers no insights in the character of volunteerism in these clubs. Further research is needed to determine whether an increased focus towards service delivery and consumerism does yield changes in the management of volunteers. It might be the case that volunteers are increasingly seen as 'a flexibly recruited and easily interchangeable unpaid "workforce"' (Lorentzen & Hustinx, 2007) rather than as important members of the organisation (cf. Meijs & Hoogstad, 2001).

5.6 Conclusion

In this study, we researched whether voluntary sport clubs in the Netherlands are changing their services by adapting to a proclaimed and supposed consumerist attitude in sport participation and what the consequences of such a shift are for member involvement in these clubs. We found that there is little evidence of sport clubs adapting to a consumerist attitude among their members. Based on our study, there is no consumerist shift taking place in Dutch voluntary sport clubs. Furthermore, we found that in clubs that have changed their services towards more flexible activities and a service orientation, there was little evidence of decreasing levels of commitment among the members. Further research is needed into this concept of "committed consumers" as opposed to "committed members" in sport clubs.

Future research might provide more insights into the changing arrangements of voluntary sport clubs to see whether they are adapting to a public that is thought to increasingly display consumerist attitudes in its membership behaviour. A focus beyond voluntary sport clubs in the Netherlands is needed to examine whether this modernization of clubs is taking place in a broader context. As we have noted, the (supposed) trend of sport clubs members becoming more consumer-oriented might also be taking place in voluntary clubs outside the sport sector, such as choirs, scouting groups and patient organisations.

Finally, the attitude towards these organisations should be critically examined on an individual level to evaluate levels of consumerist attitudes among members. Our research does raise questions about the viability of the expected consumerist turn in sport clubs. If actual changes in the services of sport clubs are not occurring, while the organisations are remaining relatively stable, it might be that in this fragmented market not all clubs need to make these arrangements. Some clubs might benefit from offering their activities in a

more flexible way, but improved flexibility does not necessarily imply that members are becoming consumers. In this respect, we concur with Pilgaard (2012) in that flexibility might be attractive for some clubs, but only if the traditional values of sport clubs are maintained.

Notes

[1] The original article uses the words 'voluntary sport association' troughout the entire article. However, to reach conformity with the other chapters in this dissertation, 'voluntary sport club' is used in this chapter as well.

CHAPTER 6

THE CONSUMER LOGIC VS. THE ASSOCIATION LOGIC: A TALE OF TWO WORLDS?

Summary

It has been argued that individualization and commercialization have given rise to the emergence of a consumer logic in voluntary sport clubs. This logic is deemed to contrast the traditional association logic, which has been the dominant logic in these organisations since they were founded. This chapter answers the question why a consumer logic has emerged in some voluntary sport clubs in the Netherlands, where the association logic has been the dominant logic since they were founded using three data sources. First, it builds on panel data from the Dutch Voluntary Sport Club Survey (n=337). Second, an online survey (n=679) was deployed to measure members' attitudes towards their voluntary sport club. Third, data from Statistics Netherlands were used to measure socio-demographics in the environment of voluntary sport clubs. The chapter shows that, contrary to what is often expected, the presence of a consumer logic in a voluntary sport club cannot be explained by the demand of its members, nor by the socio-demographics of the members or the environments they operate in. Rather, the presence of a consumer logic is related to institutional factors. More specifically, voluntary sport clubs that are organised according to a consumer logic experience more competition, cooperate more often and attract more external funds than voluntary sport clubs with an association logic. Moreover, their boards are younger, higher educated, relatively volatile and have more formalized goals. These findings imply that popular beliefs about consumerist attitudes in voluntary sport clubs should be reconsidered. Policy makers and voluntary sport club managers should have more attention for the institutional environments and board characteristics of voluntary sport clubs when proposing changes in these organisations.

This chapter is based on an article under review:

Jan-Willem van der Roest (submitted). *The consumer logic vs. the association logic: a tale of two worlds?*

6.1 Introduction

In sport research and policy, there is growing concern about the future development of voluntary sport clubs in many European countries. It has been argued that societal developments such as individualization and commercialization have given rise to consumerist attitudes among members and potential members of voluntary sport clubs, and that this might be a threat to the fundamental principles of these organisations (Enjolras, 2002; Ibsen & Seippel, 2010; Van der Roest, Vermeulen & Van Bottenburg, 2015). This observation has pressured voluntary sport clubs to adjust their activities to meet a perceived consumer demand, by introducing flexible structures and offering a range of additional services. Some clubs in the Netherlands have indeed adopted a number of these changes, indicating that they have moved towards a 'consumer logic'. Yet a majority of voluntary sport clubs are still governed by an 'association logic', meaning that they only offer activities directly related to the sport and that they use the traditional year-round form of membership (Van der Roest, Van Kalmthout & Meijs, 2015). They try to maintain

> *the loyalty and continuous participation of their members, but they do so in traditional ways guided by the logic of making the member adapt to the existing sporting system instead of offering adapted training and ways of organising activities in order to suit different groups' needs and demands in different phases of their lives. (Pilgaard, 2012, p. 51)*

The aim of this article is to answer the question why a consumer logic has emerged in some voluntary sport clubs in one the largest voluntary sectors in the world in terms of number of organisations, volunteers and members (Curtis, Baer & Grabb, 2001; Dekker & De Hart, 2009; McCloughan, Batt, Costine & Scully, 2011), in which an association logic has been the dominant modus operandi for many years (cf. Ibsen & Seippel, 2010; Skirstad & Chelladurai, 2011). By exploring a range of possible explanations, this article shows that the presence of consumer logic in Dutch voluntary sport clubs is the result of institutional processes rather than member demand.

This study builds on earlier articles that have explored the replacement of voluntary values with professional or commercial values from an institutional perspective. In particular, the study adopts insights provided by O'Brien and Slack's (2004) article on the professionalization of Britain's Rugby Union, Fahlén, Stenling and Vestin's (2008) analysis of organisational change in a Swedish ice hockey club, and Skirstad and Chelladurai's (2011) study of the embodiment of multiple institutional logics in voluntary sport clubs. Contrary to these studies, this article uses quantitative data to explain why the dominant logic in voluntary sport clubs shifts. Moreover, this study is concerned with logic shifts in voluntary sport clubs without an elite sport focus. As such it offers a perspective on organisational changes that might affect many members in the world of voluntary organised sports.

The article begins with an introduction of the literature study on consumerism in voluntary organisations and a theoretical framework for institutional theory. Thereafter, a description of the methods used in this study and the findings regarding possible explanations for the presence of consumer logic are presented. The article ends with a discussion of the impact of consumerism on the voluntary sport sector and the co-existence of multiple institutional logics in this organisational field.

6.2 Consumerism in the Dutch voluntary sport sector

As stated in the introduction, the Dutch voluntary sport sector can be considered one of the largest and best organised in the world. This view is supported by results from the Eurobarometer (2014), in which the Netherlands tops the ranking of voluntary sport club membership, with 27% of the population being a member of one or more voluntary sport club. For the most part, Dutch voluntary sport clubs are single-sport clubs, and 42% of the clubs have their own sport facility (Daamen, Veerman, Van Kalmthout & Van der Werff, 2013). The average voluntary sport club in the Netherlands has 48 volunteers and 2.3 employees, yet 47% of the clubs do not offer any form of financial compensation for the work that is done in their clubs (Daamen et al., 2013). Also, the average club has approximately 195 members; around a third have more than 250 members. This makes them smaller than German voluntary sport clubs, which have an average membership of 420, comparable to their Scandinavian counterparts (Daamen et al., 2013; Ibsen & Seippel, 2010; Wicker & Breuer, 2011).

In the past decades, voluntary sport clubs in the Netherlands have experienced a paradoxical development. One the one hand, the sector has grown rapidly because of the growing popularity of sports and recreation. In fact, many clubs have made a successful transition from the competitive sport model towards becoming more recreation-oriented (Waardenburg & Van Bottenburg, 2013). However, because of the growing popularity of sports and recreational activities in society, competition for new members has also become fiercer. Notably, the competition between voluntary and professional health and fitness centers has increased. In 2013, 19% of the Dutch population was a member of a private health and fitness center, compared to 9% in 1991 (Eurobarometer, 2014; Hover, Hakkers & Breedveld, 2012). On the contrary, 27% of the population was a member of a voluntary sport club in 2013, compared to 34% in 1991 (Eurobarometer, 2014; Van ‘t Verlaat, 2010).

This increasing competition from commercial sport organisations in combination with broader societal developments such as individualization have led to considerable interest from policy makers in the Dutch voluntary sport sector (Van der Roest, Vermeulen & Van Bottenburg, 2015). On the one hand, Van der Roest, Vermeulen and Van Bottenburg note, these policy makers regard an increasing consumerist attitude as a threat to voluntary sport clubs, because individualistic behavior can diminish the public’s interest in these clubs. On the other hand, they see the emergence of consumerism as an opportunity to improve and modernize voluntary sport clubs. However, it is not yet clear whether these concerns reflect an actual change in the attitude of voluntary sport club members, as there is no empirical evidence that either confirms or rejects this change.

Moreover, it is not quite clear what is meant by the term ‘consumerism’, and consumers in voluntary sport clubs are an under-researched group. Whereas core and peripheral volunteers have been researched in different countries (Cuskelly, Hoyt & Auld, 2006; Engelberg, 2008; Ringuet-Riot, Cuskelly, Auld & Zakus, 2014; Schlesinger & Nagel, 2013; Østerlund, 2013), members with a consumerist attitude in voluntary sport club settings have received almost no attention to date, even though their proposed rise is expected to form a major threat to these organisations (Enjolras, 2002). Therefore, Van der Roest (2015) researched how such an attitude can be defined and understood, using both qualitative and quantitative methods. From his research, a scale for the measurement of consumerism on the individual level emerged. This scale consists of five dimensions: independence, detachment, unsociability, service quality and exit.

The first dimension is independence. Since many sport participants nowadays seem to have more complex agendas then thirty or forty years ago, it is more important for people to have the opportunity to arrange their own sport activities or to have flexible opportunities to participate in sport (Pilgaard, 2012). This dimension also reflects the focus on individual choice opportunities that is at the heart of consumer culture (Clarke, Newman, Smith, Vidler & Westmarland, 2007; Featherstone, 2007; Gabriel & Lang, 2006) and which manifests itself among others in sport organisations (Sassatelli, 2010).

The second dimension is detachment. Members with a consumerist attitude tend to become detached from the organisation and are less involved than other members. As was noted by Schlesinger, Egli and Nagel (2013), consumption-oriented sport participants might be less inclined to volunteer or take up other responsibilities within the organisation.

The third dimension in this scale is unsociability. People with consumerist attitudes seem to be less willing to commit themselves to social activities. This is reflected in a statement by Gabriel and Lang (2006, p. 174) on consumerism, in which they note that consumers 'need not to be members of a community, nor do they have to act on its behalf. Consumers operate in impersonal markets, where they can make choices unburdened by guilt or social obligations.' Here it becomes evident how consumerism might be quite an alien concept for voluntary sport clubs, which can be described as social communities par excellence.

The fourth dimension is service quality. As with every consumer, the sport consumer expects service quality for the fee that he or she pays. Even though this seems obvious, Van der Roest (2015) shows that people with a less consumerist attitude often settle for lower quality.

Finally, the fifth dimension on the scale is exit. If the services of a sport organisation do not meet the expectations of members with a consumerist attitude, they are more apt to consider leaving the organisation than more 'traditional' members. In sum, consumerism is a multi-dimensional concept, which can only be defined and understood by considering these separate dimensions in parallel. Also, not all sport participants with a consumerist attitude show the same profile on these dimensions; this varies from sport to sport and from context to context.

As discussed in the introduction, concerns about the proposed rise of a consumerist attitude in voluntary sport clubs go hand in hand with the rise of a consumer logic at the organisational level (Ibsen & Seippel, 2010). However, the question is why this logic emerges in some voluntary sport clubs but not in others. An obvious explanation might be that members of some voluntary sport clubs tend to be more consumerist than those in other clubs, but thus far no evidence can be found that this is indeed the case. Instead, institutional pressures on voluntary sport clubs might better explain how and why a consumer logic has emerged in voluntary sport clubs (cf. Stenling & Fahlén, 2009). Van der Roest, Vermeulen and Van Bottenburg (2015) showed how national sport organisations have constructed the emergence of the sport consumer in sport policies without presenting any empirical evidence for the existence of such an attitude. Moreover, Van 't Verlaat (2010) concluded that national sport organisations intend to deinstitutionalize the association logic as outcome of wider marketization processes. The question, therefore, is whether institutional pressures can serve as a viable alternative explanation of why the dominant association logic is being replaced by a consumer logic in some voluntary sport clubs.

6.3 Theoretical framework: institutional theory

In order to research the emergence of a new institutional logic in the field of voluntary sport clubs, it should first be clearly stated what an institution is and how institutions can shape the prevailing logic in a particular field. Washington & Patterson's (2011) excellent article on the connections between institutional theory and sport management will be followed, in order to introduce some of the key concepts that are central to institutional theory and which are relevant for this study. First, the definition of an institution and key tenets of institutional theory are discussed. Second, the tenets are linked to research that has been done in the voluntary sport sector to discuss the emergence of a consumer logic in this sector.

For many, Selznick's (1957) book Leadership in Administration provides a definition of what an institution is. According to Selznick (1957, p. 17), an institution is 'an organisation infused with value'. However, Washington and Patterson (2011) point to Berger and Luckmann (1967) and neo-institutionalism to explain that an institution can also exist in non-organisational forms. They therefore use Greenwood, Oliver, Suddaby and Sahlin-Andersson's (2008) definition, which offers a more structural approach to what an institution is: 'More-or-less, taken-for-granted repetitive social behavior that is underpinned by normative systems and cognitive understandings that give meaning to social exchange and thus enable self-reproducing social order.' Washington and Patterson then continue by reviewing five key tenets of institutional theory: (1) isomorphism, (2) organisational fields, (3) institutional logics, (4) institutionalization and legitimacy and (5) organisational and institutional change. In the next sections, these tenets will be discussed in light of the voluntary sport sector to discuss the emergence of a consumer logic in this sector.

One of the key elements of institutional theory is isomorphism. In order to explain the homogenization of organisational fields and the quest for legitimacy, DiMaggio & Powell (1983) observe three different forms of isomorphism, through which stability and similarity can be explained. They argue that coercive, mimetic and normative isomorphic processes all lead to homogenization of organisations and that these each have their own mechanisms through which maximum legitimacy is achieved. Coercive isomorphism is a result of external pressure exerted on organisations to make them take on a particular form. Coercive pressures can both be formal and informal and are most often shaped by the legal or rational environment in which the organisations find themselves. For voluntary sport clubs an obvious coercive pressure is the non-distribution constraint, which states that voluntary sport clubs are not allowed to make any profits. Mimetic isomorphism occurs when organisations operate in insecure circumstances. O'Brien and Slack (2004) have shown how periods of high uncertainty in amateur sport contexts can lead to rapid changes, as a result of which clubs that face uncertain conditions tend to copy the structures and practices of high status organisations. Normative isomorphism means that training and education can lead to shared beliefs and standards about what are appropriate practices in an organisational field. For example, training and education programs organised by national governing bodies can transfer certain ideas about what are appropriate practices in the organisational field of voluntary sports to board members of voluntary sport clubs.

In the conception of institutional theory, an organisational field is the aggregate of all organisations that 'constitute a recognized area of institutional life: key suppliers, resource and product consumers, regulatory agencies and other organisations that produce similar services or products'. (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983, p. 143). According to Washington and

Patterson (2011), this view has expanded how organisations think about operating in markets or networks by recognizing the influence of non-competitive organisational actors. The organisational field of Dutch voluntary sports constitutes all national governing bodies, all voluntary sport clubs and, increasingly, organisations such as commercial parties, schools and welfare organisations (Waardenburg & Van Bottenburg, 2013). The national umbrella organisation plays a pivotal role in setting the agenda for the development of national sport policy regarding voluntary sport clubs (Van der Roest, Vermeulen & Van Bottenburg, 2015; Waardenburg & Van Bottenburg, 2013). Commercial parties and entrepreneurs often play a role in the local context as sponsors and financers of voluntary sport clubs. In this sense, voluntary sport clubs are highly dependent on their environment in terms of their resources as well (cf. Pfeffer & Salanzik, 1978). Furthermore, the emphasis on the social responsibilities of voluntary sport clubs that has emerged over the years means that other parties such as schools and welfare organisations have entered the field. The aggregate of these organisations is relevant for explaining the emergence of new types of institutional logics. For example, Skirstad and Chelladurai (2011) show how regulatory bodies played an important role in the emergence of the commercial and the professional logic of a Norwegian soccer club.

Because of their lengthy history, voluntary sport organisations are often characterized by strong, deeply embedded logics (Skirstad & Chelladurai, 2011). An institutional logic can be defined as a set of shared ideas and beliefs in organisational fields that result in strategies and operations which help actors to maximize their legitimacy in that field (O'Brien & Slack, 2004; Prahalad & Bettis, 1986). Legitimacy is defined in this respect as 'the degree of cultural support for an organisation – the extent to which the array of established cultural accounts provide explanations for its existence, functioning, and jurisdiction, and lack or deny alternatives' (Meyer & Scott, 1983, p. 201).

For voluntary sport clubs, the voluntary logic, or as Ibsen and Seippel (2010) put it, the association logic, seems to be the core operating principle that is very ingrained and slow to change (Skirstad & Chelladurai, 2011). However, this logic has come under pressure in recent years (Van der Roest, Vermeulen & Van Bottenburg, 2015), clearing the way for alternative logics to emerge. Case studies have shown that external as well as internal pressures can cause radical changes in the logics of these organisations (Fahlén, Stenling & Vestin, 2008; O'Brien & Slack, 2004).

However, Skirstad and Chelladurai (2011) argue that radical change is not the only process through which the voluntary logic in sport organisations can shift. In their study of a Norwegian multi-sports club they showed that two logics can operate side by side. It would therefore be interesting to see what the introduction of a consumer logic in some voluntary sport clubs means for these clubs. First, this is interesting because previous studies that have focused on the introduction of new logics in voluntary sport clubs have all studied changes that deal with forms of elite sports in the organisation (Fahlén et al., 2008; O'Brien & Slack, 2004; Skirstad & Chelladurai, 2011), whereas the introduction of a consumer logic still resides in the sport participation model that is aimed at providing sports to many. Second, only a few studies have examined the gradual emergence of institutional logics, as most work has focused on either institutional stability or radical change in logics (Washington & Patterson, 2011). Third, it has been suggested that the introduction of a consumer logic could cause serious problems for voluntary sport clubs and could even undermine the foundations of these organisations (Enjolras, 2002).

6.4 Methods

For this article, multiple data sources were used. First, the article builds on data from the Dutch Voluntary Sport Club Survey, collected in 2007 and 2012. This survey of voluntary sport clubs in the Netherlands is representative in terms of club size, type of sport and municipality size. In 2007, 870 out of 1,332 voluntary sport clubs completed the questionnaire, a response ratio of 65.3%. In 2012, 493 out of 1,156 voluntary sport clubs completed the repeated questionnaire, a response ratio of 42.6%. Board members of these voluntary sport clubs, often the chair or secretary of the board, were the ones who filled out the questionnaires. In total, 337 associations completed both questionnaires, providing data on a wide range of matters pertaining to voluntary sport clubs, including human resources, finances and cooperation with other organisations. This data was then used for the following survey to select voluntary sport clubs that predominantly have either an association logic or a consumer logic.

According to Van der Roest, Van Kalmthout & Van Bottenburg (2015), a consumer logic can be identified when clubs offer flexible, short-term memberships with a clear price-quality ratio that can easily be terminated and when they offer additional services such as physiotherapy or children's day care to members and non-members. An index score ranging from 1-10 was created that measures the presence of flexible forms of membership, the introduction of new forms of sports and play, activities for non-members, a gym, student supervision, office facilities, physiotherapy, day care for children, work/homework/meeting facilities and sport stores. For the absence or presence of each of these characteristics either a '0' or a '1' was assigned to them, together forming the 1-10 index score. Eight voluntary sport clubs in four different sports were selected for further analyses. In each sport (golf, tennis, soccer and korfball) one voluntary sport club was selected that had the lowest index score in that sport and one voluntary sport club that had the highest score. Apart from this score, the voluntary sport clubs were selected so as to be as similar as possible in size, organisation age and municipality size. After these voluntary sport clubs had been selected, an e-mail was sent to the board members requesting their participation in further research. Of the first eight clubs that were selected, two voluntary sport clubs declined to participate, after which the second best option was picked. A full overview of the participating voluntary sport clubs can be found in Table 6.1.

Table 6.1 Overview of selected voluntary sport clubs

Type of sport and logic	Size (members)	Organisation Age (years)	Municipality size	Number of questionnaires sent out	Response ratio (%)
Golf (consumer)	1000	27	39,078	880	23.9
Golf (association)	364	29	158,004	325	32.6
Korfball (consumer)	300	83	157,534	180	26.1
Korfball (association)	130	68	19,931	52	36.5
Tennis (consumer)	540	61	37,655	420	22.6
Tennis (association)	717	62	26,671	393	29.3
Soccer (consumer)	362	53	14,591	180	18.9
Soccer (association)	314	69	15,092	189	28.0

After eight clubs agreed to participate, an e-mail was sent out to all club members above the age of 15 inviting them to fill out an online survey. The survey that was sent out contained the Consumerism in Sport Organisations (CSO) Scale (Van der Roest, 2015), questions on social capital, membership and volunteering in other organisations and a demographics section. In six voluntary sport clubs the e-mail containing the link to the survey was sent out by the board. In two cases the researcher sent out the e-mail. In total, 2,619 people were invited to participate, of which 679 filled out the survey. This means the response percentage was 25.9%. It must be noted, nevertheless, that for five voluntary sport clubs no e-mail bounce statistics were available. Hence, the number of people who received the invitation was probably a bit lower than reported and thus the response percentage may actually have been slightly higher than 25.9%.

Finally, for the eight cases, information was gathered from Statistics Netherlands (CBS Statline, 2014) about the environments in which these voluntary sport clubs operate. For each case, postal codes where at least 20% of its members live[1] were selected. In total, the researched areas covered between 27.9% and 80.4% of the total membership base of each club. The information available was on the areas' population (sex, age, density and ethnicity), home values, income, urbanization and proximity of medical, educational and recreational facilities.

Thus, to answer the question as to why a consumer logic has arisen in some voluntary sport clubs whereas other voluntary sport clubs keep to an association logic, a similar case design was employed in the four sports. The only variable on which the voluntary sport clubs within a sport varied is the index score that measured the extent to which the voluntary sport club had introduced flexible, short-term memberships with a clear price-quality ratio that could easily be terminated and additional services for members and non-members. Student's t-tests were performed in order to compare means between the clubs with consumer logics and association logics in every single sport. This approach was taken because comparison over sports was not possible due to the large differences between these sports.

6.5 Results and discussion

An obvious explanation for the presence of a consumer logic would be that there is demand for it by members of the voluntary sport club. This explanation logically follows the argument made by policy makers in the Dutch voluntary sport sector, namely that voluntary sport clubs should adapt to the demands of their increasingly consumerist members (Van der Roest, Vermeulen & Van Bottenburg, 2015). However, as Van der Roest, Vermeulen and Van Bottenburg have asked, the question is whether this is actually the case. Is there indeed a relationship between the consumer logic and the demands of members?

Table 6.2 suggests that this is hardly the case. Although it must be noted that the response percentages for voluntary sport clubs with an association logic were slightly higher than for the voluntary sport clubs with a consumer logic, there are hardly any differences between the two logics when considering the scores on the CSO. Only within golf and soccer are there significant differences, and these appear when it comes to detachment and exit, but in the other variables there are no noticeable differences between the logics. This suggests that there might be better explanations for the presence of a consumer logic in voluntary sport clubs. The socio-cultural backgrounds and the societal embeddedness of the members of voluntary sport clubs might explain why some voluntary sport clubs have adopted a consumer logic.

The members' embeddedness in society is defined here as their memberships, time spent and volunteering in other societal organisations, and their generalized trust. These variables were taken into account to see whether, apart from a consumerist attitude, the backgrounds of members in voluntary sport clubs that are organised according to a consumer logic are fundamentally different than those of the members of voluntary sport clubs with an association logic.

In Table 6.2, the socio-demographics of the members of the eight voluntary sport clubs are presented. Here, it appears that the two logics do not have fundamentally different membership profiles, although a t-test suggests that the average household income in the golf club that runs on a consumer logic is significantly higher than it is in the golf club with an association logic. However, the remaining variables do not show any significant differences between voluntary sport clubs with a consumer logic and an association logic in terms of the age, educational level and household income of the members. When it comes to general trust, there are significant differences visible in the soccer and the golf cases, but not in the tennis and korfball cases. Finally, the participation in other societal organisations for the members of the eight voluntary sport clubs only differs significantly in the korfball and soccer cases, as can be found in Table 6.3.

Comparing individual differences between members of consumer logic clubs and association logic clubs does not offer satisfying explanations for the differences between these logics, either. Therefore, in the next sections alternative explanations that can be found within an organisation and its contingency will be evaluated. For these explanations, data from the four case studies are combined with data from the panel study that provides information on all 337 voluntary sport clubs.

Table 6.2 Consumerism and socio-demographics in selected voluntary sport clubs

	Golf		Korfball		Tennis		Soccer	
	(c)	(a)	(c)	(a)	(c)	(a)	(c)	(a)
Consumerism								
Independence	4.18	4.12	2.84	2.61	4.13	4.14	3.15	2.93
Detachment	2.70*	2.46*	2.42	2.2	2.75	2.74	2.71	2.41
Unsociability	2.68	2.56	2.15	2.32	2.70	2.58	2.51	2.17
Service quality	3.26	3.29	3.10	3.37	3.04	3.02	3.00	2.73
Exit	2.80	3.03	2.23	2.29	2.93	2.94	2.71*	2.14*
Age	64.7	65.5	39.6	37.3	56.1	54.1	31.4	37.6
Male (%)	72	66	61	53	60	53	94	100
Household Income (%)								
€ 0 – 40.000	16	32	54	50	21	32	17	20
€ 40.000 – 80.000	49	41	32	40	49	54	61	69
€ 80.000>	35	26	14	10	30	14	22	11
Education (%)								
Low	15	19	17	0	14	21	21	19
Middle	32	30	39	27	33	39	45	43
High	53	51	43	73	53	41	33	38

*p<0.05

Table 6.3 Embeddedness and social capital of members of voluntary sport clubs

	Golf		Korfball		Tennis		Soccer	
	(c)	(a)	(c)	(a)	(c)	(a)	(c)	(a)
Number of memberships in other organisations	1.89	1.90	2.11*	1.04*	1.4	1.73	1.25	1.18
Volunteering in other organisations (hours)	1.55	1.94	1.97	2.19	1.7	1.54	2.09*	0.56*
Time spent in other organisations (hours)	4.88	4.62	1.66	2.73	2.61	3.64	3.41	1.66
Time spent total (hours)	14.74	14.96	8.24	9.61	7.99	7.66	9.6	7.91
Generalized trust (1-5)[a]	3.86	3.70	4.12	4.07	4.00	3.77	3.47*	4.35*

*p<0.05

[a] In general, would you say most people can be trusted?

Social environment of voluntary sport clubs

A better explanation for the differences between voluntary sport clubs might be the composition of the environment of the selected voluntary sport clubs. The data provided by the Dutch Statistical Office shows that the environment can vary on a number of aspects.

First, the demographics in the social environment were considered. As was pointed out in the method section, the social environment in this study is defined as the neighborhoods in which the members of the selected voluntary sport clubs live. The demographics in Table 6.4 show that there is not much difference between the environments of the two types of voluntary sport clubs.

There are some indications that VCSs that follow a consumer logic tend to operate in more urbanized and densely populated areas than voluntary sport clubs with an association logic, but the evidence is not convincing, as the golf case shows reverse numbers. Also, the composition of the areas in terms of age and gender are also not very different from each other, as is the case on a large number of variables that are provided by the Statistics Netherlands[2] (CBS Statline, 2014). One variable that does show differences is the average income per inhabitant. For every voluntary sport club with a consumer logic, the average income is higher than its counterpart that holds an association logic. However, the question is whether this is a satisfying explanation for the differences between the two types of clubs. In analysing the background of the members of the voluntary sport clubs, it became apparent that income plays a role only in the golf case. This means that no satisfactory explanation for the differences between the two types of voluntary sport clubs was found in this study. Therefore, the article now turns to institutional theory to explore whether this offers a perspective that can explain the presence of a consumer logic in some voluntary sport clubs.

Table 6.4 Demographics of social environment of voluntary sport clubs

	Golf		Korfball		Tennis		Soccer	
	(c)	(a)	(c)	(a)	(c)	(a)	(c)	(a)
Age								
0-25 years	28	32	28	30	29	27	28	32
25-65 years	51	51	53	53	55	53	51	55
65+ years	19	15	20	17	16	19	19	14
Average income per inhabitant (EUR x 1,000)	24.7	20.5	22.2	21.2	22.0	21.7	26.1	23.4
Single households (%)	43	49	43	47	44	39	43	46
Population Density[a]	2,774	3,308	3,488	172	1,063	868	767	47
Urbanization degree[b]	3.0	2.7	2.5	5.0	4.0	4.5	4.0	4.5

[a] Number of inhabitants per km^2

[b] 1=Very high urban, 5= Not urban

An institutional perspective on differences between two logics

The previous sections pointed out that neither consumerist demand by members nor the composition of voluntary sport clubs and their environments account for the presence of a consumer logic vs. an association logic in voluntary sport clubs. Therefore, further exploration of the data related to the organisation itself was conducted in the eight cases and later, where possible, on the panel study of 337 voluntary sport clubs to either falsify or confirm the results of the case studies.

First, in exploring the data on the cases in this study, it became visible that voluntary sport clubs that operate under a consumer logic are much more externally oriented than those that run under an association logic. As can be seen in Table 6.5, the higher a voluntary sport club scores on the consumerism index, the higher the average number of cooperating organisations (e.g. schools, municipalities, other voluntary sport clubs). A majority of voluntary sport clubs that fall completely within the association logic (i.e., have a score of zero on the consumerism index) have zero or only one cooperating organisation, whereas more than half of the voluntary sport clubs with a score of four or higher on the consumerism index have more than four cooperating partners. This provides a first indication that there are differences between the two types of voluntary sport clubs. The table also shows that clubs with higher consumerism scores experience more competition in obtaining new members within their own sport. Whereas 75% of the voluntary sport clubs with an association logic indicated that they do not experience any competition at all, only 32% of the clubs with a score of four or higher face no competition in their own sport. Finally, Table 6.5 also shows that voluntary sport clubs with a high score on the consumerism index are also more financially dependent on their environment. The higher a voluntary sport club scores on the consumerism index, the lower the financial contribution of their own members is compared to external funding such as government subsidies, sponsoring and other external or commercial income.

Taken together, it appears that the institutional environment plays an important role in voluntary sport clubs with a consumer logic. This finding corresponds with Skirstad and Chelladurai's (2011) observation that institutional pressures can cause changes in the operating logic of voluntary sport clubs and Danisman, Hinings and Slack's (2006) finding that different sub-units of an organisation can follow different logics because of the different institutional environments with which they are associated. In this case, it appears that the two types of voluntary sport clubs are confronted with different patterns of institutional pressure because of their different institutional environments.

Table 6.5 External views and activities of voluntary sport clubs

	Total number of cooperating partners (2007, %)					Experiences competition in own sport (2007, %)		Share of internal funding (2007, %)
Consumerism Index (2012)	0	1	2	3	4>	No	Yes	
0	38	25	20	6	11	76	24	72
1	26	25	14	10	25	64	36	66
2	16	23	18	20	23	60	40	65
3	10	7	22	23	38	58	42	60
4>	8	5	8	27	53	32	68	56

However, it should be questioned whether different voluntary sport clubs actually face different institutional environments or whether they simply perceive their institutional environments differently. Table 6.6 shows differences between the boards of voluntary sport clubs with a consumer logic and those with an association logic. From this table it can

concluded that the younger age groups are more strongly represented in voluntary sport clubs with high scores on the consumerism index than in voluntary sport clubs with a low score, while it must be noted that this is not caused by age differences in the club, as was shown in Table 6.2. Table 6.6 also shows that boards in voluntary sport clubs with a consumer logic are generally more highly educated than their more traditional counterparts and that they have a higher level of volatility (turnover). It must be noted that this data comes from the 2012 data set, as data on this point was not available in 2007. Finally, the boards of voluntary sport clubs having a consumer logic are more likely to have formal, written policy plans. Only one-fifth of the voluntary sport clubs with a score of zero on the consumerism index have such written plans, while more than half of the clubs with the highest score on this index have written policy plans.

Table 6.6 Composition of boards and presence of policy plans

	Age (2007, %)			Educational level (%)[a]			Number of years served as board member[a]	Presence of formal, written policy plans (2007, %)	
Consumerism Index (2012)	0-36 years	36-55 years	55+ years	Low	Middle	High		No	Yes
0	0	54	46	26	26	47	13.0	79	21
1	3	66	31	13	25	62	10.9	77	23
2	4	81	15	16	32	53	9.5	69	31
3	6	81	13	11	30	59	8.5	57	43
4>	15	59	27	13	9	78	5.3	54	46

[a] Only represents board member who filled out the questionnaire (2012)

From Tables 6.5 and 6.6 it can be concluded that there is a relationship between the institutional environment and resource dependencies and the presence of a consumer logic. It appears that external control of voluntary sport clubs is positively related to the emergence of a consumer logic in voluntary sport clubs (cf. Pfeffer & Salanzik, 1978). This might imply that external control of voluntary sport clubs is relevant for the emergence of a consumer logic. voluntary sport clubs might respond to external pressures strategically by adopting this logic (cf. Oliver, 1991). However, the data does not offer a precise indication for how this mechanism works. Another reason for the emergence of a consumer logic seems to be isomorphism. Processes of normative and mimetic isomorphism are likely to affect voluntary sport clubs. Normative isomorphism is described by DiMaggio & Powell (1983) as a process in which educational and professional norms lead to the adoption of structures and activities that are perceived in an organisational field as being legitimate.

As is visible in Table 6.6, voluntary sport clubs with younger, more highly educated board members and high volatility have a greater probability of a high score on the consumerism index. First, board members with a higher level of education might be more likely to legitimize the cognitive bases of organisational norms. Second, the diffusion of institutional norms occurs through the networks in which organisations participate (DiMaggio & Powell,

1983; O'Brien & Slack, 2004). Waardenburg (forthcoming) shows that voluntary sport clubs that are perceived as successful serve as examples that are continually placed in the spotlight on websites and at conferences meant to inspire board members of voluntary sport clubs. In this way, the diffusion of a certain institutional logic can occur through norms, but it also hints at a process of mimetic isomorphism. By placing certain voluntary sport clubs in the spotlight, these become high status organisations that are then successful in obtaining legitimacy in the field of voluntary sports. Other voluntary sport clubs might copy the practices and structures of these clubs.

Competing logics or coexistence?
Although the data shows that voluntary sport clubs that had connections to the 'outside world' and a younger board in 2007 were more likely to operate according to a consumer logic in 2012, few conclusions about causality should be drawn on this basis. This study shows that there are institutional reasons for the emergence of a consumer logic, this is probably a slow process in which the association logic has gradually been replaced by a consumer logic. However, it is still unclear as to whether the consumer logic will eventually gain dominance over the association logic. This is unlikely to be true for the entire population of voluntary sport clubs, as some voluntary sport clubs simply do not have the means or the will to change their structure, operations and rationales. But it is also unsure for individual voluntary sport clubs which already have adopted a consumer logic. In their analysis of a Norwegian sport club, Skirstad and Chelladurai (2011) showed that it is more probable that both types of logic exist side by side. The question is whether this is a time of transition in which the consumer logic will eventually become the dominant logic. Stenling and Fahlén (2009) argue that there is an order between logics, and that it is probable that logics around commercialism and professionalism eventually will dominate over 'sports for all' logics, but Skirstad and Chelladurai (2011, p. 350) emphasize the value of coexistence, 'based on the realization by all parties of the benefits accruing to [different logics]'. As can be concluded from the gradual adoption of the consumer logic and the few consequences it has for voluntary sport clubs (Van der Roest, Van Kalmthout & Meijs, 2015), coexistence is indeed the most likely mode in which these two logics will remain for the coming years. Further development of voluntary sport clubs is still difficult to predict.

6.6 Conclusion

The results of this study falsify the popular explanation for the presence of a consumer logic in voluntary sport clubs, namely the idea that members demand a more consumerist way to enjoy the activities of their voluntary sport club (cf. Van der Roest, Vermeulen & Van Bottenburg, 2015). It also shows that in four cases in different sports, neither the socio-cultural backgrounds nor the embeddedness of members in voluntary sport clubs with a consumer logic and an association logic differed significantly from each other overall. Second, the study also shows that voluntary sport clubs with a consumer logic do not operate in significantly different social environments than voluntary sport clubs with an association logic. Rather, there seem to be institutional reasons for the presence of a consumer logic in some voluntary sport clubs. Things that play a role in making a voluntary sport club more likely to adopt a consumer logic are stronger institutional ties and a focus on the outside world, as well as a youthful composition of the board. Therefore, resource dependency and normative and mimetic isomorphism are concepts well suited to explaining the emergence of

this logic in a world that has long been dominated by 'sports for all' principles.

Further research should be able to provide thick descriptions and historical analyses of how and why certain voluntary sport clubs have taken a first step in the direction of the consumer logic. For a better understanding of the development of voluntary sport clubs it is crucial to understand why these choices have been made and whether mimetic and normative processes indeed have their effect on these choices. For example, a historical sociological perspective could offer path-dependent explanations to explain the development of voluntary sport clubs. At a given point in history, may some voluntary sport clubs have chosen to make the decision to 'open up' to the outside world because of an organisational crisis or because of significant changes in the institutional environment of voluntary sport clubs? These points could then be identified as critical junctures, after which self-reinforcing sequences have followed to further develop a consumer logic in voluntary sport clubs (Mahoney, 2000).

Furthermore, it would be worthwhile to investigate the demise and survival of voluntary sport clubs. Are voluntary sport clubs that have adopted a consumer logic indeed better suited to institutional norms and pressures, making their survival easier? Or are these clubs in danger of creating a process of self-destruction (Horch, 1998) in the sense that they are creating democratic problems and diminishing membership engagement (Stenling & Fahlén, 2009)?

Notes

[1] For the two golf clubs, information on the postal codes with at least 5% of the members was collected because of the large size of these clubs and the dispersion of the members over a larger area.

[2] A large number of variables was collected, including the ethnic diversity, financial backgrounds and distance to a range of facilities. There were no striking differences found apart from the ones reported in Table 4. A full overview of these data can be obtained from the author upon request.

CHAPTER 7

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

7.1 Understanding consumerism in voluntary sport clubs

With this thesis I have joined the quest to understand and evaluate the impact of a consumerist attitude on voluntary sport clubs and have examined how such clubs are dealing with this change. This is an important topic because many sport clubs based on voluntary membership and volunteer work are currently struggling with the question of what membership means within their organisations. Many are worried that a consumerist attitude among their (potential) members could threaten their right to existence. A lack of understanding about this attitude in relation to voluntary sport clubs can have negative consequences for the continuation of such organisations. I therefore have researched the consumerist attitude in the voluntary sport sector on three levels: 1) I have studied its meaning through the eyes of sport policy makers; 2) I have developed an understanding of the consumerist attitude held by sport club administrators, instructors and members; and 3) I have evaluated the reasons for and consequences of adapting to a consumerist attitude in voluntary sport clubs at the organisational level. In this concluding chapter I will answer the research questions that were raised in Chapter 1. First, in this section the more general answers to both research questions are formulated. In the following section I discuss the research results in detail. I then conclude with an agenda for future research and a presentation of the implications and limitations of this study.
This study has sought to answer the question of what a consumerist attitude means in relation to voluntary sport clubs. In Chapter 1 I stated that because there is so little empirical knowledge concerning the consumerist attitude, the concept should first be further defined in order to pave the road for research and analysis into the manner in which voluntary sport clubs deal with this attitude. The study therefore contains two research questions:

1. *What does the consumerist attitude mean in relation to voluntary sport clubs?*
2. *How and why do voluntary sport clubs deal with the perceived consumerist attitude in their organisations?*

The first question was researched at different levels in the sector. Of course, the distinction between these levels is somewhat artificial, as many people who are involved at the policy making level or at the club administration level are also involved in their local club as active sportsmen. This means that policy makers often bring their own experiences and (professional) knowledge with them, but also their experiences with regard to their own membership in a sport club. Club administrators are often active sport participants as well. As such, in this study I found that ideas about the meaning of the consumerist attitude are shared among different levels. Naturally, differences were found in what people consider to be a consumerist attitude, but many actors shared somewhat similar perceptions of the consumerist attitude in relation to the voluntary sport club.

The second question was evaluated at the organisational level. The question of how voluntary sport clubs deal with the proposed consumerist attitude among their members was answered using longitudinal data from the Dutch Voluntary Sport Club Panel. I found that some voluntary sport clubs have changed their services to become more flexible and more service-oriented, but the majority of clubs have not. After this became clear, I introduced the question as to what reasons clubs have to either change or to remain traditional.

The first question in this thesis was researched from a mixed methods approach. I have argued that studies in sport management could merit such an approach but that

little is known about its use or application within this sub-discipline of the social sciences. Therefore, I first conducted an examination of the prevalence of mixed methods in sport management and the way sport management scholars have conducted these studies. In doing so, I wanted to create a guide with which I could thoroughly apply the mixed methods approach. In the next section I discuss the highlights of adopting a mixed methods in sport management research and the influence it has had on this study.

7.2 A mixed methods approach to the consumerist attitude in voluntary sport clubs

Mixed methods are increasingly used in the social sciences (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010), but my study of their use of in sport management research has shown that mixed methods are still underused in this emerging academic sub-discipline. In total, 1.7% of all sport management articles in four leading journals between 1966 and 2011 were found to be mixed methods articles. In more established disciplines this percentage is much higher, which led me to call upon sport management researchers to deploy more mixed methods studies. This call was made earlier by Rudd and Johnson (2010) and is not based just on the low prevalence of mixed methods, but also on the merits this approach can have for studies. There are very good and valid reasons not to engage in mixed methods research, and mixed methods research should not be and end in itself (Greene, 2012). Still, for many studies or topics, applying mixed methods can help to better understand the research problem at hand. In order to do so, however, the mixing of quantitative and qualitative methods should be done properly. Therefore, I also reviewed the literature on mainstream mixed methods to see what needs to be taken into consideration when applying a mixed methods approach.

From this literature, it appears that a mixed methods approach has much to gain from considering some specific elements, such as its paradigmatic stance, the rationale behind adopting such an approach, and the choice of methods and how these are integrated in the study. The paradigmatic stance is a contested subject between mixed methods scholars (Greene, 2008). While some mixed methods scholars work from one paradigmatic standpoint, others are of the opinion that different paradigms can or even should be included in order to fully take advantage of a mixed methods approach. This study has taken a pragmatic stance as defined by Morgan (2007). According to Morgan, such a stance does not mean that the relevance of ontological and epistemological discussions are ignored. Instead, it considers methods to be loosely coupled with epistemology and places methodology at the heart of how social scientists approach their research. Within this approach, it is important to note that a pragmatic stance relies on abductive reasoning 'that moves back and forth between induction and deduction—first converting observations into theories and then assessing those theories through action' (Morgan, 2007, p. 71). In this study, I have gone back and forth between theory and empirics, and between qualitative and quantitative research results.

Second, it is also argued that effective mixed methods research should always present one or more rationales for mixing quantitative and qualitative research methods. A wide array of rationales is presented by Bryman (2006), who indicates that the 'whatever works' position for integrating these different methods no longer works for scholars who take mixed methods research seriously. Instead, they should think about and formulate their rationale for combining methods. My analysis shows that in sport management research few scholars formulate a rationale. Moreover, those who do so do not always live up to the rationale they have expressed. Therefore, a careful consideration of the rationale for doing mixed methods

research is needed in the very early stages of any research project. In Chapter 1 of this thesis I described different rationales that can be classified according to Bryman's (2006) system. The first rationale can be identified as different research questions. I have indicated that each method should answer different questions on different levels. The second rationale I put forward relates to the fact that the qualitative results about the meaning of the consumerist attitude were enhanced by the quantitative results, although this strategy can also be seen as a diversity of views, where the relationships between the dimensions of the consumerist attitude were uncovered with quantitative results.

Third, the methods themselves and the process of mixing also deserve the attention of any scholar who wants to carry out mixed methods research. A good research plan is crucial in this respect. Greene (2007) even argues that the status and the timing of interaction between methods is the most crucial aspect of mixed methods research. Researchers should therefore carefully consider the priority given to each method, the timing of their methods and the inquiry phase in which the quantitative and qualitative strands of research are mixed.

In this thesis I have researched the consumerist attitude through the use of mixed methods research to reach a deeper understanding of this concept. The mixing of qualitative and quantitative results occurred in different stages of the research, and multiple inquiry methods were used. The first research question contained a completely mixed design, where results obtained through qualitative research led to a better understanding of the consumerist attitude. This in turn provided information with which I was able to develop a quantitative measuring instrument. I did this because in the qualitative stage I found that there is still little empirical data about the consumerist attitude. This was established in a qualitative analysis of policy documents written by Dutch national sport organisations.

7.3 Dealing with societal changes: the rise of a consumerist discourse

Concerns about the possible rise of a consumerist attitude among members of voluntary sport clubs did not develop out of the blue. As I have shown in Chapter 1, wider societal developments as well as specific developments within the Dutch sport sector have given rise to these worries. Processes of individualisation, informalisation and specific developments such as the rising popularity of fitness have contributed to increased attention for the consumerist attitude in voluntary sport clubs in scientific work, professional publications and conferences and in sport policy documents. In these policy documents, societal changes are noted as the cause for the consumerist attitude in relation to voluntary sport clubs.

The hints at societal developments that are made by policy makers have a threatening sound. They try to underline that the consumerist attitude is an outcome of these developments and that this attitude threatens the future of the voluntary sport club. The following quote by Enjolras (2002, p. 373) can be marked as one of the first to observe that 'social changes, and particularly the trend toward increased individualization might transform members' participative attitude into customer behavior'. Enjolras explicitly linked this trend to a possible decline of voluntary sport clubs and added that this trend needed further research efforts. Sport policy makers have used the same argument to illustrate the worrying future of voluntary sport clubs, as I have shown in Chapter 3.

All of these hints at societal developments have one common feature: they lack any empirical evidence that societal developments are indeed linked to an emerging consumerist attitude and that the future of voluntary sport clubs is under pressure because of this attitude.

For social scientists, this is reason to indicate that more research on the topic is needed (Enjolras, 2002; Ibsen & Seippel, 2010; Van der Roest, Vermeulen & Van Bottenburg, 2015). However, before this study was undertaken, no attempts at understanding the consumerist attitude were made. For sport policy makers, this knowledge gap became an opportunity to express their concerns regarding voluntary sport clubs and to frame the issue in a specific way.

In sport policy plans, the consumerist attitude among members of voluntary sport clubs is presented as a clearly established fact. The questions social scientists ask when discussing the possible existence of a consumerist attitude are not reflected in sport policy plans. In these plans, wider societal developments and their impact on the emergence of a consumerist attitude among members of voluntary sport clubs are presented as facts that are the outcome of 'solid sociological analyses' (Van der Roest, Vermeulen & Van Bottenburg, 2015, p. 112). These facts are used as an opportunity to paint dark clouds above the voluntary sport club. A threatening version of consumerism is sketched, and the crumbling of associational life is announced.

These threats to associations are used to make a case for making the consumer more central in voluntary sport clubs. This is an interesting shift in sport policy plans, a shift that could be described as a rhetorical trick. By indicating the big threats that stem from the consumerist attitude, and given the factual sound to this analysis, policy makers create a platform with which to put forward the opportunities that come from focusing on the consumer. Here it becomes visible that the discourse around consumerism is socially constructed. This discourse revolves around the member-consumer who, according to sport policy makers (cf. NOC*NSF, 2012), should be made more central by national sport organisations and voluntary sport clubs. This has far-reaching consequences for the way policy makers look at voluntary sport clubs. They state that voluntary sport clubs are in need of modernisation in order to remain relevant as sport organisations.

In this way, the consumerist discourse in sport is very much related to wider societal discourses around consumerism. The discursive line of reasoning that can be found in other non-profit sectors closely parallels the way in which sport policy makers argue that voluntary sport clubs should be modernised. In Chapter 3 I reviewed public service consumerism to better understand the way policy makers in the Dutch voluntary sport sector construct the consumerist discourse in sport. From this review, it is clear that in both sectors the organisations responsible for service delivery are being labelled as old-fashioned and unprepared for the demands of the modern consumer. The quote in Chapter 3 by Clarke (2005) is illustrative of the way these organisations are viewed:

> *The view of citizens as consumers of public services has been a consistent and expanding focus, based on the claim that social changes towards a 'consumer culture' have created both experiences and expectations of individualised choice among the population. Against these standards, public services are judged backward, inadequate and dominated by producer paternalism. (p. 449)*

This view of voluntary sport clubs as being old-fashioned has led to pressure on voluntary sport clubs to go through a process of organisational change. One of the most important arguments for change is that clubs should be tuned in to the demand of their members. According to sport policy makers, sport activities cannot be understood from a 'one size fits all' perspective (e.g. Koninklijke Nederlandse Hockey Bond, 2010), and clubs should become aware of the demands of their members.

However, from this research it seems that national sport organisations themselves are not attempting to understand the attitudes of member-consumers better; rather, they are pushing all voluntary sport clubs in the direction of a more 'consumerist' model. This left the question open as to what a consumerist attitude is and how it can be understood. At least it became clear that there was no empirical evidence about how such an attitude relates to voluntary sport clubs. Thus, the idea that members should become customers could turn out to be an example of the Thomas theorem. This theorem describes that perceived realities can have (unexpected and unintended) real outcomes. The theorem says that 'if men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences' (Thomas & Thomas 1928, p. 572).

In Chapter 4, I therefore continued the quest to better understand the consumerist attitude by researching how this attitude is constructed by people who deal with it in everyday life in the voluntary sport club.

7.4 The consumerist attitude in five dimensions

In order to understand the consumerist attitude in relation to voluntary sport clubs, I have looked at two different aspects in this thesis. First, I wanted to understand this attitude through the eyes of people who are directly involved in voluntary sport clubs: administrators, instructors and members. How do these actors view the consumerist attitude, and what dimensions of it do they see? Second, I wanted to simplify these meanings in order to develop a research scale for the consumerist attitude. This would make it possible to understand the meaning and the significance on a larger scale. Moreover, it would allow researchers, policy makers and administrators or managers of sport organisations to determine whether members in their organisation have consumerist attitudes towards the organisation. A research scale could help them to understand the magnitude of the challenges their organisations face, but also to identify the specific dimensions on which members in their organisations have consumerist attitudes.

In the group interviews it became clear that the consumerist attitude is not a one-dimensional concept. Rather, different people recognised different aspects in the attitudes they saw with other members, but also with themselves. Both positive and negative feelings about various aspects of the consumerist attitude became visible. Some respondents explicitly stated that they do not want to be addressed as consumers in their voluntary sport club, while others stated that some aspects of the consumerist attitude are indeed applicable to the way they behave in sport organisations.

The analysis ultimately categorised the meanings given to the consumerist attitude into five dimensions which had a sufficient level of internal consistency to be part of the research instrument for measuring the consumerist attitude. I will briefly discuss these dimensions before moving on to their implications for voluntary sport clubs.

Independence

One of the most prominent dimensions in the consumerist attitude is independence. As can be recognised in the quote at the beginning of this dissertation, and in the statements that are made in Chapter 1 and Chapter 3, times have changed. This means that the consumerist attitude is one in which people make their own choices, unburdened by the demands of others. This means they want to be able to decide about the moment, the substance and the duration of their sport activities without being restrained by others in that choice.

Detachment
The second dimension that appeared to be at the heart of the construction of the consumerist attitude is detachment. Many respondents were very clear about the fact that they expect member-consumers to have a sense of detachment towards their sport organisation. This is also visible in scientific writing about the consumerist attitude. Schlesinger, Egli & Nagel (2013), for example, note that solidarity and involvement are contrary to what one would expect from a member-consumer. Volunteer work and commitments outside the sport itself, then, are the opposites of what member-consumers will accept in their sport organisation.

Unsociability
Another dimension of the consumerist attitude is unsociability. This dimension is related to the first dimension, in which it became clear that member-consumers have independent attitudes towards sport organisations. As in the first dimension, other individuals are more of a nuisance for the sport experience than a resource or a fortuity. Social activities, then, are not something the typical member-consumer enjoys. He or she could be interested in these activities, but only if it contributes to their own benefits.

Service quality
A slightly different but rather significant dimension is the service quality dimension. This dimension measures whether member-consumers attach importance to the quality of the sporting activities and the sport instructors. In the focus group interviews, terms like 'value for money' were mentioned in order to underline the importance of service quality. Also, in the literature on fitness and health clubs, service quality is an important topic that is considered by sport management scholars and practitioners.

Exit
The final dimension that was developed to understand the consumerist attitude is exit. This dimension is closely related to the service quality that sport organisations deliver. After all, if they do not deliver, and the member-consumer becomes unhappy or dissatisfied, he or she will leave the organisation. From the focus group interviews it was evident that this is not the case with members without consumerist attitudes, as they are more likely to stay loyal to the organisation even if it in any sense does not live up to their expectations. Moreover, committed and involved members will probably try to influence the organisation to improve its activities instead of leaving it.

Overall, the construction of the consumerist attitude has enough consistency to offer a valid and reliable research scale. The meanings given to the consumerist attitude by people involved in the voluntary sport sector in the focus group interviews are recognised by the larger group of members in sport organisations who filled out the questionnaire. The dimensions have enough discriminant validity, and they have a negative correlation to the settled research scale of organisational commitment. This gives a good indication of the scale's validity. Moreover, the scores of people who are active in commercial sport organisations are significantly higher than the scores of members in voluntary sport organisations. This also indicates that in organisations where one could have expected consumerist attitudes, these are indeed found with the research scale. It can therefore be comfortably concluded that the Consumerism in Sport Organisations Scale is a valid and reliable scale for further use in the quest for the consumerist attitude's meaning and its significance for the voluntary sport sector.

The five dimensions in relation to choice and voice

The character of voluntary sport clubs is somewhat distinct from the character of public service providers. I concluded in Chapters 1 and 3 that the main concepts in the literature, choice and voice, could well serve as fruitful soil for beginning the quest for the meaning of the consumerist attitude in voluntary sport clubs. Choice and voice do indeed provide first clues as to what the consumerist attitude is in relation to the voluntary sport club. The ability to choose what is best for the self-interest of the individual is the fundamental idea in both cases (cf. Clarke et al., 2007). The dimensions 'independence' and 'service quality' thus have clear links with choice. Voice relates in both cases to the individual challenging the authorities in an organisation, which is present in the detachment dimension. However, the voluntary nature of clubs and the social character of voluntary sport clubs make that choice and voice alone do not adequately describe the consumerist attitude in these clubs. The voluntary nature of clubs makes the exit option much more prominent than it is in public service providers. This has profound consequences for the way the consumerist attitude is shaped and how it relates to the organisations.

The voluntary nature of clubs also changes the 'detachment' dimension. Because voluntary sport clubs are collections of people who have committed themselves to the organisation, they also need to govern these clubs themselves. Therefore, voice has a somewhat different meaning here. In public service providers, voice is aimed at challenging authorities so the citizen can defend his or her own rights. In voluntary sport clubs, voice relates to the presence or absence of collective responsibility for the governance of the organisation.

Also, the social character of voluntary sport clubs makes the consumerist attitude in these organisations different than it is in public service providers. Within clubs the frequency of social contact is much higher than it is in public service providers, and oftentimes the very aim of a club is to provide interaction among its members. Therefore, the consumerist attitude within clubs is quite distinctive. The absence of sociability or calculative behaviour with respect to this aspect proved to be one of the key components of the consumerist attitude. One of the respondents in Chapter 4 said: 'It is rather impersonal for most people. I do meet a lot of people, I do chat with them, but that's it.' (Chapter 4, p. 92). This comment reflects the contradictory nature that the consumerist attitude has to the social character of voluntary sport clubs.

Choice and voice certainly have their place in the consumerist attitude in voluntary sport clubs, albeit in a way different from that found in public service providers. The voluntary nature and the social character make the consumerist attitude here somewhat different. The question is how voluntary sport clubs deal with this attitude. The second research question and the main aim of this thesis were to evaluate the influence of consumerism on voluntary sport clubs. How and why do these clubs deal with the perceived consumerist attitude, and what are the consequences of the arrangements they develop to adapt to this attitude? So far, it has become clear that there is pressure on voluntary sport clubs to change their arrangements, even though the empirical evidence for the idea that a consumerist attitude is threatening these organisations is not convincing.

7.5 Organisational change: a co-existence of logics in 'consumerist clubs'

Based upon the pressure on voluntary sport clubs to change their arrangements, it could have been expected that a large number of clubs indeed organise flexible activities and have

introduced a large number of non-sport related services. However, as became apparent in Chapter 5, the number of clubs with flexible forms of membership and the possibility to try out new forms of sport and play decreased between 2007 and 2012. The number of services increased, but this phenomenon is still restricted to a small number of voluntary sport clubs. One aspect that did increase over the selected time period is the number of professionals in voluntary sport clubs. In 2007, the percentage of professionals per club was 0.34. This figure went up to 0.72. Along with this percentage, a few measures of involvement and commitment in the clubs also went up. In the clubs in the sample of the Dutch Voluntary Sport Club Monitor that I researched, there were significantly more volunteers, passive members and members at the annual general meeting. The reported commitment among the members also grew, according to board members active in these clubs.

Thus far, a consumerist turn does not seem to have taken place in voluntary sport clubs. This is striking in view of the expectations from the national sport organisations mentioned in Chapter 3. In this respect, the association logic still appears to be stronger than the consumer logic that was expected to dominate (cf. Ibsen & Seippel, 2010). This association logic is defined as a set of structures, norms and values that promote commitment and solidarity among members of voluntary (sport) clubs (cf. Schlesinger, Egli & Nagel, 2013; Smith, 2000). Two forms of commitment to the organisation are needed to run a voluntary sport club successfully. First, members should be involved in the executive volunteer work and in the decision-making processes of the club to make decisions about the club's strategies and operations. Second, members need to identify with the club to some extent and show emotional commitment to the club to retain their memberships.

Even though the number of voluntary sport clubs that became more consumerist in their operations did not increase in the period 2007-2012, it was still interesting to see what a consumerist turn for specific clubs did to the members' commitment. Out of the findings of Chapter 5, based upon the Dutch Voluntary Sport Club Panel, it can be concluded that a move towards a more consumerist model of organising in voluntary sport clubs does not have adverse effects on the commitment of members. Rather, it turned out quite positively for voluntary sport clubs based upon the number of volunteers they had in the period the study was undertaken. It seems that the bigger clubs in the study and, to a lesser extent, the clubs with consumerist membership arrangements, were quite successful in attracting new volunteers. The percentage of volunteers in these clubs in general showed a rising pattern. This conclusion is quite similar to Enjolras' (2002) finding that clubs with a higher degree of commercialisation were more successful in attracting volunteers. The findings in this thesis could have two causes. First, consumerist clubs might be clubs which have started to operate more professionally and, through recruitment campaigns and the entrance of professionals in these clubs, have indeed attracted people who did not volunteer beforehand. Second, these clubs might also experience an increasing division of tasks. Due to time constraints and the demand for project-based volunteering they might need a larger number of volunteers to carry out the same work in the organisation. These two options could probably occur at the same time as well. Most importantly, it is clear that for a group of voluntary sport clubs the operations have changed. The question was, though, why these clubs have changed. Have they indeed adapted to a consumerist attitude among their members, or are there other reasons for organisational change?

Reasons for change: falsification of the thesis of member demand

After having determined that there was little change in the clubs in the voluntary sport clubs in the panel study, I tried to explain why the group of clubs that moved from an association logic to a consumer logic did actually change. In order to research this, the tensions between these two logics were examined. Ibsen and Seippel (2010) indicated that a market logic could gain ground in certain places in the voluntary sport sector. For this dissertation, market logic was translated to consumer logic, but it has roughly the same meaning. According to Ibsen and Seippel (2010, p. 605) 'the people actively involved in sport are increasingly considered to be "customers" rather than "members"'. As became clear from this dissertation, this is not the case for all voluntary sport clubs in the sector. However, a division between two sub-sectors within the voluntary sport sector could well become reality.

In order to research this possible division, I contrasted the group of clubs that have a consumer logic with the group of clubs that have an association logic. Of course, this contrast is not black and white. In reality there are many shades of grey between these logics, but it was interesting to compare the extremes. I did so by researching the claim that voluntary sport clubs change because of the demands made by their members. Indeed, it is thought that clubs with many members who harbour a consumerist attitude are moving in the direction of a consumer logic, while clubs that have many committed members have retained their traditional association logic based upon involvement and loyalty.

Yet I found little evidence to substantiate this claim. Rather, there were very few differences between the two types that were contrasted. Eight clubs in four different sports were selected from the Dutch Voluntary Sport Club Monitor to research the consumerist attitudes within these clubs. Out of this research it appeared that the members who completed the questionnaires scored quite similarly on all five dimensions of the Consumerism in Sport Organisation Scale. Between the different types of sports there were large differences, but within any given sport there were hardly any significant variations. Thus, the development of some voluntary sport clubs in the direction of consumer logic cannot be explained by the demand of their members.

However, I did find evidence of other differences between the two types of clubs. After having falsified the members' demand thesis for the presence of a consumer logic in voluntary sport clubs, I went beyond the data of individual respondents to explain the differences. I found that there were all sorts of institutional differences to be observed in the groups of clubs I had researched. These differences are explained in the next section.

Reasons for change: an institutional perspective

Institutional theory provides all sorts of starting points from which to explain the emergence of a consumer logic in some voluntary sport clubs. Based on this theory, it can be explained why voluntary sport clubs have been stable over the course of the last few decades and, for a large majority, still exhibit traditional patterns of organising their activities. This is the case because actors in organisations are likely to follow 'more-or-less, taken-for-granted, repetitive social behavior that is underpinned by normative systems and cognitive understandings that give meaning to social exchange' (Greenwood, Oliver, Suddaby and Sahlin-Andersson, 2008, p. 5). The repetitive behaviour that is shown in voluntary sport clubs is one of the main reasons that these organisations have become inert to changes. Most organisations show certain robustness when it comes to organisational changes, but the particularities of association logic, such as a democratic decision-making system and a lengthy history have made these organisations extra slow in change processes (Horch, 1994;

Janssens, 2011; Skirstad & Chelladurai, 2011). An institutional logic is a set of shared ideas and beliefs about organisations that result in strategies and operations which help to maximise the legitimacy of an organisation. In this sense, an association logic provides cultural support for voluntary sport clubs to operate (cf. Meyer & Scott, 1983).

Yet some voluntary sport clubs have undergone the transformation from an association logic towards a consumer logic. Because of the shifting expectations about voluntary sport clubs such as outlined in Chapter 3, norms about what a legitimate voluntary sport club entails have also shifted. As was explained, there is great pressure on voluntary sport clubs to make transformations in the direction of a consumer logic.

However, this pressure is not equally high for every club. Some clubs are more prone to this pressure than others because of a set of specific aspects that came out in the research for Chapter 6. From these research findings, it appears that clubs which operate under consumer logic have a stronger connection to the outside world than clubs which operate under association logic. They have more cooperating partners, experience fiercer competition from other sport organisations and are financially more dependent on their environment.

Moreover, the board composition also seems to play a role in the rise of a consumer logic in some voluntary sport clubs. Clubs with a consumer logic have, on average, younger, higher educated and more volatile boards than do clubs with an association logic. They also are more likely to have written, formal policy plans. These differences give these boards an advantage in connecting to their institutional environments, although causality between these two is unclear. Either the 'better-equipped' boards are indeed better able to respond to pressures from their institutional environment, or clubs with a strong influence of their institutional environment are more likely to obtain such a board. It is clear, though, that these aspects play an important role in the adoption of a consumer logic, whereas demand from the members is not a crucial prerequisite for the presence of this logic.

Out of the research in Chapters 5 and 6 it can be concluded that a consumer logic is not replacing an association logic in voluntary sport clubs. It might be too soon for such a conclusion, or the turn could simply just not occur in voluntary sport clubs. Members of these clubs might not be asking for a large-scale turn towards this logic, as suggested in Chapter 6 of this thesis. However, what the research does show is that the consumer logic has gained ground, at least in some clubs with specific characteristics. In these clubs, so far, the consumer logic is most likely to exist side by side with the association logic. This was also shown for commercial and professional logics in Skirstad and Chelladurai's (2011) article on the emergence of elite sport in a voluntary sport club. The concept of the co-existence of logics is interesting, because it sheds new light on the concerns about the crumbling of association life in sport that are apparent in Chapters 1 and 3. The dark clouds that are perceived deserve a more nuanced view based upon this thesis.

7.6 Resisting the 'dark clouds': voluntary sport clubs' own ways of dealing with consumerism

The dark clouds over voluntary sport clubs that have been identified in recent years have resonated in the voluntary sport sector. Clubs are, in the view of many, increasingly threatened by a consumerist attitude. This attitude is expected to eventually lead to the dissolution of associational life in sport. It goes without saying that these worries have gained a prominent place in research and policies in the voluntary sport sector. Yet despite

the size of the perceived problem, no empirical studies had been conducted to determine what is actually going on in voluntary sport clubs. This thesis is therefore the first attempt at gaining insight into the consumerist attitudes of members of voluntary sport clubs and the organisational practices that take place in these clubs.

From this analysis, it is clear that first and foremost the member-consumer is a social construction. Related to larger societal developments and the uncertainties about the future of voluntary sport clubs that come with these developments, actors involved in the voluntary sport sector have created a common understanding of what a member-consumer is and how this figure influences voluntary sport clubs. Some might be tempted, reading this conclusion, to think that the member-consumer is nothing but a construction. However, as I have mentioned in this thesis, constructing such a figure in relation to voluntary sport clubs makes the presence of the member-consumer real, and some attitudes and behaviours are indeed related to the way the member-consumer is constructed. Moreover, constructing the member-consumer in relation to voluntary sport clubs can have consequences for the way clubs deal with their members and their activities.

When applied to voluntary sport clubs, the analysis of the emergence of the member-consumer shows two things. First, the overall level of consumerism among individuals in the voluntary sport sector seems to be relatively low, especially when these levels are compared to the commercial sport sector. Second, only few clubs have adapted to a consumerist attitude. Thus, there is little ground to believe that a consumerist attitude is indeed getting voluntary sport clubs in its grip. Yet there is reason to believe that in the near future a consumerist attitude will continue to feature as a core theme within the voluntary sport sector. The discourse around this attitude will continue to be constructed, because such a construction serves many interests. First, clubs that have made a turn towards a consumer logic are perceived as being successful and will therefore continue to believe in the discourse. Second, clubs that have not (yet) made this turn are likely to uphold the story of the consumer either to develop towards the consumer logic to also become 'successful', or to indicate why they are not successful. They can uphold the story that the emergence of the consumerist attitude is indeed a major threat to associational life and that the board members themselves cannot be blamed for the club's malfunctioning. Third, national sport organisations have financial and professional interests in the consumerist discourse.

The financial interest is obvious when considering the financing structure of the Dutch voluntary sport sector. The revenues of national sport organisations are based on the total number of members associated with the organisation. This structure serves as an incentive to recruit and maintain as many members as possible. The consumerist discourse stimulates the growth in the membership numbers of national organisations in two ways: through the influential plea for local clubs to modernise and through offering sport participants the possibility to become a direct member the national sport organisation. The professional interest that is involved in the consumerist discourse is related to the financial interest. I will explain this connection in the next section.

Financial and professional interest in the consumerist discourse

The core business of national sport organisations is to serve voluntary sport clubs in their needs and to provide coordination on league schedules. However, in recent decades national sport organisations have broadened their focus towards representing the interests of their particular sport to the outside world and towards providing special offers for specific target groups (Stokvis, 2010). Van 't Verlaat (2011) describes an even further-reaching role for

national sport organisations in which they are forced to adopt a market-oriented approach because of new institutional norms. My study shows that these institutional norms have highlighted the emergence of the member-consumer in sport.

At their core, the institutional norms originate from the growing uncertainty about the position of the voluntary sport sector. Yet the financial interest serves as a heavy incentive to uphold the norms about the consumerist attitude. National sport organisations receive funds from the national lottery to support their activities. These funds are distributed by NOC*NSF and are based on the number of members each national sport organisation has. This has two consequences. First, national sport organisations urge their clubs to obtain more members. They can do so, in the view of national sport organisations, by modernising their activities so they fit the demands of the contemporary sport consumer. This was extensively discussed in Chapter 3, where I explained that the fitness sector serves as example of successfully handling these demands. Clubs should thus become more flexible and more service-oriented. Second, national sport organisations try to obtain new members themselves by offering direct memberships.

In the direct membership form, individual sport participants can become members of a national sport organisation without having to join a voluntary sport club. In this way, these members can enjoy benefits that are offered by the national sport organisation, such as licenses for participating in sport events, insurances and information about the particular sport the national sport organisation offers. The story of the emerging consumerist attitude fits very well with the interest of obtaining many members. After all, sport consumers are better served by modern sport clubs or by obtaining individual direct memberships without the obligations of traditional membership in voluntary sport clubs.

Professional norms about the development of the voluntary sport sector seem to enforce the consumerist discourse as well. Many people who work in national sport organisations want to keep up with the institutional norms, because they want to 'fit in' to the institutional environment (cf. Van 't Verlaat, 2011). Moreover, because of their professionalism they will probably also try to develop the organisations they are responsible for. It is self-evident that they do not simply want to maintain the current situation. Instead, professionals in the sector will always try to leave a legacy by improving the practices and operations in their field.

Understandably, many voluntary sport clubs have their doubts regarding direct memberships because they perceive these memberships as direct competition for their own organisations. Some will also have their doubts regarding the modernisation story that national sport organisations uphold, and others will struggle to keep up with this story. Clubs with older and lower educated board members who have been in their positions for a long time will have the most trouble fitting in with the institutional norms around consumerism. In this sense, one could argue that the voluntary sport sector is creating its own dark clouds.

However, one thing that stands out in the analyses in this thesis is that voluntary sport clubs largely resist the pressure to quickly modernise their activities. The majority of clubs do not move along with the consumerist discourse. The clubs that have moved along have done so in their very own ways. The emergence of a consumer logic in these clubs seems to cause few problems, because here consumer logic and association logic co-exist. The strong concerns about the (future) development of voluntary sport clubs in the Netherlands therefore should be viewed with more nuance. Nonetheless, this conclusion does lead to a number of questions regarding the future of voluntary sport clubs in the Netherlands and in other parts of Western and Nordic Europe.

7.7 Research agenda

In the first chapter of this thesis, two research questions were formulated. The first research question, regarding the meaning of the consumerist attitude in relation to voluntary sport clubs, was answered in Chapters 3 and 4. The meaning of the consumerist attitude has become much clearer, as the five dimensions in the Consumerism in Sport Organisations Scale provide a better understanding of this attitude. Yet the dimensions in this scale require further development. First, it would be worthwhile to further test the scale through a study with a larger sample, allowing the further testing of its construct validity. Furthermore, a larger sample would provide a better grasp of the differences between groups of sport participants. For example, the differences between men and women in terms of some of the dimensions are interesting. From a sport management perspective, specific strategies based on this scale should be further researched.

A further division in sports and a greater number of respondents per sport could explain more about the differences between individual sports. In the analyses in Chapters 4 and 6, the differences between sports is one of the most interesting observations. Further insight in the differences between sports is necessary to provide more starting points to improve sport activities in particular sports. For example, knowledge about the importance of the service quality dimension is very valuable for people who are involved in athletics, because they can adapt their strategies towards improved service quality. For other sports, deeper insight in the attitudes of members towards these dimensions is needed as well, to be able to better respond to these attitudes.

These insights can of course benefit sport administrators and sport managers at the local level, but above all policy makers in national sport organisations can benefit from these insights. From Chapter 3 it emerged that these policy makers lack sufficient empirical knowledge about the exact attitudes of the participants in the sports they are responsible for. Providing them with this knowledge can assist them in creating their policies. However, the analysis in Chapter 3 and the limited response by voluntary sport clubs to the consumerist discourse that was found in this thesis also raises questions about the relations between national sport organisations and voluntary sport clubs. Further research into this relationship is needed to evaluate the power relations and the communication lines between these two levels (cf. Garret, 2003; Harris, Mori & Collins, 2009). This can contribute to improved understanding between these two levels, and it can inform about the significance of national sport organisations for voluntary sport clubs in their pursuit of survival.

For the second research question, a number of new questions regarding the development of voluntary sport clubs can also be posed. First, it would be worthwhile to take a step backward in looking at how a consumer logic emerges to see how the initial step towards the adoption of this logic is taken. My research has shown that the institutional environment of voluntary sport clubs and the composition of the board are important predictors for the chance of a club's being able to adopt a consumer logic. However, it is not yet clear how this process comes into existence. Qualitative research into the processes of this adoption could provide valuable information about critical moments in the development of voluntary sport clubs. Is the adoption of the consumer logic an outcome of gradual change, or are there clear, distinguishable moments apparent in this process? For example, an organisational crisis or a sudden change of the management of a club might be critical moments in the process towards change.

Furthermore, qualitative research could also provide deeper insight in the meanings given

by administrators and managers in voluntary sport clubs to the influence of the institutional environment. In Chapter 6 it became clear that boards with specific features (i.e., younger, higher educated, more volatile) have adopted the consumer logic. These boards also indicate that they experience more competition in their environment. The question is whether these board members are better able to recognise pressures in their environment, and whether they are better able to respond to these pressures. This also relates to questions about the success and survival of voluntary sport clubs.

In the sample of the Voluntary Sport Clubs Monitor that was used for this study, all clubs have survived. After all, only surviving clubs were able to fill out the second questionnaire in the panel study. However, between 2007 and 2012 the number of clubs in the Netherlands went down by 1,530 clubs, a decrease of almost 6% (NOC*NSF, 2008; 2013). A very fruitful research would be an analysis of those clubs which did not survive in recent years. Are there any relationships between the existence of a consumer logic and the survival rates of clubs? Based on this thesis, one would expect higher survival rates among clubs that have adopted a consumer logic, because they have a better institutional 'fit' and thus are more legitimate organisations. However, further analyses of this hypothesis are needed.

7.8 Implications and limitations

One of the most important merits of this study is that is sheds more light on the meaning of the consumerist attitude for the voluntary sport sector. As was already clear in the previous section, the extensive knowledge on this attitude brought forward by this study provides interesting starting points for further research. The advantage of the research scale that was developed for this study is that it can be used in many sport organisations, ranging from national sport organisations that want to gain deeper insight in the profile of their sport, to local voluntary sport clubs or commercial sport organisations that want to know what types of attitudes can be recognised in their clubs. Based on this knowledge, many operational decisions about organisational operations and strategies can be taken. Clubs that mainly cater to women, for example, might want to place more emphasis on the service quality of their activities. A club with a lot of members with high detachment to the organisation might decide to professionalise some of its activities.

However, another important implication of this study is that the preferences of members within specific sports do not fluctuate much from club to club. Rather, the importance of the board and the institutional environment is underlined in this study. Policy makers should be aware of this important implication. Leading up to the new sport policies that will become effective in 2016, attention for the position of board members and the diversity of voluntary sport clubs' boards should be a key starting point. If policy makers in the voluntary sport sector want to take further steps towards the modernisation of clubs, renewal in these boards is a key indicator to attend to.

Limitations of the study

This study has provided valuable insights in the meaning of the consumerist attitude in relation to voluntary sport clubs and in the way these clubs deal with this attitude. However, a number of limitations can of course be distinguished within this study. The first relates to the study's use of mixed methods research, while the second relates to the specific methods that have been used. After looking at these particular limitations, I will discuss in a theoretical sense the limitations that have hindered this study.

First, the mixed methods approach contributed greatly to the understanding of the consumerist attitude, because it provided the opportunity to develop a research instrument based on the meanings given to this attitude by those who are involved in clubs on a daily basis. However, the development of the instrument automatically meant that a great deal of the richness of the data was lost. A more nuanced view of the consumerist attitude and its meaning for voluntary sport clubs could have been reached by providing more attention to qualitative data.

Second, a specific concern regarding the methods used in this study regards Chapter 5, in which secondary data was used to gain insights in the possible consumerist turn that voluntary sport clubs did or did not make. The reliance on this data was chosen because it was the only possible way in which a longitudinal approach among a substantial number of clubs was reached. However, relying on this data also meant that the variables that were going to provide these insights were already in the data. As such, the understanding of the consumer logic in this thesis is based on the variables that were determined a priori and was not designed on the basis of extensive research efforts.

Third, the lack of earlier studies into the consumerist attitude in sport organisations forced me to turn to other corners of academia to inform me about what it might mean for voluntary sport clubs. In particular, consumerism in public management provided insights about what consumerism entails, but also what problems organisations can encounter when they are confronted with consumerism in their organisational practices. Public organisations have a lot in common with voluntary sport clubs, as they are also nonprofit organisations that have never served 'consumers'. However, there also a number of differences between public service providers and voluntary sport clubs. The most important difference is the absence of an exit option in many public organisations. The level of ease with which members, whether they have a consumerist attitude or not, can opt out of an organisation has important implications for that organisation. There are important differences in the voice dimension, for example. For a user who cannot exit the service of a specific organisation, the voice dimension becomes much more important. Therefore, the analogy with public organisations is not always the best one with which to fully understand the consumerist attitude within voluntary sport clubs.

Overall, I hope this study has contributed to the understanding of the consumerist attitude in voluntary sport clubs. In particular, I hope it has provided sport policy makers with valuable insights into the development of voluntary sport clubs. These insights should assist them in their practices regarding the development of voluntary sport clubs. After all, these organisations have significant social meaning in the everyday lives of many people, and their development is of great concern to these people.

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Appendix

Consumerism in Sport Organisations Scale (in English)

Independence
I find it important to be able to choose at which moment in the week I participate in sport.
I find it important to be able to shape the substance of my sport lessons/activities myself.
I like participating in sport at moments that are determined by a sport club/organisation. (R)
I want to be able to decide myself how long I actively participate during my sport activities.
When I'm doing sport, I do not want to have to consider the wishes or interests of others.
Detachment
I do not want to have to do volunteer work for my sport club/organisation.
I do not want to have to meet obligations to a sport club/organisation other than the sport activities themselves.
I find it normal to have to perform additional tasks/activities for my sport club/organisation. (R)
If there are things about this sport organisation that can be improved, then I will actively try to contribute that where possible. (R)
When I do not agree with how things are managed within this sport club/organisation, I will actively try to improve these issues. (R)
I often discuss with key people (board members/managers) about how things are going within this sport organisation. (R)
Unsociability
I enjoy participating in the social activities organised by this sport club/organisation. (R)
When I am at this sport club or facility, I also seek contact with people who are not part of my team/group. (R)
After I am finished exercising or playing my sport, I often stay around to talk to others. (R)
I do not find it necessary to maintain contact with other people in this sport club/organisation.
I meet up at other locations with people who I know exclusively through this sport club/organisation. (R)
I come to this sport club/organisation solely to exercise or play my sport.
I often talk with other members about current issues regarding this sport organisation. (R)
Service quality
I find it important that my sport activities are led by qualified trainers/coaches/instructors.
The quality of the trainers/coaches/instructors determines to a large extent whether I will continue to participate in sport with this sport organisation.
I find it important that the activities that are offered to me by this sport organisation are of high quality.
The quality of the sport on offer determines to a large extent whether I will continue my activities with this sport organisation.
Exit
If I become unhappy about how things are going with this sport organisation, I will leave.
If this sport organisation does not meet my expectations, I will find another organisation where I can exercise or play sport.
I will continue to be a member of this sport organisation, even if I am discontented. (R)

Consumentisme in sportorganisaties schaal (in Dutch)

Onafhankelijkheid
Ik vind het belangrijk om zelf te kunnen kiezen op welk moment van de week ik mijn sport beoefen.
Ik vind het belangrijk om zelf de inhoud van mijn sportles/sportactiviteit vorm te kunnen geven.
Ik vind het prettig om te sporten op de momenten die voor mij zijn bepaald door een sportvereniging. (R)
Ik wil zelf kunnen bepalen hoe lang ik sport tijdens mijn sportactiviteiten.
Ik wil in mijn sport geen rekening hoeven te houden met de wensen of belangen van anderen.
Afzijdigheid
Ik wil voor mijn sport geen vrijwilligerswerk hoeven doen.
Ik vind het vervelend om bij een sportvereniging verplichtingen te hebben die ik naast het sporten moet uitvoeren.
Ik vind het normaal om voor mijn sport extra taken/activiteiten uit te voeren. (R)
Als er zaken binnen deze sportorganisatie verbeterd kunnen worden, dan zal ik mij daar waar mogelijk actief voor proberen in te zetten. (R)
Wanneer ik het niet eens ben met de gang van zaken binnen deze sportorganisatie, dan zal ik mij actief inzetten om deze zaken te verbeteren. (R)
Ik discussieer vaak met sleutelpersonen (bestuursleden/managers) over de gang van zaken binnen deze sportorganisatie. (R)
Antisociabiliteit
Ik neem graag deel aan sociale activiteiten die door deze sportorganisatie worden georganiseerd. (R)
Wanneer ik bij deze sportorganisatie ben, zoek ik ook contact met mensen die geen deel uitmaken van mijn team/groep. (R)
Nadat ik gesport heb, blijf ik vaak hangen om met anderen te praten (de ‘derde helft’). (R)
Ik vind het niet nodig om contact te onderhouden met andere mensen bij deze sportorganisatie.
Ik spreek ook buiten deze sportorganisatie af met mensen die ik enkel via deze sportorganisatie ken. (R)
Ik kom bij deze sportorganisatie puur en alleen om te sporten.
Ik praat vaak met andere leden over zaken die spelen bij deze sportorganisatie. (R)
Kwaliteit van dienstverlening
Ik vind het belangrijk dat mijn sportactiviteiten worden geleid door gekwalificeerde trainers/coaches/instructeurs.
De kwaliteit van de trainers/coaches/instructeurs bepaalt in grote mate of ik mijn activiteiten bij deze sportorganisatie zal voortzetten.
Ik vind het belangrijk dat de activiteiten die mij door deze sportorganisatie worden geboden van hoge kwaliteit zijn.
De kwaliteit van het sportaanbod bepaalt in grote mate of ik mijn activiteiten bij deze sportorganisatie zal voortzetten.
Exit
Wanneer ik ontevreden ben over de gang van zaken binnen deze sportorganisatie, dan vertrek ik.

Als deze sportorganisatie niet aan mijn verwachtingen voldoet, dan vind ik wel een andere aanbieder waarbij ik kan sporten.
Ook wanneer ik ontevreden ben, blijf ik toch lid bij deze sportorganisatie. (R)

Summary in Dutch (Nederlandse samenvatting)

In veel landen in West-Europa en Scandinavië is sport georganiseerd in sportverenigingen. Deze organisatievorm biedt zijn leden de mogelijkheid om in hun eigen buurt een sport te beoefenen, tegen een relatief lage prijs. Sportvereniging leunen voor een groot deel op de inzet van vrijwilligers en zij maken sport toegankelijk voor een groot publiek. Veel Nederlanders ontmoeten elkaar op frequente basis binnen de kaders van de sportvereniging, waarin zij met elkaar sportgerelateerde en niet-sportgerelateerde activiteiten organiseren. Sportverenigingen hebben daarom een belangrijke sociale functie in de maatschappij.

Door allerlei maatschappelijke ontwikkelingen die zich in de afgelopen jaren hebben voorgedaan, lijken zich echter donkere wolken samen te pakken boven de sportverenigingen. Individualisering en commercialisering zorgen er voor dat veel mensen die zich bezig houden met sportverenigingen, hetzij persoonlijk of professioneel, hun zorgen hebben over het voortbestaan van deze organisaties. Deze zorgen komen samen in de groeiende consumentistische houding die men meent te herkennen onder leden en potentiële leden van sportverenigingen. Deze houding gaat in tegen de fundamentele principes die ten grondslag liggen aan de sportvereniging als organisatievorm en zou daarmee een grote bedreiging voor de toekomst van sportverenigingen vormen.

Voor deze organisaties is het namelijk van groot belang dat ze voldoende middelen op de been brengen om te overleven en succesvol te worden. Zo is het zaak om voldoende financiële middelen ter beschikking te hebben, maar ook moet voldoende arbeidskracht in de vorm van vrijwilligerswerk worden gerekruteerd en behouden. Veel onderzoekers (Breuer & Wicker, 2010; Seippel, 2004; Østerlund, 2013) betogen dat het rekruteren van vrijwilligers cruciaal is voor het voortbestaan van sportverenigingen. Schlesinger, Egli & Nagel (2013) bevestigen dit en voegen daaraan toe dat betrokkenheid en collectieve solidariteit cruciaal is voor het voortbestaan van sportverenigingen. Het is echter nog maar de vraag hoe de hierboven genoemde consumentistische houding zich verhoudt tot betrokkenheid en solidariteit. Op het eerste gezicht lijkt ze behoorlijk te botsen met deze waarden.

De consumentistische houding van (potentiële) leden van sportverenigingen is in de afgelopen jaren dan ook een dankbaar onderwerp geweest van allerhande publicaties en conferenties die zich bezighouden met de organisatie van sport. Zowel onder wetenschappers als onder professionals in de sportwereld wordt gediscussieerd over de opkomst van de sportconsument en zijn betekenis voor de toekomst van sportverenigingen. Echter, wat precies bedoeld wordt met het woord ‘sportconsument’ of met een ‘consumentistische houding’ blijft veelal onduidelijk. De gevolgen voor sportverenigingen zijn daarmee dan ook onzeker.

Onderzoeksvragen

In dit proefschrift ben ik op zoek gegaan naar de betekenis van de consumentistische houding en heb ik onderzocht hoe sportverenigingen omgaan met de (vermeende) consumentistische houding onder leden. Dit heb ik gedaan aan de hand van de volgende twee vragen:

1. *Wat betekent de consumentistische houding in relatie tot sportverenigingen?*
2. *Hoe en waarom gaan sportverenigingen om met de gepercipieerde consumentistische houding in hun organisaties?*

Deze onderzoeksvragen zijn beantwoord in verschillende hoofdstukken die afzonderlijk zijn of worden gepubliceerd in wetenschappelijke artikelen.

Methoden
Om tot een beter begrip van de consumentistische houding te komen is in dit proefschrift gekozen voor een mixed methods benadering. Een mix van methoden van zowel kwantitatieve als kwalitatieve aard kan zorgen voor een diepere kennis van een sociaal verschijnsel als consumentisme. Omdat binnen het sportmanagementonderzoek nog veel onduidelijk is over het toepassen van mixed methods, heb ik eerst uitgebreide aandacht besteed aan deze onderzoeksstrategie. Een uitgebreid verslag hiervan is te lezen in hoofdstuk 2 van dit proefschrift. Om de betekenis van de consumentistische houding te onderzoeken is in het proefschrift vervolgens gebruik gemaakt van de volgende methoden:

Kwalitatieve documentanalyse – Om tot een beter begrip te komen van de manier waarop beleidsmakers in de vrijwillige sportsector aankijken tegen recente maatschappelijke ontwikkelingen en consumentisme is een uitgebreide analyse gemaakt van de meest recente beleidsplannen van NOC*NSF en de vijftien grootste sportbonden in Nederland.

Focus groepen – Omdat nog veel onduidelijk was over de betekenis van de consumentistische houding zijn focusgroepinterviews gehouden waarin sporters, sportbestuurders en sportmanagers hun visie ten aanzien van consumentisme naar voren konden brengen. Deze betekenissen hebben, samen met de kwalitatieve documentanalyse de basis gevormd voor de items in een meetschaal voor consumentisme in sportorganisaties.

Vragenlijstonderzoek – Om na te gaan of in een bepaalde sportorganisatie sprake is van consumentisme onder de leden is een meetschaal ontwikkeld die op basis van vijf dimensies de consumentistische houding meet. De vragenlijst is ingevuld door 303 sporters en, in een vervolgstudie, door nog eens 679 respondenten.

Analyses van paneldata – Om na te gaan of sportverenigingen zich aanpassen op de (vermeende) consumentistische houding onder hun leden is een analyse gemaakt van de antwoorden die zij in 2007 en in 2012 gaven op vragen uit de Verenigingsmonitor.

Door verschillende methoden van onderzoek uit te voeren en met elkaar te verbinden, levert dit proefschrift een belangrijke bijdrage in het onderzoek naar consumentisme in relatie tot sportverenigingen. De verschillende methoden zorgen er voor dat een rijk begrip van de consumentistische houding is ontstaan. Verder is een uitgebreid in kaart gebracht hoe sportverenigingen omgaan met consumentisme in hun organisatie. In de volgende paragrafen licht ik de resultaten van de verschillende hoofdstukken toe.

Resultaten
Omdat de verschillende hoofdstukken verschillende delen van de onderzoeksvragen beantwoorden, zullen de resultaten hier per hoofdstuk worden besproken. Grofweg kan het proefschrift in twee delen worden ingedeeld. Het eerste deel richt zich op de betekenis van de consumentistische houding en de manier waarop het individu zich verhoudt tot de organisatie. Dit is nagegaan door te onderzoeken hoe beleidsmakers aankijken tegen consumentisme en hoe sporters, sportbestuurders en sportmanagers de consumentistische

houding omschrijven. Aan de hand hiervan is een meetschaal ontwikkeld die onder sporters op individueel niveau meet in hoeverre er sprake is van een consumentistische houding. Het tweede deel richt zich op de manier waarop sportverenigingen omgaan met consumentisme en kijkt dus vooral naar de manier waarop de organisatie zich verhoudt tot het individu.

Deel 1: de consumentistische houding

In hoofdstuk 3 is onderzocht hoe beleidsmakers in de Nederlandse vrijwillige sportsector omgaan met de vermeende consumentistische houding onder sporters. Uit de kwalitatieve documentanalyse blijkt dat er sprake is van een 'consumentistisch vertoog' onder beleidsmakers in deze sector. Hoewel er geen sprake is van empirisch bewijs dat leden in toenemende mate een consumentistische houding aannemen ten opzichte van sportverenigingen, zetten beleidsmakers hun verenigingen onder druk om hun verenigingen te moderniseren en hiermee in te spelen op consumentistische leden. In de onderzochte beleidsplannen gebeurt dit aan de hand van drie thema's, die tezamen een coherent verhaal over consumentisme in de sport vormen.

Ten eerste worden maatschappelijke ontwikkelingen naar voren gebracht die de opkomst van de sportconsument onderstrepen en daarmee een bedreiging vormen voor de toekomst van sportverenigingen. Ten tweede betogen beleidsmakers dat het centraal stellen van de sportconsument bonden en verenigingen kansen biedt om te groeien en zich te versterken. De opkomst van de sportconsument staat daarmee nog steeds centraal, maar is verworden tot een kans. Hiervoor zal de sportvereniging echter, ten derde, oude waarden moeten laten varen en verworden tot een moderne organisatie die vermarkting en flexibilisering hoog in het vaandel heeft staan. Ook brengen sportbonden naar voren dat zij zelf moeten verworden tot brancheorganisaties om de sportconsument beter te kunnen bedienen.

Het coherente verhaal van de sportconsument dat hiermee ontstaan bevat een duidelijke retorische functie. Door het alarmerende geluid van de opkomende consumentistische houding te mengen met de kansen die modernisering met zich meebrengt, ontstaat een druk op sportverenigingen om toe te groeien naar een consumentistische logica en daarmee de verenigingslogica te verlaten. Uit dit hoofdstuk komt naar voren dat er nog veel onbekend is over de consumentistische houding onder (potentiële) leden van sportverenigingen. Een beter begrip van deze houding is cruciaal om de ontwikkeling van verenigingslogica naar consumentenlogica beter te kunnen begrijpen en (eventueel) te rechtvaardigen. Hoofdstuk 4 gaat daarom in op de vraag hoe de consumentistische houding in sportorganisaties kan worden begrepen en hoe deze kan worden gemeten. Aan de hand van focusgroepen en vragenlijstonderzoek is in dit hoofdstuk een meetschaal ontwikkeld. Deze meetschaal bevat vijf dimensies, die in gezamenlijkheid de consumentistische houding beschrijven.

1) Onafhankelijkheid, de sportconsument stelt zich niet afhankelijk op tegenover de sportvereniging, maar wil sportaanbod op maat; op de momenten en manieren waarop het hem/haar uitkomt. 2) afzijdigheid, de sportconsument trekt zich niet zo veel aan van het reilen en zeilen binnen een sportorganisatie. Hij of zij zal ook niet zo snel vrijwilligerswerk doen. 3) antisociabiliteit, de sportconsument interesseert zich nauwelijks voor sociale activiteiten bij de sportorganisatie en zal weinig contact maken met medesporters. 4) kwaliteit van dienstverlening, de sportconsument kijkt kritisch naar wat hem/haar geboden wordt voor de contributie. 5) exit, wanneer de sportconsument ontevreden is met het aanbod, zal hij/zij vertrekken.

Deze vijf houdingen kunnen zich in meerdere of mindere mate voordoen binnen een specifieke sportorganisatie, maar zijn allemaal kenmerken van de consumentistische houding onder sporters. Vooral onder leden van commerciële fitnessorganisaties komen bovenstaande houdingen veelvuldig voor, maar ook bij de leden van sportverenigingen zijn deze houdingen (in beperkte mate) te herkennen.

Deel 2: veranderende sportverenigingen?

Het tweede deel van dit proefschrift behandelt de vraag of sportverenigingen zich aanpassen op de vermeende consumentistische houding onder sporters en welke gevolgen dit heeft voor sportverenigingen. In hoofdstuk 5 heb ik onderzoek gedaan naar de mate waarin sportverenigingen flexibel aanbod creëren en aanvullende dienstverlening naast het sportaanbod aanbieden. Uit dit deelonderzoek blijkt dat over de gehele linie genomen er geen sprake is van een grote toename van flexibel aanbod en aanvullende dienstverlening. Wel is een aantal verenigingen te herkennen dat voorop loopt met dit soort ontwikkelingen. Deze 'moderne' verenigingen hebben in de afgelopen jaren aanpassingen doorgevoerd in hun aanbod.

De vraag is waarom nu juist deze sportverenigingen veranderen, terwijl andere verenigingen binnen de klassieke kaders blijven. Een plausibele verklaring hiervoor zou het ledenbestand moeten zijn. Een sportvereniging met veel sportconsumenten zou immers eerder geneigd zijn nieuw aanbod te creëren dan verenigingen met weinig sportconsumenten. Uit mijn onderzoek in hoofdstuk 6 blijkt hier echter geen sprake van te zijn. De verenigingen met een modern karakter hebben grofweg hetzelfde ledenprofiel als de klassieke verenigingen, ze hebben dus niet meer consumentistische leden. Er kwamen echter wel andere redenen voor deze veranderingen naar voren, die ik in de volgende paragraaf uitgebreid bespreek.

Mijn onderzoek gebruikt de institutionele theorie als kader om de ontwikkeling van sportverenigingen uit te leggen. Deze theorie geeft aan dat sociale processen voor een groot deel worden bepaald door regels, normen en waarden die sterk ingeslepen zijn in onze samenleving. Deze instituties zijn ons aangeleerd en hebben een sterke invloed hebben op de manier waarop wij met elkaar omgaan. Ook organisaties hebben te maken met instituties en dit geldt zeker voor sportverenigingen. Ga maar na: de dagelijkse praktijk bij sportverenigingen zit ingebakken in ons systeem en veel mensen hebben de gang naar de sportvereniging al in de opvoeding meegekregen. Een kenmerk van instituties is dat ze –omdat ze zo diep in ons systeem zijn ingeslepen- maar moeilijk veranderen. Dit kan een verklaring zijn voor het feit dat sportverenigingen weinig vernieuwend aanbod creëren. Veranderingen kunnen echter wel plaatsvinden als de maatschappelijke opvattingen over succesvolle organisaties wijzigen. In de sportwereld lijkt dit dan ook het geval te zijn. De opvatting over succesvolle sportverenigingen is de laatste jaren behoorlijk veranderd: clubs die moderniseringen doorvoeren worden over het algemeen als succesvol gezien. Denk hierbij aan de voorbeeldrol die de hockeysport al jarenlang vervult door het creëren van vernieuwend aanbod, zowel op sportief vlak (bijv. trimhockey) als daarbuiten (bijv. het clubhuis als werkplek). De institutionele theorie voorspelt dat andere verenigingen (met specifieke kenmerken) deze moderniseringen kopiëren om ook als succesvol gezien te worden.

Uit mijn onderzoek blijkt dat er inderdaad een specifieke groep sportverenigingen is die kan worden aangemerkt als koplopers op het gebied van modernisering. Over het algemeen zijn dit sportverenigingen die in grote mate in contact staan met de buitenwereld

en dus meer invloed van deze buitenwereld op de interne organisatie ervaren: ze werken vaker samen met maatschappelijke instanties, ze ervaren meer concurrentie van andere sportorganisaties en hebben meer inkomsten uit externe bronnen (bijv. subsidie of sponsoring). Daarnaast hebben ze over het algemeen jongere, hoger opgeleide besturen, zijn de bestuursleden kortere tijd in functie dan de bestuursleden van klassieke verenigingen en hebben ze vaker formele beleidsplannen vastgelegd. Je zou dus kunnen zeggen dat deze sportverenigingen 'professioneler' te werk gaan in hun bestuur en beleid en daarom eerder geneigd zijn te veranderen.

Conclusie
Sportverenigingen passen zich mondjesmaat aan aan de maatschappelijke veranderingen die benoemd worden als consumentisme. Er is een duidelijke groep voorlopers te zien op het gebied van modernisering van het aanbod van verenigingen. Deze groep heeft in dezelfde mate te maken met consumentisme onder de leden als de grote groep klassieke verenigingen, maar verandert vanwege institutionele redenen. Het is echter niet zo dat deze verenigingen hun organisatiemodel radicaal omgooien. Zij blijven in de kern verenigingen die voor een groot deel afhankelijk zijn van vrijwilligers. Het ligt in de lijn der verwachting dat andere sportverenigingen ook deze geleidelijke verandering zullen ondergaan, zonder dat zij daarbij sterk van karakter zullen wisselen.

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Curriculum Vitae

Jan-Willem van der Roest (1985) studied Governance at VU University Amsterdam and at Utrecht University. At that last university, he received a master's degree in sports policy and sports management. During his master education, Van der Roest fulfilled a traineeship with the Mulier Institute, where he also worked after his graduation. With the Mulier Institute, Van der Roest conducted several studies and he organised two conferences.

From March 2011 untill June 2015 Van der Roest was a PhD Candidate at Utrecht University. His research was concerned with consumerism in relation to voluntary sport clubs. He now works as a researcher for the Mulier Institute again, alongside being a lecturer at Utrecht University.

He is also an active volunteer in the voluntary sport sector; where he has been a football referee for the Royal Dutch Football Association between 2002 and 2011. From June 2014 Jan-Willem serves as chairman of the football section of SV Baarn. SV Baarn is a multi-sport club in a town in the province of Utrecht, the Netherlands.

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