

Internationalisation of a Global Sporting Product: The Case of Rugby 7s

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Abstract

Sports are continuing to grow in prominence and possess similar attributes to multinational corporations. However, there is currently a lack of knowledge around the internationalisation of sports in business literature. Research is heavily centred on the sport of soccer, with a focus on historical accounts of how sport has shaped national identities of nations and the cross-national diffusion of sports across national borders. This research has been driven due to the focus on the topic by the fields of sociology and political science which both contribute heavily to the literature. This thesis aims to create a focus on emerging sports such as rugby, using real-time and current accounts of how internationalisation is currently being impacted and shifting the literature into the international business field. In order to do this, two research questions are asked: How is Rugby 7s internationalising? And How does Rugby 7s manage the key decision points in internationalisation? The use of decision points looks at going beyond applying theoretical frameworks to the research and directly seeks to find the key decisions that sports managers face when internationalising.

This study is designed in an exploratory way with semi-structured interviews used to explore and better understand the phenomena of sports internationalisation. To ensure all perspectives from stakeholders were covered a single case study with embedded units was applied to the study. With the results of the interviews then triangulated with a secondary data set. The analysis of the findings shows the executives faced difficult decisions within the areas of market selection, mode of entry, adaptation and standardisation and long term commitment. The results show that Rugby 7s as a product has been heavily shaped by numerous forces such as culture and knowledge of the markets. With the events individually being unique, however, as a collective product Rugby 7s can be identified as one product as a 'glocal' approach has been implemented by executives. Further research should continue looking at other emerging sports to gain a wider understanding of sports internationalisation. By doing this it increases the knowledge and understanding of the phenomena and can be used to establish frameworks for future research.

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Contents

Abstract.....	3
Acknowledgements.....	5
Chapter 1: Introduction	10
1.1. Research Background.....	10
1.2. Research Question	12
1.3. Contribution to the Literature	12
1.4. The Organisation of the Thesis	13
Chapter Two: Literature Review	14
2.1 Highly Internationalised	14
2.1.1. Soccer	15
2.1.2. Tennis.....	17
2.1.3. Golf.....	19
2.2. Localised.....	20
2.2.1. Australian Rules and Gaelic Football.....	20
2.2.2. NASCAR	20
2.3. Quasi-Internationalised	22
2.3.1. Baseball	22
2.3.2. Basketball	23
2.3.3. American Football	25
2.3.4. Ice Hockey	26
2.3.5. Cricket	27
2.3.6. Boxing.....	28
2.3.7. Netball.....	28
2.3.8. Swimming.....	29
2.3.9. Rugby	30
2.4. Parallels between Sport and International Business Literature	31
2.4.1. Conceptual Model.....	32
Chapter Three: Methodology	35
3.1. Research Philosophy	35
3.2. Research Approach	35
3.2.1. Research Design	36
3.2.2. Data Collection.....	37
3.2.3. Sampling.....	37
3.3. Interview Process.....	37
3.3.1. Sample Size and Data Saturation	38

3.3.2. Participant Recruitment and Characteristics	38
3.4. The Interview	41
3.5. Data Analysis	42
3.6. Trustworthiness	44
3.7. Ethical Considerations.....	45
Chapter 4: Findings	46
4.1. Market Selection	46
4.2. Market Entry	48
4.3. Adaptation and Standardisation	48
4.3.1. Fan Experience	49
4.4. Long Term Competitiveness	55
4.4.1. Forming of the Women’s Circuit.....	55
4.4.2. Players.....	55
Chapter 5: Discussion.....	59
5.1. Market Selection	59
5.2. Mode of Entry	60
5.3. Adaptation and Standardisation	62
5.4. Long Term Competitiveness	65
5.4.1. Development of Sport.....	65
5.4.2. Player Development.....	68
5.4.3. Player Welfare.....	69
5.5. Contribution to Research	71
5.6. Implications.....	73
5.6.1. Sports Managers	73
5.6.2. Sports Researchers.....	74
5.7. Limitations and Future Directions.....	75
5.8. Concluding Remarks.....	76
6.0. References	77
7.0. Appendices.....	82
7.1. Individual Case Analysis	82
7.1.1. World Rugby.....	82
7.1.2. New Zealand	83
7.1.3. Hong Kong.....	85
7.1.4. Dubai.....	86
7.1.5. South Africa.....	88
7.1.6. Australia	89

7.1.7. United States of America	91
7.2. Interview Protocol.....	94
7.3. Participant Information Sheet	97
7.4. Table 2 Secondary Data Set	99

Chapter 1: Introduction

This chapter will present the background to the thesis, along with a discussion of the research questions and the problems that these have raised. The chapter will then outline how the thesis will contribute to the existing literature.

1.1. Research Background

Sport has been extensively researched in areas such as sociology and political science. However, in international business (IB) sports is viewed as an emerging topic. Giulianotti and Robertson (2007) stated that international research on sports had yet to become a mainstream topic and that the research of sports was lacking in social science journals. The growth of sports organisations, which resemble multinational enterprises, highlights the need for further research into the field of sports business to better understand the phenomena. Researchers such as Ratten (2011) have made calls for the need for research. Holt (1995) and Lewis and Winder (2007), provide insightful pieces to the internationalisation of sport and created conceptual frameworks for readers to digest.

Sport for peace and development is a key area of research in sports literature. This includes the focus of research from multiple different sports from around the world. Beutler (2008), Levermore (2008) and Mansfield (2014) highlight the idea of sport for peace and development, which seeks to raise public awareness of societal issues through sport to bring peace and development to places in need. Mansfield (2014) showed this through research on netball in Malawi. England Netball sought to help develop the game of netball in Malawi through different initiatives such as coaching. Further, Mansfield (2014), Beutler (2008) and Levermore (2008) highlight how sports have put the spotlight on societal issues such as the HIV/AIDS issue in Africa and there is a trend to help fix these issues through sports.

Past literature has focused heavily on the idea of sport consumption. Holt (1995) completed a two-year observational case study of fan consumption at Wrigley Park in Chicago. This literature highlights the theme of sports as a product. The aim of the study was to build on current literature using metaphors to create three different ways in which fans consume. Holt (1995) adds a fourth metaphor to the typology in order to refine and extend on the current form of the consuming typology. Holt (1995) states there are four types of consuming: experience, integration, classification and play. Consuming as experience refers to how consumers subjectively and emotionally react to different consumption objects (Holt, 1995). Consuming as Integration looks at how consumers acquire and look at object meanings, which is achieved through a number of different consumption practices (Holt, 1995). "Classification" views consuming as a process in which objects are viewed as vessels for culture and personal meaning which act to classify consumers (Holt, 1995). Holt's (1995)

final added metaphor, “play,” looks at how fans use consumption objects to play. These metaphors together create a typology outlining how consumers can consume different forms of sporting products. Whannel (1985) studied the consumption of sports through television. The development of consuming through television radically changed the economic landscape in sport seeing more money enter sports due to the rise of media tycoons such as Rupert Murdoch (Whannel, 1985). This consuming of sports via technology has radically evolved over time as that technology has developed. Baker (2008) highlighted how fans can consume sports through popular culture such as soccer-based movie ‘Goal’. Goldsmith and Walker (2015) and Parganas, Anagnostopoulos, and Chadwick (2017) researched the impacts of social media and other social technologies in sports. Paragnas et al. (2017) found social media connected fans to the team creating a higher sense of loyalty. Goldsmith and Walker (2015) researched the tool of fantasy sports, an emerging way for fans to consume sport.

Identity and sport is a highly researched in literature with the ideas of Patriotism and national identity being areas of focus for research. Brown (2005) researched the idea of exceptionalism in America, finding that Americans have a history of rejecting foreign sports in particular British sports such as cricket. This is due to the history of the British colonialism and the perception that the British were imposing their culture onto the USA (Malcolm, 2006). Identity is also shown by Earle (1998) in the study of Ice Hockey in Canada. Ice Hockey has internationalised and became more competitive. This has led the Canadians to strive harder to maintain excellence in Ice Hockey to protect their national identity.

Academics have also looked at varying aspects of sports and business. Elliott and Harris (2011) and Gilmour and Rowe (2010) studied the use of athlete marketing power to spread the consumption of sport. This was highlighted in the case of David Beckham’s move to LA Galaxy. LA had preseason trips which show an increase in consumption of soccer in the Asia Pacific region. Meanwhile, research on the internationalisation of sport has most commonly been studied by using the case study method. Giulianotti and Robertson (2004), Pelak (2006) and Giulianotti and Robertson (2006) all researched the idea of ‘glocalisation,’ acting both in a local and global way when internationalising. However, all these studies have been focused on soccer which is already a highly internationalised sport.

The overview provides a brief insight into the literature and was conducted from a systematic review of 87 papers conducted by the researcher for their honours dissertation, along with additional papers. It highlights three significant gaps in the literature. The first gap is that knowledge on the internationalisation of sports is limited in context. The vast majority of papers focus on soccer and

looks at the expansion of various forms of 'football' in the Western world. A second gap is most of the papers are historical in nature and focus on cross-national diffusion over time. Finally, sociology and political science are the clear disciplines the research is anchored in. This thesis addresses these gaps by focusing on rugby a sport much-less researched than others, the analysis will be conducted in 'realtime' examining recent and ongoing developments and the anchor of theorisation is in IB, with the thesis focusing on the decision points made by executives when internationalising.

1.2. Research Question

The field of IB has largely overlooked the topic of sports. This is despite sports teams resembling MNEs in different facets such as market proliferation and value. For example, the top fifty most valuable sports teams according to Badenhausen (2019) are all worth in excess of 2 billion USD. Below are the top five most valuable sports teams as identified by Badenhausen (2019).

1. Dallas Cowboys (American Football) Value: \$5 billion
2. New York Yankees (Baseball) Value: \$4.6 billion
3. Real Madrid (soccer) Value: \$4.24 billion
4. Barcelona (soccer) Value: \$4.02 billion
5. New York Knicks (Basketball) Value: \$4 billion

These figures show the importance of sports teams and organisations and highlight the need for research on them. The objective of this thesis is to focus on much-less studied sports, provide real-time analysis of sport internationalisation and to expand sports into IB literature, in particular, the decision points area. In this way, this thesis can expand on the established research on these IB topics and promote the future research within sports, while also providing useful information and advice for sports managers to use when looking to internationalise. In accordance with this purpose, the following exploratory research questions are applied.

1. a. *How is Rugby 7s internationalising?*
b. *How does Rugby 7s manage the key decision points in internationalisation?*

Conducting a single case study with embedded subunits using both personal and online networking, eight semi-structured interviews were conducted with ten different stakeholders from the Rugby 7s environment. This led to in-depth discussions, which provided findings to gain a better understanding of the phenomena.

1.3. Contribution to the Literature

The contributions to literature made by this thesis are as follows. Firstly, there is a lack of understanding and knowledge around the internationalisation of sports in the business sense. This

thesis acts as a gateway to gain a better understanding of the phenomena. Through gaining this understanding of the sports phenomena the thesis encourages future research in this emerging field of research. The thesis also directly links together established IB theories and frameworks to the field of sports highlighting the link between the two fields. By doing this the thesis also adds to the literature through linking sports literature from multiple fields into the IB field. The thesis also expands on past research by Coviello and Martin (1999), Hashai and Almor (2004), Madsen and Servais (1997) and Reid (1981) by expanding the research area of decision points in IB literature.

1.4. The Organisation of the Thesis

This thesis is split into five chapters. Chapter Two provides a review of sports literature. The literature review is structured into three separate parts: highly-internationalised; quasi-internationalised; and localised sports. These parts represent the varying levels of internationalisation in sports. Sports are assigned to each part according to variables such as marketability and participation rates. The sports are then analysed according to literature. An overview is then provided. The overview compares the similarities and differences between the sports, especially between the different levels of internationalisation. Chapter Three highlights the methodological approach, including the design and structure of the thesis. It also explains why a qualitative approach was taken and explains the methods of data collection and analysis. Chapter Four analyses the data collected through the qualitative approach and highlights the themes within the findings in relation to the research questions. Chapter Five then begins by discussing the outcomes of the analysis and discusses what this means for sports managers. The final chapter provides a conclusion including the contribution, the implications for both sports managers and researchers, the limitations and recommendations for future research.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

This chapter identifies and discusses literature on the internationalisation of sports, including the development and evolution of sports due to internationalisation. The chapter originated from literature that was systematically reviewed for an honours dissertation conducted by the researcher. The review looked at 87 articles on the internationalisation of sport. This review provides the base for this chapter, however, the literature review is reorganised to capture sports at different stages of development in their internationalisation process. With this shift in view from the honours dissertation, additional papers were also collected to go further into the development of the internationalisation of the sports.

The chapter is split into three separate parts: highly internationalised sports; localised sports; and quasi-internationalised sports. The chapter was organised with reference to Gupta (2009) study into the globalisation of sports. 'Highly Internationalised sports' refers to non culturally and institutionally constrained sports. 'Localised sports' are seen as being very constrained both culturally and institutionally. 'Quasi-internationalised sports', however, are sports that have shown internationalisation through the likes of World Cups but are limited in global scope with room for growth. To determine which category the sports fit in, the following parameters were considered: sports celebrity; media attention; labour migration; sports circuit or leagues; and participation. Parameters were used to help the researcher categorise the sports as a prelude to the discussion.

The literature used highlights themes to display how these sports have been affected by different forces. One theme is identifying sport as a product, outlining how sport itself can be viewed as a product to be internationalised. Consumption of sport and the governance and power within sport is also discussed looking at the growth of sports from the amateur game to now the truly globalised and commodified competitive sporting landscape. The theme of commodification and sport is discussed focusing on the factors that are encouraging sports to be internationalised and the labour effects of doing so. Culture is examined by looking into the views of whether sport builds culture or decimates it, overcoming geographic isolation, and adapting to different local cultures. The analysis of these themes is woven into the review of the sports. These factors will contribute to the argument of why the case study sport of rugby belongs in the quasi-internationalised grouping.

2.1 Highly Internationalised

The following part of the chapter looks at soccer, tennis and golf which are viewed by the researcher as being highly internationalised sports. This is due to the sports possessing worldwide participation and viewership, leagues and circuits that are recognised globally, high labour migration and the ease of talent flow of marketable athletes.

2.1.1. Soccer

Kelly (2007) describes soccer as being the only truly global team sport. Kelly (2007) states that the high rates of participation in soccer in both the Northern and Southern hemispheres, the global reach with 207 national associations and the power of FIFA governance, makes soccer a truly global sport. The ability for players to move transnationally and having an open and competitive bidding process for media coverage acts as a sign of the global power of soccer (Kelly, 2007). This popularity sees soccer attracting the several attention of academics (Alvito, 2007; Dolles & Söderman, 2013)

A key area of research on soccer highlights the ability for sport to be seen as a 'product.' Through a study of both the success and failures of professional soccer organisations, Dolles and Söderman (2013) developed the network of value capture. The network of value capture framework highlights that sport is not one product on its own. Sport is made up of multiple product offerings. The offerings Dolles and Söderman (2013) study are a team; sporting competitions; club; players; soccer events; events, facilities and arena; merchandise; and other commercial activities. These product offerings can act as a bundle, however, do not provide a competitive advantage alone. The customer groups such as supporters; other clubs; media; and club members offer the ability for an organisation to capture the value within the different sporting product offerings. Brewer (2017) researched value and commodity chains within sport; the ever-growing commercialisation of soccer and the effect that this had on the sports global value chain. The study found that the commercialisation of soccer leads to little noticeable structural differences between the producer and buyer-driven value chains in sport. The 'producer' driven value chain sees the producer of the product hold the most influence, the 'buyer' driven value chain sees the buyers hold the majority of influence (Brewer, 2017). However, both followed the same commercialisation blueprint set by FIFA with the core 'product' being access to viewing streams of matches, sold through broadcasting or viewing rights (Brewer, 2017). This highlights that through the growing commercialisation in world sport there is the increasing emphasis being placed on offering a tangible product to consumers.

Sports players hold a celebrity-like status which can influence consumers. Elliott and Harris (2011) and Gilmour and Rowe (2010) both examined the influence and power of soccer's David Beckham. Gilmour and Rowe (2010) view the LA Galaxy signing Beckham as a massive coup. The LA Galaxy signing David Beckham in 2007, saw more media attention develop for Major League Soccer as a whole and was seen as laying the groundwork for further athlete migration to the Major League Soccer franchisees (Gilmour & Rowe, 2010). This meant that Major League Soccer would now have the ability to attract players and be able to compete with the bigger soccer leagues in more established markets. The power of Beckham's move was further highlighted by Elliot and Harris (2011) looking at Beckhams consumption power. In November 2007, Beckham's LA Galaxy team flew

down to Australia and New Zealand to take part in friendly matches (Elliott & Harris, 2011). Elliot and Harris (2011) state the power of the 'Becks' image led to unprecedented mainstream media coverage, enhancing the stature of soccer in Australia. However, this growth was short-lived after the 'Becks' mania subsided. Beckham is seen with his 'Becks' image to hold the status and power to break through cultural barriers and in many markets create sustained growth (Elliott & Harris, 2011).

With the increasing commercialisation of sport, the interest of the media in sport and the influence and power they possess is ever-growing. Polson and Whiteside (2014) state media tycoon Rupert Murdoch suggests the universal appeal of sport can be used as a 'battering ram' to open up new television markets. Sport was viewed as holding the ability to open up new television markets. However, there is the need, in new markets to use a glocalization approach to make sure the commercial product appeals to the local consumers (Polson & Whiteside, 2014). Movies are another way fans consume a sporting product. Baker (2008) stated that the film 'Goal!' can be used as an example of globalising sports. Movies are a product that is able to be shifted across multiple markets, with Hollywood movies now being viewed more in overseas markets than the United States (Baker, 2008). 'Goal!' is an example of a soccer movie that used popular culture to globalise the product and be consumed across markets around the globe. Baker (2008) suggests that other sports could use films as a way to globalise and gain a larger presence in other markets through the popular culture aspect of movies.

The internationalisation and commercialisation of sport also shaped the labour migration of athletes. Highlighting the global mobility of talent in soccer, McGovern (2002) states that labour migration is an important facet of the internationalisation of sport. The labour migration of sport is seen in literature to be a form of international trade (McGovern, 2002). The global mobility of talent is central to traditional IB. Alvito (2007) explains that the international labour migration of athletes is hampering the development of sport in markets with less economic development. This is shown in the movement of soccer players between Brazil and Europe. With the increased commercialisation, sporting organisations are recruiting the best talent from around the world. Alvito (2007) states that Brazil, a nation with a proud soccer past is struggling to compete in the commercialised sporting environment with the economic power of Europe luring the best talent away from the Brazilian market. Della Torre, Giangreco, Legeais, and Vakkayil (2018) studied the pay inequality of migrant soccer players in Italy's Serie A league compared to the domestic-based athletes. Della Torre et al. (2018) illustrated that top Italian players along with the migrant stars earned the highest salary in the Italian Serie A league. This shows that domestic-based athletes are at a disadvantage and are experiencing pay inequality which can be attributed to the commodification of sport. This labour migration of athletes in soccer mirrors IB research around expatriation. Alvito (2007) highlights the

issue of talent drain (Brain Drain) in a nation. Carr, Inkson, and Thorn (2005) state that 'brain drain' occurs due to the mass migration of talented and skilled workers from one nation to another, while a 'brain gain' happens when societies losing talent find ways to replace it gaining. However, as highlighted by Alvito (2007) this replacement of talent with the talent flow does not always occur in sport. Brazil is a market with rich talent in soccer seen as a producer of global superstars, however, they do not have the economic power to have 'brain gain' and reattract the talent to the domestic market.

The commercialisation and modernisation of sport has also affected governance and structure in soccer. Karak (2017) states the commodification of sport led to governance and structure shift in the English Football Association (FA). The English FA adapted the structure of the game in the 1990s to take advantage of increased commercial awareness (Karak, 2017). This culminated with the formation of the Premier League in 1992, a more capitalist based league than its predecessor. The changes in the sporting environment are not only occurring at the organisational level. In today's modern and commercial environment there is increasing government intervention in sporting matters. Literature focuses greatly on the changes the Chinese government have made to attract sports to the Chinese market. Tan and Bairner (2010) examined government regulation in Chinese soccer. They found that the government had adapted to better be able to work with the global soccer community (Tan & Bairner, 2010). This includes updating sport and soccer regulations, setting up new government commercial agencies and having to strengthen Chinese communist ideology education (Tan & Bairner, 2010). These changes highlight the need for sports to be aware of both global and local factors on the internationalisation of sport. Andrews and Ritzer (2007) suggest that while most literature is focused on global and local factors in operating overseas, there is also the need to be aware of the global in the glocal. Globalisation is defined as the ambition and desire of nations, organisations and corporations to impose themselves in different geographic regions (Andrews & Ritzer, 2007). However, this can be difficult in markets with glocal pressures operating in a local way in different geographical areas. This means sporting organisations should be careful around strategies and structures implemented when internationalising into a new market.

2.1.2. Tennis

According to Eaves and Lake (2016) during the late Victorian era, the British way of playing tennis was seen by foreigners as the 'blueprint' to play the game. The governing body Lawn Tennis Association had an ethnocentric approach. This saw limited internationalisation of tennis outside of Europe. During the late 1890s, British players refused to go to Australia and America to play because they perceived the local players and championships as inferior (Eaves & Lake, 2016). This highlights a visible obstacle to the growth of the sport. The attitudes of consumers and athletes play an

important role in the internationalisation and development of a sport. However, despite this exceptionalism, tennis developed and grew internationally due to internationalists like Dr Wilberforce Vaughn Eaves. Dr Eaves travelled the world, teaching skills and developing locals around the globe which helped to increase the awareness of the game (Eaves & Lake, 2016). The result of this saw tournaments such as the Davis Cup, an internationally based tennis tournament, be organised and first take place in 1913 (Eaves & Lake, 2016). This highlights how critical overcoming exceptionalism and attitudes of stakeholders is in order to be able to successfully grow and internationalise sports or sporting product.

Despite the early lack of growth, tennis has become an internationalised sport, however, it does differ from soccer. As an individual-based sport, the organisation and operations of tennis contrast greatly with how soccer is structured. There are two main organisations who run the men's and women's tennis series across the world: the ATP World Tour for men and the WTA World Tour for women. ATP and WTA are affiliates of another governing body ITF: ITF operates international men's and women's events such as the Davis Cup.¹ The ATP and WTA are similar. For instance, they hold combined grand slam tournaments which are the major events on the circuit.² The events are held all around the world attracting fans and players to attend due to the commercialisation that has taken place. Tennis is a sport that possesses high celebrity status among players which helps its international reach. The likes of Roger Federer, Rafael Nadal and the Williams sisters are seen as highly marketable and recognised athletes the world over. This is highlighted by the \$300 million 10-year clothing deal Roger Federer signed in 2018 with Japanese retailer UNIQLO.³

Much like soccer, tennis is a sport that receives high levels of media engagement, especially on television. Whannel (1985) identified television as a form of a spectacle that led to the commodification of sport. Television was said to be a technology that would modernise all cultures around the globe (Whannel, 1985). Being able to seamlessly present the image of sport in both live and recorded form to millions of consumers all over the globe, has seen television lead to higher levels of sports economics and the commodification of sport (Whannel, 1985). The development of television presented a unique way to spread a sporting product across national borders and allowed it to be consumed by the millions around the world with access to television. According to Whannel (1985) sports such as tennis have become almost universally accessible and understood due in part to the attention gained from television. The universal understanding of the game makes tennis

¹ <https://www.itftennis.com/home.aspx>

² <https://www.atptour.com/en/tournaments>

³ <https://www.forbes.com/sites/abinlot/2018/08/28/roger-federer-on-why-he-ditched-nike-for-a-300-million-uniqlo-deal/#468ed37d64db>

easier to consume across borders due to little need for adaptation in the form of commentators and other media-related aspects (Whannel, 1985).

2.1.3. Golf

While there were major differences between soccer and tennis in the structure and organisation of the sports, tennis and golf share many similarities. Like tennis, golf is split into men's and women's circuits. However, where tennis has the ATP and WTA being governing bodies across the globe, golf has multiple organisations running events in different parts of the world. Out of the United States runs the PGA (men's)⁴ and LPGA (women's)⁵ tours, with other popular tours such as PGA European Tour (men's)⁶ taking place around the world. The International Golf Federation was formed in 1958 and was subsequently recognised by the International Olympic Committee as the governing body of golf.⁷ The popularity and widespread reach of golf lead to golf being viewed as a highly internationalised sport. The athlete awareness and celebrity power like in tennis and soccer also attribute to the highly internationalised designation, of golf with the likes of Tiger Woods holding mass appeal across the world.

According to Stoddart (2006), the high pricing of golf in markets is a barrier that has effected the internationalisation of the sport. With the need for huge land sites to develop golf courses, Stoddart (2006) states that some countries, for example, Japan are seeing high investment overseas in order to help keep up with the growing popularity of the sport with the lack of available land. One club in Japan is said to cost upwards of \$3 million to join with a waitlist for members (Stoddart, 2006). This is changing golf to become more heavily commercialised in Japan creating a business environment in the sporting area. Stoddart (2006) states due to these high prices consumers in Japan are going as far as flying to places such as Melbourne, twice a month, in order to play as this is a cheaper alternative than joining their local club. The popularity of golf in Japan and the commercialisation of the game is further highlighted by the overseas investments by Japanese businesses. Japanese businesses have invested in buying clubs all around the world including Australia, Scotland and the United States with the course that houses Australia's golf governing body 'Riverside Oaks' being owned by Japanese investors (Stoddart, 2006). The diversity of the Top 50 ranked male players also highlights the high degree of internationalisation in golf with 14 nations represented including nations such as America, England, Japan, Sweden, Mexico and South Korea with the United States having around half the top 50 players.⁸ In the women's rankings, 11 nations are represented

⁴ <https://www.pgatour.com/>

⁵ <https://www.lpga.com/>

⁶ <http://www.europeantour.com/>

⁷ <https://www.igfgolf.org/about-igf/>

⁸ <https://www.pgatour.com/stats/stat.186.html>

(including South Korea, the United States, New Zealand and Germany) with South Korea being the dominant nation.⁹ These factors highlight the increasing degree of internationalisation in golf, showing top players are coming from emerging and transitioning markets.

2.2. Localised

This part of the chapter discusses localised sports. These sports are being looked at with regards to how they are affected by the internationalisation of other sports in local markets around them. Examples of sports in this section include Australian Rules and Gaelic Football, and the National Association for Stock Car Auto Racing (NASCAR). The sports are viewed as being localised due to being constrained both culturally and institutionally.

2.2.1. Australian Rules and Gaelic Football

While Australian Rules and Gaelic Football are separate sports, Frost (2004) states that sports are globally similar in terms of the appeal of sport to the consumer. The researcher's description of Gaelic football/Aussie Rules as localised sports is consistent with Frost's (2004), which categories both as indigenous sports codes. The key parameters; celebrity power, viewership, migration, participation and leagues for both Australian Rules and Gaelic Football indicate the sports are limited to Australia and Ireland.

Frost (2004) suggests the power of globalising sports will have a negative effect on the development of indigenous sporting codes. Internationalised sports such as soccer are viewed as a threat to these indigenous sports. Sports such as soccer are able to globalise and embed themselves in the local culture. In order for indigenous codes to survive, they will need to adapt themselves in order to remain present and competitive in their home market. Frost (2004) uses the term 'crowd-out,' stating that this is what will happen to indigenous codes such as Australian Rules and Gaelic football due to the internationalising power of other sports.

2.2.2. NASCAR

NASCAR operates in the highly competitive market of the USA with other established sports such as Baseball, Basketball and American Football. Compared to these other locally established sports in the American market NASCAR has had little international development. The localised nature of NASCAR is highlighted by the place of birth of the drivers who have had at least one race at the time of writing in the Monster NASCAR Cup. With fifty-nine drivers taking part, (i.e. from Canada and Mexico) only two were not born in the United States.¹⁰ The localisation of NASCAR is also shown

⁹ <https://www.rolexrankings.com/rankings>

¹⁰ <http://www.espn.com/racing/drivers>

through all of the twenty-nine races in the Monster NASCAR Series taking place within the United States.¹¹

Studies of NASCAR highlights the use of fantasy sports as a new model of consumer engagement with a sporting product. NASCAR partnered with an advertising organisation in 2012 to create a fantasy sports platform, this was used to increase the awareness of the sport in the youth market (Goldsmith & Walker, 2015). With the changing attitudes and tastes of sport consumers fantasy sports provide a way to entice fans to consume a sporting product. The tastes are changing due to the influence of technology on the youth market, this can make it easy to transfer a product from one market to another.

Another type of technology that could greatly impact the internationalisation of sport is social media. Parganas et al. (2017) identify social media as another useful tool in the consumption of sport. Social media is found to be of benefit as it allows fans from across the globe to connect to their favourite sports team no matter where that team may be based around the globe. Fans said that social media allowed that to escape life and personally feel a sense of attachment and connection to their favourite sports team (Parganas et al., 2017). Social media is also of benefit to teams and organisations. It connects the product to the fans, but it also highlights the wants and needs of the fans and to better develop and evolve with what the fans want (Parganas et al., 2017). This provides new opportunities for sports to connect with consumers all around the globe and seek potential internationalisation opportunities in new markets. However, while technology such as social media is commonly used as a driver of internationalisation, the main target of the use of such technology in NASCAR, as stated, by Goldsmith and Walker (2015) is to increase the domestic youth market awareness of the product.

Brown (2005) highlights the attitude of exceptionalism that exists heavily in the United States and has had an immense effect on sports in America. Brown (2005, p. 1106) suggests that the idea of 'American Exceptionalism' can be viewed as 'the notion that the United States was created differently, developed differently and thus has to be understood differently.' The idea highlights how Americans see themselves as different from others. This has seen the development of exceptionalism occur in the American sporting landscape, with Americans holding preference to local 'American' sports over international sports (Brown, 2005). The exceptionalism makes it harder for internationalising sports to enter the American market. However, other high-profile American sports seeking to internationalise have also struggled in their home market due to seeking internationalisation. The increasing internationalisation efforts in sports such as baseball and

¹¹ <https://www.primesport.com/s/nascar>

basketball saw these sports decline in participation and viewership regionally, while localised sports like NASCAR with little internationalisation saw domestic growth in these areas (Brown, 2005). This highlights the need for internationalising sports to be aware of the attitudes and beliefs of consumers in international markets. Attitudes such as the 'American Exceptionalism' would likely force sports to adapt to the local culture. This also suggests that through having a local orientated perspective NASCAR is designed for the local market, and that is why NASCAR has not seen a high degree of internationalisation when compared to other high-profile American sports.

2.3. Quasi-Internationalised

This chapter examines sports that sit between the categories of highly internationalised sports and localised sports. To reiterate, highly internationalised sports can be viewed as not being culturally or institutionally constrained with the ability to operate with ease across the globe. Meanwhile, localised sports are culturally and institutionally constrained with no to little international development. The final category of sports being analysed is quasi-internationalised. Sports in this category are at a point in international development where they cannot be viewed as highly globalised but are actively seeking internationalisation, so are not localised. An example of a quasi-internationalised sport is rugby the case study sport, which actively seeks international expansion and holds World Cups, while also having a lower degree of internationalisation and development overseas compared to highly internationalised sports. Rugby will be the last reviewed sport, with the review also looking at: baseball; basketball; American football; ice hockey; cricket; boxing; netball; and swimming.

2.3.1. Baseball

Unlike NASCAR, baseball is one of the key American sporting past times that is seeking to internationalise. While not at the same levels of internationalisation as the likes of soccer and tennis, internationalisation efforts in baseball are evident as seen in this review. Baseball has been able to capture the attention of sports consumers around the world as shown by academics like Guthrie-Shimizu (2004), who highlights the growth of baseball in Japan. However, this growth is limited to a select few markets. The similar sport of Cricket is more established in a number of commonwealth nations which has made it hard for baseball to enter into the Cricket dominated markets (Chen, Gunter, & Zhang, 2012). While highly-internationalised sports have numerous visible leagues or events around the world baseball only has Major League Baseball which highlights the limited visibility of the sport.

Marcano and Fidler (1999) highlighted how sports leagues such as Major League Baseball (MLB) employ strategies similar to MNC's. One way of doing this is through licensed products. The growth

of the licensed products sales between 20-30 years ago shows how valuable sports and their products are in a commodified sporting landscape. In 1987 total sales of MLB licensed products sat at \$200 million, which rose to \$1.5 billion in 1997 (Marcano & Fidler, 1999). New reports are finding record sales which can be attributed to the growth of e-commerce as a sales place.¹² Merchandise sales have also grown overseas with the products viewed more as a fashion item with consumers not needing to be genuine fans.¹³ This shows that people are at least interested in the game which is providing a motive for MLB executives to internationalise.

Baseball is an example of a sport that was used to create a more transnational society (the removal of national borders) between America and Asia, through the diffusion of Baseball from the United States into originally Japan (Guthrie-Shimizu, 2004). Guthrie-Shimizu (2004) states baseball has a long history in Japan since its diffusion into the Japanese market in the early decades of the 1900s. Baseball was seen as an 'American' cultural form, however, it has survived war and has united the Pacific helping to bring peace due to the love of the game (Guthrie-Shimizu, 2004). This transnational idea is also clear in the development of sports celebrity power, as shown by Japanese baseball player Suzuki Ichiro (Nakamura, 2005). Ichiro was the first Japanese baseball player to feature in Major League baseball in the United States in the 2001-02 season (Nakamura, 2005). Ichiro is seen as a source of nationalism for Japan due to his ability to successfully assimilate into Major League Baseball which provided a sense of pride in Japanese consumers, while also furthering the globalisation of baseball (Nakamura, 2005).

Klein (2008) states that sports face a tough choice between being centralised or de-centralised. In a study of Major League Baseball, Klein (2008) suggests that while baseball is structurally similar to soccer (FIFA), baseball faces tougher choices. Soccer is already more global, with baseball having mainly a presence in the USA market. Klein (2008) states that MLB should consider trade-offs between generating profits and developing the sport when looking to internationalise. Klein (2008) suggests that baseball must first struggle to be viable in the international market. The reason for struggle occurs due to the need for operations such as the development of players and developing a fanbase. This suggests that sports with a low international presence like baseball need to have a long term focus on developing the sport and being de-centralised resulting in lower profits.

2.3.2. Basketball

Basketball is at a similar point of international development to baseball. Like the MLB, the American NBA is viewed as the pinnacle of the game. However, athletes such as LeBron James and Steph Curry

¹² <http://www.rakutenintelligence.com/blog/2016/baseball-merchandise-sales-2016>

¹³ <https://www.thedrum.com/news/2019/06/04/major-league-baseball-uk-expansion-gameplan>

are marketable across the world. Labour migration is also starting to occur more in basketball. Steven Adams is an example of this migration. He has been a driver for the growth of basketball in New Zealand with his presence in the American NBA. His presence in the NBA has seen basketball recently overtake Rugby as the most played sport in New Zealand schools.¹⁴ This labour migration is highlighted by the growth in foreign players over the past 25 years. In the 1996-97 season, there were 21 foreign players in the league (about 5% of the total). By the 2018-19 season, the number of foreign players was up to 108, representing just under 25% of players in the league.¹⁵ However, labour migration is starting to also occur outwards from the United States with talented young players RJ Hampton and LaMelo Ball moving to New Zealand and Australia to develop their game in the ANBL rather than the college system in the United States.¹⁶ This shows the development of basketball in recent years as the sport is increasingly becoming more internationalised but is still not at the level of sports like soccer.

Hyde and Pritchard (2009) identified the need to meet certain critical success factors for a sporting product such as timing and weather. However, there is also the need to be aware of different tastes in different cultures around the globe. In the mid-1900s China viewed sports from the West as a source of “evil capitalism” (Tan & Bairner, 2010, p. 583). It was not until after the cultural revolution in Eastern nations that sports from the West were open to enter into the Eastern markets (Tan & Bairner, 2010). The idea of sport as a cultural product is further developed by Maguire (2011a); (Maguire, 2011b). Maguire (2011a; 2011b) views sport as a cultural product and with the rise of globalisation, it is seen as having an effect on the East. The Chinese view sport as a Western-dominated product that is driven to impose itself onto vulnerable areas such as economics and politics. The West uses the economic, political and technological resources sports provide to leverage control over the East. Sports organisations are seen to be under pressure in the highly commercialised world of sport to keep growing. This results in seeing sports expand into the Eastern markets in search of the growth they require to be successful, which is similar to what we know about Western MNCs (Maguire 2011a; 2011b).

Huang (2013) suggests that the presence of the NBA in the Chinese market has altered the modernity of sport in China. Since entering into the Chinese market in 1979, the NBA has remained an American commodity, while still gaining popularity, leading to reforms in the Chinese market (Huang, 2013). Athletes such as Yao Ming have captured the attention of the Chinese public and his

¹⁴ https://www.espn.com/nbl/story/_/id/26844233/the-breakers-steven-adams-nz-basketball-revolution

¹⁵ <https://www.businessinsider.com/growing-number-of-foreign-born-players-in-nba-slows-2018-10/?r=AU&IR=T>

¹⁶ <https://www.forbes.com/sites/adamzagoria/2019/06/18/lamelo-ball-will-follow-r-j-hampton-to-the-australian-pro-league/#1958c8fc154b>

stardom helped to increase the popularity of basketball in the Chinese market. This highlights the power of sport. The power of sport as a product forced China a traditionally closed market to create reforms and open the market up to sports. Chen, Tan, and Lee (2015) found that economic reform was growing in China and that this was done mainly to increase participation in sport, with players becoming displeased with the low government-funded salary they would receive. This low wage was leading to low participation in sports. Chen et al. (2015) state the globalisation of table tennis -the national sport of China- led to the need for the local government to respond to the challenges that occur due to the globalisation of the sport. Responses include the Chinese participating in international organisations and commercialisation (Chen et al., 2015). Asian markets have recently established themselves to be attractive for sport internationalisation with sports event internationalisation being one key area in Asia. Kelly (2011) states that cities in established developed nations (e.g. Tokyo, Japan) seek to host sporting events to establish themselves and gain recognition as a main global world city. The prestige that events such as the Olympics hold gives the host cities the recognition and builds the standing of the city in the world (Kelly, 2011).

2.3.3. American Football

All three traditional American sports (baseball, basketball and football) share common traits in terms of internationalisation. For example, American exceptionalism is relevant to all these sports. This subsection focuses on the NFL the epicentre of American football. Despite being very 'Americanised' American football has iconic stars like Tom Brady who are somewhat recognised globally. Labour migration is also starting to become more evident, in the Pacific region in particular. Rugby League players like Jarryd Hayne and Valentine Holmes have moved to America to try and break into the NFL¹⁷, along with the NFL hosting scouting camps in the Pacific region.¹⁸ The NFL also show their desire to internationalise through entering an agreement with soccer's Tottenham Hotspur which sees a certain number of NFL games take place in London each year in an effort to increase the sport's fanbase.¹⁹

Riesman and Denney (1951) identified that both rugby and soccer were present in the American market before American Football, prior to the creation of American football rugby and soccer attempted to diffuse into America. However, the diffusion of English games was not successful. This can be attributed to cultural differences with Americans seeing the English as imposing themselves on American culture (Riesman & Denney, 1951). The need to be patriotic and embrace their own

¹⁷ <https://www.tvnz.co.nz/one-news/sport/league/valentine-holmes-not-giving-up-nfl-dream-but-ruling-nrl-return-either>

¹⁸ <https://www.stuff.co.nz/sport/other-sports/106541614/nfl-talent-spotters-start-hunt-for-new-zealand-athletes-with-skill>

¹⁹ <https://www.ticketnews.com/2019/08/international-nfl-games-are-hot-sellers-as-league-expands-fanbase/>

culture, and to not be influenced in globalising sports is apparent. Brown (2005) follows the same ideas of both Riesman and Denney (1951) and Stroeken (2002). Brown (2005) states the rejection of globalised sports in America (e.g. soccer) is down to the exceptionalist attitude held by American society. This exceptionalism is centred on the patriotic ideal and the pride of America. The result of this is that American sports will thrive in America, with globally-focused sports struggling to diffuse. Brown (2005) found that exceptionalism also results in American sports being negatively impacted if they seek to globalise themselves. The exceptionalism has created an oligopoly in the American sporting market (Brown, 2005). This exceptionalism is likely what may have shifted NASCAR to not seek to internationalise. American football, however, belongs in quasi-internationalised as activities such as the entering international markets shows internationalising intent along with trying to overcome the American exceptionalism.

2.3.4. Ice Hockey

Ice Hockey was placed in the quasi-internationalised category by the researcher due to the global spread of the sport. While not at the levels of soccer and other quasi-internationalised sports, ice hockey has a significant international presence. Earle (1998) highlights this through the playing of Ice Hockey at both World Cup events and the Winter Olympics. The world rankings also demonstrate the extent of the internationalisation. There are 52 nations on the men's world rankings and 39 on the women's.²⁰ While this shows international expansion it also highlights the lower levels of internationalisation compared to the highly-internationalised sports. Ice Hockey also only has the NFL as the only globally visible leagues and few globally visible stars making it a quasi-internationalised sport.

Ice Hockey is an example of the importance of sport to individuals in terms of national identity. This is seen in Earle (1998) examination of ice hockey in Canada. Earle (1998) states that ice hockey is a source of extreme national pride and identity to consumers in Canada. "We consider it our game" and "Canadian's don't deal with losing in hockey very well (Earle, 1998)." These quotes highlight the sense of pride and engagement that is attached to the Canadian public when it comes to the sport of Ice Hockey. The Canadian public is seen to have wanted to exact revenge on Team USA after the Canadian team were defeated by the USA in 1996 Hockey World Cup (Earle, 1998). Earle (1998) shows that despite the growth of the game around the world, Canada will continue to consume Ice Hockey sporting products due to the sport being engrained and rooted into the national identity of the country. National identity in the consumption of sport is also highlighted by Hyde and Pritchard (2009).

²⁰ <https://www.iihf.com/en/worldranking>

2.3.5. Cricket

Gupta (2004) and Rumford (2007) both focused on how commercial and social power in the Eastern markets has seen a shift in power from the West to the East. Gupta (2004) states the internationalisation of sport has typically followed the pattern of globalisation with the wealthy Western-based markets being the more dominant markets. However, this is not the case in cricket. Rumford (2007) believes the modernisation of cricket has helped shift power away from the traditional powerhouses to the East with India holding the most influence in the game. Cricket, despite being global, is limited to mainly a commonwealth presence influenced by the early English settlers in the commonwealth markets (Rumford, 2007). The modernising of the game with the development of ODI and T20 cricket generated more interest in the East (Gupta, 2004). With the high population of India, cricket became more successful commercially in the East. This has developed into the Eastern nations now holding the power in terms of the governance of the sport as a whole. Kaufman and Patterson (2005) highlight the need to be aware of different tastes within different cultures that can have an effect on the diffusion of a sporting product into a new market. This is shown through the diffusion of cricket into America. Kaufman and Patterson (2005) outline a key reason for cricket failing to diffuse into the United States market was due to 'timing.' The traditional view is for the failure of cricket to diffuse into the United States is that Americans are always in a hurry and are anxious for results. Whereas cricket is as a traditionally long and tedious game compared to the likes of baseball which would be the main competition to cricket in America (Kaufman & Patterson, 2005). However, it is important to consider that the literature is historical, and centres on the test cricket format which takes 5 days per match, unlike the modern One Day and T20 formats. This highlights the need to understand the differences between cultures to better align a globalising sporting product with the local environment to successfully diffuse into the market. Since the early days of cricket described by Rumford (2007) cricket has developed in a significant number of international markets, namely Commonwealth nations. This represents the first wave of internationalisation. However, unlike soccer which can also be seen to be influenced by English settlers, cricket has not become a 'truly' globalised sport. Notwithstanding the recognised leagues around the world, athletes with high celebrity status mainly driven by the popularity of cricket in India, and labour migration of athletes between markets, the 2019 Cricket World Cup shows the limited expansion with the event confined to ten countries, most of which have colonial links with the former British empire.²¹ This shows why the researcher positions cricket as a quasi-internationalised sport.

²¹ <https://www.cricketworldcup.com/standings>

Focusing on the development of T20 cricket, Hyde and Pritchard (2009) identified critical success factors required for a sporting product to be successful in a market. The main identified success factor was timing (Hyde & Pritchard, 2009). Cricket is seen to be a 'British' sport. However, Hyde and Pritchard (2009) highlight how in the late 1990's the consumption of cricket was in decline in the United Kingdom. At this stage, the consumer tastes and preferences of sport consumers were changing. This resulted in the development of the faster T20 form of cricket. Hyde and Pritchard (2009) state that T20 cricket increased the attendance of cricket due to the critical success factors present. The timing success factor is globally applicable and saw the rise of T20 cricket in cricket markets all over the globe, leading to increased consumption of cricket.

2.3.6. Boxing

Another sport positioned in the quasi-internationalised category is boxing. Comparing boxing to the highly internationalised sports is difficult to do due to the structural set up of the operations and governance of the sport. Boxing is an individual sport like tennis and golf, however, the focus is not league based with four separate organisations running fights that can see individuals win 'world championships' despite there being multiple world champion belts due to having four organisations. However, boxing in the past with the likes of Mike Tyson and Mohammed Ali, to today with fighters like Tyson Fury and Floyd Mayweather shows international awareness of the sport.

Literature on boxing focuses on the theme of sport as a product. Shin (2007) states that the product life cycle (PLC) can be applied to sport as it is in IB research after being developed by Vernon (1992). Shin (2007) split the life cycle of boxing into four stages of the PLC the introduction, growth, maturity and decline stages. All stages were affected differently by local culture and institutional pressure which altered the product life cycle. Shin (2007) views boxing as a 'product' which is consumed by people as either participants or fans. The PLC is then used to analyse the changing popularity of a sport (in this study boxing in South Korea) in a market (Shin, 2007). Shin (2007) argued that changes in tastes of sports fans are linked with changes in economic development, industrialisation and standard of living. The rise of popularity in sports such as soccer was linked to economic development and social changes, which along with government regulations are viewed to effect sports products on the PLC (Shin, 2007).

2.3.7. Netball

The sport of netball is similar to cricket in terms of the internationalisation. Both share the commonality of being developed and diffused internationally via the colonial English settlers with participation rates being higher in Commonwealth nations. Netball, despite holding a global reach lacks development of leagues. New Zealand, Australia and the United Kingdom are the nations with

the main leagues in netball. However, the recent development of the Fast Five netball series shows the innovation of the sport in attempts to internationalise the sport at a higher level.²² The pursuit of internationalisation in netball is also shown through the development of the World Cups, along with the labour migration of players as highlighted by Jamaican Jhaniele Fowler-Reid who has played in both New Zealand and Australia.²³

Through looking at literature focused on netball the key theme highlighted is using sport for development. The need for interconnectedness and support for growth in the more isolated markets is highlighted by Mansfield (2014). Looking at netball in Malawi, Mansfield (2014) identified a growing relationship between England Netball and the African nations. This relationship led to the development of the grassroots game in countries like Malawi. The England Netball organisation has been at the forefront of actively engaging with the development of the game in Africa as shown through the Malawi example. Activities in markets such as Malawi could be seen as a source of future talent. The findings of both Mansfield (2014) and Harris and Wise (2011) highlight the need for support in the more isolated markets where knowledge and other skills may be lacking which is hindering the growth of the sporting product.

2.3.8. Swimming

Swimming is classified by the researcher as a quasi-internationalised sport. While it shares similarities with tennis and golf in being an individually based sport, there are differences in the organisation of the sport that sees it qualify as a quasi-internationalised sport instead of a truly highly internationalised sport. The factors that present swimming as being internationalised is the global spread of participation. Events are held all around the world and the inclusion of swimming in the Olympics shows a global uptake in the sport. However, apart from the Olympics swimming gains little public attention when compared to sports with leagues which hold a global presence such as soccer and tennis with the ATP and WTA circuits. Swimming also has low marketability in athletes, with Michael Phelps being the most recognisable swimmer.

Literature on swimming highlights the ability of sports to develop and commercialise by gaining 'legitimacy.' Hastings, Cable, and Zahran (2005) looked at the globalisation of masters swimming (MS) programs which originated in the United States and globalised into new markets with middle to high levels of socio-economic development. The MS programs gained the ability to globalise through gaining 'legitimacy' from being recognised by FINA, the governing body of swimming (Hastings et al.,

²² <https://netball.sport/events-and-results/fast5>

²³ <https://www.stuff.co.nz/sport/netball/94617149/jhaniele-fowlerreids-departure-another-blow-for-struggling-nz-netball-league>

2005). Nations with middle to high levels of economic development were targeted as these markets possessed the required affluence and demographics that would allow the MS program to have sustainable success. Smart (2007, p. 113) states that “the development of sport is bound up with processes of economic and cultural transformation associated with the global diffusion of capitalist forms of consumption,” from this sport is seen as economically significant. The commodification and globalisation of sport have seen different sporting products hold a presence in all corners of the globe. It is viewed that sports are ‘more universal’ than the UN, with events bringing people together (Smart, 2007). This shows the importance the development of sport plays in shaping the world with the increasing commodification and growth of sport it will continue to grow in popularity and power to culturally shape the world.

2.3.9. Rugby

Rugby is the sport of focus in this thesis. It possesses attributes that highlight both the internationalised nature of the sport, but also areas for development which would allow it to become a highly globalised sport. Attributes including globalised leagues such as Super Rugby, international tournaments, the involvement of Rugby 7s in the Olympics, and player migration, highlight the internationalised nature of Rugby. However, Rugby lags behind soccer in areas such as the celebrity power of athletes and the participation rates of the sport globally. The development of Rugby 7s shows innovation and forward-thinking by rugby officials and highlights the attention to continue to grow rugby internationally. Literature highlights areas such as the development of commercialisation in rugby and the development of the game.

Lewis and Winder (2007) compared the All Blacks’ 1905 and 2005 tours of Great Britain using commodity chains and argued that globalisation has been institutionalised in new ways that thoroughly exploit rugby’s production values. This exploitation was shown in the All Blacks from 2005 onwards through advertising the All Blacks as a product, for example associating the All Black’s name and symbol with products ranging from utility trucks to energy drinks. Lewis and Winder (2007) highlight that rugby is more than a sport and more than a business. The cultural mystique of the All Blacks’ brand developed over the years adds to the value of the product. This saw a shift from a fractured regulatory environment to a market seeking regulatory environment, which commodified the game of rugby and shifted the production values of the sport in 2005 compared to that of 1905.

Harris and Wise (2011) examined the growth of rugby in the market of Argentina. Since becoming the first non-foundation member to reach the semi-finals of the Rugby World Cup in 2007, rugby in Argentina has grown from strength to strength. Harris and Wise (2011) state that there had been

concern around the eight foundation nations (New Zealand; England; Australia; South Africa; Scotland; Wales; Ireland; France²⁴) in rugby not being active enough in seeking to expand the game globally. The Argentinians have, however, shown that the game with the modernising of the sport has grown and are now a competitive nation in world rugby. The invitation for Argentina to join the Tri-Nations tournament was seen as a sign promoting greater connectivity. It also lessened the Argentinians reliance on the foundation members to help grow the game in Argentina (Harris & Wise, 2011). This example highlights how isolation can be overcome by promoting connectivity in sport and seeking to globalise sport.

Horton (2009) suggests that rugby itself is somewhat different from other sports when it comes to the development of the game with rugby being more 'glocal' than other sports being globalised. Horton states, rugby in Australia is similar to other globalised sports as the development to being a professional sport has seen an increased focus on the sport being seen as a 'product' with commercial arms (e.g. media) dictating how the game is played in order to attract spectators. Despite this, the 'glocal' context of the game is clear. While rugby is seen as a major sport, literature states that the globalisation of sport has seen minor sports also be able to diffuse and enter into new markets.

2.4. Parallels between Sport and International Business Literature

There are clear parallels between sports and IB literature. This can be seen by applying the literature discussed to traditional IB literature.

The idea of a sport gaining legitimacy is an example of one of these topics. Hastings et al. (2005) looked at the growth of the Masters Swimming (MS) program originating in America and how it managed to grow internationally. The MS program was able to internationalise and enter into new markets by gaining accreditation from FINA the swimming governing body and being a recognised program (Hastings et al., 2005). This was seen as a form of 'legitimacy' which provided the way for the MS program to internationalise. The idea of 'legitimacy' is central to IB. According to Kumar and Singh (2008), the need to gain legitimacy provides firms with the ability to internationalise successfully. Gaining legitimacy allows a firm to overcome internationalisation obstacles including the liability of foreignness and cultural distance (Kumar & Singh, 2008).

Frost (2004) examines how indigenous non-internationalising sports are at risk of being crowded out in the local market due to the influx of internationalising sports which are seeking new markets.

Dunning (2008) states that there are different motives that see a firm internationalise. These

²⁴ <http://www.nzrugby.co.nz/about-us/partners/international-rugby>

motives are resource-seeking; market-seeking; efficiency-seeking; and strategic asset-seeking investment motives (Dunning, 2008). Looking back to sports, Ratten (2011) states that sports internationalise due to saturation in the home market. This saturation in the market limits the domestic growth of sport which motivates the sports managers to internationalise into new markets. The motives for internationalising sports align with the market-seeking motive. The market-seeking motive occurs due to the desire for increasing the market size and prospects of market growth for a firm (Dunning, 2008). This highlights that sports and firms hold the same motives in internationalising.

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is viewed by Mohr, Webb, and Harris (2001) as a firms' commitment to try and minimise or eliminate their own adverse impacts on society, then using these actions to maximise long term returns. Bradish and Cronin (2009) extend on Mohr et al. (2001) suggesting CSR is the attempt for an organisation to be accountable and ethical in regard to the needs of society and other stakeholders. CSR is a concept which is again relevant in both the IB and sports fields. Ratten (2011) states CSR is important in sport, as it allows organisations to maintain a good relationship with society; leads to improved trust, and can legitimise the efforts of sports organisations. Levermore (2010) examined how social development has been occurring through the use of sport. CSR initiatives for social development were found to run through sport, however, organisations conducting these initiatives ranged from multinationals to sports federations and clubs (Levermore, 2010). Levermore (2010) states this link between development and sport has always been present with the range of organisations taking part in the development. However, Levermore (2010) also highlighted how these social development initiatives were only going to continue to rise with the hosting of mega-sporting events in lower socio-economic areas (e.g. 2014 FIFA World Cup in Brazil and the 2010 FIFA World Cup in South Africa). Hosting events in these lower socio-economic areas provides the opportunity for growth in both sporting and business circles which can be launched via the social development initiatives which occur through sport.

These three topics of legitimacy, entering into a market and corporate social responsibility are three of many parallel links between both sport and business. They highlight how both fields are not separated and can be interconnected laying the pathway for this study as these links and more will be discussed further on in the study.

2.4.1. Conceptual Model

To further highlight the parallels between the literature of sports internationalisation and IB a conceptual model has been proposed. Figure 1 looks at identifying the internationalisation process for a sporting product. Drivers and motives for the internationalisation, along with demands of the

market, barriers and facilitators all link together to affect the degree of internationalisation of a sporting product.

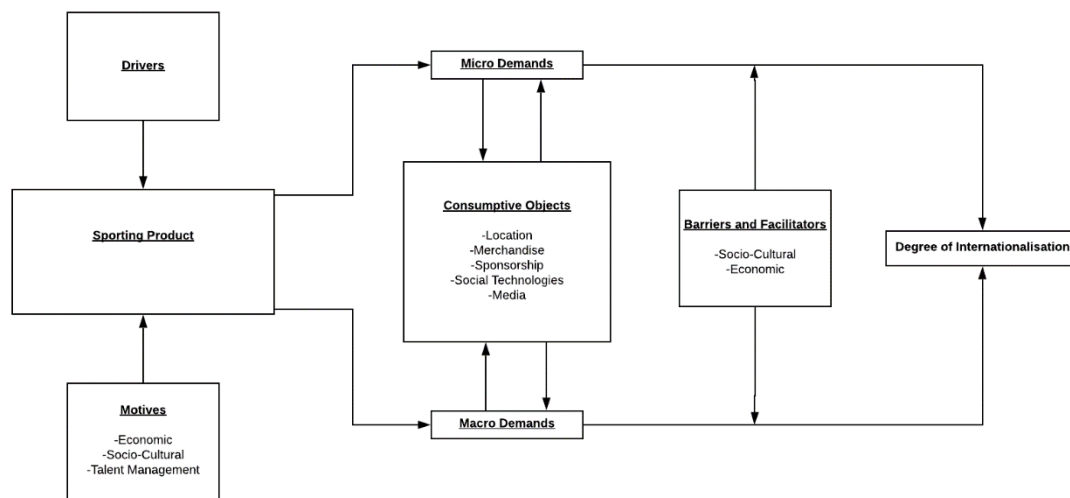


Figure 1 Internationalisation of a Sporting Product Model

When a sporting product is internationalised there are two variables which started the process. These are drivers and motives. The drivers include owners and executives of teams, leagues and organisations. The drivers have a desire to internationalise due to the motives which include economical, socio-cultural and talent management motives. Ratten (2011) states there is a current trend toward internationalising a sporting product to find new streams of revenue, this links in with standard business motives and explains the economic motive. Talent management can be seen by the analysis of David Beckham by Elliot and Harris (2011). In order to have a competitive team or an attractive product for consumers, the migration of athletes occurs which increase the internationalisation of a sporting product. Socio-cultural motives look at sport as being used to build a transnational society, this allows a product to be attractive in all markets making the product easier to consume.

The internationalisation of the product is impacted by both micro and macro demands in the markets environment. Micro demands focus on the demands of the consumer. Consumers demand different consumptive objects which help them to consume a sporting product. An example of this is the consumers or fans demand access to their sports teams and players through social technologies. This was shown by Parganas et al. (2017) who found the use of social media helped fans feel connected to the team and players creating a sense of loyalty to the sporting product. The macro demands look at the economic needs of the internationalisation of the product. Sports are reliant on economic conditions to survive and prosper internationally. Kelly (2011) highlighted this linking economic conditions of host cities of major events such as the Olympics as the main determinant of

whether the event will be successful. The consumptive objects are shown to act as either barriers or facilitators to the internationalisation of a sporting product, with the degree of internationalisation being affected by how the barriers and facilitators impact the product. The model is applicable to the different levels of sports internationalisation outlined in the literature review. Looking at the localised sport of NASCAR the degree of internationalisation was limited. Goldsmith and Walker (2015) show the motive for the executives to use emerging technology to grow the awareness of the game. However, the exceptionalism in the USA described by Brown (2005) acts as a barrier to internationalisation and limits the growth of the sport to grow the awareness of the sport in the domestic youth market (Goldsmith & Walker, 2015). For highly internationalised sports soccer can be used as an example of applying the framework. Ratten (2011) states sports executives seek internationalisation to gain new revenue streams. For the LA Galaxy officials in the case of David Beckham described by Gilmour and Rowe (2010), this acts as the driver and motive for the internationalisation of the club as a sporting product. Beckham has the global appeal which was used by LA Galaxy as a facilitator to internationalise into the Asia-Pacific market. The 'Becks' appeal was used as a marketing tool to sell the consumptive object of merchandise to fans in the new emerging markets. Finally, the framework can also be applied to the quasi-internationalise level. This can be seen in applying Rugby to the framework. New streams of revenue acts as the motive for the executives to internationalise. The internationalisation is shown by Harris and Wise (2011) and the growth of rugby in Argentina. Expanding the Tri-Nations tournament to include Argentina helped to achieve the economic demands of internationalising the sport. With Argentina include that offers more fans from the Argentinian market consuming the product through consumptive objects such as media which leads to a higher degree of internationalisation of rugby.

This analysis shows again the three gaps in the research that this thesis aims to fill. These are that the literature is heavily focused on the sport of football with other sports being under-researched, the literature is historically based with little real-time focus and the literature is anchored in the fields of sociology and political science. The thesis will again contribute by filling these established gaps and providing decision making feedback for sports managers. The research questions of how is Rugby 7s internationalising? And, how does rugby 7s manage the key decision points in internationalisation? Will be answered to ensure the contributions are successfully achieved.

Chapter Three: Methodology

This chapter will discuss how the research was philosophically guided in the approach that was being taken. It then goes on to provide an overview of the data collection highlighting the use of two sets of data. Parameters are discussed around the recruiting of informants for the chosen primary mode of data collection. It then looks into stating how the data was analysed and trustworthiness in the data was achieved along with how the research met the ethical standards of Victoria University.

3.1. Research Philosophy

Sports research can be viewed as a phenomenon as an emerging area of research that is not yet fully understood through research. Kerlinger (1986) states that theory is a construct used to better understand, explain and predict a phenomena. It is important to take the right approach in conducting the research to better understand this phenomenon. Interpretivism and realism are the chosen philosophical paradigms in this thesis. Realism is an ontological notion which asserts that realities exist outside of the mind (Crotty, 1998). Realism is said to take the view that there are multiple descriptions and explanations of the same phenomena available (Hammersley, 1992). This adoption of multiple views expands the possibility of gaining additional information that could be beneficial to the research, hence the reason for the application of realism in the research. According to Antwi and Hamza (2015), interpretive researchers believe that reality consists of people's subjective experiences of the external world, with reality being socially constructed. While Walsham (2015) states in interpretive tradition there is no correct or incorrect theories; with the theories instead of being based on how interesting they are to those involved in similar areas and the researcher. Constructs are also derived from the field via an in-depth examination of the phenomenon of interest. Walsham's (2015) description of interpretive tradition highlights the application of the interpretivist paradigm to this research. The research itself is a phenomenon which is of interest to the researcher which led the drive to want to examine the theory within this research area. The constructs of the research are also derived from the field by the use of the in-depth interviews. These examine the internationalisation of sport and rugby 7s in particular phenomenon.

3.2. Research Approach

Sinkovics, Penz, and Ghauri (2008) contend much of IB research remains quantitative empirical. Sinkovics et al. (2008) suggest that taking a more qualitative approach in IB is important. This is due to the capacity of qualitative research to create new areas for research. The idea places the importance of identifying phenomena in IB research. Vissak (2010) states that case studies are useful for understanding phenomena such as the internationalisation process or the management of

multinational enterprises. Eisenhardt (1989) and Vissak (2010) both highlight that case studies are especially appropriate for new topic areas and developing a new theory. With the focus of the research in this thesis on sport, which is itself a phenomenon in terms of IB research case study was the chosen has the approach for the research. As stated above Kerlinger (1986) states that theory is used to help understand phenomena such as sport. This requires the need for knowledge to gain that understanding of the phenomena through theory. Kerlinger (1986, p. 17) looks at the epistemological question of “How do we know?” stating this is a question that cannot be answered empirically. As the question cannot be answered empirically a qualitative approach is used to understand and predict the phenomena through asking the questions of; How is Rugby 7s internationalising?; and How does Rugby 7s manage the key decision points in internationalisation? These are the epistemological based questions that seek to gain the needed knowledge through a qualitative standpoint to be able to use the theory to understand the researched phenomena.

3.2.1. Research Design

The research can be seen as being an exploratory research design using a single qualitative case study with embedded units. The embedded subunits derive from Baxter and Jack (2008) design of a case study research project. Baxter and Jack (2008) state that the single case with embedded units allows the research to have a focus on a particular issue. However, while researching this issue the subunits within the study allow for influence and decisions from other areas within that issue to be studied. The particular issue in the case study is the internationalisation of rugby 7s. This allows the governing body of World Rugby to be identified as the main case. However, to get a better understanding of the different influences and decisions other organisations who hold a relationship to World Rugby need to be studied. With the focus being on the internationalisation of rugby 7s this provides the direct relationship to being able to study the different tournaments within both the men’s and women’s circuits. The tournaments themselves being geographically diverse provide the information around how the influence and decisions of these impact on World Rugby and the internationalisation of rugby 7s. According to Yin (2003), exploratory is a type of case study used to explore those situations where the intervention being evaluated holds no clear or single outcome. With sport being a phenomenon in IB research it aligns with the exploratory case study as there is currently no clear or single outcome due to the lack of research in the research area. Qualitative based interviews will be used as the main data collection source. These interviews will be cross-sectional as no timeframe has been given, with the topic taking a contemporary look into the research area.

3.2.2. Data Collection

In order to achieve the objectives of this research two data collection methods were employed. Primary data was collected using interviews. The interviews with key informants from the Rugby community were conducted in order to get a more in-depth perspective of the adaption vs standardisation argument around the 7s circuit. The interviews were conducted with key informants from both World Rugby (Main Single Case) and tournaments or governing bodies (Embedded Subunits). Baxter and Jack (2008) state two methods of data can be triangulated together in order to help increase the overall rigour of the research. With this in mind, a secondary data collection took place for the triangulation of the data. The second data set gathered together key data from appropriate sources such as annual reports, tournament websites and news media to analyse the growth of the 7s tournaments. The results were triangulated with the data collected from the interviews in pattern matching and analysed.

3.2.3. Sampling

As mentioned above the primary data collection source were via interviews with key informants in the rugby community. It would also see informants from both World Rugby representing the main case being studied, along with event stakeholders from national 7s events representing the embedded subunits in the data collection. A purposive method (Judgemental Sampling) of sampling was implemented, with interviewees identified with key knowledge in these specific areas of study. Purposive sampling strategies are non-random ways that ensure particular categories of cases are represented in the final sample of the research (Robinson, 2014). Kumar (2019) explains this by stating purposive sampling sees the researcher go to people who in their opinion will have the required information for the research. With the need for both the categories of the main case and the embedded subunits to be represented it outlines the need to conduct purposive sampling in the research. The sampling frame was made up of executives from the national rugby organisations and the 7s tournaments.

3.3. Interview Process

The interviews were conducted in a semi-structured fashion in order to be able to both guide the interview within relevant topics for data collection and also to allow for free-flowing conversations with the interviewees. DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree (2006) outline the key characteristics of a semi-structured interview that were implemented in the preparation of the interviews. These include: scheduled in advance at a chosen time and location; conducted around a set of open-ended questions; conducted either with individuals or groups; take between 30 minutes and a few hours to

complete (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). These characteristics guided the development of the interviews.

This is highlighted through the development of two sets of interview protocols, with open-ended questions. Two interview protocols were developed to match the background of the different interviewees to the knowledge that they may have of the research area. Castillo-Montoya (2016) states the development of interview protocols with open-ended questions helps generate quality answers while providing the interviewee's freedom in their answers. DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree (2006) state for interviews to last between 30 minutes and several hours. This was followed in order to gain quality data, with the interviews lasting between 30 minutes and 1 hour.

3.3.1. Sample Size and Data Saturation

As described above the thesis is designed as a case study. The case study approach was implemented due to it being useful in the understanding of phenomena such as the internationalisation process (Vissak, 2010). The design of the case study was then chosen to follow Baxter and Jack (2008) single case with embedded subunits. It was also discussed that participants and markets chosen to analyse would be chosen from a purposive standpoint. With this in mind, the sample size of participants is important. According to Guest, Bunce, and Johnson (2006), the sample size in purposive sampling relies on reaching 'data saturation.' It was found by Guest et al. (2006) that saturation occurred within the first 12 interviews, with basic elements of meta themes being present as early as 6 interviews. With this in mind and the number of events on the 7s circuit, it was decided that 7-12 markets would be a suitable sample size in order to reach saturation and gain quality data.

3.3.2. Participant Recruitment and Characteristics

The participants for the interviews were recruited in two separate stages. Stage one saw the researcher's personal connection to identify potential participants for the interviews. The second stage then saw the researcher target specific potential participants from applicable markets to take part in the data collection. As highlighted above the participants were chosen with specific criteria such as experience. As Robinson (2014) states, this purposive sampling allows for particular categories to be analysed and included in the final data set. This ensures that the sample will include variety to gain as much data as possible while not becoming saturated early on in the data collection. From this, the purposive sampling method of expert sampling was implemented. According to Etikan, Musa, and Alkassim (2016), expert sampling is a positive tool to use when exploring new areas of research and is used where there is a lack of observational evidence. As the name suggests expert sampling requires knowledgeable practitioners in a field to take part. Due to

this, specific criteria were set to establish the term of an 'expert' in the area of rugby 7s. The criteria include: either currently or have previously worked or played in the rugby 7s environment; if they are a player they had experience in a national setup playing in the HSBC 7s Circuit; for workers have directly been involved with the circuit as a whole or with an individual event on the circuit. The parameters for this included involvement with either the men's or women's series.

The first stage of the participant recruitment saw the researcher contact a personal contact with connections in the rugby environment. The personal contact created a list of 10 possible participants from different markets around the world. Contact with the potential participant was first made by the personal contact. If the potential participant was available to take part, communication was then handed over to the researcher. From this list of 10 potential participants, the majority were available for an interview. From the communications of 7 potential participants, the final number was 4 confirmed participants in this stage. Two of the group were individuals from the list first provided by the personal contact. The other two came from snowballing with two individuals from the original list introducing the researcher to individuals at the same organisation who had more knowledge on the rugby 7s environment.

The second stage saw the researcher email potential participants who met the criteria for purposive communication. This saw nine 7s organisations or individuals emailed. From these nine organisations or individuals, five did not take part in the research. One organisation did not feel comfortable taking part due to commercial sensitivity reasons. The remaining four organisations or individuals were all available to take part in the interviews. Two individuals from one organisation took part.

All of the participants were provided with a list of around five to seven examples of potential questions, an information sheet, consent forms and an introduction to the research project. Eight of the interviews were scheduled to take place either over Skype or a similar type of application due to the diverse location of the participants, with one face to face. One week before the scheduled interviews, the participants were emailed a reminder of the background and purpose of the research. This resulted in a total of nine interview participants, who represented seven different markets with two markets having two interviewees. The breakdown of the participants is highlighted in table 1. Table 1 shows the markets represented in the research, the number of participants taking part in the data collection and the organisations or 7s Events that are represented in the different markets. As stated above the purposive sampling method of expert sampling was implemented in the research with criteria outlined. The knowledgeable practitioner participants interview all matched the set criteria. The participants will be referred to as an 'executive' from the specific organisation or event they represent. This is done due to confidentiality and privacy reasons.

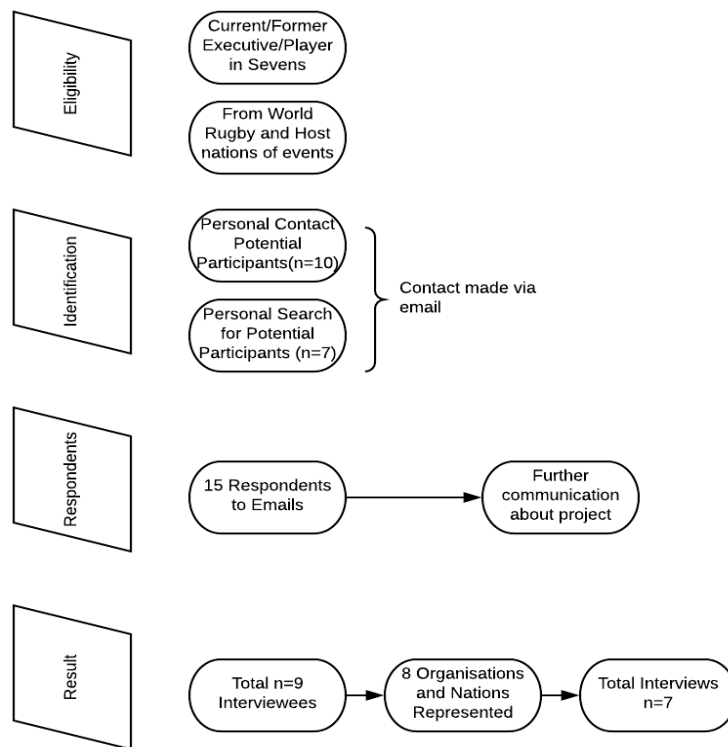


Figure 2 Map of Participant Finding

Table 1

Market	Number of Participants	Interview Participant
World Rugby	1	World Rugby
New Zealand	2*	New Zealand Rugby NZ Rugby Players Association
South Africa	2*	Rugby South Africa
Australia	1	Rugby Australia
United States of America	1	USA 7s
Hong Kong	1	Hong Kong 7s
United Arab Emirates	1	Dubai 7s

*Unintentional multiple participants agreed to take part

3.4. The Interview

The above explanation of the methodology of the research aligns with Doz (2011, p. 586) who states that good IB qualitative research needs “thick” descriptive case studies which can be based on interviews. The interviews followed DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree (2006) who provide four stages of conducting an interview: apprehension; exploration; co-operation; and participation. The stages help to build rapport and a trusting relationship and conversation between the interviewer and the interviewee.

The first stage apprehension is about building rapport between the interviewer and the interviewee, this sees the flow of conversation begin. DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree (2006) suggest starting with a broad open-ended question allowing the interviewee to engage themselves with the topic area in a friendly and non-threatening way. Following Castillo-Montoya (2016) points on developing an interview protocol, the questions that were developed were ensured to be open-ended and help to start a conversation with the interviewee. Developing the interview protocol meant splitting the interview up into different sections of topics, this ensured that the apprehension stage was successful. As can be seen on the interview protocols provided the interviews start with questions on the background of the interviewee and their personal involvement with rugby 7s. This followed the guidance of DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree (2006) as it was on topic and did not pressure the interviewee into providing in-depth answers straight away instead of seeing them ease into the interview.

The exploration stage is about in-depth description through learning, listening, testing and a sense of bonding and sharing. This was achieved through going into the more in-depth focused questions. While these were more in-depth they still provided the ability for the researcher to listen and learn through then engaging in questions that stemmed off of the original discussion question. While only one interview took place in person the listening, learning and bonding could still occur. This is due to platforms such as Skype being used which allowed the researcher to listen, test and share to get an in-depth answer.

The third stage is co-operative, this focuses on the comfort level between both the interviewer and the interviewee (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). The discussion in the interviews showed the increasing level of comfort between the interviewer and the interviewees as the time went on in the interview. Often in the interviews jokes were made, stories were shared and the more in-depth conversation was seen to be taking place highlighting the comfort level. To also increase the comfort level the interviewees were made aware that the interview would be recorded for the development of the transcription.

Finally is the participation stage. According to DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree (2006), this stage is where the greatest level of rapport is developed between the interviewer and the interviewee. This needs to occur within a certain period of time while the interview is being conducted (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). As the interviews followed DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree's (2006) timeframe for an interview it is likely that this stage would be completed. As stated earlier the interviews that took place lasted between 30 minutes and one hour.

Macdonald and Hellgren (2004) state that many IB academics are very explicit with the number of managers interviewed in a case. While Pettigrew (1990) suggests full-time researchers conduct about 50 in-depth interviews per case. As the men's circuit is the largest of the 7s circuits with 10 this limited the number of interviewees. Guest et al. (2006) state the number of samples in purpose sampling is done inductively when theoretical saturation. In this study, this occurred after 9 interviews.

3.5. Data Analysis

The primary data was analysed through a thematic approach. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), thematic analysis is a method of identifying, analysing and reporting themes found within data. Braun and Clarke (2006) further explain that thematic analysis can find themes in data in one of two ways. These are inductive or theoretical reasoning analysis. Mintzberg (1979) states that while seminal pieces such as Popper (1968) argue that inductive research is not a valid part of science, it is a more challenging and interesting part of the research which leads to new discoveries from a new phenomenon. The researcher has chosen to apply the inductive approach to the analysis of the data in this research due to the nature of the research with it stemming from a new phenomenon which is under-researched in the area, which aligns with the thoughts of Mintzberg (1979). Thomas (2006) refers to inductive analysis as using detailed readings of raw data to extract concepts, themes or models through interpretations made from the raw data when analysed by the researcher. This approach fits with the aim and purpose of the research, hence, the application of the inductive approach in the research. With the research looking to find and establish new links between the internationalisation of sport to the standardisation and adaptation outcomes of internationalising it aligns with the definition of the inductive analysis. An Inductive approach was used instead of the deductive approach, which Thomas (2006) states uses data to test theories. The raw data collected is leading to new theories on establishing the different tensions between standardisation and adaptation of a global sporting product such as Rugby 7s. While it is becoming increasingly more common to analyse data using software-based technologies such as NVivo, the data analysis was done manually by the researcher. Basit (2003) suggests the choice between manual coding and software-based coding is affected by the size of the research project, the funds available, time and

expertise of the researcher. Expanding on that Basit (2003) stated it can take weeks for a researcher to become an expert in using software-based systems. These underlying factors led to the researcher using a manual based approach. The researcher has a specific timeframe for submission, along with not having used software-based programs but has experience in manual coding which led to the selection of manual coding.

The research consists of both primary and secondary data. The analysis of the raw primary data from the interviews is based on Braun and Clarke's (2006) six phases of thematic analysis. The first phase saw the researcher become familiarised with the data; Phase two is generating initial codes; thirdly, organising codes into themes; The fourth phase is reviewing themes; phase five looks at defining and naming themes; phase six is producing the report.

Phase one was achieved by transcribing the interviews, listening to and reading them as they played and re-reading them again to begin to identify possible themes. Phase two was achieved through reading the transcripts and highlighting key parts of the data that shares a relationship to the theme of the research. Schmid and Kotulla (2011) outline seven different situational factors that impact the standardisation or adaptation choices of a firm. These seven situational factors can be linked to this research and act as the seven key identified themes for use in phase three. However, the subsections within these seven situational factors were not relevant. To have relevant subsections the interviews were thematically analysed and codes created which were then applied to the different situational factors. The fourth phase overlaps with the above statement the adapting of the codes to fit into an adapted version of Schmid and Kotulla (2011) Situational Factors acts as the reviewing of the themes. The same can be seen in phase five which looks at defining and naming themes. As stated before the main theme names from the situational factors from Schmid and Kotulla (2011) were kept, it was, however, the subsections under these themes that were adapted. For phase six, following the guide and using Schmid and Kotulla's (2011) Situational Factors as a base for the coding helped the researcher to identify relevant key themes from the raw data that outline an interesting background of the standardisation and adaptation practices implemented in a sports circuit (a series of sports events held in different locations). As stated earlier, Thomas (2006) referred to inductive reasoning as the use of detailed readings of raw data to extract concepts, themes or models through interpretations made from the raw data which has been collected and analysed by the research. The above analysis of the six phases of thematic analysis by Braun and Clarke (2006) which was implemented by the researcher aligns with the chosen inductive approach. This can be seen as the six steps involve taking the raw data collected from the interviews, creating themes and concepts from the data to generalise outcomes.

A second data set has also been used in the research. The primary reason for the use of the second data set is to triangulate the data. The triangulation of data is described as combining data from different sources and at different times, in a different place or from different people (Flick, 2004). The second data set (Table 2) looks at the growth of three different 7s events. Patton (2002) states the time frame for research will affect the amount of triangulation that is practical. These time limitations are the reason for analysing three events. Both New Zealand and Australia were chosen as they are foundation rugby nations and will answer whether 7s can grow in traditional markets. While the United States was chosen as an emerging rugby market to see if growth in emerging markets as possible. The data was set in time intervals looking at the events in a series every five years since the formation of the World Series. Meanwhile, the data was collected from numerous sources including annual reports; rugby websites; and executives. Flick (2004) states that data triangulation is the aligning of data, this is followed in the research by combining the primary data set of the interviews with the second collected data. The purpose of this triangulation between the two data sets is to ensure that consistency occurs within the research (Patton, 2002).

3.6. Trustworthiness

Sinkovics et al. (2008) state that not all quantitative criteria (e.g. objectivity) apply to qualitative research. Hence, trustworthiness was the central pillar of focus in this research. Sinkovics et al. (2008) indicate the concept of trustworthiness stems from seminal work in the 1980s by Guba and Lincoln. The concept of trustworthiness is a bundle that includes credibility, dependability, transferability and confirmability (Guba & Lincoln, 1981, 1982). These are needed to ensure trustworthiness is established. These ideas were followed in the research to establish trustworthiness. Sinkovics et al. (2008) proposed a framework which was analysed. Research techniques were drawn from this to produce credible results. For example, in the data collection and preparation stage, a 'chain of evidence' in the documentation of the interviews was established, along with also using multiple sources of evidence i.e. interviewee comments and the use of documents which established credibility. An example of confirmability being established is in the data analysis section. In the data analysis section participant were able to react and comment to data through having access to the interview transcription. Sinkovics et al. (2008) framework suggest transferability can be achieved discussion via 'establishing domain to which the study's findings can be generalised.' This was achieved through analysing the data through an adapted version of Schmid and Kotulla (2011) Situational factors of internationalising firms. While an example of dependability being achieved is through a grounded approach with the derivation of the coding scheme from data being employed. Trustworthiness is also encouraged through the application of realism. Porter (2007) states that relativists hold the view that all beliefs are equally valid with no overriding factor

to preferring one over another. This encourages through realism to that the beliefs or outcomes are transparent and accurate among other aspects which increases validity and embraces trustworthiness. These examples together highlight how trustworthiness was established in the research.

3.7. Ethical Considerations

This thesis was completed following the guidelines of the Human Ethics Committee of Victoria University of Wellington. Prior to conducting the research and gaining ethics approval, contact was made with potential interviewees. This was done in order to identify if there would be suitable interviewees to gather data from and the availability of the interviewees. However, this did not impact the integrity of the research or put the reputation of Victoria University into jeopardy as no data was collected. The human ethics committee were made aware of the contact when applying for ethics approval. In the data collection stage, the participants were made aware of both verbally and in writing of their rights including the option to withdraw from the research up to two weeks after the interview date. Participants were also aware that their name and job title would be withheld in the presentation of the data and would be instead provided pseudonyms. All of the participants were also made aware that any data collected would be held by the researcher for a period of five years after which it would then be destroyed. The study did not present any significant privacy or ethical risks.

Chapter 4: Findings

In the following chapter key findings from the data collection have been analysed using a thematic analysis approach. The findings show that there are key decision points that have been addressed by Rugby 7s executives in the internationalisation of the game. This highlights the outcome of the research question which seeks to address how the key decision points were managed by the Rugby 7s executives in the internationalisation of the game.

The qualitative findings are presented by the researcher as the key decision points. As mentioned in the methodology, the Situational Factors of Standardisation and Adaptation by Schmid and Kotulla (2011), created seven situational factors in which the findings were analysed and split within. This analysis was used to determine what points are evident as being the key decision points in Rugby 7s. The decision points analysed are market selection, mode of entry, adaptation and standardisation and long term competitiveness. The decision points are used to address and answer both of the research questions.

4.1. Market Selection

A key decision found through the analysis of the data is market selection. Rugby 7s executives face difficult decisions around market selection as the game is viewed as an emerging sport that is looking to continue growing in new markets. Selecting hosts of the rugby 7s events are decisions that cannot be made lightly, there are numerous factors that need to be considered when on potential hosts.

“so there's quite an extensive tender process involved. And it is an open, transparent, tender process. So communication goes into all of the WR member unions outlining the strategy behind the competition that we do is for all of our competitions, strategy behind the competition, and what the minimum hosting criteria.”-World Rugby Executive

The need to meet the minimum hosting criteria is critical to be able to be selected as a host. The findings show that the minimum criteria include aspects revolved around player welfare, infrastructure and financial viability. The World Rugby executive outlined the process that the selection goes through with the communication going out to the national unions, who then bid for the rights to host an event. While the hosting rights are provided on four-year intervals following along the four-year cycle of the commercial cycle run by World Rugby. The NZ Rugby executive highlighted as seen in the quote below that 7s has the ability to more easily expand into the emerging markets compared to fifteens due to the strategy of World Rugby.

“The beauty of the World Series is it can go into markets that fifteens can't get to. So I think WR strategy was to be able to position it in markets they wanted to get involved with.”-New Zealand Rugby Executive

Investment and commercial development is a key area within the decision point of market selection. On the event side of the investment, it was found that due to not having the required facilities to meet the minimum criteria it was more probable that the emerging market hosts would invest more into the infrastructure for the 7s events. All but one event on the circuit market the event as an HSBC event. Dubai due to ownership by Emirates market the event as the Emirates Airline Dubai International 7s, with the HSBC 7s events being a part of the event as a whole. It was also found that sponsors get a voice in the strategic decisions of the circuit. As shown below sponsors are consulted around the viability and marketability of them in a certain market that may be chosen to host an event.

“And whether or not the destination is one that would appeal to fans, but also to the sponsor and partners. So our global partners, the likes of HSBC, DHL, Capgemini, Tag Heuer in the past, they would then give an indication to us as to how strategic that market is for them.”- World Rugby Executive

One area that had shown to be needed to face key decisions in the market selection of the events is the pairings of the events. The events are paired with two events occurring one weekend after another. However, logistical challenges created the need to adapt the pairings. For example, originally New Zealand and the United States were paired together, the geographical distance made logistics an issue and did not give players time to rest and recover. In order to remedy this, the pairings were adapted to better suit the geographical makeup of the series with for example New Zealand now being paired with Australia instead of the United States.

As stated earlier the two series are run in alignment with the four-year commercial cycle. This occurs for both the men's and the women's series. Both series are run with national teams as the competitors, with iconic cities around the world chosen as the host markets for the events. The series has a number of events around the world with men playing ten events and the women playing in eight events in the upcoming series. This shows the standard approach that World Rugby has chosen to manage and run the series in. However, the NZ Rugby Players Association executive believes that the series in the future could be shifted to be aligned with the structure of the likes of tennis and golf, both of which were identified as highly internationalised sports in the literature review as opposed to rugby which is seen as a quasi-internationalised sport.

“imagine a 7s World Series where you had four tournaments that were like the majors...And so there was a tier, there was a process by which you could be in a tier-three tournament, and as you got bigger, you go two, and then, as a top tier nation, we would all have to play the majors.”-NZ Rugby Players Association executive

4.2. Market Entry

As outlined above the selection process sees World Rugby communicate with the national unions around the bidding for a license to host a 7s event. Once the decision has been made over which markets will host an event another decision needs to be made around the entry into the market and the channel partners that will be used. This decision typically sees the unions themselves hold the license and run the event with one selected host for the four years. However, the Rugby 7s executive have shown that different decisions have been made over the selection of the channel partners used to enter the markets. In the United States, the USA Rugby Union sold the rights to the license to a commercial entity in United World Sports who have run the event for numerous years now. Meanwhile staying in the United States, but shifting to the women’s event World Rugby has started a new way of selecting hosts in partnering with cities copying the system the Olympics use when selecting a host market: with the USA women’s event being run by the Glendale City Council in Colorado. The commercial partnership between United World Sports and World Rugby has been troubled with court proceedings started around violations of terms of the contract.

Dubai is another example of an event being run by a commercial entity, as stated before Emirates Airline holds the rights to the event. While along with holding the rights to run the event Emirates also promote and market the event using the Emirates name compared to other events that use HSBC. On the geographical city or nation host of the event, it is common that the host union or entity run the event in one city over the four-year commercial cycle. However, New Zealand has entered into discussions that would see the New Zealand leg of the circuit alternate between being hosted in Hamilton, New Zealand and Fiji each year. The license would continue to be held by NZ Rugby with the event shifting between the two hosts on the alternate years.

“The license sits with New Zealand and then we go and support Fiji to run that tournament”-New Zealand Rugby Executive

4.3. Adaptation and Standardisation

The Rugby 7s executives show through the findings that there are key decisions to be made around either adapting to the local culture or standardising operations when internationalising. These findings look at how both fan experiences and commercial activities were either adapted or standardised by the executives.

4.3.1. Fan Experience

The decisions around the fan experience encompass two key areas media and atmosphere. Fan experience addresses how sports are consumed and this is shown in the findings by media and atmosphere.

Media

The area of media plays a key role in the rugby 7s circuit environment. Media helps raise public awareness of the circuit through different platforms and various stakeholders. The findings highlight the emergence of non-traditional methods of media which are playing a key central role within rugby 7s today compared to the traditional methods of media. However, there is also the issue of standardisation and adaptation within the media area. The findings highlight two key sections within both standardisation and adaptation. Standardisation looks into the broadcasting deal of the 7s series, along with analysing the different media-based activities. Meanwhile, adaptation analyses both social media and the role it plays in rugby 7s and the schedule of the events focusing mainly on the number of days the events run for.

Standardisation

Broadcasting is a central part of the media environment in sport. Deals for the rights of broadcasting are increasingly becoming more competitive as technology grows and sports become more visible around the globe. The findings highlight that currently World Rugby has been operating by allowing the holders of the rights to both produce the broadcast and broadcast it out to the local viewers. This has been a standardised approach by World Rugby in recent years, which would see adaptation occur in the local markets with the host broadcasters broadcasting differently via all the events.

“So we're on the cusp of centralizing the broadcast model. And WR will look after full production and delivery across the whole series...it's so that we can ensure that common here and coming quality of experience of the production of the broadcast and I say broadcast, its broadcast plus, the streaming elements that we do and the non-live highlights packages and bits and pieces that we would do as well” -World Rugby Executive

However, this is changing with it being found that World Rugby is shifting to a centralised model. In order to produce a consistent product, World Rugby is moving to produce the coverage of the 7s series themselves. The purpose of this is to provide World Rugby control over the coverage to maintain consistency in the final produced product across all traditional and non-traditional media platforms.

Another area found within the findings to be standardised within the media area is the media activities that take place at the events. As a growing sport, it was found that activities at the events

are important to not only raise the awareness of rugby 7s around the world but to continue the growth of the game in the already established markets. One way this is done is through the use of media centres at the events. Due to the fast and quick pace of the 7s game, the traditional fifteens type of media coverage with interviews at players during breaks cannot take place. This results in the use of media centres. These are media areas which are typically close to the action where media can get the attention of the players before and after games and conduct interviews and other media activities.

“And we offer in the event sort of Media Centre, and then there is this mixer, where media can interview players coming off the field and there’s like a media area” -Hong Kong 7s Executive

The captain's photoshoot is another activity that is standardised across the whole circuit by World Rugby which is used as a media promotional tool. Captains of all the teams are in taking part in the event are photographed by an iconic landmark or area in the host city. This is then run over all the different media platforms e.g. newspapers, magazines, internet and television.

“the one standardized thing that is run through World rugby is the captain's photo”-Rugby South Africa Executive

“captain's photoshoot at every series stop. So it is a more traditional form of media engagement, I suppose, in that the captain of each team is presented a singular location, usually, we try and find something that’s iconic to the territory”-World Rugby Executive

As can be seen from the above quote by the World Rugby executive the captain's photoshoot is used to promote the tournament in the local host market through the more traditional media channels. While it can also be seen to gain awareness of the event through non-traditional platforms such as the internet.

Adaptation

As discussed above in sports media there are different channels used to distribute sport, these are traditional and non-traditional media channels. One non-traditional channel that has become important in rugby 7s for its ability to connect with consumers is social media. The importance of social media was highlighted by all interviewees in the research.

“Digital and social strategy associated with 7s has definitely helped us to grow its proliferation in fan bases, and rugby fans but non-rugby sporting fans as well around the world”-World Rugby Executive

However, while being important to all markets, social media has been utilised in different ways in the different markets around the globe. South Africa, for example, engage fans with social media-based activities such as a ‘Speed Tweet’ competition. The quote below highlights why this

competition is run due to social media being a normal part of life. It also shows a link between 7s and media showing a quick relationship that highlights the importance of social media in 7s.

“it's almost a natural fit in that 7s is quick and social media is quick. So we at Cape Town 7s as an example, the last two years we've done a speed tweet competition on the big screen, where you could win some very nice prizes...it would be stupid not to engage him while they are doing what they normally do”-Rugby South Africa Executive

The demographics of rugby 7s fans was found to be more a younger audience compared to the older fan demographics of traditional 15-man rugby union. This was an attribute that was brought up in the findings linking, how the younger generations consume the non-traditional media such as social media more than traditional media channels in today's age. Hence, making social media the main target to grow the game. A common theme found in the research is the use of social media as a promotional tool to use in the host's markets. Social media was found to be a useful tool to promote the event. However, as highlighted in the quote below an issue exists around how people who engage with rugby 7s on social media are already fans, as highlighted by the American executive trying to successfully connect with new fans and raise awareness of the sporting product over social media is a new challenge. However, this finding of the challenge to get organic 'likes' does not mean the USA has low levels of followers on their social media channels, table 2 shows that it is, in fact, the opposite. On Facebook, the two established rugby markets of New Zealand and Australia have 87,149 and 53,542 likes on their pages respectively. Meanwhile, the USA 7s Rugby page has a total of 847,755 likes despite being an emerging rugby market. Through analysis of the pages, it is clear that the USA 7s use a method of making videos that go viral. This includes compilation videos of big tackles, fast breaks and stunning tries from all around the world. This is then used to go viral and gain attention and likes for the page from people around the world. However, on other platforms including YouTube, the USA 7s does have less following than New Zealand and Australia as seen in Table 2. One reason for this is in particular with New Zealand is branding. New Zealand brand the 7s team as the 'All Blacks' and are able to trade the images of the 7s as part of the established and globally recognised All Blacks brand.

“So the social media limitation is the fact that you have to Like it, right? So if you're in that world, fantastic, great, but that doesn't grow as much as reinforce the traditional TV ads, billboards, anything like that reaches the non-rugby people. And that's also where you'll need to focus going forward to hit that market as well. And again, this is much more of an American issue than it is in New Zealand, I would imagine.”-USA 7s Executive

This challenge of growing the awareness of the event and rugby 7s, in general, leads to another adaptive media related finding. It was found in America that due to the competitive nature of the media landscape in the United States in order to gain max coverage of the event the number of days the event was played over was shifted from two to three days. As stated above the purpose of this was to gain the maximum coverage possible with the United States being an emerging market the potential for growth requires decisions like that to take place.

Atmosphere

Like media, fans play an integral role in rugby 7s. Without fans to consume sporting products, there would not be any sport. Rugby 7s as an emerging sport is continuing to seek growth in new markets and grow the awareness of the game in different consumer markets around the globe. Due to this, it has seen both standardisation and adaptation occur in the fans area. Findings within standardisation are centred around activities and atmosphere; and demographics and growth. While findings on the adaptation side look at again activities at the events and also the schedule of play at the different events around the globe.

Standardisation

“live event experience more similar to a festival most the fans dress elements in the crowd engagement elements really helped to try and elevate it beyond sports...They come for the rugby, but so much more as well”-World Rugby Executive

“Its’s a music festival without being a music festival”-Rugby Australia Executive

The two above quotes from the World Rugby and Rugby Australia executives highlights a theme that is common throughout all the researched rugby 7s markets. This is the theme of a festival-type atmosphere. It has become a standard feature at rugby 7s events the world over to see fans dressing up in fun fancy dress outfits, and for the events themselves to operate with an atmosphere resembling a music festival. The quote below shows that even at the Canadian event which takes place in the cooler months of the year the fans embrace what is part of a 7s culture and dress up in the fancy dress

“And even though for them, it's March the middle of winter, it's snowing inside the stadium where the roof closes. But the fans are in fancy dress and have a few beers and have a bit of fun”-World Rugby Executive

“there are certain sounds that are just associated intrinsically with rugby 7s. And you'll see Neil Diamonds, Sweet Caroline and a few others played at virtually every stop...it reinforces that they're part of that overall series experience”-World Rugby Executive

Also highlighted by the World Rugby executive is that songs such as Sweet Caroline by Neil Diamond have become intrinsically attached to the image and culture of rugby 7s. These songs and atmosphere are synonymised with rugby 7s and provide the fans to connect with the rugby 7s events and collectively feel part of the product no matter what event they are at.

The demographics of the fans and growth in fan numbers is also standardised around the globe. It has been identified as shown in the quote below, that generally Rugby 7s fans are part of the younger generations and seeing a close even division of male and female fans. This runs against the norms within rugby with the fifteen man game seeing more older fans consuming the sporting products.

“60-40 split 60% male 40% female and, and the fan base was predominantly, the majority was in the 18 to 24-year-old brackets”-World Rugby Executive

“62% of the people are over 40 years of years of age”-Hong Kong 7s Executive

However, Hong Kong in the quote above has been shown to be found to be an outlier when it comes to the demographic distribution of fans. The common finding from the executives was that 7s were consumed by the younger generations more due to the quick attributes of the sport. This reflects the day to day life of an 18-24-year-old where everything is done quickly. Growth was also found to be standardised with all markets either seeing stable attendance numbers or growth in attendance. Some of the growth could likely be attributed with the inclusion of 7s in the Olympics, with the World Rugby executive stating its inclusion brought 14.8 million uniquely new fans to rugby 7s.

Adaptation

The need to attract fans to the events creates the need for adaptation with the different events operating in different cultures and institutions to need to adapt to the local market and the pressures faced in the market.

“timing in the domestic market is important. And the reason I say that is the likes of Biarritz, last weekend, we didn't kick off till 12.30 in the afternoon, and we played till 8 on day one. And that's because in Biarritz it's a surfing town. So everybody gets up and goes out and surfs in the morning. So if you were trying to put on a game day, starting at 10 am, they've only finished their surf”-World Rugby Executive

One example of this need to adapt is seen in the quote above from the World Rugby executive. The quote looks at the need to adapt the schedule of play at the Biarritz event on the women's circuit to suit the local culture. As highlighted in the quote Biarritz is a surfing area with surfing occurring early in the morning. Due to this the schedule of play and start time of the event needed to be adapted to

work around the culture and day to day activities of the local consumers in order to be able to attract the local fans to the games. However, there was one aspect of the schedule of play that was found to be standardised across all market. This standardised aspect is that the local host nation plays last on the first day of the event. This is done in order to entice the fans to stick around right until the final minute to cheer on their own nation.

Another example of the need to adapt to the local market to attract fans is the activities that are implemented at the events themselves. It is standard that there are consumer/fan activities at every event this is to maintain that festival-type atmosphere at the events. However, the findings show a clear need for the host market to adapt activities to suit the pressures of the market.

“there's always a unique identity somewhere in the mix... So on the hundy undy, I think within Hamilton, maybe Sydney as well, which would be unique to that territory and Oceania. And you probably wouldn't see that in Europe... you'll often have the likes of a kiss camera or dance cam. But when you go to Japan culturally it'll be a hug”-World Rugby Executive

The extract above from the World Rugby executive highlights the impact culture can have on the activities that take place at the rugby 7s events. The idea of a kiss cam can be easily implemented into the more Western market such as the United States, while in Eastern nations such as Japan the idea would as stated above need to adapt to the local market and become more of a hug cam. Culture is not the only way activities are forced to adapt, infrastructure also places constraints on what activities can take place. It was found that markets such as Dubai and the United States had the ability to run other invitational tournaments and other events such as medical conferences and the ability to cater for children with playgrounds and crèches this is able to happen due to the infrastructure available to them. While the likes of Hong Kong and New Zealand among others due to the smaller size of the infrastructure or land in Hong Kong's case available are restricted in the activities they can run. With events needing to be focused more inside the stadium, the infrastructure size acts as a barrier to growth through other activities.

Commercial Activities

The commercial activities run by at the events are another area where decisions need to be made by the Rugby 7s executives. With each event and nation having the freedom to run their own commercial events with the likes of players and fans. For example, the South African team when playing in the London tournament will meet with members of the local business chamber with South African links. Host markets and the national teams themselves are said to not face great pressure from World Rugby to enter into commercial obligations. Instead, the commercial activities are

adaptable in the different markets with the events and national teams meeting their own obligations.

“Yeah, so when we in London, we in our team engage with our local business chamber. Where we have a function and the London based companies and stuff with South African links, engage with the team it's like a courtesy”-Rugby South Africa Executive

4.4. Long Term Competitiveness

Another key decision point that sports executives need to consider when internationalising is how to maintain long term competitiveness. Like MNCs, sports also face numerous factors that influence whether they will be successful internationally in the long term. The analysis of the findings highlights key decisions made by Rugby 7s executives in order to maintain long term competitiveness for the sport in the international markets.

4.4.1. Forming of the Women's Circuit

With the development of the women's series due in part to the inclusion of 7s in the Olympics, it has been with the latest renewal of the license for hosts with an upcoming new commercial cycle that the integration of both men's and women's into one event is becoming the standard approach. Prior to the renewal of events in 2019 most events were split up between men's and women's with them running at different times of the year and in different locations. However, the findings show that entering into the new commercial cycle six events have been integrated together to include both men's and women's. However, it was also identified as highlighted below this will add further constraints for markets to deal with due to the need for extra infrastructure to cope with the additional teams.

“you're not talking about just finding accommodation for two teams, you've got 12 to 16 teams, every time. And now with the conjoint, teams of male and female, you're going to be increasing that number significantly.”-NZ Rugby Players Association Executive

4.4.2. Players

In sports players or athletes play, like fans and media an integral role in the overall operations. Without players, sport would not be played, making it vital to develop both players and the labour conditions in sport. The executives face decisions around how to ensure player development and player welfare is successful to maintain the longevity of the game. Both the celebrity power of players and the depth of talent of players were both found to be key areas for decisions to be made within the rugby 7s environment for long term success.

Development

The inclusion of 7s into the Olympics has not only seen the formation of the women's series but has also led to the further development of players. This is due to the governments across the world seeing the chance to win a medal and thus investing money into developing players. This is shown in the quote below by the NZ Rugby executive, the Olympics gained the attention of governments across the world which led to more investment and money into the development of the game especially in the women's game which due to the inclusion of 7s in the Olympics saw the creation of the women's circuit.

"You know, I think, obviously, the Olympics has brought a whole lot more awareness and resources to the game. So, you know, I think in 2012, especially with a woman's game, everybody was pretty much starting from zero...Olympics became the carrot."-New Zealand Rugby Executive

"sustainable means participation, it's making sure you still have a player pathway that's delivering you, elite players, to continue to score itself."-World Rugby Executive

This continued growth and investment in the development of players come to the benefit of the game. The World Rugby executive stated that it is crucial to have player development to be able to maintain 7s as a sustainable product. The continued development is visible in all markets especially due to the Olympics with the view of that being the carrot which is leading to more investment in the game of 7s. It was also found in emerging markets that 7s is the ideal way to grow the game of rugby. This is because compared to the fifteen man game 7s is a simple game, the positions are not highly specialised like in the traditional fifteen-man game. The United States 7s executive states that in an emerging market like the USA this makes it easier to develop players as they would not need as much rugby knowledge.

As highlighted in the literature review it is common in sports that athletes can be viewed as celebrities by consumers and possess abilities to help sporting products grow around the world and transcend borders. This is able to be seen in rugby with players such as Jonah Lomu and Daniel Carter have held the ability to be globally recognisable. However, it was found from the research that unlike their compatriots in the fifteen man game, 7s players are rarely recognisable in public. The 7s players do not yet have the same marketability as the fifteens players who are more recognisable in public and hold that ability to transcend national borders.

"challenge is that the profile of the players is not big...they can walk down the street and no one knows who they are."-Rugby Australia Executive

The above quote highlights how the lack of a public image of players in 7s can be a challenge for the marketing and awareness of not only the individual events but the entire circuit as a whole. However, it was found that again the Olympics has created more opportunity to market and grow 7s. Countries taking part in the Olympics 7s programme took different approaches to player recruitment. Many were seen to take specialised 7s players, however, as shown in the quote below countries such as New Zealand and Australia took the opportunity to take players from fifteens who possess highly transferable skills but are also highly recognisable and marketable in Sonny Bill Williams and Quade Cooper respectively among others.

“You know, we had a bit of time before we obviously had Sonny Bill, we had Quade Cooper and a couple of other profiles playing.”-Rugby Australia Executive

While it was observed that the investment into the development of players in rugby 7s was now becoming more standardised with more investment from more nations due to the Olympics, the overall depth of talent in nations is unequal which requires certain nations to adapt the way they develop talent compared to other nations.

“10 to 12 athletes that can play 7s, verse 22, players that have more specific positions in 15s and it's just easier in that regards...getting them exposed to the game earlier so that they are more developed once they hit 18, 19, 20 years old and can get on development sides and then the national team with a bit of a head start as opposed to taking great athletes and then sort of just throwing them into the frying pan and hoping that they work out you know.”-USA 7s Executive

“It was easy for us to transition, non-rugby players into rugby because every New Zealander knows what rugby is. Yeah, so a lot of our female athletes might not have played rugby but watched it. So they knew what a scrum was or a line out and a ruck and a maul so we didn't have to teach them that.”-New Zealand Rugby Executive

Both of the above quotes highlight the difference in the way that the different nations take in the development of the players. The first quote shows the development in the United States a typical example of an emerging rugby market where rugby is first introduced in the university/college level. Compared to the second quote which highlights the development of players in New Zealand an example of a rugby powerhouse. The example shows when the women's programme was first being established and there was the need to develop a team. Due to the rugby culture in New Zealand and the rugby systems set in place in schools and at a youth level New Zealand were able to easily develop a women's team. This analysis shows the difference in the depth of development in the development of 7s players centres around the knowledge of the game of rugby. Nations with a rich

history in rugby have a deep talent pool of players and have the ability to easily continue that development line. However, emerging markets in the game are aware of the need to adapt and align with the methods of the traditional rugby markets to be able to develop players and gain a bigger pool of players.

Welfare

Player welfare is another area that was found to be faced by decisions that executives need to make as players are a main component of the game and need to be attracted to take part. Interviewees responded stating that there was a comprehensive and complex feedback system and review that was strongly focused around player welfare and ensuring that players were well looked after.

“onboard health safety is very critical and player... the player welfare side of the game is being looked at all the time.”-Dubai 7s Executive

The Dubai 7s executive highlighted the Series Advisory Board which continues to consistently look at and monitor the player's welfare and also that there is a comprehensive 360-degree feedback mechanism which allows for player feedback. Another finding is that in the selection process player welfare and having the right infrastructure to maintain welfare was one of if not the most important parts of the criteria when it comes to market selection. The Rugby South Africa executives also stated how the players themselves also just look for the simple comforts to ensure they are happy such as access to Wifi and good food. They went on to state that these creature comforts play a big role in players either having a good or bad experience at the event.

“So minimum hosting criteria based on several factors...most important is player welfare.”-World Rugby Executive

“On a day off, obviously they normally they would our guys I know normally has got some engagements...look for comforts, good food and Wi-Fi.”-Rugby South Africa Executive

Chapter 5: Discussion

This chapter discusses the findings and anchors them in the relevant literature of sport. The discussion focuses on the four key decision points that are faced by Rugby 7s executives that were identified in the findings. These decision points are market selection; market entry; adaptation and standardisation; and long term competitiveness.

5.1. Market Selection

As analysed in the literature review sports organisations such as World Rugby are motivated to internationalise due to market seeking motives in order to expand the fanbase of the game. This leads to market selection. As the governing body, World Rugby face the choices in which market to provide the license to and controls the overall mandate and strategy integrated into the series. Identified in the findings was that World Rugby has an open and transparent bidding process to host the 7s events. This process sees World Rugby communicate directly with the national rugby unions outlining the minimum standards in terms of criteria needed to host a series event. These criteria are based around both the capabilities of the market to satisfy the needs of the players and the needed infrastructure, along with whether or not the market will be an attractive market in terms of commercial development. The communication is sent out to the national rugby unions who decide whether or not to bid for the license. Once the license is won the national unions then determine the host city of the event in their nation through another bidding process. In the commodified sporting landscape having a robust process such as the one World Rugby implements is important. Identifying the right markets and individual cities is important for the growth of the game. Which, in the case of rugby 7s is an important decision as it is a circuit based series, the event host nations need to then be carefully chosen. This importance is shown by Lakshman (2008) who investigated the outcomes of hosting a sporting event in both Japan and India. Due to the differences in economic development, the outcome was Japan held a more successful event than the less developed nation of India. Lakshman (2008) also highlights the need for a long-term focus when selecting a host nation, when conducting a cost-benefit analysis the outcome may appear beneficial to host an event in an emerging economy in the short-term, however, as seen in past events the long-term outcome is that emerging economies can struggle after holding a sporting event. Factors such as the cost for maintenance of infrastructure and the potential inability to generate ticket sales can lead to emerging markets struggling post hosting of a sporting event.

In the case of Rugby, as stated in the literature review, there are eight foundation nations: New Zealand; Australia; England; Ireland; South Africa; Wales; Scotland; and France.²⁵ However, through

²⁵ <http://www.nzrugby.co.nz/about-us/partners/international-rugby>

internationalisation, rugby now sees on the male 7s Series ten nations hosting events (New Zealand; England; Australia; South Africa; United States; Hong Kong; Dubai; France; Canada; and Singapore.²⁶) This shows that World Rugby has been targeting non-traditional or foundation nations to internationalise the game. However, all the nations are developed nations which are less likely to run into the aforementioned troubles of hosting sporting events in emerging markets. World Rugby has shown in the past a willingness to internationalise into emerging markets.

China is an example of an emerging market where Rugby 7s executives faced difficult decisions. The NZ Rugby executive mentioned how infrastructure was built in the middle of nowhere away from big cities, with this failing to attract fans and led to the demise of the event. This highlights the need for World Rugby when looking to internationalise into emerging markets, ensure the selected market is sustainable and will have longevity and grow the game as strategically planned. Decisions in nations such as China also need to be made over around regulations that the game faces. Once a closed nation, China has been increasingly welcoming of foreign investment from firms. Tan and Bairner (2010) show this opening up of the Chinese markets also is occurring in the sporting landscape. According to Tan and Bairner (2010), China both embraced Western ideals in changing regulations, while also maintaining control. However, the simple reform of regulations and setting up of agencies helped to promote sports internationalisation into China. This shows that when internationalising 7s into China the challenge was not fully at the government and regulation level. The challenge in the internationalisation occurred at the consumer level. The NZ Rugby Players' Association executive described the women's event as of being played in the 'backbones' of China, the infrastructure was not at the same levels as other events and the crowds basically consisted of the team management. These factors, along with player feedback led to the event being dropped. This highlights the need for the governance to adapt certain areas of the product to the local market. While there is the motive to expand into China as a potentially big market, the crowd numbers show that ultimately the selection of the host city was wrong and outlines an issue that the World Rugby governance will need to overcome in similar markets to successful internationalise Rugby further.

5.2. Mode of Entry

With hosting these events in many different markets (such as the ten markets mentioned previously on the men's HSBC 7s Series) there are a number of potential issues. These issues again centre on culture and cultural attitudes. Looking at the findings the process of "glocalisation" occurs in Rugby. This sees World Rugby have control over the strategy and governance of the series, however, on the surface level the event management organisations and organisers themselves can adapt the product

²⁶ <https://www.world.rugby/sevens-series/calendar/2019?lang=en>

to identify more with the local market. This is shown in the differences in activities among other aspects of the 7s product, while the festival atmosphere is shared among the series the events individually can change the type of activities to better suit the conditions of the host market. The idea of 'glocalisation' in sport is studied by academics such as Polson and Whiteside (2014). Polson and Whiteside (2014) looked at the diffusion of American Football into the Indian market. Seen as an attractive market due to the growth of the industry, India can be a difficult market to enter. This difficulty is due to the cultural and institutional differences between the Indian market and the Western-driven nature of sporting organisations. Polson and Whiteside (2014) identified the need to "glocalise" this means the sporting organisation implements both a global and local strategy to the development of the sport in the market.

The actions of World Rugby to overcome obstacles in markets such as Dubai where the lack of knowledge around rugby could have a detrimental effect on entering into the market highlights a link between business and sport. In business there are numerous types of modes of entering into new markets these include greenfield; wholly-owned subsidiary; joint venture; and licensing (Erramilli & Rao, 1990). The findings suggest that World Rugby prefer a standard approach which takes the form of licensing. Eight of the ten events on the men's 7s World Series have been run through the direct licensing of the rights to host the events in the chosen markets from the bidding process described above with the national rugby union holding the rights to run the events. However, Dubai and the United States are run differently being adapted in the ownership and organisation of the events. The Dubai 7s event is run by the commercial entity of Emirates, however, despite this World Rugby state that even when an event is commercially run they do have a presence in the running of the event, along with help from the national union. Looking at the development of Rugby in Dubai the main reason for this commercially-run event could be down to a low level of rugby knowledge in the market of Dubai itself. Not being a traditional rugby powerhouse with no major national union Dubai already had an event running prior to the formation of the HSBC 7s Series. This suggests the need in this professional era signals the need for commercial involvement in the running of an event. The licensing strategy implemented by World Rugby is unique. Normally, firms see a loss in control in different areas of operations such as technology (Buckley & Ghauri, 1999). Buckley and Ghauri (1999) state that this loss of control can put firms off licensing. However, the findings show as stated previously control important areas (Media), while local organisers operate to suit the market needs, although this is still done under the supervision of World Rugby who employs quality control managers.

Johanson and Vahlne (1977) state that the differences in the likes of language and culture have a strong influence on the decision-making process of firms and organisations in the development of

international operations. By entering into markets in these different ways and ensuring there is market knowledge World Rugby has shown the ability to overcome the liability of foreignness. The liability of foreignness suggests that firms face costs in foreign markets due to aspects such as cultural and political differences (Zaheer, 1995). This is another challenge that World Rugby and other sports organisations and managers face when internationalising, just as typical MNEs face when entering into a foreign market. An example of this is when entering the United States. Sports entering into the foreign market of the USA face extreme cultural costs to overcome. These costs come in the form of the consumers who can be strongly against inward internationalising sports due to cultural exceptionalism, especially Americans who hold high levels of exceptionalism to foreign sports (Brown, 2005). Kaufman and Patterson (2005) also identified in the USA that cricket failed to diffuse into the culture due to the slow speed of the game, with the younger generations this was also found to be an issue in the UK with lower attendance figures which led to the development of the T20 game (Hyde & Pritchard, 2009).

Taking this into consideration Rugby 7s should be the focus of attention for World Rugby when pushing internationalisation into America, as was also suggested by the USA 7s executive. The fast speed of the game helps to overcome the issue of the USA fan perspective of wanting fast sport, which also aligns with the findings which show the fast speed led to growth in the untraditional markets. Overcoming the exceptionalism is more likely to occur in 7s. This is because 7s has attributes that are vastly different when comparing 7s to the NFL, while the fifteen man game and the NFL share similar attributes. The growth of the USA 7s events over the years backs these points up as the event has continued to grow in the market, as seen in table 2 the 2004/05 Series saw 15700 fans attend by the 2014/15 season this had more than tripled up to 75716 fans in attendance and moving from a two to three-day event. A report conducted by Chadwick, Semens, Schwarz, and Zhang (2010) states that 7s Rugby has in nations including non-traditional markets such as the United States that 7s Rugby has brought new audience and revenue to the game of rugby.

5.3. Adaptation and Standardisation

As highlighted in the findings fan experience is a key area where key decisions need to be made by sports executives. Fan experience can also be repackaged collectively under the term of fandom. Davis (2015) defines fandom as a subculture of fans who are characterised by a common sense of sympathy and compassion. Fandom is also commonly linked to being part of different areas within popular culture. However, Schimmel, Harrington, and Bielby (2007) suggest sports are separate to pop culture due to the unique culture that separates it from other pop culture due to aspects such as competition. For this research the idea of fandom will focus on the sports fans environment, it will analyse how the environment has changed due to different developments in areas such as

technology and marketing and see what impact this has had on sports fandom due to internationalisation.

Athletes as sporting celebrities is an area that has changed the landscape within fandom in sport. Sports celebrities hold the ability to transcend national borders, engage with stakeholders across the globe developing the internationalisation of sport. In rugby, the closest athlete to being a global superstar is Jonah Lomu. Lomu was described by many as rugby's 'Michael Jordan', Jackson and Andrews (1999) showed this link with both Lomu and Jordan attracting similar transnational sponsors in the form of McDonald's. Jonah Lomu is an example that rugby can have these sporting celebrities. However, the challenge for rugby 7s as described by the World Rugby executive is that fifteens have these celebrities, while 7s players are nowhere near the level of marketability of the fifteens players. The Rugby Australia executive even stated the 7s players can walk down the street without being recognised. This is the challenge that 7s faces, however, as a newer product it is likely as the game grows in the established markets the marketability of players will develop which will help with the internationalisation of the game. The idea of sports celebrities is seen more in the highly internationalised sports of soccer, golf and tennis. This is highlighted in the literature review sports celebrities are more common in the highly internationalised sports of soccer (David Beckham; Cristiano Ronaldo), Golf (Tiger Woods) and Tennis (Roger Federer; Rafael Nadal). Quasi-internationalised sports and localised sports struggle more to get globally recognised athletes that can be used like David Beckham as a marketing tool, to develop the sport and gain new revenue streams in markets around the globe, with athletes holding more marketing power in a few nations where the game is already big not holding the ability to transcend into possible emerging markets. Elliott and Harris (2011) and Gilmour and Rowe (2010) both researched the effect soccer's David Beckham had on developing soccer in emerging markets such as the United States and Oceania. Gilmour and Rowe (2010) state Beckham was an embodiment of an athlete being used for promotion gain, which was highlighted by his move to the LA Galaxy in the MLS. This move brought global media attention to the league and has developed the commercial viability of soccer in the United States, while also positively impacting the overall development of soccer in America (Gilmour and Rowe, 2010).

Another area to consider within fandom is that while fans are emotionally connected to sports there are critical factors that attract fans to sports. Hyde and Pritchard (2009) highlight this identifying the drop of attendance at cricket games in the United Kingdom was attributed to various critical factors that are important to consider in sport. The main identified factor was timing; one aspect of the timing factor was that the games need to be played at times for people to be able to attend, and the other is that it avoids competition with other sports (Hyde & Pritchard, 2009). This highlights the

need for adaptation to be able to attract fans to events. As previously highlighted, Rugby 7s shows this adaptation by adapting to the need to change start times by adapting to the cultural tastes and behaviour of fans in Biarritz. 7s is also well placed to attract fans with the short speed of the game which as identified by multiple executives is attractive to the younger target market who as described by the executives have a shorter attention span and want quick-fire action.

The final area that shows how internationalisation has impacted sports fandom is the development of sports presentation and how the fans consume the sporting product. Whannel (1985) highlights how the consumption of sport by the fans was first revolutionised by the development of television. It was argued by Whannel (1985) that global sporting events such as World Cups and the Olympics only became major sporting events globally due to television. This is due to television allowing sports to be easily accessed and consumed by millions or sometimes billions of fans and potential fans worldwide. The result of this is that sports are able to internationalise through the development of television. However, in the modern world, social media is another way sports can be presented to fans around the globe. The literature review highlights the growth of youth viewership in NASCAR racing with the implementation of fantasy sports (Goldsmith & Walker, 2015). Fantasy sports have been used in different sports as a means to engage fans and this is also evident in Rugby 7s. World Rugby runs a Fantasy competition for Rugby 7s called Rugby7Stars.²⁷ Rugby7Stars allows fans to be more engaged in the sport and to interact and compete with friends and other fans from around the world by joining leagues and creating personalised teams for both the men's and women's games. Parganas et al. (2017) state social media allows sports organisations to enhance frequencies and intensity of interactions with fans on a worldwide scale. The ease of access to social media has, like the early days of television, revolutionised how fans can consume sports. Parganas et al. (2017) went on to say that social media interaction allows fans to feel more connected and identifiable with the sport or sporting organisation. This analysis highlights the importance of sports presentation and how it is consumed by fans. World Rugby was found in the research to be well aware of this importance and in rugby 7s have shifted to a centralised and standardised process in the media-driven area. This sees World Rugby manufacture the content, which is subsequently consumed by the fans. The World Rugby executive stated this allows World Rugby to ensure consistency in the product, and allows them control over determining how the sporting product is presented to fans. However, the USA 7s executive alluded to a challenge that is apparent in emerging markets such as America. The challenge is in social media, in that it requires people to 'like' or 'follow' a page to interact with it. This limits the reach for organisations in the emerging markets where they need to

²⁷ <https://7sgame.worldrugby.org/#home>

first develop the sport to attract fans. World Rugby need to consider how to overcome this challenge as social media can also be used to attract fans, different ways such as targeted advertising may need to be looked at in how to attract 'likes' and 'follows' of potential fans in these emerging markets.

5.4. Long Term Competitiveness

The findings show that there is a lot of decisions that were made by rugby 7s executives in order to ensure the long term competitiveness of the game. This section looks at again the area of players and the welfare and development of them. However, the development of sport is also analysed. These areas are analysed and are anchored with IB theory.

5.4.1. Development of Sport

Sports are becoming increasingly more commodified which is affecting the decision making of sports executives. Commodification is the process where objects and items in all different shapes and sizes become viewed as a commodity holding economic value which is then used as a product for exchanging in trade (Appadurai, 1986). Sport is an object that has been commodified since the 1st waves of globalisation, with sport being codified back in the 18th and 19th centuries (Walsh & Giulianotti, 2001). Walsh and Giulianotti (2001) state, however, since 1990 the commodification of sport has started to occur at a phenomenal rate, with some sports like soccer experiencing hyper-commodification and becoming truly globalised. Globalisation has created more opportunities for sports to expand across borders due to commercial opportunities for potential growth.

This room for globalising growth is highlighted in Rugby 7s with the growth in markets such as the United States where the media power and population provides an attractive market to enter into. From commodification of sport, governance in sport has been impacted through decisions that need to be made and the drive for commercial growth has shifted the structure and point of view of those in power, as in the competitive globalised world sports managers shift to the view of sport as a commodity. This is highlighted by the changing from amateur to a professional status which changed the governance in sports and made sports more of a product. Andersson and Hognestad (2017) identified that with the influence of commodification stemming from the globalisation of sport, national cultures are beginning to become diluted. This is shown by Karak (2017) who investigated the power commodification had on the Football Association in England. Built on Marxian based foundations which limited profit-making the commodification of sport in the 1990s forced the English FA to change the internal structure of the governance of soccer in England in order to become more commercial and seek profit. This change is evident in the game of rugby and rugby 7s in particular. World Rugby state traditionally the purpose of the organisation was to be a regulator and investor in rugby. However, in the modern-day World Rugby now due to competition in sport

and entertainment need to inspire and reach out to new markets, capitalising on the inclusion of Rugby 7s in the Olympics (Rugby, 2014).

World Rugby Vision: Rugby- a sport for all, true to its values

World Rugby Mission: Growing the global rugby family

The Olympics have been instrumental in bringing rugby to larger audiences. This is seen in the growth of the women's 7s series. This was a non-existent product prior to the inclusion of rugby in the Olympics, however, the inclusion saw the growth of the game. With that as stated by the NZ Rugby executive, the 7s medal was seen as a "soft medal" and led to governments investing more into the game of rugby. This strategy implemented by World Rugby correlates directly with the idea of market seeking in business. World Rugby state the increase in competition is leading to the need to increase the global reach of sport to new consumers around the globe. This idea is echoed by Ratten (2011) who stated that the internationalisation of sport has seen markets become saturated. Due to this saturation, there is a need for sports organisations to seek new revenue streams by accessing fanbases in new markets (Ratten, 2011). In business literature, Dunning (2008) states four different types of motives for firms to internationalise and add value. These are resource-seeking; market-seeking; efficiency-seeking; and strategic asset-seeking investment (Dunning, 2008). From the reasons stated by Ratten (2011) for sports internationalisation, along with both the vision and actions of World Rugby in the research it is clear the motive for foreign value-adding internationalisation is, in this case, market-seeking internationalisation. Dunning (2008) states the reasons behind the market-seeking motive for internationalisation includes an opportunity for larger market sizes and share, while the need for a focus on the market is due to the differences in culture and tastes of the consumers in the new markets. These differences which encourage adaptation of products in different markets is a clear challenge that World Rugby has faced when internationalising rugby 7s.

The development of sports can occur on different levels. Shown in the findings is that the development of sport occurs at two different levels. One level is the consumer or fan level. This level focuses on the development of fans and consumers. The fan and consumer level can occur to either grow the fanbase or to help those disadvantaged to develop skills. Meanwhile, the national level looks at how sport can be used to develop different aspects of a nation including developing cities or regions.

Sport for development is a term used for what has become common practice in the sporting landscape and a key researched area. The view is sport is a tool that can be used for development in

many different areas including civilians and policy (Levermore, 2008). Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is an example of a sport for development programs. However, these programs can also help the development of individual sports, which can be seen in Rugby 7s. From the research, it was found that in Rugby 7s implemented a legacy program that could be mainly focused on potential consumers focusing on schools. It centred on developing school children into being actively engaged with Rugby 7s and developing them into being fans in markets hosting the events. These legacy programs are a standardised program implemented within the running of the event, however, the organisers are allowed to operate different types of programs. For example in the United States and New Zealand, along with other markets, the preferred legacy program was a adopt a school program. The adopt a school program sees the school children adopt a particular nation participating at the event in their class in the lead up to the tournament. The children research the teams, the culture and other aspects of the chosen nation. It is then common for the teams to hold skill sessions with the children and even for selected children to be selected to walk out with the teams at the event. Implementing a 'legacy' program in the form of the adopt a school can be of benefit to the event organisers. The USA 7s executive stated that in America you are not exposed to rugby until university. Having a adopt a school program in a growing market such as the United States helps to maintain future engagement in the game in the market. This encourages uptake in the game and makes it more likely to embed itself within the national culture. However, also in all the markets, these legacy programs are successful as they are engaging and giving back to the community. These programs can be seen as a form of corporate social responsibility (CSR).

CSR is another business term that can be integrated into sport. Mohr et al. (2001) view CSR as a firm's commitment to try and minimise or eliminate its adverse impacts on society, then using that to maximise long-term returns. Bradish and Cronin (2009) extend onto this definition stating CSR is the attempt for an organisation to be accountable and ethical in regards to the needs of society and other stakeholders. Ratten (2011) states that CSR is an important area within sport. CSR allows for organisations to maintain a good relationship with society, leads to improve trust and can legitimise the efforts of the sports organisation (Ratten, 2011). Ratten (2011) also highlighted the call for CSR in sport to positively impact the health of society. Rugby 7s is answering that call. Programs have been set up such as the program in the United States which is a medical conference aimed at improving health issues (i.e. concussions) in the game. These types of programs, along with the legacy programs show Rugby 7s organisations have a community-minded focus. This can lead to a better relationship with the local society and lead to overcoming challenges and settling easier into the host's markets.

The other level within the development of sport is the national level. As stated earlier this can occur in multiple different ways. One way is focusing on sport and developing sport within a nation. 7s is a sport that was found to have the potential to develop well at the national level. This is due to the targeted youth market. The World Rugby executive stated that youth are becoming more alike across national borders. This places 7s well to be an attractive product across borders while not facing extensive limitations in different markets. Harris and Wise (2011) and Horton (2009) researched the development of rugby in nations. Horton (2009) studied the growth in a somewhat established market of Australia, while Harris and Wise (2011) looked at the growing market of Argentina. Both studies identified challenges of globalising and establishing a sport in a market that is applicable to rugby 7s. One main theme highlighted by Horton (2009) is anti-globalisation and anti-professionalism of sports culture. Horton (2009) talks about the need to remove people who think along these lines within the Australian Rugby board in order to grow the game in this modern era. It was found within the research that this antitype of thinking still exists in the game, with many executives stating it is alive in the older generations (60+ years old) who believe rugby should go back to the good old days. However, in the changing world rugby 7s is actually well-positioned to be able to grow.

5.4.2. Player Development

Like other sports, Rugby faces an issue in developing talent. Nations have trouble with both keeping hold and attracting talent. More and more rugby players are now representing national teams in nations they were not born in. This can be seen as limiting the opportunity for the local talent to develop. The issue was recently highlighted with Irish lock Devin Toner a 60 test veteran recently being left out of Ireland's Rugby World Cup team, in favour of South African born Jean Kleyn.²⁸ However, in Rugby 7s this is not seen as big of a challenge when compared to fifteens. The series itself is run with only national teams being represented. Having no privately-owned teams lowers the migration of talent which results in more players representing the nation of their birth. Also with the inclusion of 7s in the Olympics more and more governments are investing in the 7s program which provides opportunities to players to develop in their own home nation instead of migrating to develop. Maguire (2011b) argues the movement of labour can negatively impact the development of local talent. With the movement of talent seen to be somewhat increasing, academics such as Maguire (2011) state that the influx of foreign talent is limiting the opportunity for local talent from the host market to develop. Another challenge in the development of athletes is the development of women's sport. Looking at Rugby 7s this challenge was successfully overcome. The inclusion of 7s in the Olympics forced the formation of a women's series. As found in the research the women's series

²⁸ <https://www.bbc.com/sport/rugby-union/49548816>

has gone from strength to strength and is continuing to build and gain more attention in this globalised and commodified environment. Comparing that to literature Stevenson (2002) suggests the globalisation of sport leads to the underdevelopment of women's sport. This is said to be due to commodification. Stevenson (2002) states women's sport is less marketable and receives less media attention. The result of this is the focus is on developing men's sport with women's sport being left behind.

There are two schools of thought about the effect globalisation has had on the global mobility of workers in today's modern world. One is that the rise of globalisation has seen an increase in global mobility, with workers able to move across borders more easily (Hugo, 2006). This is due to the breaking down of borders and the encouraging of trade between nations in today's globalised society. However, another view is that the effect of globalisation on global mobility and labour migration is grossly overexaggerated (Storey, 2011). Both of these thoughts and arguments occur in both business and sporting literature which again highlights the overlap and alignment between the two areas. Sport is an area where labour migration between national borders is extremely evident. Looking at rugby, in particular, the analysis above backs up the argument that globalisation increases global mobility. This is seen with rugby players playing in different national competitions and representing different nations of birth. Kirk and Weaver (2018) also back up the first argument from the perspective of the sporting landscape. Focusing on labour migration of young soccer (soccer) athletes into American colleges Kirk and Weaver (2018) found the attractiveness of the market was encouraging young athletes to migrate. The opportunity to move abroad and continue following the dream of becoming a professional soccer er and developing in the college system, while also receiving a quality education was seen as too good of an opportunity to turn down. However, despite this, there is also the view that labour migration is overstated and can damage sport in a nation. Storey (2011) looked at migration in the English Premier League and found high levels of migration from a number of different countries. Despite these findings, Storey (2011) argues the migration is overexaggerated with high numbers of migrants only coming from six nations.

5.4.3. Player Welfare

In this commodified sporting environment the players themselves are seen as commodities. The sporting organisations need the players to be able to sell the sport to the fans as without them the sport would simply not be viable. This is highlighted by the World Rugby executive who stated that in order to have Rugby 7s as a sustainable product there need to be pathways for development in players. However, the issue with this is ensuring you have a focus on delivering player welfare. If players are treated as just a commodity and not cared for it would likely lead to fewer players picking up the sport, which would result in an unsustainable product. The findings from the research

show that World Rugby and the other rugby 7s stakeholders such as the national rugby unions and tournament organisers have a strong focus on ensuring that player welfare is kept at a high standard. However, despite this care to meet the needs of the players there are still challenges that need to be overcome in the search for quality player welfare.

The exploitation of players is a challenge that World Rugby in particular as the governing body needs to be aware of. Both wealthy nations (i.e. England) to underdeveloped nations (i.e. Fiji, Kenya, Samoa) take part in rugby 7s. This creates differences in how players are being treated. For example, the NZ Rugby executive stated the New Zealand players are part of a collective bargaining agreement which gives them rights such as always being in first class on planes. Other poorer nations would be unable to provide such agreements as they do not have the financial mite to be able to. This creates the need for World Rugby to ensure that the needs of players are being achieved and players along with emerging talent in nations are not being exploited. If this is not done it would likely lead to the public viewing it as World Rugby failing to meet the expectations and would lead to a public backlash. Collective bargaining agreements such as the New Zealand 7s one describe above are now more common in the industry. Dabscheck (2003) researched the Australian Rugby collective agreement that like others was formed out of the move into the professional era of rugby. These collective agreements were described by Dabscheck (2003), as a way to increase the pay-off for all stakeholders as it sees all stakeholders such as players and administrators work together in order to maximise potential profit. Collective bargaining does not only occur on the individual union level. Dabscheck (2003) highlights that there are many worldwide agreements including in rugby between nations and the governing bodies including World Rugby that promote the revenue sharing model. It is important for the growth of rugby that even with the rise in potential income from commercial development World Rugby ensures that income flow is spread equally amongst the vast stakeholders in order to continue encouraging the potential growth of the game in new markets. However, despite this revenue-sharing model more can be done. The NZ Rugby Players Association executive stated that they believe the revenue in rugby 7s can be better shared to benefit the hosts who can be seen to be missing out on the success of the series. Doing so would promote the game and lead to more unions seeking to host events to get a slice of the pie.

Exploitation is not only an issue in the rugby environment but is an apparent issue in other sports. Marcano and Fidler (1999) describe how the Major League Baseball now with the growth of globalisation is like other sports acting like MNCs actively seeking new markets to enter into, with an outcome that this is leading to potential exploitation of potential talent. This highlighted exploitation centres on Latino children being exploited due to differences in the socioeconomic factors between the United States and Latin America. The result is these children were being targeted due to the

vulnerability that surrounded them. Taking the year of the publication into account with it being published twenty years ago these factors are now mainstream due to the visibility of such situations nowadays (e.g. sweatshops exploiting workers in Asia).

5.5. Contribution to Research

As stated the topic of sports in the IB area of research can be viewed as a phenomenon. Despite sporting organisations having an effect that extends across borders and with many being worth more money than multi-national enterprises, there has been little research within the topic area. This shows that sports can really be an emerging research area within IB, along with providing real-time perspectives of current issues facing sports internationalisation and shifts sports literature away from studying football into an emerging sport. Doh (2017) made the call for more phenomenon-based research to ensure that the research in the field of IB does not stagnate and become stale. This research answers that call researching as stated an emerging area of research in IB. Frameworks and theories such as the liability of foreignness and the movement of talent have been analysed and dissected. These examples along with the others have helped to better understand the phenomena, contributing to adding to an emerging research field within IB and providing a better understanding for future researchers. Ratten (2011) and Chadwick (2013) made the call for more sports research focused on internationalisation. This thesis answered the call by linking sports and business together. The key decision points in internationalisation were identified and analysed. This provides knowledge for how sports should look at internationalising in order to maintain competitiveness.

The study also offers new insights and perspectives for researchers around the established frameworks and theories in IB. As stated above the thesis uses ideas from IB and links them to sport. Through the analysis, it is clear the internationalisation process of sports is different from that of firms. The Uppsala model states firms first internationalise in nearby markets with a low commitment model (Johanson & Vahlne, 1977). In the research, it can be seen that this does not occur in 7s meaning the Uppsala model is not applicable. The first-ever seven's series in 1999 saw events take place in Dubai; South Africa; Uruguay; Argentina; New Zealand; Fiji; Australia; Hong Kong; Japan; and France²⁹. These hosts are significantly culturally different from one another, with ten host nations showing high commitment. These two factors highlight how the Uppsala model cannot be applied to the internationalisation of 7s. While the way firms carry out internationalisation appears to not be how sports do the ideas behind the internationalisation (e.g. market entry strategies, movement of talent) are applicable to sports. However, ideas such as exceptionalism which have shown to affect sports can be attributed to affecting IB as well. With the

²⁹ <https://www.world.rugby/search?s=sevens+1999>

rise of nationalism in societies around the world now the ideas of exceptionalism and nationalism studied by Brown (2005) are directly related to IB. Businesses can face pressures in exceptionalism seen in growing tensions in trade around the world. This highlights how IB can learn from sport around how to deal with nationalism and exceptionalism. The rise of the younger generations is also seeing the rise of being ethically sustainable. This relates to CSR which is shown to be a key area within sports internationalisation. CSR is already a studied area within IB, however, IB academics can still use experiences from sports and knowledge from sports-focused academics such as Levermore (2010).

The study of the movement of talent highlights a new area of possible study. IB research has looked at different ideas around the migration of workers as expatriates, among others. However, this research introduces the idea of player migration. Players are a commodity, they possess the skills needed for work as expatriates do. However, the players can also be used in other ways such as a marketing tool. This introduces new ways of researching within already established IB theories and frameworks, which could link back into other IB research and be used to better understand phenomena.

IB literature is further contributed to by furthering the knowledge of decision points literature. Coviello and Martin (1999), Hashai and Almor (2004), Madsen and Servais (1997) and Reid (1981) have all identified the need for managerial decision making to occur in the process of internationalisation and have covered different areas of focus. Coviello and Martin (1999) for example studied the internationalisation of service SMEs looking at New Zealand based engineering consulting firms. Meanwhile, Reid (1981) looked at the relationship between the firm, individual characteristics, and foreign entry expansion behaviour. All these papers add to the literature in their own ways. This thesis contributes the same way by using ideas such as decision making in market selection which was looked at by the likes of Reid (1981), however, this is added to by expanding the literature into the field of sports.

Sports managers can also benefit from this study. The sports managers are provided with the knowledge around the challenges of internationalising a sport. Using decision points as the analysis provides the sports managers with real-time and practical examples of how to deal with different decisions that need to be made when internationalising a sporting product. Through the research, it was found that challenges in decision making exist within multiple areas of sports from fan experience to welfare. The study provides a way of establishing and looking at these challenges in one way. Applying the framework of rugby 7s allows the managers to balance the challenges that exist specifically around standardisation and adaptation of operations and provides lessons for how

the managers can approach internationalising sports themselves. The findings correlate with past literature showing that sports generally approach internationalisation with a globalised perspective. This approach sees a global frame of mind, with local adaptation in different markets. The global approach of 7s is shown in the market selection where there is set criteria that all the markets must meet in order to be considered to host the events. The move from a decentralised to centralised television model shows the want for control in the product from World Rugby. However, the adaptation is shown with the different host markets all able to adapt the product to suit the local culture, with the adaptation mainly occurring in the entertainment area.

5.6. Implications

The research highlights that there are implications for both sports researchers and sports managers. These implications align with the objectives of research questions to address the areas in which both the managers and researchers can learn from.

5.6.1. Sports Managers

From the research, it can be seen that rugby can learn from other sports around internationalisation and vice versa. Rugby 7s managers have shown that internationalisation of the sport is increasingly important. This is shown through the development of the sport through becoming an Olympic sport and the development of women's 7s across the globe. However, with this growth, it was found that constraints such as the availability of infrastructure are constraining the growth of the game. In order to grow more internationally, Rugby 7s needs to learn from truly internationalised sports such as Golf and Tennis. Despite being individual sports these sports have a similar circuit structure to Rugby 7s. 7s managers should look at this structure and the different tiers of tournaments doing this would allow for the growth of the game having more events which would allow for more national teams to compete and increase participation of the game.

Finding the right balance between standardising procedures and adapting to local markets is challenging. However, in saying that Rugby 7s managers have shown that they have learnt from past experiences and are willing to make changes. One example of this is the changing of the broadcasting model. In the past, the events had host broadcasters who were the main parties behind the coverage of the events. However, World Rugby shifted away from the adaptation allow different broadcasters to control the coverage to World Rugby themselves centralise the operations and them being in charge of the coverage, to maintain a consistent product. This shows to other sports that operations and procedures need to continuously be maintained to suit the changing environment. World Rugby has been shown to have a firm hold on the control of the selection of the hosts' markets and the ownership of the events. Having the commercial cycle allows World Rugby to

revaluate the series every four years and see where it fits within the objectives and strategy of the game. However, when in partnerships with other parties maintaining a good relationship is essential to the success of the internationalisation. World Rugby is unique in the way in which the event is licensed. Having national unions licensed to run the events with a degree of influence from World Rugby maintains that the strategy of the game is met. However, commercial entities in both America and Dubai were also licensed to hosting events. The breakdown in the relationship between the American firm and World Rugby can potentially shed a negative light on the operations and lead to interested parties from becoming interested in hosting an event which slows the international growth of the game. Both World Rugby and other sports can learn from this the licensing relationships need to be maintained and avoid a breakdown in order for the series to be internationally successful.

In order to grow the visibility of the sport 7s executives could look at a radical shake-up of the structure of the game. The NZRPA executive suggested the possibility of a tier-based series with major tournaments that sees all nations compete, similar to tennis and golf. Structuring the series in a way like this would get more teams involved and expand the visibility of the game. World Rugby could potentially benefit from this with the development of the sport seeing more profit generated. This profit would likely occur from increasing the marketability of the players and attracting more big sponsors to the sport.

Ultimately, the analysis of the findings highlights many key decision points that executives and managers need to consider when internationalising a global sporting product. With the rise of sport as a commodity more sports are internationalising creating more competition as the executives seek new revenue streams. One key area that emerging sports have looked at to increase their long term competitiveness is to gain 'legitimacy.' Rugby 7s gained this through the approval of the sport into the Olympics. This approval shifted 7s from a niche game into a mainstream sport. Benefits of this included the formation of the women's series, which added another new stream of revenue. However, this added further constraints on market selection and ensuring player welfare targets are met. This highlights how important the decisions the managers and executives make are to the success of the sport. Future-proofing and pre-planning need to occur to ensure the sport is viable and competitive in the long run.

5.6.2. Sports Researchers

As previously stated the sports theme of this research is viewed as a phenomenon, an emerging area of research that has limited research within the field of IB and thus has a lack of knowledge. Part of the objective of the research is to better understand the phenomena and through doing this has led

to implications for researchers. The findings and discussion shows that IB based ideas are relevant within the sporting field (i.e. movement of talent, culture awareness and market entry and selection). However, the findings of the sport open more avenues for research with fresh ideas. Doh (2017) stated that phenomenon-based research (such as sports research) is needed in the IB field to ensure the research does not become stagnate and stale. Researchers can gain new ideas and views into established topic areas through the application of these ideas into the topic of sports. However, the lack of research can also hinder the research in the area. For example, the degree of internationalisation in sports cannot be properly analysed. This occurs due to there not being a definitive model that depicts how the degree of internationalisation would be viewed in the sporting landscape.

5.7. Limitations and Future Directions

An apparent limitation of this qualitative based study is that the results are unable to be verified. As the qualitative data is participant-driven the data is unable to be objectively verified extensively. While this thesis presents a way to help to understand the phenomena of sports literature in the business environment, it does not present any conceptual model to encourage future research in the environment. This limitation occurs while as stated in the implications the link between established IB models and sports is distant and in the case of the degree of internationalisation, does not fully integrate due to varying factors. The interviews themselves were conducted with the view of being participant-driven. This can lead to another limitation of the study. This is that during the interviews with participant driving the interviews as the interview was semi-structured there could be information missed out. The reason for this occurring would be that the participants may not want to divulge certain information that is relevant to the study. The research itself is also conducted with the focus on the case study of Rugby 7s this in itself can be viewed as a limitation. The circuit based structure of Rugby 7s is limited and is not common in sports as other structures such as a league based approach seen in soccer. Both tennis and golf are circuit based sports but are already viewed as being highly internationalised. Formula 1 is an example of a quasi-internationalised sport that is itself circuit-based, however, as said before this approach is not as common as the league structure meaning the applicability of the research to other sports could be viewed as being limited.

The first recommendation to verify the data is for researchers to use a mixed-methods approach. While the researcher has used the second data set to triangulate the data and find the consistencies there are limitations around the timing reducing the amount of data and the lack of testing of the second data set. Researchers should look to implement triangulation with mixed-method data sets, where the secondary data set is quantitatively tested to objectively verify the findings of the main data

set. By conducting a mixed-method approach it also would provide the researcher with tested data that can be used to also create a conceptual model for sports-related theories. As the research is tested the results verify whether or not the internationalisation is successful. This provides a greater opportunity to form a conceptual model. Thirdly, along with having the quantitative-based testing to triangulate the findings to align with the participants' responses, middle managers could also be looked at to interview. Interviewing middle managers would highlight similarities and differences between responses and would lead to a comprehensive data set. Finally, future research needs to be conducted in the full area of sports in the business setting. This means there is a need for research on all the different structures of sport. However, researching by comparing the different structures together could lead to the ability to create a conceptual model for researching the phenomena.

5.8. Concluding Remarks

In conclusion, the topic of sports internationalisation is an emerging topic within the IB field. Little research has been conducted overall linking sports and business, an objective for this research has been to provide those links to provide a better understanding of the topic. This was achieved through a case study based around Rugby 7s, investigating and identifying the challenges the sport faced in internationalising, in particular identifying the key decision points that sports managers need to consider when internationalising a sporting product. To find this a qualitative study using semi-structured interviews of Rugby 7s executives took place. From this, we found, that Rugby 7s has had challenges in the internationalisation of the sport. With executives facing numerous decisions. Constraints exist on the potential growth of the sport including infrastructure. World Rugby was found to be taken a 'glocalised' approach to the internationalisation of the game. This sees the game have both global common operations, however, in the local events the product is adapted to suit the condition of the local market. Doing this World Rugby was seen to still hold control in key areas, and keep an oversight of the local operations to ensure the product is consistent and recognise to the fans and consumers the world over. By doing this the game is provided with the ability to remain competitive in the market long term.

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7.0. Appendices

7.1. Individual Case Analysis

7.1.1. World Rugby

7s Overview

World Rugby are tasked with following and implementing a strategy in competitions around the globe. Competition operation managers are employees of World Rugby who are tasked with managing these World Rugby competitions such as the men's and women's rugby 7s series. 7s is a unique competition under the World Rugby umbrella as it is the only competition where the game is also included in the Olympic games. This increased the importance of the growth of the game while linking this to the commercial arms of the competition. There are two seven's series which World Rugby runs; the HSBC Men's 7s Series and the HSBC Women's 7s Series.

"So I suppose the two products if I can call them products, or two tournaments, are at very different development stages in their life cycle."-World Rugby Executive

An executive from World Rugby stated both are at different stages in the product life cycle. The men's has been around for 20 years and is a mature product, while the women's series is only 7 years old. The executive from World Rugby highlighted a Nielson report identified involvement in the 2016 Olympics brought 14.8 million new fans to the game, with many coming from non-traditional markets. The report also found the fanbase had a 60-40% share between males and females, and the main age range being the 18-24-year-old range.

Market Selection

The World Rugby executive highlighted the importance of the tender process for bidding to host an event within the HSBC World 7s Series. All World Rugby member unions will receive communication about the process outlining the strategy behind the event and what is the minimum hosting criteria.

"So there's quite an extensive tender process involved. And it is an open, transparent, tender process. So communication goes into all of the WR member unions outlining the strategy behind the competition." -World Rugby Executive

From the analysis, it is clear there are two key areas as described by the executive which are considered the important areas within the tender process. Player welfare is the first consideration when bids are made. This involves having the right facilities (e.g. stadium), meeting the minimum medical standards and having suitable performance facilities (e.g. training grounds). The second consideration is the financial viability of hosting the event in a specific market. The unions need to show specific audience numbers can be met, while the host needs to show they could leverage relationships and appeal to both fans and global partners (e.g. HSBC, DHL, Capgemini, Tag Heuer).

The license for the event normally will sit with the national unions, however, there have been exceptions (e.g. Dubai run by Emirates and the USA legs being run by both commercial and city council operations). There are also complex feedback systems with World Rugby running 360-degree feedback operations, including holding a Series Advisory Group (SAG) which discusses matters surrounding the game.

Fan Experience

7s fans are typically younger than 15s fans (18-24), with the mix between male and female sitting at 60-40%. The World Rugby executive stated the attributes that could lead to attracting this fan base is the activities involved in the game with a festival-type atmosphere at the events, also the speed of the game is a big consideration with a try being scored on average every 90 seconds in the series.

“I think everyone knows Hong Kong, and Dubai, and the kind of like the granddaddy of the series if you allow me to use that expression.”-World Rugby Executive

The executive also said the different mix of the cultures involved in the fan base can be seen as an attraction. Hong Kong and Dubai were described as the ‘granddaddy’ events of the circuit which have created the typical festival-type atmosphere. The executive believes that each tournament holds a unique identity that is specific to the location, with the overarching theme of the series, being entertainment. However, entertainment varies in different territories.

Media Experience

“So we’re on the cusp of centralizing the broadcast model. And World Rugby will look after full production and delivery across the whole series.”

-World Rugby Executive

In terms of the broadcasting of the series, World Rugby was said to be creating a centralised broadcast model holding more control with standardised features, which leverages time and scheduling and makes the transition between traditional and non-traditional media distribution easier to control. Media activities were said to be common within the series, however, different events can hold unique elements within these. The captain photoshoot where captains stand in an iconic place in the city of the event with the trophy is the most standard media activity.

7.1.2. New Zealand

7s Overview

New Zealand is one of the top teams on the HSBC 7s World Series in both the men’s and women’s games. The executive from New Zealand Rugby stated the men’s team has ‘a lot of history, a lot of mana.’ The Maori term Mana illustrates the prestige that someone or something holds. While the All Blacks 7s team shows the rich history of the team their female counterparts the Black Ferns 7s are

on a different stage of development. The inclusion of Rugby 7s into the Olympics created the need for nations to create a strong women's team. The New Zealand Rugby executive stated that the women's program was first developed in 2012, with a budget of \$50,000 to create a competitive team. This shows the development of the 'Go for Gold' program which sought out potential players from all over New Zealand to take part in selection camps to form a team.

"It was easy for us to transition, non-rugby players into rugby because every New Zealander knows what rugby is."-New Zealand Rugby Executive

The NZR executive stated that this was easier in New Zealand than other countries due to the wealth of rugby knowledge in the country. In New Zealand, the New Zealand Rugby Players Association (NZRPA) looks after the interests of the players.

Market Selection

In New Zealand, it is NZR who holds the license to host the 7s event in the market. NZR then seek bids to host the event from provincial unions around the nation. With the current hosts being Hamilton. The NZR executive states the Hamilton City Council are heavily involved in the 7s event operations in order to raise public awareness of Hamilton. NZR is in talks to begin sharing the hosting rights for the Series event with Fiji in the coming years. This will see both Hamilton and Fiji alternate each year as the hosts of the event. This would see the license be held by NZR who will oversee and offer expertise for running the event in the Fijian market. The New Zealand executives from both NZR and the NZRPA stated how critical feedback is in the running of the event.

Fan Experience

The games are dynamic and fast-paced, with different zones for people to go to with the event drawing many different types of groups. Table 2 highlights the decline of fan attendance in Wellington which stemmed from a changing fan atmosphere, being less party focused to more family orientated. This decline is shown in the attendance figures with the Wellington event selling out in the 99/00, 04/05 and 09/10 seasons. In the 14/15 season, the attendance dropped to 32,706, which prompted the move of the event to Hamilton which has led to steady growth in attendance. The management learnt from past failings of the Wellington event, with the need to create a balanced environment. The event is also said to attract a wide range of diversity from the cultural standpoint due to the area of the event with the executives using the Fijians community as an example who bring with them a unique way of supporting. An issue that arose is the challenge to schedule the games with the event having only in the past been holding the men's event, however, it is transitioning to an integrated event including the women. Fan interaction was determined to be more of an on the field situation with players and fans interacting that way more than in

prearranged events. While illustrated below is the importance of fan interaction in 7s due to the type of fan that attends the events.

“I would say a 7s spectator is more passionate and vocal and non-traditional, then what a fifth teens spectator would be so there's more of a how do you the crowd engaged.”-New Zealand Rugby Executive

There are activities arranged for the NZ teams to interact with sponsors. Social media was also viewed as a key tool in fan interaction, due to similarities between the speed of social media and 7s which attracts youth consumers.

Media Experience

The executives stated World Rugby holds the rights to the distribution of the coverage of the event and on-sell these rights to the local companies. Sky Sports have the rights to cover the series in New Zealand. The executives eluded to the need for the right infrastructure to support the media activities within the event, stating how it will be likely that they will need to provide greater support to Fiji.

“Obviously Fiji will be a challenge for us. So I think it's going to be certainly part of our ability to build infrastructure within Fiji and Fiji to build up a structure to make sure that broadcasters have quality will be a good challenge for us.”-New Zealand Rugby Executive

For media-related activities at the Hamilton event, the executives stated that the activities are the standard Captains photoshoot, media conferences and a local community event.

7.1.3. Hong Kong

7s Overview

The Hong Kong 7s was earlier described by the World Rugby executive as one of the ‘granddaddy’ tournaments on the tour. The Hong Kong 7s started in 1976 with the event being one of the early pioneers of the game of 7s. The event started due to the extensive ex-pat community in the Hong Kong area. This community created a western-like atmosphere in Hong Kong, which the executive suggested is an attractive reason why the event was able to grow from the early days and continue to attract teams every year. The rugby union is able to use the success of the event to grow the rugby community in Hong Kong through infrastructure and other activities.

Market Selection

Outlined by the executive from Hong Kong Rugby Union was ensuring that the host market is able to meet the minimum standards to be able to host a 7s event. They gave three examples of core criteria that are important in the market selection. These are the stadium facilities, marketing experience and event experience. It was stated that the integration of the women’s series into the

previously male-only event has had an impact on the operations of the tournament. For example, the stadium in Hong Kong has 7 changing rooms, however, with the need to have separate changing rooms for both the men and the women it creates a new challenge to overcome.

Fan Experience

The Hong Kong event was described by the executive as a 'bucket list' event for many rugby 7s fans. They went on to state the need for entertainment and need to have a 'wow' factor with a party type atmosphere. Hong Kong caters for everyone providing different types of entertainment for the many different types of fans who attend each year. This includes areas for kids and families. In doing all this the importance of gaining that 'wow' factor was imperative. In 2019 one activity included having former French rugby star Sebastian Chabal dress in a caveman suit and sing '500 miles' to the crowd.

"So I think we try to slightly change every year and provide different aspects to the event and keeping it fresh." -Hong Kong 7s Executive

Market research is carried out with the executive stating it found 62% of the fans are over the age of 40. While the fans are more likely to be from a western cultural background (e.g. New Zealand, England, Australia). To stay fresh the executive used the example of how in 2019 the entertainment included a 'Queen' cover band. This was due to the success of the recent Freddie Mercury movie. It was said it is important to have entertainment that suits the wants and needs of the identified demographics.

Media Experience

The types of media events include the captain's photo which is taken by an iconic area of Hong Kong. The event also has around five hundred credited media personnel who attend the event. The executive stated after games players do not always want to do media duties, however, they know the importance of doing so to help continue to grow the game. In terms of digital viewership, the numbers were said to be at a high level. There has been more growth in social media. The executive attributes this to organic growth with the number of devices (e.g. smartphones, tablets) the number of fans interacting over social media is organically going to grow. This growth encouraged the Hong Kong Rugby Union to invest more money into building their own social media platform (e.g. Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and LinkedIn).

7.1.4. Dubai

7s Overview

Dubai has a rich history and was also described by the World Rugby executive as one of the 'granddaddy' events on the circuit. The Dubai executive spoke about how with the commercialisation of the game the events have now become more intense, they are more

competitive with more teams capable of winning the event due to the development of the game. The Dubai event itself is a commercially-run event which is operated by Emirates airline. It is run out of the 7s Stadium in Dubai which again is owned by Emirates. The executive stated the 2009 World Cup held there was what the International Olympic Committee were using as an evaluation to see if 7s would be included in the Olympics program.

“The tournament we had in 2009, the Rugby World Cup was used by the Olympic committee who used that tournament to make a final decision on whether 7s was going to be invited to the Olympics.”-Dubai 7s Executive

Market Selection

The executive split the criteria up into two sections that they believe are important when looking at for the selection of a host market. The first is capabilities. This includes ensuring that the host union or host organisation has sufficient staffing experience, a knowledgeable community experience of the game, has access to leverage relationships with the likes of both the local and national governments and also has the ability to attract a crowd. The other area of importance is the facilities including the hotel, transport, security and knowledge of running events. As stated before, the Dubai 7s is licensed to Emirates. The event itself is not marketed as the HSBC Dubai 7s. Rather it is seen as the Emirates Dubai 7s, with the HSBC 7s event being a part of the whole event. The executive also discussed how feedback was very important to them to grow and maintain a successful event.

“So they are continually talking to the SAG...the player welfare side of the game is being looked at all the time.”-Dubai 7s Executive

Fan Experience

Despite hosting the event for numerous years, Dubai is not identified as a traditional rugby market. It is the developing markets that the executive believes is where the growth in 7s exists. The executive said to hold a successful event you cannot alone offer only rugby you need different facets of entertainment to be included. The stadium facility in Dubai is huge. There are numerous sports fields, bars, restaurants, netball courts, kid and youth zones (with flying foxes and climbing walls etc.). The executive described the space as ‘a complete and utter entertainment space.’ This space allows the event to hold over events at the same time including a netball tournament and an invitational 7s event. To get the local fans involved before the event there is also a ‘adopt a country’ program in schools. This sees local schools research selected countries, see them train and watch the event at the stadium.

Media Experience

Dubai hosts a pre-event press conference which sees the players and coaches along with World Rugby officials talking to the media about the upcoming event and the previous experiences of playing in Dubai among other things. There is also a team's function. This function is mainly aimed at the sponsors and allows them to interact with the players. Another media event is the captain's photoshoot taken in front of an iconic place within Dubai.

"Teams leave the day after the tournaments. So it's not as far as the teams are concerned it's not social, it's not a very relaxing week."-Dubai 7s Executive

In terms of attendance and viewership, attendance has grown attracting around 100-105,000 fans over the three days, however, this did dip during the financial crisis. While in digital media the event is viewed in numerous countries with hours on hours of coverage available. Social media is also of growing importance and the main source of media interaction with fans for the event.

7.1.5. South Africa

7s Overview

The South Africa 7s event has evolved over the time of the 7s series. An executive from the South African Rugby Union described Rugby 7s as not being an overnight success. This is seen in the South African leg with multiple cities Stellenbosch; Durban; Port Elizabeth; George and now Cape Town playing host for the South African leg of the 7s circuit. The executives also discussed how the Olympics has helped the development of the 7s game.

"I think just from my perspective, once it became an Olympic sport, it changed everything."-Rugby South Africa Executive

The Olympics shifted the pathway outlook for 7s players. The Olympics are now viewed as a drawcard for players.

Market Selection

Outlined by the executives as playing an important role in the growth of the event in South Africa is World Rugby's shift to streamlining the events in the circuit. This streamlining saw 10 iconic cities be chosen as the hosts of the event on the 7s circuit. These cities are seen as gateway cities which are more accessible with more direct flights in and out of the city from more locations. In terms of South Africa the executives described how when the event was hosted in the city of George, there were difficulties in accessing the city through flights. However, shifting to the more iconic city of Cape Town where it is more accessible fans are more likely to attend as it has lowered the cost.

“If you are in a country that doesn't have rugby at the heart or a rugby culture, we know what rugby players want, we understand it because we grew up with it, you know? Yeah, so it's more difficult going into the emerging markets.”-Rugby South Africa Executive

Feedback was also discussed where in South Africa the feedback provided is of importance and plays a role in winning the trophy for the best feedback out of the host markets. The executives also discussed the importance of being able to provide creature comforts for the players (e.g. good food, WiFi and venues) as the difference between receiving good and bad feedback.

Fan Experience

The executives stated how the fans themselves love to be directly involved in the environment around them. It is also important to cater to all the different types of fans, with there being many fans from multiple cultures attending the event. In South Africa, the executives stated how they like to keep the focus on the bowl of the stadium, with the task being keeping people in their seats. The number one factor of entertainment in the South African event is the rugby itself, however, having that engagement with the fans through other forms of entertainment is needed. Other forms of entertainment include MCs, DJs and dancers with dancers abseiling from the roof of the stadium during the 2019 event. In the past, there were areas out of the stadium with bars and TVs. Due to people staying there and fights breaking out this was reworked to keep the focus in the bowl. The event also runs a speed tweeting challenge during game breaks over twitter as a form of engagement.

Media Experience

South African executives discussed the importance of social media. Social media is used in the South African event to provide information for fans (e.g. bus timetable) and to build a database of fans for loyalty programs. Media operations within the event themselves are more based on the media themselves requesting access, instead of press conferences etc. There is, however, the captain's photoshoot that takes place

“We basically request local media to put in media requests.”-Rugby South Africa Executive

The broadcast is run by Supersport who the executives described as being helpful and supportive in the market. Supersport broadcast all of the events in the local market and commentate across three different languages.

7.1.6. Australia

7s Overview

The Australian 7s event is similar to the history of the South African event. The event has been in the series for the majority of the twenty years that the series has been running. Multiple cities have

hosted the event in the Australian market (e.g. Adelaide, Gold Coast and Sydney). Table 2 highlights the consistent moving of the event as executives sought to grow the game and raise the attendance levels. This resulted in Australia seeing growth in terms of the attendance of fans. The Adelaide and the Gold Coast events saw low attendance figures. However, a shift to Sydney has brought the numbers back up and despite the need to change host stadiums within Sydney due to different circumstances, the attendance figures have remained stable.

Market Selection

Outlined by the Rugby Australia executive was the balancing act between ensuring that the minimum standards for hosting the event are met, along with being able to maintain a financially viable event. In terms of infrastructure, a roughly a 30,000 seat stadium was suggested at being the size of a stadium needed, however, there is also the ability to be able to fill the stadium. Looking at the infrastructure side of choosing a market the executive stated that it is important to have space for hotels and different areas for fans. The license for the event sits with Rugby Australia, with no commercial partnership in the operations of the event. The only commercial involvement is in ensuring financial viability (e.g. from the NSW government).

Fan Experience

With Australia being in close proximity to the Pacific Islands, the executive highlighted the extent of the diversity in the crowd. There are lots of fans of different cultural backgrounds. However, the executive stated this does not lead to tribalism in the fans but instead brings a collective mix of cultures together in the crowd. The attendees are found to typically be from the younger generations, with younger fans than the typical test match in the fifteens game. Australia focuses on rugby being the main drawcard with the entertainment from the games themselves not able to be manufactured it is organic.

“Can’t sit in your seats for 11 hours of rugby,” this shows the need for Australians to identify and have other forms of entertainment. The atmosphere is said to be similar to a party, with the need to provide non-stop enjoyment. It is a balancing act due to the diverse demographics of the crowd. The first day Saturday is more of the party day. Party based entertainment includes DJs, foam parties and dancing. Sunday is more family orientated. Family-based activities include face painting, pass the ball and rides. The interaction between players and fans was also said to be organic. With the player's schedule, it is hard to manufacture the interaction.

Media Experience

As described above the attendees of the event are seen to be of the younger generations, being younger than the typical rugby test match fan. This has shifted the marketing of the event to be aimed mainly via digital platforms (e.g. social media, TV, radio). With social media being the main

way that the fans engage with the event. In terms of the media-based activities involved with the event, they include the holding of a press conference and the captain's photoshoot. Other PR activities include taking teams to areas such as the zoo, where koalas are held with photos taken of the team. The event has seen viewership remain static or slightly drop over the past few years. However, when Australia is taking part in the finals there is an evident spike in viewership numbers.

“And there are good numbers that tune in when we're playing in one of the finals.”-Rugby Australia Executive

7.1.7. United States of America

7s Overview

Rugby in the United States of America is seen as a non-traditional and growing sport. An executive from the US men's series event believes that the game of 7s is the best way to introduce rugby into the USA market. This is due to the high scoring aspect of the game. The constant end to end action is also likely to appeal to the American fans more than the fifteen man game of rugby. Players were also described to be easier to develop than the fifteen man game. This is due to needing for only 10-12 non-specialised athletes compared to the 23 man squad in the fifteen man game that also has specialised positions. The executive stated that the Olympics has helped to develop the game and gain more exposure to help grow the game in the market. However, the failure of the men's and women's USA team to progress far in the Olympics resulted in the funding being dramatically cut, despite the strong showings of the teams in the series.

Market Selection

As discussed earlier, the USA is seen as a non-traditional rugby market which the executive suggested results in the criteria of market selection being different compared to traditional markets (e.g. NZ, England, Australia). This difference centres around the need to be able to attract fans to the event and fill the stadium. The opportunities available to grow the game in America includes the population, money and television power which offer World Rugby attractive opportunities to profit from. For the infrastructure, it was suggested that there is a 'plethora' of ideal stadiums and facilities to use during the event. This comes from having numerous Major League Soccer 25,000-40,000 seat stadiums which are the ideal capacity for the event. While there are also numerous 60,000 plus seater stadiums, the executive believes with the size of the rugby market the smaller capacity stadiums are the best option to use in the market. The license of the event has been somewhat of a contentious issue. The men's event is owned by a private company, who are now in a lawsuit against both World Rugby and USA Rugby. The women's event has been licensed out by World Rugby to a city much like the Olympics is operated.

Fan Experience

The executive stated how social media has evolved how humans receive information and have created shorter attention spans in consumers. It is this that correlates well with the game of 7s. Being fast-paced with the ability for the game to completely change in the span of 20 seconds it is more of an attractive sport for fans, with the executive stating that 7s would grow rugby better in the USA than 15s due to these attributes.

Also mentioned was in a non-traditional market such as the USA you cannot simply just provide an event with the rugby itself.

“So we again this is because we're in America, we need more hooks.”-USA 7s Executive

You need to offer other entertainment to engage and entice consumers to come to the event. This sees lots of different activities take place at the USA men's 7s event. Beer gardens, multicultural events, an amateur tournament (with close to 300 teams, from 20-25 countries), conferences (business and medical) and referee clinics are used to both attract consumers to the event and then keep them entertained while there. The men's event also runs an adopt a school program. This sees schools study selected countries playing in the event, there are school visits from players and a handful of children are selected to attend the event on matchdays.

Media Experience

With rugby being a growing sport in the USA market it is important for the organisers of the event to get as much coverage of the event as possible. The men's event has in order to achieve more coverage moved from the two-day event to operating over three days. This is done in order to maximise the coverage of the event on the national TV network channels.

The executive also stated that social media was an important tool to use in the engagement of fans, however, there is a challenge with social media.

“So the social media limitation is the fact that you have to Like it, right? So if you're in that world, fantastic, great, but that doesn't grow as much as reinforce the traditional TV ads, billboards, anything like that reaches the non-rugby people...this is much more of an American issue than it is in New Zealand, I would imagine.”-USA 7s Executive

With the USA being a growth market and social media needing an individual to like or follow a page the USA market is not able to grow as much and is likely more being seen by current fans of the game. However, viewership of the event has been growing, with the executive stating the men's event has been well received by both the TV networks and fans. The Parade of Nations is a PR event

run prior to the men's event in the USA. It sees thousands of fans line up down Freemont Street, with the players engaging in a red carpet type parade down the street.

7.2. Interview Protocol

Introduction	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Intro of myself - Intro of the research topic: Internationalisation of Rugby 7s and the impact of institutions. How do these institutional pressures shape the operations and internationalisation of a 7s event? - Overview of the interview, make the participant aware that I will taking notes - Ensure they know and provide consent for the interview to be recorded - Interviewee will receive the transcript - Answers can be specific or men's/women's orientated 	
Can you tell me a bit about yourself and your background?	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Career history - A bit about the role they are in within the organisation: involvement in 7s, length of time - Current role: title, job description, over-all responsibilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How long and in what capacity have you been involved in Rugby 7s?
Introduce Rugby 7s: Overview – Gain a wider picture of the Rugby 7s landscape in terms of Internationalisation (P= Player Focus; G= General Focus)	
<p>Formed professionally in 1999 Rugby 7s is a shorter version of Rugby Union. The game is based on the same rules as Rugby 7s, but involves less players over a shorter space of time. Does Rugby 7s hold unique attributes that impacts on the engagement it has with fans etc. and the overall consumption of the game, is it more of a commodity?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Impact of 7s on 15 man game - Entertainment base - Following of the game 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Over the time of your involvement in Rugby 7s, how have you seen the game develop? What challenges has the game faced? (G) - The internationalisation of Rugby 7s has seen non-traditional Rugby markets host tournaments. Has hosting these tournaments made these non-traditional teams be more competitive in the circuit? (G) - What impact did the inclusion of 7s in the Olympics do for the development of the game? (G)
Market Selection: How are markets chosen to host a 7s event?	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Selection Process of choosing host nations - Components/Attributes host nations need to possess - Results and outcomes of this process - Players role in selection 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What selection criteria does World Rugby look for when evaluating whether to provide a license to host an event to a nation? (G) - Do the markets need to show experience of being able to hold events of the size of the 7s? (G) - How long does the process take to select host nations? (G) - What organisation receives the license to host the event? (G)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How are the organisations chosen? (G) - Are decisions based more from a commercial/growth market view or a fan based view? (G) - Do players have input into the selection process? Are they allowed to provide feedback and recommendations? (P) - When a host market is selected are players trained to be aware of the cultural differences? (P) - Do players adapt their behaviour in the different nations, due to cultural differences? (P) - Is player power used to commodify the sport? Are the players used as marketing type products in different events? (P) - Do players receive different benefits in the different events around the globe? (P)
Fan Experience: How fan experience is impacted by different Institutional Pressures	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Emphasis on fan consumption - Entertainment based consumption - Evolving consumption of Rugby 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What attributes does Rugby 7s possess that attracts fans to the events? (G) - How does the fan experience at the tournament differ market to market? (G) - How are the times the games are played determined? Are the decisions affected by the local culture of the nation? (G) - Has the development of Rugby 7s led to the transformation of fan consumption of Rugby? (G) - Does your organisation use social media to interact with fans? If so in what ways and how important is the use of social media. (G) - How do fan and player interactions differ over the events in the circuit? (P) - Do the players enjoy interacting with fans? Do some events provide better experiences than others? (P)
Media Experience: How media operations are impacted by Institutional Pressures	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Scheduling of games - Broadcasting Rights 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What is the process for obtaining broadcasting rights? (G)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Do the media organisations affect the operations of the events differently in different markets? i.e. are games scheduled in order to gain optimum coverage of viewers around the globe (G) - Do different nations have different constraints on the scheduling of the games in the event? (G) - Has viewership grown in the past few years? (G) - What are the general kind of media activities players are required to conduct? (P) - Are the players required to complete different tasks in the different markets? i.e. press conferences etc. (P)
<p>End of the interview. Is there anything else you would like to add that we haven't covered already?</p>	

7.3. Participant Information Sheet

Internationalisation of a Global Sporting Product: The Case of Rugby 7s

INFORMATION SHEET FOR PARTICIPANTS

You are invited to take part in this research. Please read this information before deciding whether or not to take part. If you decide to participate, thank you. If you decide not to participate, thank you for considering this request.

Who am I?

My name is Oliver Perkinson and I am a Master's student in International Business at Victoria University of Wellington. This research project is work towards my thesis.

What is the aim of the project?

This project is aimed at investigating the internationalisation of Rugby 7s. This is done through investigating Rugby 7s looking at the evolution of the game and how it has been impacted on by the institutional environment e.g. media and culture within the different host markets on the 7s circuit. This will provide information on the best strategy use when internationalising and setting up a new tournament focusing on either standardising all tournaments to be the same, or each tournament adapting to their own respective local culture. Your participation will support this research by showing how sports can internationalise in the future and identify any implications for the circuit based approach of internationalisation. This research has been approved by the Victoria University of Wellington Human Ethics Committee ID#0000027536.

How can you help?

You have been invited to participate because of your expertise and experience within the Rugby environment. If you agree to take part I will interview you either via Skype, at your workplace or at Victoria University of Wellington. I will ask you questions about the evolution and development of Rugby 7s. The interview will take 45 minutes. I will audio record the interview with your permission and write it up later. The Skype based interviews will also be audio recorded to be transcribed within a week after the interview. The transcription of the interview will then be made available to you to review and make comments on if you wish to do so. You can choose to not answer any question or stop the interview at any time, without giving a reason. You can withdraw from the study by contacting me at any time until two weeks after the transcript of the interview is sent to you. If you withdraw, the information you provided will be destroyed or returned to you.

What will happen to the information you give?

You will not be named in the final report but your organisation will be named (provided you have the authority to agree to this on behalf of the organisation).

Only my supervisor and I will read the notes or transcript of the interview. The interview transcripts, summaries and any recordings will be kept securely and destroyed on 20th December 2022.

What will the project produce?

The information collected will be used in a master's thesis, with the possibility of it being used for developing a teaching case study, presented at a conference or being used in an academic journal.

If you accept this invitation, what are your rights as a research participant?

You do not have to accept this invitation if you don't want to. If you do decide to participate, you have the right to:

- choose not to answer any question;
- ask for the recorder to be turned off at any time during the interview, if the interview is being conducted via Skype you have the right to ask for the recording to stop and the ability to see that the recording has ended via the onscreen icon;
- withdraw from the study anytime until two weeks after you receive the transcript;
- ask any questions about the study at any time;
- receive a copy of your interview transcript;
- be able to read any reports of this research by emailing the researcher to request a copy.

If you have any questions or problems, who can you contact?

If you have any questions, either now or in the future, please feel free to contact either:

Student:

Name: Oliver Perkinson
University email address
perkinoliv@myvuw.ac.nz

Supervisor:

Name: Eldrede Kahiya
Role: Senior Lecturer
School: Victoria Business School
Phone: 04 4639593
eldrede.kahiya@vuw.ac.nz

Human Ethics Committee information

If you have any concerns about the ethical conduct of the research you may contact the Victoria University HEC Convenor: Dr Judith Loveridge. Email hec@vuw.ac.nz or telephone +64-4-463 6028.

7.4. Table 2 Secondary Data Set

Rugby Sevens Events Comparison								
Country	Variable	Total Likes/Follows	1999/00	2004/05	2009/10	2014/15	2018/19	Sources
	City		Wellington	Wellington	Wellington	Wellington	Hamilton	Westpac Stadium Annual Reports
	Venue		Westpac Stadium	Westpac Stadium	Westpac Stadium	Westpac Stadium	FMG Stadium	World Rugby
	Capacity		34,500	34,500	34,500	34,500	25,000	theroar.com.au
New Zealand	# of Nations		16	16	16	16	16	Council Websites
	# of Days		2	2	2	2	2	Stadium Websites
	Attendance		70,000	69,000	69,000	32,706	48,611	
	Finalists		1. Fiji 2. New Zealand	1. New Zealand 2. Argentina	1. Fiji 2. Samoa	1. New Zealand 2. England	1. Fiji 2. USA	
	Social Media Platforms	Facebook: NZ7s	87,149					
		Twitter:	N/A					
		Youtube: All Blacks	282k					
	City		No tournament	Los Angeles	Las Vegas	Las Vegas	Las Vegas	World Rugby
	Venue			Home Depot Center (now Dignity Health Sports Park)	Sam Boyd Stadium	Sam Boyd Stadium	Sam Boyd Stadium	USA Rugby
	Capacity			30,000	36,800	36,800	36,800	rugbytoday.com
United States	# of Nations			16	16	16	16	Stadium Websites
	# of Days			2	2	3	3	
	Attendance			N/A	36,600	75,761	N/A	
	Finalists			1. New Zealand 2. Argentina	1. Samoa 2. New Zealand	1. Fiji 2. New Zealand	1. USA 2. Samoa	
	Social Media Platforms	Facebook: USA Sevens Rugby	847,755					
		Twitter: @USARugbySevens	4,796					
		Youtube: USA Sevens Rugby	5.4K					
	City		Brisbane	No tournament	Adelaide	Gold Coast	Sydney	World Rugby
	Venue		Lang Park (Suncorp Stadium)		Adelaide Oval	Cbus Super Stadium	Spotless Stadium	Rugby Australia
	Capacity		40,000+ (Before Redevelopment)		36,000 (Before Redevelopment)	27,000	24,000	Government Annual Reports
Australia	# of Nations		16		16	16	16	abc.net.au
	# of Days		2		3	2	3	Council Reports
	Attendance		N/A		28,211	20,546	43,320	Stadium Websites
	Finalists		1. Fiji 2. Australia		1. Samoa 2. USA	1. Fiji 2. Samoa	1. New Zealand 2. USA	
	Social Media Platforms	Facebook: AU 7s	53,542					
		Twitter: AU 7s	26,403					
		Youtube: Rugby.com.au	57.8k					

