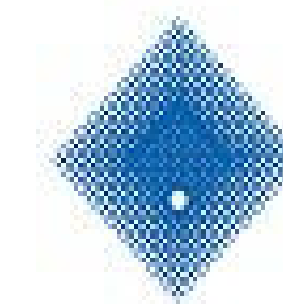


STRATEGIES FOR MANAGING PARTNERSHIPS IN COMMUNITY SPORT AND RECREATION SERVICES



VICTORIA UNIVERSITY

A NEW SCHOOL OF THOUGHT

**John Tower, Victoria University
Leo Jago, Nottingham University
Marg Deery, Victoria University**

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INTRODUCTION

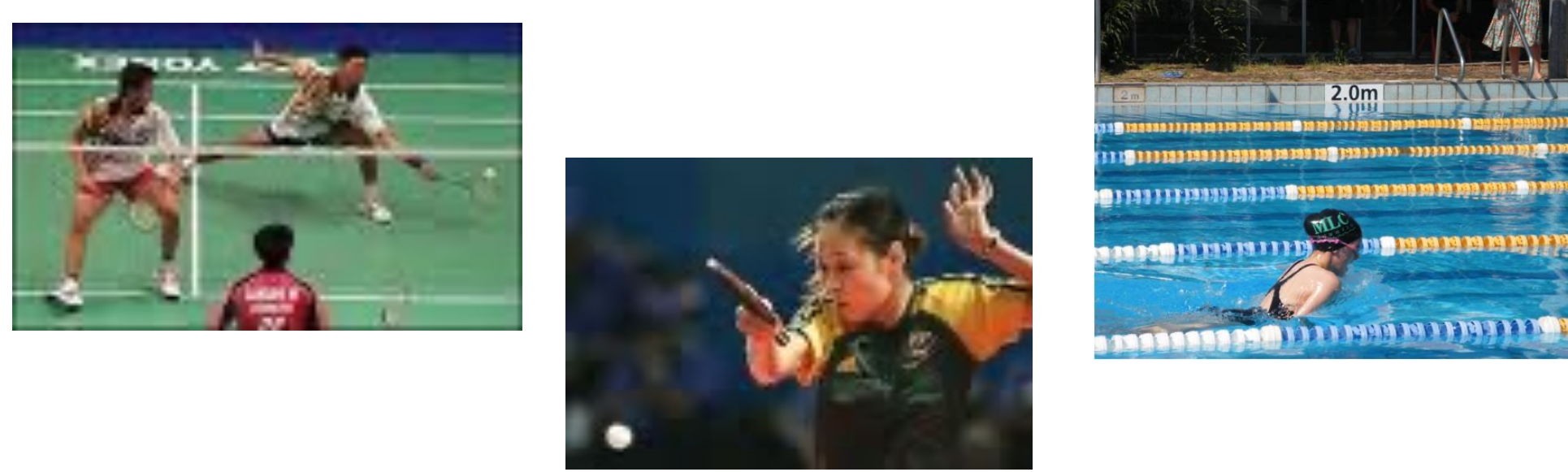
Inter-Organisational Relationships (IORs) provide a foundation for understanding the development and management of sport and recreation partnerships (Babiak & Thibault, 2008). Despite the fact that sport and recreation partnerships have been associated with creating positive economic (Crompton, 1989; Thibault, Kikulis & Frisby, 2004) and community outcomes (Andereck, 1997; Glover, 1999; Henderson, et. al., 2001; Selin & Chavez, 1994; Vail, 2007) they have not generally been well managed. Issues that have been identified about sport and recreation partnerships include:

- Lack of guidelines' contribution to less successful partnerships (Frisby, Thibault & Kikulis, 2004),
- Little conscious effort into partnership management (Tower, Jago & Deery, 2006), and
- Limited research that identifies partnership management strategies (Babiak & Thibault, 2008, Shaw & Allen, 2006).

This research addresses the need to identify partnership management strategies for community sport and recreation partnerships.

METHOD

A quantitative study surveyed local sport associations and indoor sport and recreation venues in the Australian state of Victoria. The questionnaire was mailed to 470 sport associations involved in the delivery of badminton, basketball, squash / racketball, swimming, table tennis and volleyball, and 329 indoor sport and recreation venues.



The questionnaire used an importance – performance analysis (IPA) structure to identify the constructs that were most important in the management of the relationships between the sport associations and the sport and recreation venues. The IPA structure was used because of its ease of application and its output's capacity to guide strategic directions (Bacon, 2003; Crompton & Duray, 1985; Hollenhurst, Olson & Fortney, 1992; Martilla & James, 1977).

The IPA included:

- Direct measures of importance and performance,
- Data-centred quadrants,
- Iso – rating line (diagonal model), and
- Measures of priority based on first, second and third most important variables.

The 24 variables in the IPA were based on constructs that were identified as being important in the management of relationships (Tower, et. al., 2006). The questionnaire also requested respondents to rate the achievement of 19 outcomes that could be attributed to the relationship.

Inferential statistical tests were conducted to determine:

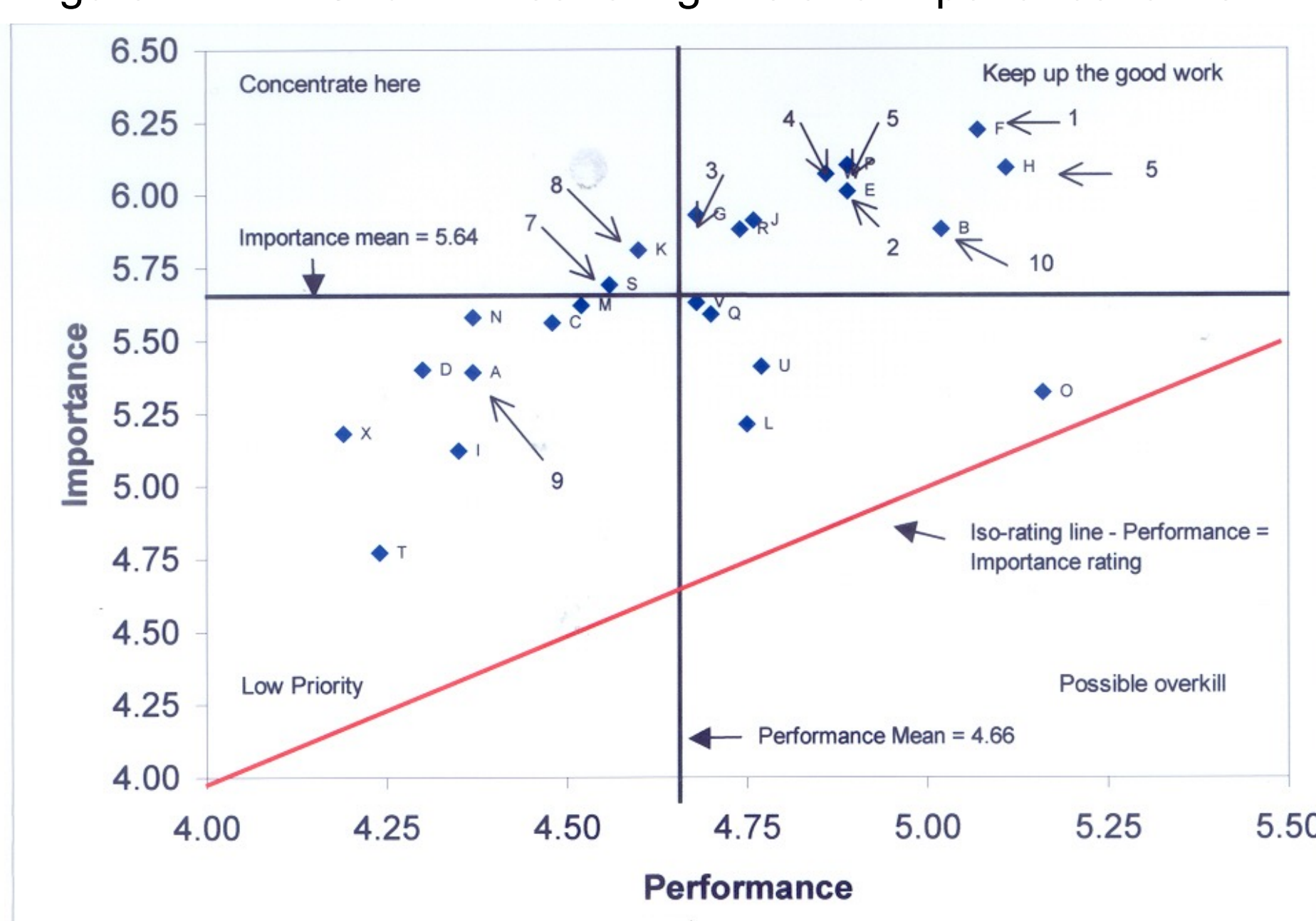
- The correlation between the rating and ranking of the relationship constructs,
- Differences among respondents' ratings of importance and performance of each construct, and
- The correlations between the relationship ratings and the ratings of the relationship outcomes.

RESULTS

A total of 206 questionnaires were included in the analysis. Local sport association administrators comprised 63.6% of the respondents and 36.4% of the respondents were administrators from sport and recreation venues. Most of the respondents were from non-metropolitan locations (54.4%) and the remainder were from metropolitan Melbourne (45.6%).

Figure 1 provides the IPA results with the quadrant and diagonal models and the data from the ranking of the variables.

Figure 1 – IPA Grid with Iso-rating line and importance ranks.



Legend			
A	Adaptation	M	Management Styles
B	Appropriate Partners	N	Power / Control
C	Benefits / Outcomes	O	Proximity
D	Clear plan & evaluation	P	Quality
E	Commitment	Q	Relevant Issue
F	Communication	R	Satisfaction
G	Cooperation	S	Shared goals / values
H	Facility	T	Shared technology
I	Funding & resource allocation	U	Social bonds
J	Interdependence / Dependence	V	Staff roles & responsibilities
K	Leadership	W	Trust
L	Longevity	X	Willingness to be flexible

The quadrant analysis indicates that there is a spread of variables across all four quadrants with attention required for Leadership and Share goals / values. The Iso-rating line indicates that all the variables are priorities for improvement because the importance rating exceeds the performance rating. The ranking of the top ten variables is based on the independent priorities of the variables. The three analyses were used to identify the constructs that were most important in the management of the relationships.

The eight most important constructs in partnership management were commitment, communication, cooperation, facility, leadership, quality, shared goals / values and trust.

Statistical analysis outcomes

- The ranks of the 24 constructs when compared with the rank based on the IPA rating has a positive correlation (Spearman's rho correlation = 0.736, $p < 0.01$, $n = 24$).
- A paired sample t-test showed significant levels of difference between the ratings of importance and performance for all 24 constructs. The importance mean scores were higher than the performance mean scores for all variables. The eta squared statistic (> 0.14 for 20 of the variables) indicated a large effect size.
- The connection between the eight most important constructs and the relationship outcomes had 147 significant positive correlations of medium strength and seven significant positive correlations of high strength.

DISCUSSION

The evidence indicates that there is scope for sport and recreation organisations to improve how they manage their partnerships. The focus on the eight most important constructs provides a context for more effective partnership management.

Partnership management strategies should focus on:

- Having good **communication** at formal and informal levels,
- Building **trust** so there is confidence that partners will make decisions in the interest of the partnership,
- Having appropriate **equipment and facilities** (this is particularly relevant for sport and recreation venues, and the associations that use them)
- Providing **leadership** that is motivating and enthusiastic,
- Developing and understanding **shared goals / values**,
- Cooperating** through coordinated actions,
- Making a **commitment** of resources, effort and time, and
- Delivering **quality** outcomes through **quality** processes.

Positive partnerships achieve results

The positive correlations between the performance of these eight constructs and the relationship outcomes demonstrate the potential for well-performing partnerships to generate more positive economic and community outcomes. Partnerships that were based on collaboration and cooperation were able to achieve higher levels of outcomes such as increased usage and a sense of community ownership.

Positive partnerships build stronger communities

Conscious and strategic management of partnerships among sport and recreation organisations contributes to more positive community relations. Organisations that collaborate are better able to serve their communities. State and local governments' services, and the community sport and recreation associations that collaborate with them can set policies that encourage and guide partnerships so the economic and community outcomes are more achievable.



Strategic partnerships get results

REFERENCES

References are available from the John Tower and are provided in the Conference Abstract Book.

