

## He Shoots! He Scores! But for How Long?

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Canada is synonymous with hockey. In fact, the sport was invented in Canada about two centuries ago. Donuts and hockey define Canada on the international scene, *eh!* Wherever you go, *out* and *about*, throughout Canada you will see that which reflects part of the Canadian culture. Sadly, however, there are signs that things are changing; the sport of hockey is falling out of favour with many of the younger crowd, both boys and girls. The same is true for bowling - 5-pin, which is - another Canadian sport.

Soccer, cricket, and badminton are gaining ground. The changing population is to blame (Wallace and Spears, 2009). In the 1800's and into the second half of the 1900's, Canada's population growth was significantly due to immigration from Europe. Now, many of the immigrants come from Asia, the Middle East, and the Caribbean, areas where hockey, a winter sport, doesn't even show up on radar.

The difficulty facing local hockey organizations and house leagues, the developing ground for professional hockey players, is the failure to interest many immigrants in the game, the high cost of participating in the sport, and the assumption that Canadians will always be interested in hockey (Wallace and Spears, 2009). Even though the population of the Toronto, Ontario, area has grown significantly over the past fifteen years, and it continues to grow, the Scarborough Hockey Association [located in the eastern portion of the GTA (Greater Toronto Area)], has seen its membership drop from about 10,000 down to 2,800 (Wallace and Spears, 2009). Another east-end hockey group, the Agincourt Hockey League, which had more than 800 members a decade ago, shut down operations in 2008 after membership dropped to 125 (Wallace and Spears, 2009). The West Hill Hockey Association, also in the east-end, had 2,250 members in the 1970's; now it has only 800 (Wallace and Spears, 2009). Interestingly, however, the GTHL (Greater Toronto Hockey League), the organization that oversees 93 GTA hockey associations in the area, has not suffered a decline in membership, primarily due to the growth of member-cities immediately north of Toronto (Wallace and Spears, 2009). There is still concern, however, that things can change (Wallace and Spears, 2009).

**Focus:** lifestyle, acculturation, faltering demand, full-demand, product life cycle, attitude.

### Questions:

1. Prepare a summary table of the overall population levels in the GTA and surrounding areas for the past 50 years. What trend do you see? What impact do you think such a trend would have on the level of membership in local hockey leagues? Explain.

2. Prepare a summary table of the ethnic breakdown of the population in the GTA and surrounding areas for the past fifty years. What trend do you see? What impact do you think that such a trend would have the level of membership in local hockey leagues? What impact do you think that such a trend would have on a child's interest in playing hockey?
3. The cost to participate in organized hockey is about \$1,000 per child, while the cost to participate in organized soccer is about \$100 (Wallace and Spears, 2009). Would this cost differential be more relevant to immigrant and/or first-generation immigrant families than others? Explain (and support).
4. Based on the information presented in the case, what stage of the product life cycle is organization hockey in for the GTHL. vs. the other organizations which were identified? How do you know?
5. How do the concepts of lifestyles and acculturation apply to this case?
6. Explain how the concepts of faltering demand and full-demand apply to this case [see Kotler, Philip. (1973). The major tasks of marketing management. *Journal of Marketing*, 37(4), 42-49, for definitions of these terms.]
7. If you were hired as a marketing consultant by the GTHL, what recommendations would you make to the organization with respect to the current and future membership issues?
8. If you were hired as a marketing consultant by the local hockey associations in the east-end of Toronto, what recommendations would you make to the organizations with respect to the current and future membership issues?

**Note.** To answer some of the above questions, you will need to review census and immigration data for the GTA and surrounding areas.

Here's a start:

**Census:** <http://www12.statcan.ca/census-recensement/index-eng.cfm>

**Immigration:** <http://www12.statcan.ca/census-recensement/2006/as-sa/97-557/index-eng.cfm?CFID=3034626&CFTOKEN=15640600>

Source: Wallace, Kenyon and Spears, John. (2009, June 15). Death knell at the rink. *The Toronto Star*, pp. GT1, GT4.