

ATTITUDINAL CONSTRUCTS TOWARD SPORT SPONSORSHIP OUTCOMES

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Abstract

Theoretical background

Sport sponsorship has increased rapidly over the last years due to its effectiveness as a marketing communication tool. Sponsors may seek a variety of outcomes including but not limited to increased sales/market share, image enhancement, brand recognition, community involvement, sampling opportunities, brand loyalty, and increased awareness (Tomasini, Frye, & Stotlar, 2004). An important issue in sponsorship research is investigating whether sponsorship activity produces the desired outcomes. Just as critical is investigating factors that influence sponsorship outcomes (Gwinner & Swanson, 2003). There have been some attempts to theoretically develop and empirically test models to investigate the influence of attitudinal constructs on sponsorship outcomes. However, as Christensen (2006) noted, sponsorship evaluation research is still at early stages, due to lack of established theoretical frameworks that can explain a consumer's decision making process, since the interactions among the constructs that have been proposed as antecedents and consequences of sponsorship programs are complex and dynamic.

Aim of abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate if the psychological connection of a consumer to a sport team, such as attitudinal loyalty, attachment and involvement predict attitudinal construct such as sponsor image, or behavioral constructs such as purchase intention and word of mouth communication.

Method

Questionnaires were collected from fans of a professional football team in Greece (N=420). The questionnaires were distributed outside of the stadium before the start of the football games. All constructs were measured by a 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree) Likert scale. Four items measured attitudinal loyalty towards their favorite

team (Gladden & Funk, 2001). Eight items measured team attachment, as the psychological connection to the team (Funk et al. 2000). Involvement was measured as a two dimensional construct (attraction and centrality), (Kyle et al. 2004). Three items were used to measure the Sponsor's image favourable purchase intentions and favourable word of mouth was measured by three items accordingly by the scale developed by Madrigal (2001).

Results

A regression analysis was performed to predict sponsor's image, purchase intention and word of mouth communication from fans' loyalty, team involvement and attachment. From the analysis it was found 'team attachment' ($t = 2.26, p < .05$) and 'involvement-centrality' ($t = 2.21, p < .05$) accounted for 66% of sponsor's image ($F = 6.66, p < .05$). For the favourable purchase intention, the results revealed that attachment' ($t = 2.84, p < .05$) accounted for 80% ($F = 8.21, p < .05$). Finally, for the favourable word of mouth the results revealed that attachment' ($t = 2.84, p < .05$) accounted for 78% ($F = 8.03, p < .05$).

Discussion and implications/conclusions

The findings supported the premise that highly attached fans are more likely to develop positive image for their team sponsor, exhibit higher intentions for purchasing and recommending the sponsor's products. The findings from this research have practical implications for both sport team marketers and sponsors. Both parties need to have a good understanding of how and when sponsorship works to maximize its value.

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