

SPORT FANS AND MOTIVES FOR ATTENDANCE - A STATUS QUAESTIONIS FROM THE LITERATURE

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Abstract

Introduction/Objectives

The desire to understand the sport consumers' behavior is a long-term objective of the sport-marketing professionals. A better comprehension about the sport fans, the motives that get supporters into the stadium and the reasons that can make them buy merchandising can help to build a whole picture about the followers of a team or sport.

Therefore, the wide-ranging idea of this literature review is to systematize the knowledge about the profile of the sport fans and to understand what takes people into the stadium and what can make them stay at home. This investigation will allow scholars and practitioners to establish common research designs and target populations in a better way. In this manner, the present pioneer contribution can be of help in order to perform studies about attendance, motives for attendance, marketing strategies and club management.

Background

Sport management researchers have tried to define the concept of a sport fan, to classify sport consumers when it comes to their fandom and to establish different models of sport consumption. However, this field of knowledge is yet to be explored and some gaps have to be filled. The biggest current problem is that until present, sport researchers and managers couldn't find a common language about these issues. The main reasons for the huge variability in this field of knowledge can be

interpreted as following. Firstly, the studies were performed in different countries and continents, therefore, the vast cultural differences can be identified in the study designs, in their main focus and, consequently, in the results. Secondly, several authors established different sport consumption models, having as a consequence different findings that cannot be compared accurately. Thirdly, as we analyze studies about attendance we can find evidence that different sports have supporters with diverse consumption motives, which stops researchers from establishing a common model. And last, sport consumption is changing a lot, as so the marketing strategies and the organizations' view about consumers. Hence, the results are different throughout times.

Methods

In our status quaestionis from the literature we focus on the definition of sport fans, spectators and consumers. We summarize the several models of sport consumption existing. Finally, we analyze the motives that make people attend games and dislocate themselves to the stadium, or, on the other hand, make them stay at home. Thus, we review the sport consumption content presented in the literature and organize it in a holistic way.

Results

Sport consumers differ a lot: fans values, attitudes and behaviors are quite varied. The modern sport fan, called "the elusive fan" by Rein&colleagues(2006), holds high expectations for the presentation of a sport event, has multiple media viewing options, and is selective in how money can be spent in the live viewing of sport attractions. Therefore, fans have been classified by, among others, (i)the number of hours dedicated to the club, (ii)the type of dedication (attending games at the stadium or at home), and (iii)the kind of consumption (amount of money spent).

Validated instruments can be located in several languages about the motives that make people attend games or sports events (e.g. Wann et al.,1999;Trail et al.,2000;Funk et al.,2009). Wann&colleagues validated the Sport Fan Motivation Scale to measure eight factors known as influencing the fans behavior: eustress, self-esteem, escape, entertainment, economic, aesthetic, affiliation and family. This was considered to be a good starting point, but it had some methodological implications. Trail&colleagues presented a theoretical model proposing a predictive relationship between the motives and the actual behavior of fans and sport spectators. This model includes nine similar motives for being a sport fan. Funk&colleagues provided a parsimonious measuring tool of motives to explain sport event attendance. The SPEED scale (Socialization, Performance, Excitement, Esteem, and Diversion) demonstrated the ability to explain 75% of the variance in team commitment. Recently, other perspectives have been brought to light. Constrains on sport consumer behavior are also being studied. Fink&Parker(2009) studied the motives to attend games of other teams than our favorites, and found that drama, skill and social were rated the highest in both game types (favorite teams or not).

Conclusions/Research propositions

Overall, we notice heterogeneity on the existing data about sport consumers, sport consumers' definitions and consumption motives. Therefore, research in this area is still in an embryonic stage. Future studies should focus on the percentage of attendance that can be explained by

each motive and the relationship between motives, pursuing the achievement of a broad-spectrum knowledge about the studied topics.

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