

DEVELOPMENT OF A LEAGUE BRAND ASSOCIATION MODEL

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Abstract

Introduction

Professional sport leagues have developed a modern brand management approach and been the subject of rebranding strategies. For example, the UEFA Europa League changed its structure and brand appearance raising the profile of the competition making it more appealing to consumers. Prior research (e.g., Gladden & Funk, 2002; Ross, Russell, & Bang, 2008) has provided team managers with brand association scales to measure consumers perceptions allowing them to take appropriate brand management actions, but have not applied this approach to leagues. Kunkel, Funk and King (2009) explored brand associations linked with sport leagues but did not offer a multi-dimensional scale as a tool to properly investigate sport league brands. The current research addresses this gap and provides a league brand association scale, which forms the basis for a league brand association model.

Literature Review

Two models have previously examined the brand associations linked with professional sport teams; The Team Brand Association Scale (TBAS) (Ross, et al., 2008) and the Team Association Model (TAM) (Gladden & Funk, 2002). The TBAS measured 11 associations linked with professional sport teams whereas the TAM measured 16 team brand associations that were later used by Bauer, Stokburger-Sauer and Exler (2008) demonstrating the TAM's applicability to the German team sport setting. Furthering these team investigations, Kunkel et al. (2009) tested the applicability of 14 team brand associations as league brand associations (LBA) in an exploratory study. The authors confirmed that consumers also linked 12 team brand associations with sport leagues. However, the authors used single-item measures and did not capture the entirety of brand associations consumers link with sport

leagues. Thus, the purpose of this research was twofold: First, to provide a multi-dimensional league brand association scale and second, to examine the higher order structure of league brand associations.

Methods and Analysis

Quantitative investigation gathered information via an online questionnaire testing consumers perceptions of sport league brands. Online surveys were sent to fans of four sport leagues in eight metropolitan areas in Australia. Descriptive statistics and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) were employed to investigate data of 368 respondents. CFA was conducted to estimate the measurement model for the 39 scale items and 14 constructs. Once the measurement model was confirmed, a league brand association model (LBAM) higher order CFA for the 14 constructs and the two second-order variables structure related associations (SRA) and non-structure related associations (NSRA) was estimated.

Results

The results of the CFA revealed a good fit for the measurement model. Factor loadings ranged from .70 to .95 and the average variance extracted (AVE) by the latent factors ranged from .62 to .82 with a mean of .71. Goodness of fit indices indicated that the data supported the model ($\chi^2 = 1172.40$; $df = 611$; $\chi^2/df = 1.92$; RMSEA = .050; CFI = .94; TLI = .93; SRMR = .040). Results of the higher order CFA also indicate a good fit. Factor loadings ranged from .75 to .95 and the AVE for the SRA was .68 and for the NSRA was .75. Goodness of fit indices indicated an acceptable fitting model ($\chi^2 = 1428.88$; $df = 687$; $\chi^2/df = 2.08$; RMSEA = .054; CFI = .93; TLI = .92; SRMR = .052).

Discussion

Data suggested that a multi-dimensional scale of LBA can be developed. Furthermore data revealed a higher order structure of these associations existed, providing a LBAM. First, the 14 dimensions represented consumers brand perceptions of sport leagues. Second, the higher order structure of these associations conceptualised league brand associations as SRA and NSRA. SRA, represented by Competitive Balance, Logo/Colours, Management and Player Development were linked to the structure and brand management of the league. NSRA, represented by Diversion, Education, Game (Football) Representation, Nostalgia, Performance, Rivalry, Socialisation, Star Players, Specific Team and Tradition were linked to the experience that the league consumption provides to the consumers. These findings are similar to the benefits identified in Gladden and Funk's TAM (2002).

Implications

This research extends prior research and contributes to the knowledge on sport league consumers, providing a LBAM. Utilising the LBAM, league managers could measure their consumers perceptions with the league brand to provide feedback on brand management and marketing strategies and actions. Where SRA can provide feedback on management strategies of the league, NSRA can be used to market and promote certain aspects of the league, such as certain rivalries or the social aspect linked with the league. Furthermore, leagues could use the LBAM to better understand how the league could help to build team commitment.

References:

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