
SPORTS MEDIA AND FAN ENGAGEMENT; NETHERLANDS NATIONAL FOOTBALL TEAM AT BRAZIL 2014

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Sports media strategies contribute to fan engagement

Abstract:

1. AIM OF ABSTRACT

There is an increasing media focus at major sports events. Fans follow their sports team via several media channels. The aim of the abstract is to examine whether media usage and media consumption of fans intervene in the relationship between sport fans' involvement and their behavioural loyalty to a football team. In what way can sports media contribute to fan engagement?

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Media effects research shows media news is of influence on corporate reputation of organisations (Meijer & Kleinnijenhuis, 2006). Online and social media are popular forms of media those are embraced by the sports industry. The usage of new media changed the relationship between a sports team and fans (Ozsoy, 2011). Sports organisations are striving to build a good relationship with their fans. To provide a better understanding of the connection between fans and a sports team Funk and James (2001) constructed a framework: the psychological continuum model (PCM). The PCM framework states that, through the processing of internal and external inputs individuals progress upward along four psychological connection stages. Further study (Funk & James, 2006) indicates that psychological commitment and attitudinal loyalty intervene in the relationship between sport fans' involvement and their behavioural loyalty to the team. It's suggested that marketing and media strategies may be developed to strengthen psychological commitment and attitudinal loyalty in order to maximize behavioural loyalty.

The present paper improves on this literature by developing media strategies conceptualized in a model of sports media. The strategies based on the PCM-principles progress fans upward along the psychological stages of involvement

to a sports team.

3. METHODOLOGY, RESEARCH DESIGN AND DATA ANALYSIS

To examine the relationship between media consumption, media usage and sport fans' involvement and their behavioural loyalty to the Netherlands national football team three types of data were used: media data, fan data and expert data. During the FIFA World Cup 2014 in Brazil quantitative media and fan data were gathered. Based on the findings there was a semi-structured interview with expert Kees Jansma to test and construct the model of sports media. Kees Jansma was press officer of the Netherlands national football team for ten years, also during the tournament. Besides he is a media producer and a football presenter at Fox Sports Netherlands.

The media data and fan data were collected from May 30 to July 14, 2014. It was such a long period because the Netherlands national football team reached the small final (3), which strengthened the study. Media data was examined by discourse analysis. Several media channels were examined: Paper (De Telegraaf - Algemeen Dagblad), TV (Studio Brazil - VI Oranje), Online (NOS.nl - NuSport.nl) and Social Media (Facebook – Twitter). By comparing two titles per media channel insights were collected about media effects at level of title. Totally 2.979 news items were coded by using the NET method (Meijer & Kleinnijenhuis, 2006): the tone of news in this study could take one of the following values: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5. (3 neutral).

Additional to discourse analysis there was a longitudinal survey at a fan panel (949). During the tournament fans completed seven times a survey. N ranged from 771 (survey 1) to 639 in the last measurement. Questions were about media usage and media consumption during the last five days. Respondents always gave their opinion about performance, emotional appeal and leadership of the team at a 5-point Likert scale. The values were compared with used media values. Based on a set of appreciation questions fans were classified at PCM stages.

4. RESULTS AND IMPLICATIONS

Traditional media are still dominant to new media, but online and social media were growing progressive during the tournament. Media consumption increases at higher stages of engagement. Online and social media increases progressive at higher PCM stages. There's causation between tone of news, sentiment among fans and engagement. The more positive media reports, the more positive fans opinion, the higher stage of fan engagement.

A integrated media mix of characteristics, content and efforts contributes to fan engagement. At lower stages media concepts appealing to socialization and fun are important. At higher PCM stages media concepts of fan identification, self-expression and ultimately group development contribute. The model describes per PCM stage of awareness, attraction, attachment and allegiance processes of media characteristics, content and media efforts. Media processes are called mass media, socialization media, selfie media and group media. They can be used by sport organisations to achieve the appropriate stages of fan engagement.

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