

Sport fandom in Qatar: a cross-cultural analysis of team identification fan behaviors, and socialization processes

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Aim of the Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate sport fandom in Qatar. Given that examinations such as this had yet to be conducted with Qatari fans, the development of specific hypotheses was not warranted. Thus, consistent with previous efforts of this type, this research was guided by several research questions. These questions included: 1). What are sport fandom levels for the Qatari sample and how do they compare with the previous cross-culture studies? 2). What are team identification levels for the Qatari sample and how do they compare with the previous cross-culture studies. 3). What are typical fan behaviors among fans in Qatar and how do these compare with other cultures? 4). What are the key socialization agents impacting the development of fandom among individuals in Qatar? 5). What is the agent impacting the development of team identification among individuals in Qatar?

Review of Literature

Researchers have examined sport fandom in several populations such as North America (Wann, Melnick, Russel, & Peace, 2001), Norway (Melnick & Wann, 2004), Greece (Theodorakis & Wann, 2008), Australia (Melnick & Wann, 2011), and United Kingdom (Parry, Jones, & Wann, 2014). These studies revealed similarities and differences across all these diverse cultural groups of sport fans. For instance, the agent "father" had the biggest influence in all samples, when asked about the reasons of becoming a fan. Another consistent result across each sample was the positive relationship between team identification and sport fan behaviors such as attendance at events and frequency of conversing about sport with others. Large cross-cultural differences were also noted in frequencies of sport fan behaviors. For instance, participants comprising the British sample were much more likely to discuss sport daily than were persons from the other cultures mentioned above.

Methods

The sampling frame was comprised by 259 university students from Qatar. An electronic questionnaire was sent to participants with an embedded link. To facilitate cross-cultural comparisons, the same questionnaire used by Melnick and Wann (2004), Theodorakis et al. (2006), and Parry et al. (2014) was utilized in this study. The questionnaire comprised five sections. Apart from the first section, which contained demographic information, the next sections included the Sport Spectator Identification Scale (Wann & Branscombe, 1993), the Sport Fandom Questionnaire (Wann, 2002), a scale with five typical sport fans' behaviors, and a measure for detecting sport fans' socialization agents (Wann et al, 2001). To be noted that all cross-cultural comparisons were made with existed data.

Results and Discussion

Initially, a Confirmatory Factor Analysis assessed the factorial validity of the Arabic version of the SSIS and SFQ using the Mplus 7.3 software. In terms of reliability, Cronbach's alpha values were satisfactory for both scales. The results of this study revealed similarities and differences with findings from other different cultures. With respect to identification with the role of sport fan, male fans in Qatar had lower levels compared to British, Greek, and Australian fans, and similar levels to the Norwegian ones. In the same line, female fans in Qatar exhibited lower levels of identification with the role of sport fan compared to all other samples, with an exception of the Greek female fans. Likewise, team identification levels of females in the current sample were higher only to their Greek and Norwegian counterparts. On the other hand, male fans in Qatar were considered as high identifiers. Their levels of team identification were lower only to British male fans. Additionally, the results of this study reconfirmed previous findings from different cultures (Melnick & Wann, 2004, 2011; Theodorakis & Wann, 2008; Parry et al., 2014; Wann et al., 2001) which showed that males were identified more with a team and with the role of being a sport fan, than females. Concerning the impact of four socialization agents on fandom (i.e., parents, friends/peers, school, and community), the agent "friends/peers" was ranked in the first place in all but two samples (British and Norwegian sport fans ranked this factor in the second place). Furthermore, in line with all other samples, male respondents exhibited higher levels in all sport consumption activities (i.e., watching sports on television) than females. Concluding, despite the fact that Qatar is now considered a major hub for sport events very little is known regarding sport spectatorship in this country. The results of this study revealed a number of interesting findings including gender differences on team identification and sport fandom, and the influence of team-related factors for selecting a sport team. They will also help sport managers and researchers to further understand the behavior of sport fans globally.

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