

EXTREME SPORTS: WHAT IS THE ATTRACTION? EXPLORATING THE SPECTATOR MARKET FOR THE “EIGHT-SECOND” SPORT–PROFESSIONAL BULL RIDING

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Context

“Extreme” sports are an emerging and fast growing industry within the larger sport business industry. Indeed, some extreme sports are among the fastest growing in relation to participation (Howard and Crompton, 2004). Some are becoming mainstream, and some that now have a professional circuit (league, or association) are drawing sizable numbers of spectators. Among these sports is an individual rodeo event – bull riding – and event that lasts merely 8 seconds!

Started in 1992 by 20 bull riders who believed that the single rodeo event could be a popular event and a stand-alone sport (www.pbrnow.com), the sport has grown and flourished every year. Today, the circuit is a 29-city tour with \$10 million (USD) at stake and boasts to have an estimated 100 million viewers watching televised PBR events on NBC Sports and the Outdoor Life Network (OLN). Billed as “The Toughest Sport on Dirt,” what attracts consumers to an eight-second sport? This was the aim of this study, to examine what factors affect the consumer’s attendance at a PBR event.

Method

Four categories of variables that affect decision-making in attending identified in prior research were examined: (a) game attractiveness; (b) economic factors; (c) socio-demographic factors; and (d) audience preferences (Green, 1995; Lu, 2002; Lu, Pitts, & Ayers, 2004). The survey method was used and the questionnaire was developed based on prior research. One PBA event was identified due to its close proximity to the researchers. Spectators at this event were surveyed using a ‘mall-approach’ method.

Results showed that the average spectator was male (51.1%), white, 26 years of age, single (56%), with either a high school (37%) or college (39%) education. This person had not attended this event before (32%), but planned to attend this event again (84%). In findings relating to spending, spectators attended this event with friends (40%) and spent an average of \$115 (USD).

In findings relating to factors that affected attendance, study participants reported the most influential factors were (ranked out of 5): the overall atmosphere of the event (3.80), favorite rider’s chance to make it to the world finals (3.77), a chance to see a record-breaking performance by a rider (3.77), a chance to see favorite rider perform (3.72), and to entertain family (3.70). The least influential factors were: the price of a ticket (3.07), special promotion (3.20), and media/advertising of the event (3.40).

Conclusions

Based on the findings, it can be concluded that the average spectator of professional Bull Riding is a young white male who is highly interested in the sport and doesn’t mind the price of the ticket to see it. Sport marketing professionals and other stakeholders in the extreme sport industry and specifically those in bull riding would most likely be happy with this information. (Additional study results and discussion will be presented.)

In addition, faculty and students of sport management can benefit from research into non-traditional sports, especially those in which there appear to be a growing job market. Sport management faculty can be relating this information in the classroom and students can learn about one more sport in the vast sport business industry.

Authors' Notes

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