Predicting fans' favourability toward the sponsor: The role of team identification

Contact details

Name author(s): Achilleas Barlas (1), Athanasios Koustelios (2), Nicholaos Theodorakis (3) & Katerina Sidorkina (4)
Institution(s) or organisation(s): University of Thessaly, Department of Physical Education and Sport Science (1, 2, 4); Aristotle University, Department of Physical Education and Sport Science (3)
City and country: Trikala, Greece (1, 2, 4); Serres, Greece (3)
Email address for correspondence: abarlas@pe.uth.gr

Aim of paper and research questions

In contrast to other behavioural variables the construct of favourability toward the sponsor has received limited attention in sport sponsorship research. Based on the above, the purpose of this study was to examine the role of team identification in predicting the favourability toward the sponsor in the context of professional sports in Greece.

Literature review

With the exception of this year's economic recession, investment in sport sponsorship contracts has been increased the last ten years worldwide (Stotlar, 2004). As a result a great number of researchers attempted to identify factors that influence various sponsorship outcomes, such as purchase intentions, sponsor's image, and favourability of the sponsor (Alexandris, Tsaousi & James, 2008; Pope & Voges, 1999). The most common ones have been event attachment, sport involvement, team identification, and attitudes toward sponsorship (Cornwell & Maignan, 1998; Crompton, 2004; Harvery, 2001; Meenaghan, 2001; Pope & Voges, 1999). The concept of team identification has been widely used as a critical variable for predicting sport fans' various future behaviours, such as repurchase intentions, loyalty, attendance, and willingness to buy sponsor's products (Gwinner & Swanson, 2003; Pease & Zhang, 2001; Theodorakis, Koustelios, Robinson & Barlas, in press; Wann, Bayens & Driver, 2004). More specifically, researchers from the sponsorship domain found that team identification had a positive direct effect on outcomes such as sponsor recognition, sponsor patronage, and satisfaction with sponsors (Gwinner & Swanson, 2003; Madrigal, 2001).

Research design and data analysis

200 spectators who attended two basketball games on the top professional level in Greece participated in the study. Their mean age was 30, 9 years (SD = 10, 4). Team identification was measured by using the Greek version of the Team Identification Scale -TIS (Dimmock, Grove & Eklund, 2005). The instrument comprised three dimensions with three items each: Cognitive/ affective (e.g. I think of the [team's name] as part of who I am), Personal evaluative (e.g. The [team name] successes are my successes), and Perceived-other evaluative (e.g. Overall the [team name] is considered good by others). To measure favourability toward the sponsor, a three item scale adapted from Speed and Thompson (2000) was used.

Results

Descriptive statistics, alpha values, and Pearson Correlation coefficients are presented on Table 1. To predict fans' favourability toward the sponsor a regression analysis was conducted. Results indicated that team identification predicted 17% of fans' favourability toward the sponsor ($R=.41$, $F_{(3,196)} = 13. 2$, $p<.001$). The coefficients suggested that Cognitive/affective had

the strongest influence on fans' favourability toward the sponsor (b=.34, t=4.4), following by Perceived-other evaluative (b=.19, t=2.2).

	Variables	M	SD	1	2	r 3	α
1	Favourability toward the sponsor	4.6	1.5				.88
2	Cognitive/affective	4.7	1.4	.38*			.79
3	Personal evaluative	5.9	1.1	.18	.48*		.85
4	Perceived-other evaluative	5.2	1.2	.29*	.48*	.60*	.73

Table 1: Mean, standard deviation, alpha values, and pearson correlation coefficient for team identification and favourability toward the sponsor.

Table notes:
*p<.001

Discussion and conclusion

Results of previous studies indicated that team identification is a major predictor of various sponsorship outcomes (Gwinner & Swanson, 2003; Madrigal, 2001). The results of the present study are consistent with these findings. More specifically, two team identification facets "Cognitive/affective" and "Perceived-other evaluative" found to exert a significant influence on fans' favourability toward the sponsor. However the results should not be overestimated due to the small sample size. Furthermore it should be noticed that team identification plays the role of "belief" in the beliefs–attitude–intentions hierarchy (Ajzen, 1988). It appears that people's intentions toward a corporate sponsor are predicted by an attitude toward that behaviour, which is, in turn, influenced by beliefs. Contrary to the above, the present study examined the direct effect of Team identification in predicting favorable sponsorship reactions, without addressing the attitudes mediation role. The above process is consistent with previous findings (Madrigal, 2001) where is mentioned that team identification's effect on purchase intentions is not wholly mediating by an attitude toward that behavior. Considering the above findings to enhance favourability toward their sponsors, team managers should develop strategies so to promote knowledge, emotional significance, and value of group membership among fans.

References

Ajzen, I. (1988). *Attitudes, Personality and Behavior*. Chicago: Dorsey Press.

Alexandris, K., Tsaousi, E., & James, J. (2007). Predicting Sponsorship Outcomes from Attitudinal Constructs: The Case of a Professional Basketball Event. *Sport Marketing Quarterly*, *16*, 130-139.

Cornwell, B., & Maignan, I. (1998). An international review of sponsorship research. *Journal of Advertising*, *27*, 1-21.

Crompton, J. (2004). Conceptualization and alternate operationalizations of the measurement of sponsorship effectiveness in sport. *Leisure Studies*, *3*, 267-281.

Fisher, R.J., & Wakefield, K. (1998). Factors leading to group identification: A field study of winners and losers. *Psychology & Marketing*, *15*, 23-40.

Gwinner, K., & Swanson, S. (2003). A model of fan identification: Antecedents and sponsorship outcomes. *Journal of Services Marketing*, *17*, 275-294.

Harvery, B. (2001). Measuring the effects of sponsorships. *Journal of Advertising Research*, *1*, 59-64.

Lee, M., Sandler, D., & Shani, D. (1997). Attitudinal constructs towards sponsorship: Scale development using three global events. *International Marketing Review*, *14(3)*, 159-169.

Madrigal, R. (2001). Social identity effects in a belief-attitude-intentions hierarchy: Implications for corporate sponsorship. *Psychology and Marketing*, *18*, 145-165.

Meenaghan, T. (2001). Understanding sponsorship effects. *Psychology and Marketing*, *18(2)*, 95-122.

Pease, D.G., & Zhang, J.J. (2001). Socio-motivational factors affecting spectator attendance at professional basketball games. *International Journal of Sport Management*, *2(1)*, 31-59.

Pope, N., & Voges, K. (1999). Sponsorship and image: A replication and extension. *Journal of Marketing Communication*, *5*, 17-28.

Speed, R., & Thomson, P. (2000). Determinants of sport sponsorship effects. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, *28*, 226-238.

Stotlar, D. (2004). Sponsorship evaluation: Moving from theory to practice. *Sport Marketing Quarterly*, *13*, 61-64.

Theodorakis, N., Koustelios, A., Robinson, L., & Barlas, A. (in press). Moderating Role of Team Identification on the Relationship between Service Quality and Repurchase Intentions among Spectators of Professional Sports. *Managing Service Quality*, *19(4)*.

Wann, D.L., Bayens, C., & Driver, A. (2004). Likelihood of attending a sporting event as a function of ticket scarcity and team identification. *Sport Marketing Quarterly*, *13(4)*, 209-215.

Wann, D. L., & Branscombe, N.R. (1993). Sports fans: Measuring degree of identification with their team. *Journal of Sport Psychology*, *24*, 1-17.