

Sport business management cultures: The role and revolution of lesbian sports consumers as fans and participants – an analysis of the significance of the lesbian sports consumer to the sport business world

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Aim of paper

Prior research has shown that there is a growing and viable lesbian sports consumer market in both the participant sports and spectator sports segments of the sport business industry (Lilienthal & Pitts, 2006; 2009; Pitts & Ayers, 2001; Pitts, 1997; 1998; 1999; 2002; 2003; 2004). In this presentation, we bring together the previous research findings and current literature and demographical information to present an analysis of the lesbian sports consumer. An additional intent of the presentation is to provide suggested marketing and promotion activity and strategy suggestions that can be used by the sports marketing manager for best practices. Thus, with the information presented, sport management professionals will be equipped with knowledge that can be applied for managing international events, marketing campaigns, developing sponsorship strategies, and increasing consumer bases.

Organisational/managerial context

Sports would not exist without people. People must play a sport in order for it to exist; people must watch sports so that it's production company can stay in business. Therefore, for the sports marketing manager, the promotion and sales of sports products should be easy: market to all people. However, people come in many shapes, sizes, and colors, and have a plethora of personal interests, values, and needs. This diversity of human physical and psychological characteristics makes the marketing manager's job very demanding. The sport marketing manager and staff must be educated in how to study people in order to know and understand the depth and breadth of their diversity and culture. This crucial knowledge and understanding will ensure the development of successful marketing and promotional strategies that will both meet the desires and needs of each consumer group and keep the sport company in business.

Organisational/managerial practice/issues

There has been some interest in the study of these many different populations in the sport management literature. A review of the current research, however, reveals that the current amount of research in the literature is significantly lower than needed. Claussen, Ko, and Rinehart (2008) specifically note that there are only a few journal articles about diverse populations and that these include three populations: African Americans, Hispanics, and Asians. Although Claussen et al. overlooked the journal articles involving lesbian and gay people in sport, Pitts (1997; 1998; 2004) and Lilienthal and Pitts (2006; 2009) reported that the focus of

research for this population is significantly smaller than research on other populations and is in critical need of attention. In the United States, for example, the gay and lesbian population is estimated at 10% while the Asian, Hispanic, and African American population are estimated at 4.4%, 14.8%, and 13.4% respectively.

Implications for sport and sport management

This is not to suggest that marketing managers in the sport business industry do not market to some of these minority populations. Sports marketing managers make promotional efforts aimed at some populations. It is, however, noticeable that promotional efforts to the gay and lesbian population is markedly less than efforts to all other populations. In fact, in many segments of the sport business industry there are absolutely no efforts to market to the lesbian and gay population; and in other segments, there are actually efforts to cover-up the lesbian and/or gay fans. It is perplexing in today's world that a most viable market would receive such little attention given that many sport businesses are in need of expanding their marketing efforts to stay in business. Therefore, it is the purpose of this study to present an overview of the lesbian sports consumer market with a specific emphasis on sport marketing efforts that can be successful.

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