a conceptual approach to understanding of sports fans' behaviour

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For organizations in the multibillion dollar sport industry, spectators and fans' behaviors and their motivation about sport is critical to team support, attendance at games and, ultimately, future revenues. Also, the task facing sport marketer and managers, both now and in the future, is how to maintain interest in, and attendance at sporting events. At this point, it can be said that understanding of sports fan's behavior and motivation is critical issue for sport marketer and managers. This study aimed to develop a conceptual structure about sports fans' behavior and their motivation.

Sports Fan Behavior and Motivation

Sports fan behavior and motivation has become a major attraction within sport sciences. Hence, studies of the motivation behind participation in sport activities are of increasing interest to both sport professionals and members of the industries who are interested in sport and leisure planning and marketing development (Cohen and Avrahami, 2005). Sports fan behavior can be explained by identification process. Certainly, some researches have found that degree of team identification is a major predictor of a variety of spectator behaviors (Wann and Dolan, 1994). At this juncture, it can be said that identification process effect sports spectator and/or sports fan behavior. Identification can be explained through social identity theory. Social identity theory argues that an individual's self-concept is comprised of a personal identity which includes specific attributes, such as ability and interests, and a social identity which includes various social categories, such as fan, parent, and worker (Donavan et al., 2005). Social identity theory is applicable for understanding fan behavior for numerous reasons: fan behavior involves interpersonal and group relationships, it is socially observable, it often revolves around the distinctions that exist between opposing groups, and it is heavily affected by the level of identification with a team. An individual need not interact directly with other group members for identification to occur; he or she must only perceive oneness with the group (Ashforth and Mael, 1999). Therefore, a given social identity, or an individual's knowledge that he or she is a member of a particular social group (like as member of fan group) becomes appealing to an individual when identification with that group will lead to self-enhancement or positive self identity. In the light of this discussion it can be said that being a sport fan is influenced from some factors. These factors are affected sport fan level and sport fan behavior.

Conclusion

Sports fan behavior is changed according to fan level and motivation factors. But how can we define sports fan motivation and how can these motivation factors affect sport fan attitudes and behaviors?

It can be said that there are some studies about fan motivation in sport literature. Earlier and more recent investigators found that spectators tend to display self-serving attributional patterns by using internal attributions to explain their teams' (and players') successes and external attributions to account for their teams' and players' failures (Wann and Schrader, 2000). Besides, some researches found that there is relation between sport spectating and entertainment (Arnould and Price, 1993). Further researches on fan motivation found that many factors are effected fan motivation. These researches are suggested that sport fans are often motivated by one or more of the following eight factors: eustress, self-esteem, escape, entertainment, economic, aesthetics, group affiliation, and family needs (Bilyeu and Wann, 2002; Wann et all., 1999). In light of the foregoing, sport fan motivation refers to the reasons that drive individuals to support sport teams, be loyal to them, buy team/sport related products, watch and attend sporting events.

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