

DEVELOPMENT OF A CONCEPTUAL TEAM BRAND EQUITY MODEL FOR THE YOUTH CONSUMER

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Abstract

Introduction

As sport teams continue to examine ways to extend their brand, impact revenue and create loyalty it is increasingly important to understand the power of their brand. In particular, teams must have knowledge of their overall brand equity, what influences this equity, and the potential outcomes associated with creating positive brand equity. While this has been studied considerably in general business and marketing literature, it is not until recently that this has received some attention in sport literature. In particular, advances have been made in the study of the creation of brand equity in team sport. However, one area which has not been considered is how brand equity may differ among different segments of consumers.

Literature Review

A variety of conceptualizations of brand equity exist outside of sport with the two most prominent attributed to Aaker (1996) and Keller (1993). While the models vary, both indicate that brand awareness and brand associations will impact brand equity. Within sport there are also a handful of models with the most commonly examined being the team based brand equity model developed by Ross (2006). This model suggests that there are a variety of antecedents (e.g., organization, market and experience induced) which impact brand equity. In turn, the creation of equity will have a variety of consequences including the ability of the team to create loyalty, gain media exposure, and generate revenue. However, the model does not indicate how it can be applied with different target segments.

One such segment of the market which is important for teams to reach is the youth segment. The youth consumer continues to grow in terms of their knowledge of products, brands and decision making strategies (Roedder-John, 1999). Research has indicated that the most important development of consumer knowledge and skills occurs between the ages of 7 and 11 (Roedder-John). It is at this point that children begin to develop loyalty towards brands

and have a more complex understanding of advertising and branding. However, it has also been found that in some instances children as young as five years of age may develop loyalties towards sport teams (James, 2001). As such, it is important to understand what may impact the brand equity of youth consumers as they continue to develop more sophisticated consumer skills.

Aim of Abstract

While Ross' (2006) team brand equity model provides a solid foundation for the study of brand equity in sport, more study on how strong brands are created for professional sport teams is needed. In addition, it is argued here that a universal model of brand equity may not be sufficient to fully understand team brand equity. In particular, different demographics or target markets may have varying antecedents which could impact team brand equity. In addition, the outcomes associated with the development of positive brand equity may be considerably different for different groups of consumers. One such group is the youth consumer. As such, a model is proposed which outlines various antecedents of brand equity and potential outcomes of building positive brand equity with this segment.

Model Development

Utilizing an extensive review of literature on consumer socialization of children and Ross' (2006) team brand equity model, a model which conceptualizes the antecedents of team brand equity for the youth consumer was developed. The antecedents which could impact brand equity among this segment are grouped into three categories (Family/Peer Groups, Cultural, and Market). The family/peer group category includes parents, other family members, friends/peers and social media connections. Cultural influences include various social norms which exist. Finally, the market related category includes items such as media coverage, team success and individual players/heroes. These categories will all combine to impact team brand equity (i.e., awareness and associations). The model also includes positive outcomes specific to the youth sport consumer that may be realized with the creation of positive brand equity including the development of brand loyalty, ability to create youth fan clubs and other youth focused marketing activities and merchandising opportunities.

Discussion

The proposed conceptual model provides the first known attempt to understand what may influence team brand equity for youth consumers. It is different from previous models in that it utilizes antecedents for a very specific target market, as well as unique outcomes associated with this market. This model will allow for future research and examination into the study of brand equity for youth consumers. While grounded in theory, future examination should focus on empirically testing the models assumptions in order to further develop the model as needed.

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