

AN INVESTIGATION OF THE CHARACTERISTICS OF GREEK SPORT FANS. SOME MARKETING IMPLICATIONS

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Keywords

tribal marketing, brand loyalty, brand equity, fan identification

Purpose

The present study investigates the level of tribalism among sports fans who support professional teams in Greece, by examining their degree of brand loyalty as well as the brand equity of the clubs they follow. The study also investigates the way and the extent to which tribal behavior affects marketing decisions of the clubs' administrations.

Review of literature

Tribalism is a major characteristic of sport consumerism. It appears though that sport marketing research is scant, in terms of addressing this issue and furthermore measuring the phenomenon at hand (Meir, 2009). The tribal marketing approach argues that market segmentation should be performed according to consumers' habits (Cova & Cova, 2002; Rein, 2006). People in sport tribes come together because of a shared passion and a sense of belonging. For that reason every tribe develops a special connection with a sport brand and its related products or services (Dionisio et al., 2008). Tribal customers do not function based on their consumption needs, but more so with respect to their identification needs (Christensen et al., 2005). Consequently, The hypotheses of this study were generated according to the abovementioned statements.

Methodology

The instrument used in this study was initially developed by Meir (2009). Content validity was achieved by the examination of the instrument by a panel of experts and the administration of a double blind translation between English and Greek. The instrument achieved a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of reliability of $\alpha = 0,865$ ($N=50$). Also, a Kaiser Meyer Olkin measure of sampling adequacy was also performed. The questionnaire was administered online to a total of 525 fans via selected club social media groups, sporting news web sites and forums. Data analysis was performed using SPSS 20 frequencies crosstabulations, Anova and Factor Analysis.

Results

Results indicate that the phenomenon of tribalism among Greek fans is prevalent and that there are specific characteristics that can be appointed to each tribe. Fans, who believe that supporting their club is important, (due to special values that derive from the club's brand equity and not because of common demographic criteria), tend to identify themselves and develop powerful bonds with their club. Loyal fans believe that by buying and wearing their club's licensed apparel, directly become members of the club's tribe and feel more attached to the club's tribal community.

Discussion – implications

What is conveyed is that the present study represents a useful tool for shaping the profile of Greek "sports tribes". It also suggests that clubs should depart from the traditional criteria of segmenting their target markets and start using tribal characteristics in terms of approaching their fans. The tribal marketing approach, suggests that sports fans with great differences in terms of their demographic background (geographic, economic, educational, cultural criteria), can achieve the same levels of devotion, faith and identification with their club, and express similar consumer behavior, when it comes to the club's offered products or services. The findings are in agreement with Cova & Cova (2001), who suggest that organizations which want to increase the sales of their products or services need to match their attributes with select characteristics of certain tribes. Key words: tribal marketing, brand loyalty, brand equity, fan identification.

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