PERCEIVED FOOTBALL IMAGE PROFILE: CASE UEFA EURO 2012™

Niklas Kuosmanen, Osmo Laitila
HAAGA-HELIA University of Applied Sciences
niklas.kuosmanen@haaga-helia.fi

Aim of the study

The aim of this study is to identify what kind of value structures football fans have and what is the spectator perceived image profile of football. Additionally, the study examines the football fans' value profile and identifies the connections between the fan value profile and the football image profile. This study reviews the relations of the football image profile elements in the spectators' minds and connects them through value theory developed by Shalom Schwartz.

The primary idea was to recognize the factors affecting football brand image in order to create a foundation for understanding and building a football brand. The results provide information for football organizations to develop a football brand and value based partnerships along with creating new marketing strategies with football sponsors.

Theoretical background

The theoretical framework of the study is based on Shalom Schwartz's (n.d.) theory of universally recognized values. Bardi, Calogero and Mullen (2008) connect this theory with consumer behavior which as a rule is guided by values. Also as Feather (1995) poses, people's values, as well as their needs, encourage the intrinsic attractiveness or averseness on potential actions. However, people who value a goal do not necessarily exhibit the corresponding trait; nor do those who exhibit a trait necessarily value the corresponding goal (Schwartz n.d.). Based on Schwartz's value theory, ten basic motivationally distinct values can be found. Each of these can be characterized by describing its central motivational goal: Self-Direction, Stimulation, Hedonism, Achievement, Power, Security, Conformity, Tradition, Benevolence and Universalism. All of the measured attributes in the football image profile questionnaire were extracted from the value theory representing those values.

Methodology

The data was collected during UEFA EURO 2012 football championships in Poland. The interviews were conducted in the public viewing zone area in Gdansk, Gdansk city center and Sopot city area. Field researchers selected randomly every 10th person to participate and in case the respondent refused from answering, field researchers asked the next person to answer. The minimum criteria for participation was that the respondent was at least 18 years old, he or she was able to communicate in English and that the respondent was not under intoxication. (Pihlainen 2010.)

The respondents were asked to fill in a questionnaire which contained 39 attributes. The respondents connected these attributes to football by using Osgood's (1965) 7-portrait semantic differential scale. The second part consisted of 10 statements of which the respondents evaluated how well the statements described oneself on a 6-portrait scale. The overall amount of the responses was 344, of which 87% (N=290) were male and 13% (N=45) were female.

Results, implications and discussion

The results indicate that the most important brand attributes that the respondents attach to football were international, fun, exciting, traditional, ambitious, and successful. The attributes least related to football turned out to be boring, weak, routine, formal, inefficient, and adult. Five most significant differences between male and female respondents were that men considered attributes like emphatic, individual, tempting, exciting, and safe more related to football than female respondents. Moreover, female respondents connected features like trendy, expensive, and nature-protective to be stronger than male respondents. In different age groups there were also some differences found in the perception of football image. The biggest attribute perception differences between age groups were related to attributes like loyal, individual and obedient, expensive, tempting, and emphatic.

The football fan value profile results show that spectators value categories like hedonism, benevolence, and security. According to Schwartz's (n.d.) interpretation, the respondents' value enjoyment in life and they want to help the people who are close to them. Furthermore, the safety and stability in their life is very important. The value sections less important for the interviewees were conformity and power. These value groups signify that they don't think people should do what they are told and that they are only little interested in being in charge and tell others what to do. The results indicate that older respondents valuate higher aspects related to conformity and security. Younger participants are therefore more intrigued by the value category that is affiliated with achievements.

The results show that football fans appreciate the devotedness in football (tradition), well organized facilities where people enjoy themselves (stimulation) and can meet other fans (universalism). Therefore, fans' perceptions of football differ from their values because football is considered to promote universalism, stimulation, tradition, and achievement partitions.

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