

The Role Of Sport Team Identification And Basking In Reflected Glory In The Development Of Sport Social Capital Among Sport Fans

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Aims of the abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine the factors that influence the development of social capital among sport fans. Specifically, it was investigated the effect of team identification and Basking in Reflected Glory (BIRG) on the social connections that are gained and sustained through one's association with a sport team.

Review of literature

Griffith and Harvey (2004, p. 249) defined "customer social capital as an asset that an organization has developed and maintains with its customers that can be employed to facilitate action and achieve/sustain a competitive advantage." As Lin (1999) put it forward, social capital is generated by social connections. Sport team identification has found to play a significant role in the development of social connections. As Wann, Waddill, Polk, and Weaver (2011) reported, highly identified sport fans are willing to establish and maintain team-related social connections with others. However, besides team identification, another potential cause of forming and maintaining social relations is the BIRGing phenomenon; the tendency of sport fans to publicly announce their team support has shown to be related with the creation of social connections; either face-to-face or online with other fans (Yoshida, Gordon, Nakazawa, & Biscaia, 2014). From the above, it was also inferred that BIRGing will positively influence the generation and maintenance of social connections among sport fans.

Methods

343 sport fans participated in an unrestricted self-selected internet-based survey (Fricker, 2008). Participants completed the Sport Spectator Identification Scale (SSIS-Wann & Branscombe, 1993), the BIRGing subscale from the self-esteem maintenance scale (Trail, Fink, & Anderson, 2003), and the social connections subscale from the sport fandom inventory (Wann et al., 2011).

Results and discussion

The psychometric properties of all scales were examined using a confirmatory factor analysis with EQS 6.1. The fit of the measurement model was good: $\chi^2 = 285.07$, $df = 101$, $CFI = .95$, $SRMR = .05$, $RMSEA = .07$. With the exception of two SSIS items, all factor loadings were above .70 and the average variance extracted values were above .50, providing evidence of convergent validity. The AVE value for each latent construct was also greater than the squared correlations between each of the constructs, indicating discriminant validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Internal consistency reliabilities were also satisfactory for all scales ranging from .90 to .94. It was hypothesized that both team identification and BIRGing will positively influence social connections, while team identification will also have an effect on BIRGing. Goodness of fit criteria indicated an acceptable fit between the data and the model: $\chi^2 = 286.07$, $df = 57$, $CFI = .95$, $SRMR = .05$, $RMSEA = .07$. Findings indicated that both team identification ($b = .50$, $p < .01$) and BIRGing ($b = .11$, $p < .01$) had an effect on social connections, explaining 33% of its variance. The path from team identification to BIRGing was also significant ($b = .52$, $p < .01$), explaining 27% of its variance.

The building of social connections among sport fans, and therefore sport social capital, creates a competitive advantage for the organizations which ultimately facilitates its economic growth (Griffith & Harvey, 2004). Through offline and online networks, such as supporters clubs or a team's official facebook pages, sport club managers can generate and maintain social capital via team identification and BIRGing. For instance, fans who tend to create or sustain social connections through team identification may have an increased need for affiliation. Sport club managers can emphasize the opportunities for social interactions with other fans through team supporting behaviors (i.e., attendance) in their advertising campaigns on the team's multiple networks. Furthermore, BIRGing can be reinforced by communicating the team's victories and historical moments of the team, among others.

References

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