

Why Do People with Low Team Identification Watch Sports?

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Previous research has examined the relationship between the motives of sport spectators and team identification (e.g., Funk & James, 2004; Gau, Gailliot, & Brady, 2007; Trail, Fink, & Anderson, 2003; Trail, Robinson, Dick, & Gillentine, 2003). Fink, Trail, and Anderson (2002) and Hsu (2003) have found significant correlations between team identification and the sports fan motivation subscales. However, these previous works did not answer whether people with different levels of team identification tend to be driven by different motives to watch sports. The current research attempts to provide an answer. Team identification is defined as 'the personal commitment and emotional involvement customers have with a sport [team]' (Sutton, McDonald, Milne, & Cimperman, 1997, p. 15). Identifying with a group enhances a person's collective self-esteem. Hence, it was hypothesized that a higher percentage of people in the high-team-identification group than in the low-team-identification group were primarily motivated by Self-esteem to watch sports (hypothesis 1). By contrast, it was hypothesized that a higher percentage of people in the low-team-identification group than in the high-team-identification group were primarily motivated by Sociability (hypothesis 2) and Entertainment (hypothesis 3) to watch sports.

Questionnaires were distributed, which included: 1. A measure of level of team identification (7-point Likert scales) (c.f. James & Ross, 2002; Wann & Branscombe, 1993), 2. Measures of the three motives for spectator sports (7-point Likert scales) (c.f. James & Ross, 2004; Milne & McDonald, 1999; Trail & James, 2001; Wann, 1995), 3. The major ONE motive that has the strongest influence on watching sports. Participants were recruited in the southeast of the US (n=220) and in the middle of Taiwan (n=399). The sample consisted of 340 females (56%) and 271 males (44%). The majority of participants (n=404, 65%) were between 18 and 25 years old. The subjects had a mean age of 24.98 years (SD = 7.223). Eighty-nine percent of participants (n=552) had at least a college education. The reliability of the scale of team identification was 0.907; the reliabilities of the three subscales of motives were between 0.807 and 0.874.

Participants were divided into two groups by using cluster analysis: the high-team-identification group (n=442) with a mean of 6.05 (SD=1.12) and the low-team-identification group (n=167) with a mean of 3.07 (SD =1.44) (missing data=10). As in previous studies (e.g., Fink, Trail, & Anderson, 2002; Hsu, 2003), the results confirmed that individuals characterized by a high level of team identification (Entertainment: M=5.62, SD=1.18; Sociability: M=5.00, SD=1.49; Self-esteem: M=5.37, SD=1.23) were more strongly motivated to watch sports than those characterized by a low level of team identification (Entertainment: M=3.45, SD=1.53; Sociability: M=3.81, SD=1.71; Self-esteem: M=3.30, SD=1.48).

Further, the hypotheses 1 and 2 were supported. A higher percentage of people from the high-team-identification group (35%, 138 out of 397) than the percentage of people from the low-team-identification group (8%, 9 out of 120) chose Self-esteem as the major motive for watching sports. The Chi Square analysis showed that the comparison between the low and high groups was significant (Chi square (1, N=517) = 33.653, $p < .001$). Conversely, a higher percentage of people from the low-team-identification group (63%, 75 out of 120) than the percentage of people from the high-team-identification group (39%, 153 out of 397) were primarily motivated by Sociability. The Chi Square test showed that the comparison between the low and high groups was significant (Chi square (1, N=517) = 21.460, $p < .001$). However, the hypothesis 3 was not supported. The percentages of people who chose Entertainment as the major motive in the high-team-identification group (27%, 106 out of 397) and in the low-team-identification group (30%, 36 out of 120) were similar. The Chi Square test showed that the comparison between the low and high groups was not significant (Chi square (1, N=517) = 0.504, $p = .478$).

Compared to people with high team identification, people characterized with a low level of team identification are more likely driven by the motive of Sociability than Self-esteem. Based on the results, sport managers may use Sociability as a theme in marketing activities to attract people with a low level of team identification and use Self-esteem as a theme to attract people with a high level of team identification. Future research is required to examine whether people would satisfy social needs and enjoy entertainment through spectator sports, or the motives of sociability and entertainment for spectator sports are only situational.