Cultural Variations in the Perception of the Value of Sports Teams to a Community

Bernard Fisher, Neumann College
Andrea Pent, Neumann College

Session 34: Socio-Cultural Presentation (25-minute) Saturday, June 2, 2007 4:30 PM - 4:55 PM

A dearth of literature emerged from the sports facilities building boom of the 1990's debating validity of the tangible and intangible value of sports teams to a community (Austrian & Rosentraub, 2002; Crompton, 2004; Ingham & McDonald, 2003; Smith & Ingham, 2003). Most of these studies denounce the real economic impact of sports facilities to a community which justify the investments that cities make to attracting and retaining these high profile tenants. The argument has been made that, in terms of real economic impact, other businesses would create significantly more economic activity than the presence of professional sports.

As a result of this increased general public knowledge regarding the overstating of the economic impact of sport teams, researchers have begun to examine the more intangible benefits of sports teams to their communities which motivate residents to continue to support professional sports through the subsidization of their venues (Crompton, 2004). Crompton (2004) argued that alternate sources of benefits were derived from community visibility, enhanced community image, stimulation of other development, and psychic income. Crompton (2004) argues that psychic income, which is an estimate of the internal benefits from derived from sports, may be the best indicator to justify continued spending for professional sports facilities. Zang, Pease, and Hui (1996) identified eight value dimensions of sport to the community. These dimensions included community solidarity, public behavior, pastime ecstasy, excellence pursuit, health awareness, individual quality, and business opportunity. These dimensions cross over some of the psychic dimensions that are proposed by Crompton (2004) and social aspects of sport such as fair play, work ethic, and reward systems that are inherent in sport (Long, Pantaleon, Bruant, & d’Arripe-Longeuville, 2006) and are also likely to exhibit variations in attitudes among generations.

This study sought to examine the perceptions of the value of both college and professional sports teams to the community using the dimensions proposed by Zang, et. al (1996). Participants in the study (N=56) were residents in the Philadelphia market area where professional sports are predominant over college sports. Participants were asked to rank the value of their favorite professional and college sports teams with regard to the eight value dimensions using a Likert Type scale from 1-5. Preliminary analysis of the data using the Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test revealed significant differences on value dimensions between college and professional sports and ANOVA revealed differences among generations (young, middle age, mature adults) with respect to the value of sports teams to the community. Researchers will present results from quantitative responses and summarize comments with respect to each value dimension.

The findings of this study are important to sports marketers interested in designing advertising and promotions that appeal to specific target markets. Similarly, this research could be of value to politicians who devise public relations campaigns in the process of fulfilling agendas which may include new sports facilities. Further, the results of this study will contribute to the growing body of literature that examines the intangible benefits of sports teams to the community.