Examination of Consumer Motivation in Two Activities: Participant Sport and Spectator Sport

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There are two major consumption activities in sport: participating in sport and watching sport, producing two types of consumer groups (Shamir & Ruskin, 1984). Knowing similarities and differences between consumers of the two activities can be advantageous for sport marketers in today's highly competitive market, as it may allow some sport organizations to increase their consumer base beyond their traditional consumers. Although participants and spectators are consumers of different activities, both are consumers of sport, implying potential connections between them. Thus, identifying similarities and differences would help sport marketers determine how spectator sports can market to sport participants, and likewise how participant sports can market to spectators.

For example, Major League Soccer (MLS) is one entity that has been attempting to increase their spectator base by marketing to soccer participants. Soccer has become one of the most popular sports to play in the US, but few of those soccer participants turn into soccer spectators (Brown, 2007). To address this issue, MLS has sponsored many grassroots tournaments throughout the US, not to make profit, but to create interest toward the league among soccer participants (Warfield, 2004). Thus, MLS believes that soccer participants also have a good potential to be soccer spectators. The important question, then, is how MLS should market to soccer participants. Since soccer participants are different consumers from soccer spectators, the ways they market to traditional soccer spectators may not be effective to market to soccer participants. Thus, MLS first needs to know what similarities and differences are between consumers of the two activities.

Only minimal attention has been directed toward examining the relationship between consumers of the two activities. Further, previous studies that examined, to some degree, the relationship between these consumer groups neglected some important factors to consider in their investigations, such as only examining aggregate sport basis (Burnett et al., 1993; Lascu et al., 1995; Shank & Beasley, 1998) and not examining motivation by different levels of sport involvement (Milne et al., 1996; Shamir & Ruskin, 1984; Wann, 1998). As a result, practitioners are still left with little knowledge of how to effectively market to consumers of the other activity. Therefore, the purpose of the study is to examine similarities and differences in consumer motivation between consumers of the two activities. Specifically, this study uses consumers who are taking part in both activities, in an attempt to compare and contrast motives important in commitment to playing the sport with motives important in commitment to watching the sport.

This present study uses consumer motivation as the key factor for the following reasons. Motivation is one of the most frequently used variables in sport consumer research and is considered to be a key in understanding consumers (Kahle et al., 2001; Milne & McDonald, 1999; Shank, 2002; Trail et al., 2000; Wann, 1995). In fact, consumer motivation has been identified as an antecedent variable in the models of sport consumer behavior for both participants and spectators (Iwasaki & Havitz, 1998; Trail et al., 2000). Therefore, consumer motivation could explain initial insight which will be a basis of marketing plans. Two other important aspects will be incorporated in the study based on previous study findings in order to provide more meaningful implications. First, previous studies found a significant relationship between motivation and level of sport involvement, concluding motivational factors were more likely to be different for individuals depending on level of sport involvement (Lascu et al., 1995; Rohm et al., 2006). Therefore, motivation will be examined by different levels (i.e., high or low) of sport involvement. Second, previous segmentation studies only occasionally included outcome factors to clarify which factor group differences appeared. Following this notion, the study includes sport commitment, a construct which reflects the degree of desire to continue to participate in or to watch a sport (Scanlan et al., 1993) as the outcome factor. Thus, the study attempts to identify what motives make soccer consumers committed to playing or watching soccer.

Data will be collected in January and February of 2009 by surveying soccer participants playing in adult recreational leagues. To compare motives important in commitment to playing soccer and watching soccer, those who take part in both activities are necessary as they are the only consumers who would be able to provide data on both activities. This way soccer marketers, for example, could know potential reasons why soccer participants also watch soccer. Thus, from soccer participants surveyed, only those indicating they also watch soccer will be the study sample. The Motivation of the Sport Consumer instrument (MSC), developed by Milne and McDonald (1999), is used to measure motivation. The MSC is the first and only scale to date that measures motivation of both playing and watching sport with the same dimensions, allowing a comparison of motives for the two activities. Level of sport involvement is measured with the Sport Involvement Inventory (Shank & Beasley, 1998), and sport commitment is measured with items used in the Sport Commitment Model (Scanlan et al., 1993). These scales have been used...
widely and appeared to be valid and reliable. Multiple regression will be performed with 13 motivational dimensions as the predictors and sport commitment as the dependent variable. Analyses will be conducted for each activity (i.e., one for playing and one for watching) as well as by levels of soccer involvement (i.e., high involvement group and low involvement group), generating four separate equations.

Results of the study will have important implications for marketers. First, the study will identify important reasons why soccer participants also watch soccer games. Since study participants take part in both activities, soccer spectator organizations could promote those important motives when attempting to market to soccer participants. Second, the study will identify motives that are important to both activities, participating in sport and watching sport. This piece of information is useful for marketers to know because these motives are ones that primarily get them to engage in both activities. Finally, since consumer motivation will be examined by high or low soccer involvement groups, marketers could determine how to market to high and low soccer participant groups differently in accordance with information provided by this study.