Collegiate marketing departments across the county are constantly trying to increase attendance at women’s and men’s collegiate basketball games. Many sport managers attempt to increase attendance at women’s games by marketing to attendees of men’s game and vice versa; thus, cross-over marketing is a common practice among collegiate athletics. However, is it an effective use of marketing resources? The purpose of our research is to examine the potential effectiveness of cross-over marketing for collegiate women’s and men’s basketball by comparing the relationships between Organizational Identification and Sport Identification and the relationship between Spectator Motives and Sport Identification for attendees at both women’s games and for attendees at men’s games.

Previous researchers (e.g., Armstrong, 2001; Fink, Trail, & Anderson, 2002; Ridinger & Funk, 2006) have compared the motives at both men’s and women’s collegiate events and found differences in magnitude. Ridinger and Funk (2006) found that attendees at women’s games were more likely to attend games based on the aesthetics, excitement, family/friends, interest in the team, support sport opportunities, wholesome environment, socialization, role model, and vicarious achievement. However, previous research has not investigated whether differences in the relationships among motives and points of attachment exist between men’s and women’s basketball game attendees.

The Sport Spectator Consumption Behavior Model (SSCBM; Trail, Robinson, Dick, & Gillentine, 2003) was the first model to distinguish the differences among the motives and points of attachment for fans and spectators at sport events. Recently, Woo, Trail, Kwon, and Anderson (2009) tested revised models. Woo et al.’s findings showed that there was a difference in spectator and fan motives, supporting Trail et al.’s results, but also contradicted some of Trail et al.’s findings.

In Woo et al.’s (2009) Model B, the motives were divided into three groups (overarching motives, vicarious achievement motives, and spectator motives) and were characterized as being correlated. The Spectator Motives construct consisted of appreciation of physical skills, aesthetics, drama/eustress, and knowledge. The Overarching Motives construct consisted of the motives of escape and social interaction. Points of attachment were divided into Organizational Identification (attachment to the team, coach, community, university, and players) and Sport Identification (attachment to the level of sport and the sport itself). The Vicarious Achievement motive was depicted to be directly related to Organizational Identification and the Spectator Motives construct was depicted to be directly related to the Sport Identification construct. Sport Identification may lead to Organizational Identification and vice versa. Using Woo et al.’s (2009) Model B, we compared the relationships among the variables between attendees at both women’s games and men’s basketball games.

Method

The participants (n = 863) were spectators at seven men’s (n = 380) and six women’s (n = 483) NCAA collegiate basketball games at seven various North-Eastern universities. Questionnaires were passed out before the basketball games and were collected during halftime. Out of the 1200 questionnaires disseminated, 863 usable questionnaires were returned, for a return rate of 72%. The final sample consisted of 53% (n = 456) male participants and 47% (n = 403) female participants. Most (n = 635) were Caucasian (73.6%). The remainder were 138 African-Americans (16.0%), 29 Hispanics (3.4%), 5 Asians (.6%), 4 Native-Americans (.5%) and 39 “Other” (3.9%).

The revised Motivation Scale for Sport Consumption (MSSC) used by Woo et al. (2009) contained 21 questions and was also used here: vicarious achievement, acquisition of knowledge, aesthetics, social interaction, drama/eustress, escape, and physical skill. The revised MSSC was shown to have adequate psychometric properties. The Point of Attachment Index (PAI; Trail et al., 2003) contained seven subscales (21 items) that focused on identification with the players, the coach, the community, the sport, the university, the team and the level of the sport (e.g., college not
professional). The PAI has shown good psychometric properties in previous research. All items had a 7-point Likert-type response format ranging from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (7).

The RAMONA Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) technique was used to test the structural model of Woo et al.’s (2009) SSCBM (Model B) on both men’s and women’s game attendees.

Results

Analysis of the structural models showed adequate fit for attendees at men’s games (RMSEA = .065; CI = .062, .069; pclose = 0.0, chi-square/df = 1831/683 = 2.68, ECVI = 5.13) and adequate fit for attendees at women’s games (RMSEA = .066; CI = .061, .070; pclose = 0.0, chi-square/df = 1623/683 = 2.38, ECVI = 5.68).

Discussion

When examining the relationships among variables within the SSCBM, significant differences existed between attendees at men’s and women’s games on only two paths. For attendees at men’s games, Organizational ID was significantly related to Sport ID, explaining approximately 7% of the variance. This indicates that as men’s attendees increase their the level of being a fan of the team, coach, players, and school, their level of being a general basketball fan or a fan of men’s college basketball, also slightly increases. However, for attendees at women’s games, this was not a significant relationship. Being a fan of the team has no relationship with being a general basketball fan. For attendees at men’s games, Spectator Motives significantly predict Sport ID, explaining 16% of the variance. However, for attendees at women’s games, Spectator Motives explain more than 50% of the variance in Sport ID. This indicates that attendees at women’s games who are fans of Women’s Basketball or who are general basketball fans are motivated to come by the aesthetics of the game, the drama and excitement, and to acquire knowledge about the sport. Whereas, attendees at men’s games, although their level of Sport ID was higher in order of magnitude, were not influenced as greatly by the Spectator motives, and they were slightly influenced by their attachment to the Organization.

From a practical standpoint, just because someone is a fan of the sport, it does not mean that they are a fan of the team/organization. This applies to both groups and speaks directly to the cross-over effect. Just because someone is a fan of the men’s basketball team, that doesn’t mean that they will be a fan of the women’s basketball team, and vice versa. There may be some people that attend both games, but the percentage is unavailable from this data. In previous research we conducted, we found that people who identified themselves as fans of the men’s basketball team for a particular Southeastern University were not fans of the women’s basketball team. The relationship was even more strongly negative between football fans and women’s basketball (James & Trail, 2008). Thus, sport managers need to be aware that marketing to men’s attendees to increase attendance at women’s games would not be the most effective use of marketing funds. Additionally, our results were consistent with Ridinger and Funk’s (2006) findings, therefore marketers targeting women’s attendees should focus on selling the aesthetics of the game, drama, excitement, and ability to acquire knowledge about basketball.