Predicting Consumption of Rival Sport Team Games: The Importance of Team Identification of Perceptions of the Rival

Daniel Wann, Murray State University
Ted Peetz, Belmont University
Frederick Grieve, Western Kentucky University
Jason Lanter, Kutztown University
Julie Partridge, Southern Illinois
Cody T. Havard, University of Memphis

Marketing Abstract 2016-297 Saturday, June 4, 2016 1:30 PM Poster (Legacy North)

Recent decades have seen great advances in sport fan research. For example, sport scholars have expanded our understanding of such issues as the process through with an individual becomes a fan (PCM), motivational profiles of fans of different sports (Wann, Grieve, Zapalac, & Pease, 2008), and the impact of perceptions of service quality (Theodorakis, Tsigilis, Alexandris, & Karvounis, 2013). One topic that is currently receiving increased attention from researchers involves perceptions of rival teams. For instance, multiple studies have found that perceptions of rivals are often related sport team identification. In 2013, Havard, Gray, Gould, Sharp, and Schaffer developed and validated a scale designed to aid sport rival researchers in assessing perceptions of rival teams and their fans. This scale, termed the Sport Rivalry Fan Perception Scale (SRFPS), contains subscales assessing four components of perceptions of rivals. In a recent investigation, Wann et al. (in press) utilized the SRFPS to investigate the number of rivals fans report having, as well as the impact of rival perceptions on sport fan consumption (e.g., attendance of contests, watching sport on television).

Hypotheses

The current investigation expanded on this study and tested the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1 predicted that team identification and evaluations of rivals would be negatively correlated (i.e., higher levels of identification would be associated with more negative evaluations). Hypotheses 2 through 5 targeted predictors of consumption of televised rival contests. Specifically, we expected team identification (Hypothesis 2), general evaluations of rivals (Hypothesis 3), and two SRFPS subscales (Outgroup Competition against Others, Hypothesis 4; Sense of Satisfaction, Hypothesis 5) to be significant independent predictors of rival consumption. Specifically, we expected greater amounts of consumption from persons higher with higher identification, more negative general evaluations of the rival, and higher Outgroup Competition against Others and Sense of Satisfaction scores. We did not expect to find that Outgroup Sportsmanship would be a significant unique predictor of consumption of televised rival games.

Method

Participants in this study consisted of 687 students (286 male; 400 female; 1 not reporting gender). They had a mean age of 20.66 years (SD = 3.77). The respondents completed surveys which began by asking them to list their favorite sport team. After listing this team, the participants completed the Sport Spectator Identification Scale (SSIS; Wann & Branscombe, 1993) for that team. The SSIS contains seven items and has been found to be a reliable and valid tool for assessing level of team identification (Wann et al., 2001). The next section focused on a rival team of the team listed in section 2 and asked respondents to answer 12 items examining the behaviors toward and evaluations of the rival. Respondents also completed 8 items on the SRFPS scale. Those modified SRFPS subscales included: Outgroup Competition against Others, Outgroup Sportsmanship, and Sense of Satisfaction.

Items on the SSIS, general measure of rival evaluations, and three SRFPS subscales were summed to form indices for each. Means, standard deviations, and Cronbach’s alphas for the measured all had acceptable reliability. Gender differences were examined for each measure using a series of one-way ANOVAs (with Bonferroni adjustment). These analyses revealed significant differences on several of the measures. Specifically, men reported higher scores than women for consumption [F(1, 684) = 9.59, p = .002], team identification [F(1, 684) = 19.07, p < .001], and
general evaluations of the rival \( [F(1, 684) = 13.05, p < .001] \). Significant differences were not found for Outgroup Competition against Others, Outgroup Sportsmanship, or Sense of Satisfaction.

Results

Hypothesis 1 predicted that team identification and evaluations of rivals would be correlated in that higher levels of identification would be associated with more negative evaluations. This prediction was tested via Pearson correlations. Expectations were confirmed as higher levels of team identification corresponded with more negative general evaluations, lower likelihood of supporting the rival, lower ratings of rival sportsmanship, and greater sense of satisfaction when the favored team defeats the rival.

Hypotheses 2 through 5 examined predictors of likelihood of viewing the rival team in a game against a favored team. A simultaneous regression was calculated in which sex, team identification, general evaluations of rival, Outgroup Competition against Others, Outgroup Sportsmanship, and Sense of Satisfaction were employed as predictor variables and likelihood of watching the game (consumption) was the dependent variable. The combined effect of the six predictor variables was significant, \( F(6, 679) = 155.21, p < .001 \) \( (R = 0.760; R^2 = 0.578; \text{adjusted } R^2 = 0.575) \). With respect to independent contributions, sex did not accounted for a significant proportion of unique variance. However, consistent with predictions, each of the other expected four variables accounted for a significant proportion of unique variance. Specifically, likelihood of watching the rival game was predicted by higher levels of identification (Hypothesis 2), more negative general evaluations of the rival (Hypothesis 3), greater likelihood of supporting the rival against another team (Hypothesis 4), and greater sense of satisfaction when the favored team defeats the rival (Hypothesis 5). Contrary to expectations, lower ratings of rival sportsmanship also predicted consumption of rival televised contests.

Discussion

This study gives us greater insight into sport fandom especially when considering consumption of a rivals games. In particular, the study revealed that higher levels of team identification correlated into greater negative evaluations of their rivals. This negative evaluation process could help fans reflect their fandom with their favorite team even when that team is not competing, showing yet another way fans express their identification. Along these same lines fans are able to strengthen their connection with a team through their consumption behaviors which helps to further our understanding of sport fandom.