Broadcasting Brand Associations: An Examination of the Impact of Team Related Media on Team Brand Associations

Henry Wear, University of Oregon
Bob Heere, University of North Texas

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As the sport industry has grown over the past decade, so too has the competition for the sport product (Baker, McDonald, & Funk, 2016). To form a competitive advantage, many sport organizations are beginning to think of their organizations as not simply a collection of players, coaches and managers, but as brands to be managed (Ross, 2006). This has brought forth an understanding in the sport marketing literature that emphasizes the importance of brand associations to team brands and consumer outcomes. Researchers have previously examined the pivotal role of brand associations to sport organizations, particularly in relation to team identity (Wear, et al., 2018), team loyalty (Kunkel et al., 2014), overall team brand equity (Bauer et al., 2005; Ross, 2006), league brand equity (Kunkel et al., 2017) and consumer outcomes (Wear et al., 2018).

However, there remains an opportunity to further investigate how individual consumer outcomes may impact individual team brand associations and the overall brand of a sport team. While scholars have found that brand associations can drive team consumer outcomes such as merchandise and media consumption, there has been little investigation into how those actions can drive the brand perceptions of a sport team. With the increased usage of second screen viewership by sport fans (Cunningham & Estin, 2017) there exists an opportunity for sport organization to better understand how each of their media platforms assist in building the brand of their team as it relates to consumption of games, highlights, and team content. This study, through partnership with a major professional sport organization, attempts to bridge this understanding and develop a deeper knowledge of how consumers’ perceptions and usage of a team’s media platforms impact their perceptions of team brand associations. From this the purpose of this study is to: 1) analyze the impact that consumer outcomes such as attendance, game viewership, and social media engagement have on individual team brand associations and 2) how consumers’ perceptions regarding team based media such as regional broadcasts, highlights, or social media content impact team brand associations. Such an understanding has the opportunity to advance the knowledge of how sport fan behavior can drive the perceptions of a sport brand, but also how perceptions regarding organizational media can shift sport brand evaluation.

Data collection for the study is currently ongoing, utilizing a quantitative research design. A survey instrument is being distributed to local area consumers of the major professional sport team. Questions regarding consumer behaviors including game attendance, game viewership, and organizational media engagement are asked, as well as perceptions of team brand associations (Wear et al., 2018). Data from the survey will result in the examination of descriptive statistics to understand the sample’s characteristics and behaviors, as well as structural equation modeling to evaluate the impacts of media consumption and perceptions on brand associations. The study is currently on track to be completed for NASSM 2020 with the results expecting to showcase the intricacies of consumers’ perceptions and behaviors, and how they contribute to sport team brands.