

Using Motives of Sports Consumption to Explain Team Identity: A Comparison between Football Fans across the Pond

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Abstract : Spectators follow their favorite sports teams for different reasons. While some attend a sporting event simply for its entertainment value, others do so because of the personal sense of achievement and accomplishment their connection with a sports team creates. Moreover, the level of identity spectators feel toward their favorite sports team falls in a broad continuum. Some are mere spectators. For those spectators, their association to a sports team has little impact on their self-image. Others are die-hard fans who are proud of their association with their team and whose connection with that team is an important reflection of who they are. Several motives for sports consumption can be used to explain the level of spectator support in a variety of sports. Those motives can also be used to explain the variance in the identification, attachment, and loyalty spectators feel toward their favorite sports team. Motives for sports consumption can be used to discriminate the degree of identification spectators have with their favorite sports team. In this study, motives for sports consumption was used to discriminate the level of identity spectators feel toward their sports team. It was hypothesized that spectators with a strong level of team identity would report higher rates of interest in player, interest in sports, and interest in team than spectators with a low level of team identity. And spectators with a low level of team identity would report higher rates for entertainment value, bonding with friends or family, and wholesome environment. Football spectators in the United States and England were surveyed about their motives for football consumption and their level of identification with their favorite football team. To assess if the motives of sports fans differed by level of team identity and allegiance to an American or English football team, a Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) under the General Linear Model (GLM) procedure found in SPSS was performed. The independent variables were level of team identity and allegiance to an American or English football team, and the dependent variables were the sport fan motives. A tripartite split (low, moderate, high) was used on a composite measure for team identity. Preliminary results show that effect of team identity is statistically significant ($p < .001$) for at least nine of the 17 motives for sports consumption assessed in this investigation. These results indicate that the motives of spectators with a strong level of team identity differ significantly from spectators with a low level of team identity. Those differences can be used to discriminate the degree of identification spectators have with their favorite sports team. Sports marketers can use these methods and results to develop identity profiles of spectators and create marketing strategies specifically designed to attract those spectators based on their unique motives for consumption and their level of team identification.

Keywords : fan identification, market segmentation of sports fans, motives for sports consumption, team identity

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