

Cross National Investigation into the Cultural Antecedents of Sports Consumption

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Abstract

The growth of sport as a leisure-time activity has been recognized for a number of years, as has the fact that sport is now a major industry in both developed and developing countries. Sport is becoming an activity of increasing importance: over time more people participate in sport (active sport consumption), more time is spent watching sport (passive sport consumption) (Konning,2009). Companies associate their brand to sports through sponsorship as sports sponsorship is an effective strategy for companies to communicate with consumers. In fact and despite economic recession and shrinkage of marketing budgets, worldwide sponsorship spending in 2009 is estimated at 44,8bn US\$ what represents an increase of 3,9% vs previous year (IEG, 2010).

Increasing importance of sponsorship is due to the difficulty to reach key segments of the consumer markets through traditional media approach and to the massive audiences of major global events and properties like Olympics, World Cup, NBA, and Formula 1 races among many others. For marketing, this major events can cross the media clutter and enable brands to communicate through sponsorship. However effectiveness of sponsorship, measured as the ability to transfer brand values from the property to the sponsor (Olson, 2007), can vary by country as consumers may not have the same background on brands and attitudes towards a specific sport. Consumers are members of a particular nation or culture which affects their attitudes and behavior (Triandis ,1989). Thus, consumer attitudes are consumer context specific dispositions that link personal and cultural values to actual consumption behavior (Wang et al. , 2006; Brunso et al. , 2004; Steenkamp et al. ,99).

The purpose of this paper is to analyze how cultural factors can influence sports consumption (active and passive) and thus, how cultural factors can influence the sponsorship efficiency in terms of transfer of image between the property and the sponsor (Olson ,2008; Ryssel and Stamminger, 88) in two cultural settings China and Spain.

In this work in progress, we develop a set of hypothesis pertaining to the main effect of specific variables on sports motivations and interaction between particular individual difference variables and national cultural dimensions. We propose a model integrating Hofstede cultural factors (Hofstede, 91), factors influencing sports motivations (James and Ross, 2002) and individual motivations (Schwartz ,95).

We will test our hypothesis in two countries with different culture context as China and Spain, and we focus in the analysis of soccer. Soccer is the world's most popular game, has the largest fan following on the planet and is now the de facto sport in 93 countries - home to

two billion people. It has 208 member nations and thus is easily the world's richest sport (Sportingo, 2009). We perform an exploratory research and 2000 interviews in both countries.

In terms of managerial implications the ideas offered herein will help properties and sponsors to better handle their sponsorship strategies and will suggest some thoughts to foster sports consumption accordingly to country culture. These findings will help to better understand sport consumption and will contribute to the development of more efficient sponsors and brands communication strategies in different countries.