Introduction

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Biographical notes: Damon P.S. Andrew, PhD, is the Dean of the College of Health and Human Services at Troy University. In this role, he serves as the chief administrative officer of the teaching, scholarly and service programs of the Department of Athletic Training, Department of Human Services and Social Work, Department of Kinesiology and Health Promotion and the School of Nursing. His research interests include organisational behaviour, organisational theory and human resource management in sport. Specifically, his research can be classified into three areas: (1) leadership in sport, (2) the attraction of sport to participants, spectators, sponsors, employees and stakeholders and (3) the effective integration of individuals with disabilities into the sporting environment. He has had over 30 manuscripts accepted for publication in peer-reviewed journals and he has presented over 50 research presentations at national and international scholarly conferences. He received his PhD in Sport Administration from Florida State University.

1   Introduction

Few would deny that one of the primary factors responsible for sport's rapid industrial growth (Broughton et al., 1999) is its attraction to participants, spectators, sponsors, employees and stakeholders. Sport's attraction to participants (Crawford et al., 2007; Kyle et al., 2003, 2004; Recours et al., 2004; Shapiro, 2003; Wiley et al., 2000) is evidenced by over $89 billion of sporting goods purchases in 2005 (National Sporting Goods Association, 2005). Sport marketing scholars have explored sport's attraction to spectators both theoretically (Funk and James, 2001, 2006) and empirically (Funk et al., 2000, 2004; Trail et al., 2003; Wann et al., 2001). Additional streams of research have developed concerning sponsor attraction to sport (Mawson, 2002), including the fit between a sponsor's brand and the associated sporting event (Koo et al., 2006). Organisational behaviour research has investigated several psychological constructs related to employee attraction to sport such as perceived organisational prestige (Andrew et al., 2006) and organisational commitment (Cunningham and Sagas, 2004; Todd and Andrew, 2006; Turner and Chelladurai, 2005). Research has also targeted the economic (Crompton and Lee, 2000; Daniels and Norman, 2003; Horen and Manzenreite, 2005) and non-economic impact (Delaney and Eckstein, 2002) of sport that influences its attractiveness to stakeholders.

Therefore, the aim of this Special Issue was to devote further attention to the attraction of sport to all associated entities. To this end, a total of 14 received

manuscripts were subjected to blind peer-review, and each manuscript was reviewed by three referees with demonstrated content knowledge in the area. After the first cycle of reviews, five manuscripts received a majority affirmative decision from the reviewers and were returned for revision, and final changes were made to the manuscripts after a second review cycle. The five papers in this Special Issue approached their study of the attraction of sport using a variety of quantitative and qualitative methods.

Firstly, Todd and Andrew analysed employee attraction to sport by conducting an exploratory investigation of factors that attract sport management students to sport jobs. Their diverse sample of 231 sport management professional development conference registrants from 27 institutions in 13 states in the US reported they were largely attracted to jobs in sport because they perceived a good fit between their preferences for future work and the sport environment. In addition, the results suggested that this perception of fit with the environment was based upon interests in sport and assessment of industry prestige. Essentially, the findings suggest that students perceive work in particular sport industry segments to be a great fit for them because of the prestige of the industry segment and their interest in sports as a fan. Thus, if true, it is possible that some students would form unrealistic expectations of employment in the field. The findings could also suggest that job seekers are mostly targeting segments of the sport industry that are highly prestigious, though there are certainly many jobs in other segments that are not as celebrated. Therefore, these results have implications for sport management faculty since the presentation of realistic job duties, salaries, and work hours for particular jobs of interest may alter their students' perceptions of industry fit. Further, industry employers can apply the findings from this study to manipulate the significant predictors of attraction when seeking to acquire new human resources.

Secondly, Hyatt and Andrijiw took an interesting approach to explore spectator attraction to sport. Since the majority of sport consumer behaviour studies involve samples of fans who attend games in person, these studies may potentially introduce a local bias. Therefore, Hyatt and Andrijiw adopted a qualitative approach to determine how people raised and living in Ontario became fans of non-local National Hockey League (NHL) teams. Heeding the call of Frisby (2005) for interpretive methodologies, semistructured in-depth interviews in the interpretive tradition were conducted to enable 20 Canadian ice hockey fans of non-local NHL teams to tell their stories in ways that made sense to them. In total, six reasons for supporting their specific distant team were given by at least a quarter of the fans: an attraction to a specific player, the team's colours/uniform, the team's logo, meeting the team's players in person, seeing the team play in person and the team's status as an underdog. Therefore, where fans of a local team may be more likely to attribute the formation of their respective fandom to a socialising agent (such as the local community, family members, friends or the local media) or general association with a city (Kolbe and James, 2000; Wann et al., 1996), fans of non-local teams often cited attributes related specifically to the team. The findings of this study provide important information about non-local sport fans, a target market that teams must enhance for global brand growth.

Thirdly, Theodorakis and Wann contributed to the limited information on cross cultural analyses of fandom by comparing and contrasting Greek sport fans with fans from other cultures, namely North America and Norway. Their study addressed four research questions:

1   'To what degree do male and female Greek university students engage in behaviours commonly associated with sport fandom?'

2   'To what extent do parents, friends/peers, school and community contribute to their socialisation into the sport fan role?'

3   'Which one of the aforementioned socialisation agents is most influential?'

4   'How strongly do students identify with their favourite team?'

Participants (n = 351) completed a questionnaire packet assessing demographic, sport fandom, sport fan behaviours, team identification and the impact of various socialisation agents. The results revealed a number of interesting findings including gender differences in sport fandom (males greater than females), the importance of fathers as a agent of socialisation and the large percentage of Greek teams listed as one's favourite team. The study's results might benefit sport managers in Greece in their attempt to increase direct and indirect consumption among both male and female fans, and the findings will assist researchers in the generalisation of various theories and models in cross-cultural settings.

Fourthly, Grieve and colleagues investigated sport fans' responses to the end of the season. Specifically, these researchers considered the conditions under which men's college basketball fans will change or switch identification. Participants (n = 154) were randomly assigned to read a brief vignette that described the University of Kentucky (UK) men's basketball team losing in the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) men's basketball tournament. Half of the participants read that UK lost in the first round (the round of 64) and half read that UK lost in the Final Four. Participants then completed the potential response options to team defeat items, which were specifically developed for this study, indicating how likely it was that they would continue to watch the tournament for each of the eight reasons. The design of the study was a 2 (Level of Basketball Fandom: high or low) × 2 (Level of Identification with the University of Kentucky Men's Basketball Team: high or low) × 2 (Round of Loss in NCAA Tournament: first round or Final Four) between subjects factorial. The dependent variables were the responses given for each of the eight different types of viewing behaviours for the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) National Championship basketball tournament (March Madness). Results indicated that the timing of the loss, level of team identification, level of basketball fandom, and level of maladaptive fan beliefs all influenced the likelihood that participants partook in certain activities. The results provide implications for Social Identity Theory (Tajfel, 1981; Turner, 1975), the Disposition Theory of Sport Spectatorship (Bryant, 1989; Sapolsky, 1980; Zillmann et al., 1989), and BIRGing and CORFing theories (Cialdini et al., 1976; Snyder et al., 1986).

Finally, Koo and associates analysed the antecedents and consequences of service quality, a variable shown to influence attraction in previous research (Bitner, 1992; Wakefield and Blodgett, 1996). Although service quality research has been widely conducted in sport and leisure settings, there has been relatively little research examining consumers' perceptions of service quality in collegiate sporting events, particularly women's sports. To address this gap in the literature, the purpose of this study was to examine the effects of service attributes on perceived service quality, and to explore how consumer satisfaction in women's college basketball mediates the relationship between consumers' perceived service quality and their behavioural intentions to attend future games. Participants (n = 287) had attended a NCAA Division I women's college basketball at the host institution in the previous month and completed measures of

technical, functional, and environmental attributes, perceived service quality, and behavioural intentions in the context of the most recent game they attended. The results of the current study suggested that the technical attribute influenced behavioural intentions through satisfaction, but the functional and environmental attributes influenced behavioural intentions through overall perceived service quality and satisfaction. These findings provide a number of insights for sport marketers, including:

1   devoting more attention to recruiting procedures and training of part-time employees

2   ensuring the creation of an exhilarating physical environment

3   promoting one's known strengths in service quality (Howat et al., 1996)

4   recognising that a large degree of customer satisfaction is determined by a factor that is mostly out of the sport marketer's control, the quality of the core product

5   periodically tracking consumers' perceptions of service quality (Wakefield and Blodgett, 1999).

In conclusion, I would like to express my gratitude to the reviewers for this Special Issue on *The Attraction of Sport*. Many of these reviewers currently perform editorial duties for other academic journals and/or serve on numerous editorial boards for scholarly journals. The insight and detail provided by these reviewers challenged the authors in this issue to consider alternative viewpoints, analyses and applications, and this synergistic relationship resulted in several quality contributions to the scholarly examination of the attraction of sport. It is my sincere hope that the papers published in this issue serve as a spark to pique interest in this important topic, as the attraction associated with the sport industry serves as a defining element of distinction when compared to non-sport industries.

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