Understanding insights for building effective marketing strategies for women’s volleyball

Merideth Jewell, Steve Chen and Kenneth Henderson(Faculty Mentors)
Management and Marketing, Morehead State University
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Background

Despite the success on the court, many women’s collegiate sport programs are consistently confronted by the issues of low fan attendance, budget constraint, and unsupportive gender stereotypes. This study examined college students’ perception of women’s volleyball and willingness for attending the competitions.

Review of Literature

• The rise of collegiate volleyball: 17,561 record crowd in the championship match in 2015
• The issues and concerns about low attendance in women’s sports: low budgets and revenues, social stereotypes,
• Current condition: Top-3 national attendance: Nebraska (n = 8,083), Hawaii (n = 6,357) and Wisconsin (n = 4933) in 2014
• Average home game attendance of MSU (n = 524) in 2015
• Factors and reasons for people to attend collegiate athletic events:
  • 8 factors identified in the traditional Sport Fan Motivation Scale: (eustress, self-esteem, escape, entertainment, economic, aesthetic, group affiliation, and family) (Wann, 1995; Wann et al., 1999)
• Social issues and gender stereotypes:
  • (a) marginalization of the women’s sports;
  • (b) sexism and objectification in female sports

Purpose of the Study

To understand insights for building effective marketing strategies for women’s volleyball

Methodology

Participants:
139 college students (70 males, 50.4%; 69 females: 49.6%) of a regional state university in Appalachia
* 51% are underclassmen
* 33.1% are affiliated with a fraternity or sorority club
36% are student-athletes
* 74.8% are non-commuters
* 87.8% attended athletic events on campus; about 21% attended more than 8 games per year

Instrumentation:
* Research foundation (Bodenner, 2015; Imbriano & Downing, 2010; Wann et al., 1999)
* 24 total questions: (a) Demographic information; (b) Athletic event attending experience; and (c) Perceptions on women’s volleyball (15 five-point Likert scale items)
* One opened question—Suggestions for enhancing fan experience

Procedure:
* Participants were randomly solicited in two forms: (a) in cafeteria, dorms, classroom hallway, and library; and (b) via an online platform (SurveyMonkey link sent to emails and Facebook pages)
* Data collection timeframe: Mid-February to late March, 2016

Results

Figure 1. Most popularly attended athletic events on campus

Table 1. Factors on perceptions that influence game attendance (KMO: .856; loading: 60.815%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor and items</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>% of variance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1) Standard Motivational Factor</td>
<td>2.6893</td>
<td>30.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2) Socioeconomic and geographic concerns</td>
<td>1.6934</td>
<td>14.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volleyball is not a good family event due to what athletes have wore</td>
<td>1.3831</td>
<td>15.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I will not go due to the cost</td>
<td>1.7518</td>
<td>11.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distance keep me from attending games</td>
<td>2.0000</td>
<td>11.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time keep me away from attending</td>
<td>3.4855</td>
<td>11.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volleyball is a good form of recreation</td>
<td>2.7968</td>
<td>11.33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Other key findings:

Women’s volleyball is the most popular and attended female spectator athletic event

Suggestions for enhancing fan experience

Discussion and Recommendations

● Apparently, participants with athletic participation experience have a significant higher rating on the standard motivational factor than those who were non-athletes (p < .05).
● Participants who are affiliated with fraternity or sorority have a lower rating on standard motivational factor than who are not.
● Practical marketing strategies are drawn to promote and solicit attendance of various Greek student organizations by creating theme nights.
● More giveaways can be offered to reward more frequently attended and enthusiastic fans with athletic participation experience.

Future Studies

● Identify coaching competencies and needed traits at different levels (particularly at the collegiate level)
● Conducting Survey and soliciting responses of ADs and members of hiring committee

Useful References