

Happiness, Life Satisfaction and Sport Fan

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Abstract: This paper is an exploratory research that examines the relationship between fanship and fans' life satisfaction and happiness. Using a sample of 1,329 football fans and 1,259 basketball fans, the current research found that, the greater one feels a fan of a football or basketball team, the more likely he or she will have a higher level of life satisfaction and happiness. These differences were especially significant between Enthusiastic Fans and Light Fans of both football and basketball teams. Since the current research is exploratory in nature, future research may be needed to test the relationships found in the current paper in different countries and in different fields.

Key words: happiness; life satisfaction; sport fan

JEL codes: M31

1. Introduction

According to the American Marketing Association (AMA 2007), "Marketing is the activity, set of institutions, and processes for creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners, and society at large." Thus, the role of marketing is to bring the best value to its stake holders. Life satisfaction and happiness are probably the most valuable benefits that anyone may want to achieve.

The current research is exploring the question: can being either a fan of football or for a basketball team can make people happier and with better life satisfaction? No research in marketing has studied these relationships between fanship and fans' life satisfaction and happiness. "Fanship" in the current study is "the extent that a fan feels psychologically connected to a team" (Wann, 1997, p. 331). Fanship is a personal identification with a sport team (Reysen & Branscombe, 2010; Wann & Pierce, 2003).

2. Conceptualization and Hypotheses

Happiness and life satisfaction represent human tendencies to experience positive emotions (e.g., Boehm & Lyubomirsky, 2008; Diener, 2000; Wright, 2005; Youssef & Luthans, 2009). While life satisfaction is the way one perceives how his or her life has been up to now and how they feel their life is going to be in the future (Lumpkin & Hunt, 1989), happiness may be the result of ones perception of experiencing positive emotions of life satisfaction. General satisfaction with life cycles, such as overall satisfaction, satisfaction with family life, job satisfaction and such circumstances may lead to the happiness (Heller et al., 2004; Pearson, 2007). Happiness is

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therefore a perceptual construct and a happy person is someone who has experienced a high frequency of such positive emotions (Diener, 2000; Seligman et al., 2005; Wright, 2005).

Seligman et al. (2005) suggest that level of happiness consists of positive emotions and pleasures, involvement and strengths life satisfactions and living with meanings. Thus, the sense of greater happiness is subjective and a result of more positive emotions and pleasure that are created by more involvement and meanings to life (Seligman et al., 2005). These three elements (The pleasant life, the engaged life and the meaningful life) are actually three different ways to happiness (Duckworth et al., 2005, p. 636).

The current research hypothesizes that the sports fans are more involved with their sport team and therefore have more meaningful life. Sport fans are more likely to be emotionally committed and get higher enjoyment from their team, spend considerable amount of money on this interest and devote much energy and time to pursue their interest (Lock, Darcy & Taylor, 2009). They closely follow their team through television, radio, newspapers, or contact with other fans (Wann & Branscombe, 1993). This kind of involvement brings of meaning for the life of sport fans.

Thus, it is suggested here that:

People with higher fanship for a football or basketball team will have higher level of life satisfaction and happiness.

3. Methodology

The data for this study was collected from representative sample of 1,329 football fans and 1,259 basketball fans, which were selected from an Internet panel.

Fanship Fans was measured by the degree of association with a team using the following question: "Please rate from 1 to 10 the way you feel and think overall about your main football/basketball team, one indicating that you are 'a little bit of a fan' and 10 'a Enthusiastic fan'". Where 1-4 are considered as "Light Fans", 5-7 "Fans" and 8-10 are the "Enthusiastic Fan".

Life satisfaction was measured on a 10-point scale using Lumpkin and Hunt (1989) three-item scale:

- (1) As I grow older, things seem better than I thought they would be.
- (2) As I look back on my life I am fairly well satisfied.
- (3) These are the best years of my life.

Happiness is measured on a 7-point semantic differential scale using Lyubomirsky and Lepper's (1999) four items:

- (1) Generally, I see myself as; an especially unhappy person (1)–to–an especially happy person (7).
- (2) In comparison to my friends, I am; less happy (1)–to–more happy (7).
- (3) Some people are generally very happy; they enjoy life and get the best out of every situation. Does this describe you? Not at all (1)–to–Very much so (7).
- (4) Some people are generally unhappy. Although they are not depressed, they could have been much happier. Does this describe you? Not at all (1)–to–Very much so (7).

4. Results

The purpose of the current research is to examine the relationship between sport fanship and life satisfaction

and happiness. Life satisfaction and happiness scales were found to be highly reliable with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.80 and 0.77 respectively.

Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) shows significant difference of life satisfaction between groups of football fans ($F = 19.877$, $P < 0.01$) and basketball fans ($F = 12.814$, $P < 0.01$). Table 1 shows the results from Scheffe Multiple Comparisons of Life Satisfaction between each group of football group of fans. This table shows that Light Fans and Fans exhibit significantly lower level of life satisfaction than the Enthusiastic Fans. However, no significant difference of life satisfaction was found between Fans and Light Fans.

Table 1 Football-Scheffe Multiple Comparisons of Fanship and Life Satisfaction

Fanship-Football		Mean Difference	Std. Error	Sig.
Light Fans	Fans	-0.32127	0.14622	0.090
	Enthusiastic Fan	-1.01966*	0.16946	0.000
Fans	Light Fans	0.32127	0.14622	0.090
	Enthusiastic Fan	-0.69839*	0.14050	0.000
Enthusiastic Fan	Light Fans	1.01966*	0.16946	0.000
	Fans	0.69839*	0.14050	0.000

Note: Dependent Variable: Life Satisfaction; *. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Table 2 shows similar results for the basketball fans. That is a significant difference of life satisfaction was found between Fans and Enthusiastic Fans and no significant difference between Fans and Light Fans.

Table 2 Basketball-Scheffe Multiple Comparisons of Fanship and Life Satisfaction

Fanship - Basketball		Mean Difference	Std. Error	Sig.
Light Fans	Fans	-0.19021	0.15897	0.489
	Enthusiastic Fan	-0.76844*	0.17532	0.000
Fans	Light Fans	0.19021	0.15897	0.489
	Enthusiastic Fan	-0.57824*	0.13229	0.000
Enthusiastic Fan	Light Fans	0.76844*	0.17532	0.000
	Fans	0.57824*	0.13229	0.000

Note: Dependent variable: Life satisfaction; *. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

ANOVA analysis shows significant difference of happiness between groups of football fans ($F = 6.234$, $P < 0.05$) and basketball fans ($F = 4.504$, $P < 0.05$). Table 3 and Table 4 show that Enthusiastic Fans of both football and basketball are happier than the Light Fans. In both type of sports there is no significant difference of happiness between and Fans and Light Fans.

Table 3 Football-Scheffe Multiple Comparisons of Fanship and Happiness

Fanship-Football		Mean Difference	Std. Error	Sig.
Light Fans	Fans	-0.15035	0.06997	0.100
	Enthusiastic Fan	-0.28632*	0.08109	0.002
Fans	Light Fans	0.15035	0.06997	0.100
	Enthusiastic Fan	-0.13597	0.06723	0.130
Enthusiastic Fan	Light Fans	0.28632*	0.08109	0.002
	Fans	0.13597	0.06723	0.130

Note: Dependent variable: happiness; *. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Table 4 Basketball-Scheffe Multiple Comparisons of Fanship and Happiness

Fanship-Basketball		Mean Difference	Std. Error	Sig.
Light Fans	Fans	-0.1459	0.0767	0.164
	Enthusiastic Fan	-0.2533*	0.0846	0.012
Fans	Light Fans	0.1459	0.0767	0.164
	Enthusiastic Fan	-0.1073	0.0639	0.244
Enthusiastic Fan	Light Fans	0.2533*	0.0846	0.012
	Fans	0.1073	0.0639	0.244

Note: Dependent variable: Happiness; *. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

5. Conclusions and Discussions

The answer to the question asked in the introduction of the current study “is being either a fan of football or of a basketball team make people happier and with better life satisfaction?” is generally yes. As hypothesized, the greater fan one is to a football or basketball team the more likely he or she will be with higher level of life satisfaction and happiness. These differences were especially significant between Enthusiastic Fans and Light Fans of both football and basketball teams.

The current research is exploratory in nature. However, if these results will be consistent over several studies in different countries, it will be important news for marketing group sport. The message of football and basketball team can be: “if you want to have better life satisfaction and be happier be a fan of our team”. The competition of winning the heart of the public may not be only winning games but also by helping fans to achieve a higher level of life satisfaction and happiness.

Future research may test these relationships in different countries and may be in different fields. Research may also examine the influence of gender, age and cognitive age, among other mediating variables on the relationship between fanship and fans’ life satisfaction and happiness.

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