

Relationship Marketing in Sports: A Functional Approach

Colleen C. Bee and Lynn R. Kahle

Abstract

This paper examines how and why consumers develop, enter into, and maintain relationships in a sports marketing context. This paper presents a framework for understanding how and why consumers engage in relationship marketing. Based on Kelman's functional approach to attitude change, this framework presents three qualitatively different levels for understanding relationship formation and maintenance: (a) compliance is superficial, temporary, and often the result of external influence; (b) identification is related to self-esteem and image enhancement of sport consumers; and (c) internalization is the result of values similarity. Internalization is more likely to result in a long-term relationship.

Relationship Marketing in Sports: A Functional Approach

Recently, relationship marketing has received considerable attention in practice. Sports organizations are focusing on long-term consumer retention and incorporating a variety of database-management techniques to maintain and enhance customer relationships. Although consumer-focused relationship marketing has received a significant amount of attention in the field, little theoretical work in the study of relationship marketing in sport supplements or justifies the professional trend. Additionally, current research in relationship marketing has been in the context of sales

Colleen Bee, PhD, is an assistant professor of marketing at the University of San Diego. Her research interests include sport marketing, emotion, experiential consumption, and suspense.

Lynn R. Kahle, PhD, is the James Warsaw Professor of Sports Marketing at the Lundquist College of Business, University of Oregon. His research interests include sport marketing, social values, marketing communication, and consumer psychology.

"All sports marketing transactions, in fact, involve some type of relationship marketing. In some cases the efforts are explicit. In other cases they are hidden or even unrecognized."

relationships (Smith & Barclay, 1997), supplier-buyer relationships (Doney & Cannon, 1997), retailer-supplier relationships (Morgan & Hunt, 1994), service relationships (Berry, 1995), brand relationships (McAlexander, Schouten, & Koenig, 2002), and consumer-firm relationships (Garbarino & Johnson, 1999). Research and theory development have not focused on relationship marketing in sport.

Relationship marketing is important because it can be effective. It facilitates role enactment by providing definitions for types of influence and communication strategies that should characterize two participants in a relationship. Teams, leagues, athletes, marketing corporations, and fans have relationships with one another that depend on successful relationship enactment. All sports marketing transactions, in fact, involve some type of relationship marketing. In some cases the efforts are explicit. In other cases they are hidden or even unrecognized. A careful examination of these relationships can improve the function of the relationship system in sports marketing.

The purposes of this paper are to examine how and why consumers develop, enter into, and maintain relationships in a sports marketing context. Specifically, the goals of this article are (a) to review current research and theory in relationship marketing, (b) to provide a framework for understanding the dynamic complexity of relationship formation and maintenance in the context of sport using Kelman's (1958, 1961) functional approach to attitudes, (c) to address current relationship marketing practices in sport and to describe how our framework can be applied practically in this context, and (d) to present implications for future research based on the functional approach to

relationship marketing in sport. The use of the functional approach will enhance efforts in relationship marketing because it provides an explicit theoretical context for understanding relationships.

“Transactional exchanges depend on extrinsic factors such as money or other rewards (price discounts, coupons, giveaways) in exchange for a good or service. Relational exchanges, on the other hand, focus on cooperation and interactions resulting from shared values.”

Review of Relationship Marketing

The following section outlines the current state of relationship marketing theory. It begins with an overview of relationship marketing definitions and approaches. Literature is then discussed related to relationship marketing perspectives and is further examined from both a consumer and an organizational perspective. Included in the consumer perspective is a discussion of several factors that influence relationships in the context of sports marketing.

Relationship marketing has been described as an ongoing cooperative behavior between the marketer and the consumer (Sheth & Parvatiyar, 2000). In practice, relationship marketing is characterized by the attraction, development, and retention of customers. Although these definitions imply a long-term view of the consumer, current approaches to relationship marketing are varied and can take a very narrow perspective that focuses on short-term behavioral components or can take a broader perspective that emphasizes deeper, longer-term relationship goals (Parvatiyar & Sheth, 2001). The narrow perspective of relationship marketing uses a variety of database marketing techniques to elicit repeat purchase behavior, and it often focuses on how many units have been sold or how much consumers have spent. From this perspective, relationships are viewed as more reactive and transactional and cannot be viewed as long-term. In contrast, broader approaches attempt to understand consumers better and go beyond the current transaction and superficial repeat purchasing techniques to develop meaningful and beneficial relationships that are proactive, enduring, and interactive. Consumers are viewed as lifetime customers, and an effort is made to thoroughly understand consumer wants, desires, and values.

Current research supports the view of relationship marketing from these two perspectives. Dwyer, Schurr, and Oh (1987) suggested that consumer relationships exist on a continuum from transactional to relational. Transactional exchanges depend on extrinsic factors such as money or other rewards (price discounts, coupons, giveaways) in exchange for a good or service.

Relational exchanges, on the other hand, focus on cooperation and interactions resulting from shared values. Although Anderson and Narus (1991) recommended that organizations focus on both transactional and relational exchanges, the narrow or transactional approach to relationship marketing is often a short-term solution. In this situation, external or superficial rewards provide the major motivation to purchase or engage in a relationship. Consumers may not continue to purchase when the rewards are reduced or eliminated; therefore, it may prove more effective and beneficial to move consumers along the continuum from transactional exchange relationships to deeper relational interactions. Transactional exchanges are nevertheless important because they serve as the first step in developing long-term relationships.

This broad perspective has been incorporated into several definitions of relationship marketing. For example, Morgan and Hunt (1994) stated, “Relationship marketing refers to all marketing activities directed toward establishing, developing, and maintaining successful relationship exchanges” (p. 22). Berry (1983) provided a similar definition in the context of service relationships: “Relationship marketing is attracting, maintaining and—in multi service organizations—enhancing customer relationships” (p. 25). These definitions focus on long-term customer retention, which is ultimately reflected in repeat purchasing behavior and moving toward certain levels of psychological attachment and relational attitude positions. Sports organizations should strive to develop this deeper level of relationship with their target consumers.

Relationship Marketing From a Sports Consumer Perspective

Several factors affect sports consumer attitudes and behavior toward relationship formation, such as commitment, involvement, trust, and shared values. This section explores how these factors influence relationship marketing from the sports consumer’s perspective.

When consumers enter into a relationship with a sport organization, that act can reflect the consumers’ commitment to continue patronage regardless of the other choices available to them. This type of behavior goes beyond repeat purchasing and reflects an ongoing partnership. Sheth and Parvatiyar (1995) have proposed a popular current theory on consumer relationship marketing. The authors posited that consumers enter into a relationship because they have a preference for choice reduction. Based on this preference for choice reduction, Sheth and Parvatiyar recognized several benefits to consumers of engaging in relationship marketing. The decision-making process becomes more efficient, search costs decline, and cognitive con-

sistency in decisions can increase. Relationship marketing also reduces the complexity of the buying situation and the amount of resources required for information processing. Additionally, if consumers are engaged in a relationship with a firm or an organization, they are likely to be familiar with the products and services offered, which reduces risk, tension, and the likelihood of cognitive dissonance.

“The recognition that attitudes involve multiple motives is especially relevant in sport, where motivational complexity is the norm.”

However, consumers have other reasons to enter into a relationship with an organization. Sports consumers are often highly involved, and their commitment to the sports organization is often displayed through the repeat purchase of tickets, continued attendance at sporting events, and the purchase of sport-related products. This behavior is also a reflection of the sports consumer's desire to demonstrate involvement and to engage in and maintain a relationship with sports teams and organizations. This paper attempts to understand sports consumers' underlying motivations for engaging in and maintaining these relationships and exhibiting related behaviors.

Recent research has also examined the important role of trust in long-term relationship development (Garbarino & Johnson, 1999; Moorman, Deshpande, & Zaltman, 1993; Sirdeshmukh, Singh, & Sabol, 2002). Trust is influenced by shared values and is often viewed as an antecedent to relationship commitment (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). Several definitions and conceptualizations of trust exist. For the purpose of this paper, trust is conceptualized as having both a behavioral and a cognitive component. It is based on consumers' expectations about the reliability and competency of players, teams, and management. If these expectations are consistently met, consumers are more likely to initiate or maintain a trusting relationship. However, several levels of trust exist in the context of sports marketing. For example, consumers may have trust in sales agents or people involved in the actual game experience, but have little trust in the coaching or management of the team. Sports organizations should consider how different levels of trust influence relationship formation and maintenance.

Values also have been identified as an important antecedent to relationship formation (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). Values represent enduring consumers' beliefs about specific modes of conduct or end states (Kahle, 1996). In the context of sports marketing, shared values between sports consumers and sports organizations, teams, or players should lead to increased

relationship commitment. As shown in the discussion of internalized attitudes below, shared values can invoke the highest level of relationship commitment.

Relationship Marketing From a Sport Organization Perspective

Sports marketers use several mechanisms to bolster relationships. Sports talk (Kahle, Elton, & Kambara, 1996) is one common method. The mere act of interaction over the topic of sports can be rewarding, define roles, and establish shared values. A second relationship mechanism is hospitality. Hospitality creates opportunities at sports events for sharing sports talk and other social interaction as well as sharing values. A third common mechanism is gift giving (Beatty, Kahle, & Homer, 1991). Cultures differ in terms of the manner of giving gifts, but sports-related gifts can reward fans, establish an identity for fans, and even express shared values.

“Antecedents of identification are linked to the social recognition or value of the relationship with the sports organization, team, or players. Identification is related to team, organization, or player success or failure and consumer satisfaction with the sports team, organization, or player.”

Sports consumers that exhibit sports-loyal behaviors, such as repeat purchasing and continued attendance, are the key to a sports organization's success. These consumers offer sports organizations a competitive advantage that can be realized through relationship marketing efforts. It is important, however, to understand the factors that affect the characteristics of the relationships. Sports organizations may be better able to manage relationships, attendance, and retention with a better understanding of the underlying dimensions of consumer behavior.

The following section uses Kelman's (1961) functional model of attitude change to explain psychologically how and why consumers enter into relationships and how sport organizations can move them from a superficial, transactional relationship to a deeper, long-term relational interaction. This theory has been applied in other contexts in sports marketing (e.g., Kahle, Kambara, & Rose, 1996).

A Functional Model of Relationship Marketing in Sport

The prediction and explanation of consumer behavior is critical to understanding relationship marketing, and attitudes provide some insight into this phenomenon. Attitudes are evaluations of a variety of stimuli (e.g., objects, ideas, organizations, and people), and

they motivate or guide behavior and influence information processing (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993; Homer & Kahle, 1988; Kahle & Berman, 1979; Lutz, 1991). Attitudes guide the content and meaning of relationships. The practice of relationship marketing attempts to direct attitudes.

One specific approach to the study of attitudes is the functional approach proposed by Kelman (1958, 1961). Kelman suggested that attitude change is the result of three different levels of social influence: (a) compliance, (b) identification, and (c) internalization. These three levels correspond to the three major theories of psychology: (a) behaviorism, (b) neo-psychanalysis, and (c) humanism, respectively. This framework identifies how different motivational

processes influence behavior, such as the characteristics of a relationship or the motivation to enter or maintain a relationship with sports organizations, as well as the depth and nature of different relationships. The recognition that attitudes involve multiple motives is especially relevant in sport, where motivational complexity is the norm.

The functional approach provides a context for studying relationships in sports consumer behavior. These three levels of social influence correspond to differences in the underlying processes that ultimately lead to behavior. Depending on which of these processes produces the attitude change, different predictions can be made about the behavior that results from the new attitude, such as the nature of the rela-

Table 1
Antecedents of Attitude Formation and Change

Antecedents	Compliance	Identification	Internalization
1. Basis for importance/relevance of the induction	<p><i>Social effect</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reaction of others (friends, family, sports team, and organization) • Gain approval/recognition or avoid disapproval/punishment • Based on extrinsic rewards (economic and social) 	<p><i>Social anchorage</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relationship definition through team success or failure, players, organizational efforts 	<p><i>Value congruence</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Value agreement • External activities: positive & negative by team, players (donations, charities, special events)
2. Source of power of the influencing agent	<p><i>Means control</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organization, team, coach, or players and their ability to supply or withhold means by which the individual strives for achievement of goals • Giveaways, small tokens, team success/failure 	<p><i>Attractiveness</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Satisfaction with players, team, coaches, organization • Sport consumer strives to establish or maintain a relationship based on role attractiveness 	<p><i>Credibility</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sport organization, team, players, and coaches are respected and viewed as trustworthy and credible
3. Manner of achieving prepotency (power) of the induced response	<p><i>Choice Limitation</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited choices available to the sports consumer • Very few options in terms of relationship behavior • Sports consumer relationships are very directed and restricted • Organization, team, or players have strong influence on consumer behavior 	<p><i>Defined Role Relationship</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specific expectations regarding behavior • Few behavioral alternatives available (although more than compliance) • Reference group influence 	<p><i>Change in Meaning</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sport consumers view changes due to relevant values implications • Potential relationship takes on new meaning and is aligned with consumer values

Note. Based on "Processes of Opinion Change," 1961, by H. C. Kelman, in *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 25(1), 57-78.

Table 2
Consequences of Attitude Formation and Change

Consequents	Compliance	Identification	Internalization
1. Conditions of performance of induced response	<p><i>Public Visibility</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relationship behavior is only maintained when the consumer's reaction is visible to relevant others (friends, family, sport organization) Relationship is maintained through public social behavior 	<p><i>Salience</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The behavioral response will occur if it is viewed as relevant to the relationship with the agent (sports team or organization) Sport consumer is acting within a role defined by identification 	<p><i>Values relevance</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Value agreement External activities: positive & negative by team, players (donations, charities, special events)
2. Conditions of change and extinction of induced response	<p><i>Ability to meet goals</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relationship behavior will only occur if viewed as meeting goal of social reward If consumer can gain reward or avoid punishment, the relationship will be maintained 	<p><i>Self-definition</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Behavior occurs because it provides self-definition If the relationship does not provide desired or satisfying definition, it will be abandoned 	<p><i>Maximization of Values</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sport organization, team, players, and coaches are respected and viewed as trustworthy and credible
3. Type of behavior system in which induced response is embedded	<p><i>External Demands</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relationship behavior is guided through defined social systems within a specific setting 	<p><i>Role expectations</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relationship behavior is based on expectations Behavior is representative of the sport consumer; however, it is isolated from deeper value system 	<p><i>Internal system</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sport consumers view changes due to relevant values implications Potential relationship takes on new meaning and is aligned with consumer values

Note. Based on "Processes of Opinion Change," 1961, by H. C. Kelman, in *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 25(1), 57-78.

relationship or the strength and durability of the change. Although the resulting behaviors may superficially seem the same, the underlying processes producing the behaviors can be different, and as a result the consequences of the actual behavior will differ. Differences in the level of attitudes that form the basis for a sports marketing relationship imply different major theories of psychology appropriate to understand, deal with, or change a particular relationship attitude.

To address the question of how and why consumers enter into, develop, and maintain sports relationships, it is necessary to identify specific conditions and situations that are most effective in initiating and maintaining consumer relationships. Kelman (1958) suggested that each process of social influence—compliance, identification, and internalization—has a distinct set of antecedent conditions and a set of consequent conditions. We will describe each of the motivational

processes and examine the associated antecedent and consequent conditions for each level. This information is summarized in Tables 1 and 2.

Compliance

Compliance is the most superficial level of social influence and results from group or individual influence. In this situation, an individual gives in to influence because he or she either gains rewards or avoids punishment. Due to the social nature of this influence, the individual seeks a favorable reaction from another person or group. Behavior change at this level is often the result of public acknowledgement of the behavior (Kelman, 1958). In a sports marketing context, consumers purchase a particular product or service, attend an event, or wear sport-related clothing to gain some form of social reward. Negative consequences are also possible. For example, consumers may refrain from

attending an event or avoid wearing sport-related clothing to avoid public embarrassment or ridicule.

In the context of sport-consumer relationships, influence likely takes the form of compliance when relationship opportunities are very directed and restricted. The limitation of opportunities and choices available to the sport consumer helps stimulate the desired behavioral response. Antecedent conditions of compliance include the existence of external rewards, such as social or economic rewards. Avoidance of punishment is also an antecedent condition of compliance.

Social rewards refer to public affirmation and recognition of a particular behavior. In this case, people participate in this type of behavior (sport consumption) because of their need for a favorable response or avoidance of a negative response, not because they truly believe or support the action. For example, if a team or player is not playing well, some consumers might avoid wearing sport-related products, in order to avoid public recognition of a relationship with that particular team or player, even if the sports consumer secretly supports them. These consumers want to avoid any negative feedback; this type of behavior is only exhibited when the referent individual or group is present to observe the behavior.

Another condition thought to influence compliance processes is economic reward. Economic rewards refer to both direct monetary rewards and indirect rewards, such as continuity programs (e.g., buy 10, get the 11th free) or gifts. Again, sport consumers participate or perform the behavior because of the extrinsic reward, not because they truly believe in the content. Many fan-loyalty programs are examples of using extrinsic rewards to influence behavior, as are giveaway plans (e.g., "Baseball Cap Night") designed to lure fans into a venue. In this situation, the removal of the external reward often signifies the end of the relationship. Furthermore, if the rewards or punishment driving the relationship become unattractive, sports consumers are likely to look somewhere else.

The consequence of compliance as an attitudinal position often is a relationship that is maintained through public social behavior, such as when the sports consumer's reaction is visible to relevant others (friends, family, or other fans). Additionally, the relationship is maintained only if it continues to meet the sports consumer's goal of gaining social rewards or avoiding public punishment. A final consequence of compliance is that behavior and relationship characteristics are guided through relevant social settings. In a sports setting, sports consumers must follow certain rules of behavior to receive social recognition or avoid public embarrassment or punishment. Compliance, as a level of influence, corresponds to the transactional

approach to relationship marketing; it is based on extrinsic factors, is short-term, and often serves as a first step in relationship formation.

Identification

Of the three levels of influence, identification has been studied in the context of sport significantly more than either compliance or internalization (Cialdini, Borden, Thorne, Walker, Freeman, & Sloan, 1976; Laverie & Arnett, 2000; Wann & Branscombe, 1990). One particular area of identification research that has received considerable attention is the tendency for sport spectators to bask in reflected glory (BIRG), originally introduced by Cialdini et al. The tendency to BIRG is a self-esteem function, where being associated with someone else's success is very similar to personal success. Identification and association with a successful team or player improves an individual's self-esteem. This research was extended to include cutting off reflected failure (CORFing), which is also a self-esteem function whereby individuals increase the distance between themselves and unsuccessful groups or teams. This disassociation is an attempt to protect self-esteem. These findings suggest that consumers feel personal success or defeat based on their favorite team or player's performance. Further research has found that a highly identified fan has a greater likelihood of BIRGing and a lower likelihood of CORFing.

Kelman (1961) offered a very similar description of identification, which occurs when an individual wants to maintain or enhance his or her own image through a relationship with another individual or group. Based on Kelman's framework, the individual actually does believe in the change, but only because of the associated identifying relationship. Identification is defined as the perceived overlap of one's own self-concept with the identity of the sport organization, team, or player. Antecedents of identification are linked to the social recognition or value of the relationship with the sports organization, team, or players. Identification is related to team, organization, or player success or failure and consumer satisfaction with the sports team, organization, or player. Ideally, the team, organization, or players occupy an attractive role in the minds of the sports consumer. In this case, sports consumers are likely to establish or maintain relationships based on role attractiveness, which leads consumers to identify with an athlete or team. Arnett, German, and Hunt (2003) proposed that consumer identity salience is an important predictor of relationship marketing success. Therefore, the highly identified sports fan not only has a greater likelihood of BIRGing, but also is more likely to maintain and engage in a successful relationship.

A relationship based on identification is maintained if it is viewed as relevant and attractive. The relationship must continue to provide the desired self-esteem functions, reinforcement, or enhancement. In addition, the relationship must continue to be attractive to the individual consumer. For example, if a sports team is successful and the consumer views this relationship as attractive, the relationship is more likely to be maintained.

The process of identification influences not only relationship maintenance, but also subsequent behavior. An important aspect of identification as a form of social influence is the external motivation that is present. An individual forms a relationship with a group in order to maintain his or her self-definition. In this case, the individual behaves in accordance with group norms and expectations (sports team or organization). Relationship behavior on the part of the consumer is based on role expectations in the specific sport context. Although the individual believes in the behaviors exhibited, he or she is still dependent on the external reference group. Many sports phenomena involve identification with individual athletes or teams, and these phenomena often form the basis of relationships (e.g., Kahle & Homer, 1985).

Internalization

Although it appears that identification has been studied most extensively in the context of sport and relationship marketing, recent research has failed to differentiate between aspects of identification and internalization (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003). However, in the context of Kelman's framework, identification and internalization are separate concepts. Internalization results when an individual's behavior is influenced through shared values. The actual behavior is important to the individual, who adopts it because of this significance. Internalization is more enduring and long-term, whereas compliance and identification are more superficial. Relationship formation at the level of internalization is consistent with the relational exchange perspective.

Kelman (1961) proposed that this type of social influence is the result of value similarity. Values are relatively enduring beliefs that consumers have about specific modes of conduct or end states (Kahle, 1996; Sarnoff & Katz, 1954). Sports fan relationships are the result of deeply held beliefs that are congruent with the sports team or individual players. Internalized behavior is less likely to be influenced by external incentives and role expectations. Values of the individual are consistent with the content of the resulting behavior. In the context of sports marketing, relationships are likely to become long-term and endure when the values of

the sports organization, team, marketing entity, or players connect to those of their target consumer. This type of relationship is likely to be initiated if a sports consumer or organization is viewed as a way to maximize individual values.

“... compliance should have the lowest levels of relationship commitment and duration, whereas internalization should result in the greatest level of relationship initiation, commitment, and duration.”

In an organizational context, Morgan and Hunt (1994) found that shared values lead to trust and increased commitment in relationships. This result occurs because value-enhanced relationships occur at the highest level in Kelman's hierarchy. Kahle (1996) has shown that many relationships and marketing activities are enhanced when the values of the consumers receive maximal attention. Batra, Homer, and Kahle (2001) showed that values are antecedent to social normative influence, which in turn influences the perception of situational attributes. Homer and Kahle (1988) similarly showed that values influence attitudes, which in turn influence behaviors of consumers. These results suggest that behavioral consistency is the strongest when values are aligned with relationship expectations.

Fan behavior is most intense when fans believe that the team or athletes represent their values and when sports organizations, teams, players, and coaches are respected and viewed as trustworthy and credible. For example, at this highest level in Kelman's hierarchy fans likely appreciate teams or athletes in spite of their on-field success. Relationships cemented in values withstand external threats more easily than relationships at the compliance or identification level. Relationships are maintained if they continue to maximize consumer values.

Organizations should try to match the values of their target consumers with the values of the sports team or organization. Additionally, marketing efforts should strive to demonstrate those values to various groups through an integrated marketing strategy. For example, if a group of consumers feels that a sense of belonging is important, the sports organization should emphasize a family atmosphere that is conducive to social interaction. On the other hand, if having fun is most important to target consumers, then the sports organization should demonstrate this perspective to the target consumers through marketing campaigns (i.e., demonstrate that the experience of attending a game or wearing a sports-related product is fun). Relationships developed at this level are of the utmost importance to

sports organizations. Marketing efforts should be directed towards developing shared values between the sports organization and the consumer.

Practical Implications

In practice, many firms and organizations take a very narrow approach to relationship marketing and often use basic database techniques and information. For example, organizations often collect simple demographic information and purchasing behavior information, such as the amount paid, the type of product purchased, where the product was purchased, and if it was a repeat purchase. However, this information does not explain *why* a particular product or service was purchased for a certain price or in a particular location. This type of information also does not provide information regarding the likelihood of a repeat purchase or why a consumer chooses to make a repeat purchase. It misses much of the dynamic complexity of the behavior of sports fans.

Social influence at the level of compliance tends to be superficial and the result of external influence. Relationships formed through identification occur at a slightly deeper level than compliance, where affiliation is based on attractiveness and role definition; however, identification is still externally motivated. Relationships that are internalized and based on shared values have the deepest level of influence and are the most durable and consistent. Although all three levels of social influence are important in relationship formation and maintenance, sports organizations should strive to move consumers from levels of compliance and identification to internalization. In practical terms this means that sports organizations need to go deeper and move the consumer from a transactional exchange based on rewards to a relational interaction focused on mutual exchange and shared values. This advance will require the use of psychographic data (Kahle & Chiagouris, 1997).

Compliance is useful for initially introducing consumers to the role of sports consumer; however, further support is needed to create a long-lasting relationship between the sports organization and the sports consumer. Kahle et al. (1996) showed that camaraderie dominates sports fans at this level. Organizations can promote compliance and camaraderie by encouraging group activities, such as purchasing tickets for organizational outings or employee reward programs. Gifts are the mechanism of relationship building that most often come into play at this level. Hospitality also can be structured to emphasize hedonic rewards.

Sports organizations then must find a way to enhance sports consumers' self-concept in order to

lead them from the compliance stage to the identification stage. Identification leads sports consumers to form a psychological attachment with sports teams or individual athletes. Identification can be influenced through external circumstances, such as team or athlete success. The sports organization must be visible, attractive, and desirable to the sports consumer. Kahle et al. (1996) found that identification with winning, self-definition, and self-expression dominate this stage. Providing role models and examples of excellence should enhance relationships at this stage. Promoting licensed goods also should influence successful entry into the level of identification. Gifts that link the owner with the team or star athlete are an important mechanism of this stage, as is sports talk about such topics as heroics. Hospitality that emphasizes interaction with athletic stars also drives identification.

Although identification provides a stronger bond than compliance, relationships based on internalization offer the strongest relationship affiliation. To achieve internalization, sports organizations must promote values that are similar to their target consumers and are viewed as credible and trustworthy. The relationship becomes meaningful to the consumer and results in longer-term support. Sharing sports information provides power to internalized relationships. Thus, sports talk provides the most efficient mechanism to enhance relationships at this stage as well as hospitality that emphasizes value-related information. Often relationships at this level wrap themselves up within the nuances of sports information.

Future Research

The functional model of relationship marketing in sport presents testable guidelines for understanding consumer behavior in the context of sport. Future research in this area should examine how the three approaches to attitude change and/or influence the formation and duration of relationships. For example, compliance should have the lowest levels of relationship commitment and duration, whereas internalization should result in the greatest level of relationship initiation, commitment, and duration. Research should also assess the direct influence of antecedents on attitude formation and change. An experimental methodology could explore the manipulation of antecedents and examine the consequences for each of the levels of attitude change in the context of sports marketing. This approach would test the hierarchical framework proposed. Another avenue for research is an examination of how trust, values, and involvement influence the attitude change process, relationship formation and maintenance, and their role within the functional framework.

Conclusion

Relationships are among the most important and powerful aspects of sports marketing. Kelman's functional theory of attitudes provides a psychographic mechanism that aids in understanding the nature of compliance, identification, and internalization relationships. With this perspective we can begin to understand the basis, source, and power of antecedents of relationships as well as the conditions of performance, change, and behavior systems of inducement for the consequent side. A great deal more research is necessary, and full usage of relationship marketing will emerge only when theories help us understand sports relationships in their full complexity.

References

- Anderson, J. C., & Narus, J. A. (1991). Partnering as a focused market strategy. *California Management Review*, 33, 95-113.
- Arnett, D. B., German, S. D., & Hunt, S. D. (2003). The identity salience model of relationship marketing success: The case of nonprofit marketing. *Journal of Marketing*, 67, 89-105.
- Batra, R., Homer, P. M., & Kahle, L. R. (2001). Values, susceptibility to interpersonal influence, and attribute importance weights: A nomological analysis. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 11, 115-128.
- Beatty, S. E., Kahle, L. R., & Homer, P. (1991, March). Personal values and gift giving behavior: A study across cultures. *Journal of Business Research*, 20, 183-190.
- Berry, L. L. (1983). Relationship marketing. In L. L. Berry, G. L. Shostack, & G. D. Upham (Eds.), *Emerging perspectives on services marketing* (pp. 25-38). Chicago: American Marketing Association.
- Berry, L. L. (1995, Fall). Relationship marketing of services—Growing interest, emerging perspectives. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 23, 236-245.
- Bhattacharya, C. B., & Sen, S. (2003). Consumer—company identification: A framework for understanding consumers' relationships with companies. *Journal of Marketing*, 67, 76-88.
- Cialdini, R. B., Borden, R. J., Walker, M. R., Freeman, S., & Sloan, L. R. (1976). Basking in reflected glory: Three (football) field studies. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 57, 626-631.
- Doney, P. M., & Cannon, J. P. (1997). An examination of the nature of trust in buyer-seller relationships. *Journal of Marketing*, 61, 35-51.
- Dwyer, F. R., Schurr, P. H., & Oh, S. (1987). Developing buyer-seller relationships. *Journal of Marketing*, 51, 11-27.
- Eagly, A. H., & Chaiken, S. (1993). The nature of attitudes. *The psychology of attitudes* (pp. 1-22). Orlando, FL: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.
- Garbarino, E., & Johnson, M. S. (1999, April). The different roles of satisfaction, trust, and commitment in customer relationships. *Journal of Marketing*, 63, 70-87.
- Homer, P. M., & Kahle, L. R. (1988, April). A structural equation test of the value-attitude-behavior hierarchy. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 54, 638-646.
- Kahle, L. R. (1996). Social values and consumer behavior: Research from the list of values. In C. Seligman, J. M. Olson, & M. P. Zanna (Eds.), *The psychology of values: The Ontario symposium* (Vol. 8, pp. 135-151). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Kahle, L. R., & Berman, J. (1979). Attitudes cause behaviors: A cross-lagged panel analysis. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 37, 315-321.
- Kahle, L. R., & L. Chiagouris (Eds.). (1997). *Values, lifestyles, and psychographics*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Kahle, L. R., Elton, M. P., & Kambara, K. M. (1997). Sports talk and the development of marketing relationships. *Sport Marketing Quarterly*, 6(2), 35-40.
- Kahle, L. R., & Homer, P. M. (1985). Physical attractiveness of the celebrity endorser: A social adaptation perspective. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 11, 954-961.
- Kahle, L. R., Kambara, K. M., & Rose, G. M. (1996). A functional model of fan attendance motivations for college football. *Sport Marketing Quarterly*, 5, 51-60.
- Kelman, H. C. (1958). Compliance, identification, and internalization: Three processes of attitude change. *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 2, 218-227.
- Kelman, H. C. (1961). Processes of opinion change. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 25(1), 57-78.
- Laverie, D. A., & Arnett, D. B. (2000). Factors affecting fan attendance: The influence of identity salience and satisfaction. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 32, 225-246.
- Lutz, R. J. (1991). The role of attitude theory in marketing. In T. S. Robertson & H. H. Kassarian (Eds.), *Handbook of consumer behavior* (pp. 317-339). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- McAlexander, J. H., Schouten, J. W., & Koenig, H. F. (2002). Building brand community. *Journal of Marketing*, 66, 38-54.
- Moorman, C., Deshpande, R., & Zaltman, G. (1993). Factors affecting trust in market research relationships. *Journal of Marketing*, 57, 81-100.
- Morgan, R. M., & Hunt, S. D. (1994, July). The commitment-trust theory of relationship marketing. *Journal of Marketing*, 58, 20-38.
- Parvatiyar, A., & Sheth, J. N. (2001). The domain and conceptual foundations of relationship marketing. In J. N. Sheth & A. Parvatiyar (Eds.), *Handbook of relationship marketing* (pp. 3-38). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Sarnoff, I., & Katz, D. (1954). The motivational bases of attitude change. *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, 49, 115-124.
- Sheth, J. N., & Parvatiyar, A. (1995). Relationship marketing in consumer markets: Antecedents and consequences. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 23(4), 255-271.
- Sirdeshmukh, D., Singh, J., & Sabol, B. (2002). Consumer trust, value, and loyalty in relational exchanges. *Journal of Marketing*, 66, 15-37.
- Smith, J. B., & Barclay, D. W. (1997, January). The effects of organizational differences and trust on the effectiveness of selling partner relationships. *Journal of Marketing*, 61, 3-21.
- Wann, D. L., & Branscombe, N. R. (1990). Die-hard and fair-weather fans: Effects of identification on BIRGing and CORFing tendencies. *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*, 14(2), 103-107.

Copyright of *Sport Marketing Quarterly* is the property of Fitness Information Technology, Inc. and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.