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The Sport Marketing Portfolio Matrix: How Brand Relevance Aligns with Fan Behavior

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Many fan behavior studies leave applications for strategic sport marketing as afterthoughts. Likewise, studies of sport marketing practices often ignore the complexities of fan psychology. The purpose of this work is to propose a new model that accurately categorizes sport products, better recognizes fan behaviors, and provides sound guidance to sport marketers. The work applies the well-established theory of portfolio management (wherein, investors strive to receive higher returns with lower risks by managing an assortment of investments). Herein, sport fans are viewed as investors that “buy,” “hold,” and “sell” athletes and teams. From sport to sport and season to season, fans manage their portfolios in line with personal goals, values, and social influences. Portfolio theory provides a solid foundation for theoretical integration.

The emergent Sport Marketing Portfolio Matrix utilizes axes of brand relevance and fan behavior. Brand relevance has been defined in terms of overall brand importance, the overarching role that a brand plays in decision-making, and the decision weight of a brand (Fischer, et al., 2010). Buy, sell, and hold behaviors then correspond primarily to BIRG/BIRF/CORF/CORS behaviors (Cialdini et al., 1976; Campbell et al., 2004). Six proposed categories of sport products (i.e., teams and/or athletes) are placed within the matrix and discussed in terms of consumer behavior, specifically: *Hidden Gems*, *Blue Chips*, *Rescue Dogs*, *Mascots*, *Castoffs*, and *Harvests*. Each of these products has implications for sport scholars as well as practitioners. Research-worthy propositions are derived and discussed throughout the work.

Keywords: *Sport Marketing, Portfolio Theory, Fan Behavior, Brand Relevance*

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