

Examining the Latent Market for Professional Sport Organizations as a Sociocultural Resource.

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Experts have argued that sports render significant changes to society. Sporting events and clubs create social capital and contribute in solving various community problems (Nicholson & Hoyer, 2008; Okayasu et al., 2010). The community value of professional sport has been identified in previous research (Zhang et al., 1996). When a new professional team is established, economical and socio-psychological impacts are observed in the community and among fans and spectators (James et al., 2002; Lock et al., 2009; Nigel et al., 2011). Matsuoka, Koto, and Yanagi (2011) explored the important pieces of evidence that a newly established sport team has a positive influence on spectators' perceptions on the community value of the sport team; data from spectators of professional basketball showed the psychological commitment of fans to their hometown. These findings prove the significant value of professional sport teams as well as the role of professional sport to encourage community participation among sport fans. Such social impacts may apply to not only spectators but also non-spectators in a community who can be included in the latent market of professional sport

organizations. However, limited empirical research has been conducted to investigate the impacts of professional sport organizations from multiple perspectives. Particularly, perceptions of non-spectators have not been examined because of the difficulty in collecting data. By using data from citizens living in five different hometowns of professional sport clubs and teams in Japan, the present study examined respondents' perceptions on the benefit of watching professional sports and the extent of clubs' and teams' contributions toward their community. Internet survey was conducted in five cities in which professional baseball teams and/or soccer clubs were located. A total of 1,445 respondents answered all the question items. The respondents consisted of those who had experiences in attending games of professional sport teams or clubs and those who had never attended any games during the last two years or more. Findings prove the significant value of professional sport clubs and teams and the role they play in encouraging community involvement. Specific findings and their implications for the academic field and for sport marketers will be presented.