Full Length Research Paper

Antecedents and consequences of Formula One spectators’ fanship: The case of inaugural Grand Prix

Kyu-soo Chung¹* and Geumchan Hwang²

¹Winston-Salem State University, United States.  
²Northern State University, United States.

Received 28 May 2015; Accepted 17 August 2015

The Formula One market, with its once-a-year international events, has a quality rather different from that of most traditional sports. This study examined how F1 spectators’ fanship transits their event pre-visit characteristics to their on-site outcomes. The study surveyed a sample of 337 spectators who were visiting the event for the first time. Using self-administered questionnaires, the participants provided information about media consumption, parasocial interaction, fanship, event satisfaction, and their likelihood of attending the event again. The results of structural equation modeling suggested that spectators’ media consumption and parasocial interaction with a favorite driver affected together F1 fanship. The fanship then influenced their event satisfaction and revisit intentions. The study suggests marketing strategies for F1 Grand Prix, particularly those of inaugural events. This can be implemented to leverage an F1 event toward solidifying the sport in a new market.

Key words: Fanship, parasocial interaction, formula one, spectators, inaugural sporting event.

INTRODUCTION

Formula One’s worldwide television viewership was estimated, in 2012, to be more than 500 million (Sylt, 2013). What makes the F1 Grand Prix unique from other major sporting events is its once-a-year occurrence at the hosting destination. Although the event’s rarity might be a winning strategy for F1’s governing body, it poses several challenges to each host city’s organization responsible for running the F1 Grand Prix. Such a difficult task becomes even more arduous for an inaugural event because the lack of precedent limits the capacity to predict the number of attendees or their behavior. Marketers are left to struggle selling tickets and designing marketing activities without any accumulated information to draw on.

In spite of a number of systemic approaches to examining major sporting events’ spectator behaviors, few psychological and behavioral characteristics of F1 spectators have been existed to date (Donahay and Rosenberger, 2007; Hartmann et al., 2008; Kim et al., 2013; Quester and Farrelly, 1998). For example, Kim et al. (2013) studied Shanghai F1 spectators regarding the relationship between their social motivations and event revisit intention. The study found that spectators’ revisit intentions are affected by salubrious effects as well as...
achievement seeking. Donahay and Rosenberger (2007) examined how racing team performance and a sponsor’s similarity to a sponsored event influence the image-transfer process of Australian F1 spectators. The results revealed that similarity indeed had a significant effect on the image-transfer process, though the effect of team performance was found to be slight.

These studies provide valuable information on F1 spectators’ behaviors; however, they were performed using F1 spectators in a firmly established market. They do not go so far as to specify aspects of how F1 spectators consume and enjoy the sport, particularly in a new market. Compared to the exposure of sport spectators of classical and successful sport entities (e.g., the NFL, NBA, or MLB), F1 spectators get only slight daily exposure to the sport’s live events and related subcultures. To attend an event again, for example, most F1 spectators have to wait a year. These are obvious obstacles to the sport taking root in a new market. Therefore, two research questions linger: How do F1 spectators who have never been to a live F1 event develop their fanship and what does it take to make them attend the event? Further, what is necessary to make them, in spite of the sport’s weakly developed market condition, visit a second time? Having answers to such questions would help F1 event organizations more effectively market the event in inaugural locations and nourish the incipient fan base.

One answer to these questions could be the developing of fanship (cf. Stacy et al., 2008). Sport fanship refers to the tendencies of sport consumers regarding a particular sport and its related culture. One of a variety of indicators of fanship is a fan’s media usage. This is particularly true for F1 fans who have limited chances to attend a race. Media is the sole vehicle where these fans can initiate and maintain their fanship in F1 regardless of their locations. Sport fanship can also be explained by parasocial interaction with a favorite athlete. Parasocial interaction refers to a cognitive process in which sport fans treat their favorite athletes as though they were close friends or neighbors. Fans have a lot of information about athletes but athletes have little about their fans. A number of studies in sport consumer behavior have been studied, as a major part of sport fanship, team identification (Wann and Branscombe, 1993; Wann and Pierce, 2003). F1 fans, however, tend to follow not a racing team but only a particular racer. Thus, researchers might be able to discover more dimensions of sport fanship by examining F1 fans’ parasocial interaction with individual racers.

The degree of sport fanship is a strong determinant of the frequency and quality of sport consumption (Amato et al., 2005). Once F1 spectators visit an F1 event for the first time, the extent to which they are satisfied with it depends largely on their fanship. The degree of satisfaction then affects the spectators’ intentions to visit the event again (Madrigal, 1995; Shonk and Chelladurai, 2008; Yoshida and James, 2010). This sequence becomes more obvious for a consumer who first experiences the benefits of a product and who have fewer opportunities to consume such products. Sport fans’ intention to go to an event again is also affected directly by the degree of their fanship (Suh et al., 2013). Although a number of studies have dealt with the mechanisms of developing and maintaining fanship in various sports, few have looked for such mechanisms for F1 spectators who need to develop their fanship with once-a-year event (cf. Kim et al., 2013; Spinda et al., 2009).

Hosting international mega sporting events come with a number of liabilities—building new infrastructure and the tremendous cost of putting it on. A prime example for this is an F1 venue. It is not uncommon to see an F1 Grand Prix be discontinued after a country runs the event only a couple of times (e.g., South Korea, Mexico, India). What shapes the fanship of F1 spectators prior to their first visit? What does it take for them to make a second visit? Having a firm grasp on the answers to such questions could be critical for the F1 organization to continue to thrive. Thus, the purpose of this study is to test a conceptual framework that consists of several antecedents and consequences of F1 fanship. Specifically, the study aims at finding the effects of media usage and parasocial interaction on F1 fanship and finding those of fanship and event satisfaction on revisit intention. By knowing the dynamics of these factors and confirming the conceptual fit of the model, the study aims to provide information that is vital to customizing F1 Grand Prix marketing activities accordingly and to finding an appropriate platform to deliver the program.

Theoretical background and hypotheses

The antecedents of F1 fanship: Media consumption and parasocial interaction

A number of studies regarding sport consumer behavior have interchangeably used the term ‘fanship’ and ‘team identification’ (Gantz and Wenner, 1995; Reysen and Branscombe, 2010; Wann and Branscombe, 1993). Fanship refers to an individual’s sense of connection to a sport team while team identification means the degree to which a fan internally connects with a favorite team (Reysen and Branscombe, 2010; Wann and Branscombe, 1993). Despite how well these concepts fit with team sports, Gantz and Wenner (1995) insisted that the form and quality of fanship vary according to sport. A prime example of a sport that bears little team identification is motorsports. Thus, this study should operate F1 fanship by fans’ self-perception of belonging to a sport, apart from supporting a particular racing team. By employing
such a definition, this study has been able to explore the dynamics of antecedents and consequences of F1 fanship. One antecedent of sport fanship is sport-related media involvement. Gantz and Wenner (1995) stated that sport fans are more likely than non-fans to use the media to discover information regarding their favorite team and athlete. The influences of media consumption are becoming more pervasive with devices that allow people to easily access sport media (Clavio et al., 2013; Kassing and Sanderson, 2010). F1’s worldwide tours are such that a country is host to only one Grand Prix a year. Being a spectator at a live F1 Gran Prix, then, is not a pursuit brought off causally. The media’s ubiquity has been more compelling for F1 fans in accessing the sport. It is media that enables fans to follow racing news during the racing season and the off-season. Media resources are the primary way to maintain F1 fanship, short of having fans tour with the circuit. Amato and colleagues (2005) categorized NASCAR fans, by their amount of consumption of NASCAR, into three groups. The study found that media exposure of hardcore fans was greater than that of moderate and casual fans. In other sports, a number of studies have identified that the amount of consuming media is positively related to the level of fanship (e.g., Lee et al., 2013; Phua, 2010; Stavros et al., in press). For example, Phua (2010) found a substantial degree of association between fan identification and media use. Although such relations have been frequently tested in the context of team sports, we have little information on how F1 consumers’ fanship is affected by their media use. Revealing the effect of media consumption on F1 fanship would become more important because unlike with other sports, F1 fanship is predominantly shaped by media. It is thus hypothesized that the more F1 spectators access media contents, the greater their fanship (Figure 1).

**Hypothesis 1:** F1 spectators’ media consumption will have a significant positive impact on the degree of their fanship.

Media audiences occasionally treat a media figure as if he were their close friend or neighbor. Researchers refer to this phenomenon as a parasocial interaction (Auter and Palmgreen, 2000; Giles, 2002; Rubin and McHugh, 1987; Rubin et al., 1985). Parasocial interaction refers to the relationships between users of mass media and media figures appearing in the media (Auter and Palmgreen, 2000; Giles, 2002). The media audiences know a great deal about their preferred media figure while the media figure knows of course little about his or her fans. Parasocial interaction is a direct outcome of consuming media, mediated by audiences’ internal characteristics such as perceived realism, perceived similarity, and social and task attraction as well as by the media figure’s personal traits such as looks, behavior, and speech. Parasocial interaction then produces media audiences’ various outcomes in terms of their affiliation with their favorite athletes (Frederick et al., 2012; Sanderson, 2008; Sun, 2010; Sun and Wu, 2012).

Little regional association exists in F1 whereas most professional and collegiate sport teams market their team via hometown attachment and strong regional bond (cf. Kraszewski, 2008). Such a lack of regional association with the sport becomes more salient for F1 teams because of the team’s multinational characters and excessive orientation toward global corporate sponsors. Even though all the racers represent their team, F1 fans are apt to follow only their favorite racer. Because of the fans’ strong proclivity to follow individual racers, this one-sided interaction prevails in such motorsports as F1.

Hartmann et al. (2008) investigated German F1 TV viewers who followed every race. Their study was concerned with how the viewers’ positive or negative parasocial interactions with a racer affected their level of suspense-mediated by their hope for a particular outcome for a favorite or despised racer. The results revealed that the level of suspense was affected by a positive parasocial interaction with a favorite racer. The mediating effect of hope was significant. Spinda et al. (2009) found a positive correlation between NASCAR fans’ parasocial interaction and their audience behavior. Although such relationship is reciprocal, media exposure is more likely to cause parasocial interaction as an outcome. Hence, this study hypothesizes that F1 spectators’ parasocial interaction is substantially affected by their media consumption (Figure 1).

**Hypothesis 2:** F1 spectators’ media consumption will have a significant positive impact on the degree of their parasocial interaction with a favorite F1 racer.

Spinda et al. (2009) found a positive relationship between NASCAR fans’ parasocial interaction and their NASCAR fanship. Still, it is necessary to know the causal effect of parasocial interaction on F1 fanship. Finding this would add an additional dimension of understanding sport fanship. It is thus hypothesized that F1 spectators’ parasocial interaction affects their degree of F1 sport fanship (Figure 1).

**Hypothesis 3:** F1 spectators’ parasocial interaction will have a significant positive impact on the degree of their F1 fanship.

**The consequences of F1 fanship: Event satisfaction and re-visit Intentions**

Scholars refer to that pleasurable fulfillment that immediately arises from one’s consumption experience as satisfaction (Mano and Oliver, 1993; Oliver, 2010). A fan’s satisfaction with a sporting event is one outcome of fanship (Bodet and Bernache-Assollant, 2011; Madrigal,
For example, sport fans tend to evaluate their subjective experience, while attending a live sporting event, by using a prior base of reference. In doing so, sport fanship takes on a crucial role in affecting such a cognitive judgment as event satisfaction. It is more likely that higher fanship leads them to be satisfied with their sport experience (Madrigal, 1995; Trail et al., 2005). Measuring this causal effect of fanship would be important because spectators, even for those who visit the event first time, go to an event holding a certain degree of fanship. We have little information on how the fanship of first time event attendees affects their satisfaction with the event experience. Hence, this study hypothesizes that F1 spectators’ fanship affects the degree of their event satisfaction (Figure 1).

**Hypothesis 4:** F1 spectators’ fanship will have a significant positive impact on the degree of their event satisfaction.

A major area of interest for sport managers and marketers has been the spectators’ intention to revisit an event. Indeed, attracting new spectators costs several times more than retaining existing ones (Mullin et al., 2007). Attending the event is one indicator of a person’s fanship to the sport. In fact, one criterion for grouping NASCAR fans for Amato et al. (2005) was the frequency with which fans attended a racing event. It is more likely that sport fans want to visit a sporting event frequently (Amato et al., 2005; Spinda et al., 2009). Thus, it is hypothesized that the greater fanship of F1 spectators the more they are determined to visit the event again (Figure 1).

**Hypothesis 5:** F1 spectators’ fanship will have a significant positive impact on the degree of their intention to revisit the event.

A number of studies in sport consumer behavior found a positive relationship between satisfaction and intention to visit an event again (e.g., Kuenzel and Yassim, 2007; Shonk and Chelladurai, 2008; Yoshida and James, 2010). Thus, the study hypothesizes that F1 spectators’ satisfaction affects the degree of their intentions to revisit the event (Figure 1).

**Hypothesis 6:** F1 spectators’ satisfaction will have a significant positive impact on the degree of their intention to revisit an event.

Finally, the designed theoretical framework includes two constructs partially mediating the relationships among the constructs (Figure 1). The first mediating effect is parasocial interaction on the relationship between F1 spectators’ media consumption and their fanship. The second is that of satisfaction on the relationship between F1 spectators’ fanship and their intentions to revisit the event.

**METHOD**

**Sample and procedure**

In 2010, South Korea hosted its inaugural F1 Grand Prix. The occasion seemed appropriate for examining spectators who were...
Table 1. Item descriptions and Mean.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construct</th>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Mean (SD)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Media consumption</td>
<td>How frequently do you watch F1 in television?</td>
<td>3.82 (1.71)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How frequently do you read F1 in newspaper or magazine?</td>
<td>3.83 (1.73)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How frequently do you search F1 in the Internet?</td>
<td>3.69 (1.71)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parasocial interaction</td>
<td>To what degree do you want to meet your favorite driver in person?</td>
<td>5.47 (1.68)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To what degree would you follow your driver if he/she switches the team?</td>
<td>5.05 (1.60)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To what degree would you feel sorry when your driver makes a mistake?</td>
<td>5.01 (1.60)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F1 fanship</td>
<td>To what degree do you consider yourself to be a F1 fan?</td>
<td>3.72 (1.53)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To what degree does your friend consider yourself to be a F1 fan?</td>
<td>3.17 (1.62)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To what degree is it important to be a F1 fan?</td>
<td>3.52 (1.61)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Event satisfaction</td>
<td>To what degree do you satisfy with the experience of this event?</td>
<td>4.53 (1.61)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To what degree do you generally satisfy with this event?</td>
<td>4.72 (1.59)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To what degree do you satisfy with your decision to attend this event?</td>
<td>4.26 (1.61)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revisit intention</td>
<td>How likely would you return to this event for next year?</td>
<td>4.62 (1.59)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How likely would you select this event among all other sporting events?</td>
<td>4.22 (1.61)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How likely would you select this event among all the events?</td>
<td>4.26 (1.61)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

for the first time attending an F1 racing events. With the approval of the hosting organization, self-administered questionnaires were conveniently distributed to spectators in the grandstand area with researchers standing by available to answer questions. The investigators on hand distributed the survey to their assigned sections, all at the same time, during the race. Only spectators in the main grandstand area were asked to complete the survey. They were asked to check if the visit was their first. Data from 337 first-time spectators were collected. The sample consisted of 188 males and 149 females. The majority were bachelor degree holders (57.9%) and their mean age was 33 years old.

**Measurement**

Every item of each construct was asked using a 7-point Likert-type. All the items were employed from previous studies with slight adjustment to fit into the context of a Korean motor racing event. A translation/back-translation was employed to maintain linguistic equivalence between Korean and English (Su and Parham, 2002). Regarding media consumption, participants were asked how frequently they consumed F1-related news on the television, newspaper/magazine, and the Internet. Parasocial interaction included three items taken from Spinda et al. (2009). Three items measured participants’ F1 fanship (Wann and Branscombe, 1993; Wann and Pierce, 2003). To measure satisfaction, three items were adopted from Yoshida and James (2010) and Madrigal (1995). Finally, three items were used to measure spectators’ intention to revisit (Shonk and Chelladurai, 2008). Table 1 shows a description of all the constructs. All the reliabilities and correlations among constructs are set out in Table 2.

**Data analysis**

The study first performed confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to check the validation of measurement model. Using structural equation modeling (SEM), the study then examined the effects of designed constructs on dependent outcomes. Specifically, SEM tested the hypothesized model’s conceptual fit for the population and assessed various causal relationships including mediating effects (Figure 1). The bootstrapping method, by maximum likelihood, was used to identify the significance of indirect effects partly designed in the model.

**RESULTS**

**Measurement model**

The measurement model was analyzed through CFA. The results of the $\chi^2$ test were found to be significant ($p < .001$). However, the ratio of $\chi^2$ to the degree of freedom was less than 3, suggesting its acceptance ($167.91/80 = 2.10$). According to a set of guidelines (Schreiber et al., 2006), the measurement model achieved an acceptable fit for the data (CFI = .98, IFI = .98, TLI = .97, RMSEA = .06).

In terms of the model’s convergent validity, all the model’ constructs showed acceptable levels of average variance extracted (AVE), ranging from .53 to .82 (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). All items loaded on their respective construct ranged from .67 to .95 with all significant $t$ values of $>.001$ levels (Baggozi and Yi, 1988). Finally, composite reliabilities ranged from .92 to .98 (Nunnally, 1978). All these results were enough to suggest the model’s convergent validities.

Discriminant validity was achieved by two results. First,
all the study’s correlations between latent constructs ranged from .29 to .61 – clearly lower than .85 (Kline, 2010). Second, the largest squared correlation was .38 between media consumption and F1 fanship, lower than the smallest AVE of .53 on parasocial (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). An acceptable fit of the measurement model for the data led the study to perform comprehensive model testing.

**Structural model testing**

The hypothesized structural model was tested through SEM. First, the ratio of $\chi^2$ to the degree of freedom was 2.32, although the $\chi^2$ test was found to be significant ($p < .001$). The selected approximation fit indices were .97 of CFI, .96 of TLI, .97 of IFI, and .06 of RMSEA (Schreiber et al., 2006). Based on these results, the significance and magnitude of each hypothesized path were then examined.

Regarding the hypotheses on the effects of media consumption and parasocial interaction on F1 fanship (H1, H2, and H3), all the paths were found to be significant. Media consumption significantly affected parasocial interaction ($\gamma_1 = .29$, $p < .001$) and F1 fanship ($\gamma_2 = .55$, $p < .001$). F1 fanship was also influenced by parasocial interaction ($\beta_3 = .25$, $p < .001$). Hence, all the designed hypotheses were supported.

Regarding the hypotheses on the effects of F1 fanship and satisfaction on re-visit intention (H4, H5, and H6), all designed hypotheses were also adopted. Satisfaction was significantly affected by F1 fanship ($\beta_4 = .47$, $p < .001$). F1 fanship had a direct impact on re-visit intention as well ($\beta_5 = .44$, $p < .001$). Finally, the effect of satisfaction on re-visit intentions was significant ($\beta_6 = .34$, $p < .001$). All the hypotheses were found to be significant.

According to the bootstrapping technique, all the indirect effects were found to be significant at .05 level. Figure 1 specifically describes the magnitudes of the each path in the structural model.

**DISCUSSION**

The main purpose of the study was to test a conceptual framework consisting of several antecedents and consequences of F1 fanship. The results reveal how F1 fanship plays a role in transmitting the spectators’ event pre-visit characteristics to their on-site outcomes. As expected, working together to affect F1 fanship were spectators’ media consumption and their parasocial interaction with a favorite racer. The mediating effect of parasocial interaction on the relationship between media consumption and fanship describes well the unique aspect of motorsport fanship. The study of Amato and colleagues (2005) suggested greater media consumption among motorsport fans with higher degree of fanship. In addition, Spinda and colleagues (2009) found a positive correlation between motorsport fans’ parasocial interaction with a favorite racer and their sport fanship. Given these results, it is quite reasonable to see in the relationship between media consumption and fanship the mediating role of parasocial interaction. This seems even more evident because a typical characteristic of a motorsport fan is a weak identification with a racing team. It may be argued that parasocial interaction could easily occur in other sports and that fans could shape parasocial interaction with a certain athlete regardless of team affiliation. However, the importance of parasocial interaction in F1 fanship gains credence when comparing NASCAR with F1. NASCAR has been successful at marketing individual racers by highlighting on their racing cars their name and number (Ryan, 2013). F1 might be more popular in a new market if people there found racers they could associate with.

Paired with parasocial interaction, spectators’ media consumption has the greatest influence on F1 fanship. A number of studies have studied sport fans’ behavior on online social media (Clavio and Kian, 2010; Kassing and Sanderson, 2010). For example, Clavio and Kian (2010) found sport consumers use online social media to express their parasocial interaction with their favorite athletes. In addition, a number of studies have reported a substantial relation between parasocial interaction and fanship (Spinda et al., 2009; Stever and Lawson, 2013). Combined together, such magnitude of media consumption on F1 fanship can be explained by two factors. One is the popularity of electronic communication
devices (Weeks and Holbert, 2013). Sport organizations such as F1 create and provide media content that attracts more people to the sport. Additionally, each racer manages his own social media to interact with his fans (Clavio et al., 2013). Racers post pictures and share their thoughts and opinions with fans on racing and non-racing topics. To get closer to a racer they are interested in, F1 fans actively consume such media-conveyed information. Another explanation for the influence of media consumption on fandom is the exclusivity of media in accessing sport (cf. Rowe and Gilmour, 2010). Media is the only, but very effective, way for fans to follow racers, especially during the off-season or in the usual case of when an event is held outside their city or country. F1’s few occurrences thus compel the fans to rely heavily on media to follow the events of the season.

The study found that spectators’ event satisfaction played a mediating role in the relationship between fandom and re-visit intentions. According to Yoshida and James (2010), satisfaction can be derived from athletic competition and from ancillary services such as food or facility cleanliness. For sport consumers’ game satisfaction, their study identified the constructs of player performance, opponent characteristics, and game atmosphere. Likewise, F1 fans might relish several components of competition such as the speed, engine sounds, and passing maneuvers (Chung et al., 2005). F1 event marketers also need to understand that uncontrollable factors (e.g., racing delays, poor weather conditions) substantially affect attendees’ satisfaction. The very limited chances of attending the event make these aspects of satisfaction more detrimental for such a once-a-year event as a site’s F1 Grand Prix. F1 event marketers, however, have little influence on these racing-related components. It should be noted that Yoshida and James (2010) found only significant effects of game atmosphere on game satisfaction. Player performance and opponent characteristics were found to be not significant. Given this, F1 event marketers can increase spectators’ satisfaction by creating more sport-focused themes across the entire venue.

In addition, F1 event marketers should be aware that F1 attendees’ satisfaction might be increased by focusing on service-oriented benefits (Kelly and Turley, 2001; Shonk and Chelladurai, 2008; Yoshida and James, 2010). For example, quality food and decent facilities provide spectators a quality experience. Pre-racing shows or victory-lane celebrations provide attendees more pleasant and unforgettable experiences. A number of studies in sport consumer behavior have found satisfaction plays a powerful role in predicting consumers’ behaviors (e.g., Caro and García, 2007; Madrigal, 1995; Yoshida and James, 2010). In testing a cognitive-affective model of sport consumers’ satisfaction in a sporting event, Caro and García (2007) found that satisfaction, as an independent and cognitive factor, well transmitted the influences of arousal to their loyalty. By finding a similar role of satisfaction, this study has revealed how F1 spectators’ pre-visit characteristics are related to their live experience at a racing event.

**Practical Implications**

The findings of the study could inform how inaugural F1 events are successfully marketed. Event promoters should focus on F1 racers as much as they market the F1 Grand Prix. After all, F1 fanship is rooted in the relationships fans have with the racers. Also, event promoters should create media content. Those of who have never attended a race before could through such content familiarize with the sport and become accustomed to a point of view of the racing. Above all, it is highly suggested that the media content should include more stories about the F1 racers. Such storylines as personal history, previous racing achievements, or mere trivial facts will stimulate interest in the racer as well as in the sport. For this aim, social media could serve as an effective tool through which racers interact with the fans. These promotions would become more powerful when bundled with a number of on-site activities. For example, a pre-game show or autograph session would enhance the experience for attendees.

Finally, F1 event promoters should understand how their target segment differs from those of other sports in terms of psychological and behavioral dimensions. Motorsport events have often failed because promoters applied the same approach used for non-motorsports events. F1 event promoters, particularly for inaugural events, must have a firm grasp of the overall mechanism that makes people visit the event and continue to do so. The key is how to position the motorsport event according to the characteristics of the expected attendees.

**Implications for future research**

The proposed model found antecedents and consequences of F1 fanship. F1 spectators’ media consumption and parasocial interaction with a favorite racer affected F1 fanship. Their fanship in turn facilitated event satisfaction and revisit intention. However, it should be noted that the model may not be applicable to other F1 Grand Prix. The study was performed in conjunction with the inaugural F1 Korean Grand Prix. F1 and other motorsports were not firmly established to their fans. This suggests that spectators’ characteristics might be different from those of other countries that have been successfully hosting F1 Grand Prix. In fact, the study of Donahay and Rosenberger (2007) sampled Australian F1 spectators and found a covariate effect of racing team identification on their image-transfer process of sponsors.
In contrast, racing teams were not recognizable by the sampled spectators of this study. Thus, the proposed model, if it is applied to a country with an advanced F1-related culture, should consider spectators’ identification with a racing team or any relevant variables.

In spite of its limitations, this study’s examination of the inaugural F1 event has provided a good deal of information on spectators’ behaviors. For example, it would be interesting to examine the effect of ethnicity congruence between spectators and racers on developing spectators’ parasocial interaction with a racer, particularly for the inaugural F1 Grand Prix.

Conclusion

Despite a number of studies that have studied the fandom of spectators in major sporting events, information on the antecedents and consequences of fandom in F1 is limited. The current study has investigated the antecedents and consequences of F1 fandom in Korean Grand Prix. Spectators with no prior attendance of F1 event developed their fandom by the interaction of media consumption and parasocial interaction with a favorite driver. The fandom affected their satisfaction with their event experience and the likelihood of their attending the event again. Parasocial interaction played a significant mediating role in the relationship between media consumption and fandom. Satisfaction also played a role in mediating the relationship between fandom and revisit intentions. The results of the study could be implemented to develop marketing strategies for the F1 Grand Prix in a new market. Motorsport marketers should focus not only on motor racing event but also on racing drivers. Additionally, they need to make media content available to F1 fans. Further studies should be made to reveal more dimensions of fandom, particularly about the process of developing fandom in a new market.

Conflict of Interests

The authors have not declared any conflict of interests.

REFERENCES


Rubin RB, McHugh MP (1987). Development of parasocial interaction