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# **Marketing Sports Event**

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## **Introduction**

The purpose of this assignment is to analyze and study different motives that can attract spectators to attend Melbourne Cup Carnival event, which is held in Australia every year. Number of research studies has been carried out over the years to highlight the factors and motives that drive the consumers towards a certain event. MCC is popular not only in Melbourne, but all across Australia and neighboring countries. The event is held each year which attracts people all around the World and combines solidarity, fashion, social gathering and horse racing all together. Purpose of the cup has significantly evolved over the years which is no longer a simple racing event. MCC has become one of the most enjoyable events in spring season.

## **Part I**

Numerous researches on the spectators who attend sporting events resulted in claiming a number of different motivational factors which attract fans towards the sports. Authors including Eastgate and Funk (2005); Crompton (1979); Gitelson and Kerstetter (1990); have mentioned that spectators attending sports seek entertainment, excitement, socialisation, adventure, relaxation, exploration and satisfaction. Coghlan and Williams (2001) conducted a study on horse racing events. They found that business and income are the main factors in motivating people to attend the horse racing event. Sport Fan Motivation Scale (SFMS) was developed by Wann in 1995. The scale measures 8 different motives of attending the sport event. These motives include self esteem, escape from stress, entertainment, economy, group affiliation, family, eustress and aesthetic. Some of the potential motives along with their relevance with MCC are discussed below:

## **1. Loyalty**

One of the most common motivational factors for spectators to follow a sport or attend a sporting event is loyalty with the team or sport itself. In recent times, consumer loyalty has been considered as one of the most important area in any business or sport. According to Jacoby and Chestnut (1978), the behavioral outcome of a customer's inclination for a defined brand selected from a set of other brands within a specified timeframe is the result of a calculated and thought-through decision process.

Melbourne Cup Carnival is one of the major sporting events in Australia which is being followed by millions of people around the world. Spectators who love horse racing are loyal to the sport and do not need any attraction or incentives to watch the sport. Hence, loyalty factor plays an important role in motivating the spectators to attend the event. People who follow horse racing and similar events are not affected by the ticketing costs, entertainment level, facilities and other factors.

## **2. Emotion**

Fans or spectators involvement in a game sometimes varies with the moods and emotions which are influenced by the team or group results. Eisler (1997) presented a scenario of sports fans whose emotions depended heavily on his team performance; with team loss the fan faced great emotional distress. Sloan (1979) in his study mentioned that sport events can affect spectator's emotions directly. These emotions can be positive such as happiness, satisfaction and can be negative as well such as frustration, de-motivation etc.

Melbourne Cup event also involves fans who are directly involved in horse racing and betting. Spectators who attend this event are very much attached to the sport and support their group or

individual enthusiastically. Therefore, emotional factor is important in this event as well as fans' emotions can be devastated if the individuals they are supporting lose the race.

### **3. Adrenaline and Involvement**

Corbin (1973) claimed that sports cause the fans to feel substantial arousal and adrenaline. This arousal can be due to involvement in the game such as cheering, yelling or supporting and are in the form of songs, music, dance and chants. Sloan (1979) also mentioned that attending a sporting event can cause violent arousal. Physical involvement by spectators in sporting event is rare and requires committed fan group or adrenaline in the sport itself. Horse racing is known for its unpredictability and close contests. Hence, it brings a great sense of physical arousal when a spectator supports any group or individual. These adrenaline and actions motivate the spectators to watch the event live rather than on television. The physical presence in this event is usually more than other events like cricket, hockey etc.

### **4. Social class**

Social class has significant influence on the sport and its following. Underwood, Bond and Baer (2001) explain further that sports like polo, golf, tennis and horse racing are considered to be a game for the higher class. These games are watched and played by people belonging to certain social class in most of the cases. Similarly, Melbourne Cup Carnival is also considered to be one of the elite events yet it is watched by spectators belonging to all classes. This factor is also relevant to some extent in the MCC event. However, it cannot be considered as a major factor due to the fact that marketing strategies are focused to target spectators belonging to all social classes rather than higher-class people. Certain features such as entertainment, food etc attract people from the middle class as well to attend the event.

## **5. Entertainment**

Entertainment is considered to be one of the most important factors in motivating spectators to attend a certain sporting event. Due to this reason, event managers make all possible efforts to introduce new and unique entertainment features in a sporting event. Over the years, many sports have developed different forms of entertainment to increase the attendance of fans. As an example, T20 cricket was introduced in cricket which is relatively a shorter format match and takes roughly 3 hours to finish a match. Entertainment features such as dance at every boundary, live music, BBQ stalls and colorful kits have been introduced to increase the entertainment level in the event. As per Nicholson and Pearce's theory (2001), the primary reason for attending a sports event is the theme of the event along with the specific attractions and activities that are part of the event. Similarly, MCC also involves entertainment value to attract the spectators towards the event. The key features that can attract spectators include music, restaurants, fashion exhibitions, child play area, and pictures with the winner etc.

## **6. Socialization**

Sporting events are typically attended in the company of friends, supporter groups etc. People plan with their friends or family to attend a particular game. Based on the need theory of Maslow, (1998), this is an important motive. This factor is very relevant to MCC event as families and friends attend the event in groups and spend the day together in an entertaining environment. Typically, horse racing stadium is not congested and does not require the spectators to sit on their seats for the complete game, thus fans have the liberty to enjoy with their friends and visit the restaurants while going through the event. Also in the theory of social identity, as explained by Mehus and Kolstad (2011), gives a feeling of team identification and elevation

of self when the favorite team of player wins. Thus in the case of MCC it may hold true and is a relevant motivating factor.

## **7. Economic value**

As Andrew & Olivier (pp. 215-228, 2010), economic value refers to an interest in sport based on the potential financial return from betting on its outcome. Horse racing is known for its interest in betting all around the world. Hence, this factor is very relevant in relation to the MCC event. Spectators attend the events for the purpose of business and betting. These spectators are not affected by entertainment level or facilities, rather they are focussed on the racing directly.

## **8. Self-esteem**

For many people, the sports they play are essential in portraying their self-image, and this may explain the increasing interest in more unique and riskier sports such as sky diving, mountain climbing etc. This is yet another component of Maslow's (1998), need theory of spectators. However, in the case of MCC event, self-esteem is not a vital motive to attend this event. Although there are certain physical features in horse racing, yet it is not considered to be a game of youth and does not bring a sense of attraction among the children as well.

## **9. Environment Factor**

Currie (2011), explains that a modern, safe and comfortable stadium can help offset some of the 'costs' (e.g. time and effort) a fan encounters when sacrificing the comfort of their couch to watch the game live. Factors fans use to assess the 'value' of a stadium. Although, MCC event is not held in a close stadium, yet this factor plays an important role in attracting the spectators.

These include food quality, cleanliness of the area, parking availability, crowd control and security etc.

## **Part II**

### **1. Emotion**

As chief marketing officer for the Melbourne Cup Carnival (MCC), I would consider emotional aspect of motivating spectators towards the events as least ranked aspect. This is due to the fact that fans and spectators who are emotionally attached with horse racing do not require any advertisement or promotions to watch the sport. These types of spectators are not bothered about the pricing or ticketing aspects but rather watch the sports for their satisfaction.

### **2. Socialization with Sport**

McNeal and Yeh (2003) children are introduced to sports at early stage and get themselves attached with the sports at a young age. Socialization agents which contribute towards attraction with the game include toys, clothing, role models and peers (Giuliano, Popp & Knight 2000). As a marketing officer, it is important to attract young children and school boys and girls towards the events to bring a sense of attraction towards horse racing event in them. Once they get socialized into the sports, interest would develop among them and number of spectators would increase as well. This aspect is also considered as least ranked option in case of MCC.

### **3. Economic Motives**

MCC involves certain business opportunities for group of people and companies as well. This factor is not rated among the vital factors but has certain impact in terms of sponsorship, business meetings, investments in racing industry and business networking etc.

### **4. Esteem Motives**

Esteem motives form an important part in attracting spectators towards the sports. Although it is a vital motivating factor for MCC event, I would still rank it among lower factors as this factor

does not attract spectators individually. Esteem motives in MCC event could include motivation to get well dressed for the event, possibility of meeting friends and enjoying the race etc.

## **5. Business Motives**

MCC event attracts number of spectators who take horse racing for business purpose. This aspect is important for marketing manager to act upon. I would consider it as a mid ranked option as this aspect increases the business as well. People who consider the event as a source of betting can be provided with special tickets, separate enclosures and different stands in the stadium to motivate them and spend their money on the event. Promotional packages, group facilities for dining, recreation and large screens can be added for their leisure as well.

## **6. Scheduling and Affordability**

Denaux et al., (2011) in their research mentioned that convenient scheduling plays a vital role in spectators' attendance as well. As a marketing plan for MCC event, it could be a mid ranked factor as the event is held in spring season during September and November. This season allows the spectators to attend the event in pleasant weather conditions in day time. Also, the event is spread over a span of 8 days with 4 race days. Different options are provided to customers to buy the tickets for a single day or avail the complete event package. Promotions and discounts packages can be offered to the groups and families which would encourage them to bring the whole family or group to the event.

## **7. Environmental Factor**

Environmental factor is considered as one of the high ranked motives to attend MCC event. MCC event attracts families and groups to visit the event and spend some leisure time. It is important for management to create best possible environmental factors to provide entertaining

and relaxing atmosphere to the spectators. Yoshida and James (2010) mentioned that exciting game atmosphere satisfy spectators and have positive influence on them to attend the event again in future. Sport spectators are very much concerned with pleasure, enjoyment and physical features of the environment and are willing to attend the games again and again if suitable environment is provide to them. MCC has certain features which could lead to high attendance among the spectators. These include clean environment, highly spaced seating plan, restaurants and dining facilities, parking facility, well secured area, clean rest rooms, location of event etc. Awareness among the people could be made through advertisements and promotions as a marketing plan. De Schriver and Jensen (2002) mentioned that there was a positive correlation between promotion and spectator attendance. Funk and James (2001) stated that media promotion plays an important role to attract spectator attendance.

## **8. Sports Loyalty**

One of the most important factors in drawing spectators towards a game is the sport itself. The unpredictability of contest, adrenaline and support for the team motivates the fans to attend the event week after week and year after year. According to Madrigal (1995), unlike other forms of leisure, sporting events provides an experience in which outcomes are unknown and could result in extreme drama or twist within the game. Wann et al., (2008) and Funk et al., (2002) in their respective research studied various factors which attracts spectators to attend the sporting event. They both considered the love of sport itself attracts the spectators. This factor was considered as the most important factor. In case of MCC, this is an important factor as well as horse racing is being followed and watched in all parts of the world. MCC is held each year during the end of September to mid of November and gathers a large crowd each year. This sporting event is not

new and does not require any introduction among the Australians. Hence, the love and attraction of horse and horse racing is one of the most important factors among the spectators.

## **9. Entertainment**

Providing entertainment before and during the game can keep the children and families committed and interested. AGF club has a separate children area in the stadium where numbers of entertainment facilities are available for young children. Young boys and girls in the family enclosure can draw name of player before the match and if that player scores during the match than the child gets the prize (Rao, 2003).

As a Chief Marketing Officer for the MCC event, entertainment is the highest ranked motivation factor for spectator attendance. People all around the world watch sports as a source of leisure and entertainment. Entertainment include several aspects which are family/friends socialising, fun, dining, relaxing, weather, quality of race, screens, music, fan following etc. Advertisements and promotions can be made to increase awareness about the event and invite people to visit the event for enjoyment. Daniels & Norman (2005) also mentioned that spectators are highly motivated by entertainment factor and ranked this factor as the most important factor among different options.

## **Conclusion**

The assignment helped in analyzing different motives that draw consumers to attend Melbourne Cup Carnival. As a chief marketing officer for the event, different aspects were studied and relevant motives were analyzed. After analysis and selection of all relevant motives, priority among the factors was carried out. It was analyzed that entertainment is one of the most important motive to draw spectators' attendance along with sports loyalty and

environment/atmosphere as people all around the world watch sports as a source of leisure and entertainment. Other factors with less priority included scheduling, pricing, business motives, esteem and emotional aspect which can also play a vital role in attracting people towards MCC event.

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