

Examination of the Effects of Playing Sport Video Games on Overall Sports Consumption

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**Marketing
Abstract 2009-073**

**May 29, 2009
9:00 AM**

**25 minute oral
(Lexington A)**

Traditionally, sport consumption is comprised of attending sports events, televised viewing, and purchasing sport merchandise. However, as technology develops, alternative activities of sport consumption have been created, such as fantasy leagues and sport video games. According to the data from the Entertainment Software Association (2005), global sales of computer and video games are predicted to increase to \$54.6 billion in 2009 up from \$25.4 billion in 2004. Despite the growing popularity of sport video games, a relatively small amount of research has been conducted about them. Current research regarding sport video games has primarily focused on discovering the motivations for playing sport video games (Kim & Ross, 2006). However, little research has focused on the effects of playing sport video games on other sport behaviors. Therefore, the primary purpose of this study was to examine the effects of playing sport video games on overall sports consumption levels. In addition, this study looked at the moderating effect of sport fan identification on the relationship between video game play and sport consumption.

A factorial design (2 video game fan x 2 sports fan) was utilized to determine whether differences in sport consumption existed as a function of identification as a video game player and whether there was an interaction effect due to level of identification as a sport fan. To measure how participants identified themselves as sports fans, Wann's (2002) five-item Sport Fandom Questionnaire (SFQ) was utilized. In order to measure how participants identified themselves as video game fans, Wann's scale was slightly modified by changing the term "sports fan" to "sports video game player" in order to assess the level of sport video game player identification. Each independent variable was converted into a two level variable, with cases in the bottom half classified into the low group and cases in the top half classified into the high group. Overall sport consumption was measured with a five-item scale adapted from Fink, Trail, and Anderson (2002) which addressed attendance, media, and merchandise consumption. Each item utilized a 7-point Likert scale. Cronbach's Alpha was used to assess the reliability of the scale items, resulting in .951 for the SFQ items, .947 for the sports video game player identification items, and .906 for consumption.

Results indicated that all the coefficients exceeded the recommended benchmark of .70 (Nunnally and Bernstein, 1994). The sample consisted of 216 students (137 males, 79 females) taking activity courses at two Midwestern universities. For the amount of time playing sport video games, 48.9% of males indicated they played video games 1-2 hours per week, and 16.8% indicated playing 3-4 hours per week. Females in the sample played less often, as 10.1% indicated they played 1-2 hours per week and 2.5% played 3-4 hours per week. Results of the factorial ANOVA revealed the main effects of sport fan ($F = 95.935, p < .001$) and sports video game fan ($F = 9.215, p = .003$) each influenced consumption. A comparison of means revealed those who identified themselves as sports video game fans reported significantly higher levels of sport consumption ($M = 5.75$) than those who were less identified as sport video game fans ($M = 4.79$). A significant ordinal interaction also existed between sport fan and sports video game fan ($F = 4.995, p = .027$) as the difference in consumption among sports fans who did ($M = 6.19$) and did not ($M = 6.06$) identify as video game fans was quite small, but the difference in consumption levels among lesser identified sports fans who did ($M = 4.95$) and did not ($M = 4.08$) identify themselves as sports fans was much more pronounced.

Results from this study indicated a relationship between playing sport video games and overall sport consumption, as those who identified themselves as sport video game fans were likely to report higher levels of overall consumption, supporting the idea that video games may increase attendance or viewing rather than competing for consumers' time. Furthermore, consumption levels increased much more among lesser identified sport fans suggesting sport video games may be responsible for generating interest in watching or attending sporting events among casual sports fans. Overall, these findings imply sport marketers should encourage video game play as a strategy to increase sport consumption, especially among those less identified as sport fans.