Investigating the Roles of Personality and Demographic Variables in Predicting the Consumption of Fantasy Sport Leagues

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The participation in fantasy sports is one of the hottest trends among sports consumers in recent years (Miller, 2005), as the market related to fantasy sport leagues has developed into a billion-dollar industry with upwards of 15 million players in the United States (Ballard, 2004). For example, CBS SportLine produced $15 million in sales from 1.3 million fantasy football participants last year (Boyle, 2005), and a total of $1.65 billion is spent annually on fantasy sports (Ballard, 2004). Though once dominated by only young males, fantasy sports leagues are gaining popularity across a growing range of age groups, income levels, and education levels. Furthermore, major broadcasting networks such as CBS and ESPN are airing an increasing number of fantasy sports storylines and themes in their TV coverage of sporting events to meet the escalating demands of fantasy league participants (Bianco, 2003).

Previous research suggests that fantasy league participation can be viewed as one form of gambling, as the gaming element of fantasy league play has been identified as one of the significant motivating factors for participation in fantasy sports (Winkler, 2006). Furthermore, the possibility of monetary loss and the uncertain outcome of results are similarly inherent in both fantasy sports play and other forms of gambling. Given the demonstrated similarities between participation in fantasy sports leagues and in gambling, it seems logical that the theoretical frameworks that have been employed to study gambling behaviors might also be applicable to study the determinants of participation in fantasy sports.

In consumer research there exists a long-standing tradition of exploring the role of personality in gambling behavior (Rockloff & Dyer, 2006), and consumer researchers have been particularly intrigued by which specific types of personality may have an influence on gambling behavior (McDaniel & Zuckerman, 2003). Examining the influence of optimum stimulation level (OSL) based personality traits such as Sensation Seeking (SS; Zuckerman, 1994) and need for cognition (NFC) on fantasy-league consumption behaviors may provide an appropriate starting point for investigation, as the decision making processes and the risk of monetary loss are the positive reinforcing factors associated with individual optimum stimulation levels. (Zuckerman & Kuhlman, 2000; McDaniel & Zuckerman, 2003). Furthermore, locus of control (LOC; Rotter, 1966) may influence the consumption of fantasy sport leagues, as previous research has demonstrated the effects of controllability on gambling behaviors (Clarke, 2004). Responding to the demand for an examination of the psychological factors that relate to fantasy league consumption, the current study attempts to provide an exploratory framework by examining the effects of personality traits (i.e., SS, NFC, and LOC) on consumers’ attitudes, intentions, and fantasy league-related consumption behaviors (i.e., time and money consumption).

Data for this study were collected using convenience sampling via web-based survey. Participants (18 +, n = 121, preliminary data) were recruited from physical activity classes in a large east coast university. In an effort to gauge their personality traits, measures of Impulsive Sensation Seeking (ImpSS; Zuckerman, 1994), locus of control (Rotter, 1966), and need for cognition (Cacioppo, Petty, Feinstein, & Jarvis, 1996) were used. Further, participants’ age, gender, intentions to participate in fantasy leagues, variety of fantasy league participation, and fantasy league-related money and time consumption were also assessed. The sample was comprised of 44% males (n = 53) and 56% females (n = 68), with a mean age of 22.5 years old (S.D. = 6.28). Internal consistency for scaled measures, including ImpSS, NFC, LOC, attitude toward fantasy football league and behavioral intentions, reached .84, .81, .80, .98 and .98 respectively. Two-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) by gender and age showed construct validity of ImpSS, in that ImpSS was negatively related to age (F = 7.36, p < 0.05), while male showed higher level of ImpSS (F = 4.64, p < 0.05).

The preliminary results of multivariate linear regression analysis provided partial support for the hypotheses, as gender, LOC and NFC significantly predicted positive attitudes toward fantasy football league (df = 4/119, F = 12.48, p < .001) and behavioral intentions (df = 4/120, F = 22.88, p < .001). The directionality of the beta coefficient for gender indicated that males reported higher positive attitudes toward the league play and intentions. Each model explained 30.1% and 44.3% of the adjusted variance in the dependent variables respectively. Multivariate linear regression analysis for fantasy league-related money and time...
consumption showed that gender, LOC and NFC were significant. The model accounted for 21.1% and 28.7% of the adjusted variance.

Findings suggest that fantasy football consumption behaviors are significant functions of personality traits and demographic factors, while empirically supporting the notion that personality traits are significant predictors of hedonic consumption. In addition, this is the first known work to examine the relationship between personality and fantasy league consumer behavior. The research also contributes to the literature for sport marketers in that the use of personality variables might prove useful as a segmentation tool.