The Application of the Motivation Scale for Disability Sport Consumption on Future Sport Consumption of Collegiate Wheelchair Basketball

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The governing body of collegiate wheelchair basketball, the Central Intercollegiate Division (CID), has set a goal of achieving NCAA status, yet for most teams this represents an expensive proposition. Miles Thompson, coach for the University of Alabama men’s wheelchair basketball team, stated that “the biggest reason we don’t have enough [collegiate wheelchair basketball] teams are budgetary constraints” (personal communication, April 2, 2011). Some CID teams simply do not have the budget to meet the necessary expenses, and instead transition into recreational university programs. The purpose of this study was to determine which motives identified in the Motivation Scale for Disability Sport Consumption (MSDSC; Cottingham, Phillips, Carroll, Drane, & Gearity, 2011) serve as significant predictor variables of future sport consumption behavior. Promoters provided with the proper tools to increase consumption behavior can greatly strengthen the development and growth of collegiate wheelchair basketball programs. These findings could assist in the increase of revenue by way of merchandise sales and increased spectatorship through live attendance and online viewership which could be used to leverage additional sponsorship.

Sport consumer behavior has been examined from a number of perspectives including motivation (Wann, 1995), points of attachment (Kwon, Trail, & Anderson, 2005), market demand (Byon, Zhang, Connaughton, & Ko, 2010) and service quality (Theodorakis, Kambitsis, & Laios, 2001). Of these, only motivation has examined unique aspects of consumption related to disability, such the influence of supercrip image and inspiration (Cottingham et al., 2011).

Previous studies of intended sport consumption include the influence of motivation on media consumption (Kim, Andrew, & Greenwell, 2009), merchandise consumption (Andrew, Kim, O’Neal, Greenwell, & James, 2009), and motives specific to team investment (Funk, Mahony, & Ridinger, 2002). Byron, Cottingham, Carroll, Grady and Allen (2010) identified the three most impactful predictor variables influencing repatronage intentions and online media consumption of disability sport. While these results were valuable for practitioners who promote disability sport, their limitation was that the scale used in the study was designed for able bodied sport and did not take into consideration consumer motives unique to disability sport.

Data was collected from 470 spectators at 8 games at the 2011 Collegiate National Wheelchair Basketball Championships. The 33-item MSDSC was used in this study (Cottingham et al., 2011). The MSDSC included modified factors from the Motivation Scale for Sport Consumption (MSSC; Trail & James 2001; Trail, 2010) including escape, social interaction, acquisition of knowledge, physical attractiveness, drama, physical skill/aesthetics, and items related to the motive, aggression (Kim, Greenwall, Andrew, Lee, & Mahony, 2008). Additionally, two motives specific to the context of disability sport, supercrip image and inspiration, were investigated. Separate from the MSDSC, three items measuring repatronage intentions (Söderlund,2006),three items measuring merchandise consumption (Fink, Trail, & Anderson, 2002), and three items measuring online media consumption (Byon et al., 2010) were used. Multiple regression analyses were conducted to determine the significance of each of the factors identified in the MSDSC in predicting the outcome variables of repatronage intentions, intended merchandise consumption, and intended media consumption.

Relevant data was examined to determine if the data met the assumptions of homoscedasticity and normality, and the data were also examined for multicollinearity. The data met all assumptions. Cronbach’s alpha levels of the motives and consumption variables were all above .70. Examining the MSDSC with repatronage intentions as a dependent variable and motivation as the independent variable, a multiple regression analysis demonstrated significant model fit accounting for 49.4% variance within the model. Physical skill/aesthetics ($\beta = .278$, $p < .001$),
acquisition of knowledge ($\beta = .272, p < .001$), drama ($\beta = .190, p < .001$), inspiration ($\beta = .185, p = .005$), escape ($\beta = .079, p = .01$), social interaction ($\beta = .083, p = .02$) and physical attraction ($\beta = -.6, p < .028$) were all significant predictors of repatronage intentions. Examining the MSDSC with intention to consume merchandise as a dependent variable and motivation as the independent variable, a multiple regression analysis demonstrated significant model fit accounting for 32.7% variance within the model. Acquisition of knowledge ($\beta = .208, p < .001$), supercrip image ($\beta = .208, p = .001$), escape ($\beta = .130, p < .001$), social interaction ($\beta = .148, p = .001$), physical attraction ($\beta = -.102, p = .002$), and physical skill/aesthetics ($\beta = .187, p = .009$) were all predictors of intended merchandise consumption.

Examining the MSDSC with intended wheelchair basketball media consumption as a dependent variable and motivation as the independent variable, a multiple regression analysis demonstrated significant model fit accounting for 45.8% variance within the model. Escape ($\beta = .241, p < .001$), physical skill/aesthetics ($\beta = .208, p = .002$), social interaction ($\beta = .100, p = .019$), and violence ($\beta = -.101, p = .021$) were all predictors of intended media consumption.

Hardin and Hardin (2004) surmise that the ‘supercrip,’ or a person with a disability achieving more than is expected of him/her, is the most common image of an athlete with a disability. Schantz and Gilbert (2001) note that athletes with disabilities are the most commonly used symbols to discuss inspiration in the context of disability. These studies indicate that both supercrip image and inspiration are commonly used by media to promote disability sport. However, our research demonstrates that factors such as escape, acquisition of knowledge, and social interaction are more impactful across multiple measures of consumption compared to the supercrip image and inspiration motives, which are significantly less effective at promoting sport consumption of wheelchair basketball. In lieu of these findings, we strongly encourage sport practitioners to develop marketing strategies which revolve around the most effectual factors in order to promote their sport most efficiently, and subsequently, to increase revenue for their programs.