

Enjoyment from Mediated Sport as Gratifications of Sport Consumption Needs

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Enjoyment is perhaps the most fundamental reason for people to be tuned into the telecasts of sport contests. Despite such significance of the construct, enjoyment has not been clearly conceptualized or been tested in sport management literature. The current study takes a functional approach (Tamborini, Bowman, Eden, Grizzard, & Organ, 2010) to conceptualize the enjoyment from watching mediated sports and empirically tests the conceptual model involving viewers of the 2010 FIFA World Cup matches.

Consistent with the functional theories of attitude developed in psychology, one stream of research in communication views enjoyment as reflecting basic motives of the individuals that “function” in a certain fashion for those individuals. Specifically, such scholars as Tamborini et al. (2010) conceptualize media enjoyment as need gratifications of intrinsic human needs such as autonomy, competence and relatedness. From this perspective, people enjoy media consumption experiences to the extent such experiences fulfill ones basic human needs. For example, Tamborini et al. (2010) found that people enjoyed video games to the extent autonomy-, competence-, and relatedness-needs are fulfilled by the game consumption experiences.

It should be noted that each media consumption context is associated with specific set of human needs. For example, comedy programs may be strongly associated with hedonic type of needs, such as fun seeking, whereas documentaries may be more suited with non-hedonic type of needs, such as knowledge seeking. Typical types of needs associated with the sports media consumption have been identified by Raney (2006). According to Raney (2006), three categories of human needs are associated with sport media consumption, which include emotional needs (e.g., entertainment), cognitive needs (e.g., learning), and behavioral and social needs (e.g., group affiliation). Therefore, all of these needs could be interpreted within the functional perspective of enjoyment. In this study, we empirically derived need gratification constructs associated with watching mediated sports, and used these need gratification constructs to predict the degree to which people enjoyed watching mediated sport, which in turn was proposed to have positive impact on audiences’ loyalty toward the sporting event. Specifically, it was predicted that each need gratification construct would have significant and positive impact on enjoyment; enjoyment would have positive and significant impact on loyalty toward the sporting event.

A total of 440 participants were recruited during the 2010 FIFA World Cup tournament period. After watching football matches, participants completed the survey asking their thoughts on various need gratification measures, enjoyment, and loyalty. Initially, 20 need gratifications items (e.g., my media consumption experience was very exciting) were adapted from existing literature. These 20 items were drawn from prior research in sport management and communication that correspond to one of the three categories of human needs (i.e., emotional-, cognitive-, and behavioral and social needs) associated with sport media consumption identified by Raney (2006). The initial set of items were expected to be associated with such dimensions of sport consumption needs as socialization, excitement, eustress, self-esteem, diversion, aesthetics, and game quality.

The analyses involved three stages. First, an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was performed on 200 cases randomly selected from the 440 completed responses in order to empirically derive need gratification constructs. The results of EFA revealed four factors, with eigenvalues greater than 1.0, which explained 76% of the total variance. Items with low factor loading (less than .4), dual-loaded on multiple factors, and items that did not load on any factors were eliminated. As a result, seven items were dropped and 13 items were retained. These four factors appeared to represent audiences’ gratifications regarding excitement, socialization, performance, and aesthetic needs. Second, multi items of four need gratification constructs derived from the EFA were then, analyzed with a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) using the 240 cases not used in the EFA. CFA confirmed that the measurement model identified in the EFA fit the data well ($S-B \chi^2 /df = 73.098/38 = 1.95, p < .01; CFI = .97; RMSEA = .06; SRMR = .04$). All items significantly loaded on a single factor and factor loadings ranged from .64 to .95. In the third stage, a structural

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model incorporating the four need gratification factors predicting enjoyment, and subsequently loyalty toward the sporting event was examined. The results showed acceptable model fit (S-B χ^2 /df = 353.82/159=2.23, $p < .01$; CFI = .94; RMSEA = .07; SRMR = .06). The structural model indicates that excitement (standardized coefficient = .69), socialization (standardized coefficient = .19), performance (standardized coefficient = .17), and aesthetics (standardized coefficient = -.22) had significant impact on enjoyment. Further, enjoyment had a direct positive effect on loyalty (standardized coefficient = .81). Interestingly, aesthetics factor had a significant negative impact on enjoyment.

From a functional perspective (Tamborini et al., 2011), four need gratification factors (excitement, socialization, aesthetics, and performance) emerged in the current study. Given the World Cup football match is considered extremely competitive, the aesthetics dimension was inversely related to the enjoyment of mediated sports. Aesthetics dimension might have positive impact on enjoyment for stylistic sports (e.g., figure skating; Sargent, Zillmann, & Weaver, 1998). Among the four factors, the excitement dimension had the strongest impact on enjoyment, suggesting that emotional rewards (e.g., eustress, suspense, etc.) are one of the most sought motivations in spectator sport consumption (Madrigal & Dalakas, 2008). Our findings add to the body of sport media and enjoyment research by examining the direct influence of need gratification on enjoyment and loyalty toward watching mediated sports. Therefore, a functional approach (Tamborini et al., 2010) has utility in the study of mediated sports consumption and future research should examine how need gratification factors might change across different sport categories (e.g., stylistic, mechanized, and combative sports; Sargent et al., 1998) and individual (e.g., gender) and group differences (e.g., team allegiance).

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