Constraints and Motivators As a Predictor of Sport Media Consumption Intention

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Introduction

Pritchard and Funk (2006) noted a movement toward escalating consumption of sport through media. They found that while some fans were using media consumption as a complement to attendance behavior, others were substituting; that is, they were consuming sport events through media in lieu of attending live. Fans' preferences to watch on television has been identified as one of the most preeminent concerns amongst sport industry practitioners as of 2012 (Luker, 2012). Nevertheless, while sport fans are increasingly electing to forego the stadium experience in favor of sport media consumption (hereinafter SMC), it is unclear why this phenomenon is occurring. Trail and colleagues (2008, 2010, 2011) have identified a list of constraints that serve to impede attendance at sport events, factors Pritchard and Funk (2006) implied may prompt substitution through media (SMC); however, the impact of these factors on attendance substitution through media has not been studied. Further, no comprehensive list of appealing elements of SMC (i.e., Motivators) has been assembled. As such, the primary purpose of this study was to assess the impact of Constraints and Motivators on SMC Intention. Secondarily, given that past research has suggested that highly identified sport fans are more motivated to attend events (Kim, Trail, & Magnusen, 2013), the current research aimed to determine the effect of Team Identification on the relationship between Constraints and Motivators and SMC Intention. This study uses Skinner's (1953) reinforcement theory of motivation and Oliver's (1977) expectancy disconfirmation paradigm to explain how constraints and motivators influence consumers to substitute SMC for attendance.

Constraints to Attendance

In relation to spectator sport, constraints are understood to represent “factors that impede or inhibit an individual from attending a sporting event” (Kim & Trail, 2010, p. 191). While Trail and colleagues (2008, 2010, 2011) identified a number of constraints to sport event attendance, not all will necessarily serve to prompt attendance substitution with SMC. For example, an individual lacking knowledge about a particular sport is unlikely to substitute SMC for attendance; rather, they would be more apt to forego sport consumption altogether. Ultimately, six constraint factors from Trail and Kim (2011) might be constraints that could prompt substitution with SMC. These include No Interest from Significant Others, No One to Attend With, Commitments, Location, Lack of Success, and Cost. In addition, as Trail et al. (2008) suggested, weather may be a viable consideration.

H1: There will be a significant positive relationship between Constraints and SMC Intention

Motivation for Sport Media Consumption

Choosing SMC rather than attending live is triggered by a unique set of motivating variables beyond those historically understood to influence sport consumers. While no scale has been developed specifically for the motivations underlying SMC, a number of researchers have explored areas relevant to this phenomenon. These areas include fantasy sport, high-definition television, and the experience of watching sport events at a local cinema. A review of literature in these areas (e.g., Drayer et al., 2010; Dupagne, 1999; Fairley & Tyler, 2012; Gantz & Wenner, 1995) indicates that Fantasy Sport, Technological Attributes, (broadcast) Enhancement, Comfort, Safety, and Ease represent potential Motivators for SMC. Additionally, consistent with past work (e.g., Kim & Trail, 2010), it is expected that Motivators will be more significant in predicting SMC Intention than Constraints.

H2: There will be a significant positive relationship between Motivators and SMC Intention

H3: Motivators will explain more variance in SMC Intention than Constraints

Team Identification

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Team Identification refers to a fan’s psychological connection to a team (Wann et al., 2001). Highly identified fans have exhibited a higher propensity to attend games (Wann et al., 2001), and the factor has even been shown to moderate the relationship between motives and game attendance such that there was a stronger relationship between the two variables for highly identified fans (Kim et al., 2013). As such the following hypothesis is proposed:

H4: Team Identification will attenuate the relationship between (a) Constraints and (b) Motivators and SMC Intention

Methods & Results

The study consisted of two phases, both of which utilized SEM for the analysis. First, the measurement model was tested on a sample of undergraduate students at a large Northeastern university. Six of the constraint factors were adapted from the work of Trail and Kim (2011), while Weather, the final constraint, and the six motivator factors were developed for use in this study. The assessment of the measurement model indicated strong psychometric properties and acceptable fit. Therefore, the measurement and structural models were assessed through a nationwide sample of 244 NFL fans and spectators recruited from NFL fan sites, blogs, and social media pages. The measurement model was assessed initially and showed reasonable model fit; however, there was evidence of multicollinearity. Therefore, it was decided that it would be more appropriate to assess both the measurement and structural models through the utilization of second order latent variables for Constraints and Motivators. The fit of the model was adequate. Path coefficients indicated there was no significant relationship between Constraints and SMC Intention, but Motivators were significantly related to SMC Intention. Finally, to assess the hypothesized moderating effect of Team Identification, a multigroup SEM was conducted where Team Identification was split up into three roughly equal categories (e.g., low, medium, and high). Results of the multi-group SEM revealed no significant differences between the three groups, indicating there was no significant moderating effect of Team Identification on the relationship between Motivators and SMC Intention. All statistics, including model fit and path coefficients, will be provided in the presentation.

Discussion & Conclusion

As expected, Motivators had a significant effect on SMC Intention and also explained significantly more variance than constraints. It was surprising, however, that constraints were not significantly related to SMC Intention given that the study was conducted in the context of the NFL, a sport notorious for high price points and poor weather conditions (Schwab, 2014). In one sense this is consistent with past research, as the only two constraints of any significance in Kim and Trail’s (2010) work (e.g., Lack of Success and Leisure Alternatives) were either not as relevant or not applicable in the current study. Finally, the fact that Team Identification did not moderate the relationship between Constraints and Motivators and SMC Intention was surprising. Perhaps this is due to the fact that social media provides an avenue by which highly identified fans can bask-in-reflected-glory (BIRG), criticize the team and officials, and connect with other fans (Reichart Smith & Smith, 2012), behaviors typically reserved for those attending live. This, however, is something that should be explored further. Perhaps qualitative interviews with highly identified sport fans for the purpose of exploring why they may prefer to watch sport events at home rather than attend would be a worthwhile endeavor. More suggestions for future research will be provided in the presentation, as well as a discussion of both the study’s theoretical and practical implications, and its limitations.