The Influence of Hedonic, Eudaimonic, and Social Need Fulfillment on Sport Media Consumers’ Well-being and Behavioral Intentions

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While consumer well-being is becoming a key subject in business and everyday life (Diener, 2009), not much is known on how sport consumption affects one’s mental health and subsequently marketing outcomes. One of the constructs that may provide insight on the topic is ‘need fulfillment’. A need is a “deficit state of the organism that recurs periodically that has a specific requirement for its satisfaction” (Gordon, 1975, p. 8). In psychology, need fulfillment is a key determinant of one’s psychological well-being (i.e., need theory), which contributes to mental health if fulfilled (Ryan & Deci, 2000). In sport management, sport consumer’s needs shape one’s values and goals, eventually motivating consumption behavior (Trail & James, 2013). In this sense, understanding the sport consumer’s need and its fulfillment is essential to learning the psychological benefits of sport consumption and marketing effectiveness. However, need fulfillment is an untapped construct in sport marketing research, particularly among sport media consumers. Thus, we conducted an empirical study on the influence of need fulfillment on well-being and behavioral intentions in relation to sport media consumption.

Based on need theory, one’s state of well-being can improve by fulfilling various needs (Ryan & Deci, 2000). In understanding the types of needs and the concept of well-being, there are three streams of research which focus on hedonic (i.e., pleasure attainment), eudaimonic (i.e., self-actualization and meaning of life), and social (i.e., sense of belongingness) needs. Grounded in entertainment theory and social identity theory (Sloan, 1989; Trail & James, 2013; Wann, 2006), each type of need can be fulfilled through sport consumption, with the expectation that fulfillment can improve the consumer’s state of global well-being (i.e., the perceived happiness of one’s life, encompassing hedonic, eudaimonic and social perspectives of well-being). [H1] Fulfillment of hedonic, eudaimonic, and social needs has a positive impact on global well-being.

In sport consumption, consumers are motivated by and are expecting fulfillment of needs such as entertainment, excitement (related to hedonic needs), achievement (related to eudaimonic needs), and group affiliation (related to social needs) (e.g., Milne et al., 2002; Trail & James, 2001; Wann, 1995). It is logical to believe that meeting their expectations regarding need fulfillment would positively impact satisfaction with the consumption experience (i.e., expectancy confirmation; Oliver, 1977), influencing their decisions for future consumption. [H2a] Hedonic, eudaimonic, and social need fulfillment positively influences spectating intentions. [H2b] Hedonic, eudaimonic, and social need fulfillment positively influences participation intentions.

When one’s needs are fulfilled, positive emotions are engendered improving one’s state of well-being (Fredrickson, 2001). Such improved well-being enhances one’s openness towards future experiences and tolerance with negative memories of the current experience (Kahn & Isen, 1993). That is, improved well-being can lead to increased intentions of related future consumptions. [H3a] Global well-being has a positive impact on spectating intentions. [H3b] Global well-being has a positive impact on participation intentions.

A two-wave survey-based field study was conducted following team Korea’s 1st qualifying match at the 2014 Brazil World Cup. Korean sport media consumers from ages 18 to 65 were targeted for the study. The questionnaire was developed based on the ‘personal need (non-) fulfillment measure’ (Cook & Wall, 1980). Hedonic (4 items), eudaimonic (5 items) and social (3 items) need fulfillment was measured by subtracting the pre-game expectations on need fulfillment from post-game perception. Data on post-game global well-being state (4 items; Simmons & Lehmann, 2012), spectating intention (3 items), participation intention (3 items), media consumption (4 items) and demographics (5 items) were collected. In the pre-game survey (7~10 days before the match), 1444 questionnaires
were collected through convenience quota sampling based on gender and age. Immediately after the match, the respondents were re-approached by email, resulting in 506 completed questionnaires (retention rate: 35.0%). After screening the sample for those with no relevant media consumption (e.g., watching the broadcast and/or highlights on TV/internet), there were 489 usable forms for the analysis.

Structural equation modeling was conducted with Mplus7. Tests for linearity, multicollinearity, missing data, and outliers were conducted; no severe concerns were found. However, Satorra-Bentler correction method was employed, as multivariate normality was violated. The confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) provided evidence of good fit for the model ($\chi^2$/df=384.178/194=1.98, CFI=.977, TLI=.972, RMSEA=.045, SRMR=.032, WRMR=.866). Based on factor loadings (from .77 to .98), Cronbach’s coefficient (from .87 to .97), and AVE values (from .87 to .92; and its comparison with the corresponding squared item-construct correlation), the measurement model was supported with adequate evidence of convergent validity, discriminant validity, and reliability.

The structural model was analyzed to test the hypotheses. Regarding H1, the path from hedonic need fulfillment to global well-being was significant (standardized $\gamma$=.15, S.E.=.07, p=.045). Supporting H2, the path from global well-being to spectating intention (standardized $\gamma$=.14, S.E.=.05, p=.004) and participation intentions (standardized $\gamma$=.11, S.E.=.04, p=.013) were significant. Regarding H3, eudaimonic need fulfillment had significant effect on participation intention (standardized $\gamma$=.16, S.E.=.08, p=.045) and marginal effect on spectating intention (standardized $\gamma$=.16, S.E.=.08, p=0.051). Further, a mediation effect of global well-being between hedonic need fulfillment and behavioral intentions was tested, where the indirect path to spectating intention was found to be significant (standardized $\gamma$=.02, S.E.=.01, p=.050).

Overall, need fulfillment had significant influence on an individual’s state of global well-being and behavioral intentions. Hedonic need fulfillment influenced behavioral intentions through the mediation of global well-being. Our findings highlight (1) sport media consumption can be a meaningful means to contribute to well-being, and (2) the prospective impact of well-being on marketing effectiveness. Eudaimonic need fulfillment had a positive effect on behavioral intentions, but not on global well-being. This leads us to question (1) whether eudaimonic need fulfillment (based on personal growth or self-achievement) through ‘vicarious’ experience can lead to perceived happiness in one’s life, or (2) if team identification (i.e., the degree of how the team’s achievement is perceived as one’s own) has a moderating effect between eudaimonic need fulfillment and well-being. Further research is needed to answer these questions. Social need fulfillment had no significant influence on well-being or behavioral intentions. One plausible explanation is that sport media consumers had high pre-game expectations for social need fulfillment (highest among need types) causing a ceiling effect, thus resulting in insignificant paths. Another explanation is that sport media consumption occurred in smaller groups, while social needs may have been more effectively fulfilled in larger groups of social members than with a small group of proximal others.

The significance of this study lies in (1) introducing need fulfillment as an influential factor of well-being and marketing effectiveness, (2) incorporating hedonic, social, and eudaimonic well-being perspectives in understanding need fulfillment, and (3) explicating the mediating role of well-being between need fulfillment and behavioral intentions. For sport marketers, highlighting (with focus on need fulfillment) the consumer’s psychological benefits from sport media consumption would be helpful to communicate a mutually beneficial entity-consumer relationship, which is critical in the relationship-oriented paradigm (Kim & Trail, 2011).