The Effect of Fans' Social Experience and Game Characteristics on their Evaluation of Game Experiences

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Introduction
For decades, scholars have put forth efforts to identify key factors that influence sport fans' evaluations of game experiences (Trail, Anderson, & Fink, 2005; Wann & Schrader, 1997). Previous studies have found that sport experiences could be determined either by the outcome of the game (win/loss) or the process of the game (exciting/boring; Madrigal & Chen, 2008). Based on this background, the current study examined how game outcomes and the processes uniquely contribute to sports fans' evaluation (i.e., satisfaction, game enjoyment, and future intention) of their game experiences. Furthermore, this study found that the effects of the outcome and process are moderated by whether the fans watch contest alone (solo context) or in a group (joint context).

Theoretical Background and Hypothesis
The outcomes and the processes of a game both contribute to sport fans' evaluations of game experience (Liberman & Trope, 1998). There are ample evidences that positive outcomes enhance game experience (Madrigal & Chen, 2008). When supported teams win, fans receive significant benefits from the contest (e.g., increased self-esteem); therefore, they positively evaluate their game experiences (Wann, 1995). At the same time, a positive process also enhances game experiences (Trope & Liberman, 2003). For example, regardless of game outcomes, exciting games may create positive emotional responses. By synthesizing these assumptions, we contend that both outcome and process play important roles in determining sport fans' overall game evaluation.

One interesting question could be emerged from the literature – “Which combinations of process/outcome do sport fans evaluate more favorably?” It is obvious that sport fans evaluate a positive process along with a positive outcome as the most favorable experience. Therefore, we examined the types of experiences in which the two combinations are inconsistent: (a) positive outcome (win) and negative process (boring game; henceforth called “positive outcome”) versus (b) negative outcome (lost) and positive process (exciting game; henceforth called “positive process”). We further examined the moderating roles of solo vs. joint contexts in the selected game experience contexts. Specifically, we propose that under the solo context, sport fans would place greater emphasis on the outcome in evaluating overall game experience. Conversely, under the joint context, the social experience process should intensify their experience of the game; thus, the game process (i.e., level of game excitement) becomes more important.

Our proposition can be supported by construal level theory and mean-end theory (Trope & Liberman, 2003). Both theories suggest that the process and outcome represent different levels of abstraction (Zhao, Hoeffler, & Zauberman, 2007). Specifically, process (outcome) refers to more concrete (abstract) information. This is because process demonstrates how a person reaches to end states (e.g., outcome). In other words, process reveals more specific contextualized information than outcome; thus, provides greater richness than outcome provides (Yang, Mao, & Peracchio, 2012). In terms of game experiences, people are more likely to focus on and be aware of the abstract information under the solo context, while focusing on process or situational factors under the joint context (Yang et al., 2012). Therefore, we hypothesized:

H1: Under the solo context, sport fans will evaluate game more positive (e.g., higher game evaluation, enjoyment, and future intention) in the positive outcome than the positive process
H2: Under the joint context, sport fans will evaluate game more positive (e.g., higher game evaluation, enjoyment,
and future intention) in the positive process than the positive outcome.

**Procedures**
This study employed a 2 (positive outcome vs. positive process) x 2 (solo context vs. joint context) between-subject design. One hundred eighty eight subjects were recruited from Amazon’s Mechanical Turk (Mturk). Following the procedure from Yang et al. (2012), the type of experience was manipulated by asking subjects to recall and write down their thoughts or feelings of a sport match that they watched via TV or Mobile devices by using a minimum of 50 worlds. Under the positive outcome condition, subjects were asked to recall and write down a sport match in which “(a) your team won the game but (b) the process in the game was frustrating or boring”. In contrast, under the positive process condition, subjects were asked to recall and write down a sport match in which “(a) your team lost the game but (b) the process in the game was involving and exciting.” Moreover, under the solo (joint) contexts, subjects were asked to recall a sport match that they watched alone (with others). Satisfaction (e.g., satisfied/dissatisfied; Yang et al., 2012), game enjoyment (e.g., I thought the game was exciting; Deci et al., 1994), and future intention (unlikely/likely; Lee et al., 2011) were measured by three-items.

**Results**
The results of analysis of variance indicated that two-way interaction was significant for satisfaction, $F(1,184) = 22.95, p < .001$, enjoyment of game, $F(1, 184) = 11.93, p < .01$, and future attendance intention, $F(1, 184) = 17.63, p < .001$. The main effects of types of experiences, $F(1, 184) = 22.14, p < .001$, were significant for satisfaction. Focusing on satisfaction, a simple effect test indicated that under the solo context, subjects evaluated game more favorably for the positive outcome compared to the positive process ($M_{positive \ outcome} = 5.36, M_{positive \ process} = 3.15, F(1, 184) = 38.45, p < .001$). Meanwhile, there was no difference under the joint context ($p > .05$). In terms of game enjoyment, a simple effect test indicated that under the solo context, subjects enjoyed the game more for the positive outcome compared to the positive process ($M_{positive \ outcome} = 5.54, M_{positive \ process} = 4.97, F(1, 184) = 3.54, p < .10$). However, under the joint context, subjects enjoyed the game more for the positive process compared to positive outcome ($M_{positive \ process} = 5.92, M_{positive \ outcome} = 5.01, F(1, 184) = 9.02, p < .01$). Lastly, focusing on future intention, under the solo context, subjects exhibited greater intention to attend the game for the positive outcome compared to the positive process ($M_{positive \ outcome} = 5.80, M_{positive \ process} = 4.85, F(1, 184) = 7.17, p < .01$). In contrast, under the joint context, subjects exhibited greater intention to attend the game for the positive process compared to the positive outcome ($M_{positive \ outcome} = 5.85, M_{positive \ process} = 4.69, F(1, 184) = 10.63, p = .01$).

**Implications**
This study shed new lights to the sports fandom literature by illustrating the process based explanations of how sports fans experience and evaluate their game consumption differently in the solo vs. joint consumption contexts. The results of this research provide managers useful and systematic information about fans’ unique experiences and evaluations with which they can develop effective segmentation and promotional strategies. More detailed theoretical and practical implications will be discussed in the presentation.