Fantasy Empowerment: Introducing the Motivation Scale for Female Fantasy Football Participation (MSFFFP)

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Introduction
The fantasy football industry is worth $70 Billion and rising, yet we still do not fully understand if and how female participation differs from their male counterparts (Richey, 2016). In 2015, there were 57.4 million people playing fantasy sports in the United States and Canada, with 66% male and 34% female participants (Fantasy Sport Trade Association, 2016). This study addresses a gap within the literature for the 19.5 million female fantasy sport participants in the US and Canada by exploring participation motivation differences. Scale development is the best way to validate knowledge (Pisano, 1994). As such a motivation scale for female fantasy football participation (MSFFFP) has been developed to validate these gender differences factors ranging from Socialize, Gratify, Enhance, Empower, and Connect emerging from the data.

Despite the growing importance of fantasy sport participation within the sport industry, there remain several aspects of the activity that require examination. In this case, a deeper understanding of the gender-based outcomes associated with initial introduction and continued participation motivations for female players will help marketers and media providers comprehend the notable marketing triggers (Zellweger, 2001) for interactive cause-related marketing (Folse, Niedrich, & Grau, 2010) throughout the NFL season. A Uses and Gratifications Theory conceptual framework (McQuail, 2010) was used to guide why female individuals choose media (i.e. fantasy football) that meet their specific needs such as enhancing knowledge, diversion, social interaction, escape, or entertainment. Therefore, the purpose of this study was twofold: (1) to determine what the participation motivation items are for female fantasy football participants, and (2) develop a scale for female specific factors differences if they exist.

Methodology
The current study implemented Churchill’s (1979) multi-step procedure for developing and validating an instrument to measure female fantasy football motives. First, a review of uses and gratifications theory (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1973; Rubin, 2009) and fantasy sports literature (Dwyer, Shapiro, & Drayer, 2011; Farquhar, & Meeds, 2007; Ruihley, & Billings, 2013) was conducted to specify the domain for the current study. Next, open-ended survey questions were developed and sent to female participants (n=392). Based on the literature and open-ended responses, a semi-structured topic guide was composed, and eight interviews were facilitated to begin the item generation process. The data were then transcribed, coded, and refined by three independent investigators. In total, 140 statements were originally identified as possible items for the scale. Three rounds of item refinement followed as the statements were tested for content and face validity via a pilot test and the revisiting of the study’s domain. In the end, 38 motives were settled upon and converted into agreement-based items on a seven point Likert-type scale (1=Strongly Disagree; 7=Strongly Agree).

Additional data collection followed as the 38-item instrument was sent to a sample provided by NFLFemale.com, an independent website dedicated to NFL coverage by women and for women. Following data collection, a principal component analysis (PCA) with promax rotation was conducted, after which factor loadings, eigenvalues, and item correlations were interpreted as a means of measure purification. In addition, the results of the PCA were analyzed by four independent experts to ensure the factors and items accurately measured why women play fantasy football. Through both the data collection and independent expert analysis, several items were removed or reworded. The resulting in a scale contained 18 items under the following five dimensions: Socialize, Gratify, Enhance, Empower, and Connect.

The final step of Churchill’s (1979) procedure, assessment of instrument reliability and validity was achieved by
sending the revised instrument to a sample provided by the Tennessee Titans official women’s club, Titan True and fantasy football participants aligned with the Tucker Center for research on girls and women in sport. A Satorra-Bentler maximum likelihood of estimation method confirmatory factor analysis was performed in Mplus7 to verify the underlying factor structure. The scale scores were then subjected to reliability (Composite reliability & inter-item correlations), convergent validity (Average Variance Extracted [AVE]), discriminant validity (AVE test), and criterion-related validity assessments related to participation level and social media usage.

Findings
Following the initial interview process, 392 female fantasy football participants were surveyed through two distinct data collection processes. Ultimately, the final MSFFFP scale was refined from 140 initial statements to five dimensions and 15 motives (I play fantasy football…). Gratify: because I like football; because it’s fun; because I enjoy the competition. Socialize: to stay in contact with family, friends, or coworkers; because I enjoy the social gatherings; to compete with friends, family, or coworkers. Enhance: because it is something to do during football season; to make watching the games more exciting; to enjoy Sundays more. Empower: because I enjoy beating male opponents; because I can defeat men at something I am supposed to be good at; to show that women can compete with men. Connect: to connect more deeply with the individual players in the NFL; because I care for players as individuals; because I enjoy learning about the background of my players as individuals.

The resulting scale scores indicated an adequate to good fit to the data, strong internal consistency, and sound convergent, and discriminant validity. As for the predictive validity results, the Gratify factor positively predicted time spent engaged in fantasy football activity and time spent watching NFL football. The Connect and Socialize factors positively predicted the frequency of fantasy-related social media usage. Gratify and Enhance positively impacted enjoyment, while the Empower factor positively impacted frustration. Lastly, the Empower factor positively impacted the level of importance of winning an upcoming game, if the opponent was a male.

Discussion
While Dwyer and Kim (2011) created a scale with three factors (social interaction, entertainment/escape, competition) for measuring fantasy football motivations, the majority of their participants were male (93%), which is common in fantasy football research (e.g., Dwyer & Drayer, 2010; Dwyer, 2011; Larkin, 2015; Lee, Ruihley, Brown, Billings, 2013). However, females are joining fantasy sport sites (i.e. FanDuel, Draft Kings, ESPN, etc.) at a rate twice as fast as men (Rubin, 2014). This, in addition to the fact that sport leagues are increasing their marketing focus on reaching the female consumer segment, necessitates the exploration of developing a motivational scale for female fantasy sport participants. For marketers, the separate MSFFFP scale will assist them in better understanding how to target messaging toward females to increase their sport consumption through fantasy football participation. The potential existence of factors unique to female fantasy sport participants can be used to drive marketing campaigns and customer experiences directed toward female consumers. Future research utilizing the MSFFFP scale, will allow researchers to make accurate and informed decisions to examine how females’ motivations for participation connect to consumption habits and purchase intentions to deepen the understanding of fantasy sport participation on customer behavior.