Beyond Hedonic Consumption: Exploring the Role of Meaningful Experiences in Online Sports Consumption

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Social networking site (SNS) users often post and share two different types of videos about their favorite athletes: (1) hedonic (e.g., game highlights) and/or (2) meaningful (e.g., prosocial acts done by the favorite players; Oliver & Hartmann, 2010). Sport consumption has long been rooted in the hedonic response (instant pleasure and enjoyment; Vorderer et al., 2004). Recently, researchers have argued that, despite its importance and significance, the meaningful dimension of sport experience has been largely neglected in traditional conceptualization (Oliver & Raney, 2011). Research indicated that sport fans also consume meaningful content highlighting moral virtue and human kindness. Particularly, studies have found that a meaningful story triggers greater attention from viewers than a hedonic story through a feeling of elevation (Bartsch & Schneider, 2014). In the current study, we focus on the potential predictive functions of elevation as one typical positive moral emotion, because several studies have demonstrated significant associations between positive moral emotions (e.g., awe) and online users’ sharing intention (e.g., Berger & Milkman, 2012; Bucher et al., 2016). In light of these findings, we propose that sports fans would exhibit greater intention to share video and search for more information about the story via online after watching a meaningful video about athletes than a hedonic video. Specifically, it is hypothesized that the feeling of elevation would drive such online sharing and information searching behaviors for the meaningful video. We aimed to examine whether a feeling of elevation evoked by a meaningful video motivates sports fans to share the video and search for more information about the story via online than does a hedonic video (experiment 1). Moreover, to test the underlying mechanism, we further identified key moderator (i.e., moral identity trait) that either magnifies, attenuates (experiment 2), or even reverses (experiment 3) the elevation effect on online video sharing and information seeking behaviors.

Experiment 1 - Design: For a single factor, two-level (meaningful vs. hedonic video) between subjects-design, a total of 51 U.S. residents were recruited via Amazon’s Mechanical Turk.

Procedure: After random assignment, participants in the meaningful video condition watched a short story about a college football player (Travis Rudolph: TR) helping a child suffering from autism. In the hedonic video condition, participants watched a highlight clip of TR. Both clips were approximately 180 seconds long. After watching one of the assigned videos, participants completed a questionnaire.

Measures: The feeling of elevation was measured with 10-items on a 7-point scale (Krämer et al., 2016). Intention to share the video (Myrick & Oliver, 2015) and subsequent online information search intention (Bartsch & Schneider, 2014) were measured with 3-items on a 7-point scale (all $\alpha$s > .94). Moral identity (Aquio & Reed, 2002) was measured and used as a covariate.

Results: The results of the analysis of covariance indicated that participants showed greater intention to share the video online after watching the meaningful video ($M = 4.03$) compared with the hedonic video ($M = 2.49; p = .009$). In addition, participants exhibited greater intention to search for more information about the story after watching the meaningful video ($M = 4.66$) compared with the hedonic video ($M = 3.22; p < .05$). The feeling of elevation particularly mediated the effect of different types of video on online sharing (effect = -.74, 95% CI: -1.62 to -.24) and information seeking (effect = -.98, 95% CI: -1.78 to -.37) intentions.

Experiment 2: To demonstrate the underlying mechanism, individuals’ moral identity trait was used as a moderator in experiment 2. We expected that individuals with high moral identity (HMI) would exhibit greater online sharing
and information seeking intentions after watching the meaningful video than after watching the hedonic video. In contrast, we expected this effect would be either attenuated or disappear for individuals with low moral identity (LMI).

Design: A 2 (meaningful vs. hedonic video) × 2 (high vs. low moral identity trait) between-subjects design (N = 143; U.S. residents from Mturk). Moral identity trait was measured in Experiment 2 as a moderator.

Procedure: The procedure in experiment 2 was similar to that of experiment 1 was used, except a new set of video clips of Dwayne Wade was shown. After being randomly assigned to watch either a meaningful or a hedonic video of Dwayne Wade, participants completed the questionnaire including moderator (i.e., moral identity), dependent variables, and demographic information.

Results: The results of the simple slope analysis indicated that the main effects of moral identity (p < .01) and different types of video (p < .01), and interaction between those two variables (p = .01) had a significant effect on online sharing intention. The simple slope analysis further indicated that participants with HMI (1 SD above mean) showed greater intention to share the video on online after watching the meaningful video (M = 3.70) than after watching the hedonic video (M = 2.77; p < .05). In contrast, participants with LMI (1 SD below mean) exhibited marginally greater intention to share the video on online after watching the hedonic video (M = 3.71) compared with the meaningful video (M = 3.01; p < .10). In terms of information seeking intention, the simple slope analysis indicated that the interaction effects between moral identity and different types of video were only significant (p < .05). The simple slope analysis further indicated that participants with HMI showed greater information seeking intention via online after watching the meaningful video (M = 4.86) compared with the hedonic video (M = 3.97; p < .05). In contrast, participants with LMI exhibited a similar degree of information seeking intention after watching the hedonic video (M = 4.13) compared with the meaningful video (M = 3.83; p = .49).

Experiment 3: In order to identify a boundary condition in which individuals with HMI exhibit similar intentions to share the video and search for more information about the story between meaningful and pleasant video, we manipulated participants’ mindset into either a benefactor or a beneficiary. We used a 2 (meaningful vs. hedonic video) × 2 (high vs. low moral identity trait) × 2 (beneficiary vs. benefactor mindset) between-subjects design (N = 142).

Procedure: A procedure similar to experiment 1 and 2 was used, except participants’ mindset was manipulated before they watch the video. In the benefactor (beneficiary) mindset condition, participants wrote down their personal experiences of giving (receiving) help to (from) other individuals. Rest of the procedure was consistent with Experiment 1 and 2.

Results: The results of the simple slope analysis indicated that three-way interaction was significant on intention to share the video (p < .05), accompanied by some main and two-way interaction effects. Specifically, the analysis indicated that participants with HMI exhibited greater intention to share the video on online after watching the meaningful video (M = 4.30) compared with the pleasant video (M = 2.39; p < .01) when their mindset is framed as beneficiary. In contrast, when their mindset is framed as a benefactor, there was no significant difference on sharing intention between the meaningful video (M = 3.60) and the pleasant video (M = 2.61; p = .13). More detailed descriptions of the experimental procedure, stimuli development, measurement, and statistical analyses for experiment 3 will be discussed during the presentation.

General Discussion: The current study extends existing sports management literature by identifying meaningful experience as an additional dimension of sports consumption. In addition, the present research identified a feeling of elevation as a key driver of online sharing and subsequent information search intentions for sports-related videos that highlight the meaningful story.