Drawing on the conceptual synergy between Sport Experience Design (SX) framework and the Psychological Continuum Model (PCM), through this study, we explored the boundary conditions under which the performance-based evaluation influences event satisfaction in the context of recreational boating competitions.

The construct of customer satisfaction has strategic importance to sport organizations. It is positively associated with consumption and evaluation outcomes (e.g., customer retention and firm values) (Luo & Bhattacharya, 2006; Olsen, 2007). Motivated by the significance of satisfaction, Funk’s (2017) SX framework outlines key antecedents of sport event satisfaction. Either a sport context perspective (e.g., Yoshida & James, 2010), or a sport user perspective (e.g., Du, Jordan, & Funk, 2015) could be adopted to investigate sport consumption experience.

In line with the sport user perspective, Du et al. (2015) provide field evidence to demonstrate the impact of a performance-based reference disconfirmation on event satisfaction in a participant sport setting. Based on the results, Du et al. suggested that physical-based performance was positively linked to the perception of overall event experience contingent upon an individual's judgment of actual performance relative to a preset time goal. We believe that event satisfaction is reference dependent, the utility function will be driven by participants' motivation to finish ahead of a predetermined performance goal.

In addition, the relationship between performance and satisfaction can be better understood based upon an individual's level of psychological connection to a sport activity. Conceptually, an individual's relative performance exerts differential influences on experienced satisfaction among levels of psychological connection to a sport activity (Funk & James, 2001;2006). For instance, allegiant boaters are expected to engage in more biased cognitive processing to resist negative situational outcomes (e.g., falling short of a performance goal) compared to individuals in the attraction stage. Hence, we hypothesized that the elevation of an individual's psychological connection to boating will diminish the strength of the effects of physical performance on event satisfaction.

To test the hypotheses, an online survey was distributed to the participants at an international recreational boating competition (n = 181). A two (performance goal: achieved vs. unachieved) by three (PCM stages: attraction vs. attachment vs. allegiance) factorial model of moderation was tested within PROCESS (Hayes, 2017). The findings revealed a significant positive effect of physical performance (b=.31, p < .05), psychological connection (b = 1.11, p < .01), and a significant negative interaction effect (b= -.58, p < .01) between the two on event satisfaction (R2=52%).

Collectively, the results provide theoretical and practical understanding of satisfaction by integrating the SX framework (Funk, 2017) and the PCM (Funk & James, 2001). The findings of boundary conditions revealed that the performance-satisfaction linkage might not be equally positive among four PCM stages, where the beneficial marginal effects of relative performance on satisfaction were diminishing along the PCM progression. Event organizers should partner with training programs to encourage novice participants to set more realistic performance goals to elicit optimal event experience.