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## **COSMOPOLITAN CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR: EXPLORING FOOTBALL SUPPORTERS' AWARENESS, INTERESTS, AND MOTIVATIONS**

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Synopsis:

This research explores fan interest, motivation, and awareness around the 2014 FIFA World Cup Finals as a function of national identity and sociocultural identification. In an effort to better understand how supporters of different countries follow and support their nations during the World Cup, the study examines the behavioural habits of national team supporters across ten different neighbourhoods and ethnic throughout the city of Toronto. The resultant findings offer a new and unique perspective into the role national identification plays in fan involvement and motivation, and contemporize past research into the motivations and behaviours of football supporters.

Abstract:

Aim

This research explores fan interest, motivation, and awareness around the 2014 FIFA World Cup Finals as a function of national identity and sociocultural identification. In an effort to better understand how supporters of different countries follow and support their nations during the World Cup, the study examines the behavioural habits of national team supporters across ten different neighbourhoods and ethnic throughout the city of Toronto. The resultant findings offer a new and unique perspective into the role national identification plays in fan involvement and motivation, and contemporize past research into the motivations and behaviours of football supporters.

Theoretical Framework

The study of consumer behaviour and fan motivation has received extensive attention over the course of the past thirty years, with specific interest in identifying those motivating factors behind consumers' intent to attend sport events (e.g., Trail & James, 2001), as well as those constraints which restrict fan attendance or consumption (Trail, Robinson & Kim, 2008). Within this

literature, a growing body of research into the role team and fan identification play in determining sport consumer behaviour has emerged (e.g., Bodet & Bernache-Assollant, 2011; Kim, Trail & Magnusen, 2013). However, to date the relevance and potential impact of national identification and sociocultural embeddedness have yet to be examined in any detail within the context of sport fan behaviour and motivations. The impact of national identification, and the mitigating effects of sociocultural embeddedness and belonging on fan motivation, however, remains an area of investigation in need of greater focus.

## Research Design

Intuitively, given the nature of international sporting events such as the FIFA World Cup or the Olympics, national identity and belonging represent key indicators of fan connection and motivation. The effects of this identification on behavioural habits and consumption level, however, have largely been overlooked in the extant sport fan behavior literature. This study therefore represents an important first step towards understanding the potential effects of national identification on sport spectators as a potential motivating factor in consumer behavior.

In order to investigate the effects of national identity on consumer behavior and explore the nature of fan behavior and motivation across different communities and cultures, a cross-sectional, positivist research design was constructed. A survey instrument, comprising 28 items divided amongst five variables (Fan Identification, Engagement, Awareness, New Media Consumption, and Demographics), drawing on Kim & Trail's (2010) analysis of constraints and motivators. This scale was adapted in order to better fit the specific variables examined – with particular emphasis on national identity and sociocultural context – but nevertheless provided an important theoretical basis of investigation.

Data collection was conducted throughout the initial group stage of the 2014 FIFA World Cup in June 2014, canvassing ten cultural and ethnic communities across the city of Toronto. The FIFA World Cup, and the study's location, were selected based on the highly developed multi-cultural and cosmopolitan nature of Toronto, and the unique impact the World Cup has in activating supporters from different countries and in different ethnic communities around the city. Convenience sampling was employed, in an effort to reach as many football supporters as possible from the targeted communities and nationalities. The ten nations selected for the study were identified based on the presence and size of geographical ethnic communities in the city (e.g., Little Italy, Koreatown, etc), fan populations represented in popular commentary and news media in the lead-in to the World Cup Finals, and the availability of communal viewing locations for national team matches. In total, 585 completed surveys were collected from 18 group stage games. This data was then inputted into SPSS, allowing for a multi-dimensional statistical analysis.

## Results

The study's findings reveal a number of important insights into the effects national identity has on fan behavior and its role as a prospective element of

fan motivation. Importantly, these results represent a potentially significant advancement in fan motivation theory for international sport and national team supporters, as well as for sport marketing practice. The level of involvement between supporter and country appears to have a direct impact on the level of awareness and spectatorship, as supporting one's country reflects an increasingly important element of national identification and sociocultural place for non-domestic supporters (e.g., fans living in a different country to the team they support). This is a potentially valuable contribution for both theory and practice, as the implications of international support for sport marketing and consumer behavior are explored in greater depth and the advances made here are built upon further.

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