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## Consumption in cricket: Contrasting form and time preferences

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Synopsis:

Abstract:

This is the revised version

Aim

Much research has been undertaken on the motivation to follow sporting and leisure events. However, the main focus of these studies has been on those who attend events (direct consumers) and follow particular teams. Little research has extended the investigation of sporting consumption to include those who consume sport via other means, such as the media (indirect consumers) and their scheduling preferences. With the growth of indirect consumption and its importance from both a finance and marketing perspective this is an area of increasing interest in sports management. The authors examined the consumption patterns of domestic cricket consumers in England and Wales over the course of a season.

Background /Literature review

Sporting consumption has been defined as "the manner in which a spectator interacts with the witnessed action that occurs during an event for which the outcome is uncertain" Madrigal (2006). It implies that consumption could take place either as a game attendee (direct) or via other means such as online, television and radio (indirect/tertiary). Other authors have acknowledged different forms of consumption without any empirical investigation. For instance, Stewart et al., (2003) posit that a sports fan is someone who says they are a sports fan and sport consumption is a self-defining phenomenon, comprising more than observing an event.

Cricket was selected as the focus of our investigation because it is a sport

where there is evidence to suggest that indirect consumption is significant and concurrent with falling attendances. This suggests that it is a sport where there are other forms of consumption, for example via television and electronic consumption, e.g. internet sites (Doyle et al., 2013). Practitioner research endorses this suggesting both the numbers of sport fans and the time they spend using internet-connected devices is increasing (Perform, 2013).

#### Method

A questionnaire was designed based on the SPEED (Socialisation, performance, excitement, esteem and diversion) scale that was devised to investigate motives to follow a sporting team (Funk et al, 2009). We adapted the scale as our focus was on consumption of the sport as opposed to the games of a particular team. It incorporated the constructs of socialising, consumption motivation, constraints to follow the sport and sporting preference. The study adopted a snowball approach, which resulted in a non-probability sample. A link being emailed to Cricket Supporters Association (CSA) members and three other cricket supporter organisations, a follow up email was sent after two weeks. Respondents also posted the survey onto other sports forums. The survey was open for a period of four months and obtained 632 responses (547 male, 85 female).

#### Results

Findings from our research suggest that a number of forms of indirect consumption are utilised more than direct consumption. Activities such as visiting websites, following reports in newspapers and talking about the team with others were activities undertaken by over 90% of respondents. A number of these forms of indirect consumption are peripheral to actual games, they do not 'involve action that occurs during an event' (Madrigal, 2006). Although game attendance and watching an event via a broadcast may be in competition for consumers, much indirect consumption consists of activities that are complimentary to the event. There appears to be a hierarchy of consumption with live sport at the top: 93% of respondents would rather attend a match than watch it on television, 86% had attended a match during the course of the season and 57% were members/season ticket holders. There was also support for tradition with respondents favouring Friday evenings for the T20 competition and Sundays for one day games, the days these games were originally played on.

The greater financial potential of indirect consumption has been noted in a number of contexts. For example, in football direct consumption is limited by a number of factors, most notably stadium capacity. Demand from broadcasters and sponsors is derived from the needs of sports fans, and an understanding of consumers modes of consumption, by both leagues and clubs, should aid the development of marketing strategies to satisfy these needs and increase consumer satisfaction.

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