

# AN EXPLORATION OF MOTIVES AND CONSTRAINTS IN SPORT TEAM FACEBOOK

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## Aim of abstract/paper

Realizing the potential use of social networking sites as a communication and marketing tool, many sport organizations have incorporated them in their overall marketing efforts (Coyle, 2010). In academia, research on Facebook has been conducted in diverse disciplines, however there are still limited studies that are sport-specific. With a need to employ a rigorous and a systematic approach to understand the psychology of sport organization's Facebook (sport FB) usage, this study attempted to identify motives and constraints of sport FB use. Accordingly, the purpose of this study is twofold: first, to capture the multidimensional facets of motivation and constraints of sport Facebook usage; and secondly to develop a valid and reliable instrument.

## Theoretical background

In this study, the Uses and Gratifications (U&G) theory is adopted as a theoretical framework. The U&G paradigm has been used to capture gratifications sought by users as motivations for using new media and its use in particular contexts (Papacharissi & Rubin, 2000). From the U&G perspective, sport FB users are often motivated to participate in activities and select sport-related content that will best satisfy a specific need. In sport FB, users are active in conversation about the team's games, popular issues and topics. Sport fans would often jump into conversation with other fans who they do not even know. These interactive features enable users to be emotionally engaged with the content (Papacharissi & Rubin, 2000). Therefore, a focus on sport FB using characteristics from a U&G point of view may help us understand motives and constraints for using sport FB.

## Methodology

The current study implemented a three-step procedure to develop and validate an instrument for measuring motives for using sport FB: factor identification, scale purification, and scale validation. First, a total of four focus groups of US undergraduate students at a medium-size East Coast university were conducted. Based on these responses from the focus group sessions, 56 survey items were generated for the dominant dimensions of FB motivations. Second, exploratory factor analysis (EFA) using SPSS 19 on the initial instrument items was performed with a convenience sample of 293 students. In addition, items were reviewed by experts in scale development to purify the measure. Last, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) using AMOS 21 version was utilized to validate the structure established with the EFA. In this stage, 275 individuals participated in the study through three professional and three college sport team Facebook pages. The majority of the participants were male (79.3%), single (50.5%), well educated (at least 76.4% had some post-secondary education), and between 18-30 years of age (63.6%).

## Results

The results of EFA indicated that 11 factors emerged which accounted for 79.4% of the total variance explained by the model. However, based on feedback from expert reviewers, several items were removed and one factor was renamed. As a result, the 10 factor solution containing 33 items was accepted as most appropriate. The factors identified were Social voyeurism (5 items), Social Enhancement (3 items), Economic value seeking (3 items), Fan Connection (3 items), Team connection/support (4 items), Entertainment value seeking (3 items), and Convenience (3 items). In addition, three constraints were identified: Self-protection (3 items), Time (3 items), and Lack of interest (3 items).

The results of CFA indicated that the measurement model fits were acceptable:  $\chi^2/df = 1.72$  (814.62/473); CFI = .96; TLI = .95; and RMSEA = .051 (.045 - .057). Average variance extracted for each factor exceeded the suggested .50 (ranged from .50 and .87; Hair et al., 2006). Each loading was greater than the suggested value of .70 (Hair et al., 2006). Each squared correlation between constructs is smaller than the average variance extracted. Based on the measurement model test, the sport FB motivation scale is found to be valid and reliable.

## Discussion and implications

This study contributes to the field of sport management by applying and extending the U&G theory to the context of sport FB consumption behavior. Consistent with the U&G theory, sport FB users tend to actively participate in information creation, sharing, and distribution. It suggests that sport fans are seeking specific media content to meet specific needs. Sport FB may be a unique and valuable outlet for needs that might not be fulfilled in a real life sporting context. More importantly, this study takes a step toward advancing the body of literature on new media effectiveness by identifying gratifications sought from sport FB pages. Additionally, the scale can provide practitioners with a reliable and valid analytical tool for the measurement of sport FB users' motivation and constraints.

## References

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