

SPORT VIEWING: DIGITAL MEDIA USES AND GRATIFICATIONS

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Synopsis:

This research project is focused on how consumers view sport in the digital era, i.e. live broadcasts and video on demand on large screen HDTVs, or on mobile devices such as smartphones and tablets, and the reasons why they view sport, i.e. their viewing motivations. The aim of this paper is to identify sport-specific viewing uses and gratifications and to analyse their influence on how different consumer target groups use digital media.

Abstract:

AIM OF PAPER AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This research project is focused on how consumers view sport in the digital era, i.e. live broadcasts and video on demand on large screen HDTVs, or on mobile devices such as smartphones and tablets, and the reasons why they view sport, i.e. their viewing motivations.

The aim of this paper is to identify sport-specific viewing uses and gratifications and to analyse their influence on how different consumer target groups use digital media. Specifically, the research questions are:

- (1) What sport viewing gratifications are relevant for digital media users?
- (2) How strongly do these gratifications influence sport viewing behaviour regarding stationary and mobile devices?
- (3) What differences in gratifications and viewing exist among consumer target groups that vary in age, gender, levels of sport involvement and media-specific innovativeness?

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND LITERATURE REVIEW

This paper is based on the uses and gratifications (U&G) approach (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1974) that is applied in the sport new media context as well as on the psychological continuum model (PCM) framework (Funk &

James, 2001). These models are normally used without focusing on different contexts, whereas the sport value framework suggests on the basis of service-dominant logic (SDL) in marketing that context should always be taken into account when the value creation of sport viewers is analysed (Woratschek, Horbel, & Popp, 2014).

Motivational studies regarding media uses and gratifications focused primarily on television and identified a variety of different motives (Ruggiero, 2000). Sport is attractive content for media companies since many consumers are interested in viewing sport - independent of age, gender, education, income, social status or culture. Information seeking, being up-to-date or learning rules, entertainment seeking, excitement, eustress, release, pastime or escape from everyday life, and social interaction were frequently mentioned as sport viewing motives (Raney, 2006). To date, only a limited number of research publications have referred to sport content delivered via the Internet (computer) or via mobile devices (tablets, smartphones, etc.).

Despite its practical relevance, sport viewing via digital devices has not been a significant topic in the new media context. There is no consensus on labelling and operationalisation of same or similar (sport) media-related motives. Dependency and multicollinearity among motives and their importance are additional issues that should be addressed.

METHODOLOGY, RESEARCH DESIGN AND DATA ANALYSIS

Sport viewing uses and gratifications, as well as intentions, were operationalised by previously validated items and scales derived from the literature. An online survey was established in Qualtrics and in 2014 and 2015 data was collected from two samples in Germany and the U.S.A. The first sample (>400 subjects) focused primarily on German students. The second sample (>350 subjects) was drawn from Amazon MTurk and focused on master participants who were U.S. citizens. The data were analysed by using IBM SPSS and AMOS employing exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses as well as linear regression and moderation analyses.

Common method bias was considered to be an issue of this study since both independent and dependent variables were measured by the consumer's evaluations. It was addressed *inter alia* by applying different scales for the sport viewing gratifications (7 point Likert scale on agreement/disagreement), device usage intentions (11 point likelihood scale) and current usage (7 point usage scale). In total, data analyses revealed reliable measurements as well as validity in both samples.

RESULTS, DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS/CONCLUSIONS

Regarding the first research question, the exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses revealed seven independent motivational factors related to sport viewing: (a) entertainment seeking and mood regulation, (b) information seeking and learning, (c) pastime, (d) fan identification, (e) social interaction, (f) escape, and (g) aesthetics. Out of these factors (a)-(d) showed significant influences on the consumers' sport viewing intentions on both mobile media

and stationary large screen HDTV. However, aesthetics did not show any direct impact on sport viewing intention via any digital device. Regarding the second research question we found that the context has a significant influence on the usage process as well as created value. However, the influence strengths of each significant factor varied among the media technologies as well as the samples. Regarding the third research question the model will be further tested highlighting consumer target groups that differ in age and gender, their previous experience with device usage, as well as their levels of sport involvement and media-specific innovativeness in order to increase the model's explanatory power. Detailed results will be presented at the conference. In conclusion, context matters and future research should conduct more context dependent analyses in sport management.

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