

# The Impact Of Sport Consumption Motives On Consumers' Attitudes Towards Sponsorship

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## Aim of the research

The paper examines how consumers' motives for following sports affect their attitudes towards sport sponsorship. It provides sponsoring firms with insights into the factors that either promote or hinder consumers' receptiveness towards sponsor-related messages, making it possible for them to identify the most favorable segments (e.g. people following sports as a means of relieving their daily stress) at which these messages should be targeted.

## Theoretical background

Over the past twenty years, research addressing sport consumer behavior has become increasingly interested in the relationship between consumers' psychological factors (e.g. their motivation) and the decisions they make regarding whether and how they consume sports. For example, Choi, Martin, Park, and Yoh (2009) study how consumers' motivational factors affect their involvement in following NCAA Division II basketball. Consumers' sport consumption motives have been extensively studied and the literature includes several contributions in regards to how they should be defined and operationalized. One of the pioneering studies in this field is Wann (1995), who distinguishes between eight motives, namely *Escape*, *Economic*, *Eustress*, *Aesthetic*, *Self-esteem*, *Group affiliation*, *Entertainment*, and *Family*. However, despite the widespread interest in consumers' motives for consuming sports, little is known about how these motives are related to how consumers perceive sport sponsorship. In the present study, the attitudes towards sponsorship are defined as consumers' *overall response* to the question of whether sponsorship is favorable or not (no specific sponsorship context was established). However, the relationship between motivation and attitude in sports consumer behavior is underexplored even though the literature suggests that these constructs are related. Both attitudes and motivations has been described as essential part of individual's cognitive processes that guide sports consumer behavior (Shilpury et al. 2009).

## Methodology, research design, and data analysis

The data includes 1,106 responses collected from Finnish consumers in spring 2016. Sport consumption motives were measured using the scale by Wann, Schrader, and Wilson (1999), while attitudes towards sponsorship were addressed with three items from Pollay and Mittal (1993). A seven-point Likert rating (1 = totally disagree, 7 = totally agree) was applied for all the constructs. The authors conducted confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to establish a measurement model and validate the constructs. The self-esteem factor was removed from the final model due to insufficient discriminant validity caused by its strong correlation with other constructs, especially that of eustress. Furthermore, one item related to attitudes towards sponsorship was removed due to its low factor loading. After these modifications, the final CFA model obtained a good fit with  $\chi^2(df) = 766.62(181)$  ( $p < 0.001$ ), CFI = 0.973, and RMSEA = 0.054.

## Results, discussion and conclusions

The results of structural equation modeling show that only two sport consumption motives influence consumers' attitudes towards sponsorship: while entertainment has a positive impact with a standardized regression weight ( $\beta$ ) of 0.510 (C.R. = 9.322,  $p < 0.001$ ), the effect of group affiliation is negative ( $\beta = -0.148$ , C.R. = -3.025,  $p = 0.002$ ).

The positive impact of entertainment indicates that consumers who enjoy sports due to its entertaining value also appreciate sponsoring. This could be explained by the fact that watching a game, for example, is only part of the sport product that is consumed in order to avoid dreariness or to have a good time. People may also believe that sponsoring helps to make the whole event possible, and that without sponsors there would be less possibilities for organizing an entertaining sporting event. For example, contests that sponsors organize during an event (e.g. "Tweet your favorite athlete and win free products") may positively affect consumers' perceptions of sports as a means of having a good time.

On the other hand, the negative impact of group affiliation implies that in case of consuming sports as a means of spending time with and enjoying the presence of other people, the involvement of sponsors may add little to the experience people are looking for. Watching and commenting on a football game, for example, may be the hub around which interaction with other people takes place. Consequently, one

may find such things as commercial breaks as interrupting the interaction process with other people, where what happens in the playfield serves as a spark for commentary and discussion.

The above results, as well as the reasons behind them, naturally require further research. Researchers may find it particularly relevant to examine whether the lacking association between many of sport consumption motives and the attitudes towards sponsorship results from these linkages being indirect (i.e. mediated).

## References

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