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# **Bridging the Gap: Bringing the World Down Under**

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## **SportWay Toward Sport Event Consumption**

### **Abstract**

Research has led to a proliferation of multi-attribute scales to understand the motives for sport event attendance. The large number of potential motives, coupled with the long questionnaires needed to measure them, creates challenges for sport marketing research in natural populations. This research brings parsimony to the study of sport consumer behaviour by developing and testing a core set of five SportWay facets of motivation. Results provide guidance to sport marketing professionals and academics in survey development decisions related to selecting the most appropriate motives and items.

Keywords: Sport marketing, motivation, attendance, measure.

Sport events represent a central aspect of leisure consumption in Australia. Few consumptive experiences create greater interest and investment than spectator sports (Baade, 2003). Within the Australian general population age 15 years and over, 44% (7.1 million) attended at least one sport event within the last 12 months (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2005-06). For many, attending a sport event takes on personal importance and continues to draw attention from marketing academics and practitioners. Despite its importance, the demand for spectator sport can fluctuate and fragment due to market forces (Andreff & Szymanski, 2006). Sport franchises reap benefits when the core product performs well, but in times of poor and mediocre performance loss of market share is a possibility (Gladden & Funk,

2002). Sport marketing action attempts to avoid the ebb and flow of event attendance by understanding what motivates consumption behaviour among sport consumers.

Sport marketing activities match needs and wants of consumers with sport products and services. A useful body of literature illustrates the unique nature of sport events and advances a variety of benefits individuals receive through sport event consumption (Funk & James, 2001). A number of multi-attribute scales have been developed and tested to measure motives for attending, watching, and supporting professional and collegiate competitive sport teams. Unfortunately this body of knowledge has led to a proliferation of scales creating implementation challenges in natural populations for academics and marketing professionals. This study provides guidance for using multi-attribute scales by developing and testing a core set of five SportWay facets of motivation useful across sport event contexts.

### **Literature Review**

A general text book definition suggests motivation emerges from a sequence of five basic stages: need recognition; tension reduction; drive state; want; and goal-directed behaviour (e.g., Schiffman, & Kanuk, 2001). The want stage receives considerable attention within the literature and represents the pathway toward a specific form of consumption to reduce an unpleasant state or receive a benefit. A sport pathway allows an individual to acquire desirable outcomes and initiate decision-making, leading to formation of choice and behavioural action (Weiss & Chaumeton, 1992). Sport participation, both active and passive, creates opportunities to acquire physical, social and personal benefits through experiential consumption (Beaton & Funk, 2008). Hence, the specific pathways individuals can take to achieve desirable outcomes as sport consumers represent SportWay.

SportWay illustrates a collection of pathways individuals seek out because each path provides an opportunity to acquire benefits (Funk & James, 2001). Numerous SportWay paths

exist and a person can achieve desirable outcomes through playing or watching baseball, football, cricket, running, golf and related events. In addition, a specific sport context such as watching football provides multiple pathways a consumer can use to fulfil needs and receive benefits (Trail & James, 2001). SportWay paths toward consumption reflect unique facets of motivation to seek out a sport event to receive benefits and satisfy needs through goal directed behaviour. For instance, an individual may regularly attend cricket matches because s/he enjoys meeting with friends to take in the game and appreciates the excitement and uncertainty surrounding the outcome of each match, while paying little attention to, and having limited knowledge of, the skills and techniques exhibited by the players. This individual's SportWay path towards cricket would reflect high levels of social interaction and excitement, along with low levels of aesthetics and performance.

Prior research provides a comprehensive list of SportWay motivational facets capable of explaining goal directed behaviour. A number of multi-attribute scales are used to measure facets of motivation for sport event attendance (Funk & James, 2001). This body of work has led to a proliferation of scales and has increased the length of questionnaires required for implementation in natural populations. These scales measure eight to fourteen facets of motivation. In addition, confusion exists regarding the appropriate wording of items to measure a specific motive, the labels used for the motive, and in the application of a core set of motives across sports. Academic research has failed to provide uniformity or specific direction to sport marketing professionals in survey development decisions related to selecting the most appropriate motives and items. The current research adopts a hybrid approach to develop a parsimonious set of motives capable of measuring the unique SportWay facets of motivation applicable across various sport event contexts.

The hybrid approach is advantageous for two reasons. First, the approach provides a core set of motives based on theoretical and practical relevance. A core set of motives provides a stronger research-practice relationship as key words used by researchers can easily be translated and used by practitioners (Henderson, Presley & Bialeschki, 2004). Second, the hybrid approach integrates micro and macro perspectives to develop distinct motive

constructs. A micro approach divides a large construct such as motivation into smaller representative factors (Kiesler, Collins, & Miller, 1969), which has led to the proliferation of scales to measure individual motives. The macro approach focuses on developing a nomological perspective of a construct's theoretical fit and interrelationships with other key variables (Gerbing & Anderson, 1988). This approach reduces the number of factors to explain the larger construct allowing a more parsimonious examination of the construct's relationship to antecedents and outcomes. The hybrid approach incorporates micro and macro approaches to develop a core number of SportWay facets that have theoretical and practical relevance. The method section outlines two studies used to test these hybrid facets of motivation.

### **METHOD**

The following section describes the hybrid approach used to bring parsimony to scale development by generating a core set of motives for attending sport events. The initial task was to review existing multi-factor instruments used in previous research to develop the hybrid approach. This review identified four instruments used to examine sport consumer motives:

1. the Sport Fan Motivation Scale (Wann, 1995)
2. the Motivation Scale for Sport Consumption (Trail & James, 2001)
3. the Sport Interest Inventory (Funk, Ridinger, & Moorman, 2003), and
4. the Spectator Motivation Scale (Pease & Zhang, 2001).

These instruments assess multiple motives, use multiple items to measure a motive, have been used in at least two studies, have been reported in peer-reviewed journals, and their psychometric properties have been found to be both valid and reliable.

A content analysis revealed five motivational themes were used consistently within the instruments to represent facets of sport consumption motivation. The five themes were Socialisation, Performance, Excitement, Esteem and Diversion (SPEED). Item analysis of each motivational theme across the four instruments was used to select the appropriate questions to measure a specific motive. A survey was next developed and tested in two studies to examine the psychometric properties of the five facets of motivation. An Australian Football

League (AFL) game was selected as the contest since it has the highest attendance rates among sport codes in Australia (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2005-06)

*Participants - Study 1:* The survey group consisted of 333 spectators attending an AFL game in southern Queensland. The sample characteristics were 55% male, 45% in the age range 25-44 years, 42% had a high school degree followed by 30% with a university degree, 50% were from Oceania followed by 30% European, 55% were living with a partner, 45% had children, and 46% earned between \$2500-6000 AUD per month. Each person indicated AFL was their favourite sport code and had been to at least one game prior to attending this event. *Study 2:* The survey group consisted of 384 individuals intercepted at various locations within the geographic location of the sport team in southern Queensland. The sample characteristics were 69% male, 51% in the 25-44 age range, 38% had a high school degree followed by 38% with a university degree, 55% were from Oceania followed by 31% Europe, 55% were living with a partner, 41% had children, and 42% earned between \$2500-6000 AUD per month. Each person indicated AFL was their favourite sport code and had been to at least one game prior to completing the questionnaire.

*Material Used: Study 1 & 2:* A paper and pencil questionnaire was used to collect responses both from spectators attending an AFL game in Study 1, and for those intercepted in Study 2. The developed questionnaire included 15 items to measure the SportWay motives. Each motive was assessed using three items randomly placed within the questionnaire. See Table 1 for motives and items.

*Procedure: Study 1:* The 15 items representing the five SportWay facets of motivation were included in a single-page questionnaire administered to spectators attending an Australian Rules Football match in Brisbane, Australia. Questionnaires were distributed by ten student researchers stationed at five randomly selected gates at the venue. Every 5<sup>th</sup> spectator was intercepted upon entrance and asked a qualifying question: "Have you attended a game prior to tonight's game?" If the response was yes, the spectator was asked to complete the

questionnaire and return it upon completion to the researcher. The number of refusals was low. A total of 400 questionnaires were distributed with 333 usable for the analysis.

*Study 2:* The 15 items representing the SportWay facets were included in a single-page questionnaire and administered at various locations within the geographic location of the sport team in southern Queensland. Questionnaires were distributed by ten student researchers at shopping malls, local footy games, train stations, and sport centres. Individuals were intercepted and asked two qualifying questions: “Are you a fan of the AFL?” and, “Have you attended at least one home game in the last 12 months?” If the responses to both questions were yes, the individual was asked to complete the questionnaire and return it immediately to the researcher. The number of refusals was low. A total of 400 questionnaires were distributed with 384 usable for the analysis.

## RESULTS

Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) using AMOS 6.0 indicated an acceptable fit for the measurement model for both samples (Sample 1  $\chi^2 = 242.81/df = 80$ ; Sample 2  $\chi^2 = 235.83/df = 80$ ). Evidence for convergent validity was observed in both samples as the standardized regression coefficients reported in Table 1 for each construct exceeded the required .707 minimum, the average variance extracted for each construct was above the .50 benchmark (Socialisation AVE = .74; Performance AVE = .76; Excitement AVE = .65; Esteem AVE = .79; Diversion AVE = .76), and construct reliability scores were above the recommended minimum level CR = .75 to CR = .86. Evidence of discriminant validity was observed with correlations between the five constructs ranging from 0.32 to 0.69 and the average variance extracted by each of the items representing a construct exceeded the squared correlation between each construct. Fit statistics were calculated and revealed identical results for both samples (RMSEA = .07; SRMR = .04; GFI = .92; NFI = .94; CFI = .96).



Table 1: Measurement Results for Confirmatory Factor Analysis of SportWay Facets	Study 1 N = 333 $\beta$	Study 2 N = 384 $\beta$
<b>Socialization</b>		
The chance to socialize with others	.89	.85
The possibility of talking with other people at the game	.84	.81
The opportunity to interact with other people	.85	.87
<b>Performance</b>		
The beauty and grace of the game.	.92	.91
The gracefulness associated with the game	.90	.87
The natural elegance of the game.	.79	.80
<b>Excitement</b>		
I enjoy the excitement associated with the games.	.82	.80
I enjoy the excitement surrounding the game.	.82	.81
I find the games very exciting.	.77	.80
<b>Esteem</b>		
I feel a personal sense of victory with the team wins	.93	.91
I feel like I have won when the team wins.	.92	.90
I get a sense of accomplishment when the team wins.	.80	.91
<b>Diversion</b>		
I can get away from the tension in my life.	.84	.83
It provides me with a break from my daily routine	.92	.85
The game provides a distraction from my everyday activities	.86	.85

### CONCLUSION & IMPLICATIONS

Sport marketing research requires a more parsimonious manageable tool for measuring motives for attending sport events. A hybrid approach allowed for the development of a parsimonious set of motives to understand why individuals seek out sport event experiences. This approach integrated both macro and micro approaches along with a content analysis of existing scales to identify five core facets of motivation: Socialisation, Performance, Excitement, Esteem and Diversion that have theoretical and practical relevance. These five motivational facets represent core sport pathways individuals seek out to provide opportunities to achieve

desirable outcomes. The SportWay facets were validated using two samples: sport event attendees and the general population. Results provide guidance to academics and sport marketing professionals in survey development decisions related to selecting the most appropriate motives and items needed to understand sport consumers.

The current research helps overcome definitional and operational challenges in sport consumer research. Currently, different multi-attribute scales use similar constructs, however these scales include different questions and the number of motives increases the length of the questionnaire. Results suggest that five core motivational facets provide a parsimonious approach to understanding how individuals acquire benefits and satisfy needs through attending a sport event. A hybrid SportWay approach facilitates sport consumer research by reducing the number of motives to a manageable number, which can improve knowledge sharing among academics and practitioners. These SPEED facets can facilitate future work in sport consumer behaviour providing the ability to examine and compare “core” motives across a variety of sport contexts while considering contextual factors. Results provide a manageable number of motives to better understand consumption activities such as attendance, media consumption and merchandise expenditure fostering a stronger research-practice relationship.

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