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**DOES DISAPPOINTMENT IN THE EVALUATION OF A SPORTING EVENT
REDUCE SPORT CONSUMPTION?**

by

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INTRODUCTION

How do bad experiences and the negative memories they create influence sport consumption? The psychological principle of reinforcement postulates an automatic association between experience and behavior. This suggests that sport tourists will repeat experiences they enjoy and avoid those that they do not. Studies that have examined people's memories after experiencing an events have often shown post-hoc memories are inconsistent with the experiencers' felt moment-by-moment during the same events (Wirtz, Kruger, Scollon, & Diener, 2003). For example, notwithstanding the disappointment or worries caused by excessive rain, long lines, or physical exhaustion, people might still have a considerably happy memory of an experience (Mitchell, Thompson, Peterson, & Cronk, 1997). These sorts of inconsistencies have also been reported among vacationers to Europe and Disneyland, and even participants (runners) in the Chicago Marathon (Mitchell et al., 1997; Sutton, 1992; Wirtz & Kruger, 2002).

For millions of people, the anticipation and recollection of various events are usually more positive than their actual experience (Mitchell et al., 1997). Indeed, positive (e.g., happiness, joy, excitement) and negative (e.g., disappointment, distractions) emotions coexist in a great range of events. A majority of research involving sporting event contexts has focused on positive fan emotions (e.g., self-esteem, enjoyment, pleasure, and fun; Jackson, 1996; Kimiecik & Stein, 1992; Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi, 2009; Pelletier et al, 1995). Yet, very little research has examined sport fans' negative emotions such as the disappointment that lingers after their favorite teams or team disappoints them. A great many fans watch their beloved teams, on an annual basis, fall in defeat (Zillmann, Bryant, & Sapolsky, 1989). Spectators can also be put off by a facility's unclean restrooms or the long lines that they must endure to attend guest services (Wakefield & Blodgett, 1996). Saayman (2012) identified sporting event elements that negatively impact spectator pleasure. These included cleanliness, crowd size, and food service. Some spectators are made uncomfortable if they are crowded and they may wish to leave the stadium or stay home the next time. We propose that the lingering uncertainty associated with disappointment may reduce how sport tourists feel about the likely consequences of sport consumption.

LITERATURE REVIEW

One topic in psychology that has long stimulated research is that of disappointment (e.g., Bell, 1985; Gul, 1991; Plutchik, 1962; Schimmack & Diener, 1997; Van Dijk & Van der Pligt, 1997; Van Kleef, De Dreu, & Manstead, 2006). Disappointment has been defined as an emotion that "is primarily experienced in a situation in which something positive was expected, but did not occur" (Van Dijk, Zeelenberg, & Van der Pligt, 1999, p. 131). Luhmann (1995) pointed out that disappointment leads to the initiation of uncertainty toward social relations at two levels: the cognitive and normative. The cognitive level of disappointment indicates an uncertainty of

knowledge; the normative level represents a failure to abide by social obligations. In addition, a sense of disappointment can be dubious since it is derived from a fracture in the relationship between expectations and actions (Knight, MacNeill, & Donnelly, 2005).

Disappointment theory, introduced by Bell (1985), has been used to explain the consequences of being disappointed when one faces uncertain circumstances. For instance, if the team one supports loses an important game, one may ponder the potential pain that accompanies an unexpected defeat as one considers attending a future game. Bell (1985) posited that the more valuable or desirable the hoped-for outcome, the greater the disappointment. This is congruent with expectation disconfirmation, which suggests that expectations that are not met, can cause dissatisfaction (Oliver, 1980). Loomes and Sugden (1986) stated that “the central proposition of disappointment theory is that an individual forms expectations about uncertain prospects, and if the actual consequence turns out to be worse than (or better than) that expectation, the individual experiences a sensation of disappointment (or elation)” (p. 271). In further describing the nature of disappointment, Van Dijk, Van der Pligt, and Zeelenberg (1999) suggested that the more desirable it is to fans that their team win and the more effort they invest in supporting their team, the more disappointed they are likely to experience if their team loses.

Sport consumption behavior includes both direct consumption (spectators attending sporting events) and indirect consumption (via media; Wann, Melnick, Russel, & Pease, 2001). Among the previous studies of sport consumption behavior, Taute et al. (2010) focused on the relationship between sport fans’ emotions and sport consumption behaviors. They found fans’ emotions directly influence future consumption intentions. Furthermore, both positive (i.e., motivators) and negative (i.e., constraints) factors can affect individuals’ attitudes and behaviors (i.e., attendance intention, media consumption intention, and licensed merchandise purchase intention). By extension, it should be beneficial to better understand individuals’ reasons for their attendance or purchase choice in terms of their attitudes and behaviors (Kim & Trail, 2011). Although positive emotions may generally attract potential sport fans, negative can be more prominent than positive ones, as prospect theory states that losses loom greater than gains (Tversky and Kahneman, 1981). Therefore, this study investigates how disappointment—arguably the most intense and third most frequent of negative emotions (e.g., anxiety and anger) (Schimmack & Diener, 1997)—influences fans’ sport consumption behaviors.

Examining the effect of fan disappointment on sport consumption behavior—the aim of this paper—is thus believed to be a worthwhile endeavor. Based on the predictions of Disappointment Theory as formulated by Bell (1985) and Loomes and Sugden (1986) and on the findings of Van Dijk, Van der Pligt, and colleagues (1999), this study puts forward three hypotheses.

- 1) Fan disappointment will be directly and positively related to the relationship between fan expectation for team success and fan motivation of sport consumption behavior.
- 2) Fan disappointment will be directly and positively related to the relationship between fan dedication to a favorite team and fan motivation for sport consumption behavior.

- 3) Fan disappointment will be directly and positively related to the relationship between fans' team-supporting efforts (i.e., the number of games attended) and fan motivation to consume sport.

METHODOLOGY

Data collection for this research will be conducted among fans attending men's baseball games at a major Division I university in the Southern United States during the spring 2015 season. Based on previous research (Mitchell et al., 1997), data collection will be conducted at different times by divergent people. Each evaluation will be tested at three different time periods: before, during, and after the experience. The questionnaire will be composed of two main categories, disappointment and sport consumption behaviors. The survey instrument will be derived from regret and disappointment scales (RDS; Marcatto & Ferrante, 2008) and the motivation scale for sport consumption behavior (MSSC; Trail & James, 2001). Similar to how each of the scales were created, each of the items will be measured on a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (7).

EXPECTED OUTCOMES/ SIGNIFICANCE OF FINDINGS

At the time of the presentation, the completed research will provide more detailed results and implications of fan disappointment, offering suggestions for future research. Fan disappointment has been the subject of minimal research, and thus we have little conception of what to expect concerning this study's results. That being so, this research should allow us to determine theoretical implications in terms of the conceptual framework of fan disappointment as a negative emotion. It is believed the results of this study will contribute to confirming and redefining the foundation of disappointment in a sport context. It should also contribute to the cumulative knowledge in the sport consumption literature by providing evidence of the relationship between the feeling of disappointment and sport consumption behaviors.

From a practical standpoint, the findings could provide direction for sport marketers to guard against distinct negative emotions (i.e., anxiety, anger, sadness, and worry) as well as disappointment. Findings should further give direction for strategic actions plans (i.e., variety/ quality of sports facilities, improved team performance) geared toward sport fans' consumption behaviors that could be of use to sport marketers, team managers, or event managers. Sport marketers could also use this information to more efficiently deploy their strategies by understanding the ramifications of fans' disappointment. Furthermore, it is believed the study will be able to suggest future research directions to shed more light on sport fans' behaviors, needs, and motivations. Additional theoretical and practical implications will be discussed in the presentation.

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