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Motivational Factors Influencing Sport Spectator Involvement At NCAA Division II Basketball Games

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Motivational Factors Influencing Sport Spectator Involvement At NCAA Division II Basketball Games

Abstract The purpose of this study was to investigate the motivational factors affecting sport spectator involvement using 304 spectators from NCAA Division II men's and women's basketball games. Two aspects (behavioral and socio-psychological) of sport spectator involvement were examined. The results revealed that spectators at intercollegiate basketball games had a higher level of socio-psychological involvement than behavioral involvement. A series of multiple regression analyses were conducted to examine the affects of socio-motivational factors (perceived value, fan identification, involvement opportunity, and reference groups) on sport spectator involvement. Fan identification, involvement opportunity, and reference groups were identified as influential factors that had a significant impact on overall sport spectator involvement. The results also indicated that the four motivational factors predicted more variance for socio-psychological involvement ($R^2 = .33$) than behavioral involvement ($R^2 = .22$). The findings of this study provide valuable insight to Division II athletic administrators about how to attract additional spectators to collegiate basketball games.

Collegiate sports play a significant role in generating meaningful growth in the sport industry, especially in the United States (Ho & Jiang, 2006). Furthermore, college sports have been recognized as a significant market segment due to their unique characteristics such as a diverse fan base, high levels of spectator involvement, and intense market competition (Fink, Trail, & Anderson, 2002). As collegiate sports have developed into a big business, many colleges and universities seek opportunities to accomplish their missions, such as increasing their visibility, enhancing their image, and generating financial success through athletic departments (Howard & Crompton, 2004). Several researchers (e.g., Fulks, 2000; Robinson, Trail, Dick, & Gillentine, 2005) have reported that athletic departments with competitive athletic programs generate profits for their universities. Direct revenue from ticket sales as well as indirect revenue from sponsorship, broadcasting rights, and merchandise are typical income streams for college athletic departments. For example, some Division I institutions attract more than 95,000 spectators for each game, and generate approximately \$3 million for a single football

contest (DeScheriver & Jensen, 2002). In 2006, the University of Florida athletic department generated \$82.4 million in revenue. However, today's colleges and universities have experienced rapid changes (James & Ross, 2004).

Educational administrators are confronted with changes associated with adapting technology, changing demographics, increasing competition, rising costs, and funding cuts. In addition, these educational administrators also are challenged to anticipate changes and to formulate proactive responses which will further the universities' educational missions. Because athletic programs are considered part of higher education institutions, athletic departments face the same financial problems as do the institutions to which they belong (Shulman & Bowen, 2001). Many colleges and universities have been facing increasingly tight budgets in recent years and have been struggling to provide more funding for their own athletic programs. Moreover, athletic administrators in intercollegiate sports must deal with periods of decline, government mandates and guidelines, and various financial difficulties.

Unlike Division I schools, athletic departments at Division II schools generate relatively small amounts of revenue from financial sources including media rights fees, luxury seating, sponsorship, and advertising (James & Ross, 2004). Many athletic programs at Division II institutions have limited public attention, only minor marketing efforts, and encounter difficulty obtaining sponsors (Howard & Crompton, 2005). Robison et al. (2005) reported that the average budget for an entire Division II athletic department is \$1,900,000, and nine percent of entire revenues are generated by ticket sales at home games. One of the most pervasive challenges facing these athletic departments is sustaining attendance at intercollegiate sporting events and minimizing the decrease and fluctuation of attendance. An athletic department's annual budget generally consists of central university appropriation, revenue from advertising, and ticket sales for sport events (James & Ross, 2004). Because athletic departments heavily rely on institutional support and student fees as funding sources, there is need for athletic administrators in Division II to maximize revenue from ticket sales.

Spectators are the key constituent of a sport organization's success. Thus, understanding spectators and their behaviors is crucial for sport organizations to effectively manage a rapidly changing marketplace. Spectators of collegiate sports are a unique group of individuals whose consumer behaviors are considered to be different from those of typical consumers (Ferrerira & Armstrong, 2004). These groups of fans and spectators look for unique consumption value which they can experience only at collegiate sport events. In order to have a better understanding of the sport spectator behavior, it is essential to identify the motivational factors influencing attendance and overall satisfaction (Mullin, Hardy, & Sutton, 2007). Armstrong (1999)

also emphasized the importance of studying motives of spectators at various sporting events. According to him, examining the reasons of attending college sporting events is critical for college athletic departments to be successful in a highly competitive marketplace.

As Milne and McDonald (1999) stated, knowing and understanding sport spectator involvement also helps college athletic departments accurately segment their target market and effectively evaluate their marketing efforts, because sport spectator involvement has a powerful influence on the level of attendance. In addition, they described sport spectator involvement as consisting of two aspects of consumer behavior: affective involvement and behavioral consumption. To see an increase in attendance at a sporting event, sport spectator involvement should be seen as a first step to becoming a loyal sport fan who is committed, loyal, and identifies strongly with a specific team or player (Capella, 2002). Thus, developing a profile of sport spectator involvement provides an opportunity for a sport organization to identify spectators' interest and commitment.

Well-designed and conducted market research in spectator behavior provides accurate consumer information related to spectator behaviors, preferences, trends, characteristics, and reaction patterns (Mullin et al, 2007). Such information should prove useful to sport marketers and administrators in college sports to determine their target segments, to satisfy consumers' demand, and to meet their needs effectively and efficiently. Although many Division II athletic administrators are aware of the significant role of ticket sales in increasing revenues, they have little information about the determinants of spectator attendance at their sporting events. Moreover, although numerous studies have been conducted to investigate spectators' motivational factors, they are limited at professional and major collegiate sporting events. As stated previously, studying spectators' motivational factors influencing their decision making process regarding attending collegiate sporting events might be essential to understand sport spectator behavior. By doing so, it is possible to identify and improve the areas of the sport marketing in the pursuit of more spectators at collegiate sporting events.

Purpose of the Study

Therefore, the primary purpose of the current study was to investigate motivational factors (e.g., perceived value, involvement opportunity, fan identification, reference group) affecting the level of sport spectator involvement with two aspects of sport spectator behavior (socio-psychological and behavioral involvements). Specifically, this present study was designed to identify the factors which have the greatest influence on the spectator decision making processes regarding attending Division II collegiate basketball

games. An additional purpose of the present study was to provide valuable information to athletic directors, sport marketers, and administrators in college sports to more effectively segment and predict spectators' behavior. A third purpose was to determine if there were age, student status, and gender differences (e.g., spectator and athlete gender) among individuals who attended games.

The following section provides a theoretical overview of sport spectator behavior, and discusses its application in literature.

Literature Review

Sport Spectator Involvement

During the past decade, the importance of sport spectator involvement has gained a lot of attention in literature (Capella, 2002; Funk, Ridinger, & Moorman, 2004; Lough & Kim, 2004). Rothschild (1984) defined sport spectator involvement as an unobservable state of motivation, arousal, or interest toward a sporting event or associated product that is evoked by particular motives. In addition, Laverie and Arnett (2000) utilized the construct of sport spectator involvement, defined as the active interest in, engagement with, and commitment to a sport event exhibited by the sport spectator.

In previous sport spectator and fan behavior literature, sport spectator involvement has been treated as a multidimensional construct. Theoretically, two important aspects of sport involvement have been proposed in studying sport spectator involvement: psychological and behavioral involvement. Funk et al. (2004) suggested that this multidimensional perspective of sport spectator involvement provides useful insights to understanding the different patterns of sport spectator behavior useful in segmenting fan or spectator base. In their study, the Team Sport Involvement (TSI) was designed to assess relationships among the 18 antecedents which fell into two categories (individual characteristics and social situation) and three facets (attraction self-expression, centrality to lifestyle, and risk) of psychological fan involvement with a professional sport team. According to their findings, the utility of psychological spectator involvement allows sport marketers to better understand spectator behaviors in an increasingly diverse sport industry. Capella (2002) also developed the Fan Behavior Questionnaire (FBQ) to examine the emotional and behavioral involvements of fans. The results indicated that sport fans who are emotionally or psychologically attached to their team will likely make many purchases of team apparel. These two studies suggested that psychological spectator involvement is a meaningful area of research.

Funk, Mahony, Nakazawa, and Hirakawa (2001) have also asserted that spectators' psychological attachment to sporting events is an essential predictor of sport spectator behavior because it allows sport marketers to

identify the pattern of sport consumer behavior associated with the different levels of motivation. However, Milne and McDonald (1999) have stated that the behavioral aspect of spectators also plays a significant role in sport spectator involvement because a person must participate in sport events in a direct or indirect way to become a sport event consumer. Furthermore, they suggested that psychological involvement represents emotional responses that spectators experience during the sporting events or are associated with their team in general while behavioral involvement is considered displays of positive support for the team. Therefore, behavioral aspects of spectators in terms of purchasing ticket, searching for information about the team or player, and cheering actions should be included and measured to predict sport spectator behavior as a result of psychological involvement.

Motivational Factors Influencing Sport Spectator Involvement

Due to the importance of sport spectator behavior, scholars in the field of sport marketing have paid considerable attention to motivations of sport spectators. As a result, a wide array of interpersonal motives of sport consumers have been proposed to explain sport spectator and fan behavior. To better understand such motivation, many researchers (e.g., Fink, Trail, & Anderson, 2002; James & Ridinger 2002; James & Ross, 2004; Lough & Kim, 2004) have proposed scales to measure sport spectator motives. Wann (1995) developed the Sport Fan Motivation Scale (SFMS) to assess sport spectator motives. The SFMS included eight motivational constructs: eustress, self-esteem benefits, escape, entertainment, economic factors, aesthetic qualities, group affiliation, and family needs. Milne and McDonald (1999) developed the Motivations of the Sport Consumer (MSC) scale, based on Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1943) which contained 12 motivation factors: risk-taking, stress reduction, aggression, affiliation, social facilitation, self-esteem, competition, achievement, skill mastery, aesthetics, value development, and self-actualization.

Trail and James (2001) developed the Motivation Scale for Sport Consumption (MSSC) which possesses satisfactory psychometric properties. The MSSC included nine motivational constructs: achievement, acquisition of knowledge, aesthetics, drama, escape, family, physical attractiveness of participants, the quality of the physical skill of the participants, and social interaction. However, Funk et al. (2004) indicated that the studies on motivation in sport spectator or fan behavior have several challenges; 1) understanding the interrelationships between motives and specific behavior, and 2) developing a list of motivational factors comprehensive enough to measure the wide variety of motivating forces which influence spectator behavior. Therefore, motives of sport spectator behavior are a difficult concept to measure and numerous arguments have been presented in literature concerning researchers' ability to measure and anticipate it (Fink et al, 2002).

There has not been much consensus in the literature as to which factors best explain and predict the motives and behavior for sport spectators. Although the number of motivational factors influencing sport spectator involvement have been varied among scholars, the theories that have received significant attention in literature can be classified into four general categories: (a) involvement opportunity as a significant element of stimulation, (b) perceived values from various product benefits, (c) emotional affiliation with fan identification, and (d) social interaction with significant others including reference groups (Iwasaki & Havitz, 1998). See Figure 1.

Involvement Opportunity James and Ridinger (2002) identified the motives of spectators attending men's and women's college basketball games. Their findings revealed that individuals attending the games were significantly influenced by entertainment values and the involvement opportunities. Involvement opportunity refers to a variety of fan services provided by the sport organization to enhance spectator involvement, including stadium accessibility, facility aesthetics, information availability on game schedule and ticket price, and direct interaction with fans through the team website (Mahony, Nakazawa, Funk, James, & Gladden, 2002; Milne & McDonald, 1999). Other researchers have found that involvement opportunities can have considerable impact on spectator behavior (Greenwell, Fink, and Pastore, 2002; James & Ridinger, 2002; Wakefield & Blodgett, 1994). For example, the ICR Survey Research Group, which conducted a nationwide survey of 1,000 sport fans (1994), found that the most important factor fans valued when attending professional sport events, was adequate parking or good public transportation. Furthermore, Shank (2002) noted that the physical surroundings of the stadium can affect spectators' desire to stay at the stadium and return to the stadium.

Perceived Value Perceived value can be defined as the perceived difference between all the benefits and all the costs of consumption (Kotler & Armstrong, 2008). Consumers have dynamic perceptions of consumption value with the same product or service. Although a certain type of value in terms of quality of product and service might be universal, perceived values of individuals vary based on the dynamics of individual value system (Kim, 2003). For example, one consumer could value a certain product due to a low price, while other consumers value the same product because of its various benefits with relatively low price. Thus, it makes sense that perceived values of various product benefits, greater than consumers' expectations in their consumption evaluation process, plays a significant role in their future decision making process. McDonald, Milne, and Hong (2002) indicated that perceived value is an essential predictor to identify sport spectators' motives. Funk, Mahony, and Ridinger (2002) also suggested that perceived

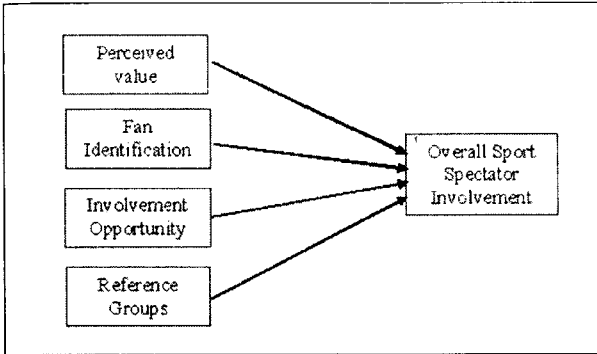


Figure 1. Relationship between spectator motivational factors and overall sport spectator involvement.

values from various service areas including facility attractiveness, accessibility, cleanliness, parking, and entertainment value should be included in the psychological scale to measure sport spectator motivation. According to Funk et al. (2004), perceived value is a powerful predictor of sport spectator involvement influenced by individual and environmental factors.

Fan Identification Another important motive for spectator attendance is fan identification. Trail, Robinson, Dick, and Gillentine (2003) reported that intercollegiate athletics sport fans and spectators were more likely to be motivated by fan identification and loyalty rather than entertainment values. Team or fan identification is defined as a spectator's personal commitment and emotional involvement with his/her sport team (Sutton, McDondald, Milne, & Cimperman, 1997). Greenwell, Fink, and Pastore (2002) noted, "Among psychological variables, team identification may be the most important variable in influencing perceptions of the service experience" (p. 234). Spectators with high levels of identification tend to display different behaviors than those with low levels of identification (Wann & Branscombe, 1990; Wann, Dolan, McGeorge, & Allison, 1994).

Reference Groups Reference groups can also have a significant influence on an individual's decision-making processes (Blackwell, Miniard, & Engel, 2001; Shank, 2002). "Reference groups" are defined as individuals who influence the information, attitudes, and behaviors of other group members (Shank, 2002, p. 169). Many researchers (i.e., Funk et al., 2002; Funk et al., 2004; Trail & James, 2001) proposed that reference groups directly and indirectly influence sport spectator behaviors in many ways; (a) sharing experiences, (b) social interactions, and (c) enhancing the image of sport products.

The emotional experience of reference groups on sport spectator behavior generates social bonds and interactions with friends and family members. From this perspective, reference groups can be seen as powerful predictors of sport spectator involvement. The level of sport spectator involvement

fluctuates due to various factors such as values, needs, the initial behavioral experience, social support from others, and personal satisfaction (Funk et al., 2004). However, few researchers have attempted to assess sport consumer behavior and preferences regarding factors that jointly affect sport spectator involvement in collegiate sports, especially at the Division II level (Chelladurai & Chang, 2000). See Figure 2.

Methodology

Participants

A sample of sport spectators ($N = 304$) was randomly selected from ten NCAA Division II men's and women's basketball games (NCAA Division II) at a large Midwestern university. Six different seat sections to be surveyed were randomly selected for each game (five men's games and five women's games) and five trained surveyors, including the researcher, distributed the self-administrated questionnaires to those who were in the selected sections during half-time, as well as before and after the games. The final sample was comprised of more male (69.7%) than female (30.3%) spectators and the participants' ages ranged from 18 to 80 years while the majority (70.0%) fell between 23–46 years of age. The largest sub-groups of the participants were white (64.8%) and African American (30.9%).

Instruments

Sport Spectator Involvement A modified Sport Spectator Involvement Scale (SSIS) developed by Kim (2003) was used in the present study. The questionnaire consists of two parts (behavioral & socio-psychological involvement) with a combined total of 14 items. A six-point Likert-scale ranging from 1 ("strongly disagree") to 6 ("strongly agree") was used to measure sport spectator involvement. Kim (2003) reported adequate reliability alpha coefficients for behavioral (.91) and socio-psychological involvement (.94).

Spectator Motivational Factor The 12 items of the Spectator Motivation Scale (SMS) developed by Pease and Zhang (2001) were used to assess motivation. Each item was written to measure spectator motivational factors such as perceived value, involvement opportunity, fan identification, and reference groups. Pease and Zhang found the reliability coefficient for these four motives ranged from .69 to .92. A six-point Likert-scale ranging from 1 ("strongly disagree") to 6 ("strongly agree") was also used to measure spectator motivational factors. Each factor was assessed with three items.

Demographic Scale Seven questions assessed socio-demographic information, such as age, gender, occupation, income, highest level of education, etc.

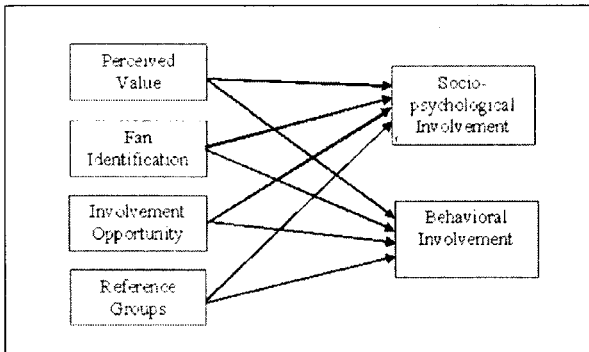


Figure 1. Relationship between spectator motivational factors and the two aspects of sport spectator involvement

Data Analysis

The data was analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS, version 16.0). First, we examined the reliability and validity of the instruments. Second, descriptive statistics for the two aspects of sport spectator involvement as well as the four spectator motivational factors were computed. A series of t-tests were also conducted to examine differences in the involvement level with respect to the socio-demographics of the sport spectators (e.g., age, gender, and team difference). Third, a series of multiple-regression analyses were conducted to predict overall sport spectator involvement and each aspect of sport spectator involvement with the four independent spectator motivational variables; perceived value, involvement opportunity, fan identification, and significant others as predictors.

Results

First, Cronbach's alpha was employed to analyze reliability and can be found in Table 2 and 3. Correlations were computed and reported in Table 4. Second, because all alphas exceeded .70, reliability was considered adequate (Crobach, 1951). Descriptive statistics can also found in Tables 1, 2, and 3. Moderate correlations were found among the variables. In particular, the relationship between behavioral involvement and psychological involvement suggests that a high degree of similarity exists between these two aspects ($r = .76$) of sport spectator involvement. However, this relationship is understandable because both dimensions measure difference concepts of the same construct: Sport spectator motivation. Socio-psychological involvement ($M = 4.67$, $SD = 1.02$) was higher than behavioral involvement ($M = 4.07$, $SD = 1.16$). Spectators ($n = 161$) who attended men's basketball games showed statistically significant higher behavioral involvement than those ($n = 143$) at women's basketball games ($t = -2.00^*$), but there were no

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Sport Spectator Involvement at NCAA Division II Basketball Games

	N	Variable – Mean (SD)		
		Psychological Involvement	Behavioral Involvement	Overall Sport Spectator Involvement
Gender				
Female	92	4.06 (1.05)	3.60 (1.19)	4.52 (1.07)
Male	212	4.50 (0.99)	4.28 (1.10)	4.73 (1.00)
Age				
22 ≥	91	4.39 (1.14)	3.86 (1.34)	4.13 (1.19)
23 - 45	108	4.78 (0.91)	4.25 (1.02)	4.52 (0.88)
46 ≤	105	4.80 (0.98)	4.07 (1.13)	4.44 (0.99)
Ethnicity				
White	197	4.67 (1.00)	3.93 (1.18)	4.30 (1.01)
African American	92	4.72 (1.08)	4.42 (1.00)	4.57 (1.00)
Asian	3	4.33 (0.86)	3.48 (0.93)	3.90 (0.89)
Hispanic	7	4.35 (0.92)	3.92 (1.44)	4.13 (1.16)
Native American	1	3.14 (N/A)	1.57 (N/A)	2.36 (N/A)
Others	4	4.75 (1.02)	4.21 (1.66)	4.48(1.46)
Game				
Women's Game	143	4.60 (1.08)	3.93 (1.21)	4.27 (1.08)
Men's Game	161	4.72 (0.97)	4.20 (1.12)	4.46 (0.98)
Student Status				
Non-Students	219	4.75 (1.00)	4.10 (1.14)	4.42 (1.00)
Students	85	4.45 (1.06)	4.00 (1.23)	4.23 (1.10)

Table 2. Sport Spectator Involvement Construct means, Standard Deviations and Cronbach Alphas (N = 304)

Construct	M	SD	α
Behavioral involvement	4.07	1.17	.88
Psychological involvement	4.67	1.02	.90
Overall Sport spectator involvement	4.37	1.03	.89

Note. The range of mean scale = 1 to 6, average means are reported.

Table 3. Socio-Motivational Factor Construct means, Standard Deviations and Cronbach Alphas (N = 304)

Construct	M	SD	α
Perceived value	4.29	1.08	.75
Involvement opportunity	4.23	1.05	.78
Fan identification	4.90	1.01	.74
Reference groups	4.06	1.06	.74

Note. The range of mean scale = 1 to 6, average means are reported.

Table 4. Correlation Matrix of Sport Spectator Involvement from phi matrix (N = 304)

PV	IO	FI	SO	BI	PI	
PV	1					
IO	.70**	1				
FI	.48**	.50**	1			
SO	.55**	.62**	.44**	1		
BI	.31**	.43**	.29**	.41**	1	
PI	.39**	.46**	.48**	.46**	.76**	1

PV = Perceived Value, IO = Involvement Opportunity, FI = Fan Identification, SO = Significant others, BI = Behavioral Involvement, PI = Psychological Involvement. Note. ** $p < .01$

differences in socio-psychological involvement. There was a significant difference in behavioral involvement by gender ($t = -4.78^{**}$). Male spectators showed higher behavior involvement than females. Non-students showed statistically significant higher socio-psychological involvement than students ($t = 2.27^{*}$). Regarding age, older participants exhibited higher socio-psychological involvement compared to younger participants ($F = 5.02^{**}$).

Multiple regression analyses were employed to predict sport spectator involvement with the four motivational factors. Standard regression coefficients and associated significant tests were used to assess the relative degree of impact on overall sport spectator involvement. Figure 3 presents results predicting overall sport spectator involvement. The R^2 was used to assess models' overall predictive fit. The result of the first regression equation found that involvement opportunity ($\beta = .25$, $t = 3.32$, $p < .01$) had a strong positive impact on overall sport spectator involvement, followed by the reference groups ($\beta = .24$, $t = 3.81$, $p < .01$) and the fan identification ($\beta = .17$, $t = 2.97$, $p < .01$). However, perceived value ($\beta = -.02$, $t = -.28$, $p < .77$) had no significant influence on the overall sport spectator involvement. These motivational factors explained 29% of total variance in the sport spectator involvement ($R^2 = .29$, $F = 30.96$, $p < 0.01$).

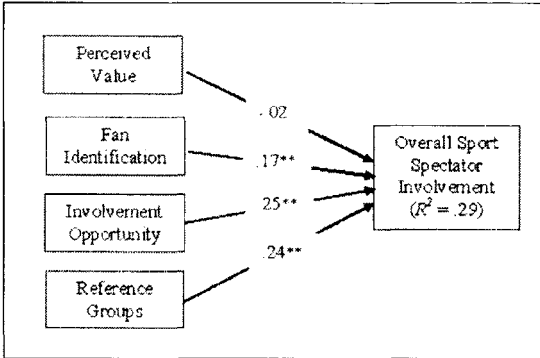


Figure 3. Results of multiple regression analyses using the four motivation factor to predict each factor of sport spectator involvement. Note: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$.

Next a series of two multiple regression analyses were conducted using the four motivational factors to predict the sport spectator involvement subscales; socio-psychological involvement and behavioral involvement (see Figure 4). The three motivational factors, Fan identification ($\beta = .29$, $t = 5.05$, $p < .01$), reference groups ($\beta = .23$, $t = 3.62$, $p < .01$), and involvement opportunity ($\beta = .17$, $t = 2.29$, $p < .05$) had a significant influence on socio-psychological involvement. About 33 percent of the total variance in psychological involvement was accounted for ($R^2 = .33$, $F = 35.82$, $p < .01$) by four motivational factors. Second, two motivational factors, involvement opportunity ($\beta = .29$, $t = 3.63$, $p < .01$) and reference groups ($\beta = .23$, $t = 3.452$, $p < .01$), had a significant impact on the behavioral involvement. Twenty two percent of the variance in behavioral involvement was explained ($R^2 = .22$, $F = 21.1$, $p < .01$). The impact of perceived value on both aspects of sport spectator involvement was not statistically significant.

Discussion

Many collegiate athletic departments are facing various financial challenges from losing sponsors, rising program costs, and decreasing attendance. Because one of the biggest revenue sources for most college athletic departments is gate receipts, many athletic departments try hard to increase the level of sport spectator involvement through prudent marketing activities. In this study, we identified the motivational factors affecting sport spectator involvement at NCAA Division II men's and women's basketball games. The predictive ability of each motivational factor was demonstrated through a series of regression analyses. Overall, 29% of the variance in overall sport spectator involvement was predicted by the four motivational factors (32% of variance in psychological involvement, and 21% of variance in behavioral involvement).

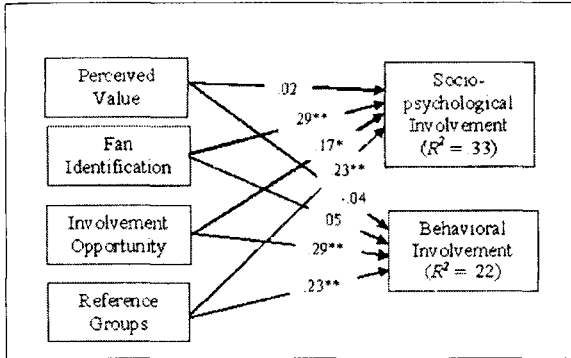


Figure 4. Results of multiple regression analyses using the four motivational factors to predict each factor of sport spectator involvement. Note: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$.

Level of Sport Spectator Involvement

The spectators in this study had a higher level of socio-psychological involvement to attend collegiate basketball games than behavioral involvement when they attend college basketball games. This finding means that the spectators viewed collegiate basketball games as a valuable experience, and were psychologically committed to support a specific team or sporting event more than attending a game, for example. From sport spectators' psychological perspectives, watching and experiencing collegiate basketball games is a valuable leisure activity in which they are willing to be psychologically affiliated with a specific team or sporting event. This finding is also consistent with previous studies (Funk et al, 2004; Lough & Kim, 2004; Mahony et al., 2002). Funk et al, (2004) found that many sport spectators or fans are psychologically involved with sporting events to maximize their personal achievement and emotional attachment with a certain team rather than being active to be a long-term spectator in terms of purchasing season tickets or enthusiastically cheering a specific team or player.

Demographic Differences in Sport Spectator Involvement

Our results also revealed that male spectators exhibited higher behavior involvement than females. This is consistent with the literature on gender differences in sport fan behavior (Dietz-Uhler, Harrick, End, & Jacquemotte, 2000; Gantz & Wenner, 1991), which showed males engaged in more sport fan behavior than females. Dietz-Uhler et al. (2000) indicated that because sports have traditionally been viewed as a male domain, male spectators showed higher behavior involvement. Furthermore, Gantz and Wenner (1991) suggested that males were more likely to enjoy social gatherings than females when attending sporting events.

With respect to age, older spectators were found to possess higher socio-psychological involvement than younger ones. Given the fact that fan identification and involvement opportunity had a significant influence on

the socio-psychological involvement, older participants, rather than younger ones, may have stronger emotional attachments with the team due to their greater time associated with the team. In addition, Greenwell et al. (2002) showed that older spectators were more satisfied with the fan services (e.g., facility and staff members) than younger fans. Thus, suggesting older fans tend to exhibit higher levels of involvement opportunities.

Impact of Socio-Motivational Factors on Overall Sport Spectator Involvement

Our major purpose was to identify the relationship between the four motivational factors and overall sport spectator involvement. The results indicated that three socio-motivational factors (e.g., fan identification, involvement opportunity, reference group) had a significant impact on overall sport spectator involvement. The results also suggest that among those factors, involvement opportunity had the most significant influence, followed by reference groups. The involvement opportunity factor used in the study included items indicating accessibility to stadiums and information availability regarding game schedule, price and direction.

Several other authors reached similar conclusions. Milne and McDonald (1999) stressed that sport marketers need to provide a place for potential fans to be affiliated with a team or sporting event because it is a crucial way to attract fans to sporting events. The findings of this study suggested that providing convenient access to information, close proximity of venues, convenient transportation to venues and convenient game times might be an effective way to extend involvement opportunities for the fans. Creating or providing various involvement opportunities might help collegiate athletic departments facilitate a strong affiliation with their spectators, fans, and supporters. Mahony et al. (2002) suggested that sport marketers at any level of sport need to foster positive associations through involvement opportunities. For instance, providing various types of information through team web sites is one way to increase spectator affiliation with the sporting event or team, particularly with young spectators or fans who may be future season ticketholders.

Establishing fan clubs, creating newsletters, and developing community relationships are also methods of opportunity involvement to promote affiliation and participation. Establishing a market environment where potential spectators are intentionally given an involvement opportunity might be a first step to increasing spectator attendance at collegiate sporting events, especially at the Division II level. However, according to Lough and Kim (2004), sport spectators at professional women's basketball games primarily expected great entertainment values. This difference between the findings of the current study and Lough and Kim's investigation (2004) might be due to differences in culture, region, or social norm. Moreover, spectators at professional sport events pay significant amounts of money for tickets. As a

result, professional sport spectators may have different expectations of quality of service and perceived or entertainment value from what college sport fans expect at collegiate sporting events.

Impact of Socio-Motivational Factors on Two Aspects of Sport Spectator Involvement

We also investigated how socio-motivational factors were related to socio-psychological and behavioral involvements. According to multiple regression analysis, the four motivational factors predicted more variance in psychological involvement ($R^2 = .33$) than behavioral involvement ($R^2 = .22$). For socio-psychological involvement, fan identification, reference group, and involvement opportunity were identified as significant influences. Fan identification had the most significant impact on socio-psychological involvement, followed by reference group and involvement opportunity. Milne and McDonalds (1999) defined fan identification as the personal commitment and psychological affiliation fans have with a sporting event. The fan identification factor used in the current study consisted of a set of items indicating the level of psychological attachment to team, organization, and sporting event. It appears that our participants attended collegiate basketball games to be loyal fans that consistently support their favorite teams or players rather than to simply experience a sporting event. This is consistent with previous studies that have found that team identification and personal achievement were significantly and positively related to team success (Mahony et al., 2002).

According to Milne and McDonalds (1999), fan identification plays a significant role in minimizing the effects of team performance since the sport marketers and marketing activities cannot directly control team success. This finding is significant for collegiate athletic directors and practitioners to strategically design and develop their future marketing plan. Spectators reporting being involved in collegiate basketball games with positive psychological commitment are also behaviorally involved in terms of attending a game, reading college-sport-related magazines, and talking about the team or event with significant others. The findings of the current study also indicated that participants' reference groups of coworkers, friends, and family members positively influenced these spectators to attend the games. According to Kim (2003), sport consumers rely on personal recommendations, visible information, and self-image from reference groups to inform their decisions to attend games.

Through the application of multiple regression analysis, involvement opportunity was the most significant influence on behavioral involvement such as purchasing season tickets, attending games, and cheering, followed by reference groups. Sport spectators are often influenced by a deep-rooted sense of fan identification with sport teams and the teams become an extension of their self-concepts (Robinson et al., 2005). Our findings indicate that affective and cognitive affiliation with a team might be a first step for

spectators to become a loyal fan of collegiate basketball games. Being a loyal fan means spectators express their interest and involvement by purchasing a ticket and attending a game. However, there might be minimum visible contributions of these spectators to the team or sporting event if there are low levels of spectators' psychological commitment. The ideal sport fans are those who have both high psychological and behavioral involvement.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the findings of the current study suggest that to improve the level of sport spectator involvement for fans who have intense socio-psychological involvement rather than behavioral involvement, collegiate athletic departments need to provide convenient and extensive involvement opportunities for their consumers. The sport marketers at collegiate athletic departments should develop a profile of their spectators' behaviors to effectively communicate with their target market. Creating an image and devising themes that provide their fans and spectators a means of being affiliated and identifying with the team and sporting event experience are strongly suggested. Also, prudent marketing activities through print, electronic, or grassroots media outlets should offer spectators opportunities to become loyal fans by having positive experiences. Furthermore, rewarding consumers with team mementos at different games will enable them to have a tangible, lasting memory of their experience, and may prompt them to return more frequently.

Limitations and Future Directions.

The results revealed that the three motivational factors accounted for 29% of the total variance in the sport spectator involvement. Even though these three factors were significant predictors for variance in spectator involvement, it would be worthwhile to find other factors that may have an influence on the sport involvement. The literature on spectator satisfaction has suggested that the core product of sport, such as win/loss record, star players, and quality of the visiting team, can have significant effect on spectator's level of satisfaction (Greenwell et al., 2002; Leeuwen, Quick, & Daniel, 2002). Madrigal (1995) indicated that fans with high levels of team identification were likely to experience emotional enjoyment when their teams won the game. Hence, the win/loss phenomenon and the content of the game may also serve as additional antecedents influencing the spectator involvement.

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