SPORT CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR

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Overview
There are billions of people worldwide who are interested in sport as fans and spectators, specifically consuming sport from a non-participatory standpoint. People attend sport events as spectators; consume sport through variety of mediums (TV, internet, smartphones, radio); purchase merchandise representing teams, leagues and countries; consume concessions at the games and matches; and discuss it with family, friends and complete strangers; among many other behaviours. Men’s Soccer World Cup 2014 attendance exceeded 3.4 million people in sixty-four matches (FIFA World Cup, 2014) and 111.5 million people watched the 2014 Super Bowl on TV (Super Bowl XLVIII, 2014). Sport spectating can bring people to the highest of highs (an estimated 700,000 fans lining the streets of Seattle in February for a parade for the Super Bowl champion Seattle Seahawks; Bien, 2014) to the lowest of lows (Brazilian men’s soccer fans being absolutely devastated when the home team lost 7–1 at home to Germany in the semi-final of the World Cup in 2014; Borden, 2014). What, however, explains all of this behaviour? What explains why people consume sport?

The specific constructs and key propositions
We proposed a model and framework to explain why people spectate and consume sport (Trail, Anderson and Fink, 2000). In 2003, we first tested the model (Trail, Fink and Anderson, 2003), and the model has evolved since then (Harrolle, Trail, Rodriguez and Jordan, 2010; Trail, Anderson and Fink, 2005; Trail and James, 2011). Parts of it have been examined for nuances and potential additions (James and Trail, 2008; Kim and Trail, 2010; Kim and Trail, 2011; Kim, Trail and Magnusen, 2013; Kwon, Trail and Anderson, 2005; Kwon, Trail and Lee; 2008; Lee and Trail, 2011a; Shapiro, Riding and Trail, 2013; Trail, Kim, Kwon, Harrolle, Braunstein-Minkove and Dick; 2012; Woo, Trail, Kwon and Anderson, 2009). The original model showed that sport consumption behaviour could be predicted by the interaction of six general constructs: motives; identification (with the team); expectancies about the experience/outcome (whether it was attending a game, watching on TV, or whatever); the confirmation or disconfirmation of those expectancies; self-esteem responses (Basking in Reflected Glory – BIR.Ging and Cutting Off Reflected Failure – COR.Fing); and the affective state of the individual (positive and negative mood, and level of satisfaction). These six factors were arranged sequentially and all were supposed
to predict future consumption behaviour either directly or indirectly (See Figure in Trail et al., 2003). I will give a brief overview of each of the constructs.

Motives reflect ‘the energizing force that activates behavior and provides purpose and direction for that behavior’ (Hawkins, Best and Coney, 2004, p. 354) and are based on social and psychological needs (Trail et al., 2000). Sloan (1989) suggested a variety of theories that explain specific motives and how each may be applicable to sport, and we provided a fair amount of support for the proposed relationships between the different motives and team identification (Fink, Trail and Anderson, 2002; Trail et al., 2000; Trail et al., 2003) and motives and expectations (Trail et al., 2000; Trail et al., 2003).

We defined identification as ‘an orientation of the self in regard to other objects including a person or group that results in feelings or sentiments of close attachment’ (Trail et al., 2000, pp. 165–6). The basis for team identification has been attributed to both identity theory and social identity theory, but we view it from the identity theory prospective. As Jeff James and I noted:

the reason that we have chosen identity theory rather than social identity theory is because social identity theory does not explain variance within the collectivity; in other words, it does not explain why fans act differently from each other . . . [F]ans act differently because the identity standard (role identity) is specific to the individual and varies to the extent that the individual wants it to vary relative to the perceived situational meanings.

(Trail and James, 2013, p. 58)

Although we tested the proposed relationship between identification and expectancies, the amount of variance explained in expectancies by identification was less than four per cent, indicating that identification was not a good predictor of expectancies (Trail et al., 2003).

Both Goldstein (1989) and Zillmann, Bryant and Sapolsky (1989) indicated that fans and spectators typically have expectations about their potential experiences, learned either through prior experiences or through communications from others. These expectations can be about the venue, the outcome of the game, experiences during the game, etc. According to Madrigal (1995) these expectancies are either confirmed or disconfirmed positively or negatively. How the expectancies are confirmed or disconfirmed, and whether positively or negatively, then impacts how people feel (affective state) and their self-esteem responses. We tested the relationship between expectancies and the confirmation or disconfirmation of expectancies and determined that there was no significant relationship between the two (Trail et al., 2003). On the face of it, the results did not make sense, but as one investigates more thoroughly, it is readily apparent that no relationship should exist. Expectancies prior to the event can be either confirmed or disconfirmed by the event experiences and whether they are or are not depends entirely on the person. Thus for each person who had their expectations confirmed, there could be another who had them disconfirmed. If there are sufficient numbers equally balanced, then the correlation between the two variables would be zero, as we observed.

Affective state is composed of feelings (positive mood or negative mood) and level of satisfaction (Trail et al., 2000). When someone’s expectancies are positively confirmed (team wins when expected to) or positively disconfirmed (team wins when they weren’t expected to) then that person feels happy (positive mood) and the person feels satisfied. On the other hand, when the expectancies are negatively confirmed (team loses when expected to lose) or negatively disconfirmed (team loses when they were expected to win), then that person feels sad or upset, and usually dissatisfied. We found support for this hypothesised relationship as (dis)confirmation of expectancies explained thirty–two per cent of the variance in affect (Trail et al., 2003).
The (dis)confirmation of expectancies was also hypothesised to impact self-esteem responses. We proposed that self-esteem responses included BIRGing and CORFing (Trail et al., 2000). Basking in Reflective Glory typically occurs when a favourite team wins and an individual wants to promote the association with a successful other by, for example, wearing team apparel, or telling people how big a fan he or she is of the team. This allows that individual to feel successful through the association. However, people who have a high need for achievement and typically search for it vicariously will often Cut Off Reflected Failure if they are not highly identified with the team and the team starts losing. However, the hypothesised relationship between (dis)confirmation and self-esteem behaviours was minimal at best, as only three per cent of the variance in BIRGing and CORFing was explained.

The result of the interaction of all of these variables is, theoretically, an increase in behavioural consumption intentions (conative loyalty). Conative loyalty means that fans intend to consume the product or service in the future and in our model this was focused on attending future games, purchasing team merchandise, buying team-related clothing and supporting the team (Trail et al., 2003). However, intentions often do go astray and actual future behaviour tends to be considerably less than is typically intended. Approximately ten per cent of the variance in future behaviour was explained by all of the aforementioned variables in the model.

Boundary conditions

The reason that conative loyalty does not predict actual behaviours as well as expected is because of constraints, barriers or obstacles. Constraints are ‘factors that impede or inhibit an individual from attending a sport event’ (Kim and Trail, 2010, p. 191), but can also be applied to any type of consumption behaviour, including media and merchandise consumption. Constraints can be either internal or external to the individual. We defined internal constraints as ‘internal psychological cognitions that deter behavior’ (p. 194) and external constraints as ‘social or environmental aspects that prevent or decrease the likelihood of the individual performing the behavior’ (Kim and Trail, 2010, p. 194). Both internal (perceptions that significant others have no interest in the sport or team) and external constraints (cost, weather, lack of transportation) may impact individuals differentially and maybe overcome if the motivation to consume the product is sufficient. However, we did not include constraints in the original depiction of the model of sport consumer behaviour (Trail et al., 2003).

Application

As noted above, we tested the originally proposed model (see Figure 1 in Trail et al., 2003) and determined that only ten per cent of the variance in behaviour intentions (conative loyalty) was explained (Trail et al., 2003). In addition, several of the predicted paths were not supported to the extent expected. These somewhat disappointing results led to us proposing three competing models based on our previous results, and coupled with identity theory and satisfaction theory (Trail, Anderson and Fink, 2005; see Figures 1–3 therein). Based on identity theory, the left-hand portion of Model A depicted team identification impacting self-esteem responses (BIRGing and CORFing), which directly impacted conative loyalty. On the right-hand side of the model, satisfaction theory supported the relationships from (dis)confirmation of expectancies to mood (affective state) and then to conative loyalty. Model B:

is an extension of Model A, but guided by research in the sport consumer realm, in addition to the consumer satisfaction and identity theory models. In this model,
(dis)confirmation leads to mood. Mood and identification both directly lead to self-esteem responses (BIRGing and CORFing), and self-esteem responses lead to conative loyalty.

(Trail et al., 2005, p. 101)

Finally, Model C, a direct effects model, was also proposed and tested. In this model, all variables have a direct influence on conative loyalty, with no indirect effects. Model B was chosen as the best fitting model as almost fifty per cent of the variance in conative loyalty was predicted by the model and it integrated identity theory, satisfaction theory and prior results from sport-related research.

**Process**

*Activities that spurred our interest in the topic*

The genesis of the idea of a sport consumer behaviour model came about through a doctoral level class at The Ohio State University taught by Bob Madrigal. Janet Fink, Jeff James and I were all in that class discussing research on motives, satisfaction, expectancies, team identification and so on. Each of us had to individually write a term paper synthesising a chosen set of articles that we had covered in that class, plus additional research in the particular area that we were most interested in. I had been impressed with Madrigal’s (1995) paper on cognitive and affective determinants of fan satisfaction with sporting event attendance and thought it was a good starting point. In addition, Wann’s (1995) and Sloan’s (1989) work on motives contributed quite a bit to my thought process; as did Wann and colleagues’ (Branscombe and Wann, 1991; Wann and Branscombe, 1993) work on identification. I also used Cialdini *et al.*’s (1976) and Snyder, Laségard and Ford’s (1986) work on BIRGing and CORFing. Many other works contributed as well, obviously.

Based on the aforementioned research, I started synthesising the empirical relationships that appeared across all of the research and determining consistencies therein. For example, much of the research indicated relationships among motives and team identification. Furthermore, a variety of research also showed relationships among team identification and a variety of other variables such as satisfaction, BIRGing/CORFing, and behavioural intentions. Using all of the above information, I proposed a model of consumer behaviour for the class term paper. Dr Madrigal provided some critical feedback when he handed back the paper. Nothing came from those efforts for a couple of years as I focused on my dissertation (which was not on this topic). After graduating and getting my first tenure-track position at Iowa State University, the pressure to publish became quite apparent, and I started thinking back to some possibilities. I dug up the term paper, approached Dr Dean Anderson, my mentor at ISU, and Dr Janet Fink who was at Texas at the time, and asked them if they wanted to be part of this project. Both agreed and a good collaboration was born. In addition, Dr Jeff James and I continued to work on the motives of sport fandom and a variety of projects came from that, the most well-known being the Trail and James (2001) paper. The work that Dr James and I did on motives contributed substantially to the original model proposed in 2000 (Trail *et al.*, 2000) and tested in 2003 (Trail *et al.*, 2003).

The largest failing of the term paper, as Dr Madrigal pointed out, was that I had not included very much (read ‘any’) theoretical justification for the relationships among the variables or even the inclusion of the variables in the proposed model. Although Madrigal (1995) had included Oliver’s (1993) work on satisfaction theory in his article, I had not used it in support of our
model, which was certainly a failing. Madrigal suggested that I include it, which eventually we did. In addition, this is where Drs Anderson and Fink provided their valuable contributions to the research. Dr Anderson provided considerable theoretical support for the idea of identification and the relationships proposed therein; whereas Dr Fink suggested self-esteem theory for supporting the BIRGing and CORFing ideas and relationships. These ideas and theories started to appear in our first two papers (Trail et al., 2000; Trail et al., 2003). Then, as we further developed our ideas, we incorporated identity theory, satisfaction theory and self-esteem theory into the justification of our model much more effectively than we had initially (Trail et al., 2005). Thus, we did not start with a sufficient theoretical basis and then build the model; we proposed the model and later we added theory to support the model tenets. This is the wrong (and ineffectual) way to propose a model. In addition, this is quite probably why the first model only explained ten per cent of the variance in the sport consumer behaviour intentions and why the later models, modified and supported by theory, explained considerably greater amounts of variance in consumer behaviour. In addition, as we incorporated values theory, constraint theory and the theory of planned behaviour, and incorporated additional variables suggested by those theories, larger amounts of variance was explained and new relationships examined.

Extensions and applications

We have continued to build on the foundational models of sport consumer behaviour from 2000, 2003 and 2005. For instance, in a project with Harrolle and colleagues (Harrolle et al., 2010), we slightly modified the 2005 model by creating two components of disconfirmation of expectancies (quality of performance and outcome) and tested it on two different samples of potential fans and spectators (Latino and non-Latino). The model fit both samples adequately with 44.5 per cent of the conative loyalty variance explained in the Latino sample and 73.5 per cent in the non-Latino sample, providing additional support for the sport consumer behaviour model.

Various other research projects have tested aspects of the model. For example, Robinson and I (2005) expanded the idea of team identification to incorporate many different points of attachment (the team, the players, the coach, the community, the sport, the university and the level of sport) and looked at the relationships among points of attachment and motives. In a collaboration with Woo and colleagues (Woo, Trail, Kwon and Anderson, 2009), we expanded the model around those relationships, proposing second-order factors for both motives and points of attachment. In one longitudinal study, we examined how past attendance behaviour impacted current team identification and attendance intentions, which in turn predicted actual attendance behaviour (Trail, Anderson and Lee, 2006), while in another longitudinal study, we built on those findings to show that past behaviour impacted future behaviour both directly and indirectly through points of attachment (Shapiro et al., 2013). Other extensions include examining (a) the relationships among vicarious achievement (a motive), team identification, and BIRGing and CORFing (Kwon et al., 2008; Trail et al., 2012); (b) patterns among internal and external motivators and constraints on attendance (Kim and Trail, 2011), which was then extended to sport media consumption intentions (Larkin, Fink and Trail, 2014); and (c) a modification and extension of the model to focus specifically on athletic team merchandise (Lee and Trail, 2011b, 2012; Lee et al., 2013). In our latter work, additional variables such as personal values, previous product experience, product attributes, attitude towards the brand and attitude towards the product were included in this model, which explained almost eighty-six
per cent of the variance in intentions to purchase team-licensed merchandise in the future (Lee et al., 2013).

Besides our own work that has applied, extended and modified the model, other researchers have used aspects of it. Most research has focused on the motivation aspects or identification aspects of the 2003 model. However, there have been several exceptions. Gau, Gailliard and Brady (2007) used both the 2003 and 2005 models to examine motives, team identification, service quality and satisfaction. Gray and Wert-Gray (2012) used aspects of the 2003 model to examine the effects of team identification and satisfaction with team performance on four sport consumption behaviours: in-person attendance, media-based attendance, purchase of team merchandise and word of mouth. Shapiro, Drayer and Dwyer (2014) used many of the relationships in support of their proposed model of fantasy sport participation. Santos (2012) also used aspects of the 2003 model to investigate the impact of motives, satisfaction, perceived service quality, subjective norms, attitude and control on purchase intention.

The work has also informed teaching and practice. The sport consumer behaviour model soon became the foundation for a class on sport consumer behaviour that has been taught at Iowa State University, University of Florida, The Ohio State University, Florida State University and Seattle University, among others. In addition, the model was the basis for the Sport consumer behavior book that Jeff James and I wrote (Trail and James, 2013). We cover an overview of a variety of sport consumer behaviours; theories and models (other than just ours) applicable to sport consumer behaviour; socialisation into fandom; market segmentation; culture and subculture; needs, values and goals; motives; consumer perceptions; market demand characteristics; expectancies, (dis)confirmation and satisfaction; BIRGing, CORFing, Blasting, BIRFing and CORSing. Using the model and the textbook provides an excellent basis for the sport consumer behaviour class, which focuses on the application of market research for specific sport organisations. That is, based on the model, the students in the class do market research for a specific sport organisation (e.g., Seattle Thunderbirds). The students create a survey that includes the variables discussed in class from the model and then collect data from fans and spectators of the sport organisation. Using a cluster analysis technique, they segment the data and then, using the model, the students examine the relationships among the variables to proposed marketing and communication recommendations to the sport organisation.

Future directions

Theoretical or empirical extensions

The model has continued to develop as we add more relationships and variables, and as we see that certain relationships previously proposed and tested are not sufficient. In addition, we have expanded the theories we use for the theoretical base of the model as we add more variables and proposed new relationships. For example, we now include self-determination theory (Deci and Ryan, 2008), Means-End-Chain theory (MEC – Gutman, 1982), attitude theory (Eagly and Chaiken, 1993), the theory of planned behaviour (Azjen, 1991) and self-esteem theory (Cast and Burke, 2002), in addition to identity theory (Stryker and Burke, 2000) and satisfaction theory (Oliver, 1977) that we originally included. Jeff James and I modified the model slightly for the textbook and then proposed a new model at the American Marketing Association Summer Marketing Educators Conference in 2011 (Trail and James, 2011). Since then, we have continued to work on it and are currently preparing a paper for submission. However, I will give a brief overview here as to the current edition of the Sport Consumer Behavior Model (Figure 19.1).
Figure 19.1 Model of Sport Consumer Behavior from Trail and James (2011)
As depicted in Figure 19.1, we propose that culture (and subculture aspects) will interact with internal motivators and external activation to socialise people into being sport consumers. We have organised culture into four dimensions including shared contexts, shared cognition, shared affect and shared behaviours (Trail and James, 2013). Within these dimensions, cultural determinants create opportunities for people to become interested in consuming sport or being a fan through internal motivating characteristics and external activating situations.

Internal motivators include personal needs, personality characteristics, personal values and personal goals. These four categories of motivators obviously vary considerably across individuals, but for the consumption of sport to occur, at least one motivation, in one of these categories, must exist. For example, some people have the need for achievement and for some, it is most easily fulfilled vicariously through some successful other. So, for this individual, the need for vicarious achievement requires some outside entity to fulfill this need; that is, there must be an external activation that elicits and then potentially fulfills that need.

External activation occurs when the individual perceives that a product/service exists. The perception process consists of becoming aware of the product/service, becoming at least somewhat interested, and then initially evaluating the product/service. This perception process influences the attitude towards the product/service. However, we propose that it is the interaction between the internal motivator and the external activation that is critical for an attitude to form about a sport product/service. Using our example from above, both the need for vicarious achievement must exist and the successful other (winning team) must become salient to potentially fulfill that need, for an attitude about that team to come into being.

An attitude ‘is a psychological tendency that is expressed by evaluating a particular entity with some degree of favor or disfavor’ (Eagly and Chaiken, 1993, p. 1). As Eagly and Chaiken posited, attitudes are developed through cognitive learning as people gain information about the attitude object through both indirect and direct experiences. The direct experiences are derived from exposure to the object and experience with it, whereas the indirect experiences can be through others such as friends, family or the media. As the attitude toward the sport product or service comes into being, intentions to consume (or not) that product/service occur. As noted in an earlier section of the document, the intentions to consume the product may or may not lead to actual consumption, typically predicated on constraints.

As depicted in Figure 19.1, we hypothesise that external constraints can impact the individual at two points in the model: the first is between the attitude-to-intentions relationship, and the second possibility is between the intentions-to-action relationship. An individual may have a very positive attitude towards a team, but because of geographical constraints, have no intentions of buying tickets to a home game. For example, I like FC Barcelona and would like to see them play at their home venue, but considering that I live in Seattle and I will not fly, it would be rather difficult to overcome those constraints. Thus, I do not intend on attending a home Barca match. Therefore, the constraint has impacted the attitude-to-intentions relationship for me. However, if Barca comes to Seattle to play Seattle Sounders FC I would intend on going to that match. A constraint might prevent me from going even if I intended to though if I could not get a ticket.

The rest of the model is the same as our 2005 model in that, after the consumption of the product, expectancies are either confirmed or disconfirmed, which lead to an affective response. The affective response, if positive, leads to BIRGing and if negative could potentially lead to CORFing. These self-esteem related responses then impact whether there are any repatronage intentions and whether there is an adjustment in the attitude towards the product/service or brand.
This newly proposed model has not been tested yet and the biggest questions that need to be answered are (a) whether or not the cultural socialisation factors impact internal motivation, or perhaps more likely, external activation, and (b) whether the interaction between internal motivation and external activation will explain more variance in the model than each individually. That has yet to be determined.

**Conclusion**

In sum, the original work we did (Trail et al., 2003), has created a foundation for anyone interested in investigating sport consumer behaviour. Although we have come a long way since that first model, there are many areas that still need further research. There also is considerable applicability to the industry and to the profession. We hope that as people see the value of this area of research the impact will spread and more sport organisations will benefit. We hope that academicians and their students that have the skills and expertise will help organisations investigate their own consumers and implement changes based on that research.

**Note**

1 This chapter is a reflection on Trail, Fink and Anderson (2003), and the work related to it.

**References**


Applying the Sport Consumer Behavior Model

Brian A. Turner1

Since graduating with my PhD in 2001, I have taught Sport Marketing every year. When I first began preparing for these classes, one name that consistently showed up in the literature was Dr Galen Trail. As a fellow Ohio State alumnus, I had the opportunity to meet and interact with Dr Trail many times early in my academic career. I was especially impressed with his work on sport spectators and always read what he published in this area. In 2003, along with Drs Janet Fink and Dean Anderson, he published an article titled ‘Sport spectator consumption behavior’ (Trail, Anderson and Fink, 2003). In the article, the authors tested Trail, Anderson and Fink’s (2000) theoretical model of sport spectator consumption behaviour and were able to explain eleven per cent of the variance in sport consumption intentions.

During the 2007–08 school year, Dr Trail and I were colleagues at Ohio State. Since our offices were next to each other, we had many great academic discussions that year. He mentioned that he was in the process of writing a sport consumer behaviour textbook (along with Dr Jeff James). Dr Trail left for a position at Seattle University after that year, so I ‘inherited’ the Sport Consumer Behavior Seminar. I knew right away that I wanted to use his new textbook, Sport Consumer Behavior (Trail and James, 2012), in my new seminar class.

I was initially attracted to the model in Trail et al. (2003) because it was one of the few that truly attempted to explain why individuals consume sport by including multiple psychographic variables. Students often struggle with understanding complex models (even doctoral students);
however, Trail and James (2013) explain each of the model’s components (and others) in a sequential and logical manner that students can comprehend.

The Trail et al. (2003) article is really the foundation for my Sport Consumer Behavior Seminar. While Dr Trail has expanded his initial model, the variables in the 2003 article provide a solid framework for the course. We have great class discussions each week on each of the variables in this study. In particular, I believe the students have the liveliest debates on the topic of disconfirmation of expectancies for experience/outcome. Students invariably follow a variety of teams and all have expectations for their performance. Some assume their favourite teams may only win a few games a year, while others expect their team to win every game they play. Every student can give an example of a game they expected their team to win, but ultimately lost and how they felt afterwards. They can also describe the euphoria when their team pulled off a big upset when they were expecting the team to lose. The students absolutely love exploring this component of Trail et al.’s (2003) model. In fact, after taking my seminar, one doctoral student included (dis)confirmation of outcomes in a larger study on basking in reflected glory (BIRGing) (Jensen, Turner, Greenwell, McEvoy and Walsh, 2014).

One year in the seminar we conducted research for our athletic department. Using the Trail et al. (2003) article as a foundation, students (in small groups) had to develop an instrument examining why spectators attend events, collect data at a sporting event, analyse the data, present the results in class and submit the findings to the athletic department. The model was an invaluable resource that enabled the students to successfully develop and use an instrument within considerable time constraints (i.e., we were on quarters at the time and only really had about seven to eight weeks to complete the entire project).

I plan on continuing to use the Trail et al. (2003) article as the guiding framework for my consumer behaviour seminar. I look forward to seeing how Dr Trail further develops his theories of sport spectator consumption behaviour in the coming years. Finally, I also anticipate more students developing research projects based on this line of research.

**Note**

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**References**


