

Consumption motives, sport identification and buying behaviours of South African premier league football fans

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Abstract

Despite the resurgent growth of professional football and its significant contribution to the gross domestic product (GDP) of the tourism and leisure sector in South Africa, little research has been undertaken to explore the principle motives for sport consumption amongst the country's football fans. This research applied the motivation for sport consumption theory to evaluate the direct- and indirect relationship between the fundamental psychological motives for sport consumption and buying behaviours of football fans. Subsequently, the direct- and indirect effects of sport fan identity with team to this relationship were also appraised. A sample of 2518 (95.3% African, 80.3% male) fans of one of the country's most prodigious Premier Soccer League (PSL) teams participated in the study. Structural equation modelling methods were applied to scrutinise postulated paths between the latent variables. Results suggested that several of the sport consumption motives influence the purchasing decision of South African football fans. Further, identification with a team revealed as a mediator between a number of the sport consumption motives and buying behaviour. Findings are discussed and recommendations made. The research was approached from the paradigms of customer engagement (CE) and the broaden-and-build theories.

Keywords: Motivation for sport consumption, fan identification, purchasing decisions, football, fans, South Africa, premier league, customer engagement theory, broaden-and-build theory.

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Introduction

In a context of slow national economic growth and trying fiscal circumstances, the industry of professional football in South Africa has flourished. Koortzen and Oosthuizen (2012) comment that the sport has enjoyed sustained commercial success, fuelled by a constituency of engaged consumers who have willingly invested monetary resources in the support of their favourite professional teams.

This investment has been salient and directly contributes to the sport's position as an established contributor to the gross domestic product of sport in the country overall – a segment which is estimated to be worth more than R19.5 billion of the tourism and leisure sector of the national economy by 2017 (PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2015). Professional football in South Africa is positioned for unrelenting growth, as illustrated by its continued attraction of sponsorship from major corporate entities, its versatility of operating across sectors (including retail, media and tourism) and the large proportionality of South African people who actively consume the sport; which is estimated at 54% of the entire adult populace (Saayman & Rossouw, 2008). The Department of Sport and Recreation (2014) has affirmed that football remains South Africa's most popular sport and prospects for retaining this status is positive (Gedye, 2007). South African professional football is an important employer of people through such branches of commerce as retail, events management, entertainment, merchandise production and even infrastructure development (De Burca, Brannick & Meenaghan, 2015; Smith & Stewart, 2007).

With all of the economic attributes of professional football acknowledged, and with due recognition of its critical role in stimulating economic growth, an understanding of the fundamental motives that drive sport consumption amongst South African football fans remains severely limited. It is clear that the fans are the single most prominent role player in the expansion of the business of sport (Bing, Li, Miao, ZiWen, XueFeng, Lu & Feng, 2015; Madrigal, Hamill & Gill, 2013). It is the large numbers of fans who consume football that attract the attention of corporate sponsors who seek brand exposure (Koenderman 2013); the investment of fans in purchasing products that activate the commercial growth of major clubs (Pichot, Tribou & O'Reilly, 2008); and the buoyancy of fans in general that stimulates the social currency of the sport (Stander & Van Zyl, 2016). The restricted understanding of the South African football fan is therefore a protuberant research problem, both from a pragmatic and empirical point of view. In this research an effort is made to fundamentally understand the principal motives that drive consumption amongst South African football fans and the relationship of these motives with fans' purchasing decisions. The role of fan identification with team as a mediator to this relationship is also explored to enhance the narrow comprehension of the South African football fan's buying decision.

Literature review

Motivation for sport consumption

Due to uniqueness of personality, fans consume sport for a variety of reasons. According to Wang, Zhang and Tsuji (2011), a multitude of motivational factors exist that move fans to engage in purchasing behaviours of products and services

related to their favourite teams. The growth of the sport industry globally has inspired authors to more closely examine the motives of consumption that exist within the sport fan fraternity (Dos Santos & Rios, 2014). The motivation for sport consumption theory (Trail & James, 2001) was developed in a response to understand the differentiating factors of consumption motive amongst fans, i.e. the principal reasons as to why fans would make a purchasing decision. Consumption, in this instance, is a broadly defined term, and refers to the array of activities related to the commercial offerings associated with a specific professional sport club, including but not limited to merchandise, match tickets, memorabilia or specially arranged events; and which are available for purchase and consumption by the sport fan (Cottingham, Phillips, Hall, Gearity & Carroll, 2014). Trail and James (2001) identified eight predominant dimensions that explain why a sport fan decides to consume the offerings of his/her favourite team. These are summarised below:

- *Vicarious achievement*, which describes the sense of esteem, empowerment and prestige that a fan experiences in relation to supporting a particular team.
- *Acquisition of knowledge*, which is the motive for gaining information and learning about one's favourite team in an effort to broaden one's insights.
- *Aesthetics*, which refers to an appreciation of the beauty and inherent artistic value that sport offers.
- *Drama/eustress*, which describes the pleasurable excitement that is associated with the often uncertain outcome of closely contested sport matches.
- *Escape*, referring to the diversion that fans find from their personal- or work circumstances, or the temporary discharge from everyday life that is available through following sport.
- *Physical attractiveness of athletes*, which is the "sex appeal" that sport sometimes offers and motivates fans to consume.
- *Physical skills of the players*, which is an appreciation of the superior athletic skill and competence displayed, particularly by professional athletes.
- *Social interaction*, which is the need for community and shared networks with other fans that inspire the fan to consume sport.

These are the main clusters of motives that drive the consumer decision on the part of sport fans. Some authors, for example Choi, Martin, Park and Yoh (2009) have separated such motives into two groupings, namely sociological and game-related factors. Sociological factors were related to the motives of vicarious achievement, aesthetics, the experience of drama/eustress and escape from daily life problems. Game-related motivational factors related to fans' acquisition of knowledge, physical attractiveness of athletes, the physical skill of the players and the social interaction motive. Cottingham et al. (2014) as well as Karakaya, Yannopoulos and Kefalaki (2015) have argued that an appraisal of these unique dimensions is required as it would assist sport clubs to understand what interventions to put in place to amplify consumer expenditure amongst its fans. This view is shared by Shank and Lyberger (2014) who have mentioned that,

based on the unique attributes of sport consumption motives amongst different fans, clubs should be willing to adopt a customised rather than a generic approach when attempting to engage fans. It is the motive for sport consumption that informs the purchasing decision of the sport fan, and more so the level of motive satisfaction that would lead such fan towards repeated and enhanced investment (Trail & James, 2001). It is therefore not only imperative that the underlying motives for consumption of fans itself are well understood, but also the relationship of these motives towards fans' actual purchasing decisions.

Motives for sport consumption and buying behaviours

In the realm of professional football in South Africa, both elements of the aforementioned statement remain largely unexplored. Firstly, a robust enquiry is needed into the dimensions of sport fan consumption motive as relating to dimensionality in the setting of the country's most popular sport. Secondly, on a more pragmatic level, an investigation into the effect of these dimensions on the buying behaviour of football fans is much needed. The relationship between motives for sport consumption and buying behaviours is explained from the theoretical departure point of the model of Hawkins, Best and Coney (1998). This model was devised from the basic customer engagement (CE) theory and argues that consumers, when considering a purchase, make both a rational (cognitive) and affective (emotional) decision. The rational component relates to objective measures that are observable in the cerebral reality of the purchaser and comprise such elements as functionality of the product/service, value for money and long term usability. The affective component, however, relates to a subjective personal value evaluation on the part of the purchaser and is concerned with the extent to which the customer perceives the product/service to be aligned to his/her own personal orientations, belief systems and culture (Brodie, Hollebeek, Juric & Ilic, 2011). Motivation for sport consumption theory maintains that when an individual sport fan's unique motive for consuming sport is satisfied, both cognitive and affective components are strengthened, as the fan will perceive it as a value-deriving purchase that satisfies some objective need, and will find intrinsic reward and gratification from such motive being met (Trail & James 2001). This will enhance the engrossment of the fan into the brand of his/her particular favourite sports team and will ultimately lead to greater frequency and intensity of buying (Cottingham et al., 2014).

In this study, the effect of motives for sport consumption on two buying behaviours in particular is scrutinised. Firstly, it is evaluated in the context of regularity with which South African professional football fans in the Premier Soccer League (PSL) physically attend matches of their favourite team at the stadium. Ross (2006) states that stadium match attendance is a critical indicator of sport fans' levels of engagement with their favourite team and an important purchasing behaviour to gauge, as it reveals the levels of energy fans are willing

to invest to support their preferred club. Through this, much is revealed of the overall consumer culture that exists amongst the fans of a specific professional team (Hewer, Gannon & Cordina, 2015). To attend a match at the stadium requires real effort on the part of the fan as it often encompasses traveling, family arrangements and a general commitment from the individual. The second purchasing behaviour under investigation is merchandise expenditure, which is determined by the spending on official products that are endorsed by the fan's favourite team – either directly or indirectly. This may include official team clothing, memorabilia such as flags or products that are dedicated to the club's promotion, namely the endorsed club magazine. According to Wiid and Cant (2015), a major portion of a club's commercial properties is vested in its merchandise; therefore, a club's management team should seek to satisfy consumer motive through product offerings that cater for the unique market, namely the sport fans. Martin (2013) has established a correlation between expenditure in merchandise and loyalty of sport fans, revealing that fans who are motivated to publicly display their allegiance will likely invest greater monetary resources to acquire products that unveil this devotion. It is thus an important purchasing behaviour to consider in the context of sport fans' consumption motives.

Sport fan identification as a mediator between consumption motives and buying

The second objective of this research is concerned with whether the construct of sport fan identification will mediate the relationship between South African football fans' consumption motives and their actual decision to purchase products. It is important to explore strategies on a pragmatic level that could translate the consumption motives of these football fans into concrete buying behaviours. In this regard, sport fan identification potentially proves a useful resource towards activating such decision on the part of the fan as it is a personal and meaningful consumer experience. Wann and Branscombe (1993) have defined sport fan identification as the level of connectedness that exists between a fan and his/her team. Wann, Melnick, Russel and Pease (2001) refer to this connection as psychological assembly between fan and team and describe fan identification as the extent to which a fan views his/her team as a natural extension of him/herself. Sport fan identification has been defined by McDonald, Sutton and Milne (1995) as "the personal commitment and emotional involvement customers have with a sport club". Follet (2015) argues that fans seek to enhance their own identity through the aspirational significance of their teams' ethos and cultures and thus value the connection they experience with that team. This in turn inspires those fans to invest more in purchasing products related to the team, such as match tickets or merchandise (Wann et al., 2001). In South Africa, it is widely known that football supporters represent a vibrant community that passionately displays its affection for its favourite teams and

exhibits the behaviours associated with commitment. From that perspective, this research aims to make a contribution.

It is postulated that sport fan identification will a) lead directly to buying behaviour and b) mediate the relationship between motives for sport consumption and buying behaviour amongst South African football fans. This is supported by the broaden-and-build theory of Fredrickson (2005) which implies that, when people experience positive emotions by performing a particular action (such as supporting a specific team), they will seek to engage in that action frequently in a pattern of thought-action repertoires to achieve sustainable well-being. Thus, should a fan's primary motive for sport consumption be satisfied, that fan is likely to identify with his/her favourite team, which may inspire enhanced purchasing of that club's commercial properties in an effort to enhance internal reward. The broaden-and-build theory has been proven effective in consumer contexts by such authors as Pollai, Hoelzl, Hahn and Hahn (2011), who have established that emotions play a role in the purchase of utilitarian and hedonic products. It is also consistent with the model of Hawkins et al. (1998), which advises that the purchasing decision is informed by both cognitive and affective factors. When the football fan (customer) experiences value on both cognitive and affective levels, this individual is likely to perceive his/her identity to be closely engrossed in the team he/she supports, which may activate enhanced purchasing of team products (Wann et al., 2001). This paper will evaluate the effect of fan identification amongst South African football fans, exploring its direct predictive qualities over buying behaviours and examining its mediating effects between consumption motives and these behaviours.

Problem statement and research objectives

Despite the buoyancy of the South African professional football industry and the significant contribution of the sport to the country's overall tourism and leisure sector, the fundamental motives for consumption amongst fans remain largely unexplored. Moreover, the relationship of these dimensions towards buying behaviours has not been scrutinised in the contexts of the nation's most popular consumer sport. The aim of this research is therefore to explore the fundamental motives for sport consumption amongst South African football fans; to evaluate these dimensions in relation to buying behaviours; and to explore the effect of football fan identification on this relationship – directly and indirectly. This is done in an effort to contribute to the validity and scientific understanding of sport consumer motives, but more importantly to advise on practical strategies that professional sport clubs can implement to enhance the investment of fans in the sport which would ultimately stimulate the further growth of the sector and its economic reach in the country.

Methodology

Research design and participants

The study made use of a cross-sectional, quantitative research design. It was exploratory and descriptive, making use of a convenience sampling method. The South African Professional Soccer League (PSL) was selected as the setting for the research as football represents the country's most popular consumer sport (Department of Sport and Recreation, 2014; Saayman & Rossouw, 2008). A total of 2518 fans from one of the country's largest and best supported professional football clubs (based in Gauteng province) participated in the study. The average age of participants was 29.31 (SD=7.36) years. Further detail of the demographic profile of participants is provided in Table 1.

Table 1: Characteristics of the Participants (n =2518)

| Variables | Frequency | Percentage |
|-----------------------------------|-----------|------------|
| Gender | | |
| Male | 2009 | 80.3 |
| Female | 492 | 19.7 |
| Race | | |
| Asian | 37 | 1.5 |
| African | 2400 | 95.3 |
| Coloured | 55 | 2.2 |
| White | 21 | 0.8 |
| Other | 3 | 0.1 |
| Level of Education | | |
| Grade 11 and below | 357 | 14.2 |
| Grade 12 | 1085 | 43.1 |
| Diploma | 568 | 22.6 |
| Degree | 328 | 13.0 |
| Post-graduate degree | 170 | 7.1 |
| Matches attended at the stadium | | |
| None | 271 | 10.8 |
| On average one per annum | 293 | 11.6 |
| On average two per annum | 280 | 11.1 |
| On average three per annum | 408 | 16.2 |
| On average four per annum | 408 | 16.2 |
| Five or more per annum | 856 | 34.0 |
| Merchandise expenditure per annum | | |
| Less than R500 | 710 | 28.2 |
| R500 to R999 | 958 | 38.1 |
| R1000 to R1999 | 550 | 21.9 |
| R2000 or more | 299 | 11.9 |

*Discrepancies in allocations relate to missing values

In terms of consumer behaviours, the largest proportion of participants (34%) indicated they attend five or more matches at the stadium per annum. From the perspective of merchandise expenditure, 38.1% indicated that they spend on average between R500 and R999 on club merchandise per annum.

Measuring instruments

Two validated instruments were utilised for the purpose of this study, with a biographical questionnaire incorporated to assess demographic aspects and specific buying behaviours. The two instruments included the Motivation Scale for Sport Consumption (Trail & James, 2001) and the Sport Spectator Identification Scale (Wann & Branscombe, 1993).

The Motivation Scale for Sport Consumption (MSSC) is a self-report measure comprising eight dimensions, each containing three items. It is therefore a 24-item instrument, scored on a seven-point Likert-type rating scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Trail and James (2001), who developed the scale, established reliability levels of between 0.75 and 0.91 through Cronbach alpha values.

The Sport Spectator Identification Scale (SSIS) is a seven-item questionnaire in its original format, but only three items were included for this study, based on highest levels of internal consistency as revealed by such studies as Wann and Branscombe (1993) and Heere and James (2007). The SSIS is scored by means of an eight-point Likert scale, where respondents are requested to rate the extent to which they agree with various statements. Responses varied from 1 (strongly disagree) to 8 (strongly agree). The SSIS is a widely used instrument in international literature, with a satisfactory internal consistency index as revealed by recent studies such as Wann and Polk (2007) Cronbach $\alpha = 0.95$ and Theodorakis, Wann, Sarmento and De Carvalho (2010) $\alpha = 0.76$, and composite reliability of 0.80.

In the biographical section of the questionnaire, two buying behaviour variables under investigation, namely stadium match attendance and merchandise expenditure were included. Respondents were asked to indicate the regularity with which they physically attend matches at the stadium by completing a six-point frequency scale indicating the number of matches attended (responses ranging from zero games to five or more games per annum). They were also asked to reveal the value of their expenditure in rand terms on a four-point category scale, with possible responses including less than R500 per year, between R501 and R1000 per year, between R1001 and R1999 per year and R2000 or more per year.

Procedure

The research was conducted by making use of a specially designed digital platform comprising all the sections of the questionnaire. This platform was then posted on the official and endorsed *Facebook* page of the partnering professional football club which gave formal permission to the researchers to do so. The researchers worked closely with the management team of the football club to ensure an efficient administration process pertaining to capturing of the data.

Respondents were recruited to the research through a specially designed electronic invitation which was posted on the *Facebook* page as well. This invitation gave interested participants access to a landing page via a hyperlink. The hyperlink enabled the digital platform comprising the instruments.

Before participants could partake in the study, they were requested to read through and confirm a terms and conditions section which explained the purpose of the research project, issues of confidentiality and anonymity. Participants were also informed of the voluntary nature of their participation (including their right to withdraw from the research at any time). Anonymous responses were recorded electronically and automatically captured using a computer programme designed for the research project.

Statistical analysis

The data were evaluated through structural equation modelling using the Mplus 7.2 programme (Muthén & Muthén, 2014). Items on the questionnaires were indicators of the specified latent variables. The ordinal categorical nature of the items necessitated the application of weighted least squares (mean and variance adjusted; WLSMV) estimation method (Rhemtulla, Brosseau-Liard & Savalei, 2012). A measurement model for the data was specified, based on the outlined literature and making use of confirmatory factor analysis and Cronbach alpha coefficient was utilised to determine reliability. Thereafter regression coefficients were added to scrutinise the structural model. For fit indices, the following were considered: Comparative fit index (CFI) and Tucker-Lewis index, with acceptable values reflected by values of 0.90 or higher; and the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) of which the value should ideally be below 0.08 (Van de Schoot, Lugtig & Hox, 2012). Correlation coefficients were also considered with practical significance being set at $r \geq 0.30$ for a medium effect and $r \geq 0.50$ for a large effect (Cohen, 1992).

Following the model evaluation of the measurement- and structural models, indirect effects were appraised, specifically to explore the possible mediating effect of identity with team between sport consumption motives and buying behaviour of fans. In line with the recommendations of Rucker, Preacher, Tormala and Petty (2011), bootstrapping resampling methods were utilised, with confidence intervals set at the 95% level of confidence. Statistical significance for the overall research model was set at the 95% level for all parameters, i.e. $p \leq 0.05$.

Results

Measurement model

The measurement model showed a good fit to the data, with the original eight-factor sport consumption motives as elucidated by Trail and James (2001) being

supported with fit statistics of CFI = 0.98 and TLI = 0.97 (both above the lower bound cut-off point of 0.90), as well as the RMSEA = 0.04, which was below 0.08. Table 2 describes factor loadings for the various latent variables.

Table 2: Factor loadings for the latent variables

| Latent variable | Item | Standardised Loading | Standard Error | <i>p</i> -Value |
|---------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|----------------|-----------------|
| Sport consumption motives | | | | |
| | Vicarious achievement | | | |
| | | | | |
| Acquisition of knowledge | VA1 | 0.83 | 0.01 | 0.001 |
| | VA2 | 0.90 | 0.01 | 0.001 |
| | VA3 | 0.86 | 0.01 | 0.001 |
| Aesthetics | AK1 | 0.84 | 0.02 | 0.001 |
| | AK2 | 0.84 | 0.01 | 0.001 |
| | AK3 | 0.81 | 0.02 | 0.001 |
| Drama/Eustress | AE1 | 0.73 | 0.02 | 0.001 |
| | AE2 | 0.78 | 0.02 | 0.001 |
| | AE3 | 0.70 | 0.02 | 0.001 |
| Escape | DE1 | 0.67 | 0.02 | 0.001 |
| | DE2 | 0.72 | 0.02 | 0.001 |
| | DE3 | 0.80 | 0.02 | 0.001 |
| Physical attractiveness | ES1 | 0.85 | 0.01 | 0.001 |
| | ES2 | 0.90 | 0.01 | 0.001 |
| | ES3 | 0.68 | 0.02 | 0.001 |
| Physical skill | PA1 | 0.84 | 0.01 | 0.001 |
| | PA2 | 0.94 | 0.01 | 0.001 |
| | PA3 | 0.75 | 0.02 | 0.001 |
| Social interaction | PS1 | 0.82 | 0.01 | 0.001 |
| | PS2 | 0.87 | 0.01 | 0.001 |
| | PS3 | 0.85 | 0.01 | 0.001 |
| Identification with team | SI1 | 0.88 | 0.01 | 0.001 |
| | SI2 | 0.93 | 0.01 | 0.001 |
| | SI3 | 0.85 | 0.01 | 0.001 |
| | ID1 | 0.70 | 0.02 | 0.001 |
| | ID2 | 0.92 | 0.02 | 0.001 |
| | ID3 | 0.88 | 0.02 | 0.001 |

All two-tailed *p* values ≤ 0.001

As observed above (Table 2), each identified latent factor variable revealed significant factor loadings through confirmatory factor analysis. Standardised estimates specified small standard errors for every variable, indicating accuracy in the estimation of values. Table 3 reveals the correlation matrix and internal consistency of measures.

From Table 3, it is clear that correlation exists between the motives for sport consumption (varying from medium to large practical significance), strengthening the argument for psychometric integrity of the measure in a South African sport context. Also, the reliability indicators for all the latent variables suggested satisfactory internal consistency according to guidelines ($\alpha > 0.70$). The consumption motive of physical attractiveness posed a challenge with low correlation witnessed in relation to all other variables. A possible practical

explanation for this could be the high percentage of the population being male in a male dominated sport context.

Table 3: Correlation matrix for the latent variables

| | <i>R</i> | | | | | | | | | | | |
|-----------------------------|----------|-------|--------|--------|-------|--------|------|--------|--------|------|-------|------|
| Variables | A | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 |
| 1. Vicarious achievement | 0.86 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 2. Acquisition of knowledge | 0.79 | 1.00 | | | | | | | | | | |
| 3. Aesthetics | 0.72 | 0.45* | | | | | | | | | | |
| 4. Drama/eustress | 0.68 | 0.22 | 0.58** | 1.00 | | | | | | | | |
| 5. Escape | 0.88 | 0.39* | 0.37* | 0.38* | 1.00 | | | | | | | |
| 6. Physical attractiveness | 0.84 | | 0.19 | | 0.36* | 1.00 | | | | | | |
| 7. Physical skill | 0.79 | 0.31* | | 0.07 | 0.18 | | | | | | | |
| 8. Social interaction | 0.78 | 0.31* | 0.59** | 0.47* | 0.35* | 0.35* | 0.26 | 1.00 | | | | |
| 9. Identity with team | 0.77 | | 0.57** | 0.44* | 0.34* | 0.57** | 0.28 | 0.53** | 1.00 | | | |
| 10. Match attendance | n/a | 0.38* | | | | | - | 0.47* | 0.50** | 1.00 | | |
| 11. Merchandise expenditure | n/a | 0.34* | 0.56** | 0.56** | 0.33* | 0.04 | 0.02 | 0.06 | 0.15 | 0.21 | 1.00 | |
| | | 0.17 | 0.19 | 0.01 | | 0.06 | 0.10 | 0.05 | 0.19 | 0.20 | 0.46* | 1.00 |
| | | 0.25 | 0.14 | 0.01 | | | | | | | | |

$p < 0.01$; α = alpha coefficient; r = correlation coefficient; * = medium effect; ** = large effect

In terms of the relationship between consumption motives and team identity, correlation could be observed between most of the motives and identity. This holds true of vicarious achievement ($r = 0.34$, medium practical effect), acquisition of knowledge ($r = 0.56$, large practical effect), aesthetics ($r = 0.56$, large practical effect), drama/ eustress ($r = 0.33$, medium practical effect), physical skill of players ($r = 0.47$, medium practical effect) and social interaction ($r = 0.50$, large practical effect), respectively. Interestingly, low correlation was observed between consumption motives, identity with team and consumer outcomes (match attendance and merchandise expenditure), probing the researchers to assess the structural model specified.

Structural model

To directly examine the postulated paths between the variables, a structural model of the research was specified, following the establishment of the measurement model, i.e. regression coefficients were added to the measurement model in order to gauge the direction and significance of the beta coefficients. Table 4 below communicates the structural paths between variables.

With statistical significance for the research model set at the 95% level for all parameters, ($p \leq 0.05$), direct paths were scrutinised between the sport consumption motives and consumer behaviours, also between identity with team and consumer behaviours. It was revealed that vicarious achievement, aesthetics, drama/eustress, physical skill and social interaction motives predicted greater levels of match attendance amongst the fans in the sample. As far as merchandise expenditure was concerned, vicarious achievement, acquisition of knowledge, drama/eustress, physical attractiveness, physical skill and social interaction

motives served as predictors of buying behaviour. To address the second part of the research objective, direct paths between identity with team and buying behaviours were evaluated, with team identity revealing as a strong predictor of both match attendance and merchandise expenditure amongst fans.

Table 4: Regression paths of the research model

| Regression relationships | Standardised Estimate | Standard Error | <i>p</i> |
|--|-----------------------|----------------|----------|
| Sport consumption motives to match attendance | | | |
| Vicarious achievement → Match attendance | 0.09 | 0.04 | 0.016* |
| Acquisition of knowledge → Match attendance | 0.22 | 0.04 | 0.260 |
| Aesthetics → Match attendance | 0.14 | 0.05 | 0.005* |
| Drama/eustress → Match attendance | 0.08 | 0.03 | 0.015* |
| Escape → Match attendance | 0.05 | 0.03 | 0.077 |
| Physical attractiveness → Match attendance | 0.04 | 0.03 | 0.201 |
| Physical skill → Match attendance | 0.09 | 0.04 | 0.020* |
| Social interaction → Match attendance | 0.08 | 0.04 | 0.026* |
| Sport consumption motives to merchandise expenditure | | | |
| Vicarious achievement → Merchandise expenditure | 0.18 | 0.04 | 0.001* |
| Acquisition of knowledge → Merchandise expenditure | 0.13 | 0.05 | 0.003* |
| Aesthetics → Merchandise expenditure | 0.03 | 0.05 | 0.484 |
| Drama/eustress → Merchandise expenditure | 0.10 | 0.03 | 0.002* |
| Escape → Merchandise expenditure | 0.06 | 0.03 | 0.059 |
| Physical attractiveness → Merchandise expenditure | 0.07 | 0.03 | 0.013* |
| Physical skill → Merchandise expenditure | 0.17 | 0.04 | 0.001* |
| Social interaction → Merchandise expenditure | 0.10 | 0.04 | 0.006* |
| Identity with team → Match attendance | 0.18 | 0.05 | 0.001* |
| Identity with team → Merchandise expenditure | 0.16 | 0.05 | 0.001* |

* = Statistically significant predictor at $p \leq 0.05$ level

To explore the final research objective of the study, indirect paths were evaluated between the consumption motives and buying behaviours through identity with the team. Results are reported in Table 5.

Identity with team served as a mediator between several of the sport consumption motives and buying behaviour. It mediated between all the motives and match attendance, with the exception of vicarious achievement and drama/eustress. As far as merchandise expenditure was concerned, identity with team was mediated by the acquisition of knowledge, aesthetics, physical attractiveness, physical skill and social interaction towards greater commercial investment by fans. It is important to note that the indirect effect for physical attractiveness through identity with team was negative for both match attendance and merchandise expenditure, indicating a competitive mediation, i.e. identity with team has a suppressing effect on the relationship between physical attractiveness and attendance, expenditure.

Table 5: Indirect effects between consumption motives and buying behaviours through identity with team

| Variable | Estimate | <i>p</i> | 95% CI | |
|---|----------|----------|--------|-------|
| Consumption motives and match attendance | | | | |
| Vicarious achievement | 0.01 | 0.586 | -0.01 | 0.02 |
| Acquisition of knowledge | 0.04 | 0.004* | 0.02 | 0.07 |
| Aesthetics | 0.05 | 0.002* | 0.02 | 0.08 |
| Drama/eustress | 0.01 | 0.469 | -0.01 | 0.02 |
| Escape | 0.01 | 0.002* | -0.01 | 0.02 |
| Physical attractiveness | -0.04 | 0.002* | -0.06 | -0.02 |
| Physical skill | 0.02 | 0.004* | 0.01 | 0.05 |
| Social interaction | 0.04 | 0.002* | 0.02 | 0.07 |
| Consumption motives and merchandise expenditure | | | | |
| Vicarious achievement | 0.01 | 0.591 | -0.01 | 0.02 |
| Acquisition of knowledge | 0.04 | 0.006* | 0.02 | 0.07 |
| Aesthetics | 0.04 | 0.006* | 0.02 | 0.07 |
| Drama/eustress | 0.01 | 0.482 | -0.01 | 0.02 |
| Escape | 0.01 | 0.364 | -0.01 | 0.02 |
| Physical attractiveness | -0.03 | 0.003* | -0.06 | -0.01 |
| Physical skill | 0.02 | 0.019* | 0.01 | 0.04 |
| Social interaction | 0.03 | 0.004* | 0.01 | 0.06 |

p < 0.001; CI = Confidence interval

Discussion

The objective of this study was to evaluate underlying motives for sport consumption as they relate to positive consumer behaviours and to assess whether identity with team could potentially influence this relationship. The study yielded valuable findings both from an empirical and pragmatic perspective. Firstly, the psychometric integrity of the MSSC was supported in a South African sport context as eight distinguishable dimensions that drive the sport fan to consume products and services related to his/her favourite teams. This is significant, as PricewaterhouseCoopers (2015) has identified sport as a strategic pillar to the overall tourism and leisure sector in the country. The results of the study propose that the MSSC could be used to measure consumption motives of South African sport fans. From a pragmatic perspective, the study revealed that several of the motivational dimensions for sport consumption are in fact related to purchasing decisions amongst South African football fans and moreover that identity with team could strengthen this relationship. These pragmatic findings are elaborated.

Motivation for sport consumption dimensions as predictors of buying behaviours

It was further revealed that differentiation existed in terms of the dimensions which relate to buying behaviour. As far as the buying behaviour of match attendance is concerned, results revealed that the consumption motives of aesthetics, drama/eustress, physical skill and social interaction have the propensity to drive football fans to the stadium. Whilst some of these motives are inherent to the fan's individual preference, the football club does exert influence

to appeal to some of the other dimensions. This applies specifically to the social interaction motive. The club can enhance the social interaction experience for fans at the stadium, for example, by introducing more opportunity for fans to interact before and after games (for example through fan parks, designated fan activation areas and digital platforms for conversation on the ensuing game). This should enhance the match attendance of these fans and drive the commercial currency of the club forward significantly (Ross 2006). In terms of merchandise expenditure, the consumption motives of acquisition of knowledge, drama/ eustress, physical attractiveness, physical skill of players and social interaction related most positively. In this regard, the football club is encouraged to again appeal to the higher order esteem needs of its fans through its engagement, provide more informative and knowledge-gaining activities to the benefit of fans, leverage on the physical appeal that its players may hold for fans along with skill and create more platforms for conversation amongst communities of fans on a regular basis (for example through highly active social media platforms). From the context of this study, the motives of vicarious achievement, drama/eustress, physical skill of players and social interaction motive revealed as possible predictors of both behaviours, suggesting by targeting these motives through their engagement strategies that the club management could get maximum commercial return on investment.

The effect of identity with the team on the consumption motive and buying relationship

The second part of this research was structured around understanding the direct potential role that football fans' identity with their team could have on consumer buying behaviour, but also as a mediator between consumption motivators and decisions. Follet (2015) observes that identifying with a sport team is a prominent influencer of the fan's sought engagement effort with his/her favourite club. More information on this in the South African sport consumer context could thus prove invaluable, particularly also in the realm of the underlying consumption motives. Results revealed, in the first instance, that fan identity in a team related directly to both match attendance at the stadium and merchandise expenditure of the football fans under investigation. It was also suggested that identity with the team served as mediator between the motives of acquisition of knowledge, aesthetics, physical skill of players and social interaction. It can thus be argued that the management team of the professional football club must design interventions that are geared towards enhancing the fan's experience of identity in the team as an influencer of buying behaviour; but, moreover as a translator strategy to leverage the sport consumption motives and convert them into real investment into the commercial properties of the club. Theodorakis et al. (2010) have argued that the concept of fan identity has been well researched, but that practical intervention strategies that could bolster this fan experience remain limited. From the perspective of this study, it was suggested that the management teams of professional clubs must seek strategies that could enhance

identity with the team. In South African football, elements of this have been evident, with major clubs advocating a specific philosophy and inviting fans to express their own identity through that mantra. Consider in this instance the value-loaded official club mantra of Kaizer Chiefs Football Club calling for “love and peace”, or the aspirational and ambitious Mamelodi Sundowns’ slogan of “the sky is the limit”. Following the results of this study, South African professional football clubs are encouraged to do more towards assisting their fans to express their own identity through their interaction with their clubs. This may be done by allowing fans a greater say in the decision-making process of the club, assisting fans to customise the club properties in a manner that reflects identity (for example through specially designed merchandise) or encouraging fans to share how they embody the club values through their own behaviour.

Limitations, recommendations and conclusion

Limitations

The study was not without limitations. The cross-sectional nature of the research design puts forward risk of common-method bias. This implies that responses may be skewed due to a measurement on a single time data point. The study was also conducted amongst football fans from one club. To further validate the findings, evaluations must be expanded into other teams and, more importantly, other sporting codes. This will ensure the findings can yield value to the larger sport consumer fraternity in South Africa. This study provided a basis point from which various future research attempts can be attempted. It will be necessary in future to differentiate more clearly the value that the different consumption motives can yield to different buying behaviours amongst fans. Although the research results supported the eight factor structure of the model of Trail and James (2001), and further revealed direct paths from these dimensions to match attendance and merchandise expenditure, more information is needed on which motives relate to which behaviours, and other positive consumer decisions must be added as variables to the investigation.

Furthermore, research is required on practical intervention strategies that could appeal to the specific consumption motives of fans, as well as to their specific identity needs. In this instance, the literature remains limited. Only through robust empirical evaluation of interventions can sport marketing executives be informed of strategies that could enhance the purchasing decisions of their fans. From this perspective much can still be done.

Recommendations and conclusion

Finally, future research must compare groups (or clusters) of fans as far as consumption motives and identity experience are concerned. Although this study made use of a large and representative sample, it did not account for individual differences between demographics of fans. By focusing on group differences,

marketing management teams can design more effective and customised solutions for their fans. In conclusion, this study contributed to understanding fundamental motives for sport consumption and team identity experience amongst the country's most popular sport. It lays the foundation for further explorations of growth of consumer expenditure in sport - a critical economic sector - in South Africa in general.

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