

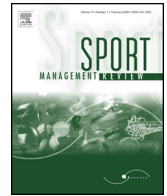


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Influence of team identification, game outcome, and game process on sport consumers' happiness

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study is to examine the relative effects of game process (i.e., boring versus exciting) and outcome (i.e., losing versus winning) on sport consumers' happiness depending on their level of team identification. The authors investigated how sport consumers' levels of happiness are different after recalling (Study 1) and imagining (Study 2) a game when the positivity of the game process and the outcome contradict each other. Results indicate that sport consumers with high team identification exhibited greater degrees of happiness after recalling and imagining a boring win game compared to an exciting loss game. Meanwhile, sport consumers with low team identification exhibited similar degrees of happiness between a boring win game and an exciting loss game.

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1. Introduction

Many people actively seek happiness (Mogilner, Aaker, & Kamvar, 2012). Given this, an interesting empirical question is what, then, would be the most effective way for persons to maximize happiness? In academia, researchers have found that individuals are often able to promote a greater degree of happiness by utilizing their money on experiential purchases (e.g., a sporting event or a music concert) compared to material purchases (e.g., a car or a watch; Nicolao, Irwin, & Goodman, 2009), on extraordinary consumption (e.g., unique, unusual, or special experiences) rather than ordinary consumption (e.g., typical, usual, or everyday experiences; Bhattacharjee & Mogilner, 2014), and on significant others (e.g., family and friends) compared to themselves (Dunn, Aknin, & Norton, 2008).

Another way to potentially enhance happiness would be to engage in sport-related consumption. A number of authors have found that active spectatorship (Doyle, Filo, Lock, & Funk, 2016; Hallmann, Breuer, & Kühnreich, 2013) promotes happiness. Specifically, accumulating evidence suggests that the positivity of the game outcome (e.g., winning versus losing) significantly influences fans' happiness (Jang, Ko, Wann, & Kim, in press). For example, Stieger, Götz, and Gehring (2015) found that the outcome of the national soccer team during the 2014 World Cup significantly impacted German fans' happiness. German fans who watched their national team match during the 2014 World Cup reported greater levels of happiness than those who did not watch the match. Importantly, the positive effect of sport spectatorship on happiness only occurred when their national team won the match (i.e., positive outcome).

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There is a lack of scholarly effort in examining the impact of game process (e.g., exciting versus boring) on fans' happiness. However, ample evidence suggests that the positivity of the game process has a significant impact on various types of fans' responses, including emotion (Knobloch-Westerwick, David, Eastin, Tamborini, & Greenwood, 2009) and behavioral intentions (e.g., future intention, word of mouth recommendations; Sumino & Harada, 2004; Yoshida & James, 2010).

To help fill the empirical gap, we examined the relative effects of game process and outcome on the happiness of sport consumers. In this study, we conceptualized positivity of the game process as whether the game is exciting or boring. In contrast, positivity of the game outcome was conceptualized as whether the supported team won or lost the contest. One useful methodological approach to examining relative effects of game process and outcome is to investigate the condition in which those characteristics are contradictory (that is, an exciting loss game versus a boring win game; Yang, Mao, & Peracchio, 2012). In this study, we operationalized the positive process and the negative outcome condition as an exciting loss game and the negative process and the positive outcome condition as a boring win game. With this methodological approach, researchers can effectively examine the distinctive role of each game characteristic on sport consumers' happiness.

We proposed that one's level of identification with one of the competing teams would be a key moderator in determining the relative effect of game process and outcome on consumers' happiness. Sport consumers with high team identification react more intensely to the positivity of a game's outcome than those with low team identification (see Wann, Melnick, Russell, & Pease, 2001). In addition, people are more likely to value the process of the consumption in evaluating overall experience when they are less concerned about the outcome (e.g., sport consumers with low team identification; Choi & Fishbach, 2011). Therefore, we proposed that sport consumers with high team identification would become happier after recalling (Experiment 1) and imagining (Experiment 2) a boring win game compared to an existing loss game. In contrast, we proposed that sport consumers with low team identification would become happier after recalling and imagining an exciting loss game compared to a boring win game. In pursuing this research goal, we extend existing fan behavior literature by demonstrating that each game characteristic (process versus outcome) plays a unique function in determining sport consumers' happiness as a function of level of team identification. In addition, the results of the current study provide an effective strategy for marketers in terms of which characteristic of the game consumption experience they should highlight to positively persuade potential consumers.

2. Theoretical background

2.1. The effects of sport spectatorship on happiness

Happiness has been conceptualized in terms of either enduring or momentary happiness (Lyubomirsky, Sheldon, & Schkade, 2005). Enduring happiness refers to life satisfaction or subjective well-being (Diener & Chan, 2011). However, our interest was in momentary happiness, which suggests that a single positive event can also cause happiness (Diener, Sandvik, & Pavot, 2009). Sport is an activity that has the potential to significantly enhance happiness, as sport spectatorship has a positive impact on the happiness of sport consumers. For instance, Hallmann et al. (2013) and Stieger et al. (2015) found that wins by a favorite team increase feeling of happiness.

Although the positive effect of sport spectatorship on happiness has been documented in recent studies, key limitations still exist. Most authors have solely focused on the effects of game outcome on happiness (Jang et al., in press; Stieger et al., 2015) without considering the positivity of the game process. In other words, there is also a lack of scholarly effort in examining how specific game characteristic make a differential impact on the happiness of sport consumers. Specifically, what remained unknown is which game characteristic—either process (exciting versus boring) or outcome (winning versus losing)—plays a more critical role in enhancing happiness. It is important to investigate the relative effects of game process and outcome on the happiness of sport consumers because they not only watch a sporting contest for an enjoyable experience (Kim, James, & Kim, 2013), but also for a winning result (Funk, Beaton, & Alexandris, 2012). In the following section, we discuss the effects of game characteristics on various types of sport consumers' responses.

2.2. The effects of game characteristics on sport consumers' responses

The concept of game characteristics has received significant scholarly attention in sport management (Su-lin, Tuggle, Mitrook, Coussement, & Zillmann, 1997). Researchers have comprehensively examined how the positivity of game characteristics impacts sport consumers' reactions during and/or after watching a game, including game satisfaction (Madrigal & Chen, 2008; Theodorakis, Alexandris, Tsigilis, & Karvounis, 2013), revisit intentions (Yoshida & James, 2010), emotional responses (e.g., pride and shame; Madrigal, 2008), and their tendency to engage in basking in reflected glory (BIRGing) and cutting off reflected failure (CORFing; Cialdini et al., 1976).

One important game characteristic that can determine sport consumers' reactions is the process of the game. Relative to boring games, contests considered exciting and suspenseful elicit greater satisfaction (Theodorakis et al., 2013; Yoshida & James, 2010) and stronger desires to attend future games and engage in positive word-of-mouth behaviors from sport consumers (Sumino & Harada, 2004; Yoshida & James, 2010).

Another important game characteristic that can impact sport consumers' reactions is the outcome of a game. In general, sport consumers react in a more positive way when the team they support delivers a positive outcome compared to a

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