



# Conceptualizing excessive fan consumption behavior



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## ABSTRACT

This research develops a theoretical model that provides new insight into excessive consumption and identification based on the consumption of rugby and brand biography of the All Blacks. This paper is grounded in Maori protocols and the spiritual relationship between the All Blacks, New Zealand and Maori. The conceptual model development process is based on the grounded theory approach and analysis of interview evidence from 15 fans in New Zealand. The model posits that the cultural sources of excessive identification or importance in consumption relate to country factors. In terms of response, excessive fan identification has two major outcomes at the individual level, one positive and the other negative. From a negative standpoint, excessive behavior leads to deviant behaviors, such as violence, misplaced priorities, psychological flow and rationalization. From a positive standpoint, however, excessive identification leads to more benign consumption in the form of cultural and social capital and communitas. Future research implications are discussed.

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## 1. Karakia and Haka

We begin with a Karakia (prayer) and Wero (challenge) to bless this paper in its journey. We are guided by the Maori Cultural Advisor, Mihaere Emery, from Ngati-Awa (Te Teko), Tuhoe, Tainui and Ngati-Raukawa.

He Honore, He Kororia, He Maungarongo ki runga ki te Whenua,

He Whakaaro pai ki nga Tanagata

Katoa. Amine!!

To Honor, To Glorify the good word of the Almighty God,

From the highest points of the Ranges

Down to the flat Lands of mother earth,

Spreading the good and powerful thoughts of the Almighty

To all the people of the Land. Amen!!

We acknowledge the importance of Maori to this paper and we Whakautethia (Respect) the concepts that relate to the Mana (Prestige) and Taonga (Treasured Gifts) of Tangata Whenua the Maori People. This paper consists of Aroha (Love), Manaakitanga (Protection), Whakapono (Faithful) and Kaitiakitanga (Guardianship), gifted naturally from Tipuna (Ancestors) down through to

Papatuanuku (Mother Earth) the Whenua (Land) of Aotearoa (Land of the long white cloud).

Mauri Tuu, Mauri Ora!! (Stand strong, Stand alive).

This paper represents a Wero (challenge) to fan behavior theory. In respect to the All Blacks we begin with the Haka (Ignition of Breath); Ka mate, Ka mate (McLean, 1996; Burns, 1983). Ka Mate has two sections: a prayer and chant composed by the Ngati Toa Chief Te Rauparaha, captain of the Tainui canoe, descending from Hoturoa born in the 1760's at Kawhia.

### Ka mate, Ka mate

#### Part 1: Karakia (Prayer)

Kikiki kakaka!

Kikiki kakaka kau ana!

Kei waniwania taku aro,

Kei tara wahia kei te rua i te kerokero!

He pounga rahui te uira ka rarapa;

Ketekete kau ana, to peru kairiri:

Mau au e koro e.

Ka wehi au ka matakana.

Ko wai te tangata kia rere ure

I'm jabbering and quivering, stuttering, shaking and naked!

I'm brushed by your body your formed curves, pulsating with energy!

Forbidden mysteries are revealed;

banter and closeness, flushed looks:

I am caught in a trap.

I'm scared but fully alert.

Who is this man with thrusting

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	weapon
Tirohanga nga rua rerarera,	investigating the hot moist flesh,
Nga rua kuri kakanui i raro?	so pungent beneath him?
Part 2: Chant	
Ka mate! Ka mate!	I am dying, I'm dead!
Ka ora! Ka ora!	No, I'm alive, fully alive!
Tenei te tangata puhuruhuru	a virile man
Nana nei i tiki mai whaka-	who can bring joy and peace!
whiti te ra!	
Upane, ka upane!	Together, side by side
Whiti te ra!	We can make the sun shine!

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## 2. Introduction

A fundamental question in consumer research has been: “what do people do when they consume” (Holt, 1995, p. 1; Havlena and Holbrook, 1986; Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982). However, despite the important developments of this research and others (Belk, 2010; Varman and Belk, 2009; Sherry et al., 2004), little attention has been placed on excessive consumption practices (Grove et al., 2012; Fisk et al., 2010; Celsi et al., 1993). This is a significant gap in our understanding because consumers regularly engage in excessive and disruptive behaviors, dysfunctional resistance, vandalism and rage (Reynolds and Harris, 2009; Garcia-Bardidia et al., 2011; Denegri-Knott, 2006).

In this study, we unpack excessive consumption practices evolving from countrywide patriotism, manifesting itself under the cloak of fan support. We develop a theoretical model that helps us to understand and reinterpret excessive consumption and identification. Like Holt (1995) in the observation of baseball spectators, we study the excessive fan consumption of rugby, specifically focusing on the brand biography (Paharia et al., 2011) of the All Blacks.

### 2.1. Contribution and paper organization

Through the consumption practices of sports fan behavior, we conceptualize excessive consumption and identification. This model will explore the effect of country characteristics, pride and self-perceptions on excessive identification as well as consequential behaviors.

In this paper, we uncover why consumers consume sport, building towards the pervasiveness of sport consumption revolving around rugby and the All Blacks: the excessive practice of rugby consumption and impact on national identity and cultural consumption. Following a presentation of our method, we discuss the findings derived from a grounded theory analysis of 15 All Blacks fans. The paper concludes with the conceptual model of excessive fan consumption behavior as well as highlighting research implications for consumption behavior.

### 2.2. Research questions

Our research addresses several questions. First, we seek to understand the pervasiveness of fan sport consumption. Second, we conceptualize consumption in excessive fan behavior. This model also uncovers:

1. What are some of the key stages of consumption?
2. What determines excessive identification?
3. How does consumption end and progress to consequences?
4. Is excessive consumption primarily a negative or positive

process?

## 3. The journey towards excessive consumption

Our journey towards conceptualizing excessive consumption practices starts with an explanation of sports consumption as a universal and pervasive phenomenon. Funk et al. (2012) argue that it accounts for a significant proportion of a consumer's everyday behavior (d'Astous and Bitz, 1995). In the US, Europe, Asia and the Americas, consumers watch 11 hours/week of sport on television (Perform, 2012). The US sports industry is the fastest growing (DeSarbo and Madrigal, 2011). The FIFA World Cup is often touted to be the most viewed sporting event in history, but the 2011 World Cup Rugby event was watched by a cumulative audience of 4.2 billion people (Chadwick et al., 2011), contributing US\$1.67 billion to the global sports economy.

Why are there such high rates of sport consumption? Sport is a social process of national identity and voyeurism. The psychological consumption defines societies and national cultures (Funk et al., 2012; Martin et al., 2011) as well as the underlying health and well-being of a nation (Anokye, et al., 2012). Consumption is motivated by the attraction to a team's image and brand biography: the symbolic meaning that commonly reflects the identity of the culture of geography (Chun et al., 2004). Sport consumption is often referred to as a sub-culture of society (Burgh-Woodman and Brace-Govan, 2007). For example, US fans often bask in the glory of the 1980 gold medal winning USA Ice Hockey Team. Others consume because of the underdog effect (Paharia et al., 2011): “Underdogs are seen as warmer” (Goldschmied and Vandello, 2009 p. 29). Many remember *Cool Running's*: the excessive representation of the underdog Jamaican bobsled team that competed in the 1988 Calgary Winter Olympics.

The All Blacks are a good example of a subculture in which consumption is pervasive. They define the social psyche, national identity and cultural consumption. The All Blacks and their fans are of interest to consumer research because rugby is an excessive, intensely masculine and gender-reinforcing sport (Nauright and Chandler, 1996; Phillips, 1996; Schacht, 1996). Masculinity has been explored in other sports (Messner, 1988, 1992, 1997), but little attention has been placed on the excessive consumption of rugby. Rugby identifies a nation and its fans, and perhaps in no other country does a single sport identify a nation more completely than rugby in New Zealand. Rugby is uniquely excessive because the sport itself is a game of violence and aggression, both on and off the field (Stafford et al., 2013; Fields Sarah et al., 2010). Rugby is also an interesting consumption practice as it permeates almost every region of the world: 117 countries across five continents by men, women, boys and girls. Tourists often come to see the rugby specifically in New Zealand (McIntosh, 2004) because it is a living artifact of the nation's history and identity (Evans and Kelley, 2002). The US has also caught on to the excitement: rugby is growing at a rate of 25% per year (Kaplan et al., 2008).

Global growth in consumption behavior in the All Blacks was recently conservatively valued between \$US190m and \$US220m dollars, putting them in the same league as Juventus and the Boston Red Sox (BRRLTD, 2013). As World Cup Champions, the All Blacks reign over England, South Africa, Australia, France and Argentina. Hence, the All Blacks is a world-renowned story of consumption and a phenomenon worth exploring as the ritual of the champion. Building that brand biography and fan base starts with grass-roots fans and players. The organization officially impacts children at five years, but consumption starts when fans are babies. Watching the ‘game’ on dad's (or mum's) knee is the fabric of family attitudes, relationships and traditions in New Zealand (Park, 2000).

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