Parsimonious Motivational Factors for Participation in Sporting Events : A Review

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Abstract

The purpose of the study was to explore the parsimonious motivational factors among sponsors while organizing sporting events and discuss the rationale behind event participation among spectators for the interest of sponsors investing in global sports events. The research study undertaken is a viewpoint using content analysis, considering inductive qualitative data and is exploratory in nature. Parsimonious motivational factors were derived based on the responses of spectators watching international sporting events backed by secondary data collected from research articles and case studies pertaining to sports event attendance behaviour and sponsorships. Qualitative data collected both from primary as well as secondary sources were used for content analysis. It was observed that sports events result in two types of involvement, mainly participation and attendance, which are influenced by economic, sociological, psychological, and motivational factors like age, leisure time, family size, health and weight concerns, personal growth, and affiliation. It was also observed that experiential sponsorship activation (ESA) reflects dimmersive brand experiences and encourages high levels of active participation. The results suggested parsimonious motives behind participation of spectators and sponsors in mega sporting events. The study revealed that relevant messaging, choice-based ticket pricing, flexibility, and accessibility across platforms attracted more viewership. Fan engagement through social networking sites leads to branding of event sponsors.

Keywords : sports events, motivational factors, attendance, spectators, sponsorship

Motivation is considered as the internal state of human beings that drives them to behave in a certain manner. Drivers are the forces of motivation that influence individuals to react and aim for certain goals. It reflects the attitudes, beliefs, motives, and other factors that impact our purchase decisions (De Mooij, 2010). A research by Ramchandani, Coleman, and Bingham (2017) revealed attitudinal changes to sport participation in the year 2014 among spectators attending sporting events in Great Britain. A study by Reimers, Chao, and Speechley (2018) identified two contextual motivational factors – team performance and special occasion and four sports motives – team identification, attitudinal loyalty, behavioural loyalty, and vicarious achievement for spectator event attendance. There are several motivational factors, which influence attendance in professional sporting events. Sports marketers need to understand these factors and develop plans, strategies, and processes leading to the fulfillment of these objectives.

Hansen and Gauthier (1989) summarized from literature the rationale behind game attendance into four categories. They are economic, socio - demographic, attractiveness of the game, and residual preferences. The results of a study by Wu and Cheng (2018) indicated that audience's experiential satisfaction in men and women's football tournaments in a stadium at Rio (Brazil) was influenced by physical environment quality, outcome

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quality, access quality, game quality, trip quality, security quality, experiential involvement, experiential equity, host city image, and spectator affection. The examination of constructs from a number of scales identified five motivational themes (socialization, performance, excitement, esteem, and diversion) used in past studies to address a parsimonious set of motives (Funk, Filo, Beaton, & Pritchard, 2009). Sports event research has used several discrete facets of motivation among spectators and fans (Funk, Ridinger, & Moorman, 2004 ; Madrigal, 2006 ; Pease & Zhang, 2001 ; Trail & James, 2001 ; Wann, 1995).

Virtual reality spectatorship (VRS) has become a major trend for sport media consumption offering optimal experience leading to maximization of user satisfaction (Kim & Ko, 2019). Virtual reality technology has a greater impact on flow experience of less involved sporting fans as compared to highly involved ones. So, the sponsors can really benefit with virtual reality games for attracting more spectators in professional sports events. Sport events result in two types of involvement, mainly participation and attendance, which are influenced by economic, sociological, psychological, and motivational parameters like age, gender, leisure time, and family size (Lera-López & Rapún-Gárate, 2011). Even social media has changed the way a consumer takes a decision by influencing evaluate and advocate stages of buying behaviour (Hudson & Hudson, 2013).

Millennials' role in social media has been highly engaging in terms of buying behaviour as observed in a study by Sharma, Gupta, and Kapoor (2020). The sports industry is continually looking for ways to deliver differentiated experiences. Innovative technology solutions have enabled new experiences and growth by connecting sports contests, teams, fans, and the masses (Petrović, Milovanović, & Desbordes, 2015). According to a study by Buning and Walker (2016), motivation to participate in events was influenced by health and weight concerns, personal growth, affiliation, and psychographic needs. In a study by Foroughi, Shah, Nikbin, and Hyun (2014) with relation to Iranian football premier league, data on game quality, augmented service, interaction, outcome, environment, and fan satisfaction were collected. The results highlighted a significant relationship between fan satisfaction and attendance. However, the research effort for estimating spectator attendance to measure event quality is lacking. There is even a need to understand whether a motive impacts attachment and builds positive attitudinal loyalty towards sporting events (Kirkup & Sutherland, 2017). On the other hand, Amis, Slack, and Berrett (1999) argued that sport sponsorship enhanced competitive advantage if it allowed substantial increment in customer value perception, permitted brand differentiation, and provided opportunities to launch products and services. Sports event sponsorship significantly contributes for promotional campaigns, with global sponsorship expenditure reaching to $62.7 billion in 2017 from $55.3 billion in 2014 (IEG Sponsorship Report, 2018). There would be an opportunity for brands to provide all-around engagement for fans and consumers with the market responding to live sports through social media platforms. The findings of a study showed that social media consumption positively influenced the sponsors' attitude towards sporting events (Hazari, 2018). A research study undertaken by Allen (2014) on the top 100 blogs explained three prime objectives through content analysis. The first one was to understand the impact of social media with respect to blogosphere ; the second one was exploring the various revenue models that were utilized in blogging ; and the third compiled and performed a descriptive analysis on the various attributes of blogs.

In the context of the above research findings and gaps, the objectives of the study here are to explore the parsimonious motivational factors among sponsors while organizing sporting events and discuss the rationale behind event participation among spectators for the interest of sponsors investing in global sports events.

Research Methodology

The research study undertaken here is a viewpoint using content analysis, considering inductive qualitative data and is exploratory in nature. Content analysis is effective in the context of justifying established patterns, which support existing theories and to discover or identify patterns for formulating new theories. It has been the tool for

analyzing communications and advertising studies for many years (Kolbe & Burnett, 1991). Content analysis focuses on published text as well as pictures or video clips as the source of data (Hair Jr., Celsi, Money, Samouel, & Page, 2016). It is an approach to draw inferences from qualitative data based on a set of ideas or concepts (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe, & Jackson, 2015). A content analysis of foreign press reports about UEFA European Cup 2012 contributed in improving the traditionalistic image of Poland to a modernistic, fast developing economy (Dembek & Włoch, 2014). The ethnographic style of study is also considered in relation to social research to understand the behaviour of respondents attending or viewing sporting events (Skinner & Corbett, 2018). In a social media study by Touchette, Schanski, and Lee (2015), content analysis of posts about apparel brands in Facebook profile pages integrated playful themes with branded entertainment and acquired engaging consumers to interact with the brands.

Primary data were collected by conducting in-depth interviews with spectators or viewers using a semi-structured questionnaire (Hague, Hague, & Morgan, 2013 ; Punch & Oancea, 2014) ; whereas, the secondary data were obtained from journal articles and case studies relevant to sports marketing. Validity of the qualitative data has been tested using adequate referencing method (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2008). Over 60 research articles and books on sports marketing were referred to from the years 1999 – 2020 to conduct the study.

Attendance in Sporting Events

Attendance in sporting events has always been fundamental to any game. Spectators and fan satisfaction play a vital role for drawing attendance. There are various methods to understand sports event audience. Trinh (2018) used survey data from sporting events in Australia which included football, rugby, horse racing, motor sports, cricket, netball, basketball, harness racing, and dog racing to prove the negative binomial distribution (NBD) theory as a robust method in dealing with sporting event attendance behaviour. In a research by Rosenbaum and Wong (2010), data were collected (through survey) from leisure and business travellers who were present at 40 different major events in Macau. The scale adapted here was an extension of SERVQUAL model. The study derived the way group consensus can be done among tourists and practitioners using the Delphi method and thereby recommended a set of reliable service quality, cost, and convenience scales that may be relevant at event venues. A study by Drayer (2011), dealing with the importance of the ticketing system in United States professional team sports, stated the merits and demerits of entering into sponsorship deals with primary and secondary ticketing companies like Ticketmaster, Stubhub, and RazorGator. Integration with primary and secondary ticket sellers can reduce fraud, predict fan intention, boost up revenue, and improve overall spectator satisfaction for sporting authorities. A research work by Alavy, Gaskell, Leach, and Szymanski (2010) suggested that progression of a match generates more viewership. Games ending in victories draw higher average viewership as compared to games leading to stalemates. The outcome of a quantitative study by Silveira, Cardoso, and Quevedo-Silva (2019) based on structural equation modelling using partial least square method proved that more the number of sports consumers identified with their preferred teams, higher was the satisfaction and loyalty towards teams and so was the intention to buy tickets for watching a soccer match in a stadium.

Scaling Techniques for Measuring Attendance

Funk et al. (2009) presented a blended approach fulfilling the demands of both academics and practitioners for theoretical as well as applied scales to investigate motives capable of explaining sport event attendance. Through examination of constructs from a number of scales, five motivational themes have been used in empirical studies. From these themes, a parsimonious set of motives were developed. They are socialization, performance, excitement, esteem, and diversion (SPEED). The resulting SPEED scale has a significant influence in bridging the

gap between theory and practice. The results of a study by Karakaya, Yannopoulos, and Kefalaki (2016) indicated three major motivational factors for attending football matches in Greece — emotional excitement, socialization, and soccer atmospherics. The findings of another study (Ho Voon, Lee, & Murray, 2014) suggested that sports service quality (SSQ) measure, which included five dimensions (peripheral, reliability, responsiveness, core, and value) influenced fan satisfaction and enhanced emotional experience (EE) in sporting events. Pan, Zhu, Gabert, and Brown (1999) suggested an econometric model on attendance to major baseball league with determinants like team attributes, market characteristics, and winning record. The attendance outcome depended upon how attractive the game was with respect to team performance for target audience and ways to collect revenues through discounted sales, parking, and corporate sponsorships.

Laverie and Arnett (2000) developed a model including factors that influence fan identity salience and attendance. The model was tested on college students. Identity salience was observed to be an important parameter while explaining sports fan behaviour. With the passing of time, attachment towards attending sporting events grows with more pleasure and value being experienced. A multi-group confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) of the Motivations of Marathoners Scale (MOMS) was adapted to identify participatory factors in events such as physical health, social motives, achievement drive, and psychological factors (Buning & Walker, 2016). Seo and Green (2008) identified another scale for online sport consumption motivations used in Twitter and termed it as Motivation Scale for Sport Online Consumption (MSSOC).

Sports Sponsorship

Sponsors are business companies which aim to maximize their media presence and connect the image of their products with sports clubs or event brands in order to boost up the demand for their goods and services (Grohs, Wagner, & Vsetecka, 2004). Sponsorships can really benefit an organization for launching and promoting its products and services. The findings of a study by Greenhalgh and Greenwall (2013) identified specific attributes like cost effectiveness, enabling sponsors to achieve their goals, targeted fan-base, and avoiding sponsorship clutter to attract sponsors in professional niche sporting events as experienced in Olympic Games. Papadimitriou, Apostolopoulou, and Dounis (2008) highlighted the novelty to corporate organizations intending to establish long-term partnerships with Olympic Games. The value of Olympics caught the attention of sponsors, thereby leading to competitive hosting bids and ambush marketing (MacIntosh, Nadeau, Seguin, O'Reilly, Bradish, & Legg, 2012). Gillooly, Crowther, and Medway (2017) stated that experiential sponsorship activation (ESA) offers immersive brand experiences and encourages high levels of active participation. Thus, event design principles should emphasize in ESA, especially for B2B brands like Cisco.

In a multiple regression analysis by Jensen (2012), it was found that a golf player's finish in an event, ranking, and average points in World Golf Ranking prior to the tournament significantly impacted the level of exposure the golfer might expect to receive from the sponsors. The results also showed a well-matched partnership was possible between a brand and an athlete to boost brand awareness, image, and equity. In North Korean games, international investors experienced first mover advantages in the area of sports sponsoring (Horak, 2013). Therefore, the role of sponsors plays a significant part in enhancing value for the overall image of global sports and prize money for athletes.

Drivers of Sports Event Sponsorships

Kitchin (2017), in his book on event sponsorship, talked about Allan Stanford, a businessman, who attempted to use 20/20 cricket to enter into the United States sports market. A one-off match between a team from Caribbean cricket-playing nation and England was organized. An award of USD 20 million was announced for the winners

and no prize money for the losers. This approach of organizing a game drew huge audience. The broadcasting rights of the event were sold to television channels and Stanford organizers generated sufficient revenues by selling the in-ground signage spots to commercial organizations as sponsors. In another instance, sponsorship activation strategies were initiated by Nissan using four elite footballers representing Germany, Ivory Coast, Spain, and Brazil. Each of these athletes experienced top-level success in their careers playing for leading clubs in UEFA Champions League. The activations executed were ticket allocations during tournament matches as well as access provided to young fans willing to meet their favourite players during the ongoing game by carrying the symbol of UEFA Champions League. In addition to these, social media played a vital role for promoting soccer. #ChampionKey was being used across Spain, England, and France to enable participants supporting their teams in the competition to discuss issues and gain two tickets to attend a home match for their team. The UEFA Cup Nissan Twitter account was activated on match days to engage fans who interacted about the outcome of the event. Such a sponsorship initiative yielded Nissan an effective brand recognition and association with a prestigious event like UEFA Champions League. Grohs (2016) suggested a procedure to adequately measure sponsor image change in field sponsorships and investigated potential factors related to the venue, sponsorship relationship, sponsor, and spectator that may impact the exposure to sponsor brand image.

In a qualitative case by Rundh and Gottfridsson (2015) on Swedish ice hockey clubs, the activity-resource-actor (ARA) model provided a tool for analyzing the actors, resources, and activities for building the marketing strategy with respect to any sporting club. Crowther (2011) arguably mentioned that fundamentally, the design and delivery of marketing events should follow a marketing strategy. Håkansson and Johansson (1992) briefed about a network which was developed by three variables. They were actors, activities, and resources. Rundh and Gottfridsson (2015) further expanded the ARA model stating that there are eight different actor groups other than arena, sports clubs, and athletes representing the game. They are spectators (viewers), sponsors, business suppliers (transport, ticket sales, restaurants, etc.), the community, television broadcasters, print and digital media (social media), corporate organization with the rights of managing and marketing the event, and finally, the volunteers who are involved in assisting the spectators and fans without any monetary gain. The resources could be manpower, equipment, knowledge, image, and finances essential for carrying out the activities in the games arena. Activities involve developing a relationship with sponsors, establishing new initiatives like sports academy for the club, bringing new businesses to the arena such as restaurants, ticket, and souvenir sales. The success of Red Bull phenomenon was an innovative approach of value co-creation through integration of branding and sponsorship activities into sport entertainment content production, distribution, and viral marketing (Kunz, Elsässer, & Santomier, 2016).

Impact of Information and Communication Technologies in Sporting Events

The application of information and communication technologies (ICT) in sports has been reviewed by several studies. The advancement in technology has helped in developing a thorough understanding of the economic prospects of sports events. Application of goal-line technologies in the football game, especially in World Cup 2018 being hosted by Russia, delivered accurate and reliable decision making process, which leveraged the value of global football tournaments in commercial terms. Organizers of football tournaments realized the importance of audience attitude towards the game and started valuing their suggestions greatly (Petrović et al., 2015). A study conducted by Kassing and Sanderson (2010) focused on tweets and interactions that took place during the cycle race in Giro d' Italia in the year 2009, wherein the tweets shared by eight cyclists were examined. The cyclists' Twitter pages were accessed and recorded at the start and completion of the race. On inductive analysis of the tweet content, researchers evolved and developed certain new constructs and themes accordingly.

Managers are required to deliver effective strategies and strong promotional tools for influencing the

conviction of a customer (Prasad & Sen, 2018). The attempts made by researchers to blend demands of practitioners as well as academicians led to the development of a scale that has helped in investigation and explanation of motives behind sports event attendance. Predominantly, there are five motivational themes being used in this empirical research. This has been evident through examination of the construct pertaining to the number of scales developed.

The value derived from specific social media tools and Web 2.0 technologies has helped sport marketers to meet their relationship marketing goals (Williams & Chinn, 2010). Posting and sharing of short messages as a means of communication has become significant to share the thoughts and sentiments in the public medium. This is very common and more popular among sports enthusiasts like fans, organizers, sponsors, and athletes in total (Hambrick, Simmons, Greenhalgh, & Greenwell, 2010 ; Pegoraro, 2010).

In a well-crafted case study about Le Tour De France, Hoeber, Hoeber, Meseery, Odoh, and Gopi (2016) explained about visual twitter analytics (VISTA) as an excellent tool used in the sports arena widely to understand the sentiments of the tweets. The tool extends a helping hand to researchers who are deeply involved in exploration of the sentiments that are shared through tweets pertaining to sports. It analyzes the tweets and segregates sentiments into three major categories of neutral, negative, and positive, and thereby identifies geographical location of the tweets meticulously. The importance of tweeting and analyses made in a mega cycling sports event like Le Tour De France held from June 29, 2013 – July 21, 2013 was reviewed by researchers, and an impressive case was developed on a cycling sports event with a global fan following and worldwide media coverage. The organizers of the cycling event encouraged the sport enthusiasts to profusely use Twitter to share their thoughts, views, and feelings. They requested to use a specific hash tag (#tdf) whenever there was any discussion happening on this cycling event. On top of it, the organizers vigorously encouraged the application of Twitter by others and also announced about their account (@letour) frequently as a means of promotion. With the assistance of their official hash tag promoted for the event, they were able to collect and record more than 4,09,000 tweets pertaining to the three week long cycling event. With the assistance of visual twitter analytics (VISTA), the pattern of sentiments, whether these were positive, neutral, or negative were analyzed, and it was identified that a greater number of tweets made were neutral in comparison to positive and negative tweets. The observation on the visual data also indicated that there had been a lot of spikes at regular intervals in the race, which implied the busty nature of data collected. The usage of synchronized temporal scale helped in addressing various queries raised by analysts and also provided extensive support while the comparison of vivid aspects of Twitter was made.

From the case approach, one can understand the importance of social media analytics. For example, if a company is analyzing the perspectives of its branding initiatives with the help of social media analytics, it would be able to track how its brand is being discussed with respect to the launch of new products under a particular brand name as well as engagements and discussions which happen with regard to the sponsorships, promotions, crisis interventions, and other market related issues. Such inputs derived from social media help a company to gauge the positive image of its brand, the negative aspects, if any, which it needs to curb, and also enable the organization in understanding the amount of positive social media buzz created by campaigns (Hoeber et al., 2016).

In order to understand the factors that can influence interest of the fans in a sports discipline, Watanabe, Yan, and Soebbing (2015) developed a linear regression model. As per the model, the factors such as team performance, schedule, time plan of the event, and market characteristics have a direct influence on the interest of sports enthusiasts and fans. The results further indicated that these factors showed a very high relationship significance with Twitter following.

Spectator Perception About Sports Event Participation

The results obtained from interviewing 47 hardcore sports fans in India preferring different sporting disciplines

Table 1. Demography of Sports Fans (in %)

Age	Below 30 years	Above 30 years
	94	6
Gender	Male	Female
	80	20
Profession	Student	Working
	90	10

have been analyzed qualitatively and interpreted in the study. The demographic profile of the fans considered is depicted in Table 1. Table 1 reveals that mostly, a young crowd is expected while organizing sports events. They are enthusiastic and energetic to participate and appreciate every moment of glory and opportunity for attending these events.

With reference to Table 2, it is revealed that it is still preferable to watch events on television. However, the exposure to social media and usage of digital technologies and apps is rising and gaining popularity among the masses.

As depicted in Table 3, it is inferred that students and executives usually prefer to watch and play games during their leisure time, primarily during evening hours. Therefore, sports broadcasters and organizers can schedule live matches during evening time.

Table 4 implies that in spite of hockey being the national sport of India, majority of the spectators or viewers in India are interested in cricket followed by football (soccer), lawn tennis, badminton, basketball, and martial arts.

Table 2. Medium for Viewing Sports Events by Spectators (in %)

Television	Digital
60	40

Table 3. Preferred Time to Watch Sports Events by Spectators (in %)

Morning	Afternoon	Evening
4	9	87

Table 4. Preferred Sports in India

Sports	Percent (%)
Cricket	64
Football	22
Lawn Tennis	6
Badminton	4
Basketball	2
Martial Arts	2

Table 5. Spectators Preferring Participation in Sports Venue Versus Television / Digital Viewership (in %)

Event Participation as Audience	Television / Digital Viewers
40	60

Table 5 shows that fans prefer to watch events on television or through digital devices. This is mainly due to convenience and flexibility of viewing during any time of the day, especially during evening hours instead of attending the live events. Therefore, there is a growing trend of over the top (OTT) sports streaming and platforms like Sony Liv. Kulshreshtha and Jain (2018) stated that investment in technology integration for mobile communication industry could bolster future competitive edge for the sports event managers.

Discussion

Qualitative remarks made by the respondents with respect to improving the overall experience for attending sports events are as follows :

➥ Meeting their favourite athletes on and off the field.

➥ Contest and fun activities among fans for making the event more engaging.

➥ Affordable ticket prices with special discounts for fans.

➥ Virtual reality shows and entertainment can be linked with games.

➥ Facilitating the viewers with giant screens in sports arenas.

➥ Losing a match should not lead to anger and misbehaviour among fans and players. This is against the spirit of any game and adequate measures need to be taken by the sports authority.

➥ Stringent rules to be adopted for restricting match fixing and other unethical practices.

➥ Facilitating fans to interact online with sports personalities.

➥ Live commentary while attending a match in a stadium can be introduced.

➥ Basic amenities like food, water etc. should be served at the event venues.

➥ While discussing about sports participation with fans by referring to the SPEED scale, performance of the sports personalities was highly ranked followed by excitement during the event, diversion from routine life, esteem or feeling of achievement, and socialization with family and friends.

Managerial Implications

The importance of attendance behaviour can be felt in different sports disciplines like cricket, lawn tennis, badminton, kabaddi, basketball, golf, and athletics. A multi-group confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) of the Motivations of Marathoners Scale (MOMS) has been developed for traditional sporting events (Buning & Walker, 2016). A research using SERVQUAL model proved reliability, tangibles, and responsiveness dimensions to be the key predictors of satisfaction in sport service experiences and behavioural intentions (Larson & Steinman, 2009). The analysis has attempted to find solutions to poor attendance in events and dimensions or themes influencing fan, athlete, and sponsor motivation to participate in an event. Socialization, performance, excitement, esteem,

and diversion (SPEED) scale can significantly impact the gap between theoretically driven research and practices (Funk et al., 2009). The impact of this innovative study would definitely bring about a change in the thought process of sports authorities and contribute towards the spirit of games. The research paper has attempted to investigate issues relevant to both researchers and sports management practitioners like sponsors and organizers for providing potential solutions to sport management research problems (Skinner, Edwards, & Corbett, 2014).

Limitations of the Study and Scope for Future Research

The content analysis conducted here is an inductive approach to reasoning. Further deductive reasoning using empirical research can be executed to establish a parsimonious motivational scale for sports event attendance. In addition to attendance, sponsorship and technology influence sports event management. There are factors like ticket pricing, consumer experience, scheduling of the tournaments, competitiveness of games, venue or destination image, and athlete branding that can be studied further for future research contribution, and statistical measures can be applied to find the impact of these factors on the overall success and revenue generation of prestigious global sporting events like Indian Premiere League (IPL), Olympic Games, Asian Games, Commonwealth Games, Association of Tennis Professionals (ATP) Tour, World Cup Cricket and Football.

Author's Contribution

Dr. Subhasis Sen conceived the idea and developed a qualitative approach of the study based on inductive reasoning. Dr. Sen extracted research papers and books of high repute, filtered these based on keywords, and generated themes relevant to the study design. He verified the analytical methods and supervised the study. The questionnaire design and interviews were conducted by him in English language from learned audience. The findings of the study were further transcribed into English. The primary and secondary data collected were interpreted to execute a content analysis. Dr. Sen wrote the manuscript in consultation with sports fans, athletes, and event organizers.

Conflict of Interest

The author certifies that he has no affiliations with or involvement in any organization or entity with any financial interest, or non-financial interest in the subject matter, or materials discussed in this manuscript.

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