

Fantasy Sport as a Complement to FIFA World Cup Viewership

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(including questions)

In 2014, the Fantasy Sports Trade Association estimated that around 41.5 million people played fantasy sport in North America (Fantasy Sports Trade Association, 2014), with even more individuals participating around the globe. While the actual expenditures related to fantasy sport in North America are valued around \$10 billion, it has been calculated that fantasy sport may be a \$70 million dollar industry in the region when accounting for tangible and intangible financial activity (Goff, 2013). The growth in both the size and value of the industry has led to a large line of research which has considered fantasy sport from a variety of perspectives (Billings & Ruihley, 2013; Drayer, Shapiro, Dwyer, Morse, & White, 2010). Included within this line of research has been focus placed on marketing (Gillentine & Schulz, 2001), motivations (Drayer et al., 2010; Dwyer & Kim, 2011; Ruihley & Billings, 2012), the effect of mass media (Billings & Ruihley, 2013), as well as participation in fantasy sport competitions (Drayer et al., 2010; Karg & McDonald, 2011).

Research by Karg and McDonald (2011) are amongst a line of studies (Randle & Nyland, 2008) which propose that fantasy sport is a complement to traditional sport consumption. However, other sport literature would also argue different demographic factors and determinants can impact the demand for sport products (Borland & Macdonald, 2003). It is thus, that there is need to further consider whether fantasy sport is truly a complement to traditional sport consumption, such as television viewing. Additionally, because research has only examined behaviors in North America, it is difficult to understand whether the theoretical understanding of fantasy sport behaviors apply to other contexts and countries. With this in mind, the present research builds on this literature by considering the linkages which exist between fantasy participation and sport event viewership among consumers in different countries. In this manner, the results of this study not only are important in better understanding the relationship between viewership and fantasy sport participation, but also how these behaviors are similar and different between consumers from two countries.

Fantasy sport literature is often traced to the literature focused on games and other types of role-playing scenarios where individuals were required to make decisions (Andes 1983; Gillentine & Schulz, 2001; London, 2007). Though the industry itself evolved out of small groups of individuals drafting leagues of players in what were called rotisserie or roto leagues, the fantasy sport boom was propelled by the increase in accessibility to technology and the internet (Farquhar & Meeds, 2007). Another line of fantasy consumption research considered the connection between participation and use of mass media (Randle & Nyland, 2008). In this, mass media is often noted as being an important complementary good to fantasy sport websites/participation (Randle & Nyland, 2008), and that fantasy sport consumers often display similar characteristics and motivations as normal consumers of sport media (Billings & Ruihley, 2013). Research into the relation of media and internet in fantasy participation also displayed that non-traditional forms of media, such as message boards, also are important in fantasy participation (Ruihley & Hardin, 2010). Despite the plethora of fantasy sport scholarship along the lines of mass media and participation, there has been very few studies which have considered these and other factors outside of a North American context. This study seeks to address that gap by examining fantasy sport participation of viewers of the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) 2014 World Cup in multiple countries. This research attempts to illuminate the understanding of fantasy sport in an international context, while also examining whether the characteristics of individuals who participate in fantasy sport differs between countries, including their viewership patterns. Through such examination, this research not only delineates the similarities and differences in fantasy sport consumption between individuals from two countries, it also considers whether fantasy sport is indeed a complement for the consumption of other sport goods as theorized by prior research (Karg & McDonald, 2011; Randle & Nyland, 2008)

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The FIFA World Cup, occurring every four years, is considered to be one of the biggest television spectacles and sporting events on the planet. The 2014 edition of the global football (soccer) tournament was said to be the most watched sporting event in history, with FIFA claiming that around a billion people watch each of the 64 matches during the competition (CNN, 2014). The tournament also is a natural setting to conduct a multi-national study focused on the relationships which exist between mass media viewership and fantasy sport participation. As prior research has noted important links between media consumption and fantasy sport in other contexts (Billings & Ruihley, 2013; Dwyer et al., 2010), the next step in this line of research is to analyze whether these relationships are similar for consumers and fantasy sport participants in other countries.

In order to examine the difference in fantasy sport participation and World Cup viewership among individuals living in different countries, an online survey was administered and released in Germany and the United States. The online questionnaire contained questions about World Cup viewership, general fantasy sports consumption, fantasy sports consumption in the context of the World Cup, general media and communication behavior, and socio-demographics of the respondents. A total of 353 useable surveys were returned. The descriptive statistics show that 76.2% of the respondents were male. 54% of the respondents came from the US, 46% from Germany. One-way analyses of variances (ANOVA) were run to identify differences in World Cup and fantasy sports consumption between the US and Germany. The results indicated that Germans were significantly more likely to watch World Cup matches. Those who watched the World Cup were also significantly more involved; yet, there were no differences regarding expenditure on merchandise.

The question now is how these significant differences in World Cup viewership and general fantasy sports consumption translates into the combined area, i.e., fantasy sports in the context of the World Cup. Interestingly, the overall consumption can be considered relatively low on both sides: only 5% of the surveyed Americans and 13% of the Germans played fantasy sport during the World Cup. The results of ANOVAs show that Germans were significantly more likely to play fantasy sports during the World Cup. Additionally, the results of bivariate correlations show that individuals playing league-based fantasy sport were significantly more likely to play fantasy sports during the World Cup, while there was also a significant relationship between watching the World Cup and playing World Cup related fantasy sport.

Results from this research fall in line with previous findings in regards to the understanding of fantasy sport as a complement to the consumption of other sport products. While fantasy sport participation did have a relationship between watching games, these relationships only came within the context of the World Cup. These findings indicate that fantasy sports in the context of the Football World Cup has not made its way yet to two important consumer groups, the traditional fantasy sports players and the traditional World Cup viewers. Thus, there is a large market potential that has not yet been adequately targeted by FIFA, media corporations, and other stakeholders.

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