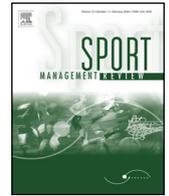




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# Curiosity generating advertisements and their impact on sport consumer behavior<sup>☆</sup>



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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to expand on the work of Menon and Soman and examine the impact of different levels of knowledge gap on the generation of state curiosity in a sport setting, and to investigate the impact of state curiosity on the intention to watch a novel sport. A total of 507 participants were recruited and ANOVAs, multiple regressions, and structural equation modeling were employed to examine the relationships. The results indicated that generated state curiosity was significantly greater for the group that viewed the moderate knowledge gap advertisement. Results also indicated that generated state curiosity had a significant mediating effect on the relationship between knowledge gap and the intention to watch the novel sport indicated in the advertisement. This study suggests that an increased understanding of the impact of curiosity and knowledge gap on sport consumers may be useful. Detailed implications for both practitioners and researchers are suggested.

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## 1. Introduction

Sport and the sport industry have had a meaningful impact on our society (Park, Mahony, & Greenwell, 2010; Wann, Melnick, Russell, & Pease, 2001). The size of the sport industry is estimated to become two times greater than the U.S. automobile industry and seven times greater than the U.S. movie industry, and is currently estimated at \$470 billion (Plunkett Research, Ltd., 2013). In addition, various sport-related activities, such as sport participation, sport attendance, and watching or listening to sports via the media, have been regarded as being among the most popular recreational activities in our daily life (Bodet & Bernache-Assollant, 2011). Therefore, the meaning of sport, sport-related activities, and its industry are important in our society.

As the sport industry has become more developed and competitive (Mahony & Howard, 2001; Wann et al., 2001), sport marketers have increased their efforts to turn casual consumers into loyal consumers in order to maximize profits. In this competitive market environment, however, shifting consumers' loyalty is not an easy job for sport marketers due to the

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already strong interest in traditionally popular sports (Park, Andrew, & Mahony, 2008). Therefore, developing new consumers is key for both popular and new sports to remain successful and survive in the current competitive marketplace (Park et al., 2010). In particular, sport marketers need to focus more on the generation of new consumers for new sports (i.e., novel sports) that have new concepts and rules, and may have trouble getting into the consumers' consideration sets (Mahony & Howard, 2001). Facilitating consumers' learning about information and attributes of new sports is the first step in the process of creating new sport consumers, because consumers need to learn about the benefits and attributes of new products or services before becoming interested in them (Lehmann, 1994; Urban, Weinberg, & Hauser, 1996). Consequently, motivating consumers to learn about the key benefits and attributes of novel sports is an important goal during product or service launch (Menon & Soman, 2002).

Although numerous studies have investigated a variety of factors affecting consumers' sport attendance and spectatorship, very few have examined how consumers become interested in and are initially attracted to novel sports. Moreover, the preceding studies on sport consumer behaviors have rarely dealt with the relationship between the level of cognitive stimulation (i.e., information and knowledge) given to consumers and how individuals' consumptive behaviors are influenced by the cognitive stimulation. While many factors may motivate an individual to become interested in and to be initially attracted to sports, one of the possibilities explaining sport consumer behaviors related to learning about novel sports may be curiosity and curiosity knowledge gap (Park et al., 2008). For example, Menon and Soman (2002) examined the effect of curiosity on the effectiveness of Internet advertising using three levels of the knowledge gap – high, moderate, and low. Their findings indicated that more curiosity can be generated for Internet advertising when the knowledge gap is moderate compared to when it is either high or low. They also found that generated curiosity results in a number of positive behaviors related to the product being advertised (e.g., greater information search, product interest). Therefore, their findings were an important step forward in this line of research and laid theoretical foundations for further examining the relationship between the level of knowledge and information given to consumers and its impact on sport consumer behaviors.

## 2. Theoretical background

### 2.1. Curiosity

Curiosity is defined as “a desire to acquire new knowledge and new sensory experience that motivates exploratory behavior” (Litman & Spielberger, 2003, p. 75). Similarly, Voss and Keller (1983) argued that “curiosity is a motivational prerequisite for exploratory behavior” (p. 17). Thus, curiosity motivates human exploratory behaviors in order to seek and acquire new knowledge and novel stimuli. As one of the major motivators of human exploratory behaviors, studies on curiosity have been undertaken in several domains, such as the educational, psychological, and occupational areas.

Berlyne (1960) made one of the earliest contributions to this line of research by classifying curiosity between specific and diversive curiosity and between perceptual and epistemic curiosity (see Table 1). Berlyne defined specific curiosity “as the desire for actively seeking depth in one's knowledge and experience with a particular stimulus or activity” (Kashdan, Rose, & Fincham, 2004, p. 291). Berlyne conceptualized diversive curiosity as actively seeking out varied sources of stimulation as a result of boredom fostering contact with new stimuli and opportunities (Kashdan et al., 2004). In contrast, perceptual curiosity is the state where people are motivated by various sensory-type stimulations. Therefore, people with high levels of perceptual curiosity are impacted by complex sensory stimulation, such as sights or sounds, so that they are willing to seek and have new information (Collins, Litman, & Spielberger, 2004). Collins and his colleagues (2004) argued that epistemic curiosity is the state evoked by “complex ideas or conceptual ambiguities (e.g., scientific theories, intellectual conundrums)” (p. 1127). Therefore, people aroused by epistemic curiosity may have the desire to obtain knowledge (Rossing & Long, 1981).

Other researchers focused on the distinction between trait curiosity, reflecting an individual's typical behavior, and state curiosity, which reflects the situation's effect on behavior (Weinberg & Gould, 1999). It is important for researchers to understand that some individuals will be naturally curious across a variety of situations, while certain situations may influence curiosity even for those who are not naturally more curious. Because sport contexts are the place in which various types (e.g., sensory or cognitive) of information and stimulation exist, and heterogeneous individuals would become the most identified cohort (Park, Mahony, & Kim, 2011), the concept of curiosity may play an important role in explaining various consumer behaviors in a sport context.

**Table 1**  
Berlyne's concept of curiosity in a sport context (Park, 2007, p. 58).

	Perceptual	Epistemic
Specific	<b>Specific perceptual</b> Fan's searching for exciting action in a specific sport	<b>Specific epistemic</b> Fan's searching for the answer to a particular question about a specific team/player
Diversive	<b>Diversive perceptual</b> Fan's exploration in sport facility or stadium with no particular purpose	<b>Diversive epistemic</b> A bored sport fan's flipping through sport network channels

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