

SEGMENTING MARKETS BASED ON SPORTS ORIENTATION: AN INVESTIGATION OF GENDER, RACE AND BEHAVIORAL INTENTIONS

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This study investigates gender and racial differences in regard to an individual's orientation toward sports (old school vs. new school) and whether or not there is a relationship between sports orientation and behavioral intentions. A quantitative survey of over 300 adults in the United States and Canada was conducted measuring sports orientation and behavioral intentions. Females were found to be more old school than males on two dimensions: perceptions toward role model influence and winning. African-Americans appeared to be more new school oriented. Finally, a significant relationship was found between sports orientation and behavioral intentions. The findings suggest that an individual's sports orientation may help marketers develop more meaningful market segments, especially when considering gender and ethnic subculture.

INTRODUCTION

The concept of an individual's sports orientation (SO) has been recently identified as a viable segmentation variable for strategic consumer marketing. Sports orientation is rooted in American sports culture and based on sports fans' attitudes, beliefs, and values (Sukhdial, Aiken and Kahle 2002). An individual's orientation towards sports can be construed in two different ways: old school or new school. Old school implies that fans identify with the traditional values associated with team sports. These fans believe it is "how you play the game that matters," not winning. Conversely, new school fans believe that one should win at any cost (cf., Sukhdial et al. 2002; Aiken and Sukhdial 2004). The new school perspective is "founded on post-modern notions of the player before the team, loyalty to the highest bidder, and high-tech production and consumption of professional sports." (Sukhdial et al. 2002, p. 73). These two orientations toward sports result in a division

between fans and athletes, based on their strong inherent values. It is this division between fans that makes sports orientation an intriguing concept to study in terms of its potential impact on market segmentation and consumption behavior.

In their 2002 study, Sukhdial et al. (2002) developed a valid and reliable scale to accurately measure fans' degree of SO along three dimensions: 1) perceptions toward the emphasis on winning; 2) opinions toward whether or not athletes should serve as role models; and 3) attitudes toward whether or not athletes have become too materialistic. Recently, Aiken and Sukhdial (2004) extended the literature on SO as a viable consumer market segmentation tool. The authors concluded that the SO concept is not only multidimensional, but may contain many high level interactions. Moreover, the authors call for further replication and investigation of SO and its interactions with demographic variables, such as gender, and a deeper exploration of how the construct relates to an individual's consumption behavior.

With the increasing number of fragmented markets in the U.S. today, this relatively new construct of sports orientation rooted in traditional values may help consumer marketers draw finer and more meaningful market segmentation lines. Thus, the purpose of this paper is two-fold. First, we investigate if there are differences in sports orientation based on gender and ethnic subculture. Second, we explore the relationship between sports orientation and consumers' behavioral intentions.

Background

Gender. One of the most important variables associated with sports orientation (SO) is gender. Preliminary studies suggest that males tend to be more old school than females. However, despite the fact that the female sports fan base is growing, the female segment has been somewhat overlooked concerning SO. A study conducted by Scarborough Sports Marketing revealed that approximately 50 million women avidly follow professional sports (Gaffney 2002). More importantly, the number of women who claimed that they were avid sports fans went from twenty-nine percent in 1998 to fifty-eight percent in 2002. These female sports fans closely follow the National Football League (thirty-one percent), Major League Baseball (twenty-eight percent), National Basketball Association (nineteen percent), NASCAR (thirteen percent), and the PGA (twelve percent). Thus, the female sports fan is a viable segment for consumer marketers to understand in terms of their motives, values, orientation towards sports, and resulting consumer behavior.

Only recently have researchers begun to more closely study female sports fans. Extant research has tended to focus on gender differences in spectator attendance (e.g., Fink, Trail and Anderson 2002; Lough and Kim 2004; Swanson, Gwinner, Larson and Janda 2003), attitudes toward sports associations and teams (Dixon 2002), perceptions of sports service experiences (Greenwell, Fink and Pastore 2002), and investigations of women's

sports sponsorships (Lough and Irwin 2001). This study attempts to extend such research by exploring possible gender differences with respect to SO and what implications such differences may have for marketers in terms of consumers' behavioral intentions.

Research on sports marketing has attempted to investigate gender differences in motivations toward sports. Indeed, Sukhdial, Aiken and Kahle (2002) discovered differences between male and female sports fans in their SO study. For example, females were found to be less old school than males regarding materialism. That is, females were *less* apt to view today's athletes as too materialistic.

More recent research has looked at how sports and consumer behavior differs between males and females. For example, Bush et al. (2004) discovered that females were more apt than males to be influenced by a sports celebrity and to recommend products and services to their friends that were endorsed by a favorite athlete. Again, it appears that perceptions and behaviors surrounding sports differ based on gender. However, Aiken and Sukhdial (2004) posit that as more women participate in and attend more sporting events, differences between genders in terms of sports orientation will narrow. We investigate whether or not this proposition holds in our current study by asking the following research question:

RQ1: Does sports orientation differ between males and females?

Ethnic Subcultures - Race

Ethnic subcultures have been defined as "those whose members' unique shared behaviors are based on a common racial, language, or nationality background" (Hawkins, Best and Coney 2004, p. 155). The purchasing power of ethnic consumer markets in the U.S. has risen faster than that of the general U.S. population (Kim and Kang 2001). As of 2004, multicultural buying power rose to over \$1.5 trillion and is expected to rise to \$2.1 trillion by the year 2009 (*Marketing News* 2005). Needless to say, interest in understanding the

consumption behavior and motives of certain ethnic groups has increased in recent years (Cui 2001). Further, the number of dollars spent on advertising to ethnic groups has also increased. For example, such companies as Procter and Gamble and DaimlerChrysler have increased their ad spending to these groups by almost fifty percent in 2004 (*Marketing News* 2005).

African-Americans have historically been the most studied U.S. minority group (Cui 2001). Much of this research has focused on consumption behavior and how African-Americans are portrayed in the media. Several studies have found that African-Americans are more receptive to advertising in general and slightly more materialistic than Caucasians (cf., Soley and Reid 1983; Yoon 1995). Further, African-Americans tend to watch more television and use it more frequently as a source of guidance than Caucasians (cf., Bush, Smith and Martin 1999). In fact, Bush et al. (1999) suggest that African-Americans and women in general “should be targeted by advertisers because of their potential marketplace expertise, their ability to diffuse information, and, most importantly, their receptivity to advertising” (p. 22).

Although there has been a significant amount of research on African-Americans’ attitudes and receptivity to advertising, less is known about this group’s values and orientation towards sports. Research regarding race and sports has generally focused on race and decision-making towards attending sporting events. For example, Zhang et al. (1995) found that African-Americans and Hispanics responded more positively to game promotions than Caucasians. Armstrong and Stratta (2004) found racial differences toward game attendance in terms of the racial classification of the spectators, sports team, and the environment in which the sports event takes place. However, no studies to date have investigated racial differences in terms of sports orientation. Thus, the present study investigates whether there are differences between African-Americans and Caucasians with regard to sports

orientation by asking the following research question:

RQ2: Does sports orientation differ between African-Americans and Caucasians?

Sports Celebrity Influence and Behavioral Intentions

Sports marketing continues to increase each year – making it an over \$200 billion dollar industry. One of the most visible parts of sports marketing is the strategy of selecting professional athletes to be spokespersons for a multitude of products. For instance, marketers have spent over \$800 million on professional athlete endorsements (*Sports Business Journal* 2004) in just one year. From golf legend, Tiger Woods’ endorsement of Nike and Buick, to Indy racer Danica Patrick’s endorsement of Honda, marketers have sought after sports celebrities to bring an attractive image to their products.

Academic researchers have investigated the influence of celebrity endorsements over the years and have offered several theoretical explanations for their continued popularity. These explanations have ranged from likeability and status (e.g., Atkin and Block 1983; Friedman and Friedman 1979) to the concept of celebrities acting as socialization agents (e.g., Bush et al. 2004). Since the present study focuses on consumers’ perceptions of professional athletes and their degree of sports orientation, it follows that these celebrities may influence consumers’ behavioral intentions.

The multidimensional construct of behavioral intentions developed by Zeithaml et al. (1996) incorporates the source of influence (in this case, professional athletes) into three dimensions of behavioral intentions toward a product. These are word-of-mouth communication, brand switching, and brand loyalty intentions. A multidimensional construct and measure of behavioral intentions fits well into our study of gender and race since it deals with facets of behavioral intentions

related to friends, peers, and celebrity spokespeople. Thus, we ask two research questions with regard to behavioral intentions:

RQ3: What is the relationship between sports orientation and behavioral intentions?

RQ4: Does this relationship differ with regard to gender and race?

METHOD

Sample

A convenience sample of adults was recruited to participate in the study. A total of 303 adults from three Southern universities and one Canadian university participated in the study. Respondent ages ranged from 18 to 75. Approximately fifty-five percent were male and forty-five percent were female. Thirty percent were African-American, and seventy percent were Caucasian. Eighty percent of the sample was from the U.S. and twenty percent was from Canada.

Measures

Sports Orientation. Sports orientation (SO) was measured using the Sukhdial et al. (2002) Old School Orientation scale. This ten-item scale was measured using a nine-point strongly disagree to strongly agree continuum. Reliability and factor loadings for each dimension are displayed in Appendix A. Items were reverse coded to show that the higher the respondent rated the item, the more the respondent reflected an old school orientation and, hence, the lower the item rating, the more a new school orientation was reflected.

The overall reliability of the SO measure was an alpha of 0.67. The measure's three dimensions had acceptable factor loadings and alpha coefficients over 0.70 (Nunnally 1978) (see Appendix A). Materialism had a coefficient alpha of 0.81, role model alpha was 0.75, and winning achieved an alpha of 0.78. Our results confirm the reliability of the SO measure, and in particular, its dimensions.

Behavioral Intentions. Consumer-related

behavioral intentions were measured utilizing an adapted version of the Zeithaml, Berry and Parasuraman (1996) purchase intentions scale. This scale has been used successfully in previous research (cf., Bush et al. 2004). Subjects were asked to respond to the twelve-item scale based on the extent to which their intentions are influenced by their favorite athlete's opinions on a seven-point scale with anchors strongly agree (1) and strongly disagree (7). The scale included items such as "my favorite athlete influences me to recommend products or brands to someone who seeks my advice" to "my favorite athlete influences me to buy fewer products from certain companies". The three dimensions of the overall intentions scale are: positive word-of-mouth (alpha = 0.93), switching behavior (alpha = 0.89), and brand loyalty (alpha = 0.83). Reliability and factor loadings for each dimension are displayed in Appendix B.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

RQ1: Does sports orientation differ between males and females?

The results for our first research question reveal some intriguing differences between the genders with respect to sports orientation (SO). First, the SO scale was investigated by gender. A t-test between the mean values of the overall SO scale indicated that females scored higher on the scale than males (female mean = 6.66, male mean = 6.37, $p < 0.02$). To better understand this difference, the mean values of each of the three SO dimensions were assessed between males and females. The males scored significantly higher than females on materialism (male mean = 6.73, female mean = 6.22, $p < 0.00$). However, males scored significantly lower than females on the role model (male mean = 6.59, female mean = 7.10, $p < 0.01$) and winning (male mean = 5.67, female mean = 6.83, $p < 0.00$) dimensions of sports orientation (see Table 1).

These results only partially support previous studies and propositions regarding the SO construct. First, Aiken and Sukhdial (2004)

found that men were more old school than women. They further posited that as more women participate in and attend sports, the gender gap between SO will narrow. Contrary to this prediction, we found that women appear to be more old school than men! With the exception of materialism, women scored significantly higher on the overall SO scale and the role model and winning dimensions. However, similar to Sukdhail et al.'s (2002) findings, we also found that females were less apt to view athletes as too materialistic. This was the only dimension of the sports orientation scale where males scored higher.

RQ2: Does sports orientation differ between African-Americans and Caucasians?

The results of the t-tests provide support for our second research question regarding differences between the two ethnic subcultures with respect to sports orientation (SO). Caucasians scored significantly higher on the overall SO measure than African-Americans (Caucasian mean = 6.56, African-American mean = 6.29, $p < 0.05$). When considering the three dimensions of SO, significant differences between Caucasians and African-Americans were found on only one dimension, role model influence (Caucasian mean = 6.95, African-American mean = 6.43, $p < 0.02$).

These results suggest that African-Americans appear to be less old school oriented than Caucasians, and more new school oriented overall. African-Americans appear to be less concerned about athletes being role models and more concerned with the idea that winning the game is the bottom line.

RQ3: What is the relationship between sports orientation and behavioral intentions?

To explore our third research question, the overall relationship between sports orientation (SO) and consumer behavioral intentions was investigated via a correlation analysis. The results show no significant correlation between the overall SO measure and the overall behavioral intentions measure ($r = -0.043$, $p >$

0.05). However, more insights are found when the dimensions of SO (materialism, role model, and winning) and behavioral intentions (word-of-mouth, switching, and brand loyalty) were investigated.

Our results show a significant negative correlation between the overall SO construct and the behavioral intention dimension of brand loyalty ($r = -0.144$, $p < 0.05$). This suggests that the more old school an individual is the less one's favorite athlete influences one's brand loyalty. Thus, old school individuals are not as apt to let athletes influence their loyalty to brands. This finding is strengthened by the significant negative correlation between the SO dimension of winning and brand loyalty ($r = -0.171$, $p < 0.05$). Here, the more old school an individual is towards winning (i.e., "it's not about winning, it's how you play the game"), the less that individual's favorite athlete influences brand loyalty. Thus, an old school sports orientation may have an impact on consumers' brand loyalty intentions.

RQ4: Does the relationship between sports orientation and behavioral intentions differ with regard to gender and race?

As shown in Table 2, we investigated the correlations between the sports orientation (SO) and the behavioral intention dimensions by gender and race. Indeed, some interesting results emerged. Amongst females, we found a significant positive correlation between role model and switching behavior ($r = 0.172$, $p < 0.05$). Here, the more females believe that athletes should be responsible role models, the more their favorite athlete influences their switching behaviors. Similar to the overall sample, we also found a significant negative correlation amongst this group with regard to the relationship between winning and brand loyalty ($r = -0.223$, $p < 0.05$). Consistent with our discussion on gender and SO, the more women perceive that winning is not everything, the less their favorite athlete influences their brand loyalty.

TABLE 1
Mean t-test Results for Sports Orientation by Gender and Race

Sports Orientation Dimension*:	Males:	Females:	t-value:	p-value:
Overall**	6.37	6.66	-2.26	.024
Materialism	6.73	6.22	2.91	.004
Role Model	6.59	7.10	-2.48	.014
Winning	5.67	6.83	-4.81	.000
	African-Americans:	Caucasians:		p-value:
Overall**	6.29	6.56	1.43	.053
Materialism	6.50	6.50	-.026	.980
Role Model	6.43	6.95	2.08	.020
Winning	6.03	6.26	.840	.402

*Based on a 1 to 9 point scale where the higher the mean value, the more old-school oriented, and the lower the mean value, the more new-school oriented. **Based on a summated scale of all items.

TABLE 2
Correlations between Sports Orientation and Behavioral Intentions by Gender and Race

Overall Sample:	Intention Dimension:	Overall Sports Orientation:	Materialism	Role Model	Winning
	W-O-M	-.035	-.018	.023	-.063
	Switching	.017	.038	.033	-.063
	Brand Loyalty	-.144*	-.051	-.036	-.171*
Males					
	W-O-M	-.065	-.019	-.065	-.052
	Switching	-.026	-.002	-.081	.023
	Brand Loyalty	-.142	-.083	-.083	-.119
Females					
	W-O-M	-.001	-.011	.119	-.093
	Switching	.078	.099	.172*	-.129
	Brand Loyalty	-.142	-.031	.032	-.223**
Caucasians					
	W-O-M	-.018	.098	-.021	-.107
	Switching	-.020	.023	-.004	-.052
	Brand Loyalty	-.147*	-.026	-.064	-1.77*
African-Americans					
	W-O-M	-.047	-.203*	.108	.022
	Switching	.095	.065	.103	.001
	Brand Loyalty	-.141	-.096	.010	-.159

*significant where $p < .05$

*significant where $p < .01$

With regard to race, we found that amongst African-Americans, a significant negative relationship exists between materialism and word-of-mouth (W-O-M) behavior ($r = -0.203$, $p < 0.05$). Here, it appears that the less concerned African-Americans are about athletes being too materialistic, the more their favorite athlete influences them to spread W-O-M about products. Hence, since our results show that African-Americans tend to be more new school, they may be more receptive to their favorite athletes and spread W-O-M.

IMPLICATIONS

The results of our study provide several interesting implications for consumer market segmentation. First, there appear to be differences in sports orientation (SO) with regard to gender and race. Second, and perhaps most interesting, there is a relationship between the dimensions of SO and behavioral intentions.

With regard to gender, males tend to agree that athletes are becoming too materialistic, self-absorbed, and greedy. This suggests that for males, being a team player is more important than individual success or showmanship. However, males appear to be less concerned about athletes being role models and believe that winning is what really counts. In contrast, females appear to be more concerned with athletes being responsible role models and that winning is not everything.

At first glance, it may seem surprising that the females in our sample were less concerned with athletes' apparent greed and materialism while regarding athletes as having a responsibility as role models and considering winning as less important. However, previous research on sports participation and fan behavior has shown that males and females engage in sport consumption for different reasons. Males have been found to engage in more sports fan behavior such as watching sports shows and listening to sports radio, whereas females reported sports behavior as more of a social event where one has the opportunity to be with family and friends (Dietz-Uhler, Harrick, End

and Jacquemotte 2000). Similarly, Armstrong (2001) reported that female hockey fans attend games because it is an experience to share with family and friends. Thus, our findings confirm that when targeting females, marketers may need to focus more on this group's social needs. Our findings also shed more light on the different perspectives that men and women may have towards sports and suggest an opportunity to further investigate the meaning of competitive sport and the nature of sport as entertainment consumption from the perspective of each of the genders.

An additional contribution of our study is that it confirms past research that detected gender differences with respect to role models and aspects of winning. Bush, Martin and Bush (2004) found that females agreed more than males that athlete role models influence them to buy certain brands. Further, females have been found to favor products that have been endorsed by their favorite role models and to spread positive word of mouth about the products and their role models to their friends (Bush, Smith and Martin 1999; Robinson and Rooks 1998).

With respect to the SO dimension materialism, our findings contradict past studies that have found males to be more tolerant of materialism than females. For example Kamineni's (2005) recent examination of the materialistic tendencies of males and females found the two to be significantly different, with males being more materialistic. Similar results were found by Juuan, Wirtz, Kwon and Keng (2001) who concluded that that men were more oriented toward money and financial wellbeing and equated the ownership of material things to success in life more strongly than women. Our findings, therefore, suggest that marketers should proceed with caution when employing endorsers who may be perceived as being overly materialistic.

Regarding race, our findings suggest that overall African-Americans are more new school oriented than are Caucasians. While African-Americans were found to be less

concerned that athletes are too materialistic and more concerned about winning, the differences were not significant. However, African-Americans do appear to be significantly less concerned about athletes being role models than do Caucasians. Therefore, when targeting African-Americans, marketers may wish to focus their communications more on new school concepts and may choose to work with endorsers who espouse new school values. Conversely, when targeting Caucasians in general, marketers may wish to focus their communications on more old school concepts.

Perhaps the most interesting finding in our study is the link between SO and behavioral intentions. This finding may shed light on whether or not marketers should use professional athletes as celebrity endorsers of their products. It appears that, overall, individuals who are more old school oriented are not as influenced by celebrity endorsers in terms of brand loyalty. This finding may help marketers in their decisions about expensive celebrity endorsement strategies aimed at old school market segments.

When considering gender, however, a different result emerges. Here, women are more old school on the dimensions of role model influence and winning. Further, we found a significant positive correlation between role model and switching behavior. Thus, it may be inferred that if women perceive an athlete to be a positive role model, they may be influenced by that role model to switch brands. We also found a significant negative correlation between winning and brand loyalty. Since, women *aren't* interested in winning at all costs, if marketers choose a celebrity athlete who is a positive role model and emphasizes the importance of teamwork, women may be influenced by this athlete and be more loyal to a particular brand.

With regard to race, we found a significant negative relationship between the SO dimension of materialism and W-O-M behavior. Here, the less concerned African-

Americans are about athletes being too materialistic, the more they may spread W-O-M about a brand their favorite athlete endorses. Considering the finding that African-Americans appear to be more new school overall, it may make sense for marketers to use new-school celebrity athletes to endorse their products. This strategy may generate a buzz or W-O-M about a product or brand amongst this particular target market.

CONCLUSIONS AND LIMITATIONS

In conclusion, examining and understanding gender and racial differences with respect to the sports orientation (SO) segmentation typology may result in marketers' ability to draw finer and more meaningful segmentation lines. As marketers gain the ability to more directly target their customers they can more relevantly direct their research and overall marketing efforts. Given the growing female sports fan and ethnic subculture markets in the U.S. it is imperative that more work be done to understand the implications of these different consumer groups.

A finding of particular interest is that the more old school an individual is the less one's favorite athlete influences one's brand loyalty. This raises questions about the effectiveness of professional athlete role models as endorsers in marketing to certain segments. These results may not be surprising since it has been suggested that media-savvy generation Y consumers, who comprised the largest portion (thirty-nine percent) of this study's participants, may not be easily influenced by athlete endorsements (Brooks and Harris, 1998; Veltri, Kuzma, Stotlar, Vismanathan and Miller 2003). This contention was more recently echoed by Peetz, Parks and Spencer (2004), who uncovered an underlying skepticism within the generation Y segment regarding celebrity athlete endorsers. These researchers suggest their subjects' expressed attitudes toward athlete endorsers provide some support for abandoning the use of costly athletes in favor of grassroots celebrity endorsements and event

sponsorships. However, this strategy may be viable for African-American targets.

One limitation of the study is that the convenience sample was drawn from regions of the U.S and Canada. Therefore, although an attempt was made to enhance the study's external validity, the results may not be generalizable to other populations. In particular, future research should include respondents from the Hispanic population since this is a fast growing segment in the U.S. Another limitation was the small sample of Canadian respondents as compared with the U.S respondents, which made a cross-national comparison unfeasible.

The sports orientation construct was developed for the purpose of enhancing customer relationships between sports marketers and fans (Sukhdial, Aiken and Kahle 2002). Our aim was to explore the potential of sports orientation as a variable to help consumer marketers draw finer and more meaningful market segmentation lines. We believe our findings offer support for drawing such lines. Not only was this study successful in replicating and validating the sports orientation scale, it also shed light on two increasingly important consumer segments – females and African-Americans. This, in conjunction with further understanding of how sports orientation impacts consumer behavioral intentions, indicates there is still much to learn about the relationship between sports orientation and consumer behavior.

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APPENDIX A Factor Analysis and Reliability of Sports Orientation

Scale Items:	Factor Loadings: Materialism	Role Model	Winning	Coefficient Alpha:
1. Most professional athletes have become too materialistic these days.	.792			.809
2. Many professional athletes today are self-absorbed, indulgent, and greedy.	.865			
3. These days, professional athletes have no sense of loyalty to the team	.743			
4. Most professional athletes are more interested in making money than playing the game.	.818			
5. Children look up to professional athletes, and so athletes have a social obligation to be role models.		.838		.746
6. It is unfair to athletes to require them to be role models*		.858		
7. Professional athletes should bear the responsibility of being role models.		.803		
8. Winning isn't everything, it's the only thing.*			.841	.782
9. Being second best is unacceptable.*			.749	
10. Show me a good loser, and I'll show you a real loser.*			.841	

*reverse coded

APPENDIX B
Factor Analysis and Reliability of Behavioral Intentions

Scale Items:	Factor Loadings: W-O-M	Switching	Brand Loyalty	Coefficient Alpha
The opinions of my favorite athlete influence me to:				
1. say positive things about products or brands to other people	.867			.931
2. recommend products or brands to someone who seeks my advice	.892			
3. encourage friends or relatives to buy certain products or brands	.855			
4. buy fewer products from certain companies		.406		.891
5. take some of my purchases to other businesses that offer better prices		.599		
6. switch to a competitor if I experience a problem with a company's service		.812		
7. complain to other customers if I experience a problem with a company's service		.856		
8. complain to external agencies, such as the Better Business Bureau, if I experience problems with a company's service		.806		
9. complain to a company's employees if I see a problem with that company's service		.850		
10. continue to do business with certain companies even if it increases its prices			.761	.833
11. pay more for products at one business even though I could buy them cheaper elsewhere			.880	
12. buy certain brands			.397	