

# **The Impact of Consumption Motivation on Sports Attendance of Older Consumers**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Businesses around the world have made Millennials and Generation Z the focal point for promotion, consumption, social media, and nearly every important component of financial operations (Korsunsky, 2022). Millennials are seen as the technology generation, and Generation Z has significantly expanding wealth, explaining the popularity of both groups with organizations seeking to find ways to increase their own financial success. However, the aging baby boomers still possess the greatest amount of spending power and represent an enormous consumption opportunity for organizations who are willing to understand what it takes to reach the older consumers. While older consumers have been the focus of a variety of research studies examining specific purchase categories (Moschis et al., 2011), older consumer consumption of sporting events has been almost universally ignored. Thus, the present study seeks to understand the motivations behind sports attendance of older consumers.

## **OLDER CONSUMERS**

The majority of baby boomers in the United States fall in the age range of 60-80. And although the baby boomers do not technically represent all older consumers (many studies use age 50 or age 55 as the cutoff for consumption studies of older consumers), their spending power points to the astounding wealth available for spending in this group. Recent studies show that the baby boomers have total spending power of approximately \$70 trillion and hold more than 50% of all wealth in the United States (Federal Reserve, 2022). Stretched to include consumers 50 years old or older, this group is retiring at a later age, utilizing more debt in their purchases, and spending greater amounts of money on personal leisure than older consumers of previous generations (Best, 2018).

## **CONSUMPTION MOTIVATION**

Consumption motivation has often been studied as a dichotomy between practical (product-oriented) consumption versus enjoyment (experiential-oriented) consumption (Dawson et al., 1990; Babin et al., 1994). Practical consumption is often described as utilitarian, with consumers seeking efficient outcomes such as product value, need satisfaction, or overall goal attainment in the shopping experience. Conversely, enjoyment-driven consumption often focuses on the emotional experiences and social outcomes of shopping, such as happiness, entertainment value, or pleasure (Dawson et al., 1990).

Consumption motivation has been examined in a variety of settings as an influencer of a significant number of consumption-related outcomes (Hill et al. 2013; Ayadi & Cao 2016), and in a variety of consumer age groups (Martin 2018). However, consumption motivation of older consumers has received scant attention. One study did find that status consumption, defined as

purchasing designed to improve the status or prestige of the purchaser (Eastman et al., 1999) and similar to experiential-oriented consumption, is less important for baby boomers as compared to consumers in the generation X and generation Y categories (Eastman and Liu 2012).

## **OLDER CONSUMERS AND SPORTS ATTENDANCE**

Attendance at live sporting events accounts for billions in revenue every year for sports teams and leagues in the United States (Statista, 2022), and recent attendance trends are encouraging for many of these leagues. A variety of sports in the United States are seeing live game attendance come back in full force after the COVID-19 pandemic. The NFL saw average live game attendance rise by over 3% in the 2022 regular season (Fischer & Broughton, 2023). In 2002, the United States women's national soccer team saw its highest game attendance average since 2019 (Dockery, 2023). The National Basketball Association has also seen improved attendance in the first half of their 2022-2023 season, outperforming the previous season by approximately 5% (Moss, 2022). And although a few United States sports leagues have seen slight attendance declines in recent years, these leagues are still bringing in million of fans for live sporting events.

Competition for fans is fierce. Finding population segments that have leisure time and discretionary income to spend, characteristics commonly associated with older consumers, is critical for many of these leagues. As identified earlier, consumers 50 and older account for the greatest amount of wealth in the United States, and are spending more on leisure and entertainment than any older generation before them (Best, 2018). Little evidence exists, however, that sports teams in the United States are actively pursuing older consumers as customers. Previous research has shown that when older consumers attend sports games, it has a positive influence on their subjective well-being (Inoue et al., 2019), but outside of studies on the impact of aging, older consumers and sports attendance is often overlooked. Therefore the present study will attempt to assess the predominant consumption motivation of older consumers, and the potential impact of consumption motivation on the live sports attendance of older consumers.

## **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

Research Question 1: Are older consumers more experientially motivated or product-oriented motivated?

Research Question 2: Which shopping motivation (experiential or product-oriented) has a greater impact on live sporting event attendance of older consumers?

## **STUDY METHODOLOGY**

### **Sample and Data Collection**

Undergraduate marketing majors will be trained to identify older consumers, age 50 and above, for potential participation in the study. The trained interviewers will provide older consumers a survey instrument to complete, and collect the instruments upon completion. The goal is to gain completed surveys from 1,000 consumers age 50 and older.

## Measures

Experiential shopping motivation and product-oriented shopping motivation will be determined using an assessment scale from Dawson et al. (1990). Experiential shopping motivation is assessed using six items, and product-oriented shopping motivation is assessed using five items. Older consumers will respond to the assessment items on both consumption motivation scales using a 7-point scale, with (1) being “Not at all descriptive” and (7) being “Very descriptive”. Older consumers will also be asked to identify how many and which sporting events they attended in the past year, their favorite sports to attend live, how much money they spend annually on sporting attendance, and demographic information important for analysis in the current study.

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