

Determinants Influencing Motivation for Sports Consumer and Its Impact on the Sports Consumption Behavior-- A Theoretical Review

Xue Yan^{1*}, Md Gapar Md Johar²

¹Department of Physical Education and Health, Lvliang University, Shanxi, China; Post Graduate Center, Management and Science University, Malaysia

²Software Engineering and Digital Innovation Center, Management and Science University, Malaysia

* Xueyan, 321012021070029@pgc.msu.edu.my

Abstract—This study systematically investigates the behavioral logic of sports consumption by integrating six foundational theories—Ecological Systems Theory, Theory of Planned Behavior, Attribution Theory, Achievement Motivation Theory, Dual-Channel Mental Accounting Theory, and Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) Theory—into a unified analytical framework. The research addresses three core questions: (1) What factors influence sports consumption motivation? (2) How does motivation translate into consumption behavior? (3) What is the interaction mechanism among multi-dimensional factors? Findings demonstrate that sports consumption behavior emerges from the dynamic interplay between external environmental factors (e.g., social context, marketing strategies, policy influences) and internal psychological drivers (e.g., attitudes, perceived control, motivational needs), with motivation serving as a critical mediator. The study advances theoretical discourse on sports consumption while providing actionable insights for industry practitioners and policymakers to enhance consumer engagement and promote sustainable industry development.

Keywords— Sports consumption behavior, motivation, multi-theoretical framework, environmental influences, psychological drivers.

I. INTRODUCTION

As the core driving force behind the development of the sports industry, the complexity of the behavioral logic of sports consumption has long been a focus of academic attention. In recent years, with the advancement of the national fitness strategy and the diversified development of the sports market, exploring the influencing factors of sports consumption behavior and its intrinsic mechanisms has become a research hotspot. This paper systematically sorts out classic theoretical frameworks such as Ecological Systems Theory, Theory of Planned Behavior, Attribution Theory, Achievement Motivation Theory, Dual-Channel Mental Accounting Theory, and Stimulus-Organism-Response Theory, and constructs a multi-theoretical integrated analytical framework for sports consumption behavior. It aims to reveal the dynamic relationships between the external environment, internal psychology, and consumption behavior, thereby providing a reference for theoretical advancement and practical optimization in the field of sports consumption.

II. THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS AND CORE ISSUES IN SPORTS CONSUMPTION BEHAVIOR RESEARCH

Sports consumption behavior refers to the decisions and actions exhibited by individuals in the process of acquiring sports products, services, or experiences. Its essence is the result of the combined effect of external environmental stimuli and internal psychological motivation. In recent years, scholars have generally agreed that the sports consumption behavior of the general population does not exist in isolation but is subject to a chain of influences from multi-level factors. Specifically, external factors such as social environment, product characteristics, and marketing strategies, together with internal factors such as consumers' personal traits and perceived evaluations, first act on sports consumption motivation. Subsequently, motivation, as a core mediating variable, further drives or inhibits actual consumption behaviors (e.g., participating in sports events, purchasing sports equipment, or paying for fitness services).

Due to differences in research perspectives, various theories have focused on different aspects of this process, but they all aim to address three core questions: What factors influence sports consumption motivation? How does motivation translate into consumption behavior? What is the interaction mechanism among multi-dimensional factors?

III. CORE THEORIES AND THEIR APPLICATIONS IN SPORTS CONSUMPTION BEHAVIOR RESEARCH

I. Ecological Systems Theory

Urie Bronfenbrenner (1974) proposed Ecological Systems Theory, identifying five interconnected systems (microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, chronosystem) that influence individual development as show at figure 1, emphasizing that behaviors are shaped by multi-level environmental factors rather than isolated individual traits. In sports-related research, ecological dynamics highlight performer-environment interactions as key to understanding behaviors (Davids & Araujo, 2010), while health behavior studies (McLeroy et al., 1988) confirm the role of nested environmental levels (individual, interpersonal, organizational, community, policy) in shaping actions. In sports consumption, the environmental ecosystem is a critical focus: Kim et al.

(2023) found eco-friendly sports like plogging, embedded in environmental systems, affect consumption patterns and participation willingness; Gammelsaeter et al. (2023) noted grassroots sports club ecosystems shape members' consumption choices. This underscores that sports consumption behavior is not isolated but influenced by multi-level environmental factors, providing a theoretical basis for analyzing environmental impacts on sports consumption.



Figure 1: Ecological model

Sources: National Institutes of Health (NIH).

II. The Theory of Planned Behaviour

The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), created by Icek Ajzen (1988, 1991) as an extension of the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA; Ajzen & Fishbein, 1975, 1980), addresses the constraint that human behavior is not entirely voluntary by introducing the concept of Perceived Behavioral Control (PBC) (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). TPB posits that behavioral attitudes, subjective norms, and PBC collectively influence behavioral intentions, which in turn determine individual behavior (Ajzen, 2011) as show at figure 2.

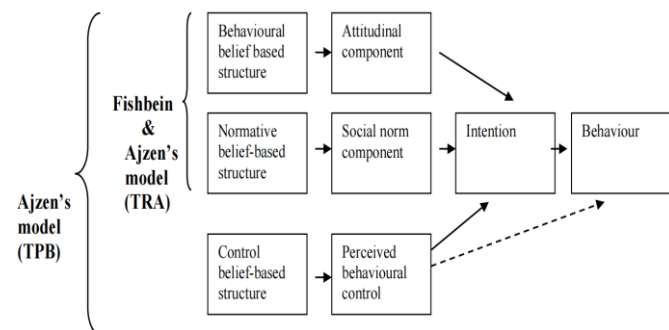


Figure 2: TPB

Source: Ajzen, I., (2011)

Key constructs: Attitudes (individual evaluations of behavior), subjective norms (perceptions of others' evaluations), and PBC (perceptions of external factors facilitating or hindering behavior) form the cognitive basis of

intentions through behavioral, normative, and control beliefs, respectively.

Predictive mechanism: Behavioral intentions predict behavior direction and likelihood, with PBC enhancing prediction accuracy by accounting for non-volitional influences (e.g., external environment, personal resources).

TPB has been widely applied in sports consumption research. Xu et al. (2018) demonstrated that an extended TPB model effectively predicts university students' exercise behavior. Kumar et al (2022) used TPB to explore youth sports consumption tendencies, while Su et al. (2021) integrated it with health action process theory to analyze adults' sports behavior. Sorochan (2022) further identified motor control and emotion as mediators in youth sports activities under the TPB framework. These applications highlight TPB's utility in explaining and predicting public sports consumption willingness and behavior by revealing key influencing factors.

III. Attribution theory

Heider (1958) proposed that individuals act as "naive psychologists" who seek to interpret social phenomena through causal attributions, distinguishing between dispositional (internal) and situational (external) causes of behavior. Jones and Davis (1965) expanded this by highlighting that people prioritize intentional behavior when making internal attributions, particularly when observing a correspondence between motive and action. Kelley's (1967) covariation model further refined attribution theory, explaining how people use multiple observations to determine whether behavior stems from individual traits or environmental factors. Fiske and Taylor (1991) formally defined attribution theory as the study of how social perceivers process information to form causal judgments as show at figure 3.

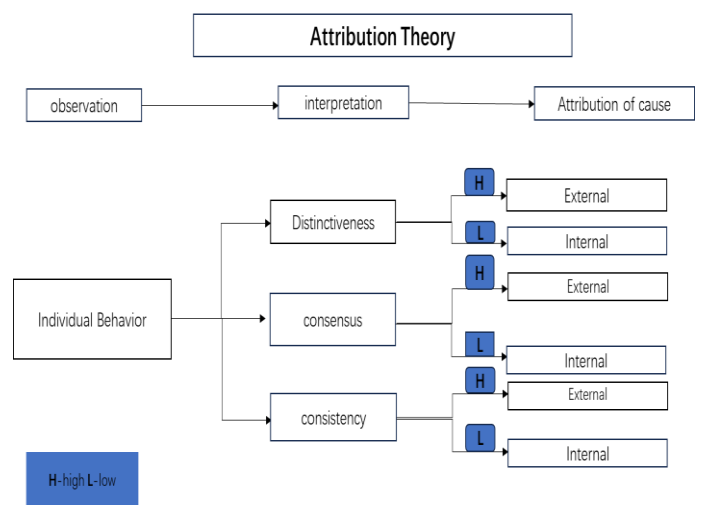


Figure 3: Attribution Theory

Sources: Heider, (1958)

A key connection lies between attribution theory and achievement motivation: attribution patterns shape individuals' motivational states, while achievement motivation reflects the

desire to attain success or avoid failure (Wigfield et al., 2021). For example, high achievers often attribute success to internal factors like ability and effort, whereas low achievers may attribute failure to internal deficits (Weiner, 1975). This link is relevant to sports consumption, as consumers' attributions of their sports experiences (e.g., attributing satisfaction to personal effort vs. external factors like facility quality) can influence their motivation to engage in future sports-related consumption.

IV. Achievement Motivation Theory (AMT)

Achievement Motivation Theory, developed by David McClelland based on Murray's concept of achievement need, posits that individuals' behaviors are shaped by three core needs: the need for achievement (striving for excellence), the need for power (influencing others), and the need for affiliation (establishing close relationships; Denhardt, 2018). McClelland (1985) emphasized that motivation, as a psychological drive, arises from unmet needs, with different needs generating distinct motives—making motivation the dynamic manifestation of needs.

In the context of sports, scholars extend this theory to define sports motivation as the internal psychological impetus driving participation in sports activities, which is closely linked to sports engagement: positive sports motivation promotes participation, and active participation, in turn, strengthens motivation (Roberts, 2012). For sports consumption behavior, this theory implies that consumers' motivational orientations (e.g., achieving performance goals,

seeking social connections through sports) may influence their willingness to invest in sports products, services, or experiences. Wang (2023) noted that stimulating intrinsic movement instincts, aligned with motivation theory, can enhance sports participation—suggesting potential applications in encouraging sports consumption through targeted motivation activation.

V. The dual-channel Mental Accounting Theory

"Mental accounting," an influential behavioral economic theory, was first proposed by Richard Thaler in 1980, referring to the cognitive processes of coding, recording, categorizing, and evaluating wealth transactions in economic decision-making. Thaler (1985) further elaborated that mental accounting follows psychological arithmetic rules that often diverge from economic logic, inadvertently shaping decisions.

Building on this, Prelec and Loewenstein (1998) proposed the dual-channel mental account theory, explaining prepayment preferences in consumption as show at figure 4. It posits two parallel accounts: one tracking positive utility from consumption post-payment, the other recording negative utility from payment. The strength of the link between consumption and payment affects experiences: strong links amplify payment pain (high pleasure-weakening coefficient α), reducing consumption enjoyment; weak links blunt payment awareness (high pain-blunting coefficient β), enhancing pleasure. These coefficients are influenced by context, product traits, and consumer motivation, impacting purchase decisions.

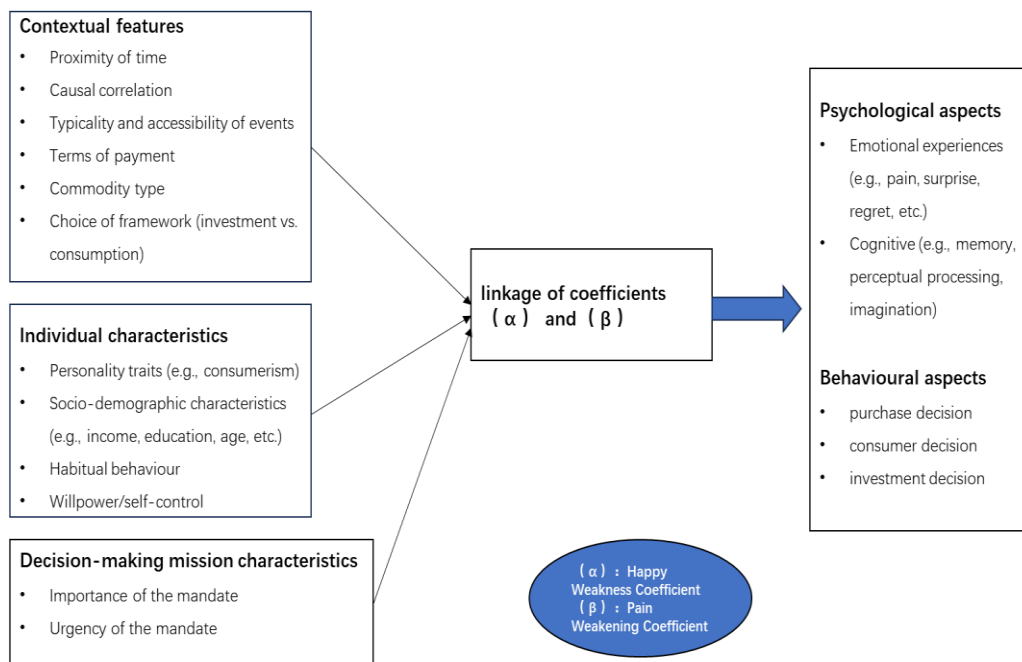


Figure 4: Framework for Dual-Channel Psychologic Account Theory

Kamleitner and Hoelzl (2009) highlighted that situational and individual factors, including motivation, shape these coefficients, affecting emotional experiences and purchasing behavior. For sports consumption, this theory illuminates how consumers evaluate health investments, sports goods, and

participation—for example, how payment models (e.g., annual gym memberships vs. pay-per-visit) influence perceived value and consumption frequency. It provides a framework for understanding sports consumers' cognitive and emotional processes in decision-making.

VI. S-O-R Theory

The Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) model, proposed by Mehrabian and Russell (1975) in environmental psychology, frames human behavior as a sequence involving three core components: Stimulus (S) – external factors (primarily environmental) that affect an individual’s internal state; Organism (O) – internal processes (e.g., affective, cognitive, perceptual activities) mediating between stimuli and

responses; and Response (R) – the consumer’s final decision or behavior (Mehrabian & Russell, 1975).

Environmental changes act as stimuli, disrupting psychological stability and triggering behavioral adjustments. Widely applied in consumer behavior research, the S-O-R model explains how external stimuli elicit cognitive, emotional, and physical reactions in consumers, which collectively shape their actions (Mei, Pan & Chen, 2021).

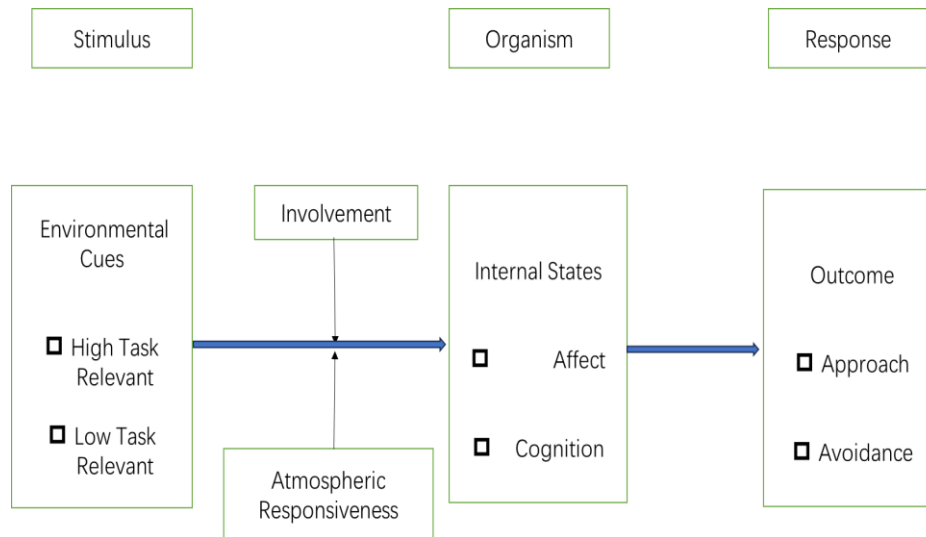


Figure 5: Framework of SOR

For sports consumption, this model is particularly relevant: external stimuli (e.g., sports marketing, facility quality, social trends) can activate internal processes (e.g., interest, perceived value) in consumers, ultimately driving responses such as purchasing sports goods, participating in paid events, or engaging in fitness activities. It provides a theoretical foundation for analyzing the psychological mechanisms linking environmental factors to sports consumption behavior.

IV. FINDING

The three core questions regarding sports consumption can be systematically addressed by integrating the six aforementioned theories:

1. What factors influence sports consumption motivation?

Sports consumption motivation is shaped by a combination of external environmental factors and internal psychological factors.

External factors: Guided by the Ecological Systems Theory, multi-level environmental elements such as family support (microsystem), cultural values towards sports (macrosystem), and sports policies (exosystem) collectively foster a social atmosphere conducive to sports consumption. Additionally, the S-O-R Theory emphasizes that specific external stimuli like sports marketing campaigns, event ambiance, and facility quality act as triggers to activate internal motivation.

Internal factors: As per the Theory of Planned Behavior, attitudes towards sports consumption, subjective norms (social approval), and perceived behavioral control (ease of access)

directly drive motivation. The Achievement Motivation Theory highlights individual needs for achievement, affiliation, and power as intrinsic drivers, while the Dual-Channel Mental Accounting Theory notes that cost-benefit perceptions (e.g., balancing payment pain and consumption pleasure) also influence motivational intensity.

2. How does motivation translate into consumption behavior?

The transformation from motivation to behavior is primarily mediated by psychological mechanisms and contextual triggers.

The Theory of Planned Behavior posits that motivation (as behavioral intention) directly predicts consumption behavior, with perceived behavioral control bridging the gap between intention and action by accounting for practical constraints.

The S-O-R Theory further clarifies this process: motivation, as the "organism" component, processes external stimuli and converts them into specific responses such as purchasing sports goods, participating in paid events, or engaging in fitness activities.

Attribution Theory adds that post-consumption evaluations (e.g., attributing satisfaction to internal effort or external factors) reinforce or weaken the motivation-behavior link, affecting long-term behavioral persistence.

3. What is the interaction mechanism among multi-dimensional factors?

Multi-dimensional factors interact through a dynamic interplay of external stimuli and internal processing:

External environmental factors (from Ecological Systems Theory) provide the contextual backdrop that shapes internal

psychological states (motivation, attitudes) outlined in the Theory of Planned Behavior and Achievement Motivation Theory.

The Dual-Channel Mental Accounting Theory explains how external factors like pricing strategies interact with internal cost-benefit perceptions to modulate motivation strength.

The S-O-R framework integrates these interactions: external stimuli (social environment, marketing) activate internal mechanisms (motivation, cognition), which in turn generate consumption behavior, while feedback from behavior (e.g., positive experiences) further influences future motivation and environmental perceptions, forming a recursive loop.

In summary, these theories collectively illustrate that sports consumption is a complex system where external environments and internal psychology interact through motivation as a core mediator, driving and sustaining consumption behavior.

V. CONCLUSION

In summary, this study systematically combs through six classic theories—Ecological Systems Theory, Theory of Planned Behavior, Attribution Theory, Achievement Motivation Theory, Dual-Channel Mental Accounting Theory, and Stimulus-Organism-Response Theory—and constructs a multi-theoretical integrated analytical framework to explore sports consumption behavior. By addressing the three core questions of "factors influencing sports consumption motivation", "the transformation path from motivation to behavior", and "the interaction mechanism of multi-dimensional factors", it reveals that sports consumption behavior is a complex process in which external environmental factors (such as social environment, sports products, and marketing strategies) and internal psychological factors (such as personal traits, perceived evaluations, and motivational needs) interact with each other, with sports consumption motivation playing a key mediating role.

This integration not only enriches the theoretical system of sports consumption behavior research but also provides practical enlightenment for relevant entities such as sports enterprises, marketing institutions, and policy-makers. It helps them better understand the behavioral logic of sports consumers, formulate targeted strategies to stimulate sports consumption motivation, and promote the sustainable development of the sports industry. Future research can further verify and improve this integrated framework through empirical methods, and explore the differences in sports consumption behavior in different cultural contexts and population groups to enhance the universality and applicability of the research results.

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