

Sports vs. All Comers: Comparing TV Sport Fans with Fans of Other Programming Genres

Abstract

Fans represent an important segment of television audiences that programmers cultivate across genres. While scholars have examined fans for sports, soap operas, and reality programs separately, they haven't looked for commonalities in fanship across programming genres. This study assessed the ways in which the viewing experience for sports fans is similar to—and different from—the viewing experience for fans of other popular genres of programming. Self-administered questionnaires were completed by 383 students at a large Midwestern university. Close-ended questions assessed the viewing experience for sports, afternoon soap operas, reality programs, situation comedies, daytime and late night talk shows, adult-oriented animation programs, and prime time dramas. Compared to fans of other programming genres, televised sports fans were likely to engage in a variety of pre-game planning and information search activities. Their viewing was more likely to be purposive and content-oriented. Televised sports fans appeared to be active viewers who took a keen interest in the action on the screen. They were emotionally involved and cared about the outcomes. Perhaps as a result, they also were more likely to check media sources for follow-up information about the games they watched. Sports fans stood alone. Fans for other programming genres were not as active or invested in their favorite programming genre.

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Sports has been a programming staple on broadcast and cable television for decades. It regularly attracts the faithful and, with major events, draws audiences other genres of programming rarely approach. Year in and year out, the Super Bowl garners the largest U.S. audience of the year, far outpacing any other single program. The Olympics and the World Cup draw unrivaled numbers of viewers across the globe, several billion over the course of the Olympics and perhaps as much as a billion for a single World Cup match (Bryant & Raney, 2000; Real, 1998). Because of its ubiquity on the television dial, the scope of the audience it attracts, and the apparent zeal with which many viewers watch sports, televised sports viewers and fans have been the subject of considerable scholarly inquiry.

With less frequent public recognition and scholarly scrutiny, other genres of programming attract and cultivate sizable audiences and, as with sports, a sizable number of fans. So, for example, prior to its final original episode in 2003, the television situation comedy *Friends* regularly drew viewers “still dying to know who [Rachel] ends up with—Ross or Joey?” when a decade had past “after [the character] stumbled into the Central Perk coffeehouse after running away from her own wedding” (Newsweek, 2003). To be sure, there are other parallels as well. For example, stars of wildly popular shows such as *Friends* receive salaries that rival the biggest sports stars.

Fans represent an important segment of television audiences that programmers cultivate across genres, from sports to soap operas, situation comedies and dramas to adult-oriented animated programs, and from reality shows to afternoon and evening talkfests. At a minimum, fans represent a steady base of viewers that programmers and sales personnel collectively describe and package to advertisers and ad agencies. At times, fans are openly promoted and celebrated. For this, all one has to see is ESPN’s self-congratulatory 25th anniversary campaign titled “The Season of the Fan” (Janoff, 2004), with on-air promotions “celebrating 25 years in sports with a salute to the fans.”

While scholars have examined fans for sports, soap operas, and reality programs separately, they haven’t looked for commonalities in fanship across programming genres. Do

fans prepare for their programs in similar ways? Are they motivated by similar or disparate sets of motivations? Do they view and respond in similar ways or is viewing and response unique to each type of program? In short, scholars haven't examined the extent to which the fanship experience cuts across genres. This study was designed to make that comparison.

Fanship

The term fan is routinely linked with those who follow sports. For example, the first meaning for the term provided by the Oxford English Dictionary states that a fan is “a keen and regular spectator of a (professional) sport, originally of baseball (Oxford English Dictionary, 1996). Yet, the term, derived from “fanatic,” can and has been applied to those with a particular interest in performers, personalities, and programs as well as athletes and sports teams. Along with athletes, celebrities have long had fan clubs and fan magazines and have been the recipients of fan mail.

At a minimum, fanship points to an active and interested audience. In all likelihood, fanship represents an array of thought processes, affective attachments, and behaviors that separate fans from non-fans, including non-fans who watch the same programming. Abercrombie and Longhurst (1998) noted that fans are “those people who become particularly attached to certain programmes or stars within the context of a relatively heavy media use” (p. 138). Others have linked fanship with knowledge about the players, teams, and game or characters and plot in a program; active, participatory, viewing; concern about outcomes; and emotional responsiveness to the action and activity as it unfolds (c.f., Gantz, 1981; Gantz et al., 1995; Mcpherson, 1975; Smith, Patterson, Williams, & Hogg, 1981). Because fans tend to be heavy viewers, they have more experience and knowledge than non-fans with the format and content of their favorite programs. In addition, because they are at least somewhat attached to the programs or stars, they may process information conveyed on these programs differently than non-fans. Indeed, recent studies (c.f., Hillman et al, 2000; Hillman et al., 2004; Potter et al, 2004) document that the level of fan identification has an impact on the level of self-reported and physiological emotional reaction one has to images of sports and sports-related news items.

Studies have documented the benefits and pitfalls associated with fanship. Fanship is said to empower fans and generate passion and energy in them (Grossberg, 1992). A early and often-cited review of sport fan research identified three benefits of being a sport fan—escape,

self-fulfillment, and social integration (Smith et al., 1981). Although their classic study was not limited to fans, Cialdini, Borden, Thorne, Walker, Freeman, and Sloan (1976) documented the image-enhancing effects of having one's school win on the playing field. For a fan, the joy of watching one's team win may rival that felt by the players. On the flip side, for the fan, the anxiety and pain associated with pending games and undesired outcomes may be as great as those experienced by the players themselves. Fans experience an increase in cognitive and somatic anxiety as an important competition approaches; the effect is heightened among highly identified fans (Wann, Schrader, & Adamson, 1998). Deeply committed fans also are less able to separate themselves from their teams when their teams lose (Wann & Branscombe, 1995).

Although people frequently call themselves a fan of—or not a fan of—a program or genre of programming, fanship is likely to exist on a continuum, providing room for the hard-core fans that the media sometimes showcase and academics occasionally study (c.f., Wann & Branscombe, 1995). As suggested in the preceding paragraph, though, placement on this continuum is likely to incorporate an individual's knowledge of, interest in, and exposure to the programming under consideration. Gantz and Wenner (1995), for example, defined sports fans based on self-reported knowledge levels, interest, and patterns of exposure to sports. Sports fans were those with considerably higher scores on perceived knowledge, interest, and viewership than their counterparts. The same should apply to other forms of entertainment programming.

Fanship for Sports

A wealth of studies have examined sports fanship. Gantz and his colleagues conducted a series of surveys to investigate the motives and behaviors associated with TV sport fans (Gantz, 1981, 1985; Gantz & Wenner, 1991, 1995; Gantz et al., 1995). In his earliest investigation, Gantz (1981) found that while some viewing motives (such as to thrill in victory) seemed unique to certain sports programs, most motives for viewing sports cut across sports. He also found that fans often prepared for the televised game beforehand; were emotionally aroused and quite active while viewing, often yelling in pleasure or displeasure as the events transpired. Gantz and Wenner (1995) found that fanship made a difference in audience's viewing experience of televised sports. Fans were more likely to prepare for a game by following reports about it beforehand; were more strongly motivated to watch for the intrinsic pleasures associated with

watching; to be emotionally involved and overtly expressive while viewing; and, for better or worse, to have the game linger on after the final whistle was blown.

Hocking (1982) and Eastman and Land (1997) examined how people watch sports, whether they watch alone, in groups, or at the stadium. Location mattered. Those who gathered at sports bars to watch sports sought the social interaction and sense of community those settings provided. In addition to letting them participate in comfortable rituals (and drinking), shared viewership at bars legitimized their fanship and established them as real, serious fans.

Wann (1995) proposed and validated a scale tapping fan motivations. Consisting of eight motivation sets, the scale addressed fan eustress, self-esteem, escape, entertainment, economic, aesthetic, group affiliation, and family needs. A follow-up study found that fans who preferred an individual sport reported higher levels of aesthetic motivation while those with a preference for team sports had higher scores on the eustress and self-esteem subscales (Wann, Schrader, & Wilson, 1999). Lines (2000) suggested a motivation framework composed of personal, social and emotional dimensions. Sloan (1989) found that that the affective, cognitive, and behavioral responses of sport fans were similar to those of athletes.

At least with sports viewing, gender makes a difference. Differences between the sexes here may stay at an early age. Young children have different motives for watching mediated sports. For girls, mediated sports gave them access to a male-dominated world, let them talk about sports with others if they wished, and look at men's bodies without being questioned about it. For boys, mediated sports provided a common ground and sense of male identity (Lines, 1999, 2000).

Most studies examining gender differences in sports viewing have focused on adults. Gantz and Wenner (1991) found that, compared to women, more men responded like fans, even controlling initial levels of interest in sports. Men were more strongly motivated to watch televised sports and indeed spent more time watching those programs. The authors suggested that social norms, expectations, and responsibility might contribute to the gender differences they found. Gantz and Wenner (1995) followed up with a study of male and female sports fans. In this comparison, gender did not affect motivations, pre-viewing behaviors, or post-viewing behaviors.

Dietz-Uhler, Harick, End, and Jacquemotte (2000) assessed fanship among college students and found that about three-quarters of the sample categorized themselves sport fans.

Females were as likely as males to consider themselves as sport fans, but they identified themselves less strongly with the concept than did males. For males, being a sport fan is an important part of their identity. For females, being a sport fan meant “attending, watching, and cheering at sporting events, preferably in the company of family and friends” (p.227). James and Ridinger (2002) found that males offered significantly higher ratings as fans than those offered by females. Males also offered higher ratings for most of the sport consumption motives. Interestingly, there were two motives that females and males rated equally high: for the action of sports and the opportunity to escape from one's daily routine. Finally, rather than use gender as a marker, Wann and Waddill (2003) examined differences based on self-reported gender orientation (i.e., masculinity and femininity) (Wann & Waddill, 2003). Masculinity was the most powerful predictor of sport viewing motivations, but for family-oriented motivations, femininity was the most important predictor.

Fanship for Other Genres of Programming

Two decades ago, when Gantz (1981) explored the motives for watching televised sports, he found that viewers watched sports more actively than other entertainment programming. However, no additional research was conducted to investigate how various programming genres were similar or different in terms of viewer motivations and behaviors. Studies have been conducted about soap opera fans and, more recently, about fans for reality programs.

Harrington and Bielby (1995) recruited adults from soap opera fan clubs and found several underlying traits and behavioral patterns. Almost all of the fans they recruited were female and white. Most watched a good number of soap operas (that is, they were fans of the genre, not just a specific show), preferred to watch alone, and talked with others about the programs. Most also subscribed to fan magazines and kept up with the shows by following plot summaries provided by those vehicles. Bielby, Harrington and Bielby (1999) investigated fan activities at three sites: fan clubs, daytime magazines, and electronic bulletin boards. Magazines gave fans ownership of visible criticism. Similarly, electronic bulletin boards provided a sense of legitimacy to fans' reactions and critiques of storylines and provided a collective sense of identity. They represented an important outlet for those who had made a significant cognitive and affective investment in the ongoing storylines of their favorite soap operas. In examining the Internet community of fans for the soap opera *All My Children*, Baym (2000) offered a more

detailed account of online activities among soap opera fans. A soap fan herself, Baym participated and observed interactions among fans between 1990 and 1993 and then in 1998. Conversations among fans focused on interpreting story lines and discussing character motivations and actions. Fans also actively tried to interact with producers and script writers to make the stories develop along the lines they preferred.

In the last few years, reality shows have been widely promoted and enthusiastically embraced by a large number of viewers (Freeman, 2002). Nabi, Biely, Morgan, and Stitt (2002) tried to find out the appeal of reality-based TV programming and assessed the premise, held in the popular press, that viewers watched to satisfy voyeuristic instincts. That did not appear to be the case. Instead, viewers, especially those who watched on a regular basis, attended because these shows were perceived as relatively unique (e.g., unscripted, real people). The authors also found the gratifications obtained by viewers differed on the basis of the frequency with which they watched these programs. For example, regular viewers wanted to be entertained while periodic viewers were more likely to use reality TV to alleviate boredom. In essence, regular viewers seemed to be a more active audience than their counterparts. Jones (2003) identified eight reasons for watching reality shows. These included gaining insight into people's behavior; to be entertained; because the shows were real—and live; to predict the outcomes; and because people enjoyed being nosy.

Grossberg (1992) argued that “sensibility” differentiated fans from general viewers. Fans turned to and responded to programs with more affect than others who watched the same content. Foster (2004) found that fans of the program *Survivor* engaged in fantasy pools where they guessed the outcome of the show and competed with others, earning points based on the number of correct guesses they made. Through the online activity, *Survivor* fans battled each other, much as the participants did on screen. From that perspective, Foster argued that *Survivor*—and perhaps other programs in the genre—appeared distinct from other fan cultures.

Research Question

After documenting that TV sport fans were active, involved, and invested consumers of televised sports, Gantz and Wenner (1995) called on scholars to investigate the differences and similarities of fans across programming genres. At that time, the authors suggested that the viewing experiences for soap opera or prime time drama fans might have much in common with

the experience for sports fans. “Soap opera fans, for example, diligently follow their favorites, read accounts of ongoing storylines, and talk with each other about recent episodes. Similarly, devotees of weekly series may set aside time in order to watch each week’s episodes, get together with others to watch, talk while watching, respond emotionally to the unfolding drama, and eagerly anticipate each new episode” (p. 71-72). Yet, because soap operas were taped and fully scripted, viewers who cared might not celebrate as much or experience as much anguish as sports fans do after the significant victories or defeats.

When Gantz and Wenner called for that comparison, sports was the only regularly scheduled genre of live, unscripted, purely entertainment programming offered on television. Now, of course, reality programs come close to fitting the bill as well. All involve real people whose lives are affected by the programs. Viewers are told these shows are unscripted. Some are televised live. With the rise of reality programs as well as the continued popularity of other genres of programs that draw loyal audiences, it is reasonable to assess commonalities in the viewing experience across programming genres. This study, then, is driven by the following question:

RQ: In what ways is the viewing experience for sports fans similar to—and different from—the viewing experience for fans of other popular genres of programming?

METHOD

Self-administered questionnaires were given to students in six sections of two introductory media classes at a large public university in the midwest. The largely close-ended questionnaire was extensively pre-tested. Many of the items were derived from those used elsewhere (Gantz, 1981, 1985; Gantz & Wenner, 1991, 1995; Gantz et al., 1995) in studies of televised sports fans. Items that directly related to other programming genres were generated by students at the same university in 2003 and 2004 who responded to open-ended questions assessing viewership for soap operas, reality programs, situation comedies, daytime and late night talk shows, adult-oriented animation programs, and prime time dramas. Items derived from their open-ended responses were modified to fit with a close-ended questionnaire and integrated with the items for sports viewing. That questionnaire was tested with several hundred college students as part of a course learning experience and modified to address issues raised by the students in the course.

A total of 383 students completed the questionnaire. None of the students who completed the questionnaire had participated in any of the pre-testing stages. All volunteered. One of the study's authors was present in each class to administer the questionnaire. Males and females were almost equally represented (51.7% were male, 46.2% were females, and 2.1% did not report the gender). Their ages ranged from 18 to 57; on average, they were 20 years old ($SD = 3.3$). About one in five (17.7%) were freshmen; 44.9% were sophomores, 29.1% juniors, and 8.3% seniors. About three in ten (26%) still lived in a university dormitory; others lived in an apartment/condo, a sorority/fraternity, a house, or with parents (34.9%, 20.1%, 18.2%, .8% respectively).

In order to measure fanship, the questionnaire began by assessing how much respondents enjoyed watching each of eight genres of programming: sports, situation comedies, reality programs, dramas, night time talk/comedy programs, daytime talk shows, adult-oriented animated series, and soap operas. Current and popular examples were provided for each genre. Zero to ten scales were employed here—as they were for much of the questionnaire. With enjoyment, zero meant respondents did not enjoy the genre at all and ten meant they enjoyed watching that type of show a great deal. Students were then asked to estimate the number of hours each week during the school year they spent watching each of those programming genres. With sports, they also were asked to indicate the number of hours they spent each day watching sports news on television as well as following sports news on the web.

Fans of each of the genres other than sports self-selected based on their response to the enjoyment items. For the questions that followed, students focused on the type of show to which they gave the highest score. In case of a tie, students were told to pick one of those types. In all cases, they wrote down that type of show. All students also answered the same questions as the items pertained to watching their favorite sport. Sports fans were defined by the researchers based on responses to the questions that measured respondent enjoyment of sports programming, the amount of time they spent following sports news on TV, and the amount of time they followed sports news on the web. In this study, sports fans were those who scored at least an eight on the enjoyment item, watched at least an hour a day of sports news on television, and spent at least an hour daily following sports news on the web.

Most of the questionnaire focused on four elements of the viewing experience: what people did before their show came on; their motives for watching; the things they did and felt

while watching; and the behaviors and feelings they experienced after viewing. Across areas, respondents used a zero to ten scale, where zero meant the item did not apply to them at all and ten meant it applied a great deal to them. Respondents answered each item first as it related to sports and then as it related to their favorite type of show. Here are the items:

Pre-viewing Behaviors: Read a magazine or newspaper article about the show (game) beforehand; read something on the web about it; plan your schedule so you'll be able to watch; think about what might happen on the show (game); plan to get together with friends to watch; plan to go to a bar or restaurant to watch; participate in online chat groups about the show (game); talk with your friends (on the phone, face-to-face, on line) about it; make sure you are wearing something/holding something lucky or that you have worn/held before when watching the show (game); bet (for money) on the likely outcome; bet (not for money) on the likely outcome.

Motivations: Because there's nothing else on; to relieve stress and escape from pressures of the day; to have something to talk about with your friends; because you don't want to miss a thing on the show or game; because you care about the characters, players, teams, or people; it's something to do with a romantic partner; it relates to your life; to see who does well/who wins; to put aside responsibilities, including studying, for a while; because the shows/games are popular; to feel connected with the characters, players, or teams; to make fun of the characters, players, or teams; to spark your imagination; because others are watching; to be in the know; to follow your bets; because the characters, players, or teams are attractive; because you like the unpredictability of the shows/games; to observe fashion; it's an excuse to party; to add some excitement to your life; it's a chance to have an alcoholic drink; to feel better about yourself; to keep track of fantasy leagues; to learn life lessons; to be part of a group that's watching; it's a good excuse to get together with friends; to follow a specific player, character, or team; to kill time.

Concomitant Behaviors: Talk with others about the show or game; talk with others about other things; tell people to be quiet so you can hear everything; have an alcoholic drink; get drunk/hammered; bet on what might happen; yell out at the characters, players, teams or action; feel anxious; yell/argue/fight; have a snack or a meal; hope (or pray) for an outcome you want; study or read; feel excited; feel happy when your favorite character, player, or team does well; feel sad or depressed when your favorite character, player or team does poorly; feel mad when

your favorite character, player, or team does poorly.

Post-viewing Behaviors: Read about the characters, players, shows, teams, or games in the newspaper; watch more about it on TV; check the web to read more about it; participate in chat groups about it; hang out with your friends after watching; write to the actors, players, or teams; talk with your friends about it; stay in a good mood for awhile if your favorite character, player or team did well; stay in a bad mood for awhile if your favorite character, player, or team did poorly; don't do anything related to the show or game once it's over, you don't think about it until the next show or game; drink more.

Based on their responses to the three items measuring sports fanship, 107 respondents were identified as sports fans. Not surprisingly, most (86%) were male. Data from these respondents on their favorite type of program (other than sports) were excluded from the analyses. A total of 99 respondents identified themselves as situation comedy fans, 53 as fans of adult-oriented animation programs, 49 as drama fans, 35 as fans of reality programs, and 28 as fans of night time talk/comedy programs. Fans clearly enjoy watching their favorite genre. On the zero to ten enjoyment scale used, fans for each genre averaged from 8.7 to 9.6 (see Table 1). The remaining programming genres assessed (daytime talk shows and soap operas) did not receive enough support to warrant inclusion in the analyses.

For the analyses, programming genres were dummy coded. Four multivariate analysis of covariance (MANCOVA) was conducted separately on the pre-viewing behaviors, motivations, concomitant behaviors and post-viewing behaviors mentioned above using the genre of fans as a factor and gender as a covariant. The MANCOVA results showed a significant effect of the genre of fans on pre-viewing behaviors (Hotelling's $F(55, 1702) = 3.37, p < .001$), viewing motivations (Hotelling's $F(145, 1607) = 2.09, p < .001$), concomitant behaviors (Hotelling's $F(80, 1667) = 1.73, p < .001$), and post-viewing behaviors (Hotelling's $F(55, 1672) = 3.35, p < .001$). The covariant gender also had a significant effect on those four dependent variables (Hotelling's $F(11, 342) = 5.01, p < .001$; Hotelling's $F(29, 323) = 4.05, p < .001$; Hotelling's $F(16, 335) = 3.29, p < .001$; Hotelling's $F(11, 336) = 3.31, p < .001$ respectively). Post hoc multiple comparisons (Bonferroni tests) were conducted for each item.

RESULTS

Pre-viewing Behaviors

Fans of televised sports were likely to engage in a variety of pre-game planning and information search activities. They were most likely to say they would think about what might happen on the game and talk with friends about it. Both items received a mean response above seven on the zero to ten scale used (See Table 2). Sports fans were also likely to plan their schedule in advance so they are able to watch the game, plan to get together with friends to watch, and read something about the game on the web, in a magazine or newspaper article. Each of these items received a mean score of at least five.

Reality programming fans were most likely to talk with friends and plan to get together to watch the shows. Those were the only items with mean scores of at least five. Fans of prime time dramas as well as those favoring night-time talk and comedy shows were most likely to think about what might happen on the shows. Mean scores here were slightly above five. The strongest pre-viewing behavior for situation comedy and adult-oriented animation fans was planning to get together to watch. Mean scores here were below five.

Compared to fans of the other genres assessed, sports fans were clearly more active as they prepared to watch their favorite program. Differences among fan groups were significant for nine of the 11 pre-viewing activities assessed. In each case, the item applied most to sports fans. Compared to fans of situation comedies, reality programs, dramas, late night talk and comedy programs, and adult-oriented animated series, sports fans were more likely to think about what might happen on the game, read a magazine, newspaper, or website account beforehand, and plan their schedules so they would be able to watch. The only pre-program activities that didn't record differences between sports fans and any other group of fans were betting on likely outcomes for money and participating in online chat groups about the program. Across fan groups, participating in online chat groups received low scores. Reality show fans were most similar to sports fans. Both fans tend to plan to go to a bar to watch, talk with friends about the show/game, and plan to wear or hold something lucky when watching their favorite program.

Motivations

Sports fans offered at least modest agreement (i.e., mean score of at least five) with 11 of the 29 viewing motivations assessed (see Table 3). Leading the way here were five motivations that had mean responses above seven, including one that averaged at least eight. These fans turned to televised sports to see who does well/wins; because they care about the players and teams; so they could follow their favorite player or team; put aside responsibilities, including studying, for a while; and because they didn't want to miss a thing on the game. Other than putting aside responsibilities, these motivations signal an emotional commitment to a player or team. Sports fans turn in to watch because they care about the outcomes. For sports fans, viewing is purposive and content-oriented. It is not a last ditch alternative when there is nothing else to do or nothing else on television.

To see who wins or does well was the most important motivation for fans of situation-comedies, reality programs, prime time dramas and adult-oriented animation shows. Here, reality programs fans were closest to sports fans, with a mean score on the item above seven. Reality program fans offered at least modest agreement with five other motivations: to not miss anything on the show; to put aside responsibilities, including studying, for a while; for the unpredictability of the program; to follow specific characters; and, because they care about the characters. Beyond watching to see who did well, prime time drama fans watched because they didn't want to miss a thing; to put aside responsibilities; because they cared about the characters; and to follow characters. For adult-orientated animation fans, the only additional motivation with a mean of at least five was putting aside responsibilities. Those who liked night time talk and comedy shows were interested in not missing a thing as well as following their favorite character. For situation comedy fans, other than to see who does well, no motivation topped a mean of five.

For 20 of the 29 motivation items assessed, sports fans offered significantly different responses than those provided by at least one of the other groups of fans. In each case, sports fans appeared to be more motivated. Even with to see who will win or do well, the item that generated the highest score across most groups, sports fans offered significantly higher scores than those who preferred situation comedies, adult-oriented animation shows, and later night talk and comedy shows. Reality program fans were most closely aligned with sports fans. Significant differences between these two fanship groups emerged only four times. On one hand, sports fans

were more likely to care about characters, players, teams or people; not want to miss a thing; and keep track of fantasy leagues. On the other hand, reality fans were more likely to say they watched those shows to observe fashion. While that difference was significant, the item itself was among the least important motivations for viewing any of the programming genres measured. Sports fans more frequently differed with prime time drama, night time talk and comedy show, and situation-comedy fans and, considerably more often than not, with adult-oriented animation program fans. With the latter group, differences emerged for 19 items. In each case, the sports fan was more motivated.

Fans of other genres offered higher scores than sports fans for eight motivations, although differences here were quite modest and, almost always, not statistically significant. These included because the show is popular, to kill time, because others were watching, to be part of a group that's watching, because there is nothing else on, because the characters are attractive, and because it is something to do with a romantic partner. Interestingly, only the last two motivations relate to content. The other motivations fall along what uses and gratifications scholars might dub pass time and social utility motives.

Concomitant Behaviors

Across programming genres, respondents offered modest to strong support for a good number of the affective responses and concomitant behaviors assessed (see Table 4). Sports fans offered at least modest support for nine of the 16 behaviors assessed. Leading the list here, with a mean score above eight, was feeling happy when their favorite character, player, or team did well. That item also was the highest rated for fans of each of the remaining genres, although scores were not quite as high. Sports fans were also likely to strongly endorse (i.e., mean scores no lower than seven) feeling excited; feeling sad or depressed when their favorite player or team did poorly; and feeling mad when their favorite player or team did poorly. Four of the remaining five highly scored items for sports fans signified active viewing and keen interest in the action on the screen. Sports fans were likely to yell out at the characters, players, teams or action; talk with others about the game; hope or pray for an outcome they wanted; and feel anxious. The fifth item was having a snack or meal. That motivation received mean scores of at least five among reality, situation-comedy, and prime time drama fans as well.

With this set of items, reality program fans came closest to sports fans. In addition to feeling happy when their favorites did well, reality fans were likely to talk with others about the show; feel excited; hope or pray for the outcome they wanted; yell out at the characters and actions; feel mad when their favorite characters did poorly; and feel sad or depressed when their favorite characters did poorly. While their scores here were never as high as sports fans, they also were not significantly lower than those offered by sports fans.

Emotion also came into play for those who favored dramas. In addition to feeling happy when their favorite characters did well, prime time drama fans felt excited, sad or depressed, mad, and anxious, a function of what was transpiring on the screen. They also were likely to talk with others about the show as well as yell out at the characters. Situation comedy fans appeared to be less involved, although this may be a function of the items measured and the generally upbeat nature of situation-comedy fare. Those who enjoyed late night talk and comedy programs felt excited while watching and also talked with others about the shows. Save for feeling happy, adult-oriented animation fans had no mean scores above five. Perhaps they were content to watch and laugh.

Statistically significant differences between sports fans and at least one other fan group emerged for 12 of the 16 items assessed. These differences occurred most frequently, and generally were greatest, between sports fans and fans of adult-oriented animation programs (11 items). Sports fans were more actively involved in viewing. They appeared more focused on viewing and were more likely to feel—and display—a wide range of emotions. Eight differences were found for sports and situation comedy fans. Six differences were reported for sports and night time talk and comedy show fans. For the most part, differences again centered on emotional responses.

Post-Viewing Responses

Even after the game or program ended, sports fans seemed more actively involved with their favorite program. Mean scores for sports fans topped six for seven of the 11 items measured. Sports fans were most likely to say they stayed in a good mood for a while when their favorite player or team did well. They also were likely to watch more about it on TV; read about the players, teams or games in the newspaper as well as on the web; talk with friends about the game; and, stay in a bad mood for a while if their favorite player or team did poorly. The only

post-viewing item that scored above six that had nothing to do with the game was hanging out with friends after watching.

Staying in a good mood was the highest rated post-viewing response for two other fan groups—those who liked late night talk and comedy shows as well as those who preferred prime time drama. Reality program fans were most likely to say they would talk with friends after the program. Staying in a good mood came in second. Situation comedy fans were more likely to say they would hang out or talk with friends. For them staying in a good mood placed third. Animation fans were most likely to say they would hang out with friends although, for that group, no post-viewing item received a mean score of five.

Sports fans scored significantly higher than fans of at least one other program genre on eight of these items. Seven differences were found between sports and adult-oriented animation fans. Indeed, scores for these two fan groups tended to represent the end points on a continuum of mean scores for each item. Six differences were recorded with situation comedy as well as late night talk and comedy show fans; four with reality fans and three with those who preferred reality programs. Differences in this section reflect a mix of affective involvement as well as, perhaps, easy access to follow-up information. Sports fans again appeared more emotionally involved. They stayed in a good or bad mood longer than their counterparts. Sports fans also were able to tap into content not available to other groups. They capitalized on readily available, at times seemingly ubiquitous, reports and stories about the games on television sportscasts, the newspaper, and web sites.

Discussion

Nearly a decade ago, Gantz and Wenner called on social scientists to investigate the ways in which fans of televised sports were similar and different from fans of other television genres. This study the pre-viewing behaviors, viewing motivations, concomitant and post-viewing behaviors of sports fans and fans of situation comedy, reality shows, primetime dramas, and adult animation to determine whether there were similarities and differences across types of fans.

The short answer to Gantz and Wenner's charge is that sports fans, to a dramatic extent, stand apart from fans of other types of television programming. Compared to fans of other programming genres, sports fans were more likely to participate in activities typically associated with fanship. The only significant differences found were between sports fans and other types of

fan groups. No differences appeared across fans of other types programming. Although this could be a factor of small sample sizes in non-sports fan cells, these findings suggest that, save for sports, other types of fan groups are essentially the same.

Sports fans are strikingly different from all other types of fans in their pre-viewing and post-viewing behaviors. Sports fans seemed to stretch out rituals associated with viewing sports as long as possible. They begin early, thinking about an upcoming game, searching for information about it on the Web and in print, talking about it with their friends, and planning their schedules so as not to miss any of the action. Even after the game ends, the game continues to play an important role in the sports fan's media diet. Sports fans watch news and recap programs and read about the outcome on the Web and in print. Unlike any other type of fan, sports fans relive the game again and again. Although survey data preclude establishing causal linkages, it is interesting to consider whether the perpetual replay of sports events factors into why sports fans' moods are so affected by the outcome of televised sports.

Perhaps the desire to extend the sports viewing experience stems from the fact that sports fans, more than fans of other programming genres, identify with the competing athletes as well as identify with other fans. Serious fans of particular teams, players, or sports in general are often consider their fanship as a significant part of their personal identity. Fans have a vested interest in seeing that their team does well. When one's favorite team does well, victory serves to validate the mental (and often financial, if one considers purchasing team-related merchandise) investment fans make in the team. Validation here is positive and is likely to be linked with enhanced self-esteem. Reliving games elongates these positive thoughts and feelings. Talking about games with other fans allows fans to feel part of a cohesive group with common interests. This sense of inclusion also seems likely to result in positive thoughts and emotions. A desire to cling to these positive experiences seems likely to draw fans towards coverage of sports both before and after the actual competition.

It is also worth commenting on the clear gender difference in preference for sports and reality shows. Fans of the former, as could be expected, were mostly male. What may have been surprising, however, was how heavily female-skewed the fan base was for the reality programming. Although gender differences were statistically controlled, it is interesting to speculate whether reality programming may become a vehicle for fan identity among females that is analogous to sports programming for males. There are, at least thematically, very striking

commonalities between the two genres. Sports and reality programming deal with human competition for which the outcomes have a substantial impact on individuals who viewers come to know and perhaps even care for. But, there are also subtle differences between the genres that may make the reality genre more appealing to females. First, the contests in reality shows showcase a substantial interpersonal dimension. While sports contests feature rivals and rivalries, outcomes are dependent on athletic performance. It may be that females are more entertained or interested in observing the group and/or interpersonal dynamics prevalent in reality programming than the more physical conflict typically found with sports. This possibility deserves further study. Second, reality programming is constrained by the clock. Viewers know that, no matter what happens in the competition, an outcome will be determined at the close of that evening's episode some 30 or 60 minutes later. This may be quite appealing to female viewers who are not as interested in highly suspenseful television fare as are males.

Table 1. Fans' Gender, Enjoyment of and Time Spent on Different TV Genres

Genres	<i>N</i> and % of Gender*		<i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)of Fans' Self-reported Enjoyment**	<i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>) of Fans' Self-reported Time***
	Male	Female		
Sport	92 (86.0%)	15 (14.0%)	9.6 (.7)	13.2 (13.7)
Sit Comedy	20 (20.6%)	77 (79.4%)	9.3 (1.1)	4.8 (3.9)
Reality Show	5 (15.2%)	28 (84.8%)	9.0 (1.2)	3.7 (2.1)
Drama	11 (22.4%)	38 (77.6%)	9.0 (1.4)	4.4 (3.3)
Adult Animation	43 (82.7%)	9 (17.3%)	9.2 (1.9)	4.2 (2.9)
Night Talk Show	21 (75.0%)	7 (25.0%)	8.7 (1.4)	3.8 (2.4)

Note: * Two situation comedy fans, two reality show fan, and one adult-oriented animation fan did not report gender. Percentages here were based on the numbers of valid cases.

** On an 11-point scale where zero meant the respondent did not enjoy the genre at all and ten meant the respondent enjoyed the genre a great deal.

*** Hours per week.

Table 2. Summary of Means and MANCOVA for Pre-viewing Behaviors of Fans

Behaviors	Sport (<i>N</i> = 107) <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	Sit Com (<i>N</i> = 99) <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	Reality (<i>N</i> = 35) <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	Drama (<i>N</i> = 49) <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	Animation (<i>N</i> = 53) <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	Night Show (<i>N</i> = 28) <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)
Think about*	7.4 (.4) _{abcde}	4.4 (.4) _a	4.7 (.6) _b	5.1 (.5) _c	4.1 (.5) _d	5.2 (.6) _e
Talk with friends*	7.2 (.4) _{abcd}	4.7 (.4) _a	5.4 (.6)	4.8 (.5) _b	3.6 (.5) _c	4.7 (.6) _d
Plan schedule*	6.9 (.3) _{abcde}	3.2 (.3) _a	4.1 (.6) _b	4.2 (.5) _c	3.2 (.5) _d	4.1 (.6) _e
Read on Web*	6.4 (.3) _{abcde}	2.5 (.3) _a	2.5 (.5) _b	3.1 (.4) _c	1.7 (.4) _d	3.3 (.6) _e
Plan get together*	6.4 (.4) _a	4.9 (.4)	5.0 (.6)	5.0 (.5)	4.3 (.5) _a	4.8 (.7)
Read*	5.5 (.3) _{abcde}	2.0 (.3) _a	2.1 (.5) _b	2.5 (.4) _c	1.5 (.4) _d	1.9 (.5) _e
Plan to go to a bar*	4.7 (.4) _{ab}	2.9 (.4) _a	3.1 (.6)	2.8 (.5)	1.9 (.5) _b	3.0 (.7)
Wear*	3.9 (.4) _{abcd}	1.6 (.4) _a	2.0 (.6)	1.8 (.5) _b	1.0 (.5) _c	1.4 (.6) _d
Bet (not for money)	3.2 (.4)	2.2 (.4)	3.1 (.6)	2.4 (.5)	1.6 (.5)	2.9 (.7)
Bet (for money) *	2.3 (.3) _a	1.4 (.3)	1.5 (.5)	2.1 (.4)	1.0 (.4) _a	1.7 (.5)
Chat online	1.0 (.2)	.2 (.2)	.2 (.3)	.5 (.2)	.3 (.2)	.8 (.3)

Note: Common lowercase letters following group means indicate significant ($p < .05$) Bonferroni comparison between groups.

* Significant ($p < .05$) main effect on item, controlling for gender.

Table 3. Summary of Means and MANCOVA for Motives of Fans

Motives	Sport	Sit Com	Reality	Drama	Animation	Night Show
	(<i>N</i> = 107) <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	(<i>N</i> = 99) <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	(<i>N</i> = 35) <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	(<i>N</i> = 49) <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	(<i>N</i> = 53) <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	(<i>N</i> = 28) <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)
See who does well/wins*	8.2 (.4) _{abc}	6.0 (.4) _a	7.2 (.6)	6.4 (.5)	5.7 (.5) _b	5.5 (.6) _c
Care about*	7.9 (.4) _{abcde}	4.4 (.4) _a	5.1 (.6) _b	5.1 (.5) _c	4.0 (.5) _d	4.5 (.7) _e
Follow a character*	7.8 (.4) _{abcd}	4.5 (.4) _a	5.4 (.7)	5.0 (.5) _b	4.1 (.5) _c	5.2 (.7) _d
Put aside responsibilities*	7.3 (.5) _{ab}	4.9 (.5) _a	6.3 (.8)	5.6 (.7)	5.0 (.7) _b	3.3 (.6)
Not miss anything*	7.1 (.4) _{abcde}	4.8 (.4) _a	6.8 (.7) _{bf}	5.9 (.5) _c	4.3 (.5) _{df}	6.3 (.7) _e
Like the unpredictability*	6.6 (.4) _{abc}	3.5 (.4) _{ad}	5.8 (.6) _d	4.0 (.5) _b	3.8 (.5) _c	4.4 (.7)
Feel connected*	5.8 (.4) _{abcd}	2.8 (.4) _a	4.4 (.7)	3.8 (.5) _b	2.2 (.5) _c	2.9 (.7) _d
Relieve stress*	5.2 (.3) _{abc}	2.3 (.3) _a	4.1 (.6)	3.1 (.5) _b	2.6 (.4) _c	3.3 (.6)
To be in the know*	5.2 (.4) _a	3.6 (.4)	3.9 (.6)	3.8 (.5)	3.1 (.5) _a	3.7 (.7)
To get together	5.1 (.4)	4.8 (.4)	4.5 (.7)	4.7 (.5)	4.1 (.5)	4.2 (.7)
Add excitement *	5.1 (.4) _{abcd}	2.9 (.4) _a	3.7 (.6)	2.7 (.5) _b	2.7 (.5) _c	2.4 (.6) _d
Something to talk*	4.8 (.4) _{ab}	3.0 (.4) _a	4.5 (.6) _c	3.8 (.5)	2.1 (.5) _{bc}	3.4 (.6)
It is popular*	4.7 (.4) _{ab}	4.0 (.4)	4.8 (.6) _c	3.8 (.5)	2.2 (.5) _{ac}	2.5 (.7) _b
Relate to your life*	4.3 (.4) _{abc}	2.1 (.4) _a	3.8 (.6) _d	2.5 (.5)	1.4 (.5) _{bd}	1.8 (.6) _c
Keep track: fantasy*	3.6 (.3) _{abcde}	.8 (.3) _a	1.0 (.5) _b	.9 (.4) _c	.5 (.4) _d	.7 (.5) _e
To kill time	3.6 (.4)	3.9 (.4)	4.2 (.6)	4.0 (.5)	3.5 (.5)	3.4 (.7)
An excuse to party	3.4 (.4)	2.9 (.4)	2.1 (.6)	3.0 (.5)	2.5 (.5)	2.7 (.7)
Chance to have a drink	3.3 (.5)	3.3 (.6)	2.2 (.9)	2.3 (.7)	2.2 (.7)	2.3 (1.0)
Make fun	3.3 (.3)	2.1 (.4)	2.6 (.6)	2.7 (.5)	2.2 (.5)	2.6 (.6)
Others are watching	3.2 (.4)	3.8 (.4)	4.0 (.6)	3.3 (.5)	2.7 (.5)	3.2 (.7)
To be part of a group	2.7 (.4)	3.4 (.4)	3.1 (.6)	2.5 (.5)	2.0 (.5)	3.0 (.6)
Attractive characters*	2.7 (.3) _a	1.9 (.3)	3.0 (.6)	2.1 (.5)	1.1 (.4) _a	1.6 (.6)
Follow your bets*	2.5 (.3) _a	1.1 (.3)	1.4 (.5)	1.7 (.4)	.6 (.4) _a	1.5 (.6)
Spark your imagination*	2.4 (.3) _a	1.6 (.3)	1.7 (.5)	1.2 (.4)	.9 (.4) _a	1.0 (.5)
Nothing else on TV	2.3 (.4)	3.8 (.4)	3.4 (.6)	3.2 (.5)	3.1 (.5)	2.5 (.7)
Feel Better *	2.0 (.3) _a	.9 (.3)	1.1 (.4)	.7 (.4)	.3 (.3)	.6 (.5) _a
Do with a partner	1.7 (.3)	1.6 (.3)	2.3 (.5)	2.1 (.4)	.7 (.4)	2.5 (.6)
Learn life lessons*	1.3 (.2) _a	.6 (.2)	1.0 (.4)	.7 (.3)	.1 (.3) _a	.6 (.4)
To observe fashion*	.4 (.2) _a	.3 (.2) _b	1.5 (.3) _{abc}	.5 (.2)	0.1 (.2) _c	.5 (.3)

Note: Common lowercase letters following group means indicate significant Bonferroni comparison between groups.

* Significant ($p < .05$) main effect on item, controlling for gender.

Table 4. Summary of Means and MANCOVA for Concomitant Responses of Fans

Behaviors	Sport ($N = 107$) <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	Sit Com ($N = 99$) <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	Reality ($N = 35$) <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	Drama ($N = 49$) <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	Animation ($N = 53$) <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	Night Show ($N = 28$) <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)
Happy when does well*	8.6 (.4) _{abc}	6.3 (.4) _a	7.7 (.6)	7.5 (.5)	5.9 (.5) _b	5.8 (.7) _c
Excited*	7.7 (.4) _{abc}	5.1 (.4) _a	6.1 (.6)	6.3 (.5)	4.8 (.5) _b	5.3 (.7) _c
Sad when does poorly*	7.3 (.4) _{abc}	4.1 (.4) _a	5.2 (.7)	5.8 (.6)	3.5 (.5) _b	4.6 (.7) _c
Mad when poorly*	7.1 (.4) _{abc}	4.1 (.4) _a	5.5 (.7)	5.1 (.5)	3.1 (.5) _b	4.0 (.7) _c
Yell out at the character*	6.9 (.4) _{ab}	4.3 (.4) _a	5.3 (.7)	5.3 (.6)	3.8 (.5) _b	4.8 (.7)
Hope/pray*	6.9 (.4) _{abcd}	4.2 (.4) _a	5.9 (.7)	4.7 (.6) _b	3.1 (.5) _c	4.4 (.7) _d
Talk about show/game*	6.8 (.4) _a	6.3 (.4)	6.7 (.6)	6.4 (.5)	4.8 (.5) _a	5.3 (.7)
Anxious*	6.4 (.4) _a	4.6 (.4)	4.3 (.7)	5.0 (.6)	3.4 (.5) _a	4.6 (.7)
Have a snack/meal*	6.3 (.4) _a	5.6 (.4)	5.8 (.6)	5.5 (.5)	4.1 (.5) _a	4.9 (.7)
Argue/fight*	4.8 (.4) _{ab}	2.1 (.4) _a	2.9 (.6)	2.9 (.5)	1.7 (.5) _b	2.9 (.7)
Tell people to be quiet*	4.6 (.4) _{ab}	2.3 (.4) _a	3.1 (.6)	2.8 (.5)	1.9 (.5) _b	3.1 (.7)
Talk about other things	4.3 (.4)	5.3 (.4)	4.4 (.6)	4.7 (.5)	4.3 (.5)	4.6 (.7)
Have an alcoholic drink	4.1 (.4)	2.9 (.4)	2.2 (.7)	3.5 (.5)	3.3 (.5)	2.8 (.7)
Bet on outcome*	2.9 (.3) _a	2.1 (.3)	2.2 (.6)	2.4 (.5)	1.0 (.4)	1.9 (.6) _a
Get drunk/hammered	2.5 (.3)	2.1 (.4)	1.6 (.6)	2.4 (.5)	1.6 (.5)	1.1 (.6)
Study/read	2.0 (.3)	2.3 (.3)	1.7 (.5)	1.3 (.4)	2.2 (.4)	1.6 (.6)

Note: Common lowercase letters following group means indicate significant Bonferroni comparison between groups.

* Significant ($p < .05$) main effect on item, controlling for gender.

Table 5. Summary of Means and MANCOVA for Post-viewing Responses of Fans

Behaviors	Sport (<i>N</i> = 107) <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	Sit Com (<i>N</i> = 99) <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	Reality (<i>N</i> = 35) <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	Drama (<i>N</i> = 49) <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	Animation (<i>N</i> = 53) <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	Night Show (<i>N</i> = 28) <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)
Good mood if did well*	7.8 (.4) _{abc}	5.6 (.4) _a	6.3 (.7)	6.2 (.6)	4.4 (.5) _b	5.2 (.7) _c
Watch more about it on TV*	7.6 (.4) _{abcde}	3.6 (.4) _a	4.7 (.6) _b	4.8 (.5) _c	3.3 (.5) _d	3.7 (.6) _e
Read about it*	7.3 (.4) _{abcde}	3.2 (.4) _a	3.5 (.6) _b	4.7 (.5) _c	2.5 (.5) _d	4.6 (.7) _e
Talk with friends*	7.1 (.4) _{ab}	5.7 (.4)	6.4 (.6)	5.8 (.5)	4.7 (.5) _a	4.8 (.7) _b
Read about it on web*	6.9 (.4) _{abcde}	1.7 (.4) _a	2.5 (.6) _b	3.2 (.5) _c	2.1 (.5) _d	3.0 (.6) _e
Hang out	6.8 (.7)	5.9 (.7)	4.6 (1.1)	6.1 (.9)	4.8 (.9)	4.4 (1.2)
Bad mood if did poorly*	6.0 (.4) _{abcd}	3.0 (.4) _a	4.0 (.6)	3.6 (.5) _b	1.8 (.5) _c	3.8 (.7) _d
Drink more	2.8 (.4)	2.1 (.4)	1.9 (.6)	2.6 (.5)	2.1 (.5)	2.5 (.7)
Do nothing about it	2.3 (.4)	3.3 (.4)	3.9 (.6)	3.9 (.5)	2.9 (.5)	2.9 (.7)
Chat about it online*	1.2 (.2) _a	.3 (.2) _a	.3 (.4)	1.0 (.3)	.3 (.3)	.5 (.4)
Write to the actors/players*	.8 (.2) _a	.3 (.2)	.7 (.3)	.4 (.3)	-0.1 (.3) _a	.8 (.3)

Note: Common lowercase letters following group means indicate significant Bonferroni comparison between groups.

* Significant ($p < .05$) main effect on item, controlling for gender.

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