

## To Play or Not to Play! Online Fantasy Football Consumption Motives and the Relationship with Attitude and Future Behavioural Intentions

Professor Manillal Dhurup

Executive Dean, Faculty of Management Sciences  
Vaal University of Technology, Private Bag X021, Vanderbijlpark, 1900  
Email: royd@vut.ac.za.

Nobukhosi Dlodlo

Lecturer, Department of Marketing and Sport Management  
Faculty of Management Sciences, Vaal University of Technology  
Private Bag X021, Vanderbijlpark, 1900  
Email: nobukhosid@vut.ac.za

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### Abstract

*The immense popularity of professional sports and fantasy football in particular, has brought fans to the Internet in search of ways to enjoy their favourite teams' performances. The study investigates the underlying dimensions that influence online fantasy football motivation and the relationship with attitudes towards its usage and future behavioural intentions. A quantitative research approach was applied using a self-administered questionnaire and data was analysed from 193 respondents. Through factor analysis, a five-factor structure was established with eustress, achievement/reward, aesthetics, enjoyment and ease of use being identified as the primary motivational dimensions towards fantasy football. Positive correlations were reported along all five dimensions. In addition the linear regression analysis showed strong predictive relationship between the underlying motives with attitude. Positive and significant relationship were also found between attitude and future intentions to participate in fantasy football. The findings presented in this study may be explored further in other sports contexts. However, sports marketers may gain invaluable insight towards the development of a comprehensive strategy towards a fantasy sports' marketing mix. Similarly, sports governing bodies may be empowered to formulate a national regulatory framework along the identified dimensions.*

**Keywords:** Fantasy football, consumption, motives, attitude, future intentions.

### 1. Introduction

The explosive growth of the Internet has dramatically changed the business environment in sport consumption patterns. According to Crawford (2004), not only can an interest in a sport help to draw interest to the digital version of that sport, but playing the digital version can lead to more of an interest in the real sport. In addition, the increased levels of interactivity, community and personalisation potential that are often encountered on the Internet platforms have significantly shifted market power from suppliers to consumers (McDaniel & Sullivan, 1998). This means that the success of online sports consumption in the 21<sup>st</sup> century now lies in the hands of the fans, rather than the teams alone (Raney, 2006). In particular, the online sport phenomenon, fantasy sport, has received unparalleled acceptance, in many countries (Mahan & McDaniel, 2006). In South Africa, the fantasy sports industry continues to expand with fans presenting a potentially lucrative target market for sports' advertisers. It is therefore imperative for marketers to better understand the motives behind fantasy sports participation. In particular, it seems prudent to determine the underlying factors that influence fantasy football participation and consumption decisions related to what Farquhar and Meeds (2007:21) characterise as 'a new form of sports spectatorship'. Among various types of fantasy sports games, the study focused on online fantasy football because it is the most popular fantasy sports league in South Africa.

In the absence of a universal definition of fantasy football, reference is made to the published work of other scholars within the context of how the game/s works. The Fantasy Sports Trade Association (2013) defines fantasy football as a simulated game involving athletic events whereby the patrons manage an imaginary sport team and compete for money and prizes against teams put together by other patrons. Spinda and Haridakis (2008) defined fantasy

football as an online sporting activity designed to delight and to a smaller degree; enlighten, through the exhibition of the fortunes and wisdom of others, but also through the display of special skills by participants. This befitting description is based on the notion that fantasy sports participants' play a dual role as team managers as well as fans of those same teams, which they have drafted. Fantasy patrons first join a league by choosing their players and assigning them to a team roster by random draws (Serazio, 2008). The participants exhibit a great sense of control while they co-produce results of their sporting competitions (Davis & Duncan, 2006). They are actively involved in building a competing team based on the statistics that are generated by real individual players or teams on the season-long leagues or single-day tournaments (Brown, Billings & Ruihley, 2012). Broadband media and high-speed computers have revolutionised information accessibility and statistical calculations for fantasy sports games (Roy & Goss, 2007). While industry research indicates that a majority of the fantasy sports websites are devoted to football games; there are virtually a copious of fantasy contests being offered in almost every other sport imaginable including baseball, golf, auto racing, tennis, cricket and rugby, among others (FSTA, 2013).

According to the Fantasy Sports Trade Association (2013), online participants spend an average of over US\$460 annually and use Internet three hours weekly to manage their virtual teams. Though fantasy sports involve no illicit substances, a growing number of participants find themselves constantly in need of their fantasy 'fix.' These self-proclaimed 'fantasy addicts' cannot resist planning vacations around Internet access so they can update their fantasy rosters, purchasing electronic devices complete with sports tickers that provide up-to-the-minute statistics and even quitting their jobs in order to devote more time to the management of their fantasy teams (Roy & Goss, 2007). Given the estimated number of participants and time and monetary investment, the growth of fantasy sport as a marketing platform remains unquestionable. The Premier League.com has over 1.6 million players in Britain (Ruihley, 2010), comprising 2.5% of the total population. In addition, fantasy cricket attracts 750,000 players in India alone and the population numbers are expected to rise considerably in most of the African countries where this game is considered as being in its infancy (Thompson, 2007).

### 1.1 Underlying theoretical context for the study

A variety of empirical studies have been conducted by previous scholars to explain the user acceptance and motives behind sports spectatorship, attendance and fandom. Through the initial efforts of scholars such as Wann (1995); Trail and James (2001) as well as Trail, Robinson, Dick and Gillentine (2003); a great amount of work has also been conducted related to how a number of variables manifest themselves in consumer behaviour, rationalisation and intention to participate in sports activities. For example, Raney (2006) and Ruihley (2010) outlined three main categories of sport fan motivations namely: *emotional* (entertainment, eustress, self-esteem and escape), *cognitive* (learning and aesthetic) and *behavioural* motives (release, companionship, group affiliation, family and economics).

The aforementioned dimensions help to present an overview of the prototypical sports fan and further assist to create a larger conversation and discourse by providing relatable experiences of the fantasy patrons. However, most of these variables are somewhat extraneous in the context of fantasy sports. Studies of Trail *et al.* (2003) have pointed out that fantasy sport play is adjacent but not equivalent to traditional sport media consumption habits and attitudes. Fantasy sport participants share some characteristics of traditional sport fans in that both groups follow televised sport contests (Smith, Synowka, & Smith, 2010). However, fantasy sport participants' viewing extends to players across an array of teams; rather than focusing on a single team and they are actively engaged in choosing and managing the players on their teams, leading to more active (rather than passive) sport participation (Serazio, 2008). Moreover, a sharp contrast has been observed between the target market for real and fantasy patrons; with the latter portraying a remarkably upscale and desirable demographic of young to middle-aged patrons (Dwyer & Drayer, 2010). There is, indeed, something unique that provides the impetus for participation within fantasy sports interfaces, especially considering that this form of sports consumption is more likely to occur online.

Roy and Goss (2007) proposed a conceptual framework for the understanding of the fantasy sport participant, proposing that there are psychological, social and marketer-controlled needs that can be fulfilled through participation in fantasy sport leagues. Spinda and Haridakis (2008) defined these types of needs as motives for play, uncovering six main factors: ownership, achievement (self-esteem), escape (pass time), socialization, bragging rights and amusement.

### 1.2 To play or not to play! Underlying motivators behind fantasy football participation

In general, motives refer to the causes or reasons that underlie a given behaviour. Thus, motives for sport participation

and sport spectatorship may provide useful starting points for exploring motivation to participate in fantasy sport. Consistent with studies of Wann (1995), Farquhar and Meeds (2007) uncovered several needs that are satisfied through participation in fantasy sport and labelled arousal as the primary motivation. Arousal concerns the emotional stimulation received as a result of participating or consuming a sport activity (Wann, 1995). This dimension is also referred to as 'eustress', drama and/or excitement one might receive from consuming a last-second play to win or lose a contest or a close call at the end of a sporting contest (Brown *et al.*, 2012). The players undergo intense coveted agony or positive stress when watching or listening to their players perform and score points for the fantasy team or when they watch the players of the competing fantasy team and hope that they perform very poorly. If the game is closely contested, the patrons are energized and internally stimulated to go online to search for statistics, read an article about how a player might perform and consequently dabble back and forth between teams and players, in order to bask in the eventual glory of the winning team (Spinda & Haridakis, 2008). Perhaps this suspense and the uncertainty of outcomes which characterises fantasy sport would be one of the main factors explaining the ever-growing participation in fantasy football (Bernhard & Eade, 2005). Based on the foregoing discourse of literature the following hypothesis is formulated for this study:

*1.2.1 H<sub>1</sub>: Perceived eustress (PEu) is positively related to attitudes toward fantasy football consumption.*

The participants' level of knowledge, familiarity, involvement in the games and agreeably so, the probability of winning the fantasy games are largely determined by chance (Kwak, Lim, Lee & Mahan, 2010). It is within the same vein that some scholars such as Bernhard and Eade (2005) and Davis and Duncan (2006) have rated fantasy sport on a similar pedestal as gambling or the two as 'a flip side of a coin.' Fantasy sport involves a monetary investment for the participants based on the outcome of the results in real-world performances of team players (Dwyer & Yongjae, 2011; Billings & Ruihley, 2013). Moreover, Spinda and Haridakis (2008) add the component of self-esteem while defining the parameters of the achievement motive. In other words, personal gratification or accomplishment is another indirect and non-monetary reward that examines how a person feels in relation to a team's performance; and therefore influences fantasy football consumption (Bernhard & Eade, 2005). In this regard, the following hypothesis is formulated for the study:

*1.2.2 H<sub>2</sub>: Perceived achievement (reward) (PAR) is positively related to attitudes toward fantasy football consumption.*

Wann (1995) found that aesthetics as defined by skill, artistry and mastery of the game is critical to the fantasy sport fan experience and the elevated ratings in the area of football consumption support this conclusion. However, aesthetics is considered as being a weak but significant predictor of participants' underlying motives (Lee, Seo & Green, 2013). This is because fantasy football is largely based on the game results rather than the game itself (Seo & Green, 2008). When Wayne Rooney hits his passion-driven penalty goal of the season or Louis Suarez throws perfect passes, spectators appreciate the seemingly effortless appeal of professional football games. In this regard, emphasis may be placed on creating gracefulness and attractive graphic displays of the game on the fantasy websites with a view to deliver a complete virtual experience for the participants. It is against this background that the following hypothesis is formulated for the current study:

*1.2.3 H<sub>3</sub>: Perceived aesthetics (PAe) is positively related to attitudes toward fantasy football consumption.*

Because of its unique content-rich characteristics, fantasy football can utilise its entertainment value effectively in the online environment to provide branded and enjoyable customer experiences (Mahan & McDaniel, 2006). For example, one user objective would be to employ the Internet to help achieve success in a competitive environment (i.e. use it to win one's fantasy league). Enjoyment is a newly created dimension that is rooted on the studies of Brown *et al.* (2012) who argued that if the participant takes pleasure in the fantasy activity, then ultimately their attitude and motivations for fantasy sport participation will be positively altered during the life cycle of the fantasy sports fan. The entertainment motive measures excitement and amusement that are derived from participating in the activity (Seo & Green, 2008). In this regard, the following hypothesis is formulated for the study:

1.2.4 H4: Perceived enjoyment (PE) is positively related to attitude towards fantasy football consumption.

Given the various interactive functions of fantasy sports leagues (e.g. drafts, trades, injury reports, line-ups and message boards), it is important for patrons to perceive the fantasy football experience as being free of mental effort and the service as easy to use (Kwak & McDaniel, 2011). In the current study, ease of use is considered one of the underlying motivations towards fantasy football participation. Relatedly, previous technological adoption studies have found a positive link between ease of technology usage and attitude (Davis, 1989). It is against this background that the following hypothesis is formulated for the current study:

1.2.5 H5: Perceived ease of use (PEOU) is positively related to attitude towards fantasy football consumption.

The study proposes a direct relationship between two dependent variables, namely; attitude and future intentions (Davis, 1989; Hsu & Lin, 2008; Kwak & McDaniel, 2011). Attitude relates to the personal evaluation of a particular entity with some degree of favour or disfavour as this will have a bearing on the consumption behaviour of users on various fantasy football websites (Bagozzi, 2007). Relatedly, attitude (ATT) towards the particular technology will predict the individual's rational behaviour and ultimately future intention (FI) to participate in fantasy football. Logically, it is expected that once positive rationalisation and future behavioural intentions are attained, this will influence the actual usage of fantasy football websites. In this regard, the following hypothesis is formulated for the study:

1.2.6 H6: Attitude (ATT) is positively related toward future intentions to participate in fantasy football leagues.

Figure 1 depicts the Fantasy Football Consumption Framework (FFCF) that is proposed for the current study.

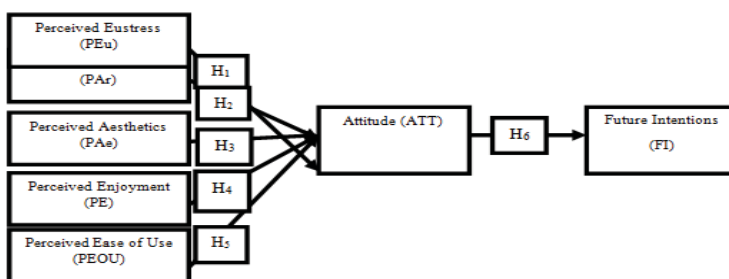


Figure 1: Proposed research framework (FFMF)

Given that a fantasy sports league is an extended form of sports spectatorship (Davis & Duncan, 2006), one's hedonic attitude towards following the sport through online technology would be expected to be positively associated with the constructs that were highlighted in the foregoing discourse, hence: a positive, predictive relationship is expected between perceived eustress (PEu), perceived achievement/reward (Par), perceived aesthetics (PAe), perceived enjoyment (PE) and perceived ease of use (PEOU) with attitude towards the usage of online technology. In addition, the attitude (ATT) variable is expected to act as a variable that is fundamental towards the determination of patrons' future intentions to participate in fantasy football leagues among South Africans.

2. Methods

Literature indicates that in order to examine the various motives behind fantasy football participation, quantitative research designs are deemed appropriate (Ruihler, 2010; Brown *et al.*, 2012). Consequently a self-administered survey of fantasy football participants was undertaken.

2.1 Sample

Participants in the study were a purposively selected sample of 250 fantasy football participants residing in the Gauteng province of South Africa. This sample size is in line with previous research on fantasy sports' participation (Seo & Green,

2008; Suh *et al.*, 2010; Kwak & McDaniel, 2011; Billings & Ruihley, 2013). In a purposive sample, the sample elements are selected because it is expected that they can serve the research purpose (Churchill & Iacobucci 2002). Only those individuals; both males and females older than 18 years; who had been previously involved in playing fantasy football leagues were selected because it was believed that they could offer valuable contributions to answer the research hypotheses. Consequentially, the study deliberately utilised inclusion-exclusion criteria by incorporating only users with some 'minimum experience' ( $\geq 12$  months) in playing fantasy football rather than those without such experience, with a view to facilitating the external validity of this study.

## 2.2 Measuring instrument and data collection

A multidimensional questionnaire that was adapted from previous studies was employed, comprising two sections. In section A, the respondents were requested to indicate their levels of agreement on a 5-point Likert scale which was anchored from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The achievement/reward subscale was adapted from the fantasy sport motivation inventory (FSMI) developed by Lee *et al.* (2013) while the ease of use subscale was adapted from the studies of Kwak and McDaniel (2011). Similarly, the enjoyment subscale was adapted from Brown *et al.* (2012). The fantasy sports motives scale (FSMS) developed by Spinda and Haridakis (2008) was adapted to formulate the eustress subscale in the current study. Additionally, the scales of Wann (1995) and Trail *et al.* (2003) were used as baseline frameworks for this dimension. In addition, the aesthetics subscale was adapted from the studies of Spinda and Haridakis (2008). While these scales were developed specifically for sports consumption in various contexts and settings, relevant modifications were made to the original variables used by these researchers in order to capture the holistic online fantasy experiences of the respondents. One of the dependent measures captured respondents' hedonic attitude towards participating in an online fantasy football league and was adapted from Kwak and McDaniel (2011). Similarly, the other dependent measure, future intentions to participate in fantasy football was adapted from the studies of Ruihley (2010). Section B covered demographic profile of the participants such as: gender, age, ethnic group, education levels, fantasy football websites patronised and frequency of participation. These questions were structured on a dichotomous, multiple choice and ranking-order closed-ended scales.

One of the researchers was involved in the fieldwork and played an active role in explaining the purpose of the study to the respondents. To ensure randomisation, data were collected at different times and days of the week. The respondents were given adequate time to complete the questionnaire and were assured of various ethical considerations such as the participants' right to anonymity and confidentiality. Informed consent was observed by utilising an accompanying letter and opening statements on the questionnaire, citing the purpose, nature and legitimacy of the study. Voluntary participation was encouraged and the respondents were informed that they were able to withdraw from the study if they wished to do so. Of the 250 questionnaires that were distributed, only 193 were returned and considered usable for the current study.

## 2.3 Reliability and validity

Since the fantasy football motivational scale was adapted from several previous studies, it was necessary therefore, to verify the internal consistency (reliability) and validity among the sub-scales. According to Malhotra (2010), Cronbach's alpha values between 0.60 and 0.69 are deemed acceptable whilst values above 0.70 are regarded as satisfactory. Individual coefficient alpha values for the subscales ranged between 0.850 and 0.875. Additionally, the Cronbach alpha value for the entire scale was 0.920 revealing the internal consistency and homogeneity of the entire scale.

In order to assess the content validity of the data collection instrument, the questionnaire was reviewed by two experts in the field of Sports Marketing and e-business. A conveniently selected sample of 20 fantasy football players was used in the pretesting of the questionnaire. This enabled the researchers to refine the measuring instrument in terms of questionnaire design, layout and wording, thereby ensuring that the instrument only comprised those questions that would validly answer the research hypotheses and achieve the research objectives (Sudman & Blair, 1998). As a precautionary measure, these 20 respondents were excluded from the main survey to avoid sampling bias. Exploratory factor analysis was conducted with a view to establishing the convergent and discriminant validities of the scale. Scale items that are expected to load together should do so, while the same should not load on more than a single factor. A stable five-factor structure indicating the fantasy football consumption motives was identified. The factor structure showed that there are no cross-loading thus providing evidence of convergent validity (items loading on one factor only) and discriminant validity (no cross loadings). Convergent validity was assessed through a computation of correlation

coefficients. Strong, positive and significant correlations were established on the five fantasy football motivational dimensions with both attitude and future intentions, providing evidence of convergence. Similarly, the high alpha values on the scale items ( $\geq 0.70$ ) reflect the degree of cohesiveness among the scale items serving as an indirect indicator of convergent validity (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). Predictive validity was assessed through regression analysis whereby the five fantasy football consumption dimensions, namely; eustress, achievement, aesthetics and enjoyment explained approximately 51% of variance in attitude towards the use of technology.

### 3. Results and Discussion

#### 3.1 Sample profile

The respondents who participated in the survey were predominantly females (64%;  $n=123$ ) compared to males (36%;  $n=70$ ). The median age group of the student sample was between 18 years to 39 years ( $n = 150$ ; 78% of the sample). Approximately 63% of the sample ( $n = 122$ ) were respondents of African background while the rest comprised whites (24%;  $n = 46$ ), Indians (8%;  $n = 16$ ) and coloured (5%;  $n = 9$ ) respondents. The sample composition comprised respondents with either matric (38%;  $n = 78$ ); technical/trades (2%;  $n = 5$ ) or university (60%;  $n = 115$ ) highest levels of education. Popular websites used by respondents were Facebook Fantasy Football Manager (47%;  $n = 91$ ), OrangeAfcon-Fantasy (40%;  $n = 76$ ) and Yahoo! Sports (13%;  $n = 25$ ), respectively. A majority of the respondents (51%;  $n = 98$ ) purported to spending at least an hour each week, participating in fantasy football leagues.

#### 3.2 Fantasy football consumption factors

Exploratory factor analysis was conducted using Principal component analysis with Varimax rotation and Kaiser Normalisation. This procedure was performed with a view to condense the experimental variables into identifiable fantasy football consumption attributes. The Bartlett's test was significant at  $p < 0.000$ , indicating that the data set was not an identity matrix with zero correlations (i.e. variables were correlated), thus confirming that a factor analysis procedure could be applied in the study. Furthermore, a chi square value ( $\chi^2$ ) of 3328.079 and a KMO value of 0.822 ( $> 0.50$ ) were reported, further confirming the appropriateness of the data set for factor analysis. The fantasy football consumption factors extracted in the study comprised five dimensions that accounted for 78% of the variance explained by the factors, which is considered good for exploratory factor extraction (Malhotra, 2010). The naming of the factors and the description is reported in Table 1.

**Table 1:** Fantasy football consumption factors and description of dimensions

Factor	Label	Cronbach Alpha	Eigen Value	Description
1	Perceived eustress (PEu)	0.875	8.502	This refers to consumption that is motivated by the adrenaline-packed drama, stimulation, physical arousal and near thrill of victory that is experienced during fantasy football viewing and playing as the participants take up the role of virtual team managers.
2	Perceived achievement/Reward (PAr)	0.851	2.914	This refers to consumption that is motivated by the direct and tangible rewards that are obtained through participating in fantasy football games such as prizes, money, sports memorabilia and stadium tickets. Ruihley (2010) also includes indirect rewards such as the sense of personal achievement and gratification obtained after participation.
3	Perceived Aesthetics (PAe)	0.863	1.809	This refers to consumption that is motivated by recognising fantasy football as a splendid performance that rivals any work of art because of its inherent qualities such as exquisiteness, fitness and the graceful movements associated with football.
4	Perceived Enjoyment (PE)	0.870	1.230	This refers to consumption that is intrinsically motivated by pure enjoyment of the game as defined by their level of amusement, entertainment, pleasure and thrill derived from the games.
5	Perceived Ease of Use (PEOU)	0.850	1.169	This refers to consumption that is motivated by the degree of physical, mental and learning effort that is associated with participating in fantasy football leagues.

### 3.3 Correlations

In order to examine the relationship among the fantasy football consumption dimensions with attitude and future intentions, non-parametric correlations were computed using Spearman's rho ( $r$ ). This correlation test statistic is used to describe the existence of a relationship amongst the constructs as well as the strength and direction of the association. In addition, correlation analysis was performed with a view to describe the outcome of the relationship between the attitude and the outcome variable, future intentions in the proposed framework. The results are reported in Table 2 of the study.

**Table 2:** Correlation analysis: fantasy football consumption dimensions with attitude and future intentions

Construct/Dimension	PEu	PAr	PAe	PE	PEOU	ATT	FI
Perceived eustress (PEu)	1						
Perceived achievement/reward (PAr)	.551**	1					
Perceived aesthetics (PAe)	.630**	.503**	1				
Perceived enjoyment (PE)	.657**	.649**	.546**	1			
Perceived ease of use (PEOU)	.193**	.371**	.019	.277**	1		
Attitude (ATT)	.505*	.657**	.689*	.641**	.324**	1	
Future intentions (FI)	.518**	.763**	.646**	.675**	.356**	.765**	1
Mean ( $\bar{x}$ )	3.838	3.998	3.836	4.092	3.019	4.174	3.724
Standard Deviation (SD)	1.063	1.037	.873	.988	1.184	.955	1.083

\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed). \*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Since the relationship between the five fantasy football consumption dimensions showed positive correlations with attitude and future intentions, stringent examinations were conducted with a view to corroborate the assumptions of the linear regression models along with co-linearity diagnostics' checks. Firstly, the correlation matrix was examined for existence of multi co-linearity, i.e. if the predictor variables correlates too highly ( $r > 0.9$ ) with each other (Field, 2005). None of the correlations in Table 2 reached a value of  $r > 0.9$  hence the data was considered suitable for linear regression analysis using the enter method. Field (2005) further suggests that if the variance inflation factor (VIF) is greater than 10 then the predictor variables are correlated among themselves hence co-linearity is a cause for concern. In this case, the regression model one was deemed appropriate for the data as the VIF values ranged from 1.004 to 2.312. Moreover, tolerance levels that fall below 0.1 indicate serious co-linearity problems whereas those tolerance values that are below 0.2 may potentially cause co-linearity problems. The tolerance statistics for the predictor variables ranged from 4.068 to 8.509 inferring that there was no co-linearity within the data set. The first linear regression procedure was conducted with a view to establish the predictive relationship between the predictors (fantasy football consumption dimensions) and their relative measurement response (attitude). The results are reported in Table 3.

**Table 3:** Regression model 1: fantasy football consumption dimensions with attitude

Independent variables: Fantasy football consumption dimensions	Dependent variable: Attitude				
	Standardised Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
				Tolerance	VIF
Perceived eustress (PEu)	.505	8.090	.000*	.696	1.736
Perceived achievement/reward (PAr)	.543	8.509	.002*	.763	1.004
Perceived aesthetics (PAe)	.431	8.328	.040*	.568	1.828
Perceived enjoyment (PE)	.269	4.068	.000*	.442	2.312
Perceived ease of use (PEOU)	.211	4.464	.000*	.781	1.415
Model 1 Summary: R= 0.716 R <sup>2</sup> = 0.513 Adjusted R <sup>2</sup> = 0.509 Std. error of the estimate = .94386 F = 65.441 Significant at 0.05 level.					

The regression analysis revealed that the five fantasy football consumption dimensions (adjusted R<sup>2</sup> = 0.509) explain approximately 51% of the variance in the intentions to participate in fantasy football. Furthermore, a large F statistic was obtained on the regression model at a value of 65.441 ( $p=0.000$ ) thus confirming the fitness of the regression model in measuring the predictive relationship between the fantasy football dimensions and attitude towards participation in the sport.

Strong and positive correlation coefficients were observed between the PEu dimension with attitude ( $r=0.505$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ). In addition, the eustress dimension was ranked third on the factor mean score rankings ( $\bar{x}=3.838$ ;  $SD=1.063$ ) providing some indications of the level of agreeability regarding fantasy football consumption which may have an influence on attitude. Moreover, the results of the regression analysis also reveal that eustress is a statistically significant predictor of attitude towards fantasy football participation ( $\beta = 0.505$ ;  $t = 8.090$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ). Hence H<sub>1</sub> which states that *perceived eustress (PEu) is positively related to attitudes toward fantasy football consumption is therefore supported*. This demonstrates that the attitudes of participants are largely shaped by the suspensive nature of fantasy football which is fulfilled through victory and pursued with the thought that the next victory is close. This is consistent with findings of Bernhard and Eade (2005) and Spinda and Haridakis (2008). However, studies of Farquhar and Meeds (2007) allude to the virtual component of fantasy football arena by labelling the participants as 'isolationist thrill seekers' whose arousal is easily motivated; even as they participate in the league alone. Therefore, in future empirical investigations, it may be expedient to examine the extent to which participants are able to enjoy complete social interaction and drama during their participation in fantasy football leagues.

Strong and positive correlation coefficients were observed between the PAr dimension with attitude ( $r=0.657$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ). Perceived achievement ( $\bar{x}=3.998$ ;  $SD=1.037$ ) was ranked second on the factor mean score rankings. The results of the regression analysis revealed that achievement is a statistically significant predictor of attitude towards fantasy football participation ( $\beta = 0.543$ ;  $t = 8.509$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ). Hence H<sub>2</sub> which states that *perceived achievement/reward (PAr) is positively related to attitudes toward fantasy football consumption is therefore supported*. The findings of this study are substantiated in literature by other scholars who argue that the suspense involved in fantasy sports coupled with the monetary extrinsic rewards and prizes can increase the desire for winning, which adds a gambling incentive for creating the most competitive team (Holleman, 2006; Dwyer & Yongjae, 2011). This would ideally enhance the fantasy websites visitation frequency as the players obtain entertainment and enjoyment that is goal-directed by a desire for rewards (Raney, 2006; Ruihley, 2010; Kwak & McDaniel, 2011). Roy and Goss (2007) suggested that achievement is a psychological variable that influences an individual's decision to participate in fantasy football while the empirical findings of Billings and Ruihley (2013) confirmed that patrons were motivated to participate in fantasy football leagues by both monetary and non-monetary rewards.

In terms of the PAe dimension, strong and positive correlation coefficients were observed between the aesthetics dimension with attitude ( $r=0.689$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ). The aesthetics dimension ( $\bar{x}=3.836$ ;  $SD=0.873$ ) was ranked fourth on the factor mean score rankings. The results of the regression analysis also reveal that aesthetics is a statistically significant predictor of attitude towards fantasy football participation ( $\beta = 0.431$ ;  $t = 8.328$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ). Hence H<sub>3</sub> which states that *perceived aesthetics (PAe) is positively related to attitudes toward fantasy football consumption is therefore supported*. These findings are in line with studies of Lee *et al.* (2013) and Thompson (2007) who assert that monetary incentives are becoming increasingly common, where service providers distribute cash or other prizes to league winners; coupled with a legal gambling and wagering component among participants. This is the current scenario, regardless of some fantasy service providers charging a subscription play fee termed the 'league entry fee' to the participants (Ruihley, 2010). In addition, non-monetary incentives such as personal satisfaction and self-esteem have also been cited as salient intrinsic rewards associated with participating in fantasy football (Serazio, 2008).

Strong and positive correlation coefficients were observed between the PE dimension with attitude ( $r=0.641$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ). According to the mean factor score rankings, the enjoyment dimension was rated the most important dimension ( $\bar{x}=4.092$ ;  $SD=0.988$ ) by the respondents. Furthermore, the results of the regression analysis also reveal that enjoyment is a statistically significant predictor of attitude towards fantasy football participation ( $\beta = 0.269$ ;  $t = 4.068$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ). Hence H<sub>4</sub> which states that *perceived enjoyment (PE) is positively related to attitudes toward fantasy football consumption is therefore supported*. In support of this finding Billings and Ruihley (2013) and Brown *et al.* (2012) affirm that enjoyment is a salient consumption motivator among fantasy football participants. Relatedly, enjoyment is in itself a form of intrinsic motivation determining if the participant takes pleasure or finds the activity entertaining, fun, thrilling and delightful when conducted as a sports activity for its own sake (Seo & Green, 2008).

Regarding the ease of use dimension, moderate and positive correlation coefficients were observed between the PEOU dimension with attitude ( $r=0.324$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ). Nonetheless, the lowest mean score ranking turned out to be perceived ease of use ( $\bar{x}=3.019$ ;  $SD=1.184$ ). Be that as it may, the results of the regression analysis revealed that ease of use dimension was a statistically significant predictor of attitude towards fantasy football participation ( $\beta = 0.505$ ;  $t = 8.090$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ). Hence H<sub>5</sub> which states that *perceived ease of use (PEOU) is positively related to attitudes toward fantasy football consumption is therefore supported*. These findings are in sync with the studies of Kwak and McDaniel (2011) that tested the efficacy of the technology acceptance model and conceded that ease of use was a salient



motivational dimension that influences fantasy football consumption. This finding can be explored further with a view to corroborate the significance of this predictor variable towards attitude in the consumption of other fantasy sports, using different samples.

A second linear regression procedure was applied with a view to establish predictive validity between the attitude (ATT) and future intentions (FI) variables. A large F statistic was also obtained on the regression model at a value of 46.716 ( $p=0.000$ ) thus confirming the fitness of the regression model in measuring the predictive relationship between attitude and future intentions towards fantasy football consumption. The VIF and tolerance value on this model were 1.000 and 5.351, respectively; indicating acceptable levels for testing the relationships between the constructs. The regression analysis revealed that attitude explain approximately 61% of the variance (adjusted  $R^2 = 0.611$ ) in fans' future intentions to actively participate in fantasy football. The results are reported in table 4.

**Table 4:** Regression model 2: Attitude and future intentions to participate in fantasy football

Independent variables: Attitude toward fantasy football participation (ATT)	Dependent variable: Future Intentions (FI)				
	Standardised Coefficients	T	Sig	Collinearity Statistics	
	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
Attitude	.364	5.351	.000*	1.000	1.000
Model 2 Summary: $R = 0.784$ $R^2 = 0.615$ Adjusted $R^2 = 0.611$ Std. error of the estimate = .95973 F change = 46.716 Significant at 0.05 level.					

Regarding attitude towards fantasy football participation; strong, positive correlation coefficients were established with the future intentions variable ( $r=0.324$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ). Consistent with this finding, the results of regression model 2 showed positive and statistically significant results between ATT and FI ( $\beta = 0.364$ ;  $t = 5.423$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ). Hence  $H_6$  which states that *attitude (ATT) is positively related to attitudes toward fantasy football consumption is therefore supported*. Previous research also consistently reports a strong positive interconnection between the fans' attitudes with behavioural intentions to participate in online games (Hsu & Lin, 2008) as well as other Internet technology based information systems (Davis, 1989; Bagozzi, 2007). However, it may be interesting to note that the studies of Kwak and McDaniel (2011) demonstrated that the attitude construct did not have a significant effect in explaining the behavioural intentions for fantasy football consumption.

#### 4. Strengths, Limitations and Directions for Future Research

The strength of the present study lies in its novelty through the validation of a conceptual framework that constitutes an important source of fresh knowledge on the underlying dimensions contributing to fantasy football consumption in South Africa. However, the study has a limitation in that its results are restricted to only type of fantasy sport league (football) with participants being drawn from only one province in South Africa (Gauteng). Although the sample size of 193 respondents may have been adequate for statistical analysis, it may not present a true representation of the prominence of fantasy football in South Africa. This implies that caution must be exercised when generalising the results to other geographical locations and upon deriving subsequent conclusions from this study. Therefore, a replication of this study on larger sample sizes with participants residing in other geographical locations is warranted, in order to establish the robustness of the scale.

The findings of this study present significant implications for future research initiatives. For example, the study can be extended to a wider sphere; by pinpointing similarities and differences between younger and older fantasy football sports fans in terms of their actions, motivations and needs related to fantasy football viewership and play. In addition, a randomised sample may be utilised with a view to confirm the efficacy of the framework; while employing more robust statistical techniques such as structural equation modelling. Additional variables such as control (ownership), escape, social interaction and team identification may be added to the model and explored even further. Furthermore, the study presents implications for sports marketers on a wider sphere. At the macro-level, identifying the motives of fantasy sport consumption would provide different sport leagues and managers with a basis for developing an integrated marketing strategy for their sporting brands. At the micro-level, the sport leagues can utilise the identified fantasy football consumption dimensions to develop tailored marketing communication strategies for specific market segments.

## 5. Conclusion

The findings of the current study identified eustress, achievement (reward), aesthetics, enjoyment and ease of use as the underlying dimensions towards fantasy football consumption among South African fantasy patrons. The study contributes to both theory and practice by advancing a hybrid model to examine fantasy football consumption antecedents, attitude and future intentions to use the technologies. This provides further building blocks in technology adoption studies which may be employed by the South African Football Association (SAFA) and other sports governing bodies, in developing a national/regional regulatory framework for systematically monitoring fantasy football websites and participants' activities in South Africa.

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