Novelty or Distraction: Effects of High-Tech Cameras on Sports Consumers’ Viewing Experiences

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Based on the self-determination theory (SDT), this study posited that the use of high-tech cameras (360-degree and point-of-view cameras), recently adopted by several professional leagues for broadcasting sports games, may either enhance or decrease viewing experience for sport consumers depending on their level of sports involvement (SIV). Particularly, the use of high-tech cameras would provide a novel viewing experience for highly involved sports consumers (HISC) and thus lead to more positive behavioral consequences. When individuals are highly involved with consumption, a novel experience further enhances their engagement with the consumption (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Meanwhile, the multi-faceted viewing experience associated with high-tech cameras, which vigorously use first-person action and often freeze play actions to feature full 360-degree panoramic camera view, would distract the viewing experience for less-involved sports consumers (LISC). Distraction is a key experience that has a negative impact on individuals’ behavioral consequences (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Thus, we propose the following hypothesis:

H1: For HISC, the use of high-tech cameras leads to greater perceived novelty and greater intention to follow the YouTube channel that provides the sports content than the use of non-high-tech cameras.

H2: For LISC, the use of high-tech cameras leads to greater perceived distraction and less intention to follow the YouTube channel that provides the sports content than the use of non-high-tech cameras.

The experiment used a 2 (type of camera: high-tech vs. non-high-tech) × 2 (level of SIV: high vs. low) between-subjects design (n = 289). First, participants watched a highlight clip of an NFL game that was either recorded by 360-degree and point-of-view cameras (high-tech camera condition) or two-dimensional traditional cameras (non-high-tech camera condition). They then completed a questionnaire that included the measure of dependent variables and covariate (team identification).

Regarding perceived novelty, the main effects of camera type (p < .001) and SIV (p < .01) and the interaction effects (p < .01) were significant. The results further indicated that high-tech cameras (M = 5.63) led to greater perceived novelty from HISC than non-high-tech cameras (M = 4.84), p < .01.

Regarding perceived distraction, the main effects of camera type (p < .05) and SIV (p < .01) were significant; moreover, interaction effects between these two variables were significant for a one-tail test (p = .09). The results further indicated that high-tech cameras (M = 4.13) led to greater perceived distraction from LISC than non-high-tech cameras (M = 3.40), p = .01.

Regarding intention to follow the YouTube channel that provides the highlight clip, the main effects of camera type (p < .05) and SIV (p < .01), and interaction effects (p < .05) were significant. Specifically, high-tech cameras (M = 6.20) led to greater intention to follow the YouTube channel from HISC than the non-high-tech cameras (M = 5.74), p < .05. Meanwhile, both high-tech (M = 3.70) and non-high-tech (M = 4.02) cameras resulted in similar intentions to follow YouTube from LISC, p = .16. Thus, H1 (H2) was (partially) supported.

Our finding extends the existing literature by demonstrating that the use of high-tech camera does not always lead to positive viewing experiences. Indeed, such effects are based on sports consumers’ level of SIV.