

Live-tweeting the game like I'm the official commentator!



<https://massmediaandsports.wordpress.com/2016/04/09/mass-media-and-sports/>

Sport events include a variety of organised competitions and performances in various athletic disciplines, attracting stakeholders, spectators, and participants. Spectators are key to successful sport events by contributing to the excitement and atmosphere, and their event experiences are linked to positive perceptions toward sport teams, host destinations, and sponsors. Each event has unique aspects that must be managed to facilitate experience interactions between people and the programme. These experiences need to be immersive to attract and retain fans, and modern sport spectators expect more meaningful experiences than just watching an event. Spectators engage with events in person or through various media channels, such as TV, radio, or online streaming platforms. The industry is concerned that younger cohorts are moving from physical event attendance to online consumption. While online spectating provides replays, close-up views, and expert interviews, it does not generate the same financial benefits for sport organisers. Younger spectators, in particular, value unique and immersive event experiences worth sharing on social media so they can be recognised and empathised by online social relationships. Therefore, sporting events need to offer the desired experiences to attract and retain younger sport fans while benefiting from the potential online exposure.

A research study was conducted by Thakane Letlatsa, a [master's](#) student in the [Department of Marketing Management](#), to explore the relationship between Gen Y and Gen Z spectators' sport event experiences and social media sharing intentions using Pine and Gillmore's (2011) experience economy framework. Two additional variables

were added to the existing four dimensions (entertainment, escape, education, aesthetic): social interaction and consumption-focused self-expression, word-of-mouth. The study sample size comprised 392 Gen Y and Gen Z spectators who had recently attended a sport event at a physical venue. Most respondents indicated watching sport with friends or family at a sport venue, while some did so at someone's house via livestreaming or social media. Facebook was the most preferred platform for sharing experiences, followed by WhatsApp and Instagram. Multiple regression analysis indicated that only one of the four original experience dimensions, aesthetics, was significantly related to social media sharing. Importantly, the results validated the significance of the two additional variables within the context of younger generation cohort sport spectators. Younger spectators' social media sharing is motivated by online self-presentation, social interactions, and aesthetic enjoyment.

Understanding spectators' needs and preferences helps organisers create memorable experiences. Importantly, it encourages the younger age cohorts, as the future market, to continue supporting live events at venues. This is essential for competitive advantage and the sustainability of sport events. Further studies could compare visual versus textual content being shared. Emerging platforms can be explored, including how AI-generated content features in online sharing. The fact that aesthetics featured so strongly also warrants further investigation. Future studies could examine why the design of the venue and ambiance are so crucial for younger spectators.

This research was conducted as part of fulfilling the requirements for the [master's degree](#) in Tourism Management in 2024 with the [Department of Marketing Management](#) by Thakane Letlatsa under the supervision of [Prof Elizabeth Ann Du Preez](#).