THE EFFECT OF ONLINE SPORTS SPECTATORSHIP ON CONSUMERS' SUBJECTIVE WELL-BEING (SWB)

The Graduate School of Economics and Social Sciences
of
İhsan Doğramacı Bilkent University

by

MUHAMMAD TAYYAB

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
MASTER OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

THE DEPARTMENT OF
MANAGEMENT
İHSAN DOĞRAMACI BİLKENT UNIVERSITY
ANKARA

August 2023

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By Muhammad Tayyab

I certify that I have read this thesis and have found that it is fully adequate, in scope and in quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Business Administration.

Ahmet Ekici
Advisor

I certify that I have read this thesis and have found that it is fully adequate, in scope and in quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Business Administration.

Celile Itır Göğüş
Examining Committee Member

I certify that I have read this thesis and have found that it is fully adequate, in scope and in quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Business Administration.

Berna Tarı Kasnakoğlu
Examining Committee Member

Approval of the Graduate School of Economics and Social Sciences

---
Refet Soykan Gürkaynak
Director

ABSTRACT

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Tayyab, Muhammad
MS in Marketing, Department of Management
Advisor: Associate Prof. Dr. Ahmet Ekici

August 2023

Recently, virtual technologies are either complementing or taking over traditional business models that used to happen in-person. The COVID-19 pandemic is one externality that stimulated this occurrence in sports. Through a quantitative research design involving online surveys, this study investigates the relationship between online sports spectatorship and consumers' subjective well-being (SWB). More specifically, drawing upon theoretical frameworks from psychology, marketing, communication, and sports management, mainly focusing on theories like the social determination theory (SDT), parasocial interaction, and flow theory, this research aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the underlying mechanisms that seek to explore how the construct of online sports spectatorship influences consumers' subjective well-being (SWB). The research objectives encompass several key aspects. First, the study seeks to identify the variables influencing consumers' online sports spectatorship behavior. These factors may include aspects such as the level of immersion in the online experience, the sense of connection with the sporting event, and the perceived enjoyment derived from virtual sports engagement. Understanding these factors can provide valuable insights into how online sports experiences contribute to consumers' subjective well-being (SWB). Second, this study seeks to empirically test out four independent variables that make up the construct of online sports spectatorship and how they impact the dependent variable of subject well-being (SWB), contrary to past studies that either focus primarily on

motivational factors' considering subject well-being (SWB) as a mediating variable or only provided qualitative evidence of the existence of such a relation. Third, my research considers the mediating effect of team identification between the independent and dependent variables, after controlling for several factors like age, gender, occupation, and streaming preferences. Overall, online sports platforms often offer opportunities for fans to interact with each other, share their passion for the sport, and build a sense of community. As such, the study examines how these social interactions influence consumers' subjective well-being and contribute to their overall satisfaction with the online sports spectatorship experience. Through direct and indirect testing, the results indicate that perceived autonomy, and vividness, are indirectly associated with subjective well-being (SWB), subject to mediation by team identification. In conclusion, this thesis fills a critical gap in current knowledge regarding the effect of online sports spectatorship on consumers' subjective well-being. By investigating the factors influencing subjective well-being (SWB), examining psychological and emotional outcomes, and considering the role of team identification, the study offers valuable insights into the impact of online sports spectatorship on consumers' subjective well-being (SWB). An important theoretical implication of this study is the testing of Rejikumar et. al's (2022) conceptual model empirically to show how perceived autonomy and vividness affect subjective well-being (SWB), subject to mediation by the factor of team identification. Furthermore, a crucial managerial implication that comes out of this study is how marketing professionals can leverage the technological affordances of online sports streaming platforms to focus on providing richer and highly interactive experiences to viewers, which can potentially lead to higher levels of subjective well-being (SWB).

Keywords: Quality of Life (QOL), Subjective Well-Being (SWB), Sports Marketing, Team Identification, Consumer Experiences

ÖZET

ÇEVRİMİÇİ SPOR İZLEYİCİLİĞİNİN TÜKETİCİNİN SUBJEKTİF İYİLİĞİ (SWB) ÜZERİNDEKİ ETKİSİ

Tayyab, Muhammad
Pazarlama Yüksek Lisansı, Yönetim Bölümü
Tez Danışmanı: Doç.Dr. Ahmet Ekici

Temmuz 2023

Son yıllarda sanal teknolojilerin, eskiden yüz yüze gerçekleşen geleneksel iş modellerini ya tamamladığı ya da devraldığı gözlemleniyor. COVID-19 salgını, spor alanında bu oluşumu tetikleyen önemli bir faktör olarak ortaya çıkmıştır. Bu çalışma, nicel bir araştırma tasarımı yoluyla, çevrimiçi spor izleyiciliği ile tüketicilerin öznel iyi oluşu (subjective well-being-SWB) arasındaki ilişkiyi araştırmaktadır. Özellikle sosyal kararlılık teorisi (social determination theory-SDT), parasosyal etkileşim ve akış teorisi gibi teoriler ışığında, psikoloji, pazarlama, iletişim ve spor yönetimi alanlarındaki teorik çerçevelerden faydalanan bu araştırmada, çevrimiçi spor seyirciliği olgusunun tüketicilerin öznel iyi oluşunu (ÖİO) nasıl etkilediğini keşfetmeye çalışılmıştır. Buna ek olarak, bu ilişkinin altında yatan mekanizmaların kapsamlı bir şekilde anlaşılması sağlanmaya çalışılmıştır. Bu bağlamda, araştırmanın hedefleri birkaç temel hususu kapsamaktadır: İlk olarak, tüketicilerin çevrimiçi spor seyirciliği davranışını etkileyen değişkenlerin belirlenmesi amaçlamaktadır. Bu faktörler, çevrimiçi deneyime dalma düzeyi, spor etkinliğiyle bağlantı hissi ve sanal spor katılımından elde edilen (algılanan) keyif/haz gibi unsurları içermektedir. Bu faktörlerin anlaşılması, çevrimiçi spor deneyimlerinin tüketicilerin öznel iyi oluşuna (ÖİO) nasıl katkıda bulunduğuna dair değerli bilgiler sağlayabilir. İkinci olarak, bu çalışma, öznel iyi oluşu (ÖİO) bir aracı değişken olarak dikkate alarak öncelikle motivasyon faktörlerine odaklanan ya da böyle bir ilişkinin varlığına dair yalnızca nitel kanıtlar sunan geçmiş çalışmaların aksine, çevrimiçi spor seyirciliği olgusunu oluşturan dört bağımsız değişkeni ve bunların bağımlı

değişken olan öznel iyi oluşu (ÖİO) nasıl etkilediğini ampirik olarak test etmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Üçüncü olarak, bu çalışma yaş, cinsiyet, meslek ve yayın tercihleri gibi çeşitli faktörleri kontrol ettikten sonra bağımsız ve bağımlı değişkenler arasında takım kimliğinin aracı etkisini ortaya çıkarmayı hedeflemektedir. Genel olarak, çevrimiçi spor platformları genellikle taraftarların birbirleriyle etkileşime girmeleri, spora olan tutkularını paylaşmaları ve bir topluluk duygusu oluşturmaları için fırsatlar sunmaktadır. Bu nedenle, çalışma bu sosyal etkileşimlerin tüketicilerin öznel iyi oluşunu nasıl etkilediğini ve çevrimiçi spor seyircisi deneyiminden genel memnuniyetlerine nasıl katkıda bulunduğunu incelemektedir. Doğrudan ve dolaylı testler yoluyla ortaya çıkarılan sonuçlar, algılanan özerkliğin ve canlılığın, takım özdeşleşmesinin aracılığına tabi olarak, ÖİO ile dolaylı olarak ilişkili olduğunu göstermektedir. Sonuç olarak bu tez, çevrimiçi spor seyirciliğinin tüketicilerin öznel iyi oluşu üzerindeki etkisine ilişkin mevcut bilgilerdeki kritik bir boşluğu doldurmaktadır. ÖİO'u etkileyen faktörleri araştırarak, psikolojik ve duygusal sonuçları inceleyerek ve takım özdeşleşmesinin rolünü göz önünde bulundurarak, araştırma çevrimiçi spor seyirciliğinin tüketicilerin ÖİO'u üzerindeki etkisine dair değerli bilgiler sunmaktadır. Bu çalışmanın önemli bir teorik çıkarımı, Rejikumar ve arkadaşlarının (2022) kavramsal modelinin, algılanan özerklik ve canlılığın, takımla özdeşleşme faktörünün aracılığıyla ÖİO'u nasıl etkilediğinin ampirik olarak test edilmesidir. Ayrıca, bu çalışmadan çıkan önemli bir yönetimsel çıkarım, pazarlama uzmanlarının izleyicilere daha zengin ve yüksek etkileşimli deneyimler sunmaya odaklanmak için çevrimiçi spor yayın platformlarının teknolojik olanaklarından nasıl yararlanabilecekleri hakkında ip uçları vermesidir; bu da potansiyel olarak daha yüksek ÖİO seviyelerine yol açabilir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Yaşam Kalitesi (QOL), Öznel İyi Oluş (SWB), Spor Pazarlaması, Takım Özdeşliği, Tüketici Deneyimleri

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am deeply grateful to my advisor, Dr. Ahmet Ekici, for his constant support throughout my master's program. His expertise, and guidance have been invaluable to me and have played a crucial role in the success of my research.

I would like to thank Dr. Itır Göğüş & Dr. Berna Tarı Kasnakoğlu for serving on the jury at my thesis defense. Their insights and guidance were instrumental in helping me shape my research and finish this thesis.

I am deeply thankful to my parents, and my elder brother for their love and support during this process. Without their encouragement, I would not have been able to complete this journey.

I want to convey my regards to my best friend, Shams Khan. Your constant support, friendship, and belief in me have been crucial in the completion of my thesis.

A special note of thanks to my very dear colleague and friend, Furkan Adem Guven, whose friendship made this challenging task much more bearable.

I want to sincerely thank my workplace managers, Mustafa Temsah and Ahmed Murtadha, whose generosity, empathy, unwavering support, and understanding of the necessity to finish my Masters education made it possible for me to complete this task.

Finally, I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to all the participants in my study. Their willingness to share their experiences and insights has been invaluable to my research and helped to make this thesis successful. Thank you for your time and contribution.

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CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

The sports industry is valued at a global market size of about 756 billion USD/ per annum (MUIC Report, 2020). This is an exciting phenomenon because these new business models affect both the supply and demand side of consumption, making it a great case to examine from a quality of life (QOL) and consumer well-being (CWB) perspective. Hence, my paper will deliver a critical take that offers further avenues to explore sports marketing to improve subjective well-being (SWB) in terms of enjoyment as positive reactions and attitudes of consumers (Vorderer et al., 2004).

Furthermore, a Verified Market Research (2021) article bears glad tidings from a global perspective. It articulates that the international sports online live-streaming market size was roughly $18,119.35 Million in 2020 and is projected to expand to USD 87,338.11 Million by 2028, growing at a CAGR of 21.26% from 2021 to 2028. This makes it a subject worth studying from a marketing perspective.

With this explosive growth, there is an ongoing wave of digital transformation sweeping across the sports industry, opening new avenues for new business models of sports entertainment. A fine example of this is online sports spectatorship. Verna (2021), reporting from Insider Intelligence, informs that the spectatorship of digital or online sports will grow from 57.5 million USD in 2021 to a booming 90.7 million USD in 2025 across the USA, with an impressive 26.4% of the total population adopting this change. According to them, the significant actors behind this change will be virtual Multichannel Video Programming Distributor (vMVPDs) and streaming services (SVODs) like Amazon Prime Video. This has led to a revenue decline in conventional corded-TV subscriptions, also known as cord cutting.

The COVID-19 pandemic significantly disrupted the world of sports, leading to the cancellation or restriction of live sporting events and the subsequent surge in online

sports spectatorship. As individuals adapted, online platforms have become a central means for sports fans to engage with their favorite teams, athletes, and other fans or viewers. This shift towards online sports spectatorship raises essential questions about its effect on consumers' subjective well-being (SWB) post-COVID era.

Sirgy & Lee (2008) theorize subjective well-being (SWB) and state that it refers to a consumer's cognitive and affective evaluations of their overall well-being, encompassing life satisfaction, positive emotions, and the absence of negative emotions. They (Sirgy & Lee, 2008) point out that this definition encapsulates the link between the satisfaction that comes from the consumption of a good or service and the overall life satisfaction that is a marker of quality of life (QOL).

As a practical marketing issue, properly assessing subjective well-being is crucial to firms that participate in well-being marketing programs. Because this metric is critical for firms to determine the value that customers perceive in their product or of the perceived customer value, this helps firms establish reasonable price points, communicate resonating value offers for the target audience, and establish cost efficiencies at all stages: production, distribution, consumption, and disposal, (Sirgy & Lee, 2008).

A study by Eime, Young, Harvey, et al. (2013) shows that engaging in sports has long been recognized as a source of enjoyment, social connection, and psychological fulfillment. This points toward the relationship between sports and individual levels of satisfaction. However, COVID-19 has led to the broader adoption of virtual channels for online sports spectatorships. This increased reliance and usage of virtual sports platforms for watching live sports necessitates an examination of its influence on consumers' subjective well-being (SWB).

This thesis aims to investigate the effect of online sports spectatorship on consumers' subjective well-being (SWB) in the post-COVID landscape. By exploring the psychological and emotional outcomes and the social dimensions of virtual sports engagement, this research aims to provide valuable insights into the implications of online sports spectatorship for consumers' subjective well-being (SWB).

Previous studies have highlighted the relationship between sports consumption and subjective well-being. For example, a study by Wann and Branscombe (1993) found that identifying strongly with a sports team positively influenced fans' life satisfaction and self-esteem. Similarly, a study by Kim and Zhang (2018) revealed that sports consumption significantly impacted consumers' positive affect levels and life satisfaction. These studies highlight the potential positive effects of sports engagement on consumers' well-being.

However, there is a paucity of research specifically examining the effects of online sports spectatorship on consumers' subjective well-being (SWB), particularly after the COVID-19 pandemic. Understanding this relationship is crucial, as online sports spectatorship has become a prevalent and accessible mode of sports consumption recently, especially due to the pandemic.

I have employed a quantitative approach to my study to address this research gap using an empirical research design. I have used the instrument of online surveys for data collection purposes, using various scales to measure my construct of online sports spectatorship, which is composed of Virtual Connectedness , Vividness, Uncertainty Reduction, and Perceived Autonomy, as recommended by Rejikumar et al. (2022). The aim was to measure these independent variables' impact on consumers' subjective well-being (SWB) in the context of sports, using the case of online sports spectatorship by fans.

My research is motivated by two critical research studies. One of them (Kim & Kim, 2020), which is quantitative, explores the impact of virtual e-sport spectatorship through live-streaming services on sports fans' life satisfaction and behavior. This research analyzes seven dimensions of online sports spectatorship motivation and their impact on fans' flow experience, subjective well-being (SWB), behavioral intention, and game loyalty.

So, it considers subjective well-being (SWB) as an intervening variable rather than a dependent variable. Additionally, this study is limited in that it only considers motivational factors and not habitual ones that take consumer contexts into account.

Second, this study only evaluated the viewpoints of individuals who watch sports online and does not oversee those who prefer to watch sports matches in-person. Third, Kim & Kim (2020) does not consider the variance between various sports genres.

To counter some of the limitations seen in Kim & Kim (2020), my research incorporates the factor of device type as a mediator and test it to see how it affects the relationship between the independent and dependent variables within the scope of my study. Furthermore, my research model considers subjective well-being (SWB) as the dependent variable.

The second pivotal study that has informed this research significantly is Rejikumar et al. (2022). This is a purely qualitative research that draws from the literary domains of transformative sport service research (TSSR), digital customer engagement, value co-creation in digital platforms, self-determination theory (SDT), and flow theory to conceptualize the formation of subjective well-being (SWB) in the domain of sports, using the concepts of positive psychology that are further derived from (Deci and Ryan, 2008; Diener et al., 1999; Doyle et al., 2016; Schwarz and Clore, 1996). The authors (Rejikumar et al., 2022) conceptualize five themes that affect subjective well-being (SWB) in the domain of online sports spectatorship: Virtual Connectedness, Vividness, Uncertainty Reduction, Online Disinhibition, and Perceived Autonomy.

Since this is a qualitative study, the authors urge future research to empirically test the variables and their model using larger-scale data to generalize findings for marketers, media professionals, and researchers. This means the development of reliable and valid measurement scales that allow for solid data collection and analysis.

Essentially, the proposed research model combines some of the limitations of both these studies; Kim & Kim (2020), and Rejikumar et al. (2022). This thesis aims to test the five independent variables taken from Rejikumar et al. (2022) and conduct hypothesis testing for each against consumers' subjective well-being (SWB) subject to mediation by team identification and moderation by device type. For this purpose, I will use/adapt pre-developed scales and measurement items for each construct from well-reputed and credible authors/studies.

The major findings of this study show that perceived autonomy, and vividness significantly impact subjective well-being (SWB), subject to mediation by team identification. In addition, the development and testing of reliable and valid measurements scales for the variables is another key finding of this study. The findings of this study contribute to the growing body of knowledge on sports consumption and subjective well-being, particularly in the context of online sports spectatorship post-COVID. The results have practical implications for sports organizations, marketers, and seeking to enhance consumers' well-being through virtual sports engagement. Moreover, the findings have the capacity to inform the development of interventions and marketing strategies to optimize online sports experiences and promote individuals' subjective well-being.

The study shares the common limitations of survey research. For example, the research only considers online sports spectators in Turkey, so it is context-specific. Second, most of the data comes from fans of the two following sports: football and basketball. Hence, it is only fair to say that the findings of my study will be context-bound in terms of geography and the genres of sports.

In conclusion, this research aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the effect of online sports spectatorship on consumers' subjective well-being, offering valuable insights into the role of virtual sports experiences in shaping individuals' overall well-being and satisfaction post-COVID. The study seeks to contribute to our knowledge of the evolving sports landscape and its impact on individuals' subjective well-being by investigating the psychological, emotional, and social dimensions of online sports engagement.

CHAPTER 2 BACKGROUND & REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE INFORMING THE RESEARCH

The world of sports marketing is deeply intertwined with culture, society, and commerce. Coakley & Dunning (2000) trace the historical trajectory of sports, highlighting its impact on culture and society and its position as a distinct cultural institution. In the contemporary consumer-driven society, sports marketing strategies play a crucial role in engaging consumers and influencing their well-being.

This discussion offers a detailed review of the relevant literature concerned with the role of sports marketing, especially cause-related marketing (CRM), in enhancing consumers' subjective well-being (SWB) and quality of life (QOL). It also delves into studies that discuss the implications of technology and the event of COVID-19 pandemic on the sports industry and how sports experiences are linked to subjective well-being (SWB) for consumers. Finally, the integration of sports into wellness programs is examined, recognizing its significance in promoting mental well-being and overall holistic wellness from a consumer standpoint. This discussion aims to shed light on the multifaceted relationship between sports marketing, consumer experiences, and subjective well-being (SWB), by analyzing relevant work that has been conducted across this research domain.

2.1. Sports Marketing: A Strategic Perspective

Coakley & Dunning (2000) trace the discursive evolution of sports along with culture and society and argue how sports is embedded in the culture as a distinct component and, like all cultural institutions, it influences and is influenced by other co-existing cultural institutions within the framework of small-scale, traditional, & urban societies. Within the framework of the modern society fueled by consumption, this study finding can be extended and connected with what Sirgy & Lee (2008, p.377) say about cause-related marketing (CRM), which they conceptualize as a subdomain of corporate social

responsibility (CSR) and consumer citizenship and define it as, "corporate efforts designed to induce consumers to make contributions to causes based on product sales" and point out as to how all these marketing strategies have an impact on the consumer well-being (CWB) and quality of life (QOL) in general.

Nowadays, cause-related marketing (CRM) has an important place in sports marketing, and Irwin et al. (2010) define CRM as "a strategic positioning and marketing tool which links a company or brand to a relevant social cause or issue, for mutual benefit." This view reaffirms what Lee & Sirgy's (2004) propose about quality of life (QOL) affecting demand and supply-side stakeholders. Irwin et al. (2010) express how cause related sports marketing (CRSM) is very relevant in the sports industry due to its intangible nature. This means consumers experience a sporting event and show a high affinity, which can be leveraged for consumer benefit if proper sports communication strategies are executed.

Coombs & Harker (2021) specify two schools of thought for sports communications that revolve around, i.e., critical cultural studies and media studies that include marketing elements like advertising, public relations, and journalism that seek to sell products and services (experiences) to consumers. Sports consumption is another crucial aspect of sports communications.

Coakley & Dunning (2000) trace the emergence of modern sport and distinguish it from the Renaissance or other epochs of forms of the sport by one specific feature, i.e., commercialization. This commercialization involves sports serving as the playground for various financially well-backed institutions like clubs, leagues, sports teams, or professional players using the institution of sports as currency for value exchange. This exchange can be a swap between monetary values or support for tangible sports items like merchandise or entertainment (sportive performance), which is experiential.

2.1.1. Sports & Subjective Well-Being (SWB)

From a consumption perspective, Ennis (2020, p.12) defines sports as "institutionalized competitive activities that involve rigorous physical exertion or the use of relatively

complex physical skills by participants motivated by internal and external rewards." Another more consumer-experience-oriented definition is offered by Bouchet et al. (2004, p.128), who define it as "a type of social action in which people consume in various ways (Holt, 1995), seeking pleasurable experiences (individual and group) which create subjective emotional reactions for the consumer". This makes for a solid point to argue that sports, in the modern-day, is about the physical exertion of the athlete and entails the consumers' cognitive effort driven by the reward systems of corporate capitalism, which involves an exchange of value.

Lee & Sirgy's (2008) conceptualization of the quality of life (QOL) / consumer well-being (CWB) ensures well-being applied to both firm and consumption-side stakeholders. Ennis (2020) expands their concepts to sports and declares how sports play an inherent role in well-being. This deliverance of well-being doesn't obligate one to participate in the sport. This means that consumers and society generally reap the reward of well-being from the procreation of sports, that happens through spectatorship. Ennis (2020) lists some benefits of sports, which relate to the well-being aspect, which can be described as stress relief from the mundane everyday life, health, negotiation platform for conflicting cultural spheres, individual identity, economic development, inclusion, group support & diversity. Thus, modern sports, commercialized and supported by media systems, are inherently tied to consumer well-being (CWB) and quality of life (QOL).

2.1.2. Experience-Driven Sports: A Consumer's Source of Entertainment

So, what does all this well-being aspect of sport tell us about the possible linkage between media, i.e., digital channels of spectatorship, and modern-day sports that has been commercialized? Ennis (2020) offers a very eloquent view of the multi-cultural nature of post-modern society, where the liquid nature of society has stimulated cross-border movement and mobility. This has allowed cultural knowledge previously context-bound (including rules/norms about sports) to be transferred and exchanged globally.

He (Ennis, 2020) postulates how the sport was previously introduced across contexts by mechanisms like the military, missionaries, etc. Global TV and other media systems significantly influence the cross-pollination of sports across geographies. These media

forms constitute the mediascapes, the flows of media content across the globe, as per Appadurai (1990). So, the consumers may want to see sports for various reasons like identification, seeing their national player represent the home country, contributing to the economy, or as a source of entertainment that contributes to consumer satisfaction by providing pleasant experiences, thus affecting consumer well-being (CWB) and quality of life (QOL).

Bason & Anagnostopoulos (2015) report how corporations acknowledge sport as a powerful tool for corporate social responsibility (CSR) where branded sponsorships and personnel engagement show the highest growth. Based on what we discussed above regarding the proliferation of sports across borders, it makes even more sense for global sports entities like athletes, teams, organizations, etc., to use social media to engage with global consumers. This is reinforced by Meng et al.'s (2015) study, which analyzes how sports organizations like NBA use social media (Facebook, Twitter) to bolster identification amongst fans using strategies like informing, marketing, personalizing, and activating.

Ashforth & Mael (1989) describe identification (amongst fans with their sports teams) as the emotional attachment and support consumers show towards an entity. Sports entities use social media to engage with fans to strengthen team identification (Meng et al., 2015); the implications include reduced price sensitivity, greater purchase intent, increased customer loyalty, and less switching behavior (Meng et al., 2015). This results in positive attitudes connected to consumer experiences, consumer well-being (CWB) and quality of life (QOL).

Mullin et al. (2000) propose that sports as form of entertainment have an edge due to an increased sense of connectedness (communal or individual). This allows sports to improve quality of life (QOL) at a macro level. Sutton et al. (1997) highlight that sports organizations can do this by increasing accessibility & communal involvement. Media tools can play a significant role in communicating the organizations' messages to consumers. This is corroborated by Ostic et al. (2021), who show how fans use social media to identify sports entities in different ways across contexts. Sports entities can

benefit by customizing messages according to consumer behavior relevant to context to increase identification, improve the experience and contribute to a greater consumer well-being (CWB)/ quality of life (QOL).

2.2. The Role of Technology in the Development of Modern Sports

Technology has had a significant impact on modern sports, transforming both athlete performance and spectator experiences. Advanced equipment, wearable devices, and data analytics tools have revolutionized athlete training and performance analysis. Additionally, technologies such as live streaming, virtual reality, and social media platforms have brought sports closer to fans on a global level, providing immersive viewing experiences and fostering fan engagement. As technology continues to advance, its role in sports development is bound to shape the future of athletic performance and fan interactions.

2.2.1. The Development of Modern Sports

Sports have been an integral part of human civilization for centuries, serving as a means of recreation, competition, and cultural expression. The development of modern-day sports is a result of a complex interplay of historical, cultural, social, and commercial factors.

2.2.1.1. Ancient Origins & Early Sporting Traditions

Sports have roots in ancient civilizations, with evidence of various forms of physical activities and games dating back thousands of years (Eitzen, 2017). Ancient cultures such as the Greeks, Romans, and Egyptians engaged in athletic contests, chariot races, and gladiatorial combat. These early sporting traditions were often intertwined with religious rituals, displaying physical prowess and cultural identity (MacAloon, 1984). The sporting events of ancient times laid the foundation for the development of organized sports in later periods.

2.2.1.2. Technological Advancements & Organized Sports

The industrial revolution and technological advancements in the 19th and 20th centuries profoundly impacted the development of modern sports (Holt, 2017). Transportation, communication, and equipment innovations significantly influenced the organization and popularization of sports. Establishing sporting clubs, leagues, and governing bodies provided a structured framework for competitions and the standardization of rules (Coakley, 2018). The development of modern infrastructures, such as stadiums and arenas, further facilitated the growth of spectator sports.

2.2.1.3. Globalization & Commercialization of Sports

The 20th century witnessed the globalization and commercialization of sports, transforming them into a global phenomenon, as discussed in Tomlinson (2014). The Olympic Games, first revived in 1896, played a crucial role in promoting international sporting competitions and fostering a sense of unity among nations (Giulianotti, 2015). The emergence of mass media, television, and the internet further expanded the reach and popularity of sports, enabling global audiences to witness sporting events in real-time.

Commercialization through sponsorships, advertising, and broadcasting rights transformed sports into multi-billion-dollar industries (Zimbalist, 2015). The commercialization of sports has positive and negative impacts, leading to increased financial resources for athletes and organizations but at the same time, raising concerns about doping, corruption, and the commercial exploitation of athletes.

2.2.1.4. Implications of Modern Sports

Modern sports have significant implications for society, culture, and individual well-being. Participation in sports promotes physical fitness, fosters discipline, and enhances personal development and subjective well-being (SWB) (Eime et al., 2013). In addition, sports serve as a platform for social integration, promoting social cohesion, cultural identity, and national pride (Kidd, 2006).

Furthermore, sports provide opportunities for economic growth through tourism, job creation, and sports-related industries (Crompton & McKay, 1994). However, the hyper-competitiveness and commercialization of sports raise concerns about the pressure on athletes, the marginalization of certain sports, and the exclusion of marginalized communities from participation. These implications need to be considered in the context of online sports spectatorship as well.

2.3. COVID-19: A Shock to the Sports Industry

Coombs & Harker (2021) report that the revenue of global sports for 2019 capped at 500 billion USD from revenue sources like broadcasting rights, sponsorships, and endorsements, which are tied to branding, advertisements, merchandise sales match fees, event tourism, etc. A report by The Telegraph (2020) reports how the governing bodies in various sports like racing, tennis, football, rugby, netball, and hockey were forced to postpone, cancel, or conduct events behind closed doors with none to limited audiences, which had a significant impact on the economy. For Horky et al. (2021), professional sport is a public performance in Goffman's (1959) terms where an event and its context are the stages, and such general cancellations are bound to have macro-level impacts.

2.3.1. Response to the Pandemic

Many entities in the sporting industry have responded to the pandemic by employing different schemes. Horky (2021) reports E-sports has seen tremendous growth, sailing competitions being digitized and then showing a massive viewership potential, and German basketball organizing matches with limited capacity. Areiza Padilla et al. (2021) describes how various fitness centers and gyms used social media networks to conduct personalized training sessions that generated e-loyalty and satisfaction among the fans and allowed such businesses to stay afloat. Regarding media communications, sports brands have reconfigured their values by allowing consumers to participate with their importance to chip in their parts to develop a moral economy directed towards safety and a new sense of reliability. So, the media message of a conscious consumer has been at the core of sports marketing communications.

2.3.2. Long-Term Implications

After a thorough review of extant literature, I identified three critical implications that can significantly affect the domain of online sports spectatorship and consumers' subjective well-being. I will go over them one by one.

2.3.2.1. The Socio-Economic Divide

Horky (2021, p.99) discusses the impact of COVID-19 on future professional sports using consumption capital that is "formed on the individual level by the production and consumption of the good itself and via the collection of additional relevant information." However, a long-run implication is that not everyone can benefit equally from consumption capital. Kim et al. (2020) magnifies this point by showing varying ramifications of consumption capital due to the marginalization and lack of opportunities many communities face due to a lack of specific social resources or privileges.

Sanderson & Brown (2020) show how the dearth of financial resources and time, post-COVID has forced less financially stable families to have their children quit a professional sportive activity, thus increasing the socio-economic divide, having ramifications for small businesses that host sporting events like restaurants, shops, stores, etc. The virtual business models must be scrutinized to ensure equality of opportunities amongst consumers if the image of sports as a channel for connecting communities is to be maintained.

2.3.2.2. The Context Collapse

Areiza-Padilla et al. (2021) identify two implications that need to be considered in the long run. One is the blurring of boundaries in the work-home space. Because of COVID-19, homes have become work and study locations and leisure activities involving sports. This obscures the definition of every day in the post-modern sense because the pandemic has affected the repetitiveness and state of mind and the intermixing of contexts in which they happen which affects firm-worker relations (Highmore, 2002). In the long run, this context collapse needs to be reconsidered by sports entertainment businesses to find a

compelling mix of products/services to optimize for consumer well-being (CWB) / quality of life (QOL) in the long run.

2.3.2.3. Remeasuring Brand Elements Indicative of Subjective Well-Being (SWB)

Areiza-Padilla et al. (2021) show how consumers' support/ participation in the virtual activities initiated by sports entities through social media was associated with e-loyalty and e-brand image. This network constitutes a Mediapolis (Deuze, 2011) where media mediates the public spaces and influences everyday life experiences, highly liquid and dynamic.

The implications of this involve further research about what exactly constitutes these digital elements of the consumption enterprise from traditional ones for businesses to customize their strategies for such platforms to capitalize from their digital domains using their consumption capitals, measured in terms of e-customization (ability to adapt products/services to a digital environment).

Because Goffman (1959) acknowledges that social characteristics define social expectations, social factors like consumer well-being (CWB) need to be adequately measured in this new mode of sports viewing. Since the sport-fan interaction becomes a digitally quantified channel, it is susceptible to commercializing people's identities. Another aspect of this is the context collapse due to COVID-19, which blurs conceptions of a target audience (Litt et al., 2016), crucial to sports firms in media budgeting/ targeting.

Russo & Tallarita (2021) argue that COVID-19 is not only a medical fact but a social fact that has compelled some social aspects to be reconstructed. For instance, social media is the emotional exchange point for consumers instead of traditional media. This hypermediated consumption of sports blurs public/ private boundaries and affects sports training, gamification, and sporting styles.

For Russo & Tallarita (2021), this web nomadism has severe implications for constructing meanings about everyday life as it's relatively unstable and very non-personalized because every click is tracked on the web. Sport is a field where

communities become social spaces, but with the blurring of the boundary between home, work, & leisure, how does this impact the consumer well-being (CWB) regarding the self-directed values that are necessary to maintain privacy?

Nowadays, sports consumption happens not just in physical landscapes but in mediascapes as well, as discussed in Appadurai (1990). Sports organizations use branding, sponsorships, and other marketing tactics in media that increase consumer engagement and affect their levels of well-being (Bason & Anagnostopoulos, 2015; Ostic et al., 2021; Mullin et al., 2000; Sutton et al., 1997) strengthen this point by telling how sports brands (through digital marketing tactics) can connect individuals and provide team identification amongst fans by customizing media communications across contexts.

The implications of COVID-19, followed by rapid digitization and adoption of hybrid sports spectatorship models and practices by sports organizations, put into question the proposed holistic claims of the model because of the amplified marginalization of communities, lack of accessibility, and the blurring of public/ private where leisure is dribbled between these two thus putting consumer wellness into risk.

Moreover, the rapid digitization models by companies demand a reconsideration of how brand elements like e-loyalty and e-brand image can be measured with proper metrics to gauge consumer satisfaction levels which can be used to generalize findings for the population parameters : quality of life (QOL) and consumer well-being (CWB).

2.4. Subjective Well-Being (SWB)

Everyday life under (post)modernity conditions is a lived experience (Lefebrve & Levich, 1987). Societal well-being (especially consumers) has always been a top issue in macro-marketing. This is elucidated by Sirgy & Lee (2008, p. 378), who point out that "Marketing has the potential to enhance consumer well-being in significant ways by providing consumers with goods and services that not only can enhance their overall quality of life but also do it safely—to the consumers themselves, to other publics, and the environment."

Nowadays, experiences are part and parcel of an effective marketing strategy. Sirgy & Lee (2008, p. 378) categorize Consumer Well-Being (CWB) as a contributory aspect of well-being marketing and define it "as the desired state of objective and subjective well-being involved in the various stages of the consumer/product life cycle about consumer goods."

The concept of Consumer Well-Being (CWB) is very profoundly rooted in the economic-based notion of consumer sovereignty, where money becomes a consumer's vote for a societal benefit that is cast through the consumption of products or services (Pancer & Handelman, 2012) & how marketers can improve the consumer well-being by providing them with goods (tangible) and services (intangible) in such a way that enhances their overall quality of life (QOL) satisfaction.

Kotler et al. (2002) advise marketers to redefine and determine the consumers' needs, wants, and interests more effectively to increase their overall satisfaction better than the competitors. This has become extremely important in a globalized world where various communication platforms quickly make marketing strategies obsolete. The global flows of technology, ethnicities (people), media, financial transactions, and ideologies, as identified by Appadurai (1990), continuously disrupt the global socio-economic landscape and significantly affect consumer attitudes about their notions of well-being regarding everyday life. Sirgy & Su (2000) report that the countervailing actions of firms through mass marketing campaigns jeopardize consumer sovereignty, which becomes irrelevant in this age of technology and media.

This paper will study subjective well-being concerning consumer experiences tied to the consumption of services and goods. Sirgy & Lee (2008) define subjective well-being as the feelings of satisfaction and dissatisfaction consumers experience, affecting their notions about their quality of life (QOL). This experiential aspect of Consumer Well-Being (CWB) applies to sports, in line with Bouchet et al. (2004), who propose that a sports product is incomplete without an intangible set of services.

2.4.1. Subjective Well-Being (SWB) & Quality of Life (QOL)

According to Sirgy & Lee (2008), subjective well-being belongs to the more abstract quality of life (QOL) concept. Lee & Sirgy (2004, p. 45) define quality of life (QOL) as "the business mechanism that plans, prices, promotes, and distributes consumer goods to customers—designed to enhance customer well-being while preserving the well-being of the firm's other stakeholders.". Lee & Sirgy (2004) divide quality of life (QOL) into two main components, where Consumer Well-Being (CWB) forms the beneficence or obligatory contribution component. In contrast, the firm side/stakeholder well-being includes the non-maleficence or the non-obligatory contribution component of quality of life (QOL).

2.4.2. Subjective Well-Being (SWB) & Consumption Experiences

Consumption of products and services is a crucial phenomenon in the modern day. According to McCracken's (1986) meaning transfer model, consumption objects (pure goods, services, or a mixture of these two) act as vessels of meaning for the consumer. The value exchange that occurs through consumption delivers material and experiential value, which becomes very subjective after individual cognitive processes.

Schor & Holt (2002) discuss how marketing, especially advertising within the media systems framework, affects Consumer Well-Being (CWB) by delivering consumers with relevant information, thus imbuing the products with symbolic meanings & experiential attributes.

Couldry (2004) describes the mediating effect of media between their place of presence and places where they are consumed. They further point out that consumption is influenced by the quantity of consumables and consumers' attitudes about how they consume. This ultimately affects levels of Consumer Well-Being (CWB) and Quality Of Life (QOL). So, Consumer Well-Being (CWB) shaped by experiences delivered through media is best captured by Couldry's (2004) call to study media as open sets practices.

Lee et al. (2002,p.158) develop a macro measure of Consumer Well-Being (CWB) concerning (five dimensions) "satisfaction with the acquisition, possession, consumption,

maintenance, and disposition of consumer goods and services…(and urge to study CWB) in terms of satisfaction and dissatisfaction stemming from one's aggregate experience of consumer goods and services within a given macromarketing system."

So, consumption in the modern-day age is experience-based, leading to Consumer Well-Being (CWB). This is confirmed by Sirgy & Lee (2008), who elucidate how a previous study measured and showed consumers' experiences concerning retailing affect their levels of consumer well-being. Higher levels of Consumer Well-Being (CWB) are shaped by consumption satisfaction. Lee and Sirgy (2002) define consumption satisfaction as the activity that reflects the satisfaction of individual needs of consumers using goods and services.

This can be construed better by coupling it with their definition of acquisition satisfaction, which affects consumers' quality of life (QOL) through consuming experiences. Lee & Yu (2014) further my point by discussing how The Consumer Process Model conceptualizes Consumer Well-Being (CWB) holistically, i.e., acquisition, possession, consumption, maintenance, and disposition, thus challenging the validity of the conventional acquisition-possession dichotomy (The Two Factor Model of consumer well-being (CWB)).

So, consumers use goods and services to satisfy their experiential needs like quality, comfort, etc. quality of life (QOL). However, The Consumer Process Model (Lee & Yu, 2014) still neglects to address how sports and other cultural art forms address and affect the quality of life as their viewership forms a consumption service consumed by the masses.

2.5. Sports & Subjective Well-Being (SWB), Consumer Well-Being (CWB)

It is stated in Coakley & Dunning (2000, pp.14-15) that "sport's function is universal, often religious, collectivity orientated, and in the training of skills representative and related to adult and warfare skills, while modern sport's function may be called specific for pattern maintenance integration' (Lüschen, 1967: 139)."

This solid argument shows that sports play a vital role as a functionalist institution in society to provide consumers (fans) with a sense of social integration, connectedness, and sacralization. It can be construed from this that sports, especially modern-day sports, play a crucial role in serving as a platform for individuals from various backgrounds to interact, communicate and produce meaning, thus keeping society integrated.

In addition, Coakley & Dunning (2000) review and identify five major functionalities of sports at the societal level: First, providing and maintaining socio-psychological stability. Second, serving as a source of socialization and allowing people to interact, thus inculcating cultural mores, beliefs, and norms. Third, integrating diverse and often disaggregated groups of individuals with or against each other by providing identities. Fourth, positioned as a political instrument for ideological purposes. Lastly, sports can provide social mobility (upward) to individuals of all levels with respect to fame, wealth, impact, and recognition.

2.5.1. Sports & Wellness

Sports and physical activity are crucial in promoting overall wellness, encompassing physical fitness and mental well-being. Engagement in sports, either through participation or physical activity, has gained recognition as an essential element of a healthy and balanced lifestyle, contributing to overall well-being encompassing physical fitness and mental well-being for individuals (Biddle et al., 2020).

While the physical benefits of sports and physical activity are well-documented, research has increasingly focused on their positive impact on mental well-being (Reed & Ones, 2021). Engaging in sports participation and physical activity by playing sports has been associated with various mental health benefits, including stress reduction, improved mood, enhanced cognitive function, and increased overall psychological well-being (Schuch et al., 2022).

2.5.1.1. Stress Reduction and Mood Improvement

Sports participation and physical activity have been linked to reduced stress levels and improved mood (Stults-Kolehmainen & Sinha, 2014). Regular engagement in sports can

act as a powerful stress buffer, reducing stressors' physiological and psychological impact (Penedo & Dahn, 2005). Exercise stimulates the release of endorphins, which enhance mood and provide a sense of well-being (Craft & Perna, 2004).

Additionally, sports participation offers a unique opportunity for individuals to engage in soothing and meaningful activities, promoting positive emotions and psychological relaxation that contribute to higher levels of overall satisfaction in an individual. (Reed & Ones, 2021).

2.5.1.2. Cognitive Function and Mental Well-being

Recent studies suggest that sports participation and physical activity while doing sports have beneficial effects on cognitive function and mental well-being (Northey et al., 2018). Regular exercise has been associated with improved executive functions, attention, and memory (Hillman et al., 2014). Sports involvement enhances neuroplasticity, promoting the growth of new neurons and the development of neural networks that contribute to cognitive performance (Voss et al., 2013).

Moreover, physical activity has been linked to a reduced risk of cognitive decline and age-related cognitive disorders, such as dementia (Livingston et al., 2020). The cognitive benefits of sports participation can positively impact subjective well-being (SWB) and overall quality of life (QOL).

2.5.1.3. Psychosocial Benefits of Sports Engagement

Sports participation offers unique psychosocial benefits contributing to mental well-being (Gayman et al., 2017). Engaging in sports fosters social connections, providing opportunities for social interaction, teamwork, and camaraderie (Sherry, 2010). These social aspects of sports involvement promote a sense of belonging, social support, and positive relationships, which are crucial for mental well-being (Kawachi et al., 2014).

Furthermore, sports participation enhances self-esteem, self-confidence, and self-efficacy, providing individuals with a sense of accomplishment and mastery

(Papaioannou & Hackfort, 2014). The psychosocial benefits of sports engagement can contribute to holistic wellness and mental well-being.

2.5.1.4. Integrating Sports into Wellness Programs

Sports and physical activity can be integrated into wellness programs to promote mental well-being and overall wellness. Wellness programs should incorporate sports participation and physical activity opportunities, emphasizing the mental health benefits derived from exercise. Moreover, creating supportive and inclusive environments that foster social connections and positive relationships is essential for maximizing the psychosocial benefits of sports engagement (Biddle et al., 2020). Integrating sports and physical activity into wellness programs provides a holistic approach to promoting mental well-being and overall wellness.

Based on the above discussion about how consumption experiences are related to consumer's subjective well-being (SWB), it can be argued that online sports spectatorship which is a service focusing on customer experience is associated with subjective well-being (SWB) of consumers. The will be the onus of this study. The next chapter will lay out the hypotheses that are crucial to exploring the veracity of this argument.

CHAPTER 3 RESEARCH MODEL & HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

The critical research motivation behind the proposed model comes from Kim & Kim (2020) and Rejikumar et al. (2022), who provide me with the components of online sports spectatorship and urge future research to explore the causal effects between these and subjective well-being (SWB) of consumers. Kim & Kim (2020, p.01) mention that "previous studies have adapted eight sub-dimensions to predict e-sport spectators' consumption behavior: (1) escape; (2) aesthetics; (3) knowledge; (4) drama; (5) vicarious achievement; (6) family; (7) social interaction; (8) physical attractiveness and skill of participants."

However, Kim & Kim (2020) argue that this approach is insufficient to study the online sports spectatorship of fans that might be subject to new sorts of contextual interferences that might affect the relationship between consumption motivations and exhibited behavior. They highlight the need to consider how the degree of flow experience moderates this relationship, as seen in Fig. 01. On another note; they chase to find out the sought benefits for which online sports viewers invest their time and effort, as opposed to face-to-face matches.

This is even more important to consider not just from a social but a managerial aspect, especially considering COVID-19. The pandemic has triggered the adoption of online sports spectatorship due to the absence of fans in stadiums due to social distancing measures, as per Avidon (2020). He strongly proposes that the digital sports spectatorship model will stay even after COVID-19, resulting in new revenue streams for firms and a totally different medium of experience for consumers. So, I explore the extant literature to explain the relevant variables critical to my research.

As such, I propose a research that will empirically test the relationship between Online Sports Spectatorship constructs as the IV on the DV of Subjective Well-being (SWB), mediated by the variable of team identification, as shown in Fig. 01 below.

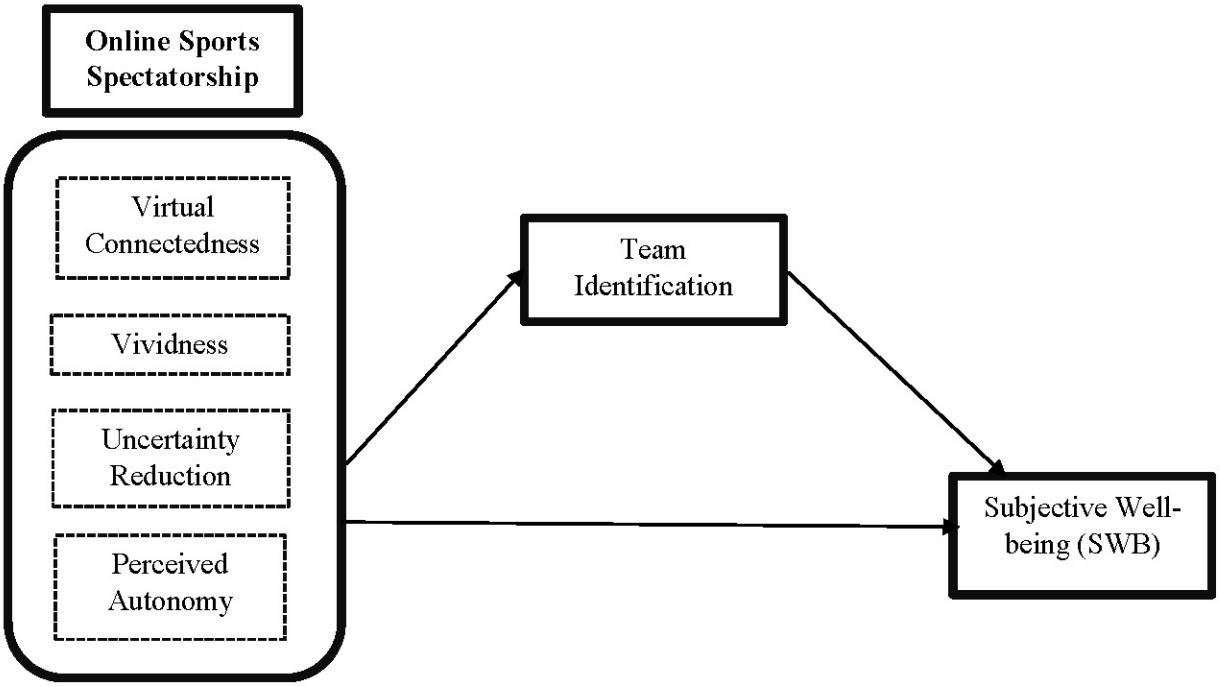

Fig. 01 Conceptual Framework

An overview of the underlying hypotheses with regards to the literature that informs them is as follows:

Direct

H1: Virtual connectedness has a direct and positive relationship with subjective well-being.

H2: Vividness has a direct and positive relationship with subjective well-being.

H3: Uncertainty reduction has a direct and positive relationship with subjective well-being.

H4: Perceived autonomy has a direct and positive relationship with subjective well-being.

H5: Team identification has a direct and positive relationship with subjective well-being.

H6: Perceived autonomy has a direct and positive relationship with team identification.

H7: Uncertainty reduction has a direct and positive relationship with team identification.

H8: Vividness has a direct and positive relationship with team identification.

H9: Virtual connectedness has a direct and positive relationship with team identification.

Indirect

H10: Team identification mediates the relationship between perceived autonomy and subjective well-being.

H11: Team identification mediates the relationship between uncertainty reduction and subjective well-being.

H12: Team identification mediates the relationship between vividness and subjective well-being

H13: Team identification mediates the relationship between virtual connectedness and subjective well-being.

Rejikumar et al. (2022, p.246) define digital sports well-being (DSW) as "the hedonic and eudemonic well-being achieved by individuals who consume sport through live Social TV." For them, Social TV is a collection of social networking websites, famous mobile applications, or digital platforms that allow consumers to view content and engage in conversations, and share opinions, ideas, and thoughts, thus constructing experiences.

3.1. Virtual Connectedness and Subjective Well-Being

Rejikumar et al. (2022) define virtual connectedness as an affective element that sports spectators experience when they exchange, share, and receive information, thus supporting each other while interacting over a digital medium. In this context, the digital medium can be an electronic platform, website, mobile app, service provider, etc., allowing sports consumers to view live sports content. Past literature from (Pifarre, 2019; Osler, 2019; Tse, 2016) does suggest that these technological or digital platforms can garner a feeling of togetherness which falls in line with the relatedness dimension of the social determination theory (SDT) that guides consumer action (Rejikumar et al., 2022).

Brodie et al. (2013) corroborate the argument that virtual together entailing value exchange and sharing results in consumer well-being. They identify five sub-processes under consumer engagement: learning, sharing, advocating, socializing, and co-developing. Brodie et al. (2013, p.110) further this by saying that the "consumer engagement process generates consumer loyalty, satisfaction, empowerment, connection, commitment, and trust."

This signals that the digital interplay cum interactivity of sports spectators from a consumption point-of-view results in satisfaction, which advocates for consumer well-being. Therefore, this provides more reason to empirically investigate the relationship between virtual connectedness and consumers' subjective well-being (SWB). Based on the discussion above, I propose testing the following hypothesis:

H1: Virtual connectedness has a direct and positive relationship with subjective well-being.

3.2. Vividness and Subjective Well-Being

Sharp lighting, booming sound effects, and spectacular camera angles make digital content all the more engaging. In other words, sports content must be programmed to capture the viewer's attention vividly. Rejikumar et al. (2022, p.251) define vividness as "the flow state achieved by Social TV sports viewers because of high clarity transmission, offering the possibility to zoom, pause or repeat the visuals for a sensorially

rich immersion." This points towards the need for technical adroitness and robust media infrastructure of the viewed content for immersing the consumer.

Flow is the key term over here. Kim et al. (2019) describe flow as "the holistic sensations people feel when they act with total involvement." They (Kim et al., 2019) explain it further by referring to the flow theory, according to which flow experience is accounted for when there is an interplay between a (sport) consumer's individual factors like skill, motivation, task involvement, and situational factors that are contextual such as task difficulty, task involvement. They clarify that a person's task-related skills and perceived challenges should be above a certain threshold for a flow state to hold firmly and keep the consumer entranced.

Gantz & Lewis (2014) do a great job here connecting the concept of flow and vividness and how it relates to the consumer's subjective well-being (SWB), stating how technical aspects like cameras and microphones improve the viewing experience, thus promoting interactivity and a sense of belonging for the viewers.

However, because sports spectators are not physically present in the proximity of the sports event but virtually viewing it through the help of an electronic or digital medium, their participation is classified as telepresence, defined by Steuer (1992, p.06) as "the experience of presence in an environment by means of a communication medium (electronic or digital)."

On top of this, Rejikumar et al. (2022) refer to the telepresence theory (Steuer, 1992), which points out that when consumers are bound in a flow state, their telepresence obligates them to feel as if they were physically present among the sports event, thus making them believe as if the digital medium were non-existent.

Kim et al. (2019) summarize that vividness leads to flow characterized by enjoyment within an energized self (Rejikumar et al., 2022) which is positively associated with the hedonic part of well-being. Hence, this probes us to research the connection between vividness and well-being empirically. Based on the discussion above, I propose testing the following hypothesis:

H2: Vividness has a direct and positive relationship with subjective well-being.

3.3. Uncertainty Reduction and Subjective Well-Being

From a marketing perspective, Shiu et al. (2011, p. 585) define consumer uncertainty as " a condition where the information available deviates from the consumer's ideal information state." According to them, consumers face uncertainty in two dominant forms, knowledge uncertainty, and choice uncertainty.

Knowledge uncertainty pertains to information about other alternatives, whereas choice uncertainty arises from practical issues that affect decision-making, i.e., functional features of a product, etc. They (Shiu et al., 2011) further discuss that the degree of credibility and ambiguity associated with a product or service causes knowledge and choice uncertainty, leading to search and purchase intention.

Consumers hate being uncertain. Keh & Sun (2008) assert that human beings naturally avoid risk and are risk-averse because the risk is associated with uneasiness and tension. Uncertainty leads to anxiety, as Morriss et al. (2016) state. Satici et al. (2020) find that anxiety negatively affects subjective well-being (SWB).

Hence, Rejikumar et al. (2022, p.252) define uncertainty reduction as "the proneness of Social TV sports viewers to act in the interest of self to reduce conflict arising out of unforeseen social threats." The highlight factors of live sports spectatorship, like unhygienic toilets, violent crowds, match cancellation, etc., are risky-inducing elements that increase uncertainty, affecting well-being adversely.

Connecting these findings to the context of online sports spectatorship, sports marketers can position online sports spectatorship by focusing on and delineating the features and attributes of digital viewing that reduce pain points that cause consumer uncertainty instead of in-person viewing of sports events. Based on the discussion above, I propose testing the following hypothesis:

H3: Uncertainty reduction has a direct and positive relationship with subjective well-being.

3.4. Perceived Autonomy and Subjective Well-Being

Ryan & Deci's (2000) self-determination theory (SDT) encapsulates the human aspects related to motivation, personality development, and well-being. It builds on the assumption that people are driven by proclivities towards personal growth, overcoming difficulties and challenges, and seeking new experiences to gain a coherent sense of self. They characterize three basic human needs – competence, autonomy, and relatedness.

Engström & Elg (2015) piggyback the self-determination theory to find that giving consumers the autonomy to participate increases their subjective well-being. Studies such as (Shir et al., 2019) and (Schüler et al., 2016) confirm the positive relationship between these two.

Applying the concept of autonomy in online sports spectatorship, it was observed (Rejikumar et al., 2022) that individuals experienced comfort, convenience, and more control over the whole service consumption experience, which enhanced their perceived autonomy due to the hedonic and eudemonic need fulfillment. Therefore, perceived autonomy is "the individual freedom and related relaxation enjoyed by the Social TV sports viewers because of their perceived control of the viewing experience" (Rejikumar et al., 20220, p. 252). Based on the discussion above, I propose testing the following hypothesis:

H4: Perceived autonomy has a direct and positive relationship with subjective well-being.

3.5. Team Identification, Online Spectatorship, and Subjective Well-Being

Team identification is a crucial part of the whole sports experience. Lock & Heere (2017) encourage the usage of team identification as opposed to fan identification as the latter is limited and considers sports consumers' behavior somewhat limited and devoid of capturing the interplay with other actors in the network.

Hence, they (Lock & Heere, 2017, p.418) define team identification as "that part of the individuals' self-concept which derives from their knowledge of their membership of a social group/s [sports team] together with the value and emotional significance of that

membership'." According to them, this definition captures the role of contextual factors affecting consumer (fan) behavior, shaping their social identity.

Inoue et al. (2020, p.531) refer to the social identity approach (SIA) and state that "(social) activity participation is more likely to enhance a sense of belonging if it is an internalized and meaningful source of social identity." Following this, they propose that further research needs to be conducted to explore whether this sense of belonging is embellished by mere participation in social activity and sharing a mutual identity with other ingroup members, i.e., group identification.

Analyzing the context of sports using the social identity approach (SIA) framework identified by Inoue et al. (2020), participation of sports fans in a sports event inculcates a sense of belonging sprouting from an internalization process that grants them social identity, i.e., team identification. Mael & Ashforth (2001) support my point by showing that sports that online spectatorship (can be digital or in-person) bring people together and construct shared social identities that surpass socio-economic class boundaries, backgrounds thus, allowing consumers to produce meaningful social relationships and belongingness that can be termed as team identification.

Inoue et al. (2020) empirically prove that team identification amongst aged adults who are sports spectators is positively related to perceived emotional support, which they further prove to be significantly associated with a sense of belonging hence contributing to subjective well-being (SWB) of consumers.

However, their study is limited in that it only accounts for the USA as the context. The authors recommend studying mediating and moderating variables that might affect the relationship between perceived emotional support and a sense of belonging (a strong predictor of subjective well-being (SWB)). Another limitation in their research is that they only consider attendance that requires live or in-person spectatorship of the event.

Rosenbaum et al. (2017) declare that servicescapes can transform consumers' lives for the better, which might lead to subjective well-being (SWB). Rejikumar et al. (2022) mention that the ramped adoption of digital technology across fields such as sports

entertainment and offering services to consumers demand that research be done to understand and capture consumer engagement. This includes understanding and measuring engagement practices and behavior, such as team identification to extend the scope of Transformative Services Research (TSR) and Transformative Sports Services Research (TSSR).

Given that COVID has shifted the sports entertainment model to a hybrid form that includes online sports spectatorship, it is deemed that my research will explore how online spectatorship of sports (as opposed to live spectatorship) and subjective well-being are mediated by team identification. Based on the discussion above, I propose testing the following hypotheses:

H5: Team identification has a direct and positive relationship with subjective well-being.

H6: Perceived autonomy has a direct and positive relationship with team identification.

H7: Uncertainty reduction has a direct and positive relationship with team identification.

H8: Vividness has a direct and positive relationship with team identification.

H9: Virtual connectedness has a direct and positive relationship with team identification.

H10: Team identification mediates the relationship between perceived autonomy and subjective well-being.

H11: Team identification mediates the relationship between uncertainty reduction and subjective well-being.

H12: Team identification mediates the relationship between vividness and subjective well-being

H13: Team identification mediates the relationship between virtual connectedness and subjective well-being.

CHAPTER 4 METHODOLOGY

This study aims to measure the effect(s) of online sports spectatorship behavior of e-sport consumers on their subjective well-being (SWB). So online sports spectatorship and its underlying constructs were treated as the study's independent variable (IV), while subjective well-being (SWB) was considered as the dependent variable (Fig. 01). The mediator has been identified as team identification, as seen in (Fig. 01).

4.1 Research Design

For this purpose, quantitative research methods will be used. This is because the research aims to explore and produce generalizable findings guided by data. In addition, since the proposed study's independent variable, i.e., online sports spectatorship, happens over an electronic medium, applying a quantitative approach to record and measure responses from a large sample makes sense. The proposed dependent variable of this study is subjective well-being (SWB). Kim & Kim (2020) already establishes the relationship between subjective well-being (SWB) and online sports spectatorship but they consider subjective well-being (SWB) as a mediator rather than a dependent variable. In addition to this, many other studies like (Jung & Kellaris, 2004) (Brodie et al., 2013) (Best et al., 2014) (Gantz & Lewis, 2014) (Engström & Elg, 2015) (Kim et al., 2019) (Satici et al., 2020) (Rejikumar et al., 2022) further point toward the association between sports spectatorship and its underlying constructs with subjective well-being (SWB).

The sample will be surveyed and asked about the type of technological device they use to stream online sports events that might affect their subjective well-being, as studied in Best et al. (2014), who discuss how certain effects are observed on a person's well-being through the usage of online communication technology. Szita & Rooney (2021) also refer as to how the type of technological device can elicit difference responses from customers. Kim & Kim (2020) also necessitate the analysis of type of device with regards to the online sports spectatorship concept.

Furthermore, the variable of team identification will be used as a mediator to see how it affects the relationship between the dependent & independent variable constructs. Lock & Heere (2017) use the identity theory and the social identity approach within the context of sports spectatorship to highlight the importance of the team identification construct, and how it is related to a consumer's self-esteem concept and in-group membership dynamics. Furthermore, Bodet & Bernache-Assollant (2011) point towards the possibility of mediation by team identification between a consumer action or transaction (i.e., online sports spectatorship) and consumer satisfaction, which falls under subjective well-being (SWB), as discussed in (Sirgy & Lee, 2008). In addition, it would warrant reliability by using well-tested measurement scales and validity by removing the human errors that might occur during data collection, thus ensuring an accurate measurement. The conceptual framework discussed above can be referred to in Fig. 01.

4.2 Sampling

In this study, the unit of analysis were sport fans based in the major metropolitan cities of Turkey who watch live sports on online platforms. My sample consisted of a diverse set of genders that were identified, and revealed by the respondents themselves (males, females, etc.), age groups (17 - 65) and all social-income households. This study employed a sampling method of convenience sampling, due to ease of implementation, limited time of research, and to ensure a sizeable number of responses. Simkus (2023) summarizes convenience sampling as a sampling technique that involves selecting participants based on their easy accessibility and availability. They further argue that this sampling method is well-suited to studies that are time-sensitive, whose aim is exploratory i.e., gain insights and generate initial findings about a research topic, and in which the accessibility to specific population groups is difficult. Simkus's (2023) explanation fits well with my research design my research design.

Second, I am testing out Rejikumar et al.'s (2022) theorized model empirically to explore and test relationships, and it was impossible to reach out to my target population as online sports spectators are spread all over Turkey.

For this purpose, online questionnaires (made on Google Forms) were used for data collection purposes. The electronic questionnaire links were distributed amongst the sample group.

These surveys were distributed among the communities thriving in Turkish universities like Bilkent University, Middle East Technical University, Boğaziçi University, Koç University, & Sabancı University. In addition, the online survey links were posted in some groups across Facebook and on LinkedIn.
At the start of the survey, screening questions, as shown in Appendix A and Appendix B, were used as a precondition, as seen in Kim & Kim (2020), to fulfill the precondition for online sports spectatorship. The stats reveal that a total of 429 individuals responded to the survey, of which 300 respondents fulfill the criterion of watching sports events online. The rest of the 129 people I surveyed reported that they either watch sports events in-person only or do not watch sports at all. So, they were discarded from the analyses and tests for this study.

Descriptive statistics post-analysis, as seen in Table 01, reveals that a total of 300 individuals (who qualified as a unit of analysis) responded to my survey, composed of 217 males (72% of n) and 75 females (25% of n), whereas 8 respondents (3% of n) preferred not to reveal their gender association. Age was categorized into the following clusters in Table 01: people aged 16 to 25, 26 to 35, 36 to 45, 46 to 55, 56 and above. The highest percentages of responses came from the 16 to 25 age group, comprising 264 responses which made up 88% of the total distribution by age. Out of these 300 respondents, 176 (58.7%) answered that they prefer to watch live sports events on both online channels and also in-person. The remaining 124 (41.3%) responded that they prefer to watch sports events on online platforms only.

In terms of my sample group's occupation, the largest number of responses came from students in highs schools and universities, which were 233 (77.7%) in total (Table 01). This explains the trends observed in the age clusters, as most of them came from the age bracket comprised of youth. With regards to the type of device used for streaming, television turned out to be the most heavily used unique type of device for streaming

sports events online. Table 01 depicts that 77 respondents (25.7%) opted for TV, while smartphones were the second most heavily used device, constituting 21.3% of the total sample.

Out of the total respondents who watch online sports events, 111 (37%) said that they opt for local channels. In terms of the streaming services available in Turkey, YouTube TV turned out to be the category leader capturing 40.7% of the total share, with 122 respondents saying they use YouTube TV for streaming live sports online (Table 01).

Table 01

Demographic Characteristics			
	(n=300)	n	%
Gender	Male	217	72
	Female	75	25
	Prefer not to say	8	3
Age (in years)	(16 to 25)	264	88
	(26 to 35)	16	5
	(36 to 45)	4	1
	(46 to 55)	8	3
	(56 and above)	8	3
Occupation	Full Time	30	10
	Part Time	07	2.3
	Student	233	77.7
	Unemployed	07	2.3
	Others	23	7.7
Type of device	Laptop/PC	19	6.3
	Smartphone	64	21.3
	Tablet	05	1.7
	Television	77	25.7
	Others	135	45
Network streams for Online Sports	Local	111	37
	International	81	27
	Both	108	36
Channels for Streaming	beIN Connect	10	3.3
	beIN Sports	8	2.7

	DAZN	2	0.7
	Exxen	2	0.7
	Fenerbahce TV	1	0.3
	S Sport +	32	10.7
	Selcuksports	1	0.3
	TRT Izle	2	0.7
	YouTube TV	122	40.7
	Others	120	40
Sport events attended	Online	124	41.3
	Both (Online & In-person)	176	58.7
Online Sports attended	Before 2020	178	59
	After 2020	122	41

4.3 Measures

Multiple items from previous research were adapted and revised for my research context, such as online spectatorship through live-streaming services. All items were measured on a 7-point Likert scale.

My independent variable, online sports spectatorship, was operationalized using sub-dimensions taken from Rejikumar et al. (2022), which they briefly define as *Virtual Connectedness* (feeling of unity felt while interacting over a digital medium), *Vividness* (sense of flow that immerses the viewer into the aired content), *Uncertainty Reduction* (feeling to acting in one's self-interest to reduce risk of perceived social threats), and *Perceived Autonomy* (feeling of freedom and control enjoyed over a digital medium).

4.3.1 Virtual Connectedness

Rejikumar et al. (2022) define virtual Connectedness as an affective element that sports spectators experience when they exchange, share, and receive information, thus supporting each other while interacting over a digital medium.

It was measured using the Social Connectedness Scale (Lee and Robbins, 1995). The scale measures the degree of interpersonal closeness experienced between an individual and their social world and the degree to which they have difficulty maintaining these emotions. Their study was conducted within the domain of social psychology grounded within the self-psychology theory, as indicated in Lee and Robbins (1995).

The scale consists of eight items rated on a six-point Likert Scale (1= 'strongly agree' to 6=' strongly disagree'). Lee & Robbins (1995) show that their scale has a reliability score of alpha = .91. They further comment that the measures appear to have strong internal reliability and stability. Even though the scale was not applied to an online sport-spectatorship event setting, it applies to a social setting over a medium where people (spectators) interact. This warrants the face validity of this measurement scale.

I will use five out of the eight items from this scale. The scale item(s) from Lee and Robbins (1995), modified to fit the context of my research, will be as follows:

1. I feel disconnected from the world when watching a match digitally.

2. Even around people I know on digital sports streaming platforms, I don't feel I belong.

3. I feel so distant from people when watching a match digitally.

4. I have no sense of togetherness with my team's fans when watching a match online.

5. I don't feel I participate with anyone or any group when watching sports online.

4.3.2 Vividness

Rejikumar et al. (2022, p.251) define Vividness as "the flow state achieved by Social T.V. sports viewers because of high clarity transmission, offering the possibility to zoom, pause or repeat the visuals for a sensorially rich immersion."

It was measured using the Dispositional Flow Scale 2 (DFS-2) and Flow State Scale 2 (FSS-2), developed by Jackson and Eklund (2002, 2004). The scales measure flow experiences at dispositions (general experience in target activity) and state (experience in a specific event in target activity) levels, as seen in Jackson, Martin, and Eklund (2008). Their scale is relevant because their sample consisted of people participating in sports. Their rankings directly relate to my topic because their research focuses on the positive psychology effect, deeply connected with consumers' subjective well-being (SWB).

The scale consists of 36 items rated on a five-point Likert Scale (1= 'strongly agree' to 5= 'strongly disagree'). Jackson, Martin, and Eklund (2008) show that DFS-2 has a reliability score of .78 to .90. They further depict that for the FSS-2, the reliability lies between .80 to .92.

Regarding validity, Jackson, Martin, and Eklund (2008, p.24) state, "The CFAs on the long flow scales…have demonstrated that both the dispositional and state versions are valid measures.

The scale item(s) from Jackson, Martin, and Eklund (2008) are as follows:

1. *I am competent to meet the high demands of watching a sports match online. (Challenge-Skill Balance)*

2. *I am completely focused on the task at hand. (Concentration on Task at Hand)*

3. *The way time passes seems to be different from normal. (Transformation of Time)*

4. *The experience is extremely rewarding. (Autotelic Experience)*

I chose these items because they capture in-depth information related to the relevant independent variable: Vividness. (Kim et al., 2019) explain Vividness further by mentioning the flow theory, when there is an interplay between a spectator's factors like skill, motivation, and task involvement and contextual factors such as task difficulty and task involvement. Items 1, 2, 3, and 4 above focus on these aspects of the flow theory by highlighting challenge-skill balance, concentration on the task at hand, the transformation of time, and autotelic experience.

4.3.3 Uncertainty Reduction

For my operational definition purposes, Rejikumar et al. (2022, p.252) define uncertainty reduction as "the proneness of Social T.V. sports viewers to act in the interest of self to reduce conflict arising out of unforeseen social threats." From a marketing perspective, Shiu et al. (2011, p. 585) define consumer uncertainty as " a condition where the information available deviates from the consumer's ideal information state."

It was measured using the Uncertainty Avoidance Scale featured in Jung & Kellaris (2004). The scale measures how much uncertain a person feels unsure about their choice. Their study explores the conditions related to a product or service communicated by marketing appeals that positively or negatively affect consumer decision-making. This is relevant to my research because it aims to explore antecedents behind consumer satisfaction, which may affect it positively or negatively.

The scale was framed of seven items rated on a seven-point Likert Scale (1= 'strongly disagree' to 7=' strongly agree'). Their scale had a reliability score of alpha = 0.75.

In terms of validity, Jung & Kellaris (2004, p.746) comment that "A previous study (Jung, 2002) showed this scale to have convergent and discriminant validity in a measurement model that included…uncertainty avoidance".

I used three of the seven items from the Uncertainty Avoidance Scale by Jung & Kellaris (2004). The scale item(s), modified to fit the context of my research, will be as follows:

1. *I feel stressed when I cannot predict consequences.*

2. *I believe that rules should not be broken for a mere pragmatic reason.*

3. *I don't like ambiguous situations.*

4.3.4 Perceived Autonomy

It is defined as a feeling of freedom and control enjoyed over a digital medium by Rejikumar et al. (2022). It was measured using the Locus of Control Scale (Durante and Laran, 2016). The scale measures the degree to which a person believes themself to lack control of things at the current time. This measure focuses on the respondent's attention in a particular moment rather than being something the person has believed over a long period.

Essentially, the scale was framed of three items rated on a nine-point Likert Scale (1 = "definitely disagree," and 9 = "definitely agree"). Durante and Laran (2016) show that their scale has a reliability score of alpha = 0.94. It is valid in that the scale was used by Durante and Laran (2016) to survey using Amazon's MTurk. It measured a consumer's sense of control in the event, which aligns with Rejikumar et al. (2022) definition of perceived Autonomy experienced by an e-sport spectator. Even though the context differs, the application from the consumer's behavioral perspective is very similar.

Regarding validity, Durante and Laran's (2016) scale measures stress's effect on beneficial (positive) consumer behaviors. Even though it differs from my contextual case of sports, it does focus on a positive consumer effect like consumer's subjective well-being (SWB).

Since my operationalized definition of perceived Autonomy focuses on the central theme of freedom and control. I will use only one of the three items from Durante and Laran's (2016) scale. The scale item(s), modified to fit the context of my research, will be as follows:

1. *When watching a sports match online, I feel like I have no control over things.*

4.3.5 Subjective Well-being (SWB)

Recalling my definition of subjective well-being (SWB) in line with Sirgy & Lee (2008), the feelings of satisfaction and dissatisfaction that consumers experience affect their notions about the quality of life (QOL) in general. For operationalizing it with the context of online sports spectatorship, it's simply the satisfaction and dissatisfaction experienced by spectators after they watch a sports match online.

The measurement scale for subjective well-being (SWB) seen in Kim & Kim (2020) nicely fit into my research design, as they use their scale for measuring how online sports spectatorship motivation influences subjective well-being (SWB) within the context of sports marketing, consumer wellbeing which are the primary foci of my research.

Their scale was framed of three items rated on a seven-point Likert Scale (1= 'strongly agree' to 7=' strongly disagree'). It has good psychometric features, including high internal consistency and high reliability, represented by an $\alpha = 0.914$.

With regards to validity, Kim & Kim (2020, pp. 7-8) conducted confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), which revealed, "CFA generated the measurement model's acceptable fit indices: $\chi 2 = 1{,}815.751$, degree of freedom = 505, $p < 0.001$, CFI = 0.907, IFI = 0.908, NFI = 0.876,"

I will use all three scale items that capture general, social, and leisure consumer satisfaction. This explains their broad and narrow relevance and applicability to my study, which will explore various dimensions of online sports spectatorship fueled by COVID-19.The scale item(s), taken from Kim & Kim (2020) are as follows:

1. *Watching matches through live streaming services satisfies my overall needs.*

2. *Watching matches through live streaming services plays a very important role in my social wellbeing.*

3. *Watching matches through live streaming services plays a very important role in my leisure wellbeing.*

4.3.6 Team Identification

This was measured using the Sport Spectator Identification Scale—SSIS (Wann & Branscombe, 1993) was used to assess fans' levels of identification with their sports team.

Essentially, the scale is framed of seven items rated on an eight-point Likert Scale (1= 'strongly agree' to 8=' strongly disagree'). The original researchers showed this scale's acceptable level of internal reliability by representing Cronbach's alpha (α) of 0.914, which explained 66.3% of the total variance. Factor loadings for individual items ranged from .713 to .905, with Cronbach alpha values from .87 to .92.

This study was conducted to measure the identification of sports fans with their teams to develop a measure for the sport spectator allegiance, which is the unit of analysis in my study as well. This study falls under the domain of sports spectatorship, which is directly relevant to my research topic. Apart from that, Wann & Branscombe (1993) state that their study tested various affective, cognitive, and behavioral reactions among sports spectators for validation. This improves the face validity of their scale, thus making it applicable to my research's dependent variable - subjective well-being (SWB).

I used six out of the seven items from the Sport Spectator Identification Scale — SSIS (Wann & Branscombe, 1993). The scale item(s) from Wann & Branscombe (1993), modified to fit the context of my research, will be as follows:

1. *How important is it to you that your team wins?*
2. *How strongly do you see yourself as a fan of your team?*
3. *How strongly do your friends see you as a fan of your team?*
4. *How closely do you follow your team during the season via your preferred medium (laptop, P.C., smartphone, tablet, etc.)?*
5. *How much do you dislike your sports team's greatest rivals?*
6. *How often do you display your sports team's name or insignia at your home or place of work?*

CHAPTER 5 RESULTS

Table 02 compares the central tendency measures of the independent, dependent, and mediator variables. The compiled data set is represented with its mean, standard deviation, maximum, and minimum values. As the data set is gathered through the usage of a 7-point Likert scale, all the values of the mean are representative of this range assigned to the respondents. The standard deviation (SD), Maxima, and Minima values are all gathered around the mean. This confirms the absence of any abnormal value or outlier in the data set.

Table 02

Variables	Mean	Maxima	Minima	SD
Virtual Connectedness	3.2	1.0	7.0	1.33
Vividness	4.5	1.0	7.0	1.35
Uncertainty Reduction	3.8	1.0	7.0	1.09
Perceived Autonomy	3.7	1.0	7.0	1.37
Subjective Well Being	4.1	1.0	7.0	1.37
Team Identification	4.2	1.0	7.0	1.37

5.1 Correlations

Pearson correlation coefficient was used to determine our variables' correlative behavior. The results show that it is significant and positive in direction, as shown in Table 03. The

output figures depict that subjective well-being (SWB) is relatively less correlated with virtual connectedness ($r = 0.403$; $p < 0.05$).

Similarly, the correlation value of subjective well-being (SWB) with vividness is lower than the moderate correlation criterion ($r = 0.194$; $p < 0.05$). The output turns as ($r = 0.202$; $p < 0.05$) in the case of the correlation of uncertainty reduction to subjective well-being (SWB) and ($r = 0.472$; $p < 0.05$) in the joint association of perceived autonomy and subjective well-being (SWB).

Lastly, it gradually improves and conforms to the moderate criterion of correlation of team identification with SWB as ($r = 0.531$; $p < 0.05$). Moreover, it is observed that the hypothesized statements about the positive association of subjective well-being (SWB) with other latent variables are supported.

Table 03

Variables	Virtual Connectedness	Vividness	Uncertainty Reduction	Perceived Autonomy	Team Identification	Subjective Well Being
Virtual Connectedness	1					
Vividness	0.265**	1				
Uncertainty Reduction	0.232**	0.359**	1			
Perceived Autonomy	0.387**	0.271**	0.240**	1		
Team Identification	0.375**	0.301**	0.321**	0.841**	1	
Subjective Well Being	0.430**	0.194**	0.202**	0.472**	0.531**	1

Correlation is significant at 0.01 level (2-tailed)

5.2 Reliability & Validity

5.2.1 Outer Loadings

At the first stage of analysis, the outer loadings between the measurement variables (MVs) and the latent variables (LVs) were determined, as shown in Fig. 02, to find out whether the measurement variables (MVs) were indeed reflective of their latent variables (LVs) or constructs.

Henceforth, the factor loadings of all the items of the latent variables were determined, as seen in Table 04 & visualized in Fig. 02. The suggested criterion of factor loading should be almost equal to or greater than 0.7, as stated in (Fornell, 1981a, 1981b). Results (Table 04) show that nearly all the items/ measurement variables passed this precondition of factor loading (Fornell, 1981a, 1981b). Thus, all the items of the entire questionnaire were included.

Table 04

Variables	Items	Factor Loadings (Outer)
	Perceived Autonomy	
PA1	I find it hard to win down	0.756
PA2	I find it difficult to relax	0.745
PA3	I feel nervous	0.683
PA4	I find myself getting upset	0.731
PA5	I find myself getting agitated	0.763
PA6	I find I am very irritable	0.789
PA7	I feel that I am rather touchy	0.666
	Subjective Well Being	
SWB1	Satisfies my overall needs	0.633
SWB2	Plays a very important role in the social well-being	0.863
SWB3	Plays a very important role in the leisure well-being	0.875

	Team Identification	
TI1	It is important to me that my team wins	0.697
TI2	I strongly see myself as a fan of my team	0.901
TI3	My friend strongly see myself as a fan of my team	0.895
TI4	I closely follow my tram during the season via digital channel	0.795
TI5	I dislike my team's greatest rivals	0.452
	Uncertainty Reduction	
UR1	I tend to get anxious easily when I do not know an outcome	0.898
UR2	I feel stressful when I cannot predict consequences	0.865
UR3	I do not like ambiguous situations	0.305
	Virtual Correctness	
VC1	I feel disconnected from the world	0.963
VC2	I do not feel belong even people I know	0.641
VC3	I feel so distant from people	0.639
	Vividness	
VIV1	I am completely focused on the task	0.774
VIV2	The way time passes seems to be different from normal	0.768
VIV3	The experience is extremely rewarding	0.740

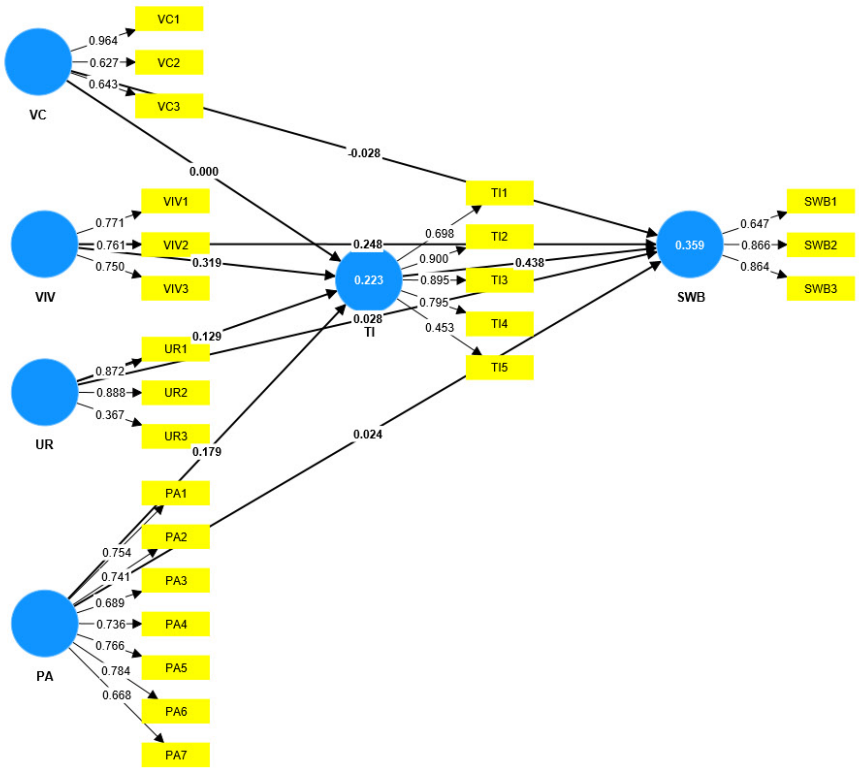

Fig. 02 Measurement Model

5.2.2 Internal Consistency

To assess the instruments' reliability, internal consistency was calculated through Cronbach's alpha (α) and Composite Reliability (CR), as shown in Table 05. For all latent variables, Cronbach's alpha values were calculated, and they ranged between 0.629 and 0.811. Generally, the recommended criterion of acceptance of Cronbach alpha is approximately equal to, or higher than 0.7 (Hair, 2017, 2011). Furthermore, The observed values of latent variables' Cronbach's alpha above 0.7 show high internal consistency of latent variables (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). This shows that all measurement items used to measure their respective constructs were reliable and internally consistent.

Furthermore, Composite Reliability (CR) values were calculated for all latent variables and ranged between 0.760 and 0.891, as shown in Table 05. A composite reliability value higher than 0.70 is recommended by (Arnold & Reynolds, 2003). In the present study, all latent variables showed high composite reliability (CR), above 0.7 for all latent variables

(LVs). This indicates that the instruments used to measure all latent variables (Virtual Correctness, Vividness, Uncertainty Reduction, Perceived Autonomy, Team Identification, Subjective Well Being (SWB)) are reliable as their values qualify for the standard criterion.

Table 05

Variables	α	CR	AVE
Virtual Correctness	0.758	0.801	0.582
Vividness	0.637	0.805	0.578
Uncertainty Reduction	0.629	0.760	0.550
Perceived Autonomy	0.865	0.891	0.539
Team Identification	0.811	0.871	0.587
Subjective Well Being (SWB)	0.714	0.838	0.637

α= Cronbach alpha; CR= Composite Reliability; AVE= Average Variance Extracted

5.2.3 Convergent validity

To measure the convergent validity of latent variables, we calculated the Average Variance Extracted (AVE), as shown in Table 05. The AVE values for all latent variables were greater than 0.5 and ranged between 0.582 and 0.637. (Hair et al., 2017) recommend a value of AVE greater than 0.5 as a solid statistic suggesting high convergent validity and, consequently, construct validity for all latent variables.

These findings indicate that all the instruments used to measure latent variables (Virtual Correctness, Vividness, Uncertainty Reduction, Perceived Autonomy, Team Identification, Subjective Well Being (SWB)) are valid, and their measurement items converge to represent the overarching latent construct.

5.2.4 Discriminant validity

The discriminant validity of the constructs is calculated through Fronell-Larcker criterion. Its value is calculated by contrasting the square root of average extracted variance (AVE) values with correlations among latent variables (LVs). Findings showed that correlation values among the latent variables were less than the square root of AVE values. The results of discriminant validity are presented in Table 06.

These findings showed that all the instruments used to measure latent variables (Virtual Correctness, Vividness, Uncertainty Reduction, Perceived Autonomy, Team Identification, Subjective Well Being (SWB)) that are not supposed to be related are unrelated indeed. Hence, these results show that each construct has been measured uniquely.

Table 06

Variables	Perceived Autonomy	Subjective Well Being	Team Identification	Uncertainty Reduction	Virtual Connectedness	Vividness
Perceived Autonomy	**0.734**					
Subjective Well Being	0.226	**0.798**				
Team Identification	0.317	0.552	**0.766**			
Uncertainty Reduction	0.428	0.233	0.306	**0.741**		
Virtual Connectedness	0.357	0.062	0.120	0.180	**0.763**	
Vividness	0.250	0.433	0.401	0.291	0.099	**0.761**

5.2.5 Hetrotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)

Table 07 represents the Hetrotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT), a sound indicator of discriminant validity. As per the criterion suggested by (Kang & Shao, 2023; Kline, 2011), the resulting figure of the HTMT ratio should be lower than 0.85. Our results show that the entire latent variables have successfully passed this acceptance criterion, as their resulting values are below 0.85.

Furthermore, the upper and lower bound of the confidence of the standard of discriminant validity does not contain the digit 1 (Fornell Claes, 1981; Henseler, 2015). Along with the first criterion, all the latent variables of the study have qualified for this criterion too.

Table 07

	PA	SWB	TI	UR	VC	VIV
PA						
SWB	0.262					
TI	0.345	0.694				
UR	0.567	0.316	0.388			
VC	0.465	0.067	0.161	0.290		
VIV	0.336	0.639	0.535	0.428	0.151	

PA= Perceived Autonomy; SWB= Subjective Well Being; TI= Team Identification; UR= Uncertainty Reduction; VC=Virtual Connectedness; VIV=Vividness

5.3 Model Fit

All the direct hypotheses were tested as accepted in the conceptual framework. In the next step of the analysis, all the hypotheses routed by indirect path were tested.

5.3.1 Evaluation of Collinearity

The variance inflation factor (VIF) was calculated for all items of each latent variable separately to check for collinearity. No collinearity issue was found as the values of VIF were less than 5, as recommended by (Hair et al., 2017).

These findings show that the independent variables and the mediator (Virtual Correctness, Vividness, Uncertainty Reduction, Perceived Autonomy, and Team Identification) are not correlated and display a linear relationship in the regression model. Thus, they independently predict the value of the dependent variable i.e., subjective well-being (SWB).

Table 08

Item	VIF
PA1	1.389
PA2	1.897
PA3	1.918
PA4	2.438
PA5	2.375
PA6	2.095
PA7	1.559
SWB1	1.209
SWB2	1.698
SWB3	1.659
TI1	1.590
TI2	3.296
TI3	3.128
TI4	1.963
TI5	1.160
UR1	1.452
UR2	1.547
UR3	1.115
VC1	1.324
VC2	1.830
VC3	1.754
VIV1	1.222
VIV2	1.276
VIV3	1.253

PA= Perceived Autonomy; SWB= Subjective Well Being; TI= Team Identification; UR= Uncertainty Reduction; VC=Virtual Connectedness; VIV=Vividness

5.3.2 Path Coefficients of Structural Model

Fig. 01 shows the study's conceptual framework. Hypotheses were tested, and the significance of relationships between exogenous and endogenous variables was

determined through β values. The β values were measured for each path in hypothesized models. High β values indicate a more significant impact of the exogenous latent construct on the endogenous latent construct.

At the first stage of the hypotheses testing, the direct relation of variables has been found, as shown in Table 08. In the first attempt, perceived autonomy is regressed against subjective well-being (SWB), and the output comes out as ($\beta = 0.005$, $p = 0.941$). Thus, the hypothesis that PA has a direct impact on SWB (H4) did not support by the study. Next, the direct impact of PA on TI has been tested and found the output as ($\beta = 0.198$, $p < 0.003$) in support of H6.

Moving further, team identification was regressed against subjective well-being (SWB), and it was seen in inserting the positive influence with subjective well-being (SWB) with an output of ($\beta = 0.449$, $p < 0.000$); thereby, the study is in support of H5, as seen in (Table 08).

Next, tests for H3 delineated the output of ($\beta = 0.041$, $p = 0.506$), thus rejecting the hypothetical statement arguing for the positive impact of uncertainty reduction on subjective well-being (SWB). Testing H7 bore the following results ($\beta = 0.099$, $p < 0.126$), which resulted in the rejection of H7, which shows that uncertainty reduction does not have a direct and positive effect on team identification. (Table 08)

Furthermore, virtual connectedness regressed against subjective well-being (SWB) with an output of ($\beta = -0.041$, $p < 0.471$); this was not accepted, and H1 was rejected. VC was tested against team identification, and we found ($\beta = 0.067$, $p < 0.567$); thereby, H9 is not accepted. (Table 08)

Next, vividness showed a positive impact when regressed against subjective well-being (SWB) ($\beta = 0.252$, $p < 0.000$); thus, H2 is accepted. Additionally, vividness showed a positive impact when regressed against team identification ($\beta = 0.307$, $p < 0.000$), respectively. Therefore, H8 is accepted, as per the study results, shown in Table 08.

Table 09

Hypotheses	Path Coefficient	T-stat	β-values	P-value	Decision
H1	VC ---> SWB	0.720	-0.041	0.471	Not Accepted
H2	VIV ---> SWB	4.310	0.252	0.000	Accepted
H3	UR ---> SWB	0.665	0.041	0.506	Not Accepted
H4	PA ---> SWB	0.073	0.005	0.941	Not Accepted
H5	TI ---> SWB	7.643	0.449	0.000	Accepted
H6	PA ---> TI	2.978	0.198	0.003	Accepted
H7	UR ---> TI	1.531	0.099	0.126	Not Accepted
H8	VIV ---> TI	5.766	0.307	0.000	Accepted
H9	VC ---> TI	0.573	0.067	0.567	Not Accepted

PA= Perceived Autonomy; SWB= Subjective Well Being; TI= Team Identification; UR= Uncertainty Reduction; VC=Virtual Connectedness; VIV=Vividness

5.3.3 Coefficient of Determination R^2 and f^2 Effect Size

The coefficient of determination R^2 determines the overall effect size and variance explained by the endogenous constructs. Therefore, the model's predictive power can be gauged through R^2. Under the current findings of the study, the R^2 value of subjective well-being (SWB) (0.305) and value of R^2 for team identification (0.226) are considered as below moderate, as per the criterion stated in (Hair et al., 2017) (Hair et al., 2011). However, Ozili (2022, p.10) supports my findings saying that "R-squared that is between 0.10 and 0.50…is acceptable in social science research only when some or most of the explanatory variables are statistically significant."

Furthermore, the f^2 determines the relative change in the R^2 by including or excluding any of the latent constructs in the model. When any latent variable is excluded from the designed model, its influential impact can be determined through the effect size of f^2. As per the findings of the current study, the f^2 values are as follows: perceived autonomy is

(f^2 =0.030); team identification (f^2 =0.439); for uncertainty reduction (f^2 =0.019); virtual connectedness (f^2 <0.000) and for vividness (f^2 =0.116).

5.3.4 Evaluation of predictive relevance Q^2

Predictive relevance Q^2 measures prediction error. The prediction error value higher than zero shows predictive relevance and is considered a good fit for the model with specific variables, according to Hair et al. (2010). The predictive relevance of the model has been computed with Q^2. Results indicate the figure of Q^2 for subjective well-being (SWB) being 0.179 and 0.189 for team identification. Q^2 values indicate higher predictive relevance for the selected endogenous latent variables.

5.3.5 Indirect Hypotheses Testing

In the next hypothesis testing stage, the study assessed indirect routes by considering the possibility of underlying mediation effects. The variable of team identification played the role of mediator.

It was found that team identification (Table10) (Fig. 03) fully mediates the relation between perceived autonomy and subjective well-being (SWB), hence H10 is accepted; and partially mediates the relationship between vividness and subjective well being (SWB), therefore H13 is accepted. Here, it is crucial to observe that team identification did not mediate the relation between virtual connectedness and subjective well-being (SWB), hence H12 is rejected. The same was the case with uncertainty reduction and subjective well-being (SWB), where team identification failed to mediate the relationship. This led to the rejection of H11.

Table 10

Hypotheses	Path Coefficient	T-stat	P-value
H10	PA ---> TI---> SWB	2.652	0.008
H11	UR ---> TI---> SWB	1.540	0.124
H12	VIV ---> TI---> SWB	4.663	0.000
H13	VC ---> TI---> SWB	0.567	0.570

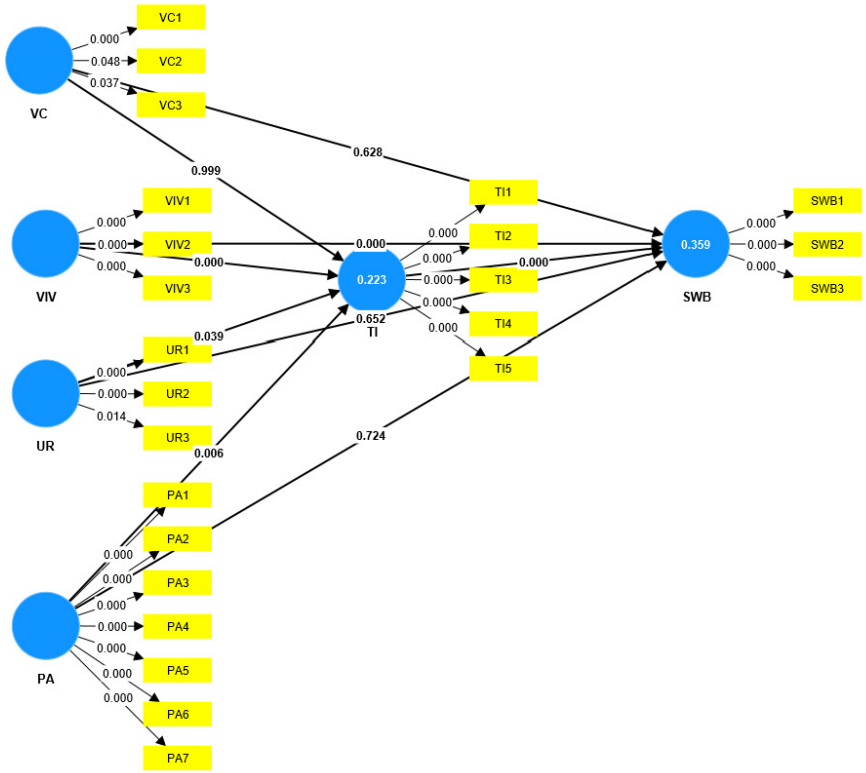

Fig. 03 Structural Model

CHAPTER 6 DISCUSSION

This thesis is a detailed study observing the effect of independent variables that make up the overarching construct of online sports spectatorship (Virtual Correctness, Vividness, Uncertainty Reduction, Perceived Autonomy) upon the dependent variable of subjective well-being, as seen in Rejikumar et al. (2022). Avidon (2020) stated that the pandemic has stimulated the adoption of online sports spectatorship. They further speculate that this business model of online streaming of live sports events will likely remain post-COVID, resulting in new sources of profit for businesses and constructing new brand experiences for consumers. So, my research tries to test out whether the themes/ qualities native to online sports spectatorship platforms have an impact on subjective well-being (SWB), which are the feelings of satisfaction and dissatisfaction consumers experience which dictate their notions about the quality of life (QOL) (Sirgy & Lee, 2008).

One of the research aims of this thesis is to address the issue of studying the effect of independent variables on subjective well-being (SWB), as shown in (Fig. 01), by considering subjective well-being (SWB) as a dependent variable. Previous studies like Kim & Kim (2020) have only considered subjective well-being (SWB) as a mediating variable. Moreover, extant literature (e.g., Kim & Kim, 2020) only focuses on the motivational factors for consumers across online sports spectatorship platforms.

My findings show strong evidence that the identified independent variables suggest a significant impact on the subjective well-being (SWB). To support this, the factor loadings shown in Table 04 suggest that behavioral traits of consumers while watching sports events on online platforms exhibit a significant correlation with subjective well-being (SWB). With increasing adoption of digital technologies across the business landscape, this can be a huge opportunity for marketing professionals to use these new touchpoints to acquire new customers or retain existing customers. Details of this will be discussed in the implications section in the final section of my thesis.

In order to test for the unique effect of independent variables proposed on Fig. 01, upon my dependent variable, the data was tested for multicollinearity. For this reason, we calculated to see if the variance inflation factor (VIF) lied in the range of tolerance, Table 08 measures the variance inflation factor (VIF), and shows that all the respective VIF values lie below 2.5. Thus, it is deduced that each of the independent and mediating variables independently affects the dependent variable, subjective well-being (SWB).

Hence, the aforementioned results show the existence of negligible multicollinearity. This finding aligns with the theorizations of existing research (e.g., Kim & Kim, 2020; Vorderer et al., 2004). Accordingly, it can be translated that attributes that are native to online sports spectatorship, as shown in Fig. 01, are associated significantly with subjective well-being (SWB) and quality of life (QOL) notions (Sirgy & Lee, 2008). This suggests that the sub-themes under online sports spectatorship (Fig. 01) may independently affect customer satisfaction levels differently across different contexts. This represents an opportunity for firms to collect and observe customer habits across these attributes to see which one affects the well-being levels most significantly in a particular market, as it can greatly help marketers decide which levers affect customer satisfaction levels the most. This can greatly help firms tailor their marketing strategies and package their products/services prioritizing the values that the customers value the most. For instance, advertisers/ brands run a digital ad campaign before a match focusing on providing the attributes that consumers seek the most in the target market. This can ultimately lead to higher campaign ROIs.

Secondly, my research aims to empirically validate and develop sound measures using scales for the latent variables (Fig. 01), as urged by Rejikumar et al. (2022). Table 04 proves that the measurement scale items used for the constructs exhibit a strong correlation with the relevant construct.

Furthermore, the internal consistency tests (Table 05) show that all independent, dependent, mediating variables in our model (Fig. 01) showed significant Cronbach's Alpha ($\alpha \approx 0.7$), Composite Reliability ($CR > 0.7$), Average Variance Extracted ($AVE > 0.5$). To test for discriminant validity, we tested for Fornell- Lacker criterion, as shown in Table 06, and Hetrotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT), as shown in Table 07. These results

exhibit that the measurement items used for relevant constructs are mutually exclusive and uniquely exhaust the construct assigned to them. This supports our research aim in line with existing literature (Rejikumar et al., 2020) that recommends developing sound measurement scales for the conceptual framework (Fig. 01). Our findings suggest that all items are valid, reliable, and converge to represent their respective construct. A sound implication of this is that the items and scales we used can be used further by future researchers to study the relationships across other markets, contexts to see how the variables respond.

Our findings about perceived autonomy were consistent with previous literature from Engström & Elg, 2015; Rejikumar et al., 2022; Ryan & Deci, 2000; Schüler et al., 2016; Shir et al., 2019), which encapsulate Social Determination Theory (SDT) and insinuate that increased levels of perceived autonomy (a subconstruct of SDT) potentially leads higher levels of levels subjective well-being (SWB). However, my findings add further value to this line of extant literature. As can be seen from Table 09, perceived autonomy does not directly and significantly affect subjective well-being (SWB). However, our mediation analysis (Table 10) reveals that team identification fully mediates the relationship between perceived autonomy and subjective well-being (SWB). From a marketing perspective, it can be interpreted that having the freedom and control over the online sports spectatorship experience has to be complemented with a strong sense of team identification through in-group assimilation practices for the consumers to experience a higher level of satisfaction from the event.

The results for vividness were consistent with previous literature from (Gantz & Lewis, 2014; Kim et al., 2019; Rejikumar et al., 2022; Steuer, 1992), which draws from the flow theory, that postulates that an interplay between a consumer's individual/personal factors like motor skills, knowledge about a sports game and situational/ environmental factors creates a sensorially rich immersion that they term as a flow state. It is further argued that the technical nuances offered by online streaming services for sports create an experience conducive to creating a flow state. Table 09 shows that the construct of vividness does have a direct and significant effect on subjective well-being (SWB). Interestingly, our mediation analysis, exhibited in Table 10 reveals that team identification partially

mediates the relationship between vividness and subjective well-being (SWB). This finding implies that platforms owners or developers of online live sports streaming service have to technically enhance their platforms by enabling features like offering more camera angles, audible sound effects etc. that are user-friendly, and allow them to interact with one another like live virtual chat rooms to help them identify with other fans of their favorite sport team.

In addition, our findings in Table 09 reveal that team identification directly and significantly impacts the dependent variable of subjective well-being (SWB). This falls accordingly with extant literature (e.g., Lock & Heere, 2018; Mael & Ashforth, 2001; Rosenbaum et al., 2017), which defines team identification as an individual self-concept that is deeply connected with their knowledge, value, and feelings with a larger social group or collective. The researchers base their argument to the Social Identity Approach framework (SIA) (Inoue et al., 2020) and declare that social activity participation (as in online sports spectatorship events) is likely to increase a sense of belongingness if it is internalized collectively. Since online sports spectatorship is a digital gathering of people who identify with or against certain teams, athletes, etc., their participation through this identification process is likely to produce higher levels of consumer satisfaction, as warranted by our study results and extant literature.

Some of our results, however, did not confirm the previous research (Keh & Sun, 2008; Morriss et al., 2016; Rejikumar et al., 2022; Satici et al., 2020; Shiu et al., 2011), which shows that lack of credibility and high ambiguity causes consumer uncertainty, which leads to a negative effect of subjective well-being (SWB). Table 09, for example, shows that uncertainty reduction does not directly and significantly affect subjective well-being (SWB). The mediation analysis, whose results are shown in Table 10, further reveals that team identification does not mediate the relationship between uncertainty reduction and subjective well-being (SWB). This shows that having a strong sense of team identification through practices, rituals, and objects doesn't potentially reduce the amount of uncertainty experienced by consumers on online platforms while watching sports, which consequently affects their levels of subjective well-being (SWB). This can be interpreted that there is not enough evidence to support our hypothesized claim. There

can be multiple reasons for this. For instance, this study was context-bound with limited data coming from particular demographics in Turkey, it is highly recommended to conduct future research that aims collect a larger data set to test out this variable in order to make conclusions under confidence. In addition, it is also recommended to test this construct using a different measurement scale that is more conceptually sound. Another reason for this can be that I could not locate sufficient literary evidence about this construct within the online sports spectatorship construct to make it conceptually sound.

In addition, the results regarding the variable of virtual connectedness were not consistent with previous literature either (Brodie et al., 2013; Osler, 2019; Pifarre, 2019; Rejikumar et al., 2022; Tse, 2016), which shows that technological platforms and digital medium provide information and value exchange which created a feeling of togetherness, and hence has a positive effect of subjective well-being (SWB) of consumers when they experience online sports spectatorship. Table 09 shows that virtual connectedness does not directly and significantly affect subjective well-being (SWB). However, our mediation analysis, in Table 10, reveals that team identification does not partially or fully mediate the relationship between virtual connectedness and subjective well-being (SWB). That is, virtual connectedness does not directly impact subjective well-being (SWB), even through the mediation effect of team identification. These results indicate that there is not enough evidence to support the hypothesized relationship, which may be due to relatively small sample size, and conceptual framing of the construct. Future researchers are highly urged to test this out using other relevant scales, and by using a larger sample size.

6.1 Implications

Through empirical investigation, this thesis explores the effect of online sports spectatorship constructed by virtual connectedness, vividness, uncertainty reduction, and perceived autonomy on subjective well-being (SWB). The key implications of the study are as follows:

6.1.1. Theoretical Implications

Rejikumar et al. (2020), draw heavily from the social determination theory (SDT), flow theory, transformative sport service research (TSSR), digital customer engagement, and value co-creation in the digital platform to understand better how online sports spectatorship affects consumers' notions about well-being in the context of sports. (Rejikumar et al., 2020) urge future research to empirically explore the impact of the themes under online sports spectatorship mediated by variables like team identification to see how it affects consumers' subjective well-being (SWB). My study makes the following contributions to previous literature.

First, my research findings show that perceived autonomy, and vividness all impact the consumers' subjective well-being (SWB) when the mediating factor of team identification is introduced. This indicates that the attributes like having the freedom and control associated with digital streaming platforms, and the level of flow state achieved are deeply associated with notions of satisfaction, quality of life, and well-being. However, all these attributes are guided strongly by how strongly a sports fan (consumer) feels or identifies with their favorite team. So, the sense of belonging to a team pivots the relationship with general satisfaction with the product, influencing relationships with the digital service provider and invoking relative emotional responses toward a particular channel (Troebs et al., 2018).

Ryan & Deci's (2000) self-determination theory (SDT) theorizes the consumer aspects inclined towards motivation, personality development, and well-being. It assumes that people are driven by an inclination towards personal growth, overcoming challenges, and seeking new experiences and connections to gain a coherent sense of self. (Rejikumar et al., 2022) incorporate the self-determination theory to postulate that its constructs are relevant in online sports spectatorship, as it motivates the consumers to engage in activities that lead to subjective well-being (SWB). They (Rejikumar et al., 2022) argue that online sports spectatorship creates mental states and offers values that satisfy many psychological needs proposed in SDT. Thus, my study support this, by being the first to test out and explore these relationships.

Second, (Rejikumar et al., 2022) stress the importance of future research to develop solid measures using scales for each of the constructs identified by their qualitative research in order to make it more generalizable. My study is the first of its kind to satisfy this gap. Analyses of my data indicate that the various scales and the accompanying items used to measure the constructs show strong outer loadings, are reliable, internally consistent, and fulfill the convergent and discriminant validity criteria. This shows my survey data strongly reflects and aligns with the construct definitions provided by the original literature (Rejikumar et al., 2022). This can serve as an asset for future research within this domain to use these measures for these constructs and test how they repond in various contexts for similar cases.

Third, my study's findings corroborate the effect of consumption experiences delivered by online sports spectatorship on the consumer's subjective well-being (SWB). This was previously noted by Couldry (2004), who pointed out that consumption is influenced by consumers' attitudes about how they consume. Sirgy & Lee (2008) furthered this concept by showing how experience-based consumption leads to subjective well-being (SWB). However, they presented this using the context of shopping and retail. But these studies missed the context of digital sports. My study fills this gap by suggesting that certain distinctive themes under online sports spectatorship, a digital medium, influence consumers' well-being. This adds value to the literature regarding transformative sport service research (TSSR), customer experiences by applying and exploring those concepts in the case of sports.

6.1.2. Managerial, Societal, & Policy Implications

The managerial implications of my findings are as follows: First, sports organizations and marketers can leverage the attributes native to online sports spectatorship on consumers' subjective well-being by enhancing fan engagement, loyalty, and brand perception. This resonates well with Areiza-Padilla et al. (2021), who state that modern phenomena like work from home etc., have caused a context collapse and an intermixing of the work and home distinction (Highmore, 2002). Marketers need to reconfigure the leisure experiences to retain their edge in this new hybrid environment. Combined with the

findings of this study, marketing professionals can utilize these new channels for leisure used by customers as a touchpoint to connect with them in new ways. This represents an opportunity through digital streaming platforms to increase the scale and capacity of their marketing operations to reach newer audiences or engage existing customers in order to increase their customer lifetime value (CLTV). From a consumer's standpoint, it can mean getting quality entertainment in the confines of their home that allow for greater flexibility, control, and freedom over the whole experience.

Second, the findings of my study show how perceived autonomy, and vividness significantly impact consumers' subjective well-being (SWB) levels through the mediation of team identification. Marketing professionals can achieve this through the implementation of strategies and marketing tactics by building online sports streaming platforms that allow for greater control and privacy of the users respecting the local privacy and data collection laws subject to consumer consent, running tactical social media campaigns that are directed to build brand trust, and by offering rich, immersive, and personalized experiences by using the latest software and hardware developments. But at the same time, making sure to facilitate fan-fan conversations on digital mediums through technological sophistication of platforms like virtual chat rooms, live chats to cater to the psychological needs resulting in higher customer satisfaction.

Third, my findings show that team identification has a direct and significant impact on subjective well-being (SWB). In line with (Deuze, 2011), online sports spectatorship represents a Mediapolis where digital mediums penetrate public and private spaces and influence consumer experiences. (Litt et al., 2016); Russo & Tallarita, 2021) forward this argument by stating that this liquid medium ordains a context collapse upon the consumers, becoming an emotional exchange point for consumers. This means that it surpasses the geographical bounds of ingroup membership as well. In a sense, showing the value of identifying with a team on a global level becomes a unique selling point (USP), that can extensively improve brand awareness measures. This implies that marketers can run global digital ad campaigns aimed to build of brand image of a global team that connects geographies. This may provide them with massive viewership on a global level.

The fourth implication revolves around team identification. Coakley & Dunning (2000) state that one of the core focus areas of development in sports organizations has been the structure of sports organizations, along with how they respond to changing contexts to maximize value for all primary stakeholders. They note that there has been a transit from the rudimentary concern regarding the provision of physical infrastructure in the towards yielding a maximum economic value, which has expanded the access of sports to a global scale owing to a global demand of sports. Coakley & Dunning (2000, p.500) report that "neo-liberal approaches to macro-economic planning have developed, so too welfare strategies have been replaced by, for example, the privatization of services and the introduction of market competitiveness into the public sector." This is evident in the new managerial approaches incorporating private business tactics like introducing limits to the size of the public sector, privatization, decentralization, and the introduction of new types of market mechanisms into arenas previously dictated by former bureaucratic organizational policies.

This means that online sports spectatorship allows for global team identification and a chance to build a community where conversations occur between team fans worldwide. This is an excellent way for marketers to incorporate corporate social responsibility (CSR), as advised by (Sirgy & Lee, 2008), into their cause-related sports marketing (CRSM) strategy (Irwin et al., 2010). As indicated by Ekici & Watson (2021), consumers using coping mechanisms like seeking group support for social connectivity with other group members that potentially affect their levels of subjective well-being (SWB). My thesis findings show that there seems to be significant evidence that online sports spectatorship platforms carry the potential of serving as a channel for sports fans/consumers to remain socially connected and experience satisfaction and positive emotions.

From a policy-making perspective, marketers can properly leverage technological affordances of online sports streaming platforms to ensure greater freedom and control to consumers, by facilitating community wide conversations freely with other fans from around the globe that are watching the same sports events digitally. For consumers, this translates into a source of socialization with other people through the medium of sports,

through the confines of their homes. While doing this, they have to ensure that proper controls are set in place like prohibiting the use of abusive and derogatory language, illegal and unethical practices like online bets to name a few.

6.2. Limitations and Future Research

Like any other research, this research has limitations due to time and convenience concerns. First of all, the sample of this research consists of respondents from the Turkish market only. Consequently, the results of their opinions or decisions cannot represent those of individuals from other countries. Nevertheless, the findings for the Turkish market can be taken as a scale of reference to conduct such studies in other similar markets. So, performing such an empirical investigation is highly recommended to see how similar markets react to these theories and processes to see if there are any emerging generalizations.

Secondly, I could not conduct an empirical analysis exploring the relationship between online disinhibition, which was one of the themes of online sports spectatorship, identified in Rejikumar et al. (2022). This was due to the relatively low factor loadings for this construct in the very initial stage of the tests, due to which this construct had to be taken out to conserve the model's overall fit. A likely reason for this could be the possibility of not finding a comprehensive and reflective measurement scale. So, it is highly recommended that future researchers develop proper measures for this construct and then test it against subjective well-being (SWB). In addition, it is highly recommended for future marketers to conduct multi-market studies that consider the variables that were not directly or indirectly significant in this study i.e. uncertainty reduction, virtual connectedness, to see if markets respond differently to the effect of relevant predictors. This can be done by using larger sample sizes, conceptually reframing the variables under question by using various scales, or even qualitatively exploring the definitions that make up these constructs first.

Lastly, as recommended by (Kim & Kim, 2020; Rejikumar et al., 2022), extending and seeing how this model plays out under the moderation effects of situational factors like the type of device, platform quality, the importance of the match, etc. would benefit and

allow for marketers to see which devices offer the best customer experience and yield the highest ROI.

6.3. Conclusion

This study aimed to investigate the effect of online sports spectatorship on consumers' subjective well-being (SWB) in the post-COVID era. In essence, I tried to answer two key research questions. First, how does online sports spectatorship affect consumers' subjective well-being (SWB)? Second, how does team identification mediate the relationship between online sports spectatorship and subjective well-being (SWB)? Through analyzing relevant literature, examining central tendency measures and correlations, and conducting various tests for reliability and validity, this study has provided valuable insights regarding the relationship between online sports spectatorship and subjective well-being (SWB).

With regards to the first question, my findings fall in line with the past literature (Rejikumar et al., 2022) (Kim & Kim, 2020) and reveal that provide consumers with more control and freedom to operate on online sports spectatorship platforms, employing marketing tactics like using brand image to gain their trust, and providing sensorially rich and immersive experiences to the consumers through robust technology can promote consumer satisfaction with the services and result in a better degree of well-being. These findings can benefit firms and marketers, especially in the sports streaming or media industry, who want to digitally transform their businesses to remain relevant due to the changing nature of consumption.

Coming to the second question, conducting the mediation tests and analyzing the indirect effects of my study show that team identification is directly related to subjective well-being (SWB) and exerts full mediation on perceived autonomy, and vividness. This means that marketing professionals need to optimally leverage the features specific to online sports spectatorship platforms to allow team fans to connect, communicate and build larger and stronger communities. Findings indicate that doing so will allow them to satisfy the customers better. These study findings empirically support the claims made in extant literature (Rejikumar et al., 2022) (Inoue et al., 2020) about team identification.

Lastly, my results support Rejikumar et al.'s (2022) call to develop sound measurement scales for the latent variables. The study supports this inquiry and exhibits that the measurement scales used for virtual connectedness, uncertainty reduction, perceived autonomy, vividness, team identification, and subjective well-being (SWB) show strong factor loadings. Furthermore, they qualify for internal consistency tests, convergent and discriminant validity. This allows them to be used across similar studies aiming to extend this line of research.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Have you ever attended any sports event in person or through online platforms?

- Yes (in-person)
- Yes (online)
- Yes (online & in-person)
- No

Did you start watching live sports online after 2020 or before 2020?

- Before 2020
- After 2020

When watching a live sports event online: *Strongly Disagree (1) - Strongly Agree (7)*

I feel disconnected from the world.

I don't feel I belong even around people I know.

I feel so distant from people.

I have no sense of togetherness with my team's fans.

I don't feel I participate with anyone or any group.

When watching a sports match online, I feel that: *Strongly Disagree (1) - Strongly Agree (7)*

I am completely focused on the task.

The way time passes seems to be different from normal.

The experience is extremely rewarding.

When it comes to watching live sports events online: Strongly Disagree (1) - Strongly Agree (7)

I tend to get anxious easily when I don't know an outcome.

I feel stressful when I cannot predict consequences.

I don't like ambiguous situations.

When watching a sports match online: Strongly Disagree (1) - Strongly Agree (7)

I think of myself as emotionally expressive.

People think of me as an unemotional person.

Other people aren't easily able to observe what I'm feeling.

I can't hide the way I'm feeling.

When watching a live sports match online: Strongly Disagree (1) - Strongly Agree (7)

I find it hard to wind down.

I find it difficult to relax.

I feel nervous.

I find myself getting upset.

I find myself getting agitated.

I find that I am very irritable.

I feel that I am rather touchy.

Watching sports matches through live streaming services: Strongly Disagree (1) - Strongly Agree (7)

Satisfies my overall needs.

Plays a very important role in my social well-being.

Plays a very important role in my leisure well-being.

When it comes to watching sports online: Not important at all (1) – Extremely important (7)

It is important to me that my team wins.

I strongly see myself as a fan of my team.

My friends strongly see myself as a fan of my team.

I closely follow my team during the season via digital channels.

I dislike my team's greatest rivals.

I often display my sports team's name or symbol at my home or place of work.

What is your gender?

- Male
- Female
- Prefer not to say

What is your age? (Write in numerical form) _____

What is your occupation? *(Choose all that apply.)*

- ☐ Unemployed
- ☐ Part-time
- ☐ Full-time

- ☐ Student
- ☐ Other (please specify): _____

What type of device(s) do you use to watch sports matches online? *(Choose all that apply.)*

- ☐ Television
- ☐ Smartphone
- ☐ Tablet
- ☐ Laptop/PC
- ☐ Other (please specify): _____

Which streaming channels do you use to watch sports online? *(Choose all that apply.)*

- ☐ Local
- ☐ International

Which of these channels do you use for streaming sports online? *(Choose all that apply.)*

- ☐ beIN Sports
- ☐ DAZN
- ☐ TRT Izle
- ☐ S Sport +
- ☐ Exxen
- ☐ YouTube TV
- ☐ Fenerbahce TV
- ☐ Galatasaray Canli Yayin
- ☐ Other (please specify): _____

APPENDIX B

Hiç şahsen veya çevrimiçi platformlar aracılığıyla herhangi bir spor etkinliğine katıldınız mı?

- Evet (şahsen)
- Evet (çevrimiçi)
- Evet (çevrimiçi ve yüz yüze)
- Hayır

Çevrimiçi canlı spor izlemeye 2020'den sonra mı yoksa 2020'den önce mi başladınız?

- 2020'den önce
- 2020'den sonra

Çevrimiçi olarak canlı bir spor karşılaşmasını izlerken:

Kendimi dünyadan kopmuş hissediyorum.

Tanıdığım insanların yanında bile kendimi ortama ait hissetmiyorum.

Kendimi insanlardan çok uzak hissediyorum.

Takımımın taraftarlarıyla hiçbir birliktelik hissi yaşamıyorum.

Herhangi biri veya grupla birlikte olduğumu hissetmiyorum.

İnternetten bir spor karşılaşması izlerken:

Tamamen yaptığım işe (maçı izlemeye) odaklandığımı hissediyorum.

Zaman normalden farklı geçiyormus gibi hissediyorum.

Bu deneyimin son derece ödüllendirici olduğunu hissediyorum..

Canlı spor etkinliklerini çevrimiçi izlemek söz konusu olduğunda:

Skoru öğrenemediğimde kolayca endişelenirim.

Sonuçları tahmin edemediğimde kendimi stresli hissederim.

Belirsiz durumlardan hoşlanmam.

Çevrimiçi bir spor maçı izlerken:

Duygularımı açıkça ifade edebilen biri olduğumu düşünüyorum.

İnsanlar benim duygusuz biri olduğumu düşünür.

Diğer insanlar ne hissettiğimi kolayca gözlemleyemezler.

Hissettiklerimi saklayamıyorum.

Çevrimiçi bir spor maçı izlerken:

Sakinleşmekte zorlanıyorum.

Rahatlamakta zorlanıyorum.

Çok geriliyorum.

Üzgün hissediyorum.

Tedirgin oluyorum.

Asabi oluyorum.

Oldukça alınganlaşıyorum.

Canlı yayın hizmetleri aracılığıyla spor karşılaşmalarını izlemek:

İhtiyaçlarımı genel olarak karşılıyor.

Sosyalleşerek kendimi iyi hissetmemde çok önemli bir rol oynuyor.

Boş zamanlarımı iyi değerlendirerek kendimi iyi hissetmemdeçok önemli bir rol oynuyor.

Çevrimiçi bir spor maçı izlerken:

Takımımın kazanması benim için önemlidir.

Kendimi güçlü bir şekilde takımımın hayranı olarak görüyorum.

Arkadaşlarım beni takımımın sadık bir taraftarı olarak görüyor.

Sezon boyunca takımımı dijital kanallardan yakından takip ediyorum.

Takımımın en büyük rakiplerinden hoşlanmam.

Tuttuğum takımın adını veya sembolünü evimde veya iş yerimde sıklıkla sergilerim.

Cinsiyetiniz nedir?

- Erkek
- Kadın
- Belirtmek istemiyorum

Yaşınız? (Rakam ile) _____

Mesleğiniz nedir? *(Geçerli olanların hepsini seçin.)*

- ☐ İşsiz
- ☐ Yarı zamanlı
- ☐ Tam zamanlı
- ☐ Öğrenci
- ☐ Diğer (Lütfen belirtiniz): _____

Spor karşılaşmalarını çevrimiçi izlemek için ne tür cihaz(lar) kullanıyorsunuz? *(Geçerli olanların hepsini seçin.)*

- ☐ Televizyon
- ☐ Akıllı Telefon
- ☐ Tablet
- ☐ Bilgisayar
- ☐ Diğer (Lütfen belirtiniz): _____

Çevrimici spor etkinliklerini aşağıdakı hangi kanallardan izliyorsunuz? *(Geçerli olanların hepsini seçin.)*

- ☐ Yerel
- ☐ Uluslararası

Aşağıdakılerden hangilerini çevrimici spor izlemek için kullanıyorsunuz? *(Geçerli olanların hepsini seçin.)*

- ☐ beIN Connect
- ☐ DAZN
- ☐ TRT Izle
- ☐ S Sport +
- ☐ Exxen
- ☐ YouTube TV
- ☐ Fenerbahce TV
- ☐ Galatasaray Canli Yayin
- ☐ Diğer (Lütfen belirtiniz): _____