
How does spectator marketing in women's leagues differ from that in men's leagues?

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Abstract: Women's sport has been receiving increasing attention internationally. However, only a few studies have examined the differences in effective marketing strategies for men's versus women's leagues or teams. Most research assumes that women's and men's teams are marketed in the same manner. This study's purpose is two-fold: first, to compare the men's and women's league's spectator demographic variables emphasising the uniqueness of spectators in women's sport; and second, to compare the spectator motivation between gender-based leagues. A series of questionnaire surveys were conducted at the Women's and Men's V. Premium Leagues, Japan's top-level volleyball leagues. This study uses a 2,405 dataset and implies that differentiating spectators by combining spectator and athlete gender will enable sport marketers and researchers to understand a sport's consumer more intimately. Additionally, even though both sports are the same, it is crucial to devise completely different marketing strategies for different leagues.

Keywords: spectator motivation; gender difference; league difference; two-way analysis of variance.

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1 Introduction

Women's sport has received increasing attention internationally (Jones, 2008; Meier et al., 2017, Pope, 2011). For example, in the Spanish women's football league, a match between Club Atlético de Madrid Femenino and Barcelona drew more than 60,000 spectators. After this 'big match', Real Madrid bought Madrid-based club Tacon, officially renamed Real Madrid Femenino (BBC, 2020). Real Madrid was the only major European football club that did not have a women's team because of unprofitability. However, in a recent statement, the club declared that it would 'contribute to the sport's development and growth' by establishing a top women's team (BBC, 2020).

In addition to the establishment of new teams, sponsorship deals for women's sport are also on the rise. After the U.S. women's national team won the 2019 Women's World Cup, the team filed a lawsuit against the United States Soccer Federation (USSF) for not paying its players the same compensation as the men's national team. This social issue has led many companies to support women's sport. Procter & Gamble donated \$529,000 to the US women's national players association. Budweiser became the first beer company to sponsor the National Women's Soccer League (NWSL). Visa signed a seven-year contract with the Union of European Football Associations (UEFA) women's football division, thereby promoting 'women's social advancement'. Many companies have realised the marketing value of female athletes and are using sport to empower women (Morgan, 2019). These practical improvements around the world are expected to change women's sport.

While women's sports have increased their value as spectator sport in Europe and North America, the popularity of women's sport in Asia, including Japan, is growing very slowly. The number of spectators for women's soccer in Japan, which temporarily surged after the women's FIFA World Cup victory in 2011, has since declined sharply (Nadeshiko League, n.d.). Although Japanese women's football is succeeding internationally more than men's football, men's football receives more public support, interests, broadcasting time, and sponsorship incomes (Manzenreiter and Horne, 2007). Therefore, Japanese men's football has been successful as a professional league, but women's football league has not yet become professional.

In addition to women's football, most Japanese women's sports that do not earn enough marketing income are operated as semi-professional leagues, not professional. Semi-professional sport, called corporate sport, is run by leading companies that own teams by supplementing their marketing revenue with their own sponsor money. Since athletes are hired as employees of the owner company, there is no financial benefit to increasing the marketing revenue of the team (Matsuoka and Arai, 2017). The

semi-professional leagues, consisting of leading companies' teams, are widespread sports organisations in East Asia. It is an interesting topic of research to consider the marketing of leagues and teams in situations where each team does not necessarily need to make a profit. Marketing is increasingly needed, as many leagues have considered professionalisation in the last decade.

A good example is the Japanese Volleyball League, popular in Japan for both men and women. This sport organisation must be unique since it operates both men's and women's leagues as a single enterprise. Additionally, it is a common belief in the global sport industry that men's leagues attract more sport consumers than women's leagues. However, this case is vice versa for the Japanese Volleyball League; the number of attendees of the women's league frequently exceeds the number of men's league spectators (V. League Report, 2018).

Whether the sporting league is structured professional, semi-professional, or collegiate, academic research has provided numerous factors to measure motives for attending competitive sporting events worldwide (Funk et al., 2002; Madrigal, 2006; Trail and James, 2001; Wann, 1995). It is also the case for Japanese sport marketing studies (Yoshida, 2011). Spectator motivation studies enable academia and practice to understand sport consumption behaviour because the motive is one of the most potent predictors of sport consumer behaviour. Sport marketers need to recognise what motivates spectators to watch sporting events. However, only a few studies have examined the differences in effective marketing strategies for men's and women's leagues or teams (Dietz-Uhler et al., 2000; Fink et al., 2002; Kahle et al., 2001). Most research assumes that women's and men's teams are marketed similarly; however, the teams or leagues must develop different marketing strategies (Fink et al., 2002). Additional academic work has supported the prevailing perception that male and female sport fans are different (Dietz-Uhler et al., 2000; Kahle et al., 2001). A recent study suggests that past marketing strategies towards women spectators often took the 'shrink it and pink it' strategy (McDonald et al., 2018). However, leagues and teams started to invest heavily in female fan development strategies. Despite these drastic changes, men and women have different reasons to consume sport, yet, female fandom research remains underexplored (Sveinson and Hoeber, 2016). Spectator needs for men's and women's sports leagues may also vary depending on the gender of the spectator. Differences in sports consumer behaviour by gender need to be considered separately in the men's and women's leagues.

The rationale suggested above could also be adopted in the Japanese Volleyball League, which operates both men's and women's leagues. To increase attendance, the league marketers must suggest diverse marketing strategies. Hence, this study's purpose is two-fold:

- 1 to examine the men's and women's league spectator demographic variables with emphasis on spectators' uniqueness in women's sport
- 2 to compare the differences in spectating motives by gender of spectators between men's and women's leagues.

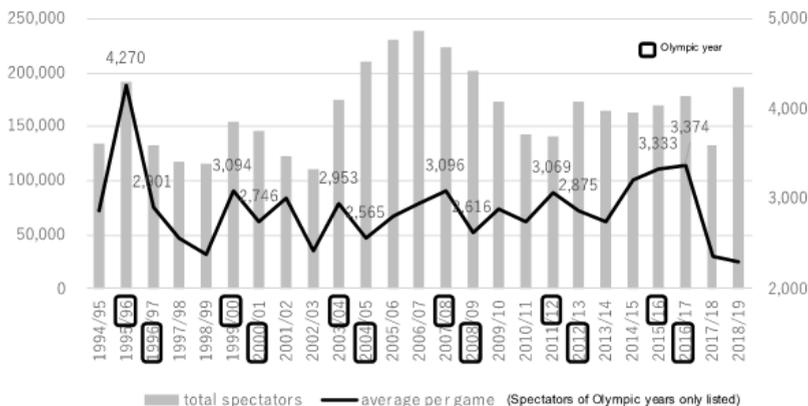
The present study provides new insights into the marketing of women's professional sports. It contributes to sport marketing in Asia, where sport marketing research could provide insights to extant knowledge from cross-country studies (Yoshida and Heere, 2015).

2 Significance of the study

2.1 Volleyball league in Japan

The Japanese Volleyball League was established as a semi-professional league. It consists of 25 men's league teams, divided into three divisions, and 21 women's league teams, divided into two divisions. It has been three years since the V. League launched its marketing company and officially adopted a serious business stance. The leagues' marketing strategy is 'fan-based' and 'attached to the community'. Therefore, spectators must be satisfied with the games they watch. Figure 1 shows the total number of spectators and the average number per game. The V. League constantly brings more than 2,500 spectators per game; however, it spikes during the Olympic year. Such a tendency suggests that the V. League is dependent on the popularity of mega sporting events and Olympic star players. Stated differently, it is unclear whether the Japanese Volleyball League has an effective marketing strategy.

Figure 1 Number of volleyball spectators



From a research perspective, it is crucial to know whether Japanese Volleyball Leagues can increase their consumers through innovative marketing strategies. Few studies have surveyed volleyball spectators (Deguchi and Kikuchi, 2016; Hiro et al., 2017). Other studies have looked into the relationship among V. League spectators' team identity, game satisfaction, and behavioural intention (Deguchi and Kikuchi, 2016). Using structural equation modelling, they indicated that behavioural intention was strongly affected by team identification and cumulative satisfaction (Deguchi and Kikuchi, 2016). Their research revealed the fan club members' characteristics using a hypothesis model; however, they still did not provide a basic comparison among spectators' gender based on athletes' gender.

2.2 Bridging the practitioner-academic gap

Previous surveys at stadiums and arenas have used extensive items to analyse spectator motivation, which sometimes made respondents too tired to complete the questionnaire (Kwon and Trail, 2005). The decrease in the number of respondents due to such

withdrawals leads to a decrease in internal validity (Matsuoka, 2014). Thus, it may be more appropriate to adopt shorter scales for questionnaire surveys in the field, such as at a game site. Short scales also help practitioners more accurately assess psychological and sociological factors influencing consumers' decision-making processes. Accordingly, Funk et al. (2009) suggested using five core facets (socialisation, performance, excitement, esteem, and diversion) called the SPEED scale to measure spectators' motivation. Their study led to a ten-item motivational scale in academia. Another study even employed a single-item measurement scale to clarify spectator motives and game attendance behaviour (Pizzo et al., 2018).

It is also necessary to examine attachment points as motivational factors because attachment towards the team, athletes, and the sport itself lead to increased fan-esteem (Nakazawa et al., 2014). By including attachment points in the spectator motivation, it is easier for sport marketers to understand why spectators are watching the game in the stadium or arena, which they can use to develop marketing strategies. Given different motives in various sport spectating circumstances, understanding the reasons for spectating is a high priority and essential for both sport marketers and researchers (Funk and James, 2001).

An even more critical challenge for practitioners is understanding consumers' needs and developing targeted marketing strategies for different consumer groups (Alexandris and Tsiotsou, 2012; Tapp and Clowes, 2002). Such consumer information is crucial for sports marketers, allowing them to target and satisfy the appropriate market segments (Bouchet et al., 2011). The identification of spectators' differences is made possible by demographic, socio-cultural, and psychographic variables commonly used (Bouchet et al., 2011; Tapp and Clowes, 2002). Hence, to clarify the differences among spectators of Japanese men's and women's volleyball leagues, it is necessary to compare these variables.

3 Research context

3.1 Spectator motivation and differences by gender

Based on the reasons for attending a game, Wann (1995) developed the sports fan motivational scale (SFMS) consisting of eight factors with 23 items, the first of its kind. Since then, researchers have cited issues with scales, including content validity, psychometric limitations, and applicability (Funk et al., 2001; Trail and James, 2001; Yamashita et al., 2018). Funk et al. (2002) highlighted that these previous motivational scales were mostly established in men's sport or a context related to sport in general. Funk et al. (2002) noted that the theoretical frameworks developed in past research might lack the potential motivational factors associated with women's professional sport consumption. Several attempts have been made to implement an original scale for women's sports using the sport interest inventory (SII) scale (Funk et al., 2001, 2002) to fill the research gap. This research included the 'opportunity to support women's sport' and 'opportunity to see a positive role model'. It is suggested that while traditional motivational scales are based on hedonic principles, women's sport motivations are more from a utilitarian perspective (Weiller and Higgs, 1997). They also stated that, rather than being motivated simply by factors associated with individual pleasure, watching women's sport might also be motivated by the utility or functions served by those sports

(Funk et al., 2002). Only a few studies have surveyed women's sport spectators (Funk et al., 2001, 2002).

Despite several spectator motivational scales developed for numerous sporting settings, few studies have identified motivational differences by spectator gender. James and Ridinger (2002) determined that motivation to attend men's and women's college basketball differs by gender. Male spectators were more stimulated by the sense of vicarious achievement, enjoyed the aesthetic value, and had more knowledge of the game. Additional research found that male spectators were stimulated by eustress, economic, self-esteem, and aesthetic factors, while female spectators were more stimulated by family-related factors (Wann et al., 1999). Robinson et al. (2004) had a critical viewpoint: if golf tournament spectators in the USA differed between men's tournaments and women's tournaments, marketers must have a distinctive marketing strategy depending on the type of tour event and gender. Their study indicated that marketing plans do not need to differ based on the tour, and the primary focus should be on a specific golfer or set of golfers playing in the event (Robinson et al., 2004).

The study by Fink et al. (2002) is the first study to examine gender differences in athletic teams. Their research suggested the need for different marketing strategies. Further research also compared the spectator-gender and team-gender motivational differences among university basketball spectators (Ridinger and Funk, 2006). The study employed SII by Funk et al. (2001) to identify three interaction effects: aesthetic appeal, interest in a specific player, and support of sport opportunities. Aesthetic appeal was more attractive to female consumers of women's basketball, supporting previous research findings (James and Ridinger, 2002). The second interaction effect, interest in a specific player, indicated that female fans scored higher than male fans for men's games, while the opposite was true for women's games. The final interaction, involving support of sport opportunities, found that females at women's games had more passionate feelings toward supporting women's games. There was little difference between female and male spectators in supporting men's team competitions.

Spectators' motivation research has grown in Japanese sport (Yoshida, 2011); however, there is a lack of research comparing spectators' and athletes' gender differences. Since Japanese sport leagues have both men's and women's leagues, it is vital to design an individual marketing strategy to elevate women's sport status.

4 Materials and methods

4.1 Participants and procedures

A series of questionnaire surveys were conducted at the Women's and Men's V. Premier Leagues, Japan's top-level volleyball leagues. Spectators from 16 regular-season home games of all JVL and WJVL teams (eight teams each in different venues) participated in this study. The surveys were conducted after the venue opened until the game started. The trained surveyors were undergraduate and graduate students who specialised in sports marketing. Before distributing the questionnaires, 15 surveyors were informed of the survey's purpose and were given general instructions from sport marketing researchers who had various experiences in distributing questionnaires.

The surveyors observed spectators' gender and age in the block to which each surveyor was assigned. Each surveyor estimated the proportions of those demographic

factors and distributed and collected the samples, considering the selection of samples that reflected those proportions. By doing this, we attempted to increase the representativeness of the sample to the population. Finally, surveyors collected all questionnaires from those who finished answering before the game started. A total of 3,623 questionnaires were returned; 1,218 were eliminated because they were visitors' fans and missing data. Visitors' fans were eliminated from the dataset so that the collected data would reflect the league spectators, both men and women. The final number of the questionnaire was 2,405 (WJVL: 1,231, JVL: 1,174).

4.2 Measurement and data analysis

The motivational factors used for this research consisted of eight items (five core facets of motivation and three points of attachment) along with a seven-point Likert scale, where responses range from '1 = least important' to '7 = most important'. After discussions with sport marketers, those items were chosen to be easily interpreted in the sport business field. All items have confirmed their validity and reliability in their previous measurement scale. Participants were asked to provide their personal information such as gender, age, occupation, marital status, and experience participating in sports for demographic variables. For behavioural variables, participants recorded the number of accompanying people, their relationship with accompanying persons, and the number of WJVL and JVL games attended in the previous season.

In the analysis, a two-way analysis of variance was used to identify the interaction between the leagues and spectators' gender differences. The data were analysed using SPSS version 25.0 for Windows.

5 Results

5.1 Demographic variables

The demographic differences for each league are shown in Table 1. For the WJVL, the spectators' gender was almost equally divided; however, for the JVL, the female spectator ratio was more than 70%. There was a significant difference between these two leagues (chi-square = 148.29, $df = 1$, $p < .001$). This finding suggests that the spectators' gender differs from the women's league to the men's league in the same volleyball sport.

Age ratios were also different for both WJVL and JVL (chi-square = 91.27, $df = 5$, $p < .001$). For the WJVL, the largest age group was in their 40's (30.7%), followed by the 50's (20.6%). For the JVL, the forties were also the largest group (24.8%), followed by those in their thirties (22.0%) and twenties (20.5%). The proportion of spectators in their twenties at JVL games was twice as large as the proportion of spectators in their twenties at WJVL games (JVL: 20.5%, WJVL: 10.1%).

There were also significant differences between spectators' occupations in both leagues (chi-square = 47.33, $df = 9$, $p < .001$). Although full-time workers are the majority in both (WJVL: 47.3%, JVL: 47.8%), the second-largest groups in each league are different. Students were the second largest group in the WJVL (12.3%), whereas, for the JVL, a part-time job (15.5%) was the second-highest, followed by households (13.4%). The spectator's marital status also differed significantly between the two

leagues, indicating more married spectators at the WJVL than at the JVL (chi-square = 10.77, $df = 1$, $p < .05$).

Finally, the spectators' volleyball-playing experiences were compared. The majority of spectators for both leagues have never played volleyball (WJVL: 43.3%, JVL: 50.0%), whereas the second largest groups were 'playing volleyball regularly' (WJVL: 37.3%, JVL: 27.1%). For teenagers, the proportion of those who played volleyball was relatively high. In particular, 95.8% of teenage female spectators in the women's league had regular playing experience. There was no significant difference between the two leagues (chi-square = 3.08, $df = 1$), indicating no relationship between spectating and participating in the same event in the volleyball context. However, the majority of spectators in the WJVL participated in volleyball regularly.

Table 1 Demographic variables

		<i>WJVL</i>		<i>JVL</i>		<i>Pearson's chi square</i>
Gender	Men	659	52.9%	351	28.8%	$\chi^2 = 148.29^{***}$
	Women	587	47.1%	869	71.2%	
Age	10's	138	11.1%	89	7.3%	$\chi^2 = 91.27^{***}$
	20's	126	10.1%	250	20.5%	
	30's	190	15.2%	269	22.0%	
	40's	383	30.7%	302	24.8%	
	50's	257	20.6%	215	17.6%	
	over 60's	152	12.2%	95	7.8%	
Occupation	Self-owned business	72	5.9%	37	3.1%	$\chi^2 = 47.33^{***}$
	Full-time	582	47.3%	579	47.8%	
	Civil servant	104	8.5%	72	5.9%	
	Household	104	8.5%	162	13.4%	
	Part-time	144	11.7%	188	15.5%	
	Students	151	12.3%	135	11.1%	
	Other	73	5.9%	38	3.1%	
Marriage status	Single	466	39.8%	551	46.5%	$\chi^2 = 10.77^{**}$
	Married	705	60.2%	634	53.5%	
Participating in volleyball	Experienced regular basis	454	37.3%	235	27.1%	$\chi^2 = 3.08$ n.s.
	Irregular basis	235	19.3%	199	22.9%	
	No experience	527	43.3%	434	50.0%	

Note: n.s. – not significant, $***p < .001$, $**p < .01$, $*p < .05$.

5.2 Behavioural variables

The comparisons of behavioural variables are shown in Table 2. First, researchers divided subjects into six groups based on their accompanying group (single man, single woman, one-man-one-woman, women-only group, men-only group, and mixed group) and compared the ratio between the two leagues. For both leagues, the mixed group was the largest (WJVL = 25.9%, JVL = 22.8%). There was a significant difference in who they

came to the venue in two leagues (chi-square = 244.16, $df = 5$, $p < .001$). The women's league was different from the men's league in that many men came alone (WJVL: 20.7%, JVL: 5.5%), whereas the women-only group, which accounts for the largest in the Men's league were not the majority in the women's league (WJVL = 18.4%, JVL = 38.7%).

Subjects were also asked if they had spectated games in the previous season for each league. Although about one-third of the respondents, namely WJVL (36.3%) and JVL (33.4%), had not watched any games last year, more than 25.4% of the respondents in WJVL and 29.7% of the respondents in JVL answered that they had watched six or more games. This indicates that a relatively large number of people watch games repeatedly at a high frequency in each league. Additional unique results were, for the WJVL, 91.6% of the spectators did not attend men's volleyball league games, whereas 92.0% of the spectators in the JVL had not been to a women's volleyball league game. This suggests no overlap between the two leagues (chi-square_{WJVL} = 643.45, $df = 3$, $p < .001$, chi-square_{JVL} = 718.00, $df = 3$, $p < .001$).

Table 2 Behavioural variables

<i>Behavioural variables</i>	<i>WJVL</i>		<i>JVL</i>		<i>Pearson's chi square</i>
<i>Accompanying group</i>					
†Single man	255	20.7%	65	5.5%	$\chi^2 = 244.16^{***}$
†Single woman	30	2.4%	91	7.8%	
Man/woman pair	257	20.9%	214	18.2%	
Men-only group	144	11.7%	82	7.0%	
Women-only group	226	18.4%	454	38.7%	
Mixed group	319	25.9%	268	22.8%	
<i>WJVL Spectating experience</i>					
0 games	351	36.3%	892	91.6%	$\chi^2 = 643.45^{***}$
1 to 2 game	242	25.1%	36	3.7%	
3 to 5 games	128	13.3%	18	1.8%	
6 to 10 games	245	25.4%	28	2.9%	
<i>JVL Spectating experience</i>					
0 games	894	92.0%	304	33.4%	$\chi^2 = 718.00^{***}$
1 to 2 game	57	5.9%	187	20.6%	
3 to 5 games	11	1.1%	148	16.3%	
6 to 10 games	10	1.0%	270	29.7%	

Note: n.s. = not significant, $^{***}p < .001$, $^{**}p < .01$, $^{*}p < .05$, †single indicates spectators coming alone.

5.3 Spectator motivation

Eight items (achievement, social interaction, performance, drama, escape, interest in volleyball, supporting the team, and supporting the athlete) were employed to assess the spectator's motivation. To confirm differences in motives between the two leagues, a set of t-tests was conducted. WJVL spectators scored significantly higher than JVL

spectators in performance ($\text{performance}_{\text{WJVL}} = 6.25$, $\text{performance}_{\text{JVL}} = 6.00$, $p < .001$), drama ($\text{drama}_{\text{WJVL}} = 5.76$, $\text{drama}_{\text{JVL}} = 5.53$, $p < .001$), and interest in volleyball ($\text{interest in volleyball}_{\text{WJVL}} = 6.18$, $\text{interest in volleyball}_{\text{JVL}} = 6.07$, $p < .05$). JVL spectators scored significantly higher than WJVL spectators in achievement ($\text{achievement}_{\text{WJVL}} = 4.38$, $\text{achievement}_{\text{JVL}} = 4.59$; $p < .05$), social interaction ($\text{social interaction}_{\text{WJVL}} = 4.26$, $\text{social interaction}_{\text{JVL}} = 4.66$, $p < .001$), escape ($\text{escape}_{\text{WJVL}} = 3.93$, $\text{escape}_{\text{JVL}} = 4.12$, $p < .05$), and supporting team ($\text{supporting team}_{\text{WJVL}} = 5.04$, $\text{supporting team}_{\text{JVL}} = 5.42$, $p < .001$). There was no significant difference in supporting athletes ($\text{supporting athlete}_{\text{WJVL}} = 5.27$, $\text{supporting athlete}_{\text{JVL}} = 5.23$, n.s.) (see Table 3).

Table 3 Results of t-test

Variable	WJVL		JVL		t-value	
	M	SD	M	SD		
Achievement	4.38	1.97	4.59	2.03	2.53	*
Social interaction	4.26	1.96	4.66	1.92	4.93	***
Performance	6.25	1.20	6.00	1.40	4.56	***
Drama	5.76	1.45	5.53	1.59	3.57	***
Escape	3.93	2.06	4.12	2.09	2.20	*
Supporting team	5.04	2.09	5.42	2.03	4.48	***
Interest in volleyball	6.18	1.27	6.07	1.47	2.01	*
Supporting athlete	5.27	1.88	5.23	2.00	0.47	n.s.

Note: n.s. = not significant, *** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$.

A series of Two-way ANOVAs were conducted to examine the direct and indirect influences of gender, league difference, or the combination of both. It is a 2 (male spectator, female spectator) \times 2 (male athlete, female athlete) analysis, and eight items of spectator motivation were adjusted as dependent variables. As a result, significant interactions were found in achievement, interest in volleyball, supporting team, and supporting athletes:

$$F_{\text{achievement}}(1, 2,262) = 6.17, p < .05$$

$$F_{\text{interest in volleyball}}(1, 2,395) = 19.40, p < .001$$

$$F_{\text{supporting team}}(1, 2,303) = 29.37, p < .001$$

$$F_{\text{supporting athlete}}(1, 2,300) = 77.28, p < .001$$

A post-hoc test using Bonferroni method was stratified to test the simple main effects of these four motivations. For achievement motivation, the simple main effect occurred for females ($F(1, 2,262) = 12.39$, $p < .001$), in which the JVL was significantly higher than the WJVL. This result indicates that female JVL spectators are more stimulated by achievement than female WJVL spectators. There was a simple main effect on interest in volleyball motivation for male spectators ($F(1, 2,395) = 38.35$, $p < .001$) and both leagues ($F_{\text{WJVL}}(1, 2,395) = 18.19$, $p < .001$, $F_{\text{JVL}}(1, 2,395) = 93.53$, $p < .001$). Female spectators expressed a higher motive of interest in volleyball than male spectators in both leagues; however, there was no significant difference in female motives between the two leagues. For supporting team, there was a simple main effect in female spectators ($F(1, 2,303) =$

45.45, $p < .001$) and for both leagues ($F_{WJVL}(1, 2,303) = 11.50, p < .001, F_{JVL}(1, 2,303) = 17.97, p < .001$). These findings indicate that male spectators tend to support WJVL teams, whereas female spectators support JVL teams. Finally, there were simple main effect for both gender in supporting athletes motivation ($F_{Male}(1, 2,300) = 65.80, p < .001, F_{Female}(1, 2,300) = 15.61, p < .001$), and JVL ($F(1, 2,300) = 114.00, p < .001$). This illustrates that female spectators are more motivated to support athletes for JVL than WJVL, whereas male spectators' motivation towards supporting WJVL athletes is significantly higher than that of JVL.

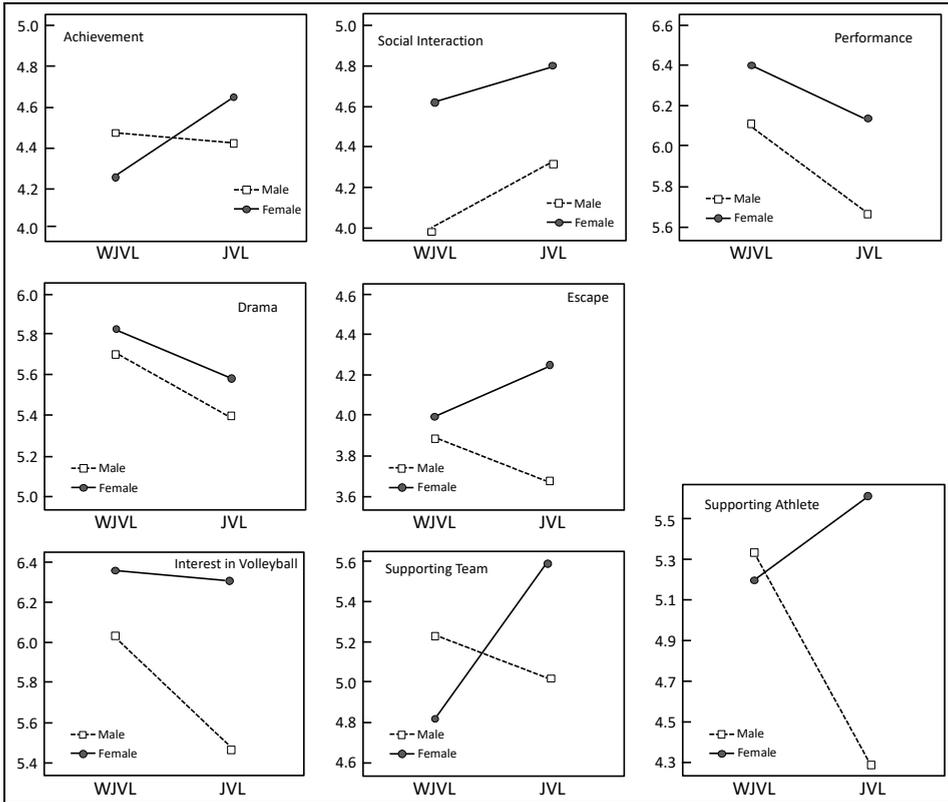
Table 4 Results of two-way ANOVA

League	WJVL		JVL		Main effect		Interaction
	Male	Female	Male	Female	League	Gender	
Achievement	4.48 (1.93)	4.26 (2.01)	4.43 (2.11)	4.65 (1.99)	3.86*	0.00	6.17*
Social interaction	3.95 (1.92)	4.62 (1.95)	4.32 (1.93)	4.80 (1.90)	10.64**	45.12***	1.29 n.s.
Performance	6.11 (1.26)	6.40 (1.11)	5.67 (1.56)	6.14 (1.31)	39.31***	45.94***	2.20 n.s.
Drama	5.70 (1.43)	5.83 (1.47)	5.40 (1.65)	5.59 (1.56)	16.49***	5.93*	0.18 n.s.
Escape	3.87 (2.02)	3.99 (2.10)	3.78 (2.06)	4.25 (2.08)	0.89	10.59*	3.76 n.s.
Interest in volleyball	6.03 (1.31)	6.36 (1.20)	5.47 (1.69)	6.31 (1.30)	27.60***	101.30***	19.40***
Supporting team	5.23 (2.00)	4.82 (2.17)	5.02 (2.13)	5.59 (1.96)	9.55**	0.80	29.37***
Supporting athlete	5.34 (1.75)	5.20 (2.01)	4.29 (1.98)	5.61 (1.87)	14.60***	50.64***	77.28***

Notes: Mean, standard deviation in parentheses; n.s. = not significant, *** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$, post-hoc (Bonferonni) test; Achievement: $F_{female}(1, 2,262) = 12.39, p < .001$, interest in volleyball: $F_{male}(1, 2,395) = 38.35, p < .001$, $F_{WJVL}(1, 2,395) = 18.19, p < .001, F_{JVL}(1, 2,395) = 93.53, p < .001$, supporting team: $F_{female}(1, 2,303) = 45.45, p < .001, F_{WJVL}(1, 2,303) = 11.50, p < .001, F_{JVL}(1, 2,303) = 17.97, p < .001$, supporting athletes: $F_{male}(1, 2,300) = 65.80, p < .001, F_{female}(1, 2,300) = 15.61, p < .001, F_{JVL}(1, 2,300) = 114.00, p < .001$.

For motivations there were no interactions, the main effects occurred between the league and spectator gender in social interaction ($F_{League}(1, 2,272) = 10.64, p < .001, F_{Gender}(1, 2,272) = 45.12, p < .001$), performance ($F_{League}(1, 2,365) = 39.31, p < .001, F_{Gender}(1, 2,365) = 45.94, p < .001$) and drama ($F_{League}(1, 2,308) = 16.49, p < .001, F_{Gender}(1, 2,308) = 5.93, p < .05$) There were significant main effect in the gender difference in escape motivation ($F(1, 2,275) = 10.59, p < .001$) (see Table 4, Figure 2).

Figure 2 Results of two-way ANOVA



6 Discussion and implications

6.1 Discussion

This study investigated the differences in demographic and behavioural factors among spectators of Japanese men’s and women’s volleyball leagues. By comparing the two leagues’ motivational factors, this study also attempted to reveal women’s league spectators’ unique characteristics.

First, it compared the WJVL and JVL spectators’ demographic and behavioural variables. One of the more striking results was the ratio difference in the spectators’ gender for the men’s and women’s volleyball leagues. For WJVL games, the spectator gender ratio was almost the same (52.9% male spectators, 47.1% female spectators). In contrast, for the JVL games, there were significantly more female spectators (28.8% male spectators, 71.2% female spectators) (see Table 1). Comparing the ratio of spectators in JVL games to the Japanese women’s football league, less than 30% were female spectators, and over 70% were male (Nadeshiko League, 2014), indicating more women spectators for women’s volleyball. By contrast, only 40% of women spectators watched the Japanese men’s football league (J. League, 2014). Thus, even though the same sport

is played by both male and female athletes (i.e., the same product is offered), the gender ratios of the respective leagues' customers are different.

Comparing the behavioural variables, male spectators in the women's league games tend to attend individually (WJVL_{woman}: 2.4%, WJVL_{man}: 20.7%). However, the male group ratio in the women's games is smaller than that of the female group at both the women's and the men's games (WJVL_{women group}: 18.4%; WJVL_{men group}: 11.7%; JVL_{women group}: 38.7%; JVL_{men group}: 7.0%) (see Table 2). Therefore, it can be stated that male spectators attend the opposite genders' sporting events by themselves. Women spectators attend the opposite genders' sporting events with a group of women. Another interesting result was that the majority (91.6%) of JVL spectators never attended a WJVL game in the previous season, and 92.0% of WJVL spectators did not attend a JVL game in the previous season. However, 32.6% of the JVL spectators attended more than six JVL games, and 26.4% of WJVL spectators attended more than six WJVL games in the prior season. Stated differently, spectators' behavioural loyalty in both leagues is high, and very little overlapping exists between two leagues' spectators. The percentage of spectating experiences was higher for JVL female spectators. This finding could indicate that women are more likely than men to remain loyal fans once they have committed to the team or athlete they support (Fink et al., 2002). As Fink et al. (2002) have stated this research has been applied to the same sport; however, the values produced are different, suggesting that both practitioners and academicians in sport marketing need to recognise that these two leagues produce a completely different product.

Additionally, for the women's volleyball league, most teenage spectators have experience playing volleyball regularly. It provides a new insight for girls spectating women's sport. Previous research has highlighted the importance of gender equality issues and enhancing female sport participants (Funk et al., 2003). Consequently, the players' motivational concept serving as a positive role model for youngsters has been introduced in several studies (Funk et al., 2002, 2003). Additionally, young girls also learn techniques or tactics that they could adopt as players on their teams.

To reveal the women spectators' motivational characteristics, a two-way ANOVA was conducted. Previous studies have discussed several motivational differences between male and female spectators. The present study found that spectator motives differed with the athletes' gender. There was no interaction between spectator gender and athlete gender in social interaction, performance, drama, and escape motivation. It suggests that the league they watch and the spectators' gender are related to these motivations. However, there were interactions in four motivations: achievement, interest in volleyball, supporting a team, and supporting an athlete. When females watch the WJVL, they are less stimulated by supporting team motivation; however, the supporting team motivation is high when they attend JVL games. This finding indicates that female spectators seek different values from each league. The sport is the same, but the values produced differ. Sport marketers and researchers need to recognise that these two leagues produce a completely different product. This result supports that female consumers tend to become loyal fans of a particular team once they are hooked on it (James and Ridinger, 2002). Even if the supporting team or athlete performs poorly on-field, it less impacts their connections. Team and league marketers must maintain long-term relationships with such female fans.

Finally, the unique attributes of the volleyball spectators in both women's and men's league were summarised in Figure 3. For the WJVL spectators, many female spectators

have experience playing volleyball and enjoy the performance of volleyball itself during games. Female spectators tend to watch the game in a group, whereas approximately 40% of male spectators attend the women’s game alone with low-level social motivations.

For JVL games, the ratio of female spectators attending the game with a ‘women-only group’ is relatively high, while male JVL spectators attend in ‘pairs of man-women’. The overall motivation score for JVL spectators is high for females and low for males and highlights women as key marketing targets because they are primarily responsible for attendance decisions. Females in the JVL are incredibly supportive of the teams and players, compared to both male JVL and WJVL spectators. These female spectators are likely to be good customers for the team and the league, with whom the team can build a long-term relationship. This study indicates that by comparing the spectators’ and athletes’ gender, there will be unique findings that encourage the leagues’ marketing strategy, which will help elevate the status of women’s sport leagues.

Figure 3 Summarising the spectators’ unique characteristics

	Female Spectators	Male Spectators
WJVL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Majority of spectators aged 10’s (17%) is high compared to 10’s spectating JVL and the volume zone is 40’s (27.6%) · Most of played volleyball (72.2%) · Most merely spectate by themselves (4.5%) · Performance (6.40) and interest in volleyball (6.36) high motivation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Majority of spectators aged 40’s (33.5%) and 50’s (22.2%) · Most never player volleyball (57.1%) · Spectate by themselves (39.2%) · Performance (6.11) and interest in volleyball (6.03) high, social interaction (3.95) low
JVL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · 10’s and 60’s ratio less than 10%, 20’ s to 50’ s are around 20% · Half participated in volleyball · Spectating with “women-only group” ratio high (54.5%) · Highly motivated in interest in volleyball (6.31). Motivation score is overall high 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · 10’s and 60’s ratio less than 10%, 20’ s to 40’ s are around 20% · Half participated in volleyball · Spectating with “Man/woman pair” ratio high (31.4%) · Highly motivated in performance (5.67), however the motivation score is overall low

6.2 Implications

One of the crucial results of this research is that all spectators cannot be treated in the same way. Previous studies have clarified the consumer behaviour differences among spectators’ gender (James and Ridinger, 2002; Wang and Matsuoka, 2014), countries (James et al., 2009), and sport contexts (Wann et al., 2008). Numerous motivational studies have been conducted in the sport spectatorship context; however, they have been limited to capturing spectators as a whole. This study implies that differentiating spectators by combining spectator and athlete gender will enable sport marketers and researchers to understand the sport’s consumer more intimately. Additionally, even though the sport is the same, it is crucial to devise completely different marketing strategies for different leagues.

This study examined whether spectators of women’s volleyball and men’s volleyball differ and whether different marketing strategies should be developed to attract

spectators. For instance, men's and women's volleyball spectators watch the game with different people. If the women's league wants to increase more female spectators, it is crucial to target those who play volleyball on a regular basis, such as in school clubs. Adjusting the game time for teenagers who will spectate with their teammates could be an idea to increase their attendance at the games. An additional example of increasing female spectators in the men's league is to use star athletes on their billboards. The results showed that JVL female spectators scored highest for 'supporting team' and 'supporting athlete'. It indicates their strong connections with athletes of the opposite gender, such as 'idols'. Athletes should endorse the league to maintain and enhance spectators. When sport marketers want to increase the attendance of a specific gender, it is not effective to employ the same marketing strategy for both men's and women's leagues.

Additionally, the results for 'achievement' and 'supporting team/athlete' showed that, in common, the mean value of the responses of female spectators tended to be lower for the WJVL than for the JVL. In other words, female spectators felt a sense of accomplishment toward the JVL and at the same time wanted to support the team/athlete, while they had only a small sense of accomplishment in the WJVL and did not want to support the team/athlete. It can be concluded that the JVL has been somewhat successful in its marketing to attract female spectators. In the future, the critical marketing issue will be to make them feel a continued attachment to the team and players. For this reason, it is vital to plan measures (such as post-game events) that will make people feel a greater sense of accomplishment than ever before.

On the other hand, in order to motivate female spectators of the WJVL to support the team and watch games, it is necessary first to increase their attachment to the team and players and then have them feel a sense of accomplishment on behalf of the team, which is one of the crucial factors in watching sporting events. In order to increase the attachment to the team and players, for example, it would be helpful to introduce the history of the players and set up events to interact with the players, thereby bringing them closer to each other.

The value of this research is that a survey was conducted with actual volleyball spectators from both men's and women's leagues, as only a few studies have investigated spectators of female sporting events (Funk et al., 2001; Funk et al., 2002). While the data itself is valuable, the motivational scale using a single item will allow sport marketers to easily interpret the study results and adapt their marketing strategy.

7 Limitations and future research

Although the current study can help practitioners in the sport industry better understand consumer behaviour among the two leagues, there are some limitations. First, the motivational scale adapted for the present study was conducted using eight items. While these items were common to spectators of all sports, it might be helpful to add items relevant to the motivation of volleyball spectators. Second, Japanese volleyball was the main research topic. Due to the extreme popularity in both spectating and participating in volleyball among Japanese and the unique gender role in the Asian region, the ability to generalise the data could be limited. Therefore, it should be compared with other leagues and other countries to fill the gap between existing marketing strategies and real sport

consumers. Third, the timing of data collection should be scrutinised. The results could differ from the beginning to the end of the season. Future research should also consider how to determine which games should be surveyed. Finally, while this research examined spectator motivation, other psychological variables, such as attachment, involvement and brand image, also explain spectators' behavioural intentions (James and Trail, 2008; Hill and Green, 2000; Kaplanidou, 2009). Testing other positive variables will further the recognition of unique characteristics among women's sport spectators.

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