

# **Collaborative Consumption Sport Hosting: Value and Consumption Constraints**

Michael Goldman \*

Sport Management, University of San Francisco, San Francisco, California, USA  
Gordon Institute of Business Science, University of Pretoria, Johannesburg, South Africa

Brandon Brown

Preston Robert Tisch Institute for Global Sport, New York University, New York, New York, USA

Eric C. Schwarz

College of Sport and Exercise Science, Victoria University, Melbourne, Australia

\*Corresponding author: Michael Goldman can be contacted at: [mmgoldman@usfca.edu](mailto:mmgoldman@usfca.edu)

## **Abstract**

**Purpose** – The purpose of this paper is to find evidence of the benefits and constraints of collaborative consumption experiences by investigating the perceptions of hosts and visitors that attended professional regular season basketball and baseball games in the USA.

**Design/methodology/approach** – Data were collected through four focus groups with 37 total participants, and were analyzed through qualitative content analysis.

**Findings** – The results show that participants in a collaborative consumption experience perceive four types of value: social interaction and belonging, new fandom, travel bucket list experiences, and local and sport knowledge. In addition, the results provide evidence of five consumption constraints related to collaborative consumption: expenses, average experiences, seat location, interpersonal disconnects, and personal risk.

**Practical implications** – Practitioners can use this initial study to better understand the benefits hosts and visitors perceive in the experience, and therefore the kind of experience design that would encourage increased purchases and loyalty.

**Originality/value** – This paper provides qualitative insights into the benefits and detriments of a collaborative consumption sport experience, based on participants' involvement in an innovative peer-to-peer platform.

**Keywords:** Collaborative consumption, Value, Constraints, Collaborative Economy, Shared economy, Sport hosting

**Paper type:** Research paper

## **Introduction**

Of the many concerns a given business must confront, one perpetual difficulty is the continuous change in consumer preferences. Studies suggest that under the current market economy, consumers are not only shifting their attitudes towards traditional business interactions (i.e., traditional B2C practices) but have developed an overall concern towards the ethical standards of certain corporations (Hamari *et al.*, 2016). While there is a growing apprehension amongst consumers towards issues such as ecological and environmental practices, consumer concerns also entail matters such as authenticity and trustworthiness (Hamari *et al.*, 2016). According to Eckhardt, Belk, and Devinney (2010), consumers are beginning to question their interactions with larger B2C corporations because they perceive such corporations to be faceless and are often unaccountable for past issues. In turn, according to these consumers, interacting with larger B2C corporations may be considered disreputable, or even unethical.

Subsequently, consumers are showing a reluctance to trust certain B2C marketing messages, and are turning away from what is sometimes considered ‘unethical consumption behavior’ (Eckhardt *et al.*, 2010). Therefore, it is no wonder that the collaborative economy (defined as ‘the peer-to-peer-based activity of obtaining, giving, or sharing the access to goods and services, coordinated through community-based online services’ (Hamari *et al.*, 2016) has since become an attractive alternative for consumers. While one could argue the use of one term over another, the two most common terms used interchangeably are the collaborative economy and the sharing economy. However, Gössling and Hall (2019) do make a distinction that the sharing economy mainly refers to private and non-commercial transactions, with the collaborative economy being focused on peer exchanges that are driven by commercial platforms and businesses. This collaborative economy allows consumers to rely on each other, rather than larger faceless B2C corporations. As such, consumers can begin to build a sense of trust towards fellow consumers rather than a corporation itself. Further, as a community-oriented set of activities, collaborative economies also permit consumers to be somewhat autonomous. Overall, a community-oriented consumption experience allows consumers to find a trustworthy alternative to corporations and bypass interactions with B2C corporations altogether.

These new consumer preferences have garnered the attention of a range of industries. Companies such as Airbnb and Uber, which rely on such collaborative economies, have seen substantial profits over the last decade (Hamari *et al.*, 2016). These companies have witnessed a flow of positive consumer appraisals, and in turn, have become some of the most notable leaders in the industry. As recently as 2010, sharing systems achieved market volumes of \$100 billion USD (Lamberton and Rose, 2012). Not only have companies welcomed the process of creating a modern-age source of revenue but in that the process is collaborative, consumers are equally

interested in the concept. According to Hamari *et al.* (2016), revenue ‘flowing through the sharing economy directly into people’s wallets’ exceeded \$3.5 billion USD. Altogether, the collaborative consumption experience represents a modern way of conducting commerce which is beneficial to both industries and consumers.

The topic of collaborative economies has flourished in the tourism field. The tourism industry interacts with collaborative economies in the form of lodging services (e.g., Airbnb), interactive restaurant services (e.g., Eatwith, Seamless), and tour guide services (e.g., Vayable). However, in saying this, the same cannot be said about the sport marketing field or of sport organizations evoking the use of collaborative economies. This is interesting because similar to the tourism field, the sport marketing field is heavily based on the accommodation of customer needs and wants due to its experiential and interactive nature (Tsiotsou, 2016, Yoshida, 2017). The extent of the research in the sport setting has explored singularly within academia the creation of value through membership and participation in sport fan consumption communities (Hedlund, 2014) and an exploration of sport fandom through online communities (Kirkwood *et al.*, 2019).

This study attempted to elucidate the consumer effects of the collaborative consumption process in sport. In that this study was exploratory, the authors sought to investigate any values and constraints that emerged when both sport consumers and sport organizations utilize the collaborative consumption experience and hence form a collaborative economy. In doing so, we intended for this research to fit within a larger body of the emerging research regarding collaborative economies in sport.

## Review of Literature

### *Collaborative Economies and Consumption*

There are challenges to developing one true definition of a collaborative economy. Many terms including *collaborative economy* (Gössling and Hall, 2019, Hamari *et al.*, 2016, Piscicelli, 2016), *sharing economy* (Boateng *et al.*, 2019, Činjurević *et al.*, 2019, Gössling and Hall, 2019, Hamari *et al.*, 2016, Möhlmann, 2015, Schiel, 2015), *peer or peer-to-peer economy* (Boateng *et al.*, 2019, Gössling and Hall, 2019, Schiel, 2015), *participative economy* (Gössling and Hall, 2019), and *access or access-based economy* (Schiel, 2015) are interchangeably used. While one could argue the use of one term over another, the two most common terms used interchangeably are the collaborative economy and the sharing economy. However, Gössling and Hall (2019) do make a distinction that the sharing economy mainly refers to private and non-commercial transactions, with the collaborative economy being focused on peer exchanges that are driven by commercial platforms and businesses. Therefore, collaborative economies can be an organized system of recirculating goods, increasing the utilization of durable assets, providing an exchange of services, and sharing productive assets through platforms that encourage social transformation (Möhlmann, 2015).

According to Gössling and Hall (2019), collaborative consumption represents the concept of consumers relying upon each other to satisfy a set of wants or needs. While much of the collaborative consumption experience occurs using social and digital platforms, its results are often perpetuated through face-to-face interactions. As engagement in a collaborative economy typically requires action, consumers are likely to engage in ‘the peer-to-peer-based activity of obtaining, giving, or sharing the access to goods and services’ (Hamari *et al.*, 2016). Such access is often coordinated via community efforts and fulfilled through community-based online

services or face-to-face interactions. Ikkala and Lappinen (2015) demonstrated that collaborative consumption has both financial and social benefits. While there is a monetary exchange, this exchange provides a framework for individuals to attain a desired level of sociability. Ikkala and Lappinen's (2015) study showed that over time, social factors became more important than the monetary exchange, even for those who initially became involved with the sharing economy just to generate revenue. More recently, Sthapit and Jimenez-Barreto (2018) confirmed that social interactions were a key component for individuals to have positive memorable experiences.

In consideration of these financial and social benefits, Table I provides examples of how collaborative consumption provides benefits to consumers.

While there are benefits to collaborative consumption, it is important to acknowledge that there may also be constraints that prevent the incorporation or success of activities driving these interactions. Some of these are more general, such as people choosing not to meet their leisure goals or being at a transitional point in their lives (marriage, children, death of family, relocation), preventing active participation in consumptive communities (Jackson, 2000). From a professional sports perspective, these constraints include unaffordability of attendance, other social commitments, and alternative sport spectating options (Kim and Trail, 2010, Trail *et al.*, 2008). Some constraints may also be caused by a lack of relationship with others, hence preventing the opportunity for collaboration (Kim and Trail, 2010, Trail *et al.*, 2008).

Constraints also exist when participating in collaborative consumptive activities. The first area would be related to having a poor user experience. This can be directly affected by the design of the experience by the service provider, but can also be as a result of strained person-to-person interactions, which the service provider has little control over (Piscicelli, 2016). A second constraint involves the service provider having the inability to reach scale in terms of both the

supply of collaborators and the demand of customers due to not having a clear value proposition that addresses a consumer need, not being able to scale up due to lack of funds, not having brand recognition in the marketplace, or not being able to maintain authenticity and differentiation in comparison to competition (Piscicelli, 2016). Another constraint is determining whether the offerings are trustworthy. There are numerous unethical or unregulated offerings that justify the use of economic rationalization to drive consumer purchasing behavior of consumers, as many consumers will either not care or exhibit inconstancies between their beliefs and behaviors (Eckhardt *et al.*, 2010).

### ***Collaborative Consumption in Sport***

Sport organizations are acknowledging the importance and evolution of collaborative and co-creation services as part of the sport fan experience (Hedlund, 2014). Sport fans often do not attend sporting events alone (Hedlund *et al.*, 2018), which provides ample opportunities for sport organizations to be catalysts for developing networks of like-minded fans through sport fan consumption communities (Hedlund, 2014). Luckily for the sport industry, sport organizations have ample opportunities to partake in collaborative consumption experiences. A given sport organization has the opportunity to offer membership to a sport fan community through participation in various activities such as the rituals and traditions connected with fandom of NCAA Division I College Football teams (Hedlund, 2014). There are also opportunities linked to attendance at professional football games in Europe and digital interactions through club-sponsored channels (Biscaia *et al.*, 2018). Furthermore, sport entities offer consumers an outlet for word-of-mouth experiences and social media recommendations for others to attend sporting events as part of an overall social experience (Bednall *et al.*, 2012). This has now even extended to shared services associated with attending professional sports games, such as with J-League

club Cerezo Osaka in Japan, who have engaged with supporters to help with parking shortages (Ninomiya, 2021). These examples – most of which are common to many sport organizations – can lend themselves to the collaborative consumption experience.

The consumption experience of sport fans can be enhanced through fantrepreneurship, which is the concentrated small-scale and potentially commercial exploitation of fan knowledge in the production and consumption of sport and entertainment activities within the event space by highly committed fans to satisfy their own needs through the co-creation of the experience (Hills, 2017, Sibbritt *et al.*, 2019). Therefore, fantrepreneurs are ‘fans that organize and manage an enterprise with initiative and risk in order to meet the perceived needs of their sport fandom.’ (Lundberg and Ziakas, 2018). The actions of fantrepreneurs when they are involved in collaborative consumption have similar qualities to the concept of neotribalism and the inherent lifestyle characteristics. Neotribalism is the sociological theory that people migrate towards networks of people with similar interests, beliefs, lifestyles, rituals, and languages through activities, communications, product usage, and emotional connections (Lundberg and Ziakas, 2018). The tribal concept includes having a local sense of identification that is grounded in the establishment of a community (Cova and Cova, 2001). These social communities have substantial influence over consumer behavior within the sphere of influence with a foundation of offering and supporting a high level of a sense of community through tribal sport marketing efforts (Cova and Cova, 2002). In considering the evolution of postmodernism in society, individuals search for experiences that involved shared emotions with others in various environmental settings, with sports facilities and fan interactions providing a particularly rich opportunity to offer social interactions between consumers (Meir and Scott, 2007).



The shared experiences of tribes have evolved consumers to become prosumers because they create products, services, and experiences, and they participate in the creation, updating, and transfiguration of them (Cova and Dalli, 2009). As such, customers do not just expect to be provided products and services; they want to be actively involved in the co-creation process and view brands as shared cultural property (Cova and Dalli, 2009). This is especially true with millennials, whose generational characteristics include the desire for interactive, connected, networked, collaborative, authentic, and shared experiences that include being actively involved in the co-creation and development of products and services (Fromm and Garton, 2013, Yim and Byon, 2020).

Applying both the concepts of fantrepreneurship and neotribalism to collaborative consumption demonstrates the potential for fantrepreneurs to organize neotribal events that extend to a co-creation process of an event such as a professional sports game that drives the motivations, behaviors, and needs inherent to enhance sport fandom and sport fan consumption patterns (Lundberg and Ziakas, 2018). However, for it to be fruitful, it is important that collaborative consumption be ‘moderated by a perceived sense of authenticity, nostalgia, autonomy, and anticommercialization’ (Lundberg and Ziakas, 2018).

A natural extension of fantrepreneurship and neotribalism is the development and evolution of sport fan consumption communities, which from a sport marketing standpoint have been important strategic initiatives for professional sport teams. Professional sports teams have been a catalyst for the evolution of collaborative consumption for decades. For example, ‘designated family seating areas, family ticket packages, family promotions, and special events and activities targeted to promote family attendance... [thereby] creating a unique event culture and consumption experience for consumers’ (Armstrong, 2008). Other consumptive communities

may include renting of corporate boxes and group tickets with friends or work colleagues (Menzies and Nguyen, 2012), facilitating online brand communities (Popp and Woratschek, 2016), providing season ticket holders the opportunity to bring others to games for free during special occasions, or becoming a member of the fan club for a team.

In consideration of increasing fantrepreneurship and tribalism in driving collaborative consumption, ‘many sport organizations have shifted their focus from motivating individual consumption to the creation and development of sport fan consumption communities that engage in the co-creation and collaborative consumption of the sporting event experience’ (Hedlund, 2014). Such a process has required sport organizations to allocate resources for the development of these communities through co-created group activities that cultivate connections and relationships, hence fostering social acceptance, group affiliation, and an overall feeling of belonging to a community. These engagements can help build individual sport fandom that can lead to increases in future intentions to attend a game, purchase merchandise, and recommend attending games to others (Hedlund, 2014). This, in turn, can lead to the development of stronger social bonds that promote support for and engagement in the sport fan consumption community (Hedlund, 2014, Santos *et al.*, 2019).

### ***Purpose of this Study***

For years sport organizations have been utilizing their events as a medium to provide a structured space for collaborative consumption experiences. Sport organizations not only offer unique experiences to consumers (e.g., the sport fan community, participation in niche peer-to-peer rituals, peer-to-peer traditions, etc.), but these experiences make the sport field appropriately relevant to the notion of collaborative consumption. Recently, some sport organizations have recognized that the collaborative consumption experience can be extended to serve as a

framework for host-visitor interactions and have begun to allow their most avid fans (e.g., season ticket holders, or members of support groups) to host visitors who may not be familiar with the sport organization.

This current study sought to find evidence of the benefits and constraints of collaborative consumption experiences by investigating the perceptions of hosts (members/season ticket holders) and visitors (international tourists) that attended National Basketball Association (NBA) and Major League Baseball (MLB) regular season games in the USA via a formalized collaborative consumption program offered by a third-party vendor. For our investigation, two overarching research questions were developed to assess the benefits and constraints a collaborative consumption experience can offer sport organizations:

*RQ1: What value do hosts and visitors experience through collaborative consumption in a sport setting?*

*RQ2: What consumption constraints do hosts and visitors experience through collaborative consumption in a sport setting?*

In that the collaborative consumption paradigm is community-centric, understanding the values and constraints the community itself (i.e., consumers) realized through the collaborative consumption experience will subsequently influence the merit of the associated sport organization. The goal of this study is to determine what values the users (i.e., the visitors) and hosts obtain through the connections, as well as what constraints prevented quality collaboration. It is also hoped that the results of the study demonstrate how a sport organization can benefit the interactions between hosts and visitors.

## **Methodology**

To examine the collaborative consumption experience within the lens of sport, the authors worked with a start-up organization named SportsHosts. The authors chose to work with SportsHosts because it offers a representative collaborative consumption experience for a sport organization and its respective consumers, and outside of Airbnb Experiences, was the only such experience in the market. Airbnb Experiences provided a platform for people to share not just their homes, but also their interests, hobbies and passions, including sport experiences. In Mexico for example, an Airbnb Experiences host named Alexis was offering an opportunity to join him for a scheduled Liga MX soccer game at one of Mexico City's iconic stadiums. The experience included tickets, drinks and transportation, and promised that the guest would "learn about their histories and the history of Mexican soccer... we'll also share stories about our own experiences so you get a true sense of the importance of soccer in Mexico" (Airbnb, 2020).

SportsHosts is a company that connects international travelers to local sport fans to attend local sport events (which may include pre- and post-game festivities), and earns a commission on ticket revenue. SportsHosts represents the collaborative consumption experience because it allows local sport fans (i.e., hosts) to guide travelers (i.e., guests) through the consumption experience themselves; in doing so, the guest experiences the sport organization through an individual consumer rather than the sport organization itself. The hosts and guests pay their own ticket, merchandise, and concession costs, are connected through the SportsHosts platform, coordinate when they will meet up before the game, and plan the shared activities they will participate in before, during, and after the game. The hosts are not paid by the sport organization or SportsHosts. Not only does this represent a peer-to-peer economy, but such a paradigm is an accurate representation of the fanpreneurship aspect of sport consumption.

In this study, the three authors (without the participation of SportsHosts or the professional teams involved) hosted focus groups to obtain information regarding the values and constraints of the sport-oriented collaborative consumption experience. Focus groups have been used in previous sport marketing research, especially where a greater degree of spontaneity in the expression of the viewpoints of hosts and visitors is desired (Sassenberg, 2015). The presence of high levels of fan group membership, comfort and knowledge of each other, and cohesiveness through shared experiences contributed to the support and empowerment felt by participants (Hennink, 2007, Peters, 1993). Focus groups were selected to be consistent with previous sport marketing research that aimed to surface different opinions through participant interaction (Sassenberg, 2015).

Four focus group sessions of 75 minutes each, totaling 37 participants, were conducted during 2018 with *hosts* and *visitors* of the NBA's Brooklyn Nets (eight and 11 participants, respectively) and MLB's San Francisco Giants (seven and 11 participants, respectively; see Table II). Previous research found that a moderating size group of between six and 10 participants were appropriate (Sim, 1998). Focus group participants were recruited by SportsHosts through convenience sampling using lists of previous hosts of, and visitors to, Nets and Giants games. SportsHosts were interested in understanding the authentic experiences of hosts and visitors, as well as the benefits and costs of participating. Both professional sport organizations had participated in a SportsHosts trial project, are global sport brands, and operate in major sport markets. The group of hosts had previously acted as game and experience hosts to international visitors attending their first Nets or Giants game. The group of English-speaking visitors had previously participated in a SportsHosts trial event a few weeks before as non-fans of the teams, and were available at the time of the focus groups in New York or San Francisco.

The visitors were originally from France, Italy, Brazil, Canada, and the UK. The focus groups were hosted at the respective sport organization facilities on a non-game day.

The authors developed and refined a moderator guide to investigate the following research questions. These questions were asked in the context of their previous participation in the SportsHosts trial event, and were supported by follow-up questions where relevant, while staying in the background to allow participants to discuss the topics with one another (Sarstedt and Mooi, 2014).

1. Do you attend team sports when traveling? Why? Why not? Can you tell me about these experiences?
2. How do you feel about going to a game with a local fan? What do you think works and what doesn't work? Which parts of the experience are appealing to you? Why? What about the experience is a turn-off? Why?
3. How do you feel about going to a game with a visitor from out of town or abroad? What do you think works and what doesn't work? Which parts of the experience are appealing to you? Why? What about the experience is a turn-off? Why?
4. How would you describe the relationship with someone you would go to a game with? What about someone you had just met? (hosting, hosted)

The topics during the focus group discussions began with a broad discussion of sport-related travel and attending games with other people. The discussion also covered their views and experiences of hosting visitors at a game or being hosted at a game. Participants were grouped into host and visitor groups to discuss more specific experiences based on their role in the experience. The level of involvement by the moderator ranged from a directive to a more non-directive approach, depending on the flow of the discussion and level of depth initially offered

by the participants (Hennink, 2007). For example, the moderator amplified minority views to mitigate the expected peer influence of stronger voices, and allowed positive group pressure to challenge some thinking (Sarstedt and Mooi, 2014). The focus groups also included rich data due to argumentative interactions (Sim, 1998), such as when Brooklyn Nets participants debated the potential interpersonal risks of being hosted at a game. Following Miles and Huberman (1994), and with the permission of the participants, the focus groups were recorded, transcribed, and then coded by hand and manually analyzed to draw conclusions regarding the themes observed in the data. The researchers conducted an initial broad coding process to look for similar ideas. Once these broad codes were developed and agreed to by all three researchers, one of the researchers developed a list of more specific codes. Data was coded according to a realist perspective, which saw the researcher use keywords and short phrases provided by the participants to directly develop the codes (Schreier, 2012). An initial list of 27 codes was developed from this process. The researchers then collaboratively developed higher-order themes, and discussed these until consensus on the nine themes was reached. The trustworthiness of inferences was ensured by multiple coding and an audit trail of inter-coder discussion and agreement. The content of each code was checked independently to ensure the consistency of the code. The researchers were in agreements with all the categories developed. The findings are provided in the following section.

## **Results**

### ***Values of Collaborative Consumption (RQ1)***

The study initially investigated the value hosts and visitors experience through collaborative consumption in a sport setting (RQ1). The qualitative analysis across all focus groups provided strong evidence for four types of value experienced by hosts and visitors through collaborative

consumption: social interaction and belonging, new fandom, travel bucket list experiences, and local and sport knowledge (see Table III).

In terms of social interaction and belonging, participants spoke about the value of consuming the sport product as part of a bigger group or community. This value was experienced mostly by visitors, as expressed by a female spectator at a Brooklyn Nets game: 'Like what she said, for me at least three, four people. It would be more fun. Not just two people' (Female, Nets visitor). The value of social interaction and belonging also included the opportunity to network as well as develop friendships: 'People that I met, that I hosted, I'm friends with them on Facebook. I'm friends with them on Instagram' (Female, Giants host).

The second value that the focus group participants discussed was new fandom. Visitors expressed the benefit of becoming fans of the San Francisco Giants and Brooklyn Nets through the collaborative consumption experience:

I went to Pence's last game and had never heard about him before. At the end of the game, when he made a speech, I was almost crying because I felt a connection – I'm a Giants fan now (Male, Giants visitor).

Hosts also expressed this value and considered the benefit to them of growing their team's fanbase internationally. A female San Francisco Giants host argued: 'You share your passion and then they become passionate', while a male host from the same team expressed a typical welcome: 'Isn't it great to be here? Look at this experience or those objects that we are giving you because everybody loves it here.'

The third value of travel bucket list experiences was only expressed by visitors. These focus group participants discussed the important role of sport consumption in their travel and tourism plans: 'When I travel, I think the sport is part of the experience.' (Female, Nets visitor)



Lastly, visitors discussed the value of local and sport knowledge, received from the hosts that looked after them during their shared consumption. Importantly, this aspect of value includes knowledge of the sport, local stadium, and surrounding entertainment facilities, all of which may be unfamiliar to visitors.

I had no idea... but going with the host and the locals – they explained everything, from the best bar to go to before, to why we were wearing these stupid costumes, to every single role, and why this is on the scoreboard and what's not. I would never have picked all that up. (Male, Giants visitor).

### ***Constraints of collaborative consumption (RQ2)***

Next, the study examined the consumption constraints hosts and visitors experience through collaborative consumption in a sport setting (RQ2). The findings pointed to five consumption constraints related to collaborative consumption: expenses, average experiences, seat location, interpersonal disconnects, and personal risk (see Table IV).

In terms of expenses, hosts and visitors in the focus groups highlighted the substantial costs involved in consumption. Hosts expressed the difficulty in covering the costs of concessions for visitors and the perception of having to pay more for a ticket to sit together, than they may already have for the game:

What I would like to see would be some kind of concessions voucher, so that I could take these people, because ballpark prices are expensive. I'd like to be able to go to a hotdog or a food stand or take these people, wherever they want to go.

(Male, Giants host)

Visitors discussed the relatively high costs of merchandise, which may not be covered by their travel budgets.

The second constraint focus group participants discussed was the average nature of the collaborative consumption experience. For visitors, the lack of some type of exclusive or VIP access or experience reduced the appeal of the sport product:

I think it's cool, also if there was a little extra, if they brought you, I don't know, a little VIP treatment, nothing crazy but just where you felt the Nets were behind this and you really felt welcome, I think that'd be cool. Especially if you know it's connected to the Brooklyn Nets then it's not just some random person; it's a little bit more from the team. (Female, Nets visitor)

For the third constraint of seat locations, hosts argued that the prospect of having to relocate from premium seats to general seats to sit with the visitor they are hosting was unappealing:

I like to sit in the premium lower box right, behind home plate. How do I coordinate where I want to sit and what I want to pay with someone coming in from out of town? They may have a budget and want to sit elsewhere. (Male, Giants host)

The fourth constraint to collaborative consumption was interpersonal disconnects. Visitors and hosts expressed concern about whether the two parties would be appropriately matched and whether they would be able to relate to each other:

The sort of people that you're mixing together. If you've got say Bob and his six friends who are going to hit the bar hard before they go... Then you've got a family of four from Germany with their two kids. (Male, Giants host)

Lastly, the visitors participating in the focus groups were worried about potential personal risks. Female visitors expressed their unease with the idea and the need to strengthen the vetting and supervision of hosts:

In a foreign country, I wouldn't want to be totally feeling vulnerable there. I would want to at least know that there's some sort of supervision going on in terms of accountability on this host. This host has been vetted very well. The team stands by this person. He could drink but I definitely wouldn't want him to be totally wasted with me. (Female, Nets visitor)

## **Discussion**

The purpose of the study was to determine the benefits and detriments the collaborative consumption experience can offer to consumers and therefore the sport organizations that benefit from the consumption experience. That is, through this study, the authors sought to determine if users (i.e., visitors) would obtain positive experiences through a collaborative consumption experience, and if hosts and sport organizations could obtain a desirable level of connectedness with each other. Through our qualitative methods, we found many well-informed findings that can help further the topic in academia, as well as also assist the sport industry in navigating the collaborative consumption economy.

It should be noted that many of the realized benefits (which are discussed below) shed light upon how neotribalism and fantrepreneurship can come to fruition in the collaborative consumption model. Neotribalism suggests individuals migrate towards networks of those with similar interests, beliefs, lifestyles, rituals, and languages through activities, communications, product usage, and emotional connections (Hardy, Gretzel, & Hanson, 2013; Lundberg & Ziakas, 2018). Our study indicates that the individuals who took part in our focus groups did indeed migrate towards those with similar interests, lifestyles, rituals, and the like through the collaborative consumption model put forth by SportsHosts. Further, as was seen on multiple occasions, the fans who were able to “host” were able to organize and manage a number of

consumption efforts. Thus, a direct representation of fantrepreneurship was shown within this particular collaborative consumption model. Subsequently, as is suggested by the literature concerning neotribalism, fantrepreneurship and sport, both hosts and visitors were able to enhance their fandom and fan consumption patterns.

## **Benefits**

While there are many benefits to the concept of collaborative consumption, perhaps what seems most relevant is that it offers a wide array of benefits to multiple parties. That is, not only can organizations benefit from taking part in the experience itself, but consumers – both host consumers and guest consumers – have the potential to benefit as well.

In looking at local professional sports fans as hosts and international tourists as visitors partaking in a live game experience as part of their travel, this study demonstrated that these consumers value social interaction and belonging, new fandom, travel bucket list experiences, and local and sport knowledge as part of their experience through collaborative consumption interactions in the sport setting. The concept of social interactions and belonging focused on the value of being a part of a community through networking and developing friendships through the sport experience. New fandom articulated the benefits of becoming a fan of the professional sports team and broadening the international brand awareness of the team as a result of the collaborative consumption experience. The travel bucket list was specifically valued by visitors, articulating that sport consumption played an integral role in enhancing their travel experience. Also, visitors believed the knowledge by hosts of the local area and the sport added value to the collaborative consumption experience.

It should be said that all the realized benefits – social interaction and belonging, new fandom, travel bucket list experiences, and local and sport knowledge – were consumptive oriented and

have secondary effects. This means that each realized benefit is not only beneficial for the time being in its current context but likely offers ancillary or secondary benefits. For example, while consumers realized a sense of social interaction and were able to feel a sense of belonging, this then influences a further benefit to the sport organization. For example, the Nets were able to become the significant mediator that enabled such friendships, allowing the Nets to be held in high esteem without considering the sporting event itself. New fandom is, of course, a primary benefit to all sport organizations, yet here, the idea of new fandom to an international traveler being introduced to the sport in a new way takes on a new meaning. Outside of the fact that new fandom can lead to actions such as purchasing of merchandise or other team-oriented equipment, it is also likely that new fandom from international travelers can help aid brand awareness and increase brand equity. Hence international travelers have the potential to become a type of spokespeople or brand ambassadors for the Nets or Giants. Our results suggest many of the international travelers (i.e., guests) were unfamiliar with the team they were visiting and indicated their local community was as well. By becoming a fan, gaining knowledge, and/or checking off a bucket list item, these fans will bring their new fandom/knowledge/experience to their local community and spread the word – either directly through word of mouth, or indirectly through purchased merchandise or active consumption.

## **Detriments**

The study also identified several constraints to the collaborative consumption experience in a sport setting. The expense of the sport consumption experience in terms of food and merchandise was viewed as being a potential barrier. Additionally, hosts felt negative about the experience if they needed to pay additional money to sit together with the visitor and/or potentially relocate their seating from a premium section to the general section. This extended to

the need for the collaborative consumption interaction to be something beyond the norm, necessitating the addition of some type of exclusive or VIP experience to add value to the experience. Beyond the specific experiences in the sport facility, there were genuine concerns over how hosts and visitors were to be matched; if the hosts and visitors would be able to relate to each other; and personal risk due to not knowing the other party.

In the fact that there are numerous constraints, it should be realized that the collaborative consumption experience – due to its subjective nature – is to some extent not completely controllable by the sport organization. That is due to the peer-to-peer aspect of collaborative consumption, as the experience relies heavily upon the consumers themselves. Therefore, this can lead to negative experiences such as interpersonal disconnects and personal risk in the form of safety. However, it should be noted that these same constraints are not unique to the sport setting. Interpersonal disconnect and issues regarding safety are present in other collaborative consumption experiences such as Uber rides. Still, with Uber and other collaborative consumptive experience such as SportsHosts, data-driven measures are being taken to not only ensure a better match amongst visitors and guests but to perform better background checks on those willing to become hosts.

In recognizing the uncontrollable constraints which are present in a collaborative consumption experience, there are still several constraints sport organizations may be able to limit. Constraints such as expenses, average experiences, and seat location are perhaps aspects of the experience which the Giants or Nets can help alleviate. Discounts to those who are willing to become hosts may help assuage these concerns. Further, offering better seating to a host (and subsequently, the associated visitor) may lessen these concerns, and may increase the overall consumption experience for both parties. It should be noted though that such involvement on the behalf of the

sport organization may tend to take away the peer-driven aspect of the collaborative consumption experience, which is the main driver of what makes the collaborative consumption experience enjoyable. While it is suggested that the sport organization make the experience as authentic and peer-driven as possible, we feel that the benefits of such involvement (i.e., offering better seats or discounts to those willing to host) may outweigh the negative consequences associated with an experience that is not completely peer-driven.

### **Conclusion, Limitations, and Recommendations**

It is important to note that these initial results from this study are not free from limitations.

Although internal and external validity were strengthened by following the guidance of Miles and Huberman (1994), the selection of only two sites for the study limited the data triangulation that was possible. This study should be replicated across a wider range of teams and countries to confirm the main findings of the study. There also may be opportunities to expand the design method for collecting data by providing online surveys to hosts and visitors shortly after the experience to investigate potential relationships between hosting/visiting and fandom, as well as pairing respective hosts and visitors to examine bi-directional dynamics. Ultimately, expanding this study longitudinally would add significant value, as potentially following a set of hosts or visitors over a season to track how benefits and constraints may shift over time, and how the teams respond. These additional studies could consider the influence of visitor sport fandom, sport organization awareness, performance, rivalry, game type and quality, athlete profile, and newness of the facility on collaborative consumption.

Additionally, the lack of prior research on the application in professional sports resulted in the need to utilize research from other fields and make correlative assumptions. Finally, since the study relied only on focus groups, the results are based on the recollection of the event the

respondents were a host or guest at. This includes an assumption that the responses were free from any exaggeration or embellishment of events and the selective memory of focus group participants was accurate. These limitations were mitigated by generalizing to the larger collaborative consumption theory base, as is appropriate with qualitative research.

For practitioners, this study uncovered a potentially untapped market for professional sports organizations to consider in marketing their teams, enhancing the experience of new fans, expanding the connection and experience of current fans, and extending their fan base internationally. As professional sports organizations need to continuously address the changes in consumer preferences and the expansion of collaborative economies in the global society, empowering their most local customers to engage with new customers through collaborative interactions has the opportunity to increase brand awareness, generate additional revenue, and enhance the live experience in the sport setting. Practitioners can use this initial study to better understand the benefits hosts and visitors perceive in the experience, and therefore the kind of experience design that would encourage increased purchases and loyalty. For example, sport organizations can provide information and training resources to fans, to enhance their role as expert and friendly hosts. Sport organizations can also collaborate more deliberately with city and regional tourism bodies, to strengthen the appeal of sport and general tourism. Importantly, these sport marketing activities should focus on both domestic and international tourism markets, given the appeal of non-local professional and collegiate sport organizations in different parts of the U.S. and around the world. The initial evidence of Airbnb Experiences in Mexico, and SportsHosts' activities in Australia, suggests that sport organizations outside the U.S. will be able to take advantage of these findings. Also, practitioners can use this study to address the constraints of these experiences to maximize the success of these interactive opportunities.



Especially important from the standpoint of visitors/new customers is addressing safety and interpersonal issues through strong host vetting and due diligence processes. In terms of hosts, ensuring the engagement goes beyond the norm and does not financially or psychologically devalue their experience is vital to the growth and success of these interactions.

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**Table I: Benefits of Collaborative Consumption**

Benefits	Explanation
Attitude	The behavioral predisposition that is positive or negative with respect to a product or situation through the desire to satisfy natural needs and interests, knowledge, accomplishment, and experiences (intrinsic motivation) or via rewards or incentives used to bring about desired behavior (extrinsic motivation) in terms of use intentions driven by ideology and socioeconomic concerns such as sustainability and reputation (Hamari <i>et al.</i> , 2016).
Convenience	The search for the consumptive activity desired is easy to find and accessible – both of which are predictors of using the sharing economy (Boateng <i>et al.</i> , 2019).
Community Belonging	The aspiration to be part of a group and connect with like-minded people in online and offline communities, thus creating a stress a sense of community that drives participation in sharing activities (Möhlmann, 2015).
Cost Savings	The rewards and economic benefits from services and interactions that result in a positive return on investment (ROI) in terms of providing value for money (Boateng <i>et al.</i> , 2019) and delivering financial benefits that improves the economic situation of individuals (Činjarević <i>et al.</i> , 2019) by incorporating an economic model that enables access over ownership (Hamari <i>et al.</i> , 2016).
Enjoyment of the Activity	Possessing or benefitting from something that provides a pleasurable experience is essential to influencing use intentions, making involvement more communal, and being supportive for a specific ideological cause (Hamari <i>et al.</i> , 2016; Schiel, 2015).
Encounter Satisfaction	The overall satisfaction with an experience with other individuals, an activity, a location, or an online platform that is driven by customization of the activity, flexibility in the offering, and service recovery when something goes wrong (Möhlmann, 2015; Moon <i>et al.</i> , 2019).
Hedonic	The emotional aspects of immersion in activities in terms of individuals preferences for involvement that is fun, entertaining, fantasy, and pleasurable, hence driving happiness and satisfaction of needs (Činjarević <i>et al.</i> , 2019; Schiel, 2015).
Membership	The ability to connect with like-minded individuals in face-to-face or online platforms through participation in organized activities, rituals, and traditions that facilitate meaningful relationships between individuals and between individuals and organizations (Hedlund, 2014).

Socio-Emotional	The forming of relationship by individuals initiating, cultivating, and responding to others through interactions that may be offered through participation in particular services that encourage social connections, social cohesion, and altruism that meet customer prestige needs (Boateng <i>et al.</i> , 2019; Schiel, 2015).
Social Value and Identity	The use of social drivers to create meaningful interactions with others that provide self-fulfillment, emotional rewards, and positive social behavior virtually and physically – can be with others with similar interests or meeting with new people that expand social contacts (Činjurević <i>et al.</i> , 2019).
Trust	The value of believing the reliability, truth, and ability in a product, service, or individual that drives exchange relationships and human interactions that drives future confidence in collaborative activities and relationship building (Boateng <i>et al.</i> , 2019; Möhlmann, 2015).
Utility	The perceptions that a product, service, or individual is useful or beneficial in terms of suitability, satisfaction, and potential repeat usage (Möhlmann, 2015).

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**Table II: Focus Group Profiles**

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	Nets Hosts	Nets Visitors	Giants Hosts	Giants Visitors
Number of subjects	11	8	10	7

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**Table III: Coding for RQ1 relating to value**

Themes	Sub-themes	Roles	Comments from Participants
Social interaction and belonging	Bigger group	Host	It's cool when you're traveling, you're usually by yourself, or maybe with someone else or a smaller group. It's cool to get that <u>bigger group experience</u> if you're about that. That's great. (Male, Giants host)  I think it helps provide a <u>networking</u> opportunity with people that share the same interests as you (Female, Nets visitor)
	Networking	Visitor	I think it's about being <u>part of the community</u> too. You feel like a local and get involved with everyone there. (Male, Giants visitor)
	Community	Visitor	
New fandom	Root for them	Visitor	They are more special to me now so like if I see them on TV I will <u>root for them</u> or something like that. But I haven't started following them religiously or anything like that. (Female, Nets visitor)  We want to be able to <u>show something different</u> and say: 'Hey, San Francisco is the place to be. We have AT&T Park, we have a really great diverse community, so why not?' (Female, Giants host)
	Show off	Host	I went to a Galaxy match to see Beckham and I was like, 'Okay, I'm a Galaxy fan.' I can see how this is important for international visitors coming in. They see their first Giants game and they <u>could be a fan automatically</u> (Male, Giants host).
	Become fan	Host	
Travel bucket list experiences	Always wanted to go	Visitor	Came down the coast just to look at the waves and never seen any baseball before. <u>Always wanted to go</u> for a baseball game (Male, Giants visitor)

Local and sport knowledge	Intertwined	Host	Even though we're on vacation, its always, sport is somehow <u>intertwined</u> with our vacation mode. (Male, Nets host)
	Different here	Visitor	It is normal for me. For example, I saw American Football. We don't have that. It's <u>different here</u> . (Male, Giants visitor)
	Locals would know	Visitor	<u>Locals would know</u> where to go versus someone Googling the best sports bars near the stadium. You would have a better experience. (Male, Giants visitor)
	Explain it to me	Visitor	I was never into hockey until I came to see a game here. I sat next to a group of people who are really into hockey, and they managed to <u>explain it to me</u> , and for the two and a half hours, we were the best of mates. (Female, Nets visitor)
	I wouldn't really know	Host	I think if I were going away somewhere, knowing that someone would take me out to all these cool places because if I was coming to Brooklyn, <u>I wouldn't really know</u> what is the good place to go, what places do I stay after. (Male, Nets host)

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**Table IV: Coding for RQ2 relating to constraints**

Themes	Sub-themes	Roles	Comments from Participants
Expenses	Money talks	Host	I think good point is obviously <u>money talks</u> . I think if you were to give a season ticket holder either a discounted ticket, or either a free ticket if they go along with two people then, obviously it depends on the section and what kind of game it is, because that's really how expensive the ticket is. (Male, Nets host)
			I did really want a jersey when I was there, but it was getting <u>too expensive</u> . If the host, or as a visitor, you could get that price down a bit, I think people will definitely be interested to buy it. (Male Giants visitor)
	Too expensive	Visitor	The price on my season tickets is pretty good. I don't want to <u>pay more than what I normally pay</u> for my season tickets. (Male, Giants host)
Average experiences	Pay more than I normally pay	Host	
	Exclusivity of a certain experience	Visitor	The <u>exclusivity of a certain experience</u> , like if you got to meet player alumni or something like that. If you got to be on the floor with the Brooklyn Nets as they warmed up, that would be a key difference for me. (Male, Nets visitor)
	Don't have any Giants stuff	Host	Most of them <u>don't have any Giants stuff</u> . If you can give hats those to the people who sign up for SportsHosts, I'd say they're coming on a specific day because they get really excited getting a hat or something. (Male, Giants host)
Seat location	Upgrade	Host	If you're on the 200s and the Nets will <u>upgrade you</u> for free to the 100s if you host these people or like get down to the single digits. (Male, Nets host)



Interpersonal disconnects	Person deeply irritating	Visitor	What if my host is annoying? It's like, 'They got good reviews, but I just find this <u>person deeply irritating</u> . It's grating.' (Female, Nets visitor)
	Person is weird	Host	I guess my thing is like what if that <u>person is weird</u> ? It could happen. (Female, Nets host)
	Party animal	Host	Are you a <u>party animal</u> ? Are you like the after-the-game late dinner person? If you are like me, you eat early because for some reason that's just what you do. (Male, Nets host)
Personal risk	Nothing in common	Host	I don't want to sit next to someone where it's not interesting, we don't have <u>nothing in common</u> . I want someone who's fun, who's outgoing. I want to know something about the person first before I would say, 'Okay, I'll host. (Female, Nets host)
	Someone you don't know	Host	I could see it being a little dicey to do a drink with <u>someone you don't know</u> . I get that (Male, Nets host)
	Random dude	Visitor	I guess I'm just wary of being in a foreign country with a <u>random dude</u> . (Female, Nets visitor)  Sometimes traveling as a solo female, I don't want to be with a dude. If there was a group, maybe I could sign up with a group. At the very least, I can rock up, single female but there's going to be other people too, and I'm not going to be alone. Even if this guy has good reviews. <u>Safety in numbers</u> . (Female, Nets visitor)
	Safety in numbers	Visitor	

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