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What Motivates Donors to Athletic Programs: A New Model of Donor Behavior

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Abstract

In the highly competitive college sport environment, many varsity sport programs have financial systems independent from the academic side of the university. These programs function on multimillion dollar budgets partially funded through ticket sales, licensed merchandise, and television rights. However, donations from alumni and boosters account for the most substantial portion of many athletic budgets. Fundraising efforts in this environment have not had available models of donor behavior from which to streamline solicitation efforts. Using the Existence Relatedness Growth (ERG) Theory as a guide, this article fills this gap by reporting on the development and testing of an integrated model of college donor motives: A Model of Athletic Donor Motivation (MADOM). Using a sample of college sport donors ($N = 532$), the results yield a psychometrically sound eight-factor measurement scale: A Scale of Athletic Donor Motivation (SADOM). Study implications and practical applications of the scale are discussed.

Keywords

donor motivation, ERG theory, college athletics, charitable giving, measurement scale

An integral part of the university system in the United States is a highly competitive varsity sport program that provides entertainment and education for students, staff, and community members. These (particularly Division I-A) programs require multi-million dollar budgets, which are heavily reliant on donations from alumni

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and boosters. Much of the research devoted to university fund-raising has focused on organizational success (Frank, 2004; Staurowsky, Parkhouse, & Sachs, 1996; Tucker, 2004) and the individual characteristics of donors (e.g., satisfaction with undergraduate experience, participation in extracurricular activities, and income; Clotfelter, 2003; Monks, 2003). Unfortunately, this myopic view has hindered research progress because scholars have yet to provide a comprehensive explanation of the motivating factors that guide donor decision making.

When oil tycoon Boone Pickens donated US\$165 million to his alma mater Oklahoma State University in 2006, he broke the record for giving to a university athletic program. This is one of the many examples of large donations to intercollegiate athletics, which one estimate placed at more than US\$1.2 billion annually (Wolverton, 2007). Due to declining federal and state funding, the bulk of universities and their athletic programs have become dependent on private support from their alumni and other boosters (Hibbert & Horne, 1996; Kirchner, Markowski, & Ford, 2007; Stinson & Howard, 2007; Wunnava & Lauze, 2001). The current economic climate has fostered charity proliferation worldwide, resulting in increased competition for individual donations (National Center for Charitable Statistics, 2009). For this reason, many donor-supported organizations are faced with increased competition for fund-raising in an economic environment where supply (i.e., donations) is currently not paralleling demand (Schwinn, 2008).

Athletics are not immune to the troubles that have plagued many public and private organizations. Gladden, Mahony, and Apostolopoulou (2005) urged university development officers to increase sophistication in fund-raising efforts because of the rising challenges associated with soliciting donations in the modern "giving environment" (p. 18). The attractiveness of a donor-supported athletic program is important to the solution of financial austerity plaguing university athletic departments and is particularly appropriate to the most successful athletic programs in the nation. The most recent National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) study noted that only 14 of the 120 Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS) schools (i.e., the highest competitive level of intercollegiate athletics) reported cash flows greater than expenses (Fulks, 2010). Equivocal statements regarding profits abound, but by most estimates, universities and their sport programs share the burden of ever-increasing athletics expenditures with ever-shrinking state and university budgets. Given that donor-supported gifts represent one of the main ways that university athletic departments offset budget shortfalls, make capital improvements, and run day-to-day operations, the current research has great potential to strengthen our understanding of donor motivation.

Conventional wisdom suggests that a successful donor program requires organizational leadership, favorable tax laws, a culture of philanthropy, and athletic success (Cermak, File, & Prince, 1994; Staurowsky et al., 1996). However, successful fund-raising may also require a deeper understanding of the motives underlying donor decisions to give (Bennett & Sargeant, 2005). Yet there have been surprisingly few attempts to measure donor motivations using needs and motivation theories (i.e., beyond the arguably more surface-level motivations of tickets, and parking), and empirical

consensus about what motivates individuals to give has not been reached. In an effort to unite this fragmented and still developing area of inquiry, the purpose of this study was to develop a comprehensive model for athletics donor motives to (a) test dimensions not adequately addressed in prior studies and (b) develop a psychometrically sound scale to measure the motives of donors. It is important for fund-raising officers to understand the reasons why people donate to nonprofit sport organizations. For this reason, our donor motives scale has the potential to make both research and practical contributions to the nonprofit literature (in general) and the sport literature (in particular). The posited model is rooted in the sport management, social psychology, organizational behavior, and marketing literatures.

Theoretical Background

Motivation is an important tool for understanding consumer behavior (Ko, Park, & Claussen, 2008). For decades social psychologists have put forth theories attempting to explain how needs and motives are initiated and maintained. Murray (1938), a “classic needs” theorist, noted that “. . . a need is a stimulus—a force pushing an individual in a certain direction or to behave in a certain way” (p. 123). Alderson (1955) similarly defined motivation as “. . . a conscious experience or subconscious condition, which serves as a factor determining an individual’s behavior or social conduct in a situation” (p. 6). Needs and motivations underpin human behavior, and the main point of studying consumer motivation is to discover how past behavior or current needs influence future decision making (Alderson, 1955). These concepts also share a cost-benefit component in which the individual weighs the costs of taking action against the expected benefits (Floyd, Whelan, & Meyers, 2006).

Several attempts to synthesize the research related to psychological needs and motivation have been offered (Alderfer, 1972; Maslow, 1943). For example, Maslow’s (1943) Hierarchy of Needs was one of the first unified and still most popular motivational theories. This theory includes five basic needs (i.e., physiological, safety, social, esteem, and self-actualization) in order of importance and stipulates that as each lower-level need is met the next higher-level need becomes the motive. While Maslow’s theory has intuitive appeal, several scholars have questioned its theoretical and practical utility (Arnolds & Boshoff, 2002). Among the most salient criticisms is that the Hierarchy of Needs does not provide a description of how individuals are motivated. Although some research supports Maslow’s two basic categories (i.e., Deficiency and Growth Needs), the existence of a strict ordering has not been well-received (Schermerhorn, Hunt, & Osborn, 1997).

Understanding the limitations of the Hierarchy of Needs, Alderfer (1969) proposed a conceptually simpler framework known as ERG Theory, which categorized human needs into three core areas (i.e., Existence, Relatedness, and Growth). Alderfer (1969, 1972) addressed the shortcomings in Maslow’s theory by aligning the hierarchy of needs with empirical research (Robbins, 1998). Appearing in 1969, the ERG Theory first categorized Maslow’s lower order needs (i.e., Physiological and Safety) into the

Existence category (i.e., desires for basic material needs and well-being such as food, working conditions, salary, and fringe benefits). The second iteration moved Interpersonal Love and Esteem Needs into the Relatedness Needs category (i.e., desires to establish and maintain positive interpersonal relationships). Next, Self-Esteem and Self Actualization Needs were collapsed into the Growth Need category (i.e., desires to be creative and have opportunities for personal development). Unlike the Hierarchy of Needs, the ERG Theory maintains that multiple needs may operate simultaneously and that a prescribed order determining the activation of the needs was unnecessary (Alderfer, 1980).

Another unique aspect of ERG theory is the Frustration-Regression phase (Alderfer, 1980). Alderfer's theory has received greater empirical support than Maslow's because of two main ideas. First, human needs tend to cluster around levels introduced by Alderfer more so than around those of Maslow. Second, the two-way process of Satisfaction-Progression and Frustration-Regression better describes human motivation. The Frustration-Regression principle explains that when a barrier prevents an individual from obtaining a higher level need, a person may "regress" to a lower level need (or vice versa) to achieve satisfaction (Borkowski, 2011). For example, a person may want existence-related objects when their relatedness needs are not satisfied. Similarly, a person may want relationships with significant others when growth needs are not met.

This aspect of ERG theory is useful for the current research because the donor may have multiple needs to satisfy simultaneously. Focusing exclusively on one need at a point in time will not effectively motivate a donor. In addition, donor motivation could be affected by the Frustration-Regression principle. For instance, if growth opportunities are not provided to donors, the donor may regress to relatedness needs, which could result in donors pursuing other organizations to fulfill unmet needs. If an organization is able to recognize these conditions, steps can be taken to satisfy the donors' needs.

Researchers have found the ERG Theory more appropriate than the Hierarchy of Needs because it more closely reflects individual knowledge of how the importance of various factors can simultaneously motivate an individual (e.g., Luthans, 1998; Robbins, 1998; Schneider & Alderfer, 1973). As well, there is the need to confront the problem of how circumstances and emotional involvement impact individual behavior (Allen, Machleit, Kleine, & Notani, 2005). Hibbert and Horne (1996) called for an approach that integrates both social and personal psychology perspectives and also considers the characteristics of the person and his or her circumstances. Thus a more meaningful method of examining motivation theory should test causal linkages between the content of behaviors (Wahba & Bridwell, 1976). Since previous research on the ERG has focused on the relationship between the ERG and work behaviors (Fox, Scott, & Donohue, 1993), the current study extends this theory by discussing the causal relationships between the motives and behaviors of university athletic donors. Existence needs, relatedness needs, and growth needs might operate simultaneously when potential University donors make giving decisions.

The authors also utilized the Acquired Needs Theory (McClelland, 1961, 1965) and Cognitive Evaluation Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985) since they provide the necessary theoretical backdrop for understanding donor motivation. For example, McClelland argued that, like motivation, human needs are learned and acquired through life experiences. Therefore, the contents of needs were classified into Achievement, Affiliation, and Power. Achievers require recognition for their achievements; affiliation seekers tend to look for harmonious relationships with others; and power seekers attempt to control others for their own goals or group goals. Cognitive Evaluation Theory was employed to explain the effects of external rewards on internal motivation. In this process, perceived competence, accompanied by feelings of autonomy, yield positive impacts on intrinsic motivation. Although intrinsically motivated individuals perform for their own achievement, external factors (e.g., extrinsic rewards) that possess a controlling aspect tend to decrease intrinsic motivation.

A Model of Athletic Donor Motivation

To develop a comprehensive Model of Athletic Donor Motivation (MADOM), the authors conducted an extensive literature review. Because of the inconsistencies in existing conceptual frameworks for donor motives, additional support to develop the model was needed. This first phase involved an extensive review of the academic literature, popular press articles, reports, and other documents relating to college athletic donors. This review provided the background for adapting and refining the constructs and items, in addition to assisting with the interpretation of the data collected during the second research phase. The primary question guiding the literature review was “Why do people give money to a university athletic department?” In response to this question, eight donor motivation dimensions repeatedly appeared in the literature: (a) philanthropy (e.g., feel good and support the department), (b) vicarious achievement (e.g., intrinsic rewards, achievement, and basking in reflected glory), (c) commitment (e.g., love for the school and athletes), (d) affiliation (e.g., sense of belongingness), (e) socialization (e.g., associate with other donors), (f) public recognition (e.g., ego enhancement and save face), (g) tangible benefits (e.g., better seats, parking, and suites), and (h) power (e.g., involvement in programmatic decisions).

Adapting these findings to the ERG model, three dimensions of the ERG Theory were included as the primary dimensions, and each dimension was defined by corresponding subdimensions: (a) growth needs—philanthropy, vicarious achievement, and demonstration of commitment, (b) relatedness needs—affiliation and social interaction, and (c) existence needs—public recognition, power, and tangible benefits. The proposed conceptual framework extended existing donor motivation research and will fill the gap in the donor motivation literature particularly in the context of college athletics. Factor definitions are located in Table 1 and Table 2 summarizes the factor structures available in the literature.

Table 1. Definitions of Motivation Factors.

Factors	Definitions
Philanthropy	Intrinsic motive for prosocial behavior that has no obvious benefit for the respondent but is beneficial to the recipient
Vicarious achievement	Intrinsic motive to indirectly experience success due to organizations' achievement
Demonstrating commitment	Motive to demonstrate the psychological connection that donors feel toward the University and athletic program
Affiliation	Motive to seek group entry through the act of a donation or reassurance that one is considered as a member of the group
Socialization	Motive to interact with other members of the donor and referent groups
Power	Intrinsic motive to participate in decision-making processes to improve organizational performance
Public recognition	The attention and formal acknowledgement donors expect to receive from the organization after making a donation
Tangible benefits	Motive to receive tangible advantage, gain, or profit in exchange of their donation

Growth Needs

Growth needs refer to an individual's desire to produce positive effects on themselves and the environment (Alderfer, 1972). The reasons for individual giving are diverse but generally include personal needs and attachment to the organization (Brady, Noble, Utter, & Smith, 2002). In addition, information from the organization (e.g., demonstrated need) can also influence one's propensity to give (Merchant, Ford, & Sargeant, 2010). Satisfaction of these needs occurs when individuals engage in actions that support their individual psychological growth fulfillment. In the proposed model Growth Needs consist of (a) philanthropy, (b) vicarious achievement, and (c) demonstration of commitment.

Philanthropy. Philanthropy refers almost exclusively to charitable giving (Sulek, 2010). Individual influences, such as involvement with charitable causes or personal experiences with charitable activities, are among the most important factors that influence donor behavior (Brady et al., 2002). These influences on giving are referred to as philanthropic predispositions, which are noted in the literature as the expectations potential donors view as a reward for helping (Brady et al., 2002). Philanthropy is generally a prosocial behavior with intrinsic benefits for the giver. Additionally, many donors possess the altruistic desire to make a positive difference through their gift. However, it is (arguably) the beneficiary that reaps the greatest reward in the philanthropic exchange. While philanthropy is partly predicated on causes the donor can directly see, feel, and understand, a large portion of gifts are made although no direct

Table 2. Factor Structures of Athletic Donor Motivation.

Context Instrument Analysis Dimensions	Proposed model	Sargeant and Woodliffe (2007)	Tsiatsou (2007)	Gladden, Mahony, and Apostolou (2005)	Mahony, Gladden, and Funk (2003)	Scaurovsky, Parkhouse, and Sachs (1996)	Verner, Hecht, and Fransler (1998)
	Collegiate sport	–	Collegiate sport	Collegiate sport	Collegiate sport	Collegiate sport	Collegiate sport
	CFA	1 (24)	EFA 4	Content analysis 17	EFA 1 (10)	ACQUIRE-II EFA 1 (5)	MAD-I EFA/CFA 12
	Growth needs:	Altruism	Prestige	Support and improve the athletic program	Philanthropy	Philanthropy	Philanthropy
	a. Philanthropy	Empathy	Belongingness	Help student athletes	Future success	Power	Create
	b. Vicarious achievement	Sympathy	Sociopractical	Repayer	Psychological commitment	Success	Power
	c. Demonstration of commitment	Fear, pity, guilt	Motivation	Socialite	Community pride	Social	Change
	Relatedness needs:	Prestige/making a difference	Trusting	Altruist	Community pride	Curiosity	Loyalty
	a. Affiliation	Fit with self		Good cause	Priority seating		Collaboration
	b. Social interaction	Past experience		Support and promotion	Business		Public recognition
	Existence needs:	Model/experience		university	enhancement		Inside information
	a. Power	Community of participation		Commitment	Tradition		Priority treatment
	b. Public recognition	perceived norm		Family needs	Current success		Participating in secondary events
	c. Tangible benefits	Judgmental criteria		Dynast	Escape		Giving of time and energy
		Public policy Contributions and Crowding out		Ticket oriented			
		Social justice		Entertainment/employment			
		Tax		Membership benefit			
		Feedback		Miscellaneous			
		Labeling					
		Recognition/rewards					
		Branding					
		Reputation					
		Media					
		Mode of ask					
		Seed money					
		Demographics					
		Lifestyle					

Note. CFA = confirmatory factor analysis; EFA = exploratory factor analysis.

tangible benefit accrues to the giver (Walker & Pharoah, 2002). This type of donor motivation is characterized by the “warm glow” effect where the benefits of giving are largely psychological (Sargeant & Woodliffe, 2007).

Sport marketing research supports the idea that psychological rewards provide the greatest payback to the giver (Gladden et al., 2005), and philanthropic motivation has been identified as one of the primary motives for athletic donations (Gladden et al., 2005; Verner, Hecht, & Fansler, 1998). Thus it is reasonable to surmise that this motive stems from the giver’s need to support student-athletes and also the organization. Perhaps, too, it is the philanthropic impact between the giver and receiver (Duncan, 2004) that motivates donors when targeting their gifts (i.e., the “warm glow” effect).

Vicarious achievement. Vicarious achievement is also an intrinsic motive where personal success is achieved through the success of a referent other. Individuals with a high need for achievement can fulfill the need vicariously through a successful association (Robinson & Trail, 2005). In sport, this occurs though the success of a winning or highly prestigious team but can also be related to other points of attachment that represent success (e.g., team, coach, players, and community). As these groups become more successful, the individuals who are closely attached psychologically will feel an increased sense of achievement (Robinson & Trail, 2005). Tucker (2004) found evidence that having a highly successful basketball and football team positively impacted alumni-giving. Mahony, Gladden, and Funk (2003) noted that since connectedness is fostered by organizational success, vicarious achievement is one of the main reasons that fans donate to sport organizations.

Donors perceive that certain programmatic impacts of their actions provide them with a sense of achievement. This cognitive sense of satisfaction motivates donors to target their gifts to a particular program or organization. In ERG theory, a growth need is related to creating a positive effect on the individual and his or her surroundings. Viewed through this lens, vicarious achievement should be seen as a subdimension of growth needs since a positive psychological benefit does indeed manifest.

Demonstration of commitment. Commitment is the psychological connection that donors feel toward the athletic program. Demonstration of commitment is related to donors’ intrinsic motives and (as the title depicts) “demonstrates” and broadcasts their psychological connection to an organization. In addition, the construct demonstrates that the donor provided the organization with monetary support to help satisfy the need of the organization or the community. Donors judge the level of sacrifice as part of the overall commitment required to obtain charitable benefits and provide reciprocal benefits back to the organization (Sargeant, Ford, & West, 2006). While demonstrated commitment in the donor context is largely monetary, it may also include intangible and nonmonetary sacrifice (e.g., cognitive and emotional) such as the time and effort required by the donor to support organizational activities (e.g., meetings, banquets, or administrative activities).

Research generally supports the idea that highly committed donors act to ensure future group success (see Gladden et al., 2005; Verner et al., 1998). In particular, perceptions of quality and trust toward an organization are important factors influencing donor loyalty, which is regarded as a primary outcome of commitment (Gutierrez-Nieto & Serrano-Cinca, 2010). Individuals motivated by altruism are more likely to exhibit loyalty to organizations they support (Diamond & Kashyap, 1997; Sargeant & Woodliffe, 2007). The more attached an individual is to the sport team, the more likely he or she is to donate to the athletic department (Kim, Chang, & Ko, 2010).

Relatedness Needs

The bulk of donors' financial support goes to organizations in which they are or have been personally involved (e.g., college or university attended or one they are connected to socially or geographically). According to ERG theory, these needs are about building relationships and are concerned with the desire for relationships with significant others characterized by mutual sharing. Relatedness needs are different than Growth and Existence Needs because these needs require reciprocation. In the proposed model, the Relatedness Needs consist of (a) affiliation and (b) social interaction.

Affiliation. Affiliation is the motivation to seek group entry through the act of a donation, which provides reassurance that one is a member of the group. Affiliation seekers want peaceful relationships with others rather than recognition for their work (McClellan, 1965). Group affiliation is usually accompanied by positive feelings of "oneness" (Brady et al., 2002) or "we-ness" (Jackson, Bachmeier, Wood, & Craft, 1995; Schwartz & Howard, 1982), associated with fitting into a group and resulting in a sense of belonging. This sense of oneness is consistent with models of organizational identification, suggesting that giving behaviors are positively related to other communal constructs of cohesiveness, individual attachment, solidarity, nostalgia, and unity (Brady et al., 2002; Merchant et al., 2010). For example, Jackson et al. (1995) found that involvement in church activities and ties to voluntary associations increased volunteering and charitable giving.

In college sport, team affiliation also is influenced by an increasing sense of community, making it easier for individuals to get involved through their donations (Verner et al., 1998). The sport literature refers to this idea in a social sense, relating participation in an event with friendships created through sport consumption (Milne & McDonald, 1999). Fund-raising studies have shown that identification with the university's athletic department is a significant predictor of giving behavior (e.g., Beatty, Kahle, & Homer, 1991; Kim et al., 2010; Mael & Ashforth, 1992). Since the emotional attachment to the university and sense of belonging increase over time, affiliation is seen as a powerful and motivating force for giving. Accordingly, this sense of being connected with another (i.e., "we-ness") is a central determinant of giving behavior.

Social interaction. Personal and social-situational factors play a key role in the individual becoming part of a larger group. This idea is partially explained by socialization theory. The socialization process involves assimilating with referent groups and forming self-perceptions so that an individual can function in a community (Kenyon & McPherson, 1973). Such communities consist of churches, social groups, countries, and sport teams (among others), and are generally characterized by certain norms, values, and traditions. "Socialization is a process by which individuals not only learn social mores but also come to accept and endorse these socially advocated values and behaviors, experiencing them as their own" (Kolbe & James, 2000, p. 3).

The organization may become personally important to the donor, which results in an enhanced psychological connection that will likely increase the group member's propensity to give to that entity. Social interaction is linked to an individual's motivation to interact with other members of the donor group (Verner et al., 1998) or with other referent groups at special events (e.g., sponsors, coaches, and players; Billing, Holt, & Smith, 1985; Staruowsky et al., 1996). Additionally, giving allows donors the opportunity for family interactions, memories, and traditions to be built (Gladden et al., 2005). For many donors, "doing good" is enjoyable and creates a positive feeling, which is enhanced when performed in conjunction with friends and family members (Prince & File, 1994). With regard to ERG theory, the need for social interaction is indeed a relatedness need for human motivation since group and community membership help to steer this motivation.

Existence Needs

In the original ERG model, existence needs include physiological and material desires (e.g., work-related pay, fringe benefits, and physical safety) and are characterized by obtaining material sustenance. Although charitable giving can be explained to a certain extent by altruism (Batson, 1981), warm glow (Andreoni, 1990), and a desire for social change (Radley & Kennedy, 1995), not all motives for giving are altruistic (Cialdini et al., 1987). In particular, when there is a genuine cost to the helper, giving is driven more by self-interest and certain instrumental motives (Neuberg et al., 1997). In the proposed model, Existence Needs consists of (a) power, (b) public recognition, and (c) tangible benefits.

Power. Power is an intrinsic motive to participate in decision-making processes to improve organizational performance. Similar to growth needs, this need posits that the end goal of a donation is to influence others, and donor giving is performed to contribute to organizational success (McClelland & Burnham, 1976). Therefore, power can be viewed as both an informal and formal influence and control mechanism over others (Bok, 1982; Verner et al., 1998). It is also important to understand the role of power in shaping how and whether nonprofit organizations are able to continuously innovate for positive consequences (Dover & Lawrence, 2011). This goal-oriented donation behavior might be maximized when donors share similarity with the primary

beneficiary and have a strong feeling of affiliation as observed in Bennett's (2011) study. Staurowsky and colleagues (1996) identified power as an important factor in athletic donor motivation. This factor was characterized by donor influence in various aspects of decision making and the influence of one donor over another for positive consequences.

Public recognition. Most universities have buildings prominently named after alumni who have given substantial dollar amounts often after the explicit promise of recognition. Generally defined as the attention and formal acknowledgement donors expect to receive from the organization after making a donation, public recognition is regarded as a key factor in donor giving. The fund-raising literature shows that providing adequate donor recognition helps to secure and attract future donations (e.g., Irwin-Wells, 2002; McKinnon, 1999). Positive and prompt feedback from the organization to donors helps strengthen the emotional "pay-back" and enhances the propensity of future donations (Merchant et al., 2010). To satisfy and secure this need, educational and local cultural organizations often create giving categories (e.g., platinum, gold, and silver) and then publicly disclose lists of donors who contribute at these levels (Sargeant & Woodliffe, 2007). Consequently, receiving proper recognition can be important to the existence needs of an individual.

Tangible benefit. One final motive is reciprocity for the donor. In this sense, individual donors are motivated by the tangibles provided by the athletic department in exchange for a donation (i.e., because the donations are considered payments by the donor). Although athletic donors might receive intrinsic satisfaction and a sense of well-being for their gift, the services and items they receive as part of the exchange can be equally enticing. Thus tangible benefit is the tacit advantage, gain, or profit the donor receives from the donation. However, if the extrinsic benefit or reward has a controlling aspect, donors may decrease their intrinsic motivation to give (Deci & Ryan, 1985).

Fund-raising studies have suggested that tangible benefits (e.g., priority seating, parking, and season tickets) are important factors in donor behavior (see Mahony et al., 2003) and are connected to the enhancement of donor well-being (Martin, 1994). Bendapudi, Singh, and Bendapudi (1996) classified certain tangibles as egoistic motivations because they tend to be associated with rewards for helping or avoiding retribution for not helping. The authors maintained that egoistical motives are associated with reducing the donor's concern for the needy either by helping or avoidance behaviors. The idea that all behavior is motivated by a cost-benefit analysis is at the heart of public goods and exchange theories favored by economists. In their recent exploratory research, Stinson and Howard (2010) conducted in-depth interviews with donors making gifts to both athletic and academic programs. The authors found that initial donor support of athletics programs is often commercially driven (e.g., guaranteed tickets) and later transitions to philanthropic giving. As such, tangible benefits are important for the existence needs in ERG theory as existence needs pertain to meeting material desires.

In sum, these aspects of the model point to individual motives for giving by using ERG Theory as a guide. However, the motives are abstract unless they lead to a behavioral outcome or change in donor behavior. Therefore, showing that such material desires (i.e., Growth, Relatedness, and Existence needs) translate into behavioral intentions salient to the model.

Method

This research involved two phases. The first phase was comprised of a literature review, which provided the background for adapting and refining the constructs and items. The second phase confirmed the factors of the measurement scale and the final structural model for college donor motivation.

Data Collection and Participants

The target population were athletic department donors housed in an NCAA Division I-A (i.e., Football Bowl Subdivision) university. After receiving approval from the university's Institutional Review Board and from the athletic department's development officer to conduct the study, we sent an e-mail invitation to an online questionnaire to the list of athletic department donors. There were approximately 7,500 donors contacted from a total 15,000 donors. The donors were informed that involvement was voluntary and that no compensation would be provided for participation. A total of 816 responses were received for an 11% response rate, which is comparable to other studies using online surveys (e.g., Kaplowitz, Hadlock, & Levine, 2004). A number of cases were deemed unusable due to invalid, blank, or incomplete responses, yielding 532 usable questionnaires. The average age of the participants was 55 ($M = 55.19$, $SD = 12.15$) ranging from 24 to 82 years old, and 77% were male. Most of the participants were White (78%), followed by Hispanic (21%), Asian (.9%), and African American (.4%). The respondents were affluent with an average income of US\$133,499.75. Overall, 75% of the sample reported annual income higher than US\$75,000 and 25% of the sample reported annual income above US\$165,000.

Measures

The measures utilized in the Scale of Athletic Donor Motivation (SADOM) were developed through a three-step process. First, an initial pool of 67 items was compiled from a review of the extant literature pertaining to the constructs identified in the literature review. In addition, items for the emergent and redefined factors were generated from existing scales. The philanthropy measures were adapted from prior studies on donor motivation in collegiate sport (e.g., Gladden et al., 2005; Staurowsky et al., 1996; Verner et al., 1998). The measures for demonstration of commitment were adapted from existing studies (e.g., Gladden et al., 2005; Mahony et al., 2003; Strode & Fink, 2009) as were the items measuring vicarious achievement and affiliation (Strode &

Fink, 2009). The scale developed by Verner et al. (1998) was modified to capture social facilitation, public recognition, and power. The response format for all items was a 7-point Likert-type scale anchored from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*).

Second, the researchers evaluated each item based on relevance, representativeness, and clarity. We used the definitions of each factor to guide this process and revised the items accordingly. In this step, two university fund-raising experts and three scholars with expertise in donor behavior and motivation were invited to rate the relevance, representativeness, and clarity of the scale items. Based on the panel's recommendations, 24 items were dropped and three items ("I appreciate the opportunity to meet athletes," "I appreciate the opportunity to meet coaching staff," "I appreciate the opportunity to meet administrators in AAA") were merged into one item ("I appreciate the opportunity to meet people in AAA") based on the feedback from the panel. In this process, 43 items survived. Finally, a group of 28 graduate students, who have work experiences (e.g., internship and practicum, and graduate assistantship) in collegiate athletics, rated each item based on the same criteria (i.e., relevance, representativeness, and clarity). The response format was a 5-point Likert-type scale anchored from 1 (*low*) to 5 (*high*). A mean score below 4 on any of the three criteria led to the elimination of two items ("being a donor allows me to be a part of AAA boosters," "I donate because many of my friends are donors of AAA"). As a result, a total of 43 items representing eight donor motivation constructs were used for the main survey.

Third, based on the assessment of psychometric properties (i.e., reliability and validity) via the confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), the theoretical relevance of the items, and parsimony of the scale, a final set of 25 items were retained for further structural equation analysis. In this process, one item was eliminated from each of philanthropy (i.e., "I donate because it is important to give to a non-profit organization"), vicarious achievement (i.e., "I feel like I have won when the team that I support wins"), commitment (i.e., "I donate to demonstrate my commitment to the AAA"), affiliation (i.e., "there is certain camaraderie with the members of Gator Boosters"), and public recognition ("I appreciate the opportunity to be recognized at a special event that honors donors") due to low factor loadings. Several tangible benefit items (i.e., "advance notice of sport events," "newsletter/magazine," "access to more in-depth sport information" and "receiving special items") and five power items (e.g., "I donate to improve the quality of the athletic programs at AAA," "It is important to know the inside story about the program") were eliminated because of low factor loadings, parsimony, and theoretical relevance. More specific information about the measures is provided in the result section.

Finally, the outcome variable "Intention to Donate" was measured with donation probability, which is a measure of behavioral expectation (Warshaw & Davis, 1985). However, researchers have used both intention and subjective probability measures interchangeably to predict future behavior (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980; Yi & La, 2004). Warshaw and Davis (1985) argued that behavioral expectation outperformed behavioral intention in predicting future behavior. Based on this rationale, the following question was asked: "I would consider donating to this organization." The 7-point

semantic scale for intention to donate was anchored by improbable/Probable, Likely/Unlikely, and Impossible/possible.

Analytic Technique

To confirm the factor structure of the donor motivation scale, the items and factors were prespecified based on previous research and then entered into AMOS graphics. To assess the fit of the measurement model, we followed a two-step procedure. In the first step, based on the results of a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), the authors assessed the reliability and validity of the measurement scale. Both convergent and discriminant validity were examined. In the second step, a structural equation model (SEM) estimated the path coefficients between the motivations and behavioral intentions. SEM was particularly suitable because it allowed simultaneous estimation of multiple relationships between latent constructs while accounting for measurement error and maximizing the variance explained. To test the overall fit, χ^2 goodness of fit, root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), comparative fit index (CFI), and standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) were used.

The data met the assumptions for SEM analyses (e.g., normality, multicollinearity, and outliers). The total of 532 cases is greater than the generally recommended minimum sample size of 200, according to the criterion established by Weston and Gore (2006), for SEM. In addition, the ratio of cases-to-observed variables was 21:1, which was more than adequate for the usage of SEM (see Bollen, 1989; Kline, 2005).

Results

Measurement Model

The first order measurement model included 25 items representing eight factors, which achieved an adequate fit to the data ($\chi^2/df = 795.47/247 = 3.221$, RMSEA = .065, CFI = .933, SRMR = .05). All factor loadings were greater than .50 (range = .52 → .94), and the average variance extracted (AVE) values were acceptable (range: .68^{Tangible Benefits} to .92^{Demonstration of Commitment}). Reliability coefficients ranged from .76^{Tangible Benefits} to .94^{Demonstration of Commitment} (see Table 3).

Additionally, AVE values for all constructs were greater than the corresponding squared interfactor correlations (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Correlations among research variables ranged from .23 → .93. With the exception of one case (i.e., Affiliation → Social Facilitation = .93), all factor correlations were below .70, indicating discriminant validity among the study measures (Kline, 2005; see Table 4). Similar to the first order model, the second order CFA achieved an adequate fit to the data (S-B $\chi^2/df = 868.405/264 = 3.289$, RMSEA = .066, CFI = .926, SRMR = .078). The correlations among the three ERG dimensions were somewhat inflated, ranging from .45 → .77 (see Table 4). Item correlations are presented in Table 5. Taken together, the results provide strong support for the reliability and convergent and discriminant validity of the measurement scales (Hair, Anderson, Tatham, & Black, 2005).

Table 3. Factor Loadings, Reliability Coefficients, Construct Reliability, and AVE.

Factors and items	γ	α	CR	AVE
Vicarious achievement		.84	.85	.81
I feel proud when the AAA team I support plays well	.80			
I feel sense of achievement when the AAA team I support does well	.77			
I feel pride in the success of the program the I support	.87			
Philanthropy		.81	.81	.79
I donate because it is the right thing to do	.56			
I donate to help fund scholarships for students	.90			
I donate to provide educational opportunities for students	.92			
Display of commitment		.94	.92	.92
I donate to show my allegiance to the AAA	.88			
I donate to show my devotion to the AAA	.94			
I donate to show my dedication to the AAA	.94			
Affiliation		.76	.83	.72
AAA Boosters makes me feel like I belong to a special group	.82			
I feel connected to members of AAA Boosters	.82			
I donate to gain a sense of belonging	.52			
Socialization		.78	.78	.73
I enjoy associating with the members of AAA Boosters	.79			
I appreciate the opportunity to meet people in the athletic department (e.g., athletes and coaches)	.73			
I enjoyed the opportunity to participate in a special event for donors	.66			
Power		.83	.85	.80
It is important for me to be able to voice my opinion on department decisions	.78			
It is important for me to have opportunities to shape the direction of the department	.91			
It is important for me to have access to the power structure by being informed on issues surrounding athletics	.70			
Recognition		.90	.89	.87
It is important for me to receive recognition for my contribution	.86			
It is important for me to have my name appear in a publication to acknowledge my contribution	.87			
I feel good about being publicly recognized for my gift	.88			
Tangible benefit		.76	.81	.68
The access to priority seating is important to me	.79			
To receive parking privileges is important to me	.79			
Ability to purchase tickets in advance is important to me	.62			
Receiving a tax deduction is important benefit for me	.53			

Note. AVE = Average Variance extracted; CR = construct reliability.

Structural Model

To evaluate the proposed research model, SEM was used because it allowed us to focus on the conceptual connections among the latent factors. The covariance matrix

Table 4. Factor Correlations.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Achievement	1							
Philanthropy	.453	1						
Commitment	.621	.627	1					
Affiliation	.541	.536	.676	1				
Socialization	.523	.516	.613	.932	1			
Power	.252	.296	.226	.297	.409	1		
Recognition	.271	.228	.296	.367	.454	.638	1	
Benefits	.411	.295	.314	.242	.316	.388	.389	1
	1	2	3					
Growth	1							
Relatedness	.767	1						
Existence	.445	.488	1					

was analyzed via maximum likelihood with AMOS graphics. This approach enabled the examination of relationships among the study variables simultaneously, extracting the relative impact of each, and also accounted for the errors associated with the variables. The full model, including motivation and behavioral intention, achieved an adequate fit to the data ($S-B \chi^2/df = 957.306/338 = 2.832$, $RMSEA = .059$, $CFI = .939$, $SRMR = .075$).

Donor motivation was operationalized as a third-order construct with three dimensions of Growth, Relatedness, and Existence and eight subdimensions (see Figure 1). The direct paths from motivation to behavioral intention were statistically significant ($\beta = .35$), and the paths from motivation to the ERG dimensions were also significant ($\beta = .89_{\text{Growth}}$, $\beta = .86_{\text{Relatedness}}$, $\beta = .53_{\text{Existence}}$). The standardized paths from the ERG dimensions to their subdimensions were significant, ranging from $.52 \rightarrow .99$ (see Figure 1). These findings provide support for the belief that donor motivation is a third-order factor containing three related (but distinct) relational facets and subdimensions. In sum, the results of the structural model test lend strong support for the psychometric properties of the proposed model of donor motivation.

Discussion

In the United States, there is a long-standing tradition of donating money to a university primarily from alumni or from wealthy individuals who reside in the same geographic area as the university (Kim et al., 2010). Varsity sport programs for these universities run on multimillion dollar budgets, much of which is generated from donations from alumni and other boosters. Understanding the motives underpinning donor willingness to give is important to conceptualize and operationalize what drives these individuals to support their favorite university. It is of interest to ascertain what

Table 5. Item Correlations.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25
PH1	I																								
PH2	.464	I																							
PH3	.510	.836	I																						
Va1	.243	.257	.270	I																					
Va2	.244	.375	.332	.655	I																				
Va3	.317	.362	.375	.685	.650	I																			
DC1	.592	.519	.532	.426	.407	.529	I																		
DC2	.541	.501	.509	.424	.434	.527	.814	I																	
DC3	.556	.499	.524	.406	.411	.559	.825	.889	I																
AF1	.449	.400	.408	.374	.356	.465	.513	.544	.540	I															
AF2	.369	.380	.361	.278	.330	.341	.450	.492	.460	.669	I														
AF3	.316	.245	.245	.173	.261	.225	.371	.412	.405	.434	.431	I													
SO1	.378	.363	.364	.322	.284	.370	.412	.463	.449	.657	.682	.346	I												
SO2	.329	.323	.320	.280	.247	.376	.413	.429	.437	.515	.543	.297	.567	I											
SO3	.293	.340	.291	.262	.252	.334	.362	.373	.354	.434	.462	.343	.473	.569	I										
PO1	.081	.237	.159	.122	.185	.144	.055	.117	.101	.083	.142	.244	.112	.211	.279	I									
PO2	.197	.286	.234	.149	.179	.186	.188	.198	.217	.178	.204	.305	.157	.331	.366	.716	I								
PO3	.157	.172	.140	.174	.227	.231	.184	.172	.202	.230	.275	.292	.223	.365	.420	.541	.622	I							
PR1	.156	.206	.156	.169	.203	.174	.231	.226	.228	.232	.213	.353	.197	.308	.397	.425	.506	.459	I						
PR2	.148	.163	.141	.157	.171	.201	.236	.206	.217	.226	.162	.346	.166	.248	.377	.356	.469	.435	.756	I					
PR3	.177	.212	.188	.209	.199	.233	.291	.259	.268	.282	.275	.369	.264	.385	.42.5	.354	.544	.453	.744	.765	I				
BE1	.114	.198	.117	.241	.222	.277	.225	.183	.197	.155	.091	.114	.089	.110	.157	.217	.195	.247	.264	.234	.226	I			
EE2	.145	.248	.188	.184	.186	.235	.234	.226	.212	.167	.099	.129	.139	.209	.275	.277	.280	.315	.296	.270	.273	.642	I		
BE3	.152	.235	.202	.325	.305	.356	.242	.243	.236	.252	.162	.061	.242	.224	.263	.178	.175	.201	.182	.185	.170	.498	.446	I	
BE4	.127	.254	.190	.201	.229	.204	.177	.199	.172	.135	.106	.117	.140	.150	.210	.233	.270	.249	.248	.223	.284	.380	.410	.337	I
M	5.13	5.30	5.27	6.23	5.77	6.08	5.59	5.44	5.48	5.05	4.66	3.89	5.32	4.90	4.54	4.09	3.91	4.06	3.46	3.39	3.70	5.92	5.52	6.25	5.75
SD	1.25	1.12	1.13	.80	1.05	.79	1.15	1.18	1.18	1.36	1.30	1.37	1.17	1.26	1.30	1.49	1.42	1.44	1.62	1.53	1.44	1.21	1.57	.82	1.19

Note. PH = Philanthropy; Va = Vicarious Achievement; DC = Demonstration of Commitment; AF = Affiliation; SO = Socialization; PO = Power; PR = Recognition; BE = Tangible Benefits.

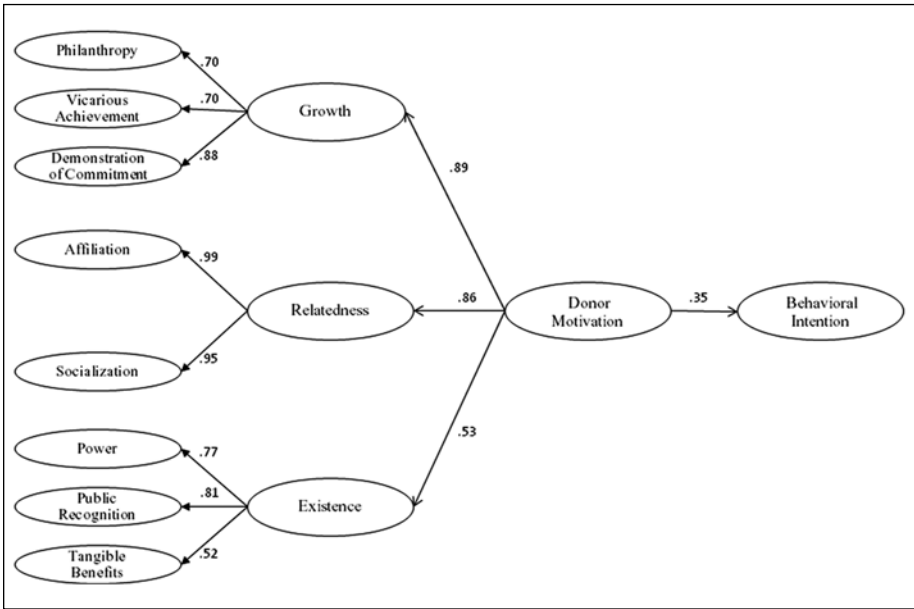


Figure 1. A model of athletic donor motivation.

factors influence financial donations and determine whether these factors resonate more (or less) desirably among donor groups. Knowing that a particular need (or multiple needs) influence individuals to give will enable athletic departments to develop strategies and promotional activities aimed at fostering, maintaining, and reinforcing stronger donor connections. Development officers and fund-raising managers would then be better equipped to build a base of donor who feel affiliated, important, and rewarded for their gifts.

Little common agreement exists on the conceptualization of donor motivation in college athletics. This conceptual void, coupled with a lack of psychometrically sound measurement tools, has hindered understanding of donor motivation in college sport and subsequently practitioner ability to develop effective market segmentation strategies.

Rooted in ERG Theory, this study explored the various motivations of individuals who donate money to university athletic programs and attempted to develop a comprehensive conceptual framework and measurement scale to aid systematic understanding of donor motivation. Growth Needs, Relatedness Needs, and Existence Needs are intended to capture general donor motivation, while specific aspects (i.e., eight subdimensions) in each of the dimensions reflect specific motivations of donors to college athletics. The proposed framework consolidated existing factor structures identified through interview and content analysis (Gladden et al., 2005; Sargeant & Woodliffe, 2007), exploratory factor analysis (Mahony et al., 2003; Staurowsky et al., 1996; Tsotsou, 2007), and confirmatory factor analysis (Verner et al., 1998). The results confirm that the overall fit of the measurement and structural models were acceptable

and that the hypothesized relationships were confirmed. Taken together, the results support the utility of ERG Theory as a viable framework for understanding donor motivations in college sport and, perhaps, beyond this specific context. Results of validity and reliability tests also provided empirical evidence of psychometric robustness of the SADOM.

In consideration of the increased financial challenges surrounding college athletics and the importance of private giving for effective program management, a comprehensive framework aimed at understanding donor motives contributes to the general sport giving literature in two main ways. First, the model provides a systematic understanding of donor motivation in college athletics. The model contributes to the larger donor and giving literature through an integrated model of college donor motivation intended to fill existing conceptual gaps. Since previous evaluations of the ERG have focused primarily on work behaviors (Fox et al., 1993), the proposed model extends the ERG model by exploring the donor motivation factor and supports previous studies on the utility of ERG theory. Previous studies have found that the ERG Theory is more appropriate than the Hierarchy of Needs Theory as it more closely reflects individual knowledge of how various factors can act to motivate an individual to give (Luthans, 1998; Robbins, 1998; Schneider & Alderfer, 1973). Second, the SADOM developed in this study should provide marketers and researchers with a tool to measure the basic motives of donors in college athletics, and help to develop further effective segmentation and promotional strategies to retain existing donors and recruit new ones. Additional testing of the model using broader samples is warranted to provide further evidence of external and concurrent validity.

Limitations

Several limitations of the model should be identified. First, the developed model and the associated measurement scale were limited to the not-for-profit college athletics context. Thus further work is necessary to examine whether the proposed framework is applicable to other marketplaces, such as performing arts centers, cultural centers, and nonprofit organizations more generally. Second, the psychometric property of the measures used in the study was tested using a delimited sample (i.e., donors to the athletic program in one large institution). Thus generalizing the results beyond this particular sport segment should be approached with caution. Future examination of the items using broader samples (e.g., corporate philanthropy; Urriolagoitia & Vernis, 2011) in other similar organizational contexts is necessary to increase generalizability of the scale. Third, it is necessary to improve the scale by refining the items in affiliation and socialization to establish further the discriminant validity of the scale. Therefore, testing the model in divergent settings would strengthen the overall utility of the factor structure and also lend support for the overall applicability of the scale.

Future Research

Donor motivation may be studied further in conjunction with such consumer variables as consumer loyalty and commitment, satisfaction, perceived service quality and prestige of an organization, and how they function together to lead to increased donation levels. Environmental and situational aspects (e.g., social pressure, social culture, and norms) should also be examined to understand donor behavior more fully. In future research, it is also necessary to identify the psychological characteristics and socioeconomic status of the donors to uncover specific motivation factors of giving in college athletics. This knowledge may provide management with strategic directions in understanding the decision-making process of donors, which could help marketers develop market segmentation and communication strategies. As a result, this effort may significantly enhance the financial health and overall success of many nonprofit organizations, including college athletics.

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