

**The Impact of Parental Style on Sport Consumption Preferences of
Teenagers: An Exploratory Investigation in the Asia Pacific Region**

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The Impact of Parental Style on Sport Consumption Preferences of Teenagers: An Exploratory Investigation in Australia and potential implications for China.

Abstract

This paper examines the impact of parental style on the sport consumption preferences of teenagers. Marketers are increasingly interested in the impact that parents have on their children's purchase preferences and behaviours and past research suggests that the degree and nature of such influence varies with different parental styles and with different cultures. In spite of this earlier work, there is little research which looks specifically at the impact of parental style and sport consumption preferences and behaviours of teenagers. This exploratory study develops a profile of the sport consumption attitudes and behaviours of teens according to the parental style practiced by their parents. It is hoped that the paper will open an academic discourse on the subject by providing an exploratory investigation of Australian teenagers and parents, and by highlighting likely problems for sports marketers who rely on research and marketing theories that have only been tested in one cultural context, when entering new and lucrative global markets.

The Impact of Parental Style on Sport Consumption Preferences of Teenagers: An Exploratory Investigation in Australia and implications for China

Introduction

Sport marketers worldwide are particularly keen to have a greater understanding of how teenagers relate to and consume sport as the future of sport business and the globalization of sport rests heavily on their shoulders. In particular the move into Asia by a number of sporting franchises including; cricket, soccer, baseball, basketball and motor-racing has demonstrated the desire by the business side of sport to attract an increasingly global audience. Several writers have emphasized the importance of the youth market not only for their own spending power, but also in relation to the influence they exert on family buying decisions in general (Ward et al. 1977; Moshis et al. 2001; Tapscott 2005; Hartley 2002). This study considers the impact of parental style on the sport consumption preferences of teenagers. The results of an empirical investigation into the impact of parental style on the sport consumption preferences of Australian teenagers will assist Australian sports marketers in their efforts to be more effective. However, while it would be tempting to generalise the results of this study and the western based literature from which it is derived, sports marketers are cautioned about examining the cultural context of parental influence particularly in emerging markets such as China.

Many western sports, and teams within those sports, have identified Asia, and particularly the huge Chinese market, as a key area of strategic diversification which if captured would fuel the growth of their sport exponentially in the coming years and offset the increasingly small margins in their highly competitive domestic sports markets. While the sheer size of the Chinese market is irresistible these sports marketers have developed their strategies based on an understanding of western consumer culture and western family structures and socialization patterns. A commentary on the differences that might be expected in the Asian market is offered in this paper which should serve as a caution to western-based sport franchises relying on western-gained expertise and western-based marketing knowledge. Similarly if future research in this area was to show that Chinese teenagers exhibit very similar behaviours to western teenagers, but that the parental styles impacted quite differently, then we would have some cause to question the traditional western literature on parental style influence and our understanding of the sports consumer socialization process in general.

Literature

Consumer socialization is the process of insight, training and imitation that allows young people to acquire the habits and values, knowledge and attitudes relevant to their functioning in the marketplace (Ward 1980; Baumrind 1980). This process has been studied quite extensively through the late 1970s and early 1980s in relation to media use and consumption (Carlson & Grossbart 1988); attitudes to advertisements (Barry 1977; Grossbart & Crosby 1984; Heslop & Ryans 1980) and in cross cultural contexts (Rose 1999) however no studies to date have examined the impact of parental style on the sport consumption preferences of teenagers.

The effect of parents on the socialization of their offspring has been shown to affect many key consumption behaviours including brand preference and loyalty, information search, reliance on mass media and price sensitivity (Childers & Rao 1992; Moschis 1987; Ward 1974). The underlying theme of this research is that parents transmit values and attitudes as well as purchasing habits, brand and consumption preferences to their children (Cotte & Wood 2004). When viewed in this manner, socialization then assumes that children learn through modelling, direct instruction and observation.

In the case of sport consumption, little has been done previously to explore the impact of parental style and socialization on teenage consumption preferences. Given the relationships that have been shown to exist in other consumption settings, it is reasonable to assume that different parental styles will impact not only the level of sport consumption but also the nature and scope of that consumption (participation versus spectating and use of electronic media).

Parental Styles

In spite of the likelihood that parents will be unique in their approach to child rearing, there has been considerable research which has sought to group parental styles by their consistency in handling mis-behaviour, warmth, over protectiveness and anxiety (Carlson & Grossbart 1988). Although variation in the number and definition of labels for categorizing parental style exist, all studies tend to show the following dimensions: restrictiveness versus permissiveness (Armentrouut & Burger 1972; Baumrind 1968; 1971; Bronson 1972; Hower & Edwards 1978); Warmth versus hostility (Armentrout & Burger 1972; Becker 1964; Hower & Edwards 1978); and calm detachment versus anxious emotional involvement (Armentrout & Burger 1972; Becker 1963; Hower & Edwards 1978).

Becker's 1964 model of parental style incorporated eight parental types, Baumrind's 1966 model suggested three, Carlson & Grossbart's 1988 model suggested five and Carlson, Grossbart & Stuenkel's 1992 model used four. Other studies have incorporated a variation on these styles, however all agree on the general dimensions as mentioned earlier. In this study, the five dimensions presented by Carlson and Grossbart (1988) will be used and the following discussion provides a brief outline of each one.

Authoritarian parents seek high levels of control over children, viewing children as being dominated by egotistical and impulsive forces (Gardner 1982; Carlson & Grossbart 1988). These parents are often theologically motivated and they attempt to shape, control and evaluate behaviour and attitudes of children in accordance with an absolute standard (Baumrind 1966). Obedience is considered a virtue and punitive forceful measures are favoured to curb self-will. Authoritarians favour children in subordinate roles with a lack of autonomy and little communication between parents and children (Baumrind 1966; Calson & Grossbart 1988).

Rigid controlling parents are similar to authoritarian parents except that they exhibit calm detachment and limited emotional involvement in their children's socialization. These parents encourage limited verbal exchange and communication generally in their children

preferring to foster responsibility and dependency. They shield their children somewhat from external influences, but not in the same nurturing way than Authoritative parents would.

Like both authoritarian and rigid and controlling parents Neglecting parents maintain distant relationships with their children, neither seeking nor exercising control over their children. Their relationship is characterized by a lack of warmth and anxious concern for their children's development, they see little need to monitor nor directly encourage their children and see children as being capable of meeting their own needs.

The fourth group of parents are known as Authoritatives and these parents attempt to direct the child's activities in a rational, issue-oriented manner. They encourage verbal give and take, share reasoning for decisions and will consider the objections of children. Both autonomous self-will and disciplined conformity are valued by these parents. These parents use reasoning, shaping and reinforcement to achieve their parental objectives and recognize the child's individual interests and special features.

The final parental style is the Permissives. These parents seek to remove as many parental restraints as possible without endangering the child. Although somewhat warm and protective, they allow substantial freedom, regarding children as having adult rights but few responsibilities (Baumrind 1978;1980). Permissive's interactions with children are affirmative, acceptant and benign. They view themselves as resources and not shapers and they attempt to gain compliance by reasoning and not overt control.

In addition to this variance in parental approaches to raising children, researchers have also attempted to explore the differences in socialization and parental styles cross nationality (see Rose 1999; Tan Tsu Wee 1999; Bornstein 1989). Whilst these studies, and other commercial exploration of teenage consumption patterns, have largely noted many similarities in teenage taste, language use, attitudes and consumption preferences particularly in relation to "iconic" brands (Tan Tsu Wee 1999) they have also highlighted marked cultural variances that are reflected in teenage behavior, aspirations and norms. However in all these studies parental style, and in particular the degree of autonomy and consumption independence granted to children, has been shown to directly influence teenage consumption patterns and preferences. In order to better understand the teenage segment it is important to analyse the influence of parental style and of course teenage preferences and behaviours as well.

Teenagers

Leisure and sport marketers have devoted considerable attention to baby boomers over the last decade due to their sheer size and spending power, however during the next ten years this group will begin to decline in number as the older segment of baby boomers begin to pass on. In its place the teenage market, after many years of decline, now makes up over a quarter of the Australian population (ABS 2004) and this trend appears to be consistent worldwide. This group, often referred to as the N-Gen or generation Y, (Hartley 2002) is of particular interest to marketers due to their tendencies to embrace

media consumption and their economic ability to make substantial consumption decisions (Tapscott 2005).

Teenagers are now being touted as a global marketing force taking their title as “trendsetters” to the streets to influence younger kids, other teens and even adults all seeking to find what is “in” (Neuborne 1999). For research purposes teenagers are those members of a population aged between 13 and 19 years and in most countries these age groups represent middle and high school aged children. Many of the older teens exhibit considerable consumption independence and account for 46 percent of adult spending on audio equipment and 48 percent on athletic shoes (Rosenthal 1998). In spite of their many adult tendencies most teens are also adjusting to a physically maturing body including awareness of sexual feelings and physical prowess, they have ambivalent feeling toward the dependency and security of childhood and the independence of adults and they are experiencing a growing importance of peer groups as far as opinions and values are concerned (Tan Tsu Wee 1999).

With all this growing realization of power and independence is it still worth noting that much of a teenager’s emotional stability, or lack of it, can be attributed to the family and in particular to their parents (Rose 1999). The style of parenting has also been shown to have considerable influence over both the emotional perspective of teenagers and their consumption patterns and habits, in particular restricting and monitoring of media use as well as the level and degree of autonomy and independence in general consumption (Carlson & Grossbart 1988; Bush et al 1999; Mangelburg & Bristol 1998; Moschis & Churchill 1978; Singh et al. 2003).

Whilst research has shown that parents from all countries generally share many of the same goals for their children – most notably educational achievement and economic security (Bornstein 1989; Rose 1999), there are also dramatic differences in the means they use to promote these goals and the degree to which they emphasize group versus individual assertiveness and independence (Rose 1999). For example, Asian parents are known to see their children as the centrepiece and key reason for many of their personal goals and thus the parental influence on these teens is likely to be significant in many areas (Singh et al. 2003). For these children being part of the group, and integration and cohesion, are valued and rewarded. Children in Asian cultures are often sheltered and protected until they are in their late teens or even older and they are allowed time to mature (Rose 1999).

This style of parenting has been shown to produce teenagers with very different consumption patters to those of western teens, even though their desire for popular consumption items (celebrities, clothing styles, music and gadgets) are similar (Tan Tse Wee 1999). This ‘sheltering’ might not be the case with reference to sport however, given that many Asian parents don’t have the experience with Western sports products or the accompanying consumption culture of modern sports fans which would allow them to dictate the terms of their teenagers sport consumption.

In contrast US and Australian parents are more likely to embrace independence and individualism which would suggest less parental influence particularly on routine consumption decisions (Rose 1999). These parents tend to begin independence training early and to use external rewards and punishments more frequently than their Asian counterparts. This style of parenting produces independent teens that have highly developed reasoning and consumption skills.

In relation to sport consumption, little has been done that specifically examines the role of parental style in teenage sport consumption preferences although some studies have been conducted examining socialization and sport consumption (see Yang et al. 1999). This is in spite of the fact that sport consumption patterns and attitudes of teenagers toward sport are of particular interest to many governments who are showing increasing concern at the declining sport participation rate of teenagers in traditional fitness-related activities (Edwards & Daly 2006; Turco 2004). In a recent study of the 3.5 million Australians under 18 found that secondary school students have 600 less hours of physical activity in a year than their counterparts 30 years ago (Edwards & Daly 2006). These findings are of most concern mainly due to the potentially enormous healthcare costs that an obese and inactive population can present to a national economy. It is also interesting to note that many of the current marketing messages regarding childhood obesity and the need for children to be active are being directed toward parents and not just the children afflicted.

As a direct result of this concern, many governments have begun to initiate active school campaigns in an attempt to get teenagers moving again and to stimulate their interest in maintaining healthy body weight and eating patterns, Australia is no exception. Teenagers represent 13 percent of the Australian population (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2004) with 27 percent indicating that they were actively involved in organized sport or physical activity (ABS 2004). In Australia the Australian Sports Commission is tasked with the aim of developing and encouraging sport participation at all levels from grassroots to elite athletes. Other countries such as New Zealand, the UK and many other European countries have similar government based organizations aimed to getting their youth active and involved in sport and healthy activity.

From a sport marketing perspective, most of the decline in sport participation has been in areas of “traditional” team sports like basketball, baseball, football (all codes) volleyball and hockey. This presents a considerable threat for these sports in terms of their future growth on a national basis both for participation and spectating. In contrast, non-traditional sports have seen a modest increase in participation and interest by teenagers, with sports such as in-line skating, mountain biking, snow boarding and BMX bike riding becoming popular.

This apparent change in sport consumption preferences is of increasing concern for sport marketers globally and makes the study of teenagers a relevant focus for many academic researchers keen to understand the differences in their styles of consumption and reactions to traditional models of marketing. In addition, much of what we know about teenage behaviour is that it is designed to specifically differ from the consumption

behaviour of their parents and it is therefore logical that traditional marketing models, developed to explain adult behaviours, will also differ in some way.

Finally, when we consider the formidable evidence in the literature of the impact of parental style on the socialization of consumption of teens (Becker 1964; Baumrind 1968; 1978, 1980, Rose 1999; Carlson et al. 1992; Carlson & Grossbart 2001; Crosby & Grossbart 1984), it is relevant to examine the impact of parental style on sport participation and consumption to add to the body of knowledge in the fledgling sports marketing discipline.

This has led to the development of an exploratory research study which attempts to develop a profile of the sport consumption attitudes and behaviours of teens according to the parental style practiced by their parents. It may be important for sports marketers who target the lucrative teen market to understand how conducive the parental relationship is in impacting direct and/or indirect sport consumption by teens, and also in assessing the likely value in including parental style as a segmentation variable in such markets. In constructing sports marketing messages and channels it is also important that the marketer understand whether or not the parent is a relevant and credible source of information and influence with regards to the teens sports consumption preferences, attitudes and behaviours.

Method

A questionnaire was distributed to children aged between 13 and 17 years attending a large high school in Australia. The questionnaire was in two parts with part one to be completed by the teenagers and part two to be completed by their parents. A total of 1500 questionnaires were distributed and 372 were returned. The demographic profile of respondents and parents is shown in table 1.

Insert table 1 here

In most prior research only mothers have been targeted to determine the impact of parental style as it was posited that mothers would have more direct impact on consumption behaviors of children (Carlson & Grossbart 1988; Ward, Wachman & Wartella 1977). However, as this study was examining consumption patterns in relation to sport it was determined that fathers should also be included in the study as prior research has highlighted the greater participation rates of males in sport consumption activities generally. Further as the study was based in Australia where nuclear family structures are common, both mothers and fathers were allowed to answer the questions. Indeed the inclusion of both parents has some precedent in other studies, particularly where examination of children's behaviour is the focus of the study (as is the case here) (Ferrari & Olivette 1993; Fischer & Crawford 1992). Whilst this sampling process may run the risk of increasing issues of multicollinearity, this problem was accounted for in the subsequent data preparation and analysis phase and was not an issue.

Measures

Parental style. Whilst a number of different parental styles have been identified in the literature, the earliest and most well known are those proposed by Becker (1964).

Becker's (1964) eight ideal parental styles are a summation made from prior studies of parenting behaviour which are displayed in a three dimensional model. The main contribution of this model is mainly in the area of consumer socialization.

In contrast, Baumrind's (1978) work reduced these multiple groups into three (Authoritarian, Authoritative and Permissive) in order to study parental style in younger children and mainly in relation to consumption behaviour. As this study examines a wide range of children's ages to capture the teenage demographic (13 – 17 years) we have followed the suggestion of Carlson & Grossbart (1988) where greater variance in parental styles was anticipated than allowed by Baumrind's (1978) model and where consumer socialization was not really the focus of this study as suggested by Becker's (1964) model. Thus five parental styles were used: Authoritarian; Rigid and Controlling, Neglecting, Authoritative; and Permissive. However in an attempt to avoid making predictions about parental style groups the parental styles allocated to parents in this research were empirically determined as follows.

This study measured individual parental beliefs and from this inferred a specific parental style, a method slightly different to that done in previous parental style studies. The task then was to develop statements representative of one extreme parental style and from this determine a scale that would be anchored to one polar dimension. By further testing the levels of agreement with these statements by each of the five different parental styles, the scale can be made to represent the five levels of agreement and correspondingly the five parental styles.

The first stage of the development of the measures was to use existing descriptions of authoritarian parents to construct twenty five statements representative of their beliefs. Authoritarian parents are considered to be the most extreme in their disciplinarian behaviour, rate most highly on dimensions of restrictiveness, anxious emotional involvement and hostility (Carlson & Grossbart 1988). For these reasons the Authoritarian parental style is frequently used as a benchmark from which to compare other parental styles. These twenty five statements related to parental beliefs about consumer activities, household functions and processes, discipline and responsibility. These statements are shown in appendix 1.

Each parental type was then anchored to a level of agreement with the Authoritarian statements. The extremes on these dimensions from which the parental styles originated mean that there is a natural direction of scaling of each style radiating from one extreme. On the basis of dimensions including: restrictiveness; hostility and warmth, the parental styles were assumed to run in a sequential order starting from Authoritarian and then Rigid Controlling, Neglecting, Authoritative and finally Permissive. In this order, Authoritarians and Permissives would be polar opposites with regards to their beliefs and subsequent parental behaviour.

This ordering was tested with a control group of parents where each parental style was placed on a position of agreement with each of the statements selected previously. Results from this process confirmed that the five parental styles could be ordered on a

five point scale of agreement with authoritarian statements. From this six statements were selected for which a minimum of 83 percent of respondents ordering the five parental styles in the correct sequence. Appendix 2 shows these statements and the percentage of respondents who ordered them this way. The internal consistency of the statements was tested using item-to-total correlation and all were found to be reliable ($\alpha = 0.8771$). These six statements were then used in this study and parents were asked to rate their agreement with them on a five point scale. The results of these ratings were then used to determine the parental style of the parents in this study.

Sport consumption A five item scale was used to determine the degree of encouragement and autonomy parents would give their teenagers in relation to sport consumption and participation (see appendix 3 for scale information). Sport consumption was measured by items relating to both sport participation and sport spectating (both live and via television) and parents responses were asked to indicate their degree of supportiveness based on their answers to these questions (1 being very supportive and 5 being very unsupportive) with a mean score of 1.79 or supportive.

Additional information was gathered about both the parent's and the child's actual sport participation preferences and patterns and this information was used to further develop the profiles of the various parental styles. Finally children were asked their perceptions of the degree of encouragement they received from their parents in relation to their sport consumption and this information assisted in further profiling the parental styles in relation to sport consumption of children.

Data analysis

The first stage of the analysis consisted of cluster analysis and is consistent with previous research (Rose 1999; Carlson & Grossbart 1988; Kelley et al. 1992) using a K-means approach. The decision to employ a five cluster solution was made on the basis of interpretability and these five dominant clusters correctly classified 95% of the sample. These matched styles suggested by Baumrind (1980) and Becker (1964) and Carlson & Grossbart (2001), ie Authoritarian, Rigid and Controlling, Neglecting, Authoritative and Permissive. Once cluster membership was established, descriptive statistics of the characteristics for each cluster were then analysed using a Tukey's pairwise comparison and those variables found to be significant are shown in Table 2.

Insert table 2 here

Results

The results of the data analysis provided an interesting profile of parental style and teenage sport consumption that can be used to develop a more detailed empirical model for later testing. Specifically, it was clear that parental style did discriminate in the area of teenage sport participation (direct sport consumption), but not in terms of indirect sport consumption of teens (watching sport on TV, using the internet or other forms of media). Specifically Table 2 shows that Permissive and Authoritarian parents were most likely to have teens that participated regularly in sport, whilst Neglecting parents were least likely to have sporty teens.

There were no significant relationships observed in the data between parental style and teenage attitudes toward sport. However when we examined parent's attitudes toward their children's sport consumption we can see from the results shown in Table 2 that once again Permissive parents were most likely to have positive attitudes toward their children participating in sport and Neglecting parents were the least supportive of their children participating in sport.

When we further examined the profiles of the various parental styles in this sample it was found that Permissive parents were most likely to have tertiary education and to participate in sport regularly themselves. Neglecting parents were found to have lower levels of education (trade or equivalent) and least likely to participate regularly in sport themselves. Once again Table 2 shows these results. In addition, parents who were involved in sport regularly also tended to have a significantly higher consumption level in many other sport related consumption activities, particularly media consumption via sporting magazines (78%) and cable TV (36%).

Discussion

These results once again confirm earlier studies that have found that five distinct parental styles (Carlson & Grossbart 1988; Rose 1999) can be used to classify parental influence on teenage consumption behaviours. In this case the consumption behaviour examined related to sport consumption preferences. What was interesting here is that permissive parents were most likely to have children who played sport regularly and were most likely to be supportive of their children being engaged in sport. In turn these parents were also more likely to be involved in sport themselves and were more likely to consume sport related products themselves (television broadcasts, sporting magazines, cable sport TV, and purchasing of sport merchandise for them and their family).

As Permissive parents view themselves as resources and not shapers of teenage behaviour, the fact that this group also had high sport related consumption, and thus could provide a sport consumption resource base, would support the strong impact that this style has on teenage sport consumption. In addition, this group is probably likely to share many sport consumption opportunities with their teens cognizant with their desire to allow substantial freedom for their teenagers with adult rights but few responsibilities (Baumrind 1978;1980).

In contrast the group of parents least likely to have teenagers who engage in active sport consumption were the neglecting parents. This group of parents not only would not have provided any particular encouragement to their children in this area, but their distant relationships with their children and their view that their children are being capable of meeting their own needs combined with their own low sport related consumption would have resulted in a distinctly apathetic household. This group of parents was also the least likely to even watch sport on television.

Rigid and controlling parents are known to display the greatest emotional detachment of all parental styles and their lack of interest and support to children in relation to sport

participation reflects this. These parents tend to force maturity on their children and the decision to play or not play sport would therefore be left to the child with little or no influence or intervention from these parents.

Authoritative parents in this sample, whilst not likely to play sport themselves, are somewhat supportive of their children participating in sport. These parents would be likely to engage in rational discussion and reasoning with their children about health and sport consumption choices and yet they would not force children who expressed a dislike for sport to participate.

Finally, Authoritarian parents were noted as having some success in influencing their teens to be sport consumers and to participate in sport. This is not surprising given that Authoritarian parents seek high levels of control over children, viewing children as being dominated by egotistical and impulsive forces (Gardner 1982; Carlson & Grossbart 1988). As mentioned earlier these parents are often theologically motivated and they attempt to shape, control and evaluate behaviour and attitudes of children in accordance with an absolute standard (Baumrind 1966). Given that participation in sport is often seen as a form of self discipline and many sports have definite and unquestionable rules and regulations, this outcome is not surprising.

Implications

Whilst this study is focused on the influence of parental style on Australian teenagers, it is hoped that these findings will pave the way for some logical extensions and propositions relating to the preferences of Asian teenagers in relation to sport consumption. Asia represents a unique and attractive market opportunity for many Australian and global sporting franchises and gaining the hearts and minds of its teenagers is likely to provide a successful outcome.

Prior research that has examined parental style in a cross cultural context has found that whilst the impact of parental style varies the styles themselves are consistent suggesting that the prior conceptualization of parental style developed in the United States (Baumrind 1971; Becker 1964, Carlson & Grossbart 1988) can be extended to other nations (Rose et al. 2003). These findings therefore support the premise that if parental style is found to have an influence on sport consumption of teenagers, as was shown in this study, then it would be valid to examine its impact in other cultural settings, particularly Asia.

The problem with this approach however, is that previous research is based on the underlying premise that parents have experience with the consumption behaviour in question. In the case of sport consumption in Asia, this is an unlikely assumption as contemporary sport consumption and preferences are likely to revolve around recently introduced “Western” sports like basketball and baseball.

What is known about Asian sport consumption generally (both direct and indirect) is that it is a relatively new concept in many Asian countries, particularly China, and as such the degree of parental influence on sport consumption preferences by teenagers is likely to be

low. It may be that these countries operate under a process of “reverse socialization” where the teenagers are actually influencing the sport consumption patterns of their parents rather than the more traditional notion of socialization. Future studies should attempt to investigate the impact of parental style on consumption of contemporary sports in Asian countries and investigate the relevance of past, direct parental experience with sport. It is also important that sports marketers wishing to enter the teen sport market in Asia assess contemporary cultural influences such as peers and the media and compare the magnitude of these influences relative to more traditional socialization agents such as parents and schools.

Unlike many Western countries, schools in Asia and particularly China, will offer different sports and exercise programs than those that the teens are likely to want to consume. Sports such as basketball, American football and baseball are popular. Sports wishing to build long term futures in large Asian markets will need to invest considerable money and time in developing junior sports participation programs in local communities. Similar assimilation programs such as the Australian Football League’s (AFL) Auskick program have proven successful in domestic migration of a once regional sport and Rugby Union has achieved global success with junior sports development by investing the vast revenues from Rugby World Cup back into developing sport nations.

Many Western sporting franchises have already entered the Chinese market, hoping to attract some of the largest population of children in the world (in excess of 300 million under the age of 15) (McNeal & Yeh 2003). This means that China has the most ‘potential’ consumers of any nation in the world and a continual and lucrative target for sports and sports marketers. However, the traditional parent-child relationship in China has changed and one of the most significant developments has been that much more consumer freedom is being granted to Chinese teens, and more independent decision making is being encouraged as Chinese families adjust to having both parents working and increased incomes from dual earners (McNeal & Yeah 2003). Recent and comprehensive studies of Chinese consumers however have focused on “marketplace” expenditure and influences and have ignored “leisure” and hedonic expenditures and preferences.

Examinations of store purchases and snack food preferences give us some insight into the general nature of parental influence and child consumer socialization in China but doesn’t account for behavioural and experiential consumption preferences and constructions. In fact, researchers have found that Chinese families often define ‘leisure’ expenditure in terms of both time and money as relating to their children’s education (Veeck, Flurry & Jiang 2003). Money spent on books and other educational products are often characterized as being leisure expenditure and much of the parent’s leisure time is spent assisting their children with studies. Traditional Western sports rituals like week-end sports for children are often replaced in Chinese cultures by week-end educational classes and supplemental lessons.

Limited research has been conducted on the choice of sport for participation by Chinese teens but research on professional sports people in China has found that their choice of

sport is strongly influenced by their family background and regional cultural influences (Jinxia 2001). Parental style is unlikely to be a singularly useful sports marketing construct but combined with other demographic and psychographic variables it may add to a rich picture of Asian teen life.

While increasing consumer independence seems to be the trend among Chinese consumers, other Asian cultures such as Japan are thought to reflect different parental style characteristics than Western cultures. Rose's (1999) comparison of Japanese and American consumer socialization and parental style patterns found that Japanese mothers like to maintain greater control over their children's consumption and that the timetable for socialization and parental influence is much more protracted for Japanese teens. Therefore sports marketers targeting Japanese teens would likely find success in targeting Japanese parents.

Parental style is a potentially powerful and predictive tool for segmentation in the sports marketing discipline. Future studies should focus on defining the operation of parental influence on both direct and indirect consumption of sport and should particularly seek to understand the cultural differences in the operation of parental style influence. Initial investigations in this research have found that teen's sports consumption and preferences do vary according to parental style and existing research indicates that consumer socialization and parental style do vary across cultures (Rose, Dalakas & Kropp 2003). There is ample evidence to suggest that the investigation of the influence of parental style on the sporting consumer socialization of children in varying cultures is a relevant and valuable endeavour for sports marketing academics and practitioners. This could lead to the use of parental style as a cross-national segmentation tool as well as providing great insight for marketers operating in multi-cultural sports markets in the Asia-Pacific region.

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Table 1
Demographic profile of respondents

<i>Item</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Gender of teens		
Male	178	47.8%
Female	194	52.2%
Age of teens		
12 years	22	5.9%
13 years	121	32.5%
14 years	83	22.3%
15 years	74	19.9%
16 years	56	15.1%
17 years	14	3.8%
18 years	2	0.5%
Do teens play sport regularly?		
Yes	285	76.4 %
No	88	23.6 %
Parental demographic information		
Mothers	259	70%
Fathers	100	27%
Guardians	10	3%
Age of parents		
25 – 34 yrs	39	10.6%
35 – 44 yrs	242	65.6%
45 – 54 yrs	83	22.5%
55 – 64 yrs	4	1.1%
Over 65 years	1	0.3%
Highest level of education of parents		
High School	184	53%
Trade/certificate	105	30%
University	59	17%
Do parents play sport regularly?		
Yes	100	27.4%
No	265	72.6%

Table 2
Descriptive characteristics of parental styles

Variables	Authoritarian (n=48)	Rigid Controlling (n=82)	Neglecting (n=78)	Authoritative (n=49)	Permissive (n=99)
Children playing sport regularly*	Yes	Some	No	Some	Yes
Attitudes to children's level of sport consumption**	Moderately supportive	Least Supportive	Least Supportive	Moderately supportive	Most supportive
Education level***	TAFE	High school	TAFE	TAFE	Undergraduate degree
Parents play sport regularly#	As many do as don't	As many do as don't	Least likely	Not very likely	Most likely

- (F = 3.882, df = 4, p = 0.004); ** (F = 5.626, df = 4, p = 0.00); *** (F = 2.68, df = 4, p = 0.05): # (F = 2.395, df = 4, p = 0.05).

Appendix 1
Statements used in Parental Style Questionnaire*

1. Parents should choose all the programmes their children watch on television
2. Children should work for their pocket money and be made to save it rather than spend it.
3. Parents should encourage their children to take on adult responsibilities
4. Children should be assigned chores around the house and should perform them without question
5. Children respond to punishment for misbehaving (without parents reasoning with them or explaining the error of their conduct)
6. If parents provide a close and well controlled family environment their children will develop into sensible adults
7. Parents should approve all purchases made by their children
8. Children should receive any sex education from their parents and not from instructors at school
9. Children should not be allowed to enter adult discussions
10. Parents should ultimately decide the way their children dress
11. Parents should review all their children's reading material even if it is set as part of a school curriculum
12. Children are basically impulsive
13. The decision to move to a new town is made by the parents and should not involve children
14. Parents should curb any relationships their children have with other people outside the family who seek to influence them
15. When given an instruction children should carry it out without questioning their parents
16. Parents should punish wilful behaviour by their children
17. The selection of the school a child will attend is a decision that only parents need to be involved in
18. Children benefit most from a strict family routine including a set bed-time, curfew and chore rosters
19. Children have few rights when it comes to family decisions
20. Television advertising directed at children is irresponsible as it encourages them to take matters onto their own hands
21. Children should not be allowed to hire any videos without parental consent
22. Parents always know what is best for their children
23. Giving children too much freedom is only asking for trouble
24. It is important for a child's wellbeing that parents retain firm control over them
25. Deciding what children eat is the responsibility of the parents.

Appendix 2
Results of the Parental Style test and Scale reliability

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Corresponding Parental Style	Authoritarian	Rigid and Controlling	Neglecting	Authoritative	Permissive
Items ($\alpha = 0.8771$)					
Children should not be allowed to enter into adult discussions	100%*	82%	82%	91%	82%
Parents should curb any relationship their children have with people outside the family who seek to influence them	100%	91%	91%	82%	82%
The selection of the school a child will attend is a decision that only parents need to be involved in	100%	100%	82%	82%	82%
Children have few rights when it comes to family decisions	91%	82%	91%	82%	82%
Television advertising directed at children is irresponsible as it encourages them to act independently of their parents	91%	82%	91%	82%	82%
Parents always know what is best for their children	91%	82%	82%	82%	82%

* Percentage of responses ordered correctly

Appendix 3
Parental supportiveness to sport participation

	Factor Score	Mean	Stand Dev'n
I believe that playing sport is healthy for my child/children	.781	1.45	0.64
I encourage my child/children to participate in regular sport	.760	1.66	0.76
I allow my child/children to choose the sport(s) they participate in	.746	1.61	0.66
I allow my child/children to choose the sport(s) they attend live	.623	2.15	0.82
I allow my child/children to choose the sport(s) they watch on TV	.602	2.05	0.83

$\alpha = 0.737$

Scale mean = 1.78

Scale: 1 = strongly agree and 5 = strongly disagree