

PREDICTING FANS' REPURCHASE INTENTIONS: THE ROLE OF SERVICE QUALITY AND TEAM IDENTIFICATION

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INTRODUCTION

Sport management and marketing researchers have included loyalty in numerous theoretical and empirical models in their attempt to understand sport consumers' various behaviors. The concept of service quality has been used extensively as the independent variable for predicting customer loyalty in such models (Murray & Howat, 2002; Wakefield and Blodgett, 1994). Researchers seem to agree that service quality dimensions positively influence sport customers' attitudinal and behavioral loyalty. Equally, the construct of team identification has also found to influence sport fans' various behaviors. Wann, Bayens, and Driver (2004) found that more identified fans attend more games in the future, and buy more official team products (Fisher & Wakefield, 1998). A number of studies also presented evidence regarding the association of the two concepts: service quality and team identification (Sutton, McDonald, Milne, & Cimperman, 1997; Wann & Schrader, 1997). Greenwell, Fink, and Pastore (2002) reported that more identified fans have more positive perceptions regarding their team's venue/facilities, services and staff. Based on the above, the purpose of this study was to incorporate service quality, team identification and fans' future intentions in one model. More specifically, we examined the role of team identification, and service quality in predicting fans' repurchase intentions.

METHODS

The sample was drawn from spectators attended two basketball and one football game on professional level in Greece. 257 spectators participated in the study. They were males, and were females. Their mean age was 34,8 years (SD = 11,9). Perceived service quality was measured by using SPORTSERV (Theodorakis and Kambitsis, 1998). The 22 perception-performance items of the instrument represent five dimensions: Facilities, Staff, Security, Access, and Reliability. The greek version of SSIS (Theodorakis, Vlachopoulos, Wann, Afthinos, & Nassis, 2006) was used to examine fans' psychological attachment to the team. The scale contains seven items. A single-item question regarding fans' willingness to attend more games in the future was used to measure repurchase intentions in this study.

RESULTS

Descriptive statistics, alpha values, and Pearson Correlation coefficients are presented on Table 1. Item deletion techniques lead to the elimination of one item in the access dimension. To predict fans' repurchase intentions a regression analysis was conducted. Results indicated that team identification along with the five service quality dimensions predicted 18% of fans repurchase intentions ($R=.42$, $F_{(6,250)} = 9,415$, $p<.001$). The coefficients suggested that team identification had the strongest influence on fans' future behaviors ($b=.30$, $t=4.8$), following by Reliability ($b=.33$, $t=4.0$), and Access ($b=.22$, $t=3.3$).

DISCUSSION

Results from previous studies indicated that perceived service quality and team identification independently predicted fans willingness to attend more games of their favourite team in the future. In this study we

Table 1. Mean, standard deviation, alpha values, and pearson correlation coefficient for repurchase intentions, team identification, and service quality dimensions.

Variables	M	SD	r						α
			1	2	3	4	5	6	
1 Repurchase Intentions	5.9	1.4							
2 Identification	6.3	1.2	.30*						.77
3 Facilities	5.3	1.0	.13	.21*					.76
4 Staff	4.9	1.6	.06	-.10	.42*				.96
5 Security	5.9	.9	.24*	.17*	.44*	.27*			.84
6 Access	5.9	1.1	.12	.19*	.39*	.27*	.31*		.75
7 Reliability	4.7	1.9	.18*	-.11	.35*	.73*	.18*	.31*	.96

*p<.01

incorporated the two aforementioned concepts for predicting fans' future behaviors into the same model. Team identification found to be the major contributor to the prediction of the dependent variable. Furthermore, among the five service quality dimensions, Access and Reliability exerted the strongest influence in the prediction of fans' repurchase intentions. Managers of professional sport teams should develop strategies that will increase fans' psychological attachment to the team. They should also improve aspects of service quality and more particular service reliability (i.e. to deliver what it promised), and access issues such as parking availability, entering/leaving the arena, and transportation among others. Practical implications for professional teams' managers and limitations of the study will be discussed.

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