

The determinants of attendance and consumption in sporting events in Spain

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Aim of paper and research questions

Over the last twenty years, sport has claimed a growing share of the economy, with reported estimates ranging between 2% and 2.5% of GDP in Spain (Lera-López, Rapún-Gárate & Aguirre-Zabaleta, 2008). This economic importance of sport is closely related to the significant increase in the number of people taking part in sports. Nevertheless, over the past ten years sports participations appear to have reached a stagnation point in Spain (García, 2006) as well as in many other countries (Bottenburg, 2005; Bloom, Grant & Watt, 2005). This decline in sports participation rates has been paralleled by a corresponding shift in sports attendance and spectatorship (Gratton & Taylor, 2000). Consequently, there is an increasing interest in considering the analysis of sports attendance. In this context, this paper tries to analyse the determinants of attendance at thirty-five different professional and amateur sports in Spain. As well as frequency of attendance, we also investigate sporting event-related consumption and the relationship between sports attendance and participation.

Literature review

The analysis of demand for sports attendance has recently attracted considerable attention. Much of this literature focuses on professional sports such as soccer, baseball, basketball and rugby (see, among others, Borland & MacDonald, 2003 and Cairns, 1990 for a literature review). Researchers have studied variables affecting match attendance from the following five key perspectives: (a) game attractiveness (e.g., individual skills, presence of star players, team records, league standing, closeness of competition, special events, and entertainment); (b) schedule convenience or audience preference (e.g. time of match, day of week, weather, etc.); (c) economics and marketing (e.g. ticket-price, marketing promotions, income, availability of substitute forms of entertainment, television effect, etc.); (d) socio-demographics (e.g. population, age, gender, ethnicity, occupation, education and geography); and (e) fan motivation factors (club and team identification, self-esteem enhancement, entertainment, need for affiliation, family ties, etc.). The first two perspectives are closely associated with the type of sport (baseball, basketball, soccer, etc.), while the economic and socio-demographic variables and motivation factors can be applied to any sport. Downward (2007) discusses the sports decision in the light of economic decision-making theories emanating from two basic approaches: the neoclassical and the heterodox. Neoclassical approaches employ a rational-choice framework to model individual decision-making in sporting activities. Heterodox economic theories, in contrast, consider a wider set of methodological and theoretical principles. All these theories involve economic, sociological and psychological approaches.

Research design and proposed data analysis

Adopting a broad concept of sport, as in the common European approach, we analyse the determinants of sports attendance in thirty-five different professional and amateur sports. This paper focuses particularly on the role of economic variables, socio-demographic characteristics,

and motivation variables in explaining frequency of sports attendance as well as consumption at sporting events.

We estimate ordered probit models, following a methodological approach common in some of the empirical literature (Farrell & Shields, 2002; Forrest & Simmons, 2002). The parameters are estimated by maximum likelihood techniques, using the routines included to this effect in the Limdep 8.0 program. The information was obtained through a questionnaire survey, using a stratified random sample of the population in Spain. The survey was conducted in 2007 by telephone interview using the Computer Aided Telephone Interview (CATI) system. 640 valid interviews were obtained from the Spanish population over the age of 18.

Discussion of progress

The preliminary results on the determinants of sports attendance and consumption at sporting events suggest the significant importance of socio-demographic variables, economic influences, motivational factors and sports participation variables. The models of the key drivers in sports attendance and consumption at sporting events also present differences. On the one hand, the set of significant variables is not the same in each model. In addition, the same independent variables play a significantly different role in explaining each of the two sporting decisions.

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