

What brings people into the stadium?

A cross cultural comparison between Portugal and Belgium about the motives that influence the attendance to soccer games

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Aim

The main objective of this research is to find out what brings people into the stadium of the main soccer club in the city where they live, by exploring various aspects of the consumer decision-making process. We want to investigate the relative weight of multiple predictors of live attendance, including team identification(TI), place/stadium attachment(PA), sportscape, socio-psychological factors, economical factors, club's marketing decisions, duration of involvement with the club as a fan, sex, sports participation, and residence.

Theoretical background

Wann and Branscombe(1993) refer to the concept of TI as the extent to which a fan feels psychologically connected, is involved with and has invested in the team and sees the team as an extension of the self. The authors elaborated a scale to study TI, the Sport Spectator Identification Scale(SSIS). TI and attendance have been found to be positively and strongly correlated.

PA refers to the emotional, functional and symbolic relationships that individuals create with a particular recreational setting (Williams&Vaske,2003). Carvalho and colleagues(2011) were the first to use the concept of PA in professional team sports.

Findings from Hill and Green(2000) show that stadium factors (i.e., the sportscape) can enhance the likelihood that supporters of the home team will attend future games. Fink and Parker also studied the socio-psychological motives to attend games of other teams than the favourite(2009), and found that socialization (related with being with family and friends at the stadium), physical skill (related to the performance of the players and teams), and drama, were rated the highest in both game types (favourite teams or not).

The following hypotheses are being tested:

- H1 – Fans and non-fans attendance's major predictor is socialization;
- H2 – Compared with local club's fans, non-fans and fans of other teams' attendance is more influenced by a) sportscape factors, b) entertainment and c) marketing strategies, like promotions or special prices;
- H3 – Compared with highly identified fans, the lowly identified fans' attendance is more influenced by a) sportscape factors and b) entertainment;
- H4 – Compared with fans with a higher PA, the attendance of the fans with a lower PA is more influenced by sportscape.

Methodology

To compare motives that influence live soccer attendance in Portugal and Belgium, two similar cities were selected: Aveiro and Leuven, respectively. These are university cities of intermediate dimension (78000 and 97000 inhabitants) with one medium level soccer club playing in the first league. Participants in this study are 2 last years' high school students (16-18years old) from both public and private schools with scientific and technical education. In this manner, the sample is constituted by the same kind of population in both cities and, therefore, they can be compared.

A 20minutes on-line survey was conducted. Fans and non-fans were addressed at the schools, with a brief explanation about the content of the study and a request to fill it out voluntarily during their free time. As an extra motivation, a lottery of a prize was announced.

The questionnaire is constituted by three parts: the first part examines the person as a soccer fan (or not), containing consumption behavior items, the SSIS, PA (Carvalho,2011) and socio-psychological items; the second part investigates, using a Likert-scale, the reasons of the respondents to attend to games of SC Beira-Mar or Oud-Heverlee Leuven, whether they are fans or not of that club – sportscape perception (i.e. stadium aesthetics, crowding, parking, accessibility, hygiene, quality of food and drinks), game and management related issues, marketing actions and economical factors; the third part consists of socio-demographic questions (ex: age, sex, residence).

Descriptive and multilevel analyse will be carried out using SPSS19.

Results

Data is being collected. A minimum of 300 respondents in each city are expected. Further conclusions will be presented.

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