

ASSESSING PERCEIVED BENEFIT AND VALUE OF A SPORTING EVENT

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In accordance with general business marketing, it is important for marketers of professional sport organizations to appreciate customers' perceptions of service quality and value which are the keys of obtaining customer satisfaction, customer loyalty, repurchase intentions, and repeated patronage (Cronin et al., 2000; Johnson et al., 2006). Since the perceived quality and value were caused by the extent to which the outcomes of sporting events meet spectators' expectations, research studies dealing with such issues are necessary. Researchers has attempted to determine the causal relationships among perceived core service quality and peripheral service quality, customer satisfaction and behavioral intentions in the settings of sporting events (Tsuji et al., 2007; Yoshida & James, 2010). However, due to the difficulty of collecting data from spectators after a sporting event, only a few studies have dealt with the spectators' reactions to the outcome of a game. Therefore, the purpose of the present study were to: (1) identify spectators' expected benefits before a game, spectators' perceived benefits which were obtained from the outcome of a sporting event, spectators' perceived peripheral service quality, and perceived value, and (2) examine the relationships among those aspects.

Data were collected at a game of bj-league, which is the Japanese professional basketball, at the beginning of the 2012-13 season. The home team, 8 wins 2 defeats by the 10th game, won the game over the away team, 4 wins 6 defeats by the 10th game. The data for the present study was collected in two steps. In order to sample respondents representing all 2134 spectators except fans of away team, a quota sampling method was used in the arena. After all blocks of seating in the arena were divided into six areas, each well-trained data collector was assigned an area. Each data collector selected subjects from each area according to approximate proportions of age and gender of spectators in that area. Before the basketball game, the selected individuals were administered the first questionnaire containing items on demographics, past experience of spectating, expected benefits of spectating, team attachment, and so forth. This procedure yielded a sample of 618 usable respondents.

In the second step, as returning the filled first questionnaire to a data collector, respondents were given a stamped addressed envelope and the second questionnaire containing items eliciting perceived benefits, perceived peripheral service quality, and perceived value. The number of respondents returning the second questionnaire was 235 (response rate = 38.1%). The researchers matched the two sets of data by using the identification number, age, and gender on both the first and second questionnaires. A total of 196 respondents fully completed the survey and was used for the analyses of the present study. The threat of nonresponse bias was addresses by comparing characteristics of respondents with characteristics of non-respondents who answered to the first questionnaire but did not mail the second one back. Results of the comparisons indicated no significant differences on gender and spectating experience between the two groups.

Sample characteristics consisted of 55.4% females and 44.6% males. The mean age for the sample was 41.2 years. Of the subjects, 66.9% were married, and 61.7% were full-time workers. Ninety percent of the sample had experience on attending the team's home-game before. With respect to spectators' expected benefits and perceived benefits, 14 items with seven-point Likert scale were employed to assess five dimensions of benefits (i.e., social interaction, achievement, escape, performance, and drama) which were drawn from previous research (e.g., Trail & James, 2001). The results of the confirmatory factor analyses using Amos 20 yielded evidence of good support for the measurement model of expected benefits as well as perceived benefits. Perceived peripheral service quality was assessed with three dimensions, which were stadium employees, facility space, and ancillary services (i.e., half-time show and concessions). Perceived values, which can be defined as a spectator's overall evaluation of what he or she receives compared with what he or she gives up or pays, were measured with four items (Johnson et al., 2006).

The mean scores on perceived benefits after the game were relatively high, especially on drama ($M=6.31$), achievement ($M=6.30$), and performance ($M=6.28$). All the scores on perceived benefits except achievement were significantly higher than those of expected benefits before the game. The stepwise regression analyses showed that achievement ($\beta=.36$, $p<.01$), ancillary services ($\beta=.29$, $p<.01$), and drama ($\beta=.21$, $p<.01$) were significantly associated with perceived value of event. It was revealed that those three aspects from the outcome of the game explained 42.1% of variance in perceived value of the sporting event.

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