

# DOES CUSTOMER DELIGHT ARISE WHEN THE HOME TEAM LOSES? AN APPLICATION OF THE CUSTOMER DELIGHT AND SATISFACTION MODEL

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## Key words

Customer delight, emotion, home team fan

## Background

Customer delight is defined as a profoundly positive emotional state resulting from having one's expectations exceeded to a surprising degree and is considered different from customer satisfaction (Rust & Oliver, 2000). Although there are indications that watching sports arouses a range of emotions, from positive (e.g., excitement, delight) to negative (e.g., anger, discouragement; e.g., Holt, 1995), little research has investigated how spectators feel about or react to a game their home team loses. As sporting events always end with one team losing, we should understand how spectators behave when their home team loses. This study clarifies the mechanism of delight, focusing on home team fans' reactions to lost games.

## Theoretical background

Oshimi and Harada (2013) investigated the mechanism of delight in watching sports and proved that spectator delight positively affected attendance and word-of-mouth intention to attend games when the spectators' home team won, whereas there was no effect when the home team lost. Similar studies have shown that positive or negative emotions were aroused in spectators depending on whether their team won or lost (Kerr et al., 2005; Oshimi & Harada, 2012). However, little research has studied spectators' degree of "delight" when their home team loses; therefore, our research is designed to develop a theory of delight as it applies to sporting events.

## Method

This study was conducted during Japanese professional football (A-club) and basketball league (B-club) games by using a questionnaire survey. Questionnaires were distributed to spectators using a convenience sampling method covering all areas, from reserved seating to non-reserved seating. The data were collected by mail less than a week after each match. A total of 241 usable questionnaires were collected. The results of each game were 1-2 (A-club) and 62-83 (B-club), and the number of spectators were 3,654, 36% of the stadium was filled (A-club) and 1,422, 90% of the arena was filled (B-club). Each item was taken from previous studies (Chitturi et al., 2008; Finn, 2005; Loureiro, 2010; Oliver et al., 1997). Analysis was conducted using SPSS 21.0 and Amos 21.0. First, to clarify the validity and reliability of the scale, we calculated descriptive statistics, average variance extracted (AVE), and construct reliability (CR) and conducted a confirmatory factor analysis. Second, a t-test and simultaneous multi-sample analysis were conducted to investigate the differences between the fans of two teams in their delight, satisfaction, intention to watch another match, word of mouth, and other factors. Finally, a free description area on the questionnaire allowed respondents to explain their thoughts, which we analyzed in detail.

## Results and discussion

The differences between the two teams' fans in terms of delight, satisfaction, intention to watch another match, and word of mouth became clear through a t-test ( $t[289] = 6.10, p < .001$ ) and simultaneous multi-sample analysis ( $\chi^2/df = 2.67, CFI = .869, RMSEA = .084$ ). Specifically, B-club fans were more delighted and satisfied with the game than were A-club fans, and a causal relationship between delight and intention (word of mouth/attending future games) was shown only among B-club fans.

These results indicate that not all fans experience the same emotions or impressions when their home team loses. However, positive emotions (e.g., enjoyment, pleasure) positively influenced delight and satisfaction in both this study and previous studies (e.g., Oliver et al., 1997; Oshimi & Harada, 2013), indicating that evoking positive emotions is important for sporting events regardless of whether the home team loses. For example, B-club fans included statements in the questionnaire's free description area such as "I was delighted by the cheerleading performance," and "I was delighted when we cheered for our home team and felt sympathy with other spectators." These results indicate that, even when a home team loses customer service (such as cheerleading) and game atmosphere (such as sympathizing with other spectators) may influence delight and produce a positive intention to watch another match and spread word of mouth. This is a new insight into how spectators behave when their favorite team loses. However, we cannot generalize these results because they are based on only two cases and involve sports (football and basketball) whose characteristics differ widely. Future research must collect a larger sample and use a variety of game results to determine which factors other than those results and player performance (both of which are difficult for sports marketers to control) arouse spectator delight.

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