

WHY SOCCER FANS STAY HOME? A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY IN TURKEY

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Introduction and literature

The increasing proliferation of media technology has resulted in more opportunities for sport fans to consume both sport and media offerings. Due to these increased opportunities, sport fans can watch their favorite sports from the comfort and safety of their home while also not expending scarce resources (e.g., time, energy and money). Moreover, many sport leagues across the world have experienced recent increases in hooliganism, taunting of opposing fans and fan violence. Due to these factors which may negatively influence fan attendance at sporting events, the purpose of this research is to examine the influence of new media technology, the costs associated with event attendance, the comforts associated with watching sporting events at a remote location, and the fears associated with in-person attendance on intentions to continue to watch sporting events from a remote location.

Sport researchers have identified numerous determinants that influence sport consumers to attend sporting events, including cognitive, affective, social and behavioral factors (Madrigal, 1995; Wakefield, 1995). In addition to the positive influences on sport consumer behavior, these four general factors may also have negative impacts on event attendance. Due to the increasing price of attendance (e.g., tickets, transportation, parking, concessions), many fans are unable to afford attending a sporting event in-person. Moreover, the tickets that many average fans can afford are frequently located in remote, obstructed view or undesirable locations. In contrast, the proliferation of new media technologies facilitates a better view of the action from the comfort of the fan's own home or alternative remote location. In addition, recently, sport events across the world are increasingly marred by violence and poignant examples of poor fan behavior toward both players and opposing fans. As a result, many fans feel insecure and unsafe at sporting events, thus their fear for their own safety also influences them to not attend. While these four determinants of non-attendance at sporting events motivate fans to stay at home, new media technologies allow these fans to continue to watch the events with minimal disruption to their everyday life.

Methodology

Based on the research question and literature review, a four-dimensional conceptualization of fan consumption through media technology is proposed. The questionnaire for this study was developed based on Churchill's (1979) recommendations for scale development. To generate an adequate pool of items, an extensive literature review and semi-structured interviews with sport fans (n=54) were conducted. Then, a pilot study was carried out with one hundred twenty-five soccer fans to ensure the clarity of the statements. Based on an examination of the reliability

of the items, three items were discarded and twenty-two statements were retained. In total, out of 1200 questionnaires, 978 were returned for a response rate of 81.5%. Of these, 28 responses were rejected because many items were left blank, yielding a final usable response rate of 79.2% (n=950).

The data was subjected to reliability, validity, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), and structural equation modeling (SEM) procedures. Fit values of RMSEA and SRMR were smaller than accepted value of 0.08. Additionally, the values of GFI, AGFI, CFI, NFI, NNFI in the CFA and SEM were higher than accepted value of 0.90. Overall, many of the fit statistics, validity, and reliability evidence suggested the confirmation of the proposed CFA model.

Results and conclusion

The results of this study indicate that media, price, comfort and fear have a significant relationship with intentions to continue to watch sporting events from remote locations. These results suggest that the four factors, underlying soccer fans' staying home, plays a critical role in the sport marketing and sport media context, and that the managers of sport area should pay attention the larger part of fans. These results are important because defining factors related with watching televised game at home play a role in the development of many new communication and media strategies. Our study also suggests that the motivation of watching televised game isolated from motivations of participating game may be more different than previously anticipated.

Keywords: Soccer, soccer fan, sporting event, sport consumer behavior

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