

SAME GAME – DIFFERENT EXPERIENCE: HOW CONTEXT INFLUENCES EVENT EXPERIENCE AND SPECTATOR PERCEPTIONS

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Abstract:

AIM OF PAPER

Value creation through sport events clearly involves a large number of actors (e.g., teams, players, sponsors, facility owners, caterers, police and private security firms, spectators). However, the set of relevant actors and their contributions to value co-creation have differential impact. Clearly spectators that watch the event live at the venue compared with an at home viewing on TV or in another public setting (e.g., a live site public screening) or in a sports bar have markedly different experiences. Therefore, value co-creation through sport events is highly context-specific and understanding the role of context is an imperative.

This research attempts to analyze context-specific actor contributions and value perceptions of consumers, thereby contributing to the application of the concepts of value co-creation and value-in-context. In particular, we address the following research questions:

1. How do the context-specific actors contribute to spectators' experience of watching a sport event?
2. How does overall spectators' value of watching a sport event differ across contexts?

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The perspective of value co-creation implies that the entire co-creation context determines value (Chandler & Vargo, 2011). Such "value-in-context" is considerably influenced by the context-specific actors participating in value co-creation.

In the context of team sport events, we suggest that three types of actors are generally important for value co-creation. First, the opposing teams naturally

contribute to spectators' experience of the game. Given that value is always determined by the beneficiary, the service quality of the actual game can be conceptualized as 'perceived team performance' (Gladden & Funk, 2001). Second, the organizer of the event at the venue (e.g., stadium, public screening, bar) considerably determines how spectators are able to create value through the overall event experience (Edvardsson, Enquist, & Johnston, 2005). Third, fans and spectators themselves contribute to the event experience by creating the 'spectator-induced atmosphere' (Uhrich & Koenigstorfer, 2009).

While there is value created for all actors within the value-creation ecosystem of a sport event, this study focuses on value from the perspective of spectators. Following Macdonald et al. (2011) we define spectators' (customers') value-in-use as "a customer's outcome, purpose or objective that is achieved through service" (p. 671). Consequently, the fulfilment of spectators' needs describes their perceived value.

METHODOLOGY, RESEARCH DESIGN AND DATA ANALYSIS

A posited conceptual model relates the actor-specific contributions to spectators' event experience to the context-specific perceived value from the perspective of the spectators. The empirical study compares different contexts of spectating live broadcasts of football games during the FIFA World Cup 2014. The respondents from a self-administered online survey (N=532) had watched the games in four different contexts: at a public screening (N=127), in a bar, pub, or restaurant (N=86), at home together with a group of friends (N=261) or alone at their homes (N=54). A structural equation model for each context was estimated. The models were then compared using multi-group analysis.

RESULTS, DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

For the various service providers involved in the value creation process for a sport event it is highly relevant to understand the degree to which they are able to actually influence spectators' experience of the event. The results clearly reveal that the relative influence of the contributions of the co-creating actors on spectators' experience and the respective importance of dimensions such as spectators' perceived value vary considerably depending on each context. Results indicated that the performance of the team contributes to a relatively small extent to the event experience of spectators in a public screening context, however, it revealed as the most important in all other contexts. This corresponds with recent findings that the value dimension 'Social contacts and Interaction' is more important for spectators at public screenings than in all other contexts. Hence, spectators appear to prefer public screenings when they are searching for interaction with their friends and other people during the game. It is surprising that irrespective of context all value dimensions must reflect fun and enjoyment ('Fun and Entertainment', 'Atmosphere') across all contexts. In the contexts, in which team performance is the most important driver of the experience, the value dimensions that are closely connected to the game itself (e.g. 'Physical Attractiveness and Aesthetics') are relatively more important compared with other contexts indicating that spectators might choose to watch the games in one of these contexts when they are more strongly interested in the game. The results are highly relevant for sport managers who should consider context and establish cooperations with other context-specific

actors in order to optimize offerings for sport event spectators.

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