Travel Intention Among A Branded Fan Community Regarding The 2018 FIFA World Cup Russia

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Aim of study

This study is focused on a branded fan community whose members feel strongly connected with their national team. In particular, it is focused on the Fan Club Nationalmannschaft (FCN) which was founded by the German Football Association (DFB) to strengthen support of the German squad for international matches. As the 2018 FIFA World Cup Russia is right around the corner, this study examines past travel behavior of fan club members and their intentions to travel to Russia. This will help to better understand the needs of members and will allow the DFB to arrange appropriate travel offers. Additionally, this study shall contribute to the body of knowledge in sport tourism and shall shed light into the characteristics of fan clubs national teams.

The following research questions have been stated:

- RQ1: What factors drives the travel intention of members of a branded fan community to attend a mega-event like the 2018 FIFA World Cup Russia?
- RQ2: Functions the branded fan community as a social actor in the framework of value co-creation influencing the travel intention?

Literature review

Although there has been various interest among scholars to study intentions of attending mega-events (Kim & Chalip, 2004; Neirotti & Hilliard, 2006), evidence-based information about performed attendance remains underdeveloped (Funk, Alexandris & Ping, 2009). This accounts particularly for passive sport fans supporting their favorite sport teams during mega events. Motives and constraints play an important role in a person's travel decision making. Crucial intrapersonal resp. interpersonal factors such as monetary costs, long distance travel, family obligations, as well as structural factors of the host destination such as safety risks may be perceived as travel inhibitors (Kim & Chalip, 2004).

Woratschek, Horbel and Popp (2011) developed the framework of value co-creation in sports. It is based on the service dominant logic — SDL, which was described by Lusch and Vargo (2004) emphasizing on the social actors who contribute to the creation of a product. For this study it was assumed that the FCN functions next to other stakeholders as a social actor for satisfaction with match visits and travel intention.

Methodology

The author executed a complex online survey addressed to members of the FCN in regards to membership satisfaction, team identification, satisfaction with match visits, and past and future travel behavior. It was assumed that team identification would have a positive causal effect on the others as former research has shown that it is much more persistent and influential (Haumann, Quaiser, Wieseke & Rese, 2014).

The link to the survey instrument was sent out via the official FCN newsletter. In total 520 members responded to the survey. A descriptive data analysis was applied.

Additionally, the author conducted a confirmative factor analysis (CFA) and structural equation modeling (SEM) to apply the framework of value co-creation focusing on team identification, fan satisfaction and loyalty (Woratschek, Horbel & Popp, 2011) for the FCN.

Results

The author found out, that more than one third of the respondents (36%) were highly loyal towards the team 'Die Mannschaft'. Around one-third (35%) took already part in official fan club travels in the past. Main travel motives were 'to support the German national team' (82%), 'to experience the unique WC atmosphere' (77%), 'to get to know famous stadia' (62%), and 'to see both WC and touristic highlights' (50%). Ninety two per cent of the participants were very satisfied with the travel offers and showed high willingness (93%) to travel again.

In regards to RQ1, the majority (58%) indicated to be interested in an official DFB travel package for the 2018 FIFA WC Russia. Respondents highlighted 'high costs' (19%) and 'existing crime and corruption' (20%) in Russia as the main travel constraints.

Concerning RQ2, CFA showed acceptable model fit to verify the measurement structure of the latent variables (χ^2/df = 1.75; RMSEA = .04; SRMR = .05; CFI = .98). Same applies for the structural model (χ^2/df = 1.97; RMSEA = .05; SRMR = .07; CFI = .97). The findings show strong support for the tested framework of value co-creation and are highly significant (α < .01), except for all causal effects which are associated with the FCN: a) team identification on FCN (p = .98); b) FCN on stadium atmosphere (p = .43); c) FCN on satisfaction with match visit (p = .75). This means firstly, that the FCN does not significantly functions as a social actor in regards to the tested framework of value co-creation, and secondly, that the FCN has no significant causal effect on travel intention. Here the DFB is required to develop strategies and implement programs which strengthen satisfaction and identification with its branded fan community rather than with the team in general.

References

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