

**Attribute-level satisfaction at sporting events: Assessing the antecedents and consequences**

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Abstract 76**

In the marketing literature, it is widely recognized that customer satisfaction can create long term benefits for firms, such as positive word-of-mouth, cross-buying, and customer loyalty (Anderson, Fornell, & Lehmann, 1994; Bolton & Drew, 1991; Cronin & Taylor, 1992; Oliver, 1999). In order to lower customer defection rates and increase customer loyalty, both practitioners and academics have acknowledged customer satisfaction as a key concept of a customer retention strategy (Cronin, Brady, & Hult, 2000; Cronin & Taylor, 1992, Oliver; 1999). In the realm of the spectator sport industry, customer satisfaction has been viewed as a significant predictor of intentions to attend future sporting events (Cronin, Brady, & Hult, 2000; Kwon, Trail, & Anderson; 2005; Wakefield & Blodgett, 1996). Sport marketing researchers to date have investigated two types of customer satisfaction: game satisfaction (Madrigal, 1995; Kwon, Trail, & Anderson; 2005; Trail, Anderson, & Fink, 2005) and facility satisfaction (Wakefield & Blodgett, 1996). Customer satisfaction has become a widely-agreed upon predictor of behavioral consequences in sport marketing. However, one gap in the literature is studying the influence of game and service satisfaction together. A review of the literature indicates there is still much to learn about the two types of attribute-level satisfaction. This study is one of the first empirical studies designed to examine the antecedents of consequences of both game and service satisfaction.

Services marketing researchers suggest that the consumer's perceptions of the core product and services may coexist as antecedents of customer satisfaction and behavioral intentions (Mittal, Kumar, & Tsiros, 1999; Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1994). Surprisingly, there is a lack of research in sport marketing examining both the core product (e.g., player performance and team characteristics) and services (e.g., facility and employees). A more thorough analysis of these factors affecting customer satisfaction and behavioral intentions is warranted because sport marketing research has advanced with little overlap between the core product and services. For example, sport marketing researchers have paid little attention to the concept of service personnel even though there are numerous service employees at sporting events, such as ticket takers, concession employees, and security personnel (Ferreira & Armstrong, 2004; Wakefield & Blodgett, 1996). The role of these employees has not been well-studied despite the acknowledged importance to study how service employees influence the consumers' satisfaction and repurchase intentions (Cronin & Taylor, 1992; Oliver, 1994).

The purposes of the current study were to: (1) propose a model of the relationships between service quality, core product quality, customer satisfaction, and behavioral intentions and (2) examine the relationships between the proposed constructs. We conceptualized two types of attribute-level satisfaction: game satisfaction and service satisfaction. Working with two types of satisfaction enabled us to examine the relative impact of both service and core product quality on spectator satisfaction, and eventually behavioral intentions.

Core product quality included player performance and team characteristics based on Garvin's (1984) definition of quality. James and Ross' (2004) player skill and effort scale and Funk, Ridinger and Moorman's (2003) excitement scale were used to assess perceptions of player performance. For team characteristics, we focused on the quality of the opponent (Madrigal, 1995) and used a scale adopted from Greenwell's (2001) core product scale. A scale for measuring the quality of various services was adopted from Brady and Cronin's (2001) scale of multidimensional-multilevel service quality and Wakefield and Blodgett's (1996) sportscape scale. Two types of attribute-level satisfaction and behavioral intentions were measured by a scale adopted from Brady, Knight, Cronin, Hult, and Keillor's (2005) study. Since we collected data from Japanese professional baseball spectators, the survey instrument was translated into Japanese by one of the researchers. To test the equivalence between original and Japanese instruments, back-translation into English was conducted by another native of Japan who was also fluent in English.

Data were collected from sport spectators attending a professional baseball game in the eastern Tokyo metropolitan area. Questionnaires were distributed in the stands before the game started. From the 460 questionnaires distributed, 413 were returned for a response rate of 89.8%. Of these, 41 responses were rejected because many items were left blank, yielding a final usable response rate of 80.9% (N = 372). Of the total sample, 67.8% of respondents were male. Age was measured through a categorical variable with grouping; more than one-third of the subjects were in the 30-39 age range (38.9%), 92 respondents (26.1%) were between 40 and 49 years old, and 91 respondents (25.9%) were between 20 and 29 years old.

When the factor model was analyzed, six quality constructs were emerged: (1) facility access, (2) facility space, (3) stadium

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employee, (4) game atmosphere, (5) player performance, and (6) opponent characteristics. As Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranged from .80 to .95, the proposed constructs were internally consistent. Confirmatory factor analysis provided evidence of construct validity for the items, as noted by sufficient factor loadings, ranging from .64 to .91 (Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2005).

After assessing the measurement model of the proposed constructs, we investigated structural equation modeling which indicated the proposed structural model was an acceptable fit (chi-square[*df*] = 1469.49 [717],  $p < .01$ ; the comparative fit index [CFI] = .98; the nonnormed fit index [NNFI] = .98; the adjusted goodness of fit index [AGFI] = .76; the root-mean-square error of approximation [RMSEA] = .06). An examination of the relationships between the theorized constructs revealed that facility access and stadium employee had statistically significant effects on service satisfaction (facility access,  $\beta = .38$ ,  $p < .01$ ; stadium employee,  $\beta = .35$ ,  $p < .01$ ) whereas game atmosphere and player performance were the major predictors of game satisfaction (game atmosphere,  $\beta = .63$ ,  $p < .01$ ; player performance,  $\beta = .22$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Furthermore, research evidence found that both service and game satisfaction had statistically significant effects on the spectator's behavioral intentions (service satisfaction,  $\beta = .22$ ,  $p < .01$ ; game satisfaction,  $\beta = .53$ ,  $p < .01$ ), and explained 41 % of the variance in behavioral intentions. Based on the differential effects of service and core product quality on satisfaction and behavioral intentions, implications were drawn, concerning the drivers of customer satisfaction and loyalty.