

Five Senses! How do they Affect Spectators' Stadium Experience and Intention to Revisit.

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Title: Five Senses! How do they Affect Spectators' Stadium Experience and Intention to Revisit. The importance of the experience economy has been widely recognized in consumer behavior (Pine & Gilmore, 1999). Recently, a number of consumer behavior studies have paid close attention to consumers' experience via their five senses: sight, sound, touch, smell and taste (Gobe, 2001; Lindstrom, 2005; Rein, Kotler, & Shields, 2006; Schmitt, 1999). According to Gobe (2001), in a competitive marketing environment consumer satisfaction is the most important predictor of customer retention. Consumers experience products and brands via five senses, and they are widely known to have an effect on consumer satisfaction. This is why the world's most successful companies differentiate their products and brands by utilizing the five senses to gain competitive advantage (Lindstrom, 2005).

In the professional sport industry, a stadium is an important venue in which sport consumers directly consume and experience sports. However, in spectator sports, little attention has focused on the role of the five senses in the creation of stadium satisfaction and subsequent intention to revisit. A few studies have focused primarily on the effect of physical condition of stadiums on future intention to comeback (Wakefield & Blodgett, 1994; Wakefield, Blodgett, & Sloan, 1996; Wakefield & Sloan, 1995). Thus, more comprehensive research of the stadium experience, particularly through the five senses, is required. Similarly, sport research has neglected to examine the effect of the five senses on sport consumers' sport satisfaction. This study examines the impact of sensory experience (measured via five senses) on satisfaction with the stadium experience and satisfaction's effect on intention to revisit the stadium. The study was conducted in two stages: the identification of sensory experience items and examination of the relationship between stadium satisfaction and intention to revisit. Based on a literature review (Gaffney & Bale, 2004; Gladden & Funk, 2002; Hocking, 1982; Holt, 1995; Wakefield, Blodgett, & Sloan, 1966; Wakefield & Sloan, 1995; Westerbeek & Shilbury, 1999), the experience via sight sense was determined to be composed of a stadium's architecture, color, landscape, sightlines, scoreboard, and decorations. Aural experiences consist of noise of spectators, cheering, sound system, organ music, and announcer. The experience via sense of touch includes psychological touch, physical contact with other spectators, spatial arrangement of the aisles and seats, and comfortable seating. The olfactory experience contains a stadium's smell, crowd smells, food smells, and tailgate party smells. The experience via taste is composed of a wide range of food and beverage choices, good tasting food, and psychological taste. The sight dimension consists of six items, sound consists of five items, touch consists of four items, smell consists of five items, and taste consists of four items. Since the sound and touch dimensions are associated with both the physical (i.e., facility and equipment) and human (i.e., other spectators) elements each was further categorized into sub-dimensions.

The data were collected via online survey from 20 MLB fan forums. Two hundred and sixty three baseball fans around the United States participated in the survey. Males contributed 80% of the completed surveys. A 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree) was used for the survey. Because items were selected to represent the five senses, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was used to confirm the expected relationships between indicators that were selected from the literature and their corresponding dimensions. Confirmatory factor analysis revealed a moderate fit to the data (CFI=0.842, RMSEA=.093, SRMR = .073). A competing model emerged from examination of the modification indexes and the matrix of standardized residuals. The revised model revealed a significantly better fit than the original model (Chi-square diff=227, df=7, p <.001; CFI=.906, RMSEA=.072, SRMR=0.058). The revised model freed the following errors to correlate: stadium architecture and landscape, stadium's unique smell and its association with past memories, physical contact with other spectators and the smell of other spectators, sound from the crowds (human element of sound) and the psychological touch (i.e., tightly packed crowd), sound from stadium facilities and scoreboard entertainment, and sound from the crowds and physical and psychological touch. Correlated error terms suggest shared, unspecified variance. For example, some aspect of stadium architecture and the surrounding landscape has not been captured by either measure. Further, that aspect is related to both architecture and landscape. Examination of the correlated error terms indicates logical relationships among the specific errors that were allowed to correlate. The relationship between sensory experience and satisfaction with the stadium experience, and between satisfaction with the stadium experience and intent to revisit is the focus of Stage 2 of the study for which data are currently being collected. Self-administered questionnaires are being distributed to patrons of 3 stadiums. The questionnaire will include items developed and confirmed in Stage 1 measuring the sensory experience. Stadium satisfaction is measured on a Likert scale using three items defined by Oliver (1980). Intention to revisit is measured by a single item: in the future, how likely are you to return to the

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stadium for other games? (Cronin & Taylor, 1992). All items are modified to fit the stadium context. Hierarchical regression will be utilized to examine the relationships among sensory experience, stadium satisfaction, and intention to revisit.

The aim of the study is to provide preliminary insight into creating positive stadium experience using the five senses surrounding spectators. Stage 1 of the study revealed that the five senses certainly exist within the stadium environment, but they are to a certain degree inter-correlated. It was also confirmed that aural and tactile experiences have both a structural and human element. Nearly all the senses are engaged in the stadium and combine with knowledge to form experience. The stadium is a unique container of collective emotion and energy which produces experiences that are as varied and complex as the individuals who periodically visit the stadium (Faffney & Bale, 2000). With the completion of Stage 2 (December 31st, 2008), the study will identify the ways in which spectators' sensory experiences impact their satisfaction with the stadium and their intention to revisit. It will reveal whether the five dimensions can be used either in aggregate or independently to affect spectator satisfaction and intentions to revisit. Furthermore, the 2 identified sub-dimensions (i.e., structural and human) can provide sport franchises with more in-depth marketing and promotional strategies to enhance spectators' stadium experience.