

The Effects of Prior Experiences on the Perception of Live Sensory Stimuli

Kyu-soo Chung, University of Texas at Austin

Dong Soo Ryu, Korea University, Seoul

B. Christine Green (Advisor), University of Texas at Austin

Geumchan Hwang, University of Minnesota

Randall Griffiths, University of the Incarnate Word

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A live experience differs significantly from one captured on video or audio. This difference matters, especially for sporting events. Live experience has become a distinct economic offering (Pine & Gilmore, 1998, 1999). Like goods and services, experiences are now designed to meet customers' needs and be deliverable to them. The experience economy is thus more about engaging event attendees beyond the present moment than merely entertaining them. Live sport events offer particularly vivid experiences for consumption. Sport event attendees are more likely to enjoy the sensuality of a lively staged sport by immersing themselves in it. In this experiential marketing, engaging all the senses is crucial to enhancing attendees' emotions and event satisfaction (Lee, Lee, Seo, & Green, in press; Pine & Gilmore, 1998, 1999; Schmitt, 1999). However, as the sensuality of an event experience begins to fade out, the challenge for sport event marketers is to find ways to expand those experiences to encourage repeat attendance. Yet, one question remains unanswered: How does previous live experience of an event affect the in-the-moment sensory experiences of sport event attendees? This would be more compelling for motor sport promoters who market visceral stimuli seldom experienced at other events and position the game held annually.

Sport venues such as stadia, arenas, or racing circuits are the physical places in which event attendees are widely exposed to a variety of sensory stimuli. The stimuli emanate from the sport events themselves as well as facility-driven services. Event attendees perceive such stimuli through their five senses and react to them. Motor sport is a prime context to experience this effect. For example, the eye takes in speeding cars, the ear takes in blaring engines and squealing tires, and the nose takes in the smell of burning gas and oil – examples of sport driven stimuli (Chung, Ji, & Kim, 2005). Additionally, spectators' enjoyment is enhanced by good food and comfortable seating – examples of facility driven stimuli (cf. Lee et al., in press; Yoshida & James, 2010).

In such a situation where consumers seek more an experience than they do functional features and benefits such as sport events, sensory experience may influence emotion, cognition, and behavior around consumption (Hirschman, 1984; Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982; Schmitt, 1999). Based on the Stimulus-Organism-Response model (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974), arousal was found to be a valid structure of affective reactions to the great amount of sensory stimuli at a motor sport event (Caro & García, 2007; Pine & Gilmore, 1998, 1999). Then arousal can shape cognition as a crucial factor. Satisfaction is traditionally considered a cognitive state resulting from a consumer's subjective experience and a prior base of reference (Oliver, 1980), suggesting that one indicator of sport spectators' cognition would be the satisfaction of event experience (Yoshida & James, 2010). In the sport marketing literature, intentions to attend future sport events are frequently employed to explain one's behavior outcomes (e.g., Shonk & Chelladurai, 2008; Wakefield & Blodgett, 1999; Yoshida & James, 2010). That is, the perception of five sensory stimuli at a motor sport event sequentially moves from arousal through satisfaction to revisit intentions (Compeau, Grewal, & Monroe, 1998).

Prior affect refers to the general feeling that is stored in memory. This general feeling is a result of encoding that occurred during the original sensory experience. Compeau et al. (1998) have found that in-the-moment experience is substantially influenced by the general feelings originally encoded in memory. Thus, the purpose of this study is to determine whether previous experience of the event affects current evaluations of the sensory experience. Specifically, the study will determine whether spectators with previous experience of an F1 race differ in their evaluation of the current sensory experience as measured by their perceptions of the visual, aural, olfactory, gustatory, and tactile stimuli at the race.

The data were collected from the circuit stand at the 2012 F1 Korean Grand Prix (October 13-14). While visual, aural, and olfactory stimuli examined the perception of on-going racing stimuli, gustatory and tactile stimuli were assessed

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by those who were part of an ancillary service at the event (cf. Chung et al., 2005; Lee et al., in press). The experience via visual stimuli was composed of the racing car's design and speed and pit crews' cooperative movement (three items). Aural stimuli consisted of spectator noise, event announcements, and the blasting of engine sounds (three items). The olfactory experience included track's asphalt, burning oil, and burning tire (three items). The experience via the sense of touch contained comfortable seating, spatial arrangement of the aisles and seats, and physical contact with other spectators (three items). Finally, the experience via taste was composed of variety of food and beverage choices, taste quality, and psychological taste (three items). Three items of arousal were adopted from Bradley and Lang (1994) and three items of event satisfaction were assessed from Madrigal (1995) and Oliver (2010). The survey also asked the attendees three items of their revisit intention and of prior affect at the event, if any. A seven-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (not at all) to 7 (very much) was used for all items. From a question asking about prior visits to the event, continuing attendees could be distinguished from newcomers at the event.

The final sample consisted of 463 spectators. Of the sample, the spectators who had previously attended some sort of motor sport were 36.5% (n = 169). Prior F1 Korean races were the most cited event (n = 71 for 2010 event; n = 103 for 2011 event). Those of who had never attended a race before were 63.5% (n = 294). The sample consisted mostly of males (n = 278, 60.0%), bachelor degree holders (n = 275, 59.4%), and their mean age was 37 years old (median = 35). In preliminary analysis, there was a significant difference between continuing attendees and newcomers on visual (t = 2.41, p = .02) and aural (t = 2.63, p = .01) stimuli. No significant differences were found at olfactory, gustatory, and tactile stimuli. Arousal, satisfaction, and revisit intention were found to differ significantly according to prior experience (t = 2.82, p = .01; t = 2.98, p = .01; t = 6.74, p < .001 respectively). In further analysis, Structural Equation Modeling will be employed to test several causal and mediated relationships among the five sensory stimuli, arousal, satisfaction, prior affect, and revisit intention.

Live sport events assault the senses of event attendees. Although it is a formidable task for sport marketers to create, manipulate, or remove live stimuli, this study will provide further insight into where they can still manage, not the event per se, but spectators' experience. This could be done by staging theatrical components to create unforgettable memories at the racing circuit.