

**Color Commentary in International Sport Competitions: Analyzing the Effects on Audience Perception and Satisfaction**

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In the 2002 FIFA World Cup, conflict between Korea and Italy emerged due to the soccer match between the two countries. The nationalistic hostility on Korea's part even extended to a boycott of Italy's products. This type of phenomena can be found across the globe. Perceptions of biased media coverage were considered one of the main culprits for evoking such nationalism (Ha, 2004). While some argue that sportscasters should be neutral and objective, following their journalistic duties (Licen & Topi 2008), others note that biased commentary plays a positive role in terms of attracting and inspiring viewers thus providing a higher level of enjoyment (Desmarais & Bruce, 2009). Ongoing debate exists as to whether nationalistic color commentary should be abandoned or whether it satisfies some viewers' needs.

According to Sullivan (1991), commentary had a strong impact on audience perception and enjoyment as it helps audiences interpret situations. Previous studies have also proved how sports commentary changes the situation of viewer responses to mediated sports (Beentjes, Van Oordt, & Van Der Voort, 2002; Bryant, Brown, Comisky, & Zillmann, 1982; Comisky, Bryant, & Zillmann, 1977; Sullivan, 1991). According to disposition theory (Zillmann, Cantor & Joanne, 1996), disposition tendency has an effect on audience enjoyment. Drawing from the disposition theory of 'sports fandom', Owens and Bryant (1998) found that home-biased commentary resulted in a greater level of excitement and enjoyment for the home fans as compared to the visiting fans. In addition, Lee and Yeo (2011) also found the home announcer and color commentator help audiences enjoy the sports contests.

Although previous studies have investigated viewers' responses to commentary in sport, many of them focused on measuring only the perceived impression of the game itself and thus important factors such as viewers' perceptions of the team and viewers' satisfaction levels have been neglected to date. The current study attempts to address these issues. Further, this study extends previous work in this area by assessing the influence of color commentary on audiences' patriotism, social integration, nationalism, counter-team image, hostility, product purchasing behavior, and audience satisfaction.

A quasi experiment involving 82 subjects was conducted to test the study's hypotheses. The current study utilized a pre-post experimental design, in which the study participants were randomly divided into two groups. Each group was exposed to one of two versions of a video (an objective commentary version and a color commentary version). After viewing the video clip taken from the 2011 Asian Cup of a soccer match between South Korea and Japan, the subjects were asked to complete a survey instrument. After the post-test measures, the participants were asked to complete another questionnaire regarding their satisfaction of the video clip. All the scaled measures reached a satisfactory reliability level with Cronbach's  $\alpha$  ranging from .74 (Re-viewing Intention) to .92 (Nationalism).

To test the effects of color commentary, a 2 (manipulated video: neutral and home team biased commentary) 2 (time) repeated measures of ANOVA was utilized on six dependent variables. Consistent with expectations as noted in the study's hypotheses, color commentary (biased toward Korea) was significantly more effective in increasing perceived patriotism toward South Korea compared to objective commentary:  $M_{pretest} = 4.86$ ,  $M_{posttest} = 5.35$  versus  $M_{pretest} = 4.69$ ,  $M_{posttest} = 4.62$ ,  $F(1, 80) = 11.579$ ,  $p < .01$ . Moreover, objective commentary had more positive effect on perceived Japanese' team images compared to the color commentary (biased toward Korea):  $M_{pretest} = 2.78$ ,  $M_{posttest} = 3.50$  versus  $M_{pretest} = 2.86$ ,  $M_{posttest} = 2.73$ ,  $F(1, 80) = 11.865$ ,  $p < .001$ . However, no significant interaction effect was found on social integration and nationalism related to the home country and hostility and purchase intentions related to Japan. Lastly, to test the audience's satisfaction and reviewing intentions,

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a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted. A univariate analysis of variance on each of the four dimensions of audience satisfaction indicated no significant main effects for information and knowledge, enjoyment and entertainment, and satisfaction with the commentary. However, the participants in the color commentary version condition were more likely to watch similar types of mediated soccer matches again than the participants in the objective version condition. Commentary had a significant main effect on reviewing intention:  $M = 4.27$  versus  $M = 3.66$ ,  $F(1, 80) = 6.113$ ,  $p < .05$ . The main effects accounted for 7% ( $\eta^2 = 0.7$ ) of the variance.

The results showed that color commentary positively influenced perceived patriotism, the other team's image as well as audience reviewing intention. The findings imply that color commentary that is biased for the home team helps to develop a home audience's identification with its country and that it helps a home audience to more fully enjoy sport events. Therefore, these results advance the findings of previous research which examined the cognitive responses of consumers to biased commentary in televised sports. Moreover, this research shed light on viewer perceptions of their country beyond just the team, which is an area that has not been studied much thus far. Moreover, it should be noted that commentary has a significant impact not only on the home team image but also on the other team's image. The results of this study will be helpful to those who set the appropriate roles of a sports commentator in terms of their journalist duties in mediated sports. Furthermore, the results provide information to broadcasting networks about the roles of sports commentators and the changing expectations that audiences have for this class of broadcaster. In the application of these findings to the sport industry in general and sport management in particular, the findings of this study both advance the body of knowledge in this area (e.g., application of disposition theory; application of analysis to nationalism, enjoyment, etc.) and can assist sport managers. For instance, the study noted that the home team biased commentary may have a positive impact on fans' identification with their team. Thus, as similar to the work of Lee and Yeo (2011) in analyzing how commentary may assist audiences in enjoying their sporting events even more, the findings of this study can assist sport managers by better informing them of audience expectations of broadcaster conduct and broadcast content. Rather than relying solely on traditional journalistic mores in hiring broadcasters and crafting coverage, these results illuminate a possible alternate approach which may resonate more fully with audiences, possibly leading to greater levels of fan identification and sponsor support.

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