The 2014 FIFA World Cup: Examining Service Quality and Value Perceptions among Attendees at Rio De Janeiro

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Introduction
Hosting mega sport events has become very competitive and a complex undertaking (Shoval, 2002), and serious investments have been made by clubs and governments in sport facilities worldwide over the past decades to host mega sport events. For example, about $4.9 billion were invested in building and/or improving quality of soccer stadiums over the past two decades (Deloitte, 2012). More recently, Brazil invested approximately $11.3 billion in infrastructure to host the 2014 FIFA World (Reuters, 2014). Despite the high financial costs for the host, the governments often make strong claims about the social impacts derived from mega sport events (Heere, Walker, Gibson, Thapa, Geldenhuys, & Coetzee, 2013). Additionally, previous studies suggest that a high standard of service quality at the events is a critical issue for hosts (Ko, Zhang, Cattani, & Pastore, 2011) due to its impact on value creation for consumers (Yoshida, James, & Cronin, 2013). While service quality is related to a consumer attitude or global judgment of the superiority of a service (Zeithaml & Bitner, 2003), the concept of value refers to his/her assessment of the utility of a product or service based on perceptions of what is received and what is given (Zeithaml, 1988). Notwithstanding, the recent 2014 FIFA World Cup in Brazil has raised the question of whether the host population actually perceives the value of major sport events to the community (BBC, 2014). Several protests before and during the World Cup focused on aspects such as the cost of the stadiums, and whether there truly was added value to the Brazilian population by hosting this major sport event (The Guardian, 2014). Thus, the purpose of the current study is to examine the role of service quality on consumers’ perception of the value of the 2014 FIFA World Cup.

Method
Six surveyors and a supervisor collected data from spectators attending live games of the 2014 FIFA World Cup at the stadium located in the city of Rio de Janeiro. Data were collected during the seven games played in Rio de Janeiro and the methods for data collection were the same for each game. Each surveyor was assigned to a specific area surrounding of the stadium, approaching the potential respondents, explaining the project, and asking for their participation. Only native Brazilians and individuals with a visible domain of the Portuguese language were selected. A total of 701 surveys were collected and, after data screening, 535 complete responses were deemed usable for data analysis. The scale proposed by Biscaia, Correia, Yoshida, Rosado, and Marôco (2013) was adapted to assess service, and included 21 items to assess the constructs of Teams, Referees, Frontline Employees, Accessibilities, Crowd Experience and Atmosphere. The value measure included three items, and was derived from Yoshida et al. (2013) to assess the Utilitarian Value of a sport event for consumers. All items were measured on a 7-point Likert-type scale (1=Strongly Disagree, to 7=Strongly Agree). Data were submitted to a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to examine the measurement model using AMOS 21.0, and structural model estimation was performed to test the relationships among the constructs.

Results
The results of the CFA for the measurement model showed that the factor loadings of five items from the service quality scale failed to exceed the cut-off point of .50 (Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2009), and as such, were eliminated. After these scale refinement procedures, the measurement model indicated an acceptable fit to the data \( \chi^2 (131) = 287.56 \ (p<.01), \chi^2/df=2.20, \text{CFI}=.96, \text{GFI}=.95, \text{TLI}=.95, \text{RMSEA}=.05 \). Composite reliability values for all constructs were above the cut-off point of .60 (Baggozi & Yi, 1988), while AVE values were close to or greater
than .50, providing evidence of convergent validity. Also, evidence of discriminant validity was accepted given that the AVE value for each construct was greater than the squared correlations between that construct and any other (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Subsequently, the overall assessment of the structural model also indicated an acceptable fit to the data \(\chi^2(131)=287.56\) (p<.01), \(\chi^2/df=2.20\), CFI=.96, GFI=.95, TLI=.95, RMSEA=.05. The analysis of the path coefficients indicates that Teams \((\beta=.22,\ p<.05)\) and Atmosphere \((\beta=.55,\ p<.01)\) have a significant positive effect on spectators’ perception of Utilitarian Value. Crowd Experience \((\beta=-.45,\ p<.01)\) showed a significant negative effect on Utilitarian Value, while the path coefficients for Referees, Frontline Employees, and Accessibilities were not significant in predicting Utilitarian Value (p>.05). The ability of the hypothesized model to explain variation in the outcome variable was assessed by R2 values. All together, service quality dimensions accounted for approximately 31% of the variance in Utilitarian Value (R2=.31).

**Discussion and Implications**

Understanding the aspects leading to consumers’ perceptions of utilitarian value is paramount to establish a link between the hosts and their target consumers, as well as to better planning future events. The findings of this study are consistent with the idea that sport consumers’ value perceptions are complex in relation to the utilitarian aspects of sport consumption and can be derived from core sport products and ancillary services (Funk & James, 2011). The positive predictive effect of Teams suggests that superior quality in the core product can produce high levels of utilitarian value. Thus, although the on-field performance is not under the control of the event managers, coordination of national professional leagues (e.g. MLS) with the institutions that are responsible for international competitions between national teams (e.g., FIFA), seems to be vital so players arrive to major events in good shape and ensuring spectators experience good performances of the teams. Complementarily, Atmosphere and Crowd Experience showed a predictive effect on Utilitarian Value suggesting that event managers should be vigilant in managing aesthetic aspects (Yoshida et al., 2013). Atmosphere was the strongest positive predictor of Utilitarian Value, suggesting that event managers should create a memorable atmosphere inside and around the stadium. For example, displaying the lyrics of familiar songs on mega-screens, offering memorabilia, designing interactive experiences to the spectators (Biscaia et al., 2013), adding decorations such as pictures of the players or important slogans (Yoshida et al., 2013), and creating fan zones outside the stadium with multiple activities before and after the games may be important to improve the perception of the atmosphere surrounding the event. On the contrary, Crowd Experience revealed a negative effect on Utilitarian Value. Crowd experience is related with energy and noise of the supporters (Biscaia et al., 2013), and some violent episodes have been reported over the years leading to a decreased sense of security (Frosdick & Marsh, 2005). In this sense, event managers should reinforce the security measures for entering the stadiums and have a role in controlling fan activities inside the stadium (e.g. singing and engaging in ritualized behaviors) in order to improve perceptions of crowd behavior and increase the consumption value. These findings should be considered by hosts when planning major sport events, and provide numerous opportunities to continue advancing our knowledge of how to manage service quality and improve the value of the sport consumption experiences for spectators.