The Effect of Personality Traits on Spectator Rating of Service Quality and Satisfaction

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Sports are regarded as a favorite leisure activity, whether people participate or attend games as a spectator (Snipes & Ingram, 2007). One of the largest industries in the United States is spectator sports, with spectator spending reaching almost $26 billion (Howard & Crompton, 2003). Researchers have studied various factors in order to better understand why spectators attend sporting events (e.g., Chen & Rylander, 2008), and have found that spectators’ future behavior such as revisiting has been greatly influenced by spectator satisfaction (Yoshida & James, 2010). Satisfaction with service quality and core product quality has been found to have a significant influence on consumer behavior (Yoshida & James, 2010; Wakefield & Blodgett, 1996). Consequently, it is important for sports organizations and sports marketers to provide good service quality to positively impact spectator satisfaction.

Another perspective to consider regarding satisfaction is the impact of personality traits on perceptions of a service experience, like attending a sporting event. Psychology scholars have studied personality traits to better understand people and to anticipate people’s behaviors (Anand, 1977; Barrick & Mount, 1991). John (2003) reported that the satisfaction with perceived service quality varied by customer’s personality traits. In a sport context, Donavan, Carlson and Zimmerman (2005) stated that assessing individual personality traits can be utilized by sports teams and sport managers to influence attendance rate.

Even though the prospective impact of personality traits on consumer behavior has been acknowledged, researchers have yet to examine whether there is a difference in perceptions of service quality and satisfaction across different personality traits. Building from the information about individual differences, this study included a measure of spectators’ personality traits in order to assess whether there are differences in ratings of overall service quality and satisfaction based on personality trait. The main purpose of this study was to examine whether spectators’ personality traits influence perceptions of service quality, core product quality and satisfaction.

A questionnaire was completed by consumers attending two college football games at a southeastern university in the United States (n = 352). Four personality traits - Dominance, Influence, Steadiness, and Conscientiousness – were assessed using the DiSC Personality Profile System (DiSC PPS) profiling system (Reynierse, Ackerman, Fink & Harker, 2000). Accordingly, spectators were divided into four groups based on personality traits: ‘Dominance’ (n = 80), ‘Influence’ (n = 111), ‘Steadiness’ (n = 83), and ‘Conscientiousness’ (n = 78). Fifty-one percent of the total sample were male, and the majority of participants were Caucasian (78.4%). Two dimensions of service quality were measured utilizing the scale developed by Yoshida and James (2010). Satisfaction was measured with the scale developed by Brady, Voorhees, Cronin and Bourdeau (2006). Multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was used to test for differences in ratings of service quality, core product quality, and satisfaction.

Pillai’s Trace was used for the current study to test the null hypothesis of mean score equality for the three constructs among the four personality traits. Based on the results from Pillai’s Trace, the null hypothesis was rejected (F = 7.21, p < .001, η² = .059). A univariate statistical test was performed since the multivariate tests showed significant results. As a result, it was concluded that all of the null hypotheses were rejected at the .05 alpha level: service quality F (3, 352) = 8.28, p = .000, η² = .067; core product quality F (3, 352) = 9.33, p = .000, η² = .074; and satisfaction F (3, 352) = 14.38, p = .000, η² = .110. Based on the partial eta squared value for the service quality dependent variable, 6.7% of the variance in service quality was explained by the personality traits. The partial eta squared value for the core product quality dependent variable indicated that 7.4% of the variance was explained by the personality traits, and 11.0% of the variance in satisfaction was explained by the personality traits.

A post hoc test, Tukey’s honestly significant difference (HSD), was conducted to identify which personality trait was responsible for the significant differences in the perception of service quality, core product quality and satisfaction.
Those with Dominance as a primary personality trait had significantly lower ratings of service quality and core product quality compared to Influence and Steadiness, while there was no significant difference between those characterized by Influence and Steadiness on the ratings of satisfaction. Moreover, those characterized by Steadiness as a primary personality trait had significantly higher ratings of service quality and core product quality compared to Dominance and Conscientiousness. No significant difference was found between Steadiness and Dominance in the ratings of satisfaction. Lastly, those with Influence as a dominant personality trait had higher ratings of service quality and satisfaction compared to Conscientiousness, while no significant difference of core product was detected between them. Also, no significant difference was found between Influence and Dominance in the satisfaction. The findings indicated there were significant differences in the perceptions of service quality, core product quality, and satisfaction based on personality trait.

Using this type of information, sports marketers can promote and market to spectators differently based on the personality traits. In addition, if the sports marketers and organizations consider the different perceptions and different perceptions of satisfaction based on personality traits, they are able to improve the spectator experience.