Co-Creation of Value in Sport Ticket Sales: An Examination of Subscription-Based Ticket Services

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Marketing - Sales (Professional Sport) virtual asynchronous
20-minute oral presentation (including questions) Session: Ticketing
Abstract 2020-152

In an effort to join the subscription economy, sport organizations have begun offering subscription-based ticket (SBT) plans. SBT plans are designed so that the buyer pays a monthly fee for access to a team’s home games. Often, these plans do not include predetermined seat locations, and the buyer works with a service representative or mobile application to secure their seats on game day. More than two-thirds of Major League Baseball (MLB) teams offered a SBT service in 2018 with more than one million tickets sold via this platform (Lombardo, 2019). SBT services are growing throughout professional and collegiate sport. For example, Oregon State University Athletics launched a SBT service that provides tickets to eight different sports for a monthly payment of $24.99. Early evidence suggests these services do appeal to sport spectators (Thron, 2016; Bauernfeind, 2017; Sanborn, 2018).

The purpose of this study is to examine the differences between SBT services and traditional season ticket plans across a series of critical marketing variables. In particular, this study examines season ticket services from the perspective of their ability to deliver positive consumer outcomes via value co-creation. The importance of value co-creation emerged as part of a larger move in marketing theory toward a customer focused, service-dominant logic (Vargo & Lusch, 2008). Co-creation of value yields positive consumer outcomes such as enhanced service satisfaction (Prebensen, et al., 2016), increased consumer loyalty (Stokburger-Sauer, et al., 2016), increased consumer engagement, and enhanced quality of life (Neal et al., 2007).

This study will utilize a survey research protocol in partnership with a MLB team that implemented a SBT service in 2019. Surveys will be emailed to the team’s season ticket holder database by the CRM system administrator. In accordance with Mathis, et al’s (2016) study of value co-creation in the tourism sector, respondents will be asked to rate their level of agreement with respect to their ticket plan’s ability to deliver satisfaction in the co-creation of value (Vargo, et al., 2009), satisfaction in enhancing quality of life (Neal, et al., 2007), overall satisfaction in being a season ticket holder (Beccarini & Ferrand, 2007), engagement with the team (Yoshida, et al., 2014), and spectator social identification with the team (Wann & Branscombe, 1993).

The primary research question will be addressed using a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA). Respondents will be grouped based on the type of season ticket service they have purchased (full season, partial season, or ticket subscription). Then, differences on this independent grouping variable will be assessed across the five dependent variables measured by the survey instruments. Data is scheduled to be collected at the beginning of 2020, and data analysis will proceed by first analyzing the omnibus, multivariate F value (Wilk's lambda) then univariate F tests as appropriate. Results of this study will advance the understanding of co-creation of value, and its primary outcomes, in sport ticket marketing and sales. Additionally, this study will provide initial evidence as to the success of the recent innovation of SBT services.