Shared Joy is Doubled Joy? Does Stadium Atmosphere Influence the Emotional Experience of Media Consumers and the Attractiveness of Sport Broadcasts?

Anton Behrens, German Sport University Cologne
Sebastian Uhrich, German Sport University Cologne

Marketing - Consumer Behavior (Professional Sport)  
virtual asynchronous
20-minute oral presentation (including questions)  
Session: Consumer Behavior/Emotion I

Abstract 2020-185

Professional sport leagues and teams from the US and Europe increasingly focus on lucrative markets abroad and, hence, it is important to investigate the factors that positively influence the attractiveness of media products from the perspective of foreign sports media consumers. This research sets out to examine the role of media-transferred stadium atmosphere on the perceived attractiveness of foreign team sport content. Based on a review of the literature and two initial exploratory surveys of satellite fans in Japan (N=26) and Germany (N=52), we propose that especially spectator-induced atmospheric stimuli contribute to the attractiveness of international team sport broadcasts and that this effect is mediated through an emotional contagion process (Biscaia, Correira, Rosado, Maroco & Ross, 2012; Hatfield, Cacioppo, & Rapson, 1992). Thus, in addition to on-pitch success and star players, the on-site engagement of sport teams’ domestic supporters appears to be a driver of satellite fans’ interest in specific teams or leagues. But to what extent is the media experience of (foreign) fans influenced by the stadium atmosphere and which specific stimuli are the most important determinants in the emotional contagion process? The positive effect of stadium atmosphere on the emotional arousal of fans at the venue is well investigated (e.g. Hocking, 1982; Jutte & van der Wal, 2018; Thonhauser & Wetzels, 2019; Uhrich & Benkenstein, 2010.) Uhrich and Benkenstein (2010) define four main components of stadium atmosphere (i.e. organizer-induced, architectural-induced, game-induced and spectator-induced stimuli). Spectator-induced stimuli can be expected to be particularly important drivers of emotional spill-over effects from on-site fans to media consumers (Arakawa, 2012). However, no study has examined the effects of different components of spectator-induced stimuli on other consumers beyond the immediate physical environment. Building on Uhrich and Benkenstein’s (2010) conceptualization of spectator-induced stadium atmosphere, we will conduct an experimental study that tests the effects of the number, the appearance, and the behavior of on-site fans on the self-reflected emotional arousal of TV viewers (Russel, 1989) and the attractiveness of the broadcast (study 1). Self-compiled sequences of Highlights from the UEFA Champions League with variations of the three social components will serve as experimental stimuli. The on-pitch action will be kept identical across all conditions. Moreover, we will control for team identification (Lock & Funk, 2016) and susceptibility for emotional contagion (Doherty, 1997). A second experimental study (study 2) will then investigate the relative effect of spectator-induced atmosphere compared to game-related atmosphere in enhancing both the emotional experience of media consumers and the perceived attractiveness of the broadcast. Overall, this research will provide valuable learnings for managers seeking to improve sport TV experiences or media content in general (e.g. highlight clips or social media content).