

서비스 스케이프와 스포츠 참여도와의 관계 연구

Investigating the Relationship between Servicescape and Sports Attendance

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요약

본 논문은 스포츠 산업은 미국에서 지난 수 십년 동안 계속해서 발전해오고 있으며, 그것은 전문가들에게 있어서 후원자의 수를 증가시키는 주요한 원인이 되고 있다. 이 기회를 스포츠 관련 기관에게 있어서 최고의 이익으로 전환시키기 위하여, 전문가들이 당면한 과제는 스포츠 활동에의 적극적 참여를 유도하는 것과 재방문(지속적 참여) 요소를 홍보하는 것이다. 지금까지 많은 연구들은 스포츠 활동의 참여 정도에 영향을 미치는 변수들을 확인하려고 노력하였다. 하지만 변수들 중 많은 부분은 스포츠의 본질성과 불확실한 장소로부터 파생되는 우연성으로 인하여 다소 통제하기가 힘든 특징을 가지고 있다. 그러므로 경쟁력 확보와 수익의 극대화를 위하여 관리자들이 통제 가능한 요소를 찾아내고 이해하기 위한 노력이 필수적이다. 이 연구는 스포츠 활동의 참여에 영향을 미치는 통제 가능한 많은 변수들이 1992년 이후 환대산업에 널리 쓰여진 '서비스 스케이프'요소와 일치한다는 것을 알아냈다. '서비스 스케이프'의 개념적 모형에 비추어 보았을 때, 이 연구는 스포츠 활동 참여를 증가시킬 수 있는 통제 가능한 변수들을 분리시키는 시도이기도 하다. 스포츠 산업의 개념으로서 '서비스 스케이프'의 적용을 증진시키는 점에서 뿐만 아니라 더 나아가 이 변수들을 증명하고 변수들간의 관계를 측정하고, 그리고 스포츠 참여의 영향력을 평가하는 미래에 있을 실증적 연구에 대한 의견을 제공하는 점에서 이 연구는 중요하다고 할 수 있다.

Abstract

The sport industry has been continuing to grow in the past few decades in the U.S., and it presents significant opportunities for the practitioners to increase the number of patrons. To convert this opportunity to optimum benefits for a sport organization, one of the most significant challenges for the practitioners would be promoting sport attendance and repatronage. So far, many studies have tried to identify variables that affect the level of sports attendance. However, many of these variables are rather uncontrollable due to the nature of the sports and contingencies that are derived from many areas of uncertainties. Thus, to acquire competitive advantage and profit maximization, it would be essential for the managers to focus on understanding controllable elements. This study found that many controllable variables that influence sports attendance coincide with the servicescape elements which have been widely used in the hospitality industry since 1992. In the light of the conceptual framework of servicescape, this study also attempted to isolate the controllable variables that can be utilized to increase the sports attendance. This study presents its significance not only in extending the application of servicescape concept to the sport industry, but also in providing suggestions for future empirical studies that would further identify these variables, gauge the relationship between those variables, and assess its impact on the sports attendance.

Key words : Sport Marketing, Servicescape, Sportscape, and Determinants of Sports Attendance

I. INTRODUCTION

The overall popularity of sports has been enjoying steady growth over the past few decades. The spurt development of sports specific media vehicles such as

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ESPN, The Tennis Channel, The Golf Channel, Gol TV, and Speed channels are the evidence of its growing demand. In parallel, the more than \$16 billion was spent on professional and college stadiums and arenas during the 1990s compared with only \$3 billion spent in the 1970s and 1980s combined (Miller & Washington, 2008). These are clear indications of a thriving demand and popularity of sports. However, it is obvious that the popularity of a certain sport does not necessarily translate to equally high level of attendance all across different individual teams or events.

To the practitioners and managers, this raises an important question of what drives attendance at the sporting events, as well as what discourages them. This is a crucial question to be answered since attracting consumers to sporting events is a major avenue for many sports teams to increase revenue and distinguish themselves from other teams (Yusof & See, 2008). There are diverse variables, from man-made to natural, which can impact on consumers' sports attendance. Nevertheless, it would be more efficient if managers focus on understanding impact of man-made or controllable variables, such as music and seating comfort.

Therefore, the purpose of this study is to explore controllable determinants of sports attendance. To suggest appropriate controllable determinants, servicescape concept by Bitner (1992) was applied in this study. Servicescape is defined as a man-made environment that provides consumers with a spatial layout, aesthetic appeal, and ambient conditions (Bitner, 1992). Servicescape experiences are significant in the hospitality industry because consumers experience service quality not only through their interactions with employees, but also from their impressions of the physical surroundings (Johnson, Mayer, & Champaner, 2004; Wakefield & Blodgett, 1994, 1996; Mattila & Wirtz, 2001; Lucas, 2003). The conceptual framework developed in this study will improve literature related to servicescape and extend an idea for future research.

Further, a better understanding of controllable determinants of sports attendance may provide an edge for sport marketers in the increasingly competitive sport industry.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2-1. Controllable & Uncontrollable Determinants of Sports Attendance

Many studies suggest that sports teams and stadiums are no different from any other products in the market, and therefore, they must be marketed and promoted accordingly (Tomlinson, Buttle, & Moores, 1995). In general, numerous studies present an overarching concept that the attendance at sporting events is influenced by the consumers' perception of the entertainment value of the event and the general atmosphere, interactions and service experienced in the stadium (Tomlinson et al., 1995).

Within the framework of this concept, many studies have attempted to identify and measure the variables that are correlated with the consumers' motivation of attendance at the sporting events as illustrated in Table 1. All of these variables are interrelated and interdependent. These variables are intertwined in complex and sometimes even contradicting ways that it is virtually impossible to single out a variable as a predictor of sports attendance. For example, Borland and Lye (1992) suggested that the unemployment is negatively correlated with attendance since disposable income is likely to decrease with unemployment.

On the contrary, the study of Sandercock and Turner (1981) suggested that the attendance is positively correlated with unemployment. The logic was that to an unemployed person, frustrated and angry as they should be, attending sporting events serves as a means of venting their anger and frustration. Therefore, as much as these research findings enlighten the managers about important elements that influence motivation of

표1. 스포츠 참여동기 관련 선행변수

Table 1. Variables correlated with consumers' motivation of sports attendance

Variable	Supporting Literature
capacity of the stadium	Greenwell, Fink, & Pastore(2002; Yusof & See(2008).
Stadium facilities	Yusof & See(2008)
Weather	Schofield(1983); Hynds & Smith(1994)
Advertising & Promotions	Bruggink & Eaton(1996); Yusof & See(2008)
Team Success	Kahane & Shmanske(1997); Forrest & Simmons(2002)
Degree of uncertainty about the outcome of the game	Madrigal(1995); Gan et al.(2000); Garcia & Rodriguez(2002)
Proximity of the teams in league ranking	Borland & Lye(1992)
Presence of star players	Schofield(1983); Kahn & Sherer(1988)
Real (inflation adjusted) ticket price	Noll(1974)
Unemployment rate	Borland & Lye(1992); Sandercock & Turner(1981)
Television coverage of the game in question or of a different match	Baimbridge et al.(1995,1996); Carmichael et al.(1999); Garcia & Rodriguez(2002)
Timing of the game	Schofield(1983); Baimbridge et al.(1996); Carmichael et al.(1999); Knowles et al.(1992)
Racial composition of the team	Kahn & Sherer(1988); Brown et al.(1991)

consumers' attendance at sporting events, it is crucial to note that some factors present limitations in applicability in the practical settings.

In other words, it would be extremely difficult for the managers to apply what at least seems to be impossible to control. Moreover, some elements within a set of hypothesized predictors can be contradictory among itself. The managers do not have the control over factors such as, weather, income, unemployment, competitiveness of a game, and team's win-loss record. In fact, uncertainty of the outcome of the games or matches is one of the aspects of competitive sports that make sporting events more exciting as an 'unscripted drama' that heightens the level of anticipation. Consequently, it would be more worthwhile and practical for the managers to concentrate on studying and enhancing the variables that are relatively more controllable and consistent in promoting attendance.

2-2. Impact of Servicescape on Sports Attendance

It is obvious that repatronage of the customers are important in increasing the level of attendance at the sporting events, thus providing a continuous stream of revenue. According to Bitner (1992), the repatronage of

the service provider is positively correlated with the levels of customer satisfaction. Therefore, it could be said that the customers' intentions of repatronage is heavily depended on the customers' perception of the service quality rendered because it is this perception that determines the customers' satisfaction level (Wakefield & Blodgett, 1994). In light of this idea, Bitner (1992) developed a concept of "servicescape" to identify the controllable or amendable elements that influence consumers' perception of the quality of services rendered. Bitner (1992) describes servicescape as the "built environment" or, more specifically, the "man-made, physical surroundings as opposed to the natural or social environment" (Wakefield & Blodgett, 1994, p.67). Therefore, Bitner (1992) implies that the term, servicescape, can be used interchangeably with the 'facility itself' because the physical settings of the facility play a pivotal role in influencing customers' intention of repatronizing by effecting the perception of customers' satisfaction with the service experience.

Especially in the leisure service settings, Bitner suggests that "spatial layout and functionality" and "elements related to aesthetic appeal" are two key aspects of the servicescape. These elements are also known as "interior layout and design" (Brauer, 1992). First, spatial layout and functionality refers to the ways in which seats,

aisles, hallways and walkways, food service lines, rest-rooms, and entrances and exits are designed and arranged (Wakefield and Blodgett, 1994). These elements are associated with the comfort level of the customers.

Second, as the term might suggest itself, aesthetic appeal refers to the elements that influence the ambience and customers' perception of the place. Bitner (1992) suggest that the customers will likely to either approach or avoid the place based on their personal assessment on these two factors of the leisure service settings. Apparently, the key elements of the servicescape coincide with the controllable or amendable factors that affect the customers' motivation to attend sporting events.

Many of controllable factors of sporting events are directly associated with the physical settings of the facilities such as stadium design and aesthetics, cleanliness, electronic scoreboards, and comfort of seating, etc. In parallel, the study of Tomlinson et al. (1995) suggested that there are far more important considerations in attending the game than the performance of the team, and the elements that overlap with the servicescape elements, such as cleanliness and design of the stadium were ones of the highest scoring determinants of game attendance. Therefore, in the light of the servicescape as an overarching concept, Wakefield, Blodgett and Sloan (1996) further developed the concept of "sportscape" that discusses the factors that are specifically related to sports stadiums and facilities.

The sportscape ranges from physical environment to ancillary service elements. For example, the sportscape elements can be anything from accessibility to parking, promotional activities before and after the game, concessions, musical selections, amenities, and service experience (Yusof & See, 2008). In other words, the sportscape refers to the fixed elements in a built environment that do not change from game to game. Therefore, concept of servicescape provides crucial, practical, and applicable suggestions to the practitioners and managers about controllable aspects within the physical settings of the facility. It is apparent that the

concept of servicescape has become a foundation of numerous marketing strategies and facility designs in our sports industry today.

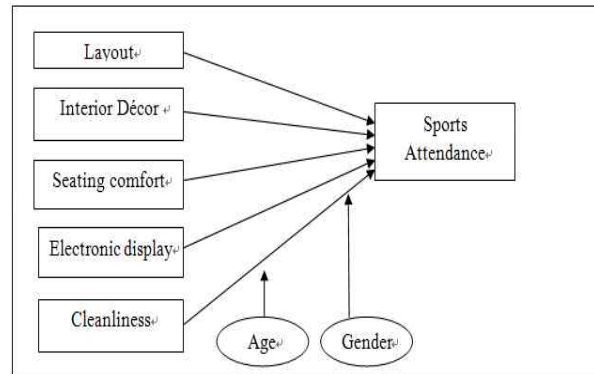


그림 1. 서비스스케이프와 스포츠 참여도와의 관계 모형
 Fig 1. Framework to understand relationship between servicescape and sports attendance

III. Dimensions of Servicescape as Determinants of Sports Attendance

At an attempt to test the validity of the influence of servicescape on the attendance, Wakefield and Blodgett(1996) tested servicescape elements such as; layout accessibility, facility aesthetics, seating comfort, electronic equipment and displays, and cleanliness to confirm its influence on the perception of servicescape quality, thus the customers' intention of repatronage. In the following sections, each of the controllable dimensions that constitute the servicescape for the framework of this study is defined and developed. Propositions based on the framework are highlighted, and practical implications are discussed.

3-1. Layout

In confirmation to Bitner's (1992) suggestions, the research findings implied the consistency in the effect of aforementioned elements on the attendance and repatronage of the customers at the sports facilities. According to the study, an effective layout that provide

easy access to entry and exit, and other ancillary service areas such as restrooms, concessions, and souvenir stands had positive effect on the perceived quality of the servicescape (Wakefield & Blodgett, 1996).

The study of Baker and colleagues (Baker et al., 1988; Kerin et al., 1992) suggest that customers often spend many hours observing the interiors of the facility in leisure settings. Therefore, it is probable that, this serves as the rationale for the aesthetics or the attractiveness of the servicescape being one of the most important determinants of perceived servicescape quality as Wakefield and Blodgett's(1996) research findings suggest.

Proposition 1: Effective layout will produce a positive effect on sports attendance.

3-2. Interior décor

As evident it might be from the numerous clichés regarding the importance of the first impression, aesthetics or attractiveness of the facility is crucial in imprinting a lasting image to the customers. The aesthetics can be achieved in several ways. Effective architectural design, color schemes of throughout the facility, fixtures, ornamental signs, pictures, and banners are some examples of elements that can be utilized to enhance the aesthetics of the facility. For example, the study of Tom et al. (1987) suggest that brightly colored walls, seats, and steps are relatively more attractive than unpainted or dull colored walls, seats, and steps. This is an implication that the managers should always be attentive and savvy with the aspects of aesthetic elements that can be improved in the facility.

Proposition 2: Interior décor will produce a positive effect on sports attendance.

3-3. Seating Comfort

The seating comfort also plays an important role. The attendees of sporting events spend number of hours watching the event in their seats, and it would only make

sense that the level of seat comfort would be positively correlated with the positive perception on the quality of the facility. According to Wakefield and Blodgett(1996), the seating comfort is affected by the physical seat itself as well as by the space between the seats. First, the physical aspect of the seat refers to the design and condition of the seats. The seats can in padded or non-padded, bench seats or seats with backs, or new or old. By using common sense, the practitioners can safely assume that new, padded seats with backs would be provide more comfort to the customers than the old, non-padded bench seats. Second, the seating space is also an important factor because it is associated with crowding. The aspect of seating space refers to not only the space between the seats in a row but the spaces between the rows as well. Barker and Pearce (1990) suggest that the close proximity of the seats may cause both physical and psychological discomfort.

Other studies (Eroglu & Machleit, 1990; Hui & Bateson, 1991) also revealed that inadequate seating room can be displeasing, eliciting the perception of poor quality. In fact, the issue of narrow rows is also closely related to the aspect of layout accessibility. If the rows of the seats are too narrow, it would make it difficult for the customers to walk in-and-out of their seats to go to the restrooms or concessions.

In light of Bitner's (1992) servicescape concept, Wakefield and Blodgett(1994;1996) suggest that the elements that are related to the comfort and crowding are important determinants of the duration of the customers' and perception of the quality of the facility as well as the service. This provides an implication that the higher level of comfort and lower level of crowding would positively affect the customers' satisfaction. The amount of time spent at the facility would be a good indicator of the level of satisfaction of the customers' experience in leisure settings.

Proposition 3: Seating comfort will produce a positive effect on sports attendance.

3-4. Electronic Displays

The electronic equipment and displays are “signs, symbols, artifacts that can be used to enhance the leisure experience” (Wakefield & Blodgett, 1996, p.48). The electronic scoreboards and displays enhance the leisure experience by making the waiting time more pleasurable, creating excitement in between innings or periods, and providing information such as game scores and player information (Wakefield & Blodgett, 1996). It also serves a form of great marketing and entertainment tools.

For example, the electronic scoreboard and displays are often used to show sports trivia quizzes, highlight video clips, instant replays, promotions, and advertising. Because of its versatility and impact on the servicescape and sportscape qualities, all professional sporting facilities are now equipped with state-of-the-art electronic scoreboards and displays. In fact, the usage of electronic scoreboard and displays are even spreading throughout minor leagues, collegiate leagues, and even high school league facilities (Greenwell, Fink, & Pastore, 2002).

Proposition 4: Usage of electronic displays will produce a positive effect on sports attendance.

3-5. Cleanliness

Among all of the servicescape elements, perhaps the cleanliness is the most easily controllable and manageable element in efforts to achieve perception of good quality. The elements such as stadium design, aesthetics, seat comfort, and electronic scoreboards are indeed controllable since they are man-made elements but it has its limitations due to high costs. Many studies (Wakefield et al., 1996) have confirmed that the cleanliness is an important determinant of perceived servicescape quality in leisure service settings such as baseball, football, and casinos.

Therefore, the managers should pay attention not only to keeping the facility clean prior to the event but also monitoring the cleanliness during and after the event to keep good quality of servicescape. For example, the areas

such as restrooms, concourses, floors, carpets, seating areas, concession areas, and gift shop should be kept clean throughout the facility. Although not suggested in the studies, keeping the facility clean can also contribute to reducing liability arising from negligence. If a customer slipped and fell due to spillage or wet conditions of the floor, the managers can potentially face a lawsuit.

As much as the concept of servicescape and sportscape provide insights to the managers on controllable elements that improve attendance, one should note that some limitations do exist. That is, not all fans are motivated to attend by the same factors (Tomlinson, Buttle, & Moores, 1995). Borland and Lye (1992) suggest that different types of fans such as ‘hard core sports fans’ and ‘theatre-goers’ who attend infrequently are motivated to attend the game based on different elements.

Proposition 5: Cleanliness will produce a positive effect on sports attendance.

3-6. Moderating variables: Gender and Age

Wakefield and Blodgett (1996) suggested that the servicescape element of cleanliness might be significantly important for women and for customers with young children. They might be more sensitive to unclean restroom and concession areas more than the ‘hard core sports fans’ that are likely to put more emphasis on the core product or team winnings. Similarly, Westerbeek’s (2002) study on Australian Rules football matches revealed that the older spectators were more concerned with the maintenance and development, attractiveness of the surroundings, and comfort and safety of the stadium.

Therefore, it is apparent that gender and age within the servicescape that influence the customers’ motivation to attend sporting events do not uniformly impact all customers. The practitioners must understand the different needs of different demographics to deploy appropriate marketing strategies to be successful.

Proposition 6: Gender and age will have moderating

effects on the relationship between cleanliness and sports attendance.

IV. IMPLICATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Our conceptual model of servicescape in relation to sports attendance suggests a wide range of research possibilities. Given the scarcity of studies reported in the sport marketing literature on this topic, there lies a tremendous opportunities for theory building and empirical testing, based upon existing theory from both the marketing and environmental psychology literatures.

The propositions developed in this study have significant implications for both academic research and practice. Many previous studies have highlighted the importance of quality servicescape in motivating attendance in the sports settings. In recent years, there has been a trend of sports managers placing emphasis on these elements in designing, building, and renovating the sporting facilities (Greenwell et al., 2002). It is an implication that servicescape plays an important role in influencing consumers' sports attendance behaviors beyond their perception of the core products, sport events.

It will be essential for sport managers to recognize that the majority of sporting facilities have been designed to improve customer comfort and increase customer amenities. The biggest difference in attributes of the old and new sporting facilities is that the new facilities replaced the bench seats and simple scoreboards of the old stadiums with padded chairs with armrest and cup holders, and modern electronic scoreboards (Greenwell et al., 2002). In addition, the designs of stadiums are evolving as well. For example, the Paul Brown stadium, the home of the NFL's Cincinnati Bengals, was designed with increased customer service in mind. The futuristic looking stadium was built with attention to spectator sight lines, wide concourses, and ample restroom facilities (Cameron, 2000). Specifically, the elements that were

emphasized in Paul Brown stadium's design coincide with crucial elements of servicescape: spatial layout and functionality.

The most challenging part of experimentally testing servicescape would be the cost involved in changing servicescape (e.g., layout or interior décor). Alternative option would be using virtual world technology (e.g., Second Life) or social networking site (e.g., Facebook). Virtual worlds are computer-based, three-dimensional simulated environments inhabited by avatars in the form of two or three-dimensional graphical representations of humanoids (or other graphical or text-based avatars) (Kock, 2008).

For example, if a sport marketing company were to increase sports attendance via favorable interior décor, the company can utilize their websites or other computer-based environments to display different interior décors and measure the amount of positive feedback from the consumers, as well as their intention to attend sport events. If in fact particular interior décor do lead to increased intention to attend the sport event, managers could then work with the facilities to improve the use of the interior décor element in an attempt to increase these gains.

Although elements of servicescape alone cannot increase the sports attendance level, neglecting servicescape elements certainly can negatively influence the level of customer satisfaction and their intention of attendance. Cannella (1999) suggests that the poorly designed stadium and lack of stadium amenities is often the cause of low attendance. According to his study with the Tampa Bay Devil Rays baseball team, who recorded bottom in the American League attendance in 1999, their low attendance was a result of the stadium portraying an image of a dirty warehouse to the customers (Cannella, 1999).

While not discussed in this study, ethnicity is suggested to be included in future studies. Previous studies have revealed that different ethnicities are influenced differently by the variables that determine the

level of sports attendance (Zhang, Pease, Hui, & Michaud, 1995; Zhang, Pease, Smith, Lee, Lam, & Jambor, 1997). For example, these studies found that game promotions, amenities, and schedule convenience had impact on ethnic minorities' attendance at professional sport events more significantly, compared to on Whites.

Given the complexity of the relationship between the environment, human cognition, and behavior (Bandura, 1997), a variety of methods will be needed to fully understand the impact of servicescape on sports attendance. Both qualitative (e.g., focus group interview) and quantitative studies (e.g., survey) can be used to further investigate this phenomenon in future research.

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