

Exploring the Relationship between Spectators' Experience with Sportscape Elements and Propensity to Re-Patronize: Evidence from Addis Ababa Stadium, Ethiopia

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to explore the relationship between spectators' experience with sportscape elements and propensity to re-patronize in Addis Ababa stadium, Ethiopia. The survey instrument was administered to 150 spectators' from all seating sections at four different games based on the sportscape model proposed by Wakefield, Blodgett and Sloan (1996) and Theodorakis and Alexandris (2008) SPORTSERV model. Based on descriptive analysis, spectators' appeared to have unpleasant experience with majority of the studied sportscape elements and despite the unfavorable experience; result of the regression analysis depicts none significant relationship with spectators' propensity to re-patronize or attend future games in the stadium.

Keywords: Spectators' Experience, Sportscape Elements, Propensity to Re-Patronize.

1. INTRODUCTION

Servicescape which is the physical environment of the service establishment plays a vital role in influencing consumption experiences. According to Bitner (1992), servicescape plays many roles in service marketing such as: communicating service features and outcomes; facilitating the service delivery and consumption; enhancing the consumer experiences and thereby affecting their behavioral responses. A clear implication here is that the physical setting can aid or hinder the accomplishment of both internal organizational goals and external marketing goals (Arnould, et al, 1998). However, the way the physical setting is created in organizations has barely been tapped as a tangible organizational resource (Becker, 1987; Bitner 1992). According to them, management of the physical setting typically is viewed as tangential in comparison with other organizational variables that can motivate employees, such as pay scales, promotions, benefits, and supervisory relationships. Similarly, on the consumer side, Simpeh et al (2011) believes, variables such as pricing, advertising, added features, and special promotions are given much more attention than the physical setting as ways in which customers can be attracted to and satisfied by a firm's services.

The importance of servicescape is more evident in services which are consumed primarily for hedonic purposes and where customer spends longer time in the facility like watching sport events (Wakefield et al, 1994; Hightower et al, 2002). Currently in Ethiopia, there is an intense competition for the consumer in the sport industry. A number of medias are giving attention to sports streaming today than ever before through television, newspapers, various FM radio stations and the internet targeted to specific sports events, especially football. And the Ethiopian premier league is a major manifestation. The Ethiopian premier league generates huge sums of revenue each year, however, spectators attendance figures reported indicate a decline over the past few years. And the Ethiopian Football Federation has repeatedly stated that their aim is to increase the number of people attending football games. This could not be, however, achieved without deeply analyzing constraints on attendance. Specifically, the role of sportscape elements as a constraint should be explored. Because the sportscape itself may also be key in deciding whether or not an individual considers attending a sports event (Wakefield et al, 1996; Gustafson, 2005). Each stadium aspect that spectator's encounter during a sporting event shapes their overall image and could affect whether or not they choose to attend an event at the facility in the future (Wakefield et al, 1996). A positive experience will often predict future purchase intentions whereas a negative experience may inhibit the likelihood of attending a future event at the facility and portray a negative image of the organization as a whole (Hightower et al, 2002).

In the absence of sufficient research findings in this area, the study is conducted to explore the relationship between spectators' experience with sportscape elements and propensity to re-patronize in Addis Ababa stadium, Ethiopia.

1.1. Research Objectives

- ☞ To explore the relationship between spectators' experience with sportscape elements and propensity to re-patronize.
- ☞ To determine the most significant sportscape element that predicts spectators' propensity to re-patronize.
- ☞ To locate areas of improvement as of sportscape elements are concerned.

1.2. Research Hypotheses

Based on the above research objectives, the following hypotheses was set.

- H1:** Spectators' experience with scoreboard quality has a significant effect on propensity to re-patronize.
- H2:** Spectators' experience with venue aesthetics has a significant effect on propensity to re-patronize.
- H3:** Spectators' experience with space allocation has a significant effect on propensity to re-patronize.
- H4:** Spectators' experience with layout accessibility has a significant effect on propensity to re-patronize.
- H5:** Spectators' experience with seat comfort has a significant effect on propensity to re-patronize.
- H6:** Spectators' experience with venue cleanliness has a significant effect on propensity to re-patronize.
- H7:** Spectators' experience with facility employee services has a significant effect on propensity to re-patronize.
- H8:** Spectators' experience with facilities parking has a significant effect on propensity to re-patronize.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Definition of Sportscape

Wakefield et al (1996) defined sportscape as the physical environment where the core service is being present and consumed by the fans of the team. Sportscapes is defined also by Bitner (1992) as the design of the physical environment and service staff qualities that typify a context which encompasses various service encounters that may lead to a display of approach or avoidance behaviors in an environment.

2.2. Elements of Sportscape

According to (Wakefield & Blodgett, 1994), the sportscape includes the interior and the exterior elements such as environment of stadium, beauty of facilities, quality of scoreboard, rest seats, decoration of stadium, space of stadium, signs inside the stadium and quality of staff. It is generally encompasses aspects of spatial layout, functionality and elements related to the aesthetic appeal of the physical environment. However, the work of Hill and Green (2000), allows for the inclusion of the non-fixed elements in the sportscape model like service quality (food quality and service, cleanliness, ticketing service, services at the stadium in general), stadium security and safety, perceived crowding, and time to get to the stadium.

2.3. Effects of Sportscape Elements on Behavioral Intentions

Yoshida et al, (2010) study revealed a close relationship between sportscape elements and behavioral intentions at both professional baseball games in Japan and college football games in the United States. In addition, they revealed that fans from the United States do have relatively stronger revisit intention regardless of sportscape elements than spectators' in Japan because of their team identification. Donovan et al, (1994) gives evidence that consumers are likely to pay premium price when they have a positive perception regarding the facility. On the contrary, if customers have a negative perception toward the physical environment of the facility, they are not likely to visit it again (Bagozzi et al, 1999). Wakefield et al (1994) applied the servicescape dimension to sports, and their results showed positive relationship between exciting emotions and spectators' perception of stadium quality. Hill and Green (2000) examined the relationship between perceptions of the sportscape, loyalty, and future attendance intention and found that sportscape elements were important in predicting behavioral intentions of spectators' who did not support the home team. They also indicated that the spectators' psychological involvement and loyalty had comparatively more effect on spectators' than sportscape factors.

2.4. Conceptual Framework of the Study

The proposed causal framework in this study posits that spectators' experience with sportscape elements plays an essential role in explaining propensity to re-patronize. The sportscape element is composed of eight constructs as indicated below.

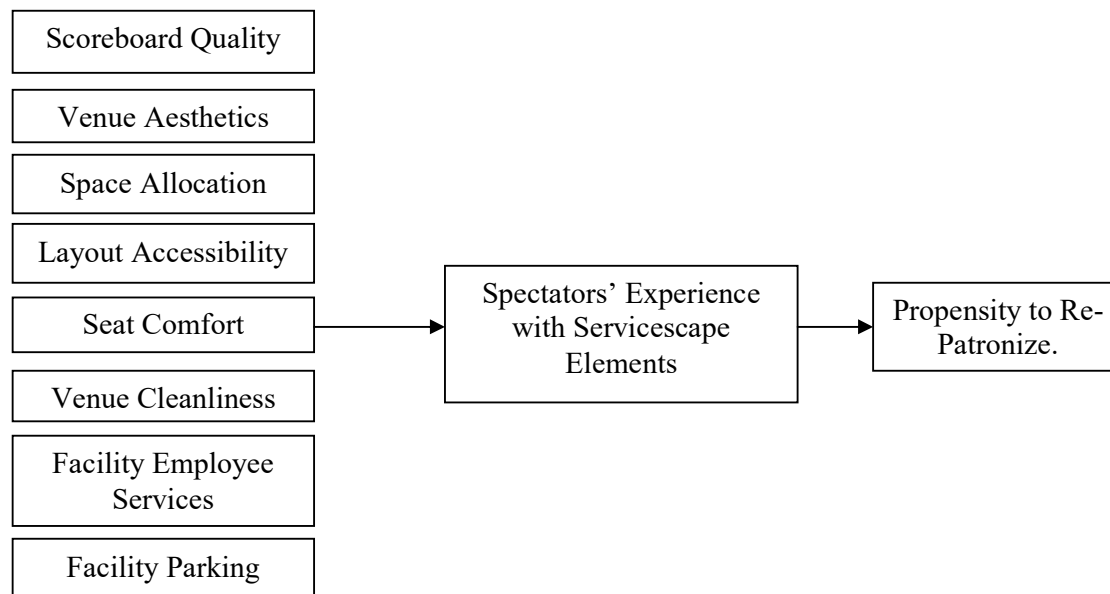


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of the Study

Source: Adapted from Wakefield, Blodgett and Sloan (1996) sportscape model and Theodorakis and Alexandris (2008) SPORTSERV model.

3. MATERIALS AND METHODS

3.1. Study Area

Addis Ababa Stadium, which was constructed in 1940, is a multi-purpose stadium in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia (Bromber, 2006). It is used mostly for football matches although it also has athletics facilities. It hosted several matches during the 1962, 1968 and 1976 African Cup of Nations (Bromber, 2006) and used on club level by a number of teams including Saint George S.C., Ethiopian Coffee S.C., Dedebeit F.C., Defense and Eclectic of the Ethiopian Premier League.

3.2. Target Population

The target populations of this study were football spectators' from the Ethiopian premier league, Addis Ababa stadium. A survey instrument was administered to 150 conveniently selected spectators' in all seating sections at four different games. All the questionnaires were distributed and collected before the start of the game.

3.3. Measurement Instrument

A number of models have been developed and employed in service environment studies, including Bitner's (1992) Servicescape model, Theodorakis and Alexandris (2008) SPORTSERV model, Mehrabian and Russell's (1974) environmental psychology model and Wakefield, Blodgett and Sloan (1996) Sportscape model. This study is based on partly the most common theoretical framework called the Sportscape model proposed by Wakefield, Blodgett and Sloan (1996). Accordingly, spectators' answered to six sportscape elements namely scoreboard quality, venue aesthetics, space allocation, layout accessibility, seat comfort and venue cleanliness. However, the facility employee services and facility parking dimensions were included in the study too, based on Theodorakis and Alexandris (2008) SPORTSERV model. In addition, spectators' propensity to re-patronize was measured by employing the adopted item from Cronin and Taylor (1992).

3.3.1. Instrument Reliability and Validity

Reliability and validity of the measures are important markers of the quality of a measuring instrument. Thus, to ascertain that the instrument used in this study is reliable, the Cronbach's alpha test, which is the frequently used measure of scale reliability, is done. A Cronbach's alpha value of above 0.7 is considered acceptable (Field, 2009). Validity of the instrument is assured by presenting it to a team of reviewers who have the required knowledge about the subject matter.

3.4. Data Analysis

Summary of the demographic information and the mean and standard deviation of the variables were analyzed using descriptive statistics. To explore the relationship between spectators' experience with sportscape elements and propensity to re-patronize, a multiple regression analysis was employed.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Though all the distributed questionnaires were returned, 14 of them were found incomplete. Consequently, data presentation is based on the completed 136 questionnaires.

4.1. Respondents characteristics

A majority, which is 91.9% of the respondents, were males while only 8.1% were females. 22.8% of the respondents were aged below 25 years, 33.1 % were aged between 25 – 35 years, 24.2% were aged between 36 – 45 years, 15.4% were aged between 46-55 years and 4.5% above 55 years of age. As of monthly income is concerned, the vast majority (38.3%) of the respondents earn between ETB 1500-3000.

Table 1: Demographic profile of sample respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Male	125	91.9
Female	11	8.1
Total	136	100.0
Age	Frequency	Percent
Below 25	31	22.8
25-35	45	33.1
36-45	33	24.2
46-55	21	15.4
Above 55	6	4.5
Total	136	100
Monthly Income	Frequency	Percent
Below 1500	37	27.2
1500-3000	52	38.3
3000-4500	25	18.4
Above 4500	22	16.1
Total	136	100.0

Source: Survey Data, 2013.

4.2. Reliability Statistics

To make sure instrument reliability, Cronbach's alpha value was computed. According to (Field, 2009): Cronbach's alpha coefficient of > .9 is regarded as excellent, > .8 - good, > .7 - acceptable, > .6 - questionable, > .5 - poor, and < .5 – unacceptable. As shown in the reliability test table below, Cronbach's alpha values for all factors were above the acceptable level, which indicates a high level of internal consistency for the study's scale.

Table 2: Cronbach's Alpha Reliability

Sportscape Elements	N of Items	Cronbach's Alpha	Overall Cronbach's Alpha
1. Scoreboard quality	4	.777	.792
2. Venue aesthetics	3	.801	
3. Space allocation	4	.791	
4. Layout accessibility	4	.783	
5. Seat comfort	4	.822	
6. Venue cleanliness	3	.791	
7. Facility employee services	3	.701	
8. Facility parking	3	.711	
9. Propensity to Re-Patronize	1	.785	

Source: Survey Data, 2013.

4.3. Descriptive Statistics

Table 3 shows spectators' experience with the identified eight sportscape elements. Spectators' appeared to have unpleasant experience with five of the sportscape elements namely scoreboard quality (M=2.214), venue aesthetics (M=2.921), layout accessibility (M=2.914), seat comfort (M=2.521) and facility parking (M=2.431). On the other hand, spectators' have had a positive experience with the rest three sportscape elements, i.e. space allocation (M=3.024), venue cleanliness (M=3.332) and facility employee services.

Table 3: Experience with Sportscape Elements

Sportscape Elements	Mean	Std. Deviation
1. Scoreboard quality	2.214	
2. Venue aesthetics	2.921	
3. Space allocation	3.024	
4. Layout accessibility	2.914	
5. Seat comfort	2.521	
6. Venue cleanliness	3.332	
7. Facility employee services	3.711	
8. Facility parking	2.431	

Source: Survey Data, 2013.

4.4. Regression Analysis

Table 4 reports the results of the regression model using spectators' propensity to re-patronize as the dependent variable and spectators' experience with the eight sportscape elements presented above as the independent variables.

4.4.1. Assessing the Fit of the Regression Model

The R-squared, F test and Collinearity problems were examined to predict the goodness of fit of the regression model. Accordingly, the R-squared shows that 57.5% of total variance is explained by the model. The F-test has a value of 116.330 and is significant at 0.000 which indicates how the observed R-squared is statistically reliable and is not a spurious result of oddities in the data set. Collinearity effect was tested by using the variance inflation factor (VIF) and in this study VIF between 1.056 and 1.603 suggests a moderate correlation, but according to (Cohen et al, 2003; Pedhazur, 1982), this is not that much severe to call for corrective actions.

Table 3: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate		
1	.758a	.575	.562	.277		
Sum of Squares			Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression		71.509	8	8.939	116.330	.000a
Residual		7.146	128	.077		
Total		78.665	136			

Source: Survey Data, 2013.

Table 4: Sportscape Elements and Propensity to Re-patronize

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
(Constant)	.344	.171		2.007	.048		
Scoreboard quality	.047	.031	.049	1.509	.135	.942	1.062
Venue aesthetics	.031	.029	.035	1.061	.292	.921	1.086
Space allocation	.247	.028	.342	8.756	.348	.639	1.565
Layout accessibility	.259	.048	.172	5.360	.609	.947	1.056
Seat comfort	.260	.029	.352	8.994	.053	.636	1.572
Venue cleanliness	.249	.026	.382	9.659	.060	.624	1.603
Facility employee services	.041	.026	.056	1.592	.115	.798	1.253
Facility parking	.003	.030	.003	.085	.933	.830	1.205

a. Dependent Variable: Propensity to re-patronize

Source: Survey Data, 2013.

As depicted in the above table, there is no significant relationship between spectators' experience with

sportscape elements (scoreboard quality, venue aesthetics, space allocation, layout accessibility, seat comfort, venue cleanliness, facility employee services and facility parking) and propensity to re-patronize. An examination of each predictor revealed that scoreboard quality (Beta= .049, $p > .05$), venue aesthetics (Beta = .035, $p > .05$), space allocation (Beta = .342, $p > .05$), layout accessibility (Beta = .172, $p > .05$), seat comfort (Beta = .352, $p > .05$), venue cleanliness (Beta = .382, $p > .05$), facility employee services (Beta = .056, $p > .05$) and facility parking (Beta = .003, $p > .05$).

4.4.2. Hypotheses testing

The result of the regression analysis depicts that all the hypothesized relationship is rejected, which means spectators' experience with sportscape elements did not have a significant effect on spectators' propensity to re-patronize or attend future games in the stadium.

Table 5: Results of hypothesis testing

<i>Hypotheses</i>	<i>P-value (at 5%)</i>	<i>Decision</i>
H1: Spectators' experience with scoreboard quality has a significant effect on propensity to re-patronize.	.135	Rejected
H2: Spectators' experience with venue aesthetics has a significant effect on propensity to re-patronize.	.292	Rejected
H3: Spectators' experience with space allocation has a significant effect on propensity to re-patronize.	.348	Rejected
H4: Spectators' experience with layout accessibility has a significant effect on propensity to re-patronize.	.609	Rejected
H5: Spectators' experience with seat comfort has a significant effect on propensity to re-patronize.	.053	Rejected
H6: Spectators' experience with venue cleanliness has a significant effect on propensity to re-patronize.	.060	Rejected
H7: Spectators' experience with facility employee services has a significant effect on propensity to re-patronize.	.115	Rejected
H8: Spectators' experience with facilities parking has a significant effect on propensity to re-patronize.	.933	Rejected

Source: Survey Data, 2013.

5. DISCUSSIONS

Based on the findings of this study, spectators' appeared to have unpleasant experience with a number of sportscape elements, but despite their unpleasant experience there is no significant relationship between spectators' experience with sportscape elements and propensity to re-patronize. Naturally, it is likely that displeasure with a service environment will lead to avoidance behavior. Literature also indicates that customers who express a high level of pleasant experiences at sports events are more likely to exhibit such positive fan behaviors as willingness to attend additional games, purchase merchandise, and follow a sports team in the mass media (Yoshida et al, 2010; Stevens et al, 2012). An empirical study by Uhrich et al, (2012) suggests that satisfaction with the sport stadium atmosphere is positively correlated with increased spending at sports events. Uhrich et al, (2009) proposed that a sports stadium atmosphere that satisfies fans could result in increases in long-term fandom, positive word-of-mouth, and heightened sales of tickets and merchandise. For an entertainment facility, Turley et al, (1992) proposed that service quality, facility evaluation and outcome of facility have strong, close relationships. Donovan et al, (1994) also provided evidence that consumers spend more money than they expected when they are in a positive mood about the facility. If customers have a negative perception toward the physical environment of the facility, they are not likely to visit it again (Bagozzi, 1999).

Contrary to the findings of the above researchers, this study did not find a significant relationship between spectators' experience with sportscape elements and propensity to re-patronize which is similar to findings arising from the research work of (Wann et al, 1993). According to Wann et al, (1993), one of the possible reasons why spectators' tolerate these rather poor stadium conditions is their team identification (TI), this is, their emotional connection with the team (Wann et al, 1993). In fact, previous studies have revealed that TI is the most important predictor of attendance independently of other factors, explaining between 15% and 21% of its variability (Kim et al, 2010; Mahony et al, 2002; Matsuoka et al, 2003; Wann et al, 2004; Wann et al, 1993; Won et al, 2006). Strongly attached fans might attend games anyway, because they place less importance to external constraints, such as rather poor stadium conditions. Another possible reason why people still seem to accept these inadequate stadium conditions and keep attending games is their place attachment (PA), this is, their emotional connection with the place (Moore et al, 1994), and in this case, the stadium. A passionate link with the stadium goes beyond the tangible conditions, and might stimulate people to attend live games, as well as care

less about the stadium characteristics. In the professional team sports context, PA has been connected with the emotional attachment fans feel to the home stadium of their club (de Carvalho et al, 2011). In fact, the stadium is, most of the times, a special place to the fans, and it represents home as well (Gustafson, 2005). For example, they associate the stadium with their youth, or they have pleasant memories of past experiences at the stadium, such as being there with the family and the friends, or they have memories related with the club history. Loyalty and team affiliation had a prominent role in increasing the attendance of spectators' at the stadium. Yusof et al, (2008) noted that one of the strongest predictors of spectators' attendance is team quality which is associated with the number of star players, the level of rivalry and the quality of team competition

6. CONCLUSION AND MARKETING IMPLICATIONS

Spectators' have had a positive experience with space allocation, venue cleanliness and facility employee services. However, spectators' experience with scoreboard quality, venue aesthetics, layout accessibility, seat comfort and facility parking scores below average. Overall there is no significant relationship between spectators' experience with sportscape elements and propensity to re-patronize. From a marketing standpoint, the results suggest that greater gains in higher levels of patronage or repeated attendance can be made by clubs segmenting their fans according to level of team identification. Therefore, the real opportunity may lie in creating awareness and increased patronage behaviors among those less identified with the club itself. These individuals should be targeted for supplemental promotional attention. Sutton et al, (1997) have suggested that increasing community involvement activities, creating opportunities for fan affiliation and participation with the team, making the team and its players accessible to the public, and reinforcing the team's tradition can serve to increase team identification. The fact that people are still attached to the place they already know, and where they have memories, the promotion of the club, such as outdoor posters, or publicity in general, should focus not only on the club, as is usually the case, but also on the stadium experiences. When establishing their marketing strategies, they should not look at the club and at the venue separately, but simultaneously.

6.1. Limitations and Future Research Suggestions

First, due to the relatively small sample size and using a convenient sampling, the results of this study are only a reflection of those respondents who participated. Thus, it might have limited the representativeness and generalization of the findings for the target population. Second, spectators' experience with sportscape elements may vary depending on the type of seating section they are in. Third, this study has been emphasized more on fixed elements of a sportscape and on one sport event namely football. The proposed model could be modified to allow measurement of spectators' experience with non fixed elements of sportscape and across different sport events which would enable a direct comparison of results across different types of sports.

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