



An empirical model of attendance factors at major sporting events

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ABSTRACT

Sports events represent a major category of event revenue contributing economic benefits to cities and regions. Whilst attendance at sports events is recognised as an important leisure and entertainment activity (Shamir and Ruskin, 1984), over the past 20 years sports event attendance expenditure has been declining as a percentage of total recreation expenditure (Ross, 2006). Consequently, an understanding of the factors that influence sports event attendance is crucial to the sustainability of these events. This study identifies the antecedents of sports event attendance among 460 respondents who were surveyed in Melbourne, a city that was recognised as the Ultimate Sports City in 2008 (Church-Sanders, 2008). Structural Equation Modelling was used to create an empirical model of attendance motivations. The model identifies constructs relating to emotional responses and facilities, as the predictors of event attendance and provides a discussion of the implications of this research for sporting event and hospitality managers.

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1. Introduction

Attendance at sports events represents a significant revenue stream for sports venues and sporting associations with subsequent economic benefits for cities and regions. High attendance sporting events attract sponsor revenue and thus an empirical understanding of the factors that influence sports attendance is important to the long-term viability of these events. Previous studies reveal that attendance motivations are varied and include economic, geographic and socio-demographic factors as well as accessibility, entertainment, performance, attractiveness of the game, emotion and individual preference for the product (Brokaw, 2000; Greenstein and Marcum, 1981; Hansen and Gauthier, 1989; Robertson and Pope, 1999; Schofield, 1983; Shamir and Ruskin, 1984). Thus it can be concluded that event attendance motivations involve inherent event characteristics, the stadium or event environment, social experiences and emotions.

There is a growing interest in the role of emotions in consumer behaviour because emotions play a significant, central role in our lives (Burns and Neisner, 2006). Sirakaya et al. (2004) noted that it is particularly important to understand emotions, within the context of leisure, as emotional reactions are indelibly intertwined in the attendees experience.

Over the past 20 years sports events attendance expenditure has been declining as a percentage of total recreation expenditure

(Ross, 2006). Consequently, an empirical understanding of attendance motivations would be valuable to sports managers, venue operators, and government administrators. The aim of this study was to develop an empirical model derived from data on attitudes, perceptions and emotional responses that provide a conceptual understanding of the significant predictors of event attendance.

2. Literature review

A review of literature identified a series of underlying motivations that are essential to the understanding of sports event attendance. These ranged from socio-emotive dimensions to on-site entertainment and the impact of these factors varied among different attendance groups. "True fans", for example, are described as loyal followers prepared to attend every event (Brokaw, 2000). Shank (2001) explains that although fan motivation is a multidimensional construct influenced by a variety of variables, true fans are concerned with the enjoyment of the event itself and are not dissuaded from attending by the outcome of the event, the venue, financial considerations, social dimensions or entertainment (Brokaw, 2000). These attendees demonstrate the highest degree of attendance loyalty, displaying intense emotional responses towards a sporting individual or sports team. They resist information that may contradict their beliefs or attitudes (Ross, 2006) and as frequent patrons, they are essential to the survival of sports teams and venues (Mahony et al., 2000).

Whilst true fans are the bread and butter of the majority of sports events, the casual fan provides the bulk of attendance

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revenue. They are influenced by ‘... various forms of advertising that promote specific attributes of the sport product ...’ (Ross et al., 2006, p. 262) including discounting and promotional inducements (Allen, 2007). Casual fans are more likely to attend a sporting event if there are few competing alternatives (Zhang et al., 1997). Such alternatives are not confined to other sporting events; however, as Robertson and Pope (1999) point out ‘the consumer’s decision to attend a game is typically a choice among entertainment alternatives’ (p. 12). This proposition is supported by numerous studies that demonstrate that competition for sporting event attendance can be extensive (Al-Thibiti, 2004; Buttle et al., 1995; Dietz-Uhler et al., 2000; Fink et al., 2002; Greenstein and Marcum, 1981; Kwon and Trail, 2001; Robertson and Pope, 1999; Shank, 2001; Zhang et al., 1997). Watching a sporting event on television also competes with on-site attendance with some people preferring to watch an event at home (Dietz-Uhler et al., 2000). Thus, sports events compete with all other forms of leisure activity, a factor that may be particularly relevant in a declining economy.

Financial and economic considerations feature strongly in the attendance literature where they are divided into controllable and uncontrollable factors (Ross, 2006). Controllable factors include the ‘price of tickets or the perceived value of the sports product’ (Shank, 2001, p. 194) as well as incentives, inducements and other promotional activities. Uncontrollable factors are presented as those factors that cannot be changed by event organisers ‘... such as the average income of the population or the economic health of a country’ (Shank, 2001, p. 194). The popular coverage of the sport business reveals that attendance tends to mirror economic decline with a subsequent impact on local and regional businesses. The 2009 Superbowl hosted in Tampa, Florida is one example. In this case it was predicted that ‘spending cutbacks ... [would] result in fewer overall visitors and media representatives, a shorter average length of stay per visitor, and tightly held wallets by those who do visit the region’ (Horrow and Swatek, 2009, p. 1). Indirect impacts included reduced purchasing of local supplies by concessionaires and lower levels of local employment.

Attendance at sporting events has also been associated with the opportunity to socialise with family and friends (Dietz-Uhler et al., 2000; Fink et al., 2002; Robertson and Pope, 1999; Wann et al., 2004). Kahle and Riley (2004) note that sports events provide opportunities for groups to socialise and that this enhances the overall experience. Their study found that the enjoyment of sport is emotive and often heightened through group interaction. The importance of emotional arousal in experiential consumer behaviour is well-established (Arnould and Price, 1993; Celsi et al., 1993; Havlena and Holbrook, 1986; Mehrabian and Russel, 1974; Moneta and Csikszentmihalyi, 1996); however, Getz (1997) notes that major events seek specifically to capture and promote this state of excitement. Sirakaya et al. (2004) notes that it is particularly important to understand experiential phenomena, such as emotions, within the context of tourism and leisure, however, very little research has been conducted on the role of emotions within this context (Bigné and Andreu, 2004). Nevertheless, it can be concluded that consumption in groups enhances the overall attendance experience and that a component of this social dimension is the entertainment value of a sporting event. Attendees value the opportunity to disengage from life’s routine (Wann, 1995; Al-Thibiti, 2004) but ‘... the game itself isn’t enough to draw people in [because] people get bored easily and need to be entertained’ (Petrecca, 2000, p. 3). Kahle and Riley (2004) explain that many attendees ‘... are less concerned with the outcome of the sporting event than they are with the overall quality of the entertainment experience’ (p. 283). This experiential benefit is recognised as a form of escape (Wann, 1995), a coping strategy that leads to fulfilment and contentment (Smith, 1988; Gladden and Funk, 2002). An extension of this dimension is the inclusion of

entertainers before, during and after an event. Valued for its ability to engage and maintain spectator interest, this additional dimension is considered a fundamental element of the sports event (Gladden and Milne, 1999). Bruce Springsteen’s half-time show at the 2009 Superbowl, for example, was a heavily promoted mini concert, which was a drawcard in and of itself (Horrow and Swatek, 2009). These mini-concerts provide entertainment both at the venue (as a marquee event) and for the TV audience ensuring that interest is maintained whilst also attracting spectators.

Entertainment is also valued for its ability to generate atmosphere, which is defined as the subjective excitement level created at an event (Brooks, 1994). Atmospheric variables include the quality of service offerings, cleanliness of the venue and the availability of restrooms, food and beverages, and car parking (Wakefield and Blodgett, 1996; Wakefield and Sloan, 1995). In addition, the sports venue has a powerful influence on attendance and has received considerable attention in the literature (Brokaw, 2000; Buttle et al., 1995; Robertson and Pope, 1999; Shank, 2001; Wakefield and Sloan, 1995). These studies confirm that spectators consider issues such as size, seating comfort and access as well as aesthetic qualities of the stadium in their attendance decisions.

Buttle et al. (1995) have classified venue characteristics into front room factors, back room factors and circumstantial factors. The front room factor describes aspects of a sports event that impact on attendees’ enjoyment of the event experience such as smoke free zones. Back room factors are those factors that contribute to the overall event experience but are amenable to management control including parking, ease of getting a seat and stadium accessibility. The facility factor relates to the facilities available at the event, including design and comfort of the venue, the standard of available food and drinks, ticket prices, facilities for children, venue and seating access and any other facilities such as pre- and post-event entertainment.

These environmental considerations are core to the service experience performed within what Bitner (1992) refers to as the ‘servicescape’. Robertson and Pope (1999) modified this concept to include the service experience at sports events describing that environment as the sportscape. They contend that ‘the sportscape or physical environment of the stadium can influence whether or not a spectator attends, how long they will stay, and if they will return or not for a future event’ (Robertson and Pope, 1999, p. 8). An additional consideration within the sportscape is the sense of community provided by the venue (Trujillo and Krizek, 1994), which can foster a positive association with the venue or the event.

Atmosphere is enhanced further by participant attractiveness or what Gladden and Funk (2002) describe as star players. Bjelac and Radovanovic (2003) explain that if an athlete possesses great skill, fans are even more inclined to attend the game. Sports stars that have developed a reputation for their sporting prowess become attractions in and of themselves, a phenomenon that Braunstein and Zhang (2005) refer to as “star power.” They assert that those that possess athletic skill and ‘... have attained a level of familiarity with the general public are viewed as stars’ (Braunstein and Zhang, 2005, p. 242) and have a positive influence on sports event attendance.

Clearly, the factors that influence sports attendance are complex and multifarious. Whilst the literature review has identified that attendance at sports events has received academic attention from a variety of perspectives, a model of attendance has yet to emerge. As a result, the aims of this study were to add to the body of work on attendance at sporting events by developing an empirical model of attendance motivations. Given that little research has been conducted on the role of emotions within the context of tourism and leisure (Bigné and Andreu, 2004), however, the paper focuses primarily on the factors that influence emotions within the sports event context by exploring the antecedents of

emotion and predicting the influence of this construct on attendance at sporting events.

3. Methods

The review of literature identified a number of variables that influence attendance at sporting events. In order to gain an understanding of the impact and relevance of these variables to the target population and to identify any other issues that might be influential, a qualitative pilot study was conducted. This initial qualitative phase was justified because qualitative methods are particularly orientated toward exploration and discovery of social phenomena through the use of inductive processes (Minichiello et al., 1995). Indeed, Strauss and Corbin (1990) state that 'qualitative methods can be used to uncover and understand what lies behind any phenomenon about which little yet is known' (p. 19). Depth interviews are an important data collection procedure in qualitative research and these were extensively used in this study (Patton, 1987).

A non-probability, convenience sample of 50 respondents was obtained. Interviews were conducted using a semi-structured interview schedule that incorporated the themes and topics that were identified as important within the literature. Respondents were asked to discuss the importance of these themes and were also asked a series of questions about their sporting event attendance patterns in the past 12 months. Several insights emerged during this phase. These included aspects relating to the importance of the emotional impact of the sporting event as well as the level and quality of facilities at the venue. The interviews were coded, transcribed and analysed and the resulting information was merged with the dimensions identified in the review of literature to develop a quantitative questionnaire comprising 77 questions. These were presented as a Likert-type scale where respondents rated each question from 1 to 6. Response categories were anchored as Not Very Important and Very Important. A number of classificatory and demographic questions that had been identified as important in the review of literature were also included.

Thus, whilst a single particular scale was not used in the development of the questionnaire, a variety of sub-scales and previously validated questions were utilized to represent the various dimensions identified in the review of literature. These included items that were adapted from previous studies by Unger and Kernan (1983), Wakefield and Blodgett (1996), Robertson and Pope (1999), Brokaw (2000) and Wann et al. (2004). A sample of 20 respondents from the Melbourne White Pages telephone directory was obtained to pilot the questionnaire. The questionnaire worked effectively and required only minor modifications. Consequently, the research involved what Tashakkori and Teddlie (1989) describe as a "sequential mixed method design" employing a qualitative phase to inform the subsequent quantitative phase.

Examples of questions/statements included to establish the level of importance that respondents attributed to issues relative to attendance at sporting events in general are:

It's satisfying	It's fun
It's stimulating	It's exciting
It's astonishing	Stadium accessibility
It's challenging	Stadium parking availability
It's desirable	Ease of getting a seat at the game
It's fascinating	

The city and suburbs of Melbourne were selected as the research base because Melbourne is considered to be the sporting capital of Australia (Westerbeek, 1999) and was recognised as the Ultimate Sports City in 2006 and again in 2008 (Church-Sanders,

2008). The city has an abundance of world-class facilities and hosts a variety of sports including; football (soccer, rugby and AFL), tennis (The Australian Open Grand Slam), basketball (with two local ABA teams hosting the 2009 final series), swimming (The World Championships), cricket (test, one-day, Twenty20) horse-racing (The Melbourne Cup during the spring carnival), athletics (Commonwealth Games) and Formula One motorcar racing (The Australian Grand Prix). Sampling within a sporting capital allowed the research to address issues of competition between sporting events as well as a wide range of alternative leisure activities that are available within the city.

A telephone interview process was employed, with the Melbourne telephone directory as the sampling frame. A systematic random sample procedure was utilized and 460 valid responses were obtained, which represented 222 (48.3%) female respondents and 238 (51.7%) male respondents. One thousand five hundred households were contacted providing an acceptable response rate of 31%. During the interview initial screening questions were used to obtain valid respondents for the sample (i.e., they had attended a sporting event in the last 12 months).

4. Analysis and results

An exploratory factor analysis of the behavioural and attitudinal items included in the questionnaire was conducted in order to establish the communality of variables, and as a data reduction measure. In this analysis a principal axis extraction method was used with a varimax rotation. The Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy and Bartlett's test of sphericity were used to indicate the appropriateness of factor analysis for the data. In testing the appropriateness of the factor model Bartlett's test of Sphericity was used to confirm that the correlation matrix is an identity matrix and that the variables are uncorrelated in the population. This contention is supported at the 0.000 level. The KMO index compares the magnitudes of the observed correlations coefficients to the magnitudes of partial correlation coefficients. Small values would indicate that factor analysis may not be appropriate, however, the high value of 0.748 supports a factor analysis (Malhotra et al., 2004).

The factor analysis provided seven factors with Eigen values greater than one, which accounted for 74.5% of the variance (see Table 2). The seven factors and the variables that make up these factors are presented in Table 1 below.

All variables were tested for inter-item reliability and consistency of the questionnaire using Cronbach's alpha with an alpha of 0.6 being regarded as an acceptable level (Hair et al., 1998). This produced most acceptable scores with all factors achieving alpha's ranging from 0.7 to 0.9 (see Table 2). The most dominant factors in this analysis, however, related to entertainment and emotional arousal, accounting for 36.8% of the variance. SPSS was used to measure the reliability and variance of each of the seven factors (Table 3).

The data were multivariate, non-normal. Researchers and statisticians have proposed three major approaches to dealing with non-normal multivariate data (Hair et al., 2006). Firstly, parametric analysis of the raw data; secondly, parametric analysis of the transformed data, and thirdly, nonparametric analysis of the data may be undertaken. Data transformations made some of the data very difficult to analyse using SEM (Byrne, 2001), and in the case of the log transformations, made the interpretation of the data very difficult (Kline, 2005). Data transformation may cause problems, to the extent that a researcher has developed a strong theoretical foundation and believes in the original specification, transforming the data can provide an incorrect specification. Thus, researchers must be mindful of the trade-offs inherent in transforming data (c.f. Satorra, 2001). One alternative to

Table 1

Factor names and factor descriptions.

Factor name	Factor description
Entertainment factor	Fun, excitement and general levels of enjoyment and entertainment.
Emotional arousal factor	The arousal of spectator's emotions includes variables such as whether the sports event was found to be stimulating, satisfying or stirring.
Back room factor	Any factor amenable to management control that contributes to the overall experience this includes parking, ease of getting a seat and stadium accessibility.
True fan factor	Attendees for whom the enjoyment of the game itself is most important. They are interested in the competitive nature of the event, the process the outcomes and the performance of the team or individual that they support.
Front room factor	Facilities or elements of the event experience that are under the control of management. These front room factors relate to factors, which could be said to directly influence the spectator's enjoyment of the event experience, which include alcohol and smoke free zones.
Event factor	The event factor is a mixture of back room (closeness to players) and circumstantial variables (special events).
Social factor	The social factor considers the importance of friends and family in the enjoyment of the event.

Table 2

Rotated factor matrix.

	Entertaining	Emotional arousal	Back room	True fan	Front room	Event	Social
Entertaining	0.746						
Fun	0.736						
Exciting	0.735						
Enjoyable	0.715						
Stimulating		0.861					
Satisfying		0.693					
Stirring		0.663					
Parking			0.768				
Ease of getting a seat			0.705				
Stadium accessibility			0.646				
Sport itself				0.810			
No matter weather				0.682			
Sports fan				0.636			
Alcohol free zone					0.796		
Smoke free zone					0.758		
Special events						0.773	
Star players						0.754	
Friends							0.711
Family							0.625

Extraction method: principal axis factoring; rotation method: varimax with Kaiser normalization.

transformation when dealing with non-normal data in SEM is via the use of an estimation approach that adjusts the model fit Chi-square statistic, such as the Bollen–Stine bootstrapping approach (Shook et al., 2004). It was decided, that data transformation would not be undertaken, and instead parametric analysis was undertaken of the raw data. Maintaining the data in their raw form allowed for consistent data that could be interpreted easily. The Bollen–Stine bootstrapping approach was also used in SEM.

Hair et al. (2006) indicate that the guidelines for goodness-of-fit indices should be adjusted to take into account both sample size and the number of observed variables. Table 4, following, provides the indications for GFI based on a sample size of greater than 250 respondents, and between 12 and 30 observed variables, which are the cut-offs provided by Hair et al. (2006).

After Bollen–Stine bootstrapping was employed, a probability level of 0.09 was achieved. Other fit indices suggested a reasonable

fit to the data (Hair et al., 2006; Kline, 2005). The model of attendance motivations at major sporting events showed a clear relationship between emotion and attendance construct ($\beta = -0.29, p < 0.05$). In addition, facilities (backroom and front of house service) had a positive relationship with attendance ($\beta = 0.30, p < 0.05$).

Attendance at sporting events has antecedents of emotion and services. Services are measured by items that represented accessibility of the stadium, access to seating and parking. These measures were related positively to the facilities construct. In addition, the facilities construct had a positive relationship with emotion ($\beta = 0.41, p < 0.05$), and attendance ($\beta = 0.30, p < 0.05$).

The attendance construct was represented by items that represented the intention to attend a major sporting event within the next 12 months and intention to attend a major sporting event in the future. This construct represented 11% in the variance for the emotion and services constructs.

Table 3

Reliability, total variance explained and MANOVA.

Factor	Eigen value	% of Total variance	Cumulative (%)	Reliability
Entertainment	4.63	24.37	24.37	0.85
Emotional arousal	2.37	12.47	36.84	0.81
Back room	1.75	9.21	46.06	0.80
True fan	1.63	8.58	54.86	0.73
Front room	1.50	7.87	62.50	0.80
Event	1.21	6.39	68.89	0.70
Social	1.07	5.61	74.51	0.73

Table 4Suggested goodness-of-fit statistics and acceptable cut-off criteria for $N > 250$, and $12 < m < 30$, where m = number of observed variables.

Goodness-of-fit statistic	Cut-off criteria
Chi-square	Significant p values can be expected
CLI or TFI	Above 0.92
RNI	Above 0.92 but do not use with $N > 1000$
SRMR	0.08 or less (with CFI above 0.92)
MSEA	Values < 0.07 with CFI of 0.92 or higher

Hair et al. (2006, p. 755).

The emotion construct was represented as a higher order construct for three constructs. These constructs were astonish ($\beta = 0.84, p < 0.05$), stirring ($\beta = 0.72, p < 0.05$), and fun ($\beta = 0.650, p < 0.05$). The emotion construct had a negative but significant relationship with the attendance construct ($\beta = -0.29, p < 0.05$).

Finally, the sub-construct of astonish had a direct relationship with the attendance (likelihood of attending a major sporting event) construct. This relationship was significant ($\beta = 0.22, p < 0.05$).

Overall the model of motivations to attend sporting events indicated a good fit with the data. All of the indices represented were within the acceptable range for the sample size.

The media consumption factor did not fit the overall model of sports attendance, having a non-significant relationship with the attendance construct. This construct was removed from further analysis due to the lack of existence of a relationship.

The strength of the prediction of purchase likelihood from emotion and facilities was in line with other studies using attitudes to predict purchase likelihood and purchase behaviour (Baldinger and Rubinson, 1996). The relationship between emotion and purchase likelihood was consistent with the literature, on purchase likelihood (Domke et al., 1998; Wyer and Srull, 1989), however, an explanation of the results of this study in relation to emotion is provided in Section 6 below.

5. Mediating (indirect) variable effects

The mediating effect of emotion on attendance purchase likelihood was tested. Mediation implies a causal sequence among three variables, X (independent) to M (mediator) to Y (dependent). The independent variable (X) influences the mediator (M). The mediator (M) influences the dependent variable (Y). Baron and Kenny (1986, p. 1173) described the mediator variable as ‘... the generative mechanism through which the focal independent variable is able to influence the dependent variable of interest’.

Based on the full structural model (see Fig. 1) a mediating relationship between facilities, emotion and attendance was

proposed. The following procedure, as outlined by Holmbeck (1997), was used to test the presence of these mediating effects:

1. Assess the fit of the direct effect model, i.e., specifying a direct relationship between the independent variable (facilities) and the dependent variable (attendance).
2. Assess the fit of the mediating effect model, i.e., specifying a mediating relationship between the independent variable, the mediating variable, and the dependent variable. In this instance, the research investigates the relationship between facilities and purchase likelihood, which is mediated by emotion.
3. Assess the fit of the mediator model when the path between the independent and dependent variable is constrained to zero, versus when the path between the independent and dependent variable is unconstrained. For mediation to be supported, the inclusion of the path between the dependent and independent variable should not improve model fit significantly.

A direct path between facilities and attendance was specified. This path was significant ($\beta = 0.30, p < 0.05$), but this caused the mediating relationship between emotions and attendance to become non-significant ($\beta = -0.05, p > 0.05$), and so it was concluded that emotions did not mediate the relationship between facilities and attendance.

6. Discussion and implications

In line with the overall aim of this study a conceptual understanding of the significant predictors of event attendance has been generated. The most significant predictors of attendance were found to be the emotion and facilities. That is, attendance at sporting events is affected by the emotion attached to the sports event and to the perceived quality and availability of facilities. The findings highlight that there is both an emotional and social aspect to attending sporting events, with spectators interested in having fun, being entertained and being comfortable at the event. These constructs may be further broken down into the dimensions of the sportscape (Robertson and Pope, 1999), and entertainment (Kahle

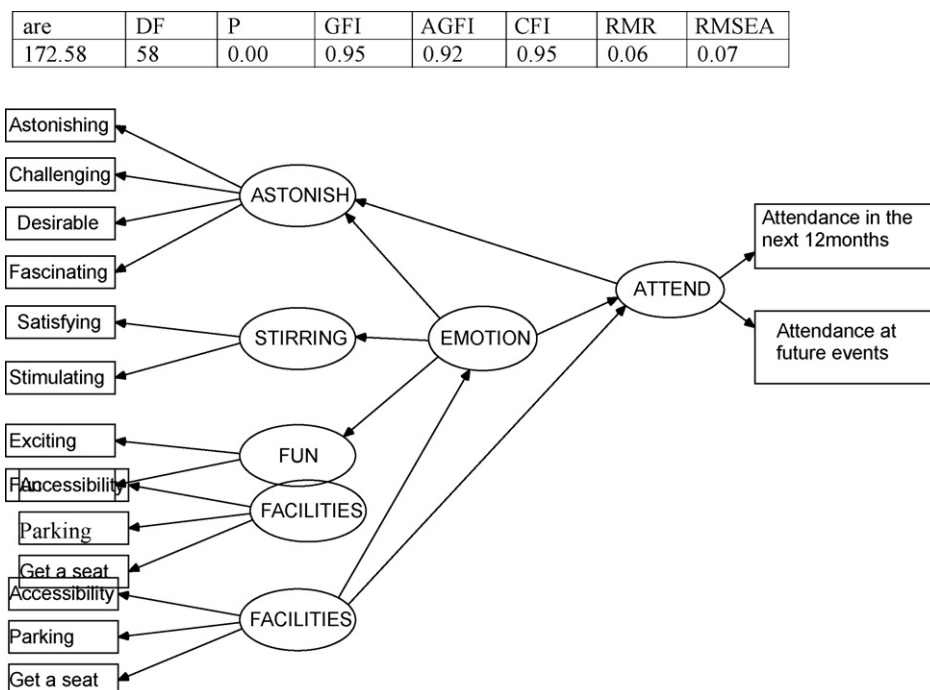


Fig. 1. Following shows a model of attendance motivations at major sporting events. The model has been tested using Structural Equation Modelling software.

and Riley, 2004). Indeed, the sportscape and entertainment have an effect on the perceived willingness of spectators to attend future sporting events.

Aligned with the social aspects of sports events are the atmospherics, which are the backroom and front of house elements of the event (Wakefield and Blodgett, 1996). This facilities construct (backroom and front of house) is represented by accessibility of the venue, parking at the venue and the ability of respondents to gain a seat within the venue. These key concerns for these respondents are supported by previous research (see Brokaw, 2000; Buttle et al., 1995; Robertson and Pope, 1999; Shank, 2001; Wakefield and Sloan, 1995).

The facilities construct is also directly related to both the emotion and attend constructs. This suggests that spectators are more likely to attend sports events and to enjoy the experience more if they are satisfied with the facilities associated with the stadium such as access, parking and seating.

The emotion construct consists of the arousal of a spectator's emotions and it includes variables such as whether the sports event was found to be stimulating, satisfying or stirring. The emotion construct has a strong relationship with intention to attend a sporting event. The build up of an event, the desirability of attending the event, and the level of satisfaction and stimulation with the event all contribute to the emotion construct. If spectators perceive that the event will be fun, challenging, stimulating and satisfying, then they are much more likely to want to attend an event in the future.

The implications for these findings are that event organisers should direct resources to the promotion of an event, including the entertainment factor for the event. That is, the organisers may work on creating a sense of anticipation and excitement surrounding the event, and work on stirring emotions via the sense of fun and excitement involved with attending sports events. As a part of this, events should promote the social atmosphere and the level of escapism that can be experienced with sporting events. In addition, working on the facilities for the event, such as accessibility, parking and being able to gain a seat at the event will enhance spectators' intention to attend sports events in the future. With sponsorship dollars, attendance revenue and television rights tied to attendance (Brokaw, 2000), it is in the interests of sports event organisers to make attending the event as easy and comfortable as possible for spectators.

In conclusion, the facilities on offer as well as the social, entertainment and fun aspects of the event influence attendance at sporting events. There is a direct link between the higher order emotion factor and attendance at sporting events, as well as the perceived facilities at the event. Sporting organisations may concentrate on making it easy and comfortable for spectators to gain access to sporting events, as well as working on the social and emotional aspects of the sporting events. Increasing the emotional aspects of the event allows spectators to engage in escapism (Robertson and Pope, 1999), which contributes to future attendance.

The most significant predictor of attendance was found to be the facilities associated with the event. This has major implication for sporting event attendance because if attendees are dissatisfied with venue facilities it is likely to decrease future attendance whilst satisfaction with facilities is likely to optimise attendance. These results will be valuable to event managers because they are amenable to management control. That is, management can enhance stadium facilities so that attendees experience positive impressions of the venue.

This has major implications for sporting event attendance because if attendees are dissatisfied with venue facilities it is likely to decrease future attendance, whilst satisfaction with facilities is likely to optimise attendance. It is suggested that the social aspect

may be even more important in times of economic downturn, as spectators use sporting events and attendance at these events to escape from their own reality for a brief period. Thus, even in times of economic hardship there are opportunities for event managers to increase event attendance.

Finally, the model presented provides a better understanding of events attendance; however, additional research could provide further direction for the systematic study of sporting events attendance. In particular academic focus on the link between attendance and the facilities factor would be valuable since this construct and the variables that make up the construct are amenable to management control.

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