

RANKING THE SPECTATORS' DIFFICULTIES IN PURCHASING ELECTRONIC TICKETS OF FOOTBALL PREMIER LEAGUE MATCHES AT AZADI STADIUM, IRAN

¹Ahmad Narimani^{ABCDE}

²Tahere Moosavi Rad^{ABCDE}

³Loghman Keshavarz^{ABCDE}

A Çalışma Deseni (Study Design)

B Verilerin Toplanması (Data Collection)

C Veri Analizi (Statistical Analysis)

D Makalenin Hazırlanması (Manuscript Preparation)

E Maddi İmkanların Sağlanması (Funds Collection)



Abstract: This study aimed to rank the spectators' difficulties in buying electronic tickets of football premier league matches at Azadi stadium. The population consisted of all spectators of Esteghlal-Persepolis match in the fifteenth league at Azadi stadium (N= 100000). According to Morgan table and using simple random sampling method, 500 participants were selected as sample. A researcher-made questionnaire was used for collecting the data; its face validity was confirmed by 15 experts and performing a pilot study on 30 subjects, its Cronbach's alpha was calculated to be 0.86. Using SPSS 22, the descriptive and inferential (including Friedman test) statistics was applied for analyzing the data. The findings showed that there was a significant difference between rankings of difficulties in buying electronic tickets of Football premier league matches at Azadi Stadium. The difficulties were ranked as: problem in ticket systems, early selling out of electronic tickets, lack of confidence to electronic ticket sale, lack of skill to work with the internet, low speed of internet, and lack of access to the internet.

Keywords: *Electronic Ticket, Football Premier League, Spectators.*

¹MA, Sport Events Management, Payame Noor University,Iran

²Assistant Professor, Payame Noor University,Iran

³Associate professor, Payame Noor University,Iran

1. INTRODUCTION

The sports events, especially football tournaments attract annually many fans to stadiums. Due to high demands and limited time, the selling of tournaments' tickets has always been one of the important social and security issues. After nearly 40 years of selling tickets and considering extensive technology developments, the selling of ticket in person has proved to be inefficient. The e-ticket selling in Football league matches may impact on presence rate of spectators in Azadi Stadium.

Although there may be some barriers to football fans in purchasing an e-ticket, the understanding of e-ticket selling procedure in sports events and providing appropriate solutions may affect the quality of e-ticket sales. The selling and buying e-ticket for football matches was a dream which was realized in last season of Football Premier League. At first, it seemed that this project, like many other initiatives in the fourteenth league, to be canceled, but not only this did not happen, it was also announced that all tickets for league matches at Azadi Stadium would be sold online. Sooner or later, of course, the internet should be applied in all fields, but until the basic concepts such as naming the seats and buying tickets according to the number of seats are not defined in Azadi Stadium, this may not benefit football. In fact, this step towards the development will be a proper step only if all mechanisms are provided.

The e-ticket selling is the most appropriate way to overcome problems, satisfy the spectators, and earn money. The e-ticket selling leads to easy, fast, and secure ticket sale process. In this regard, the economic and trade procedures may be adopted to gradually achieve significant revenue, because the target market is very wide and available. The most important factor in attracting maximum benefit is to attract maximum spectators; this may not be achieved unless the overall development of sports and presence of spectators in the stadium to be encouraged. The people who buy tickets to attend stadiums are generally men under 30 years old. It is predicted that with the implementation of this plan and considering security issues, the presence of children and their parents in the stadium will increase. Considering online sales and no spatial restrictions for this type of sale, the people who already refused to buy tickets from the stadium because of long distances may now easily buy tickets and attend the stadium. The e-ticket selling includes a supply chain which consists of three main components: suppliers, producers, and distributors (Sadri Khanlou, 2009).

The e-ticket selling of Football League matches is one of the indicators which is considered by Asian Football Confederation; in Iran, the deployment and development of this method face serious challenges and barriers. Using hierarchical analysis, Talebpour et al (2013) studied financial, technical, organizational, and behavioral barriers which impact on deployment and implementation of e-ticket selling in Premier League of football (Talebpour, 2013). The e-ticket is one of the ways to sell sports events' tickets;

it eliminates the illegal sale market and also increases the security of events because the identity of all spectators is known (JalaliFarahani, 2013) and is the spectators' entry permit to competition venues (Hamidi, 2013). The e-ticket is a type of e-commerce which suggests new distribution channels for different kinds of tickets. Usually, a personal computer, a personal digital assistant device which is connected to the internet, or a mobile phone are used to order the tickets (Mozafar Nia, 2013).

The e-ticket is a new method to sell, issue, and offer tickets which are used by many companies to reduce the cost of printing tickets (Ainin, 2008). In great events, the method of selling tickets plays an important role in avoiding congestion and maintaining the safety and security of spectators and venue. Therefore, it can be said that the ticket sell aims to create suitable conditions for watching sports events, maintain safety and security of spectators and venue, increase the quality of service, raise the satisfaction of spectators, establish order, and prevent entry of unauthorized persons to the venue (JalaliFarahani, 2013). The spectators may use the website to see the map of all seats and select their preferred seat. The research shows that the e-ticket selling through the website has increased from three hundred million dollars in 1999 to 3.9 million dollars in 2004. Also, Jupiter showed that the e-ticket selling via the internet has increased from 45 million dollars in 2002 to half a million dollars in 2007 and this trend is rapidly increasing.

The e-ticket selling via the website may eliminate illegal sale market and increase the security of tournaments (Hamidi, 2013). Depending on service hours of companies, the tickets may be purchased at any time. The tickets are sold in the electronic system as online, therefore, it is not required to queue in front of service counters; this helps to increase customer satisfaction. The advantages of e-tickets include improvement of service for customers, reduction of costs, reduction of personnel costs, solving problem of fake tickets, and no need for expensive paper to print tickets. Compared with a paper ticket, the e-tickets are not threatened by the risk of lost or robbery (Mozafar Nia, 2013). The advantages of ticket online sale in Football league matches include convenience and speed of buying tickets, 24-hour access, extensive distribution, and seat selection (Talebpour, 2013). Since the e-ticket is associated with a change in habit of using paper, insecurity, and moderate risk of computer system error, some people are mentally suspicious and have a sense of puzzlement about not having paper tickets (Mozafar Nia, 2013).

The research on barriers to use technologies can be examined from several perspectives; the researchers have put these barriers in different categories. The financial, technical, organizational, and behavioral barriers each impact on deployment and implementation of Internet ticket sale. The technical barriers have the highest priority; in this regard, the low internet speed, complexity and difficulty of understanding and applying the technology of online ticket sale, lack of qualified technical personnel, and lack of connectivity of club sites with each other are the most important barriers. The stakeholders must provide high capacity Internet bandwidth, update telecommunication

equipment, and remove current restrictions to increase the speed and quality of Internet to take advantage of Internet in buying tickets of matches. If the Premier League clubs want to be in charge of selling the tickets of their teams, they must have their own stadium; in Iran, most clubs do not have this important feature.

According to experts, the insufficient funds of clubs is another important barrier to use the technology of e-ticket sale at Premier League; it can be said that this is most affected by state revenues. In this regard, the low or lack of financial support of supporters from the club is one of the most important barriers. The transfer of clubs to the private sector and signing financial contracts with sponsors may partly meet the financial needs of clubs to employ professionals and pay them to launch advanced Internet sites with high security for e-ticket sales; so, this may finally lead to using the technology of online ticket sale.

The organizational factors may also be serious barriers to using the technology of e-ticket sale in Football Premier League in Iran. The unclear position of league organization and its unclear relationship with Football Association are the barriers of e-ticket sale. Therefore, a comprehensive plan in Premier League organization is necessary to use online ticket system at Premier League clubs. Since the members of Board of Directors, particularly CEOs play a key role in most decision-makings about their clubs, the change of their attitude toward old ticket sale systems and adopting a new perspective about new ways such as online ticket sales should be included in agenda.

The behavioral factors were also determined as barriers to use e-tickets in Football Premier League. In this context, the sports managers' knowledge in using this technology should be increased and they should encourage using it in different ways such as informing, training, and changing the attitude of fans towards it (Talebpour, 2013). In this sense, the barriers of using e-ticket include lack of confidence and trust, no access to a computer, lack of knowledge to use the Internet, no access to Internet, unsafe transaction, and being unaware of services (Ainin, 2008). In a study entitled (Analysis of barriers to implementing online ticket sale in Football Premier League using Analytical Hierarchy Process (AHP)), Mahdi Talebpour et al. (2013) showed that the most important barriers include technical (0.299), financial (0.260), organizational (0.221), and behavioral (0.220) barriers. The e-ticket problems include validity, safety, and reliability of ticket (Tripathi, 2009). The e-ticket software was launched in Turkey on April 14, 2014. The e-ticket was the most important barrier to male fans attendance in Turkish Super League football matches; the stadium atmosphere and violence were the subsequent barriers to male spectators' attendance in Turkish Super League football matches. From the perspective of male spectators, the problem in e-ticket system software was the most important barrier to buying e-ticket of football matches (Hakan, 2016). The electronic ticket, problems in the system, and problem in software were the fourth barrier to female spectators to attend at football matches of Turkish Super League. The violence, stadium

atmosphere, and time of matches were the first three barriers to female spectators to attend at football matches of Turkish Super League (Arif, 2015).

2. METHODOLOGY

This was descriptive-correlation field study. The population consisted of all spectators of Esteghlal-Persepolis match in the fifteenth league at Azadi stadium in 2015(N= 100000). According to Morgan table and using simple random sampling method, 500 participants were selected as sample. Totally, 384 questionnaires were returned for analysis. A researcher-made questionnaire was used for collecting the data; its face validity was confirmed by 15 experts and performing a pilot study on 30 subjects, its Cronbach's alpha was calculated to be 0.86. Using SPSS 22, the descriptive and inferential (including Friedman test) statistics was applied for analyzing the data.

Socio-Demographic Features of The Participants: The findings showed that in terms of age, 38, 102, 91, 69, 50, 21, 15, and 4 subjects aged 16-20, 21-25, 26 -30, 31-35, 36-40, 41-45, 46-50, and 51 (or more) years old, respectively. In terms of education level, 12, 176, 64, 108, and 24 subjects had a high school, high school diploma, associate, bachelor, and master and higher degree, respectively. In terms of employment status, 16, 70, 54, 51, 64, 111, and 18 subjects were school student, a university student, staff, employee, military personnel, self- employed, and unemployed. Also, 167 subjects were single and 217 subjects were married. And, 217 subjects lived in Tehran and 167 subjects lived in other cities.

3. RESULTS

Table-1: Ranking the spectators' problems in buying electronic tickets

| Problems | Mean | Ranking |
|--|------|---------|
| Problem in ticket systems | 5.49 | 1 |
| Early selling out of electronic tickets | 5.03 | 2 |
| Lack of confidence to electronic ticket sale | 4.20 | 3 |
| Lack of skill to work with the internet | 3.03 | 4 |
| Low speed of internet | 2.15 | 5 |
| Lack of access to the internet | 1.11 | 6 |

Table-2: Results of Friedman test to determine the difference in ranking of spectators' problems in buying electronic tickets

| | |
|--------------------|-------|
| Number | 384 |
| Value χ^2 | 92.76 |
| Degrees of freedom | 5 |
| Significance level | 0.001 |

According to table 1 and 2, considering the χ^2 value and since the significance level is less than 0.05, it can be concluded that there is a significant difference between rankings of difficulties in buying electronic tickets of Football premier league matches at Azadi Stadium. The difficulties are ranked as: problem in ticket systems, early selling out of electronic tickets, lack of confidence to electronic ticket sale, lack of skill to work with the internet, low speed of internet, and lack of access to the internet.

4. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The findings showed that there was a significant difference between rankings of difficulties in buying electronic tickets of Football premier league matches at Azadi Stadium. The difficulties were ranked as: problem in ticket systems, early selling out of electronic tickets, lack of confidence to electronic ticket sale, lack of skill to work with the internet, low speed of internet, and lack of access to the internet. This is consistent with findings of Tripathi (2009), Hakan (2016), and (Arif, 2015).

The electronic ticket is new in Iran and there is no ideal design for a website in this area. In regard to first problem (a problem in ticket systems), a separate system for seats in the stadium, development of a site according to standards in the world, and ticket sales through club systems may be effective in solving this problem. In relation to second problem (early selling out of electronic tickets), considering the specific timing for sale of tickets and allocating some tickets for special sell, especially in days and hours near to match time may have a role in solving this problem. For the problem of lack of confidence to electronic ticket sale, it is suggested that some privileges are granted to users to use them in the case of a particular problem in buying tickets. About the problem of lack of skill to work with the internet, the ICT and the Internet may be included comprehensively in training content of students (as potential forces to attend at stadiums. This problem may also be solved by referring to guide the content of e-ticket shopping in ticket sale system. During the event, also, some other actions may be taken such as providing short training videos through the stadium's scoreboard, TV channels in the moments when the match has not yet started, or break between two sets. In relation to the last two problems (low speed of internet and lack of access to the internet), Ministry of Communications may increase bandwidth across the country to solve these two problems.

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Yazışma Adresi (Corresponding Address): Ahmad Narimani (a.narimani60@gmail.com)