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Assessment of Football Fans' Willingness for Attendance in Football Stadiums and Associated Factors

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Abstract

Present study aims to assess the football fans' willingness to attend in football stadiums and its related factors. This applied study is among descriptive correlative ones and is quantitative in terms of data collection. The statistical society of present study consists of all football fans in the football stadiums of Hamedan province during 1990. Given the point that the statistical community of this study was indefinite, so the Cochran formula was used to estimate statistical samples. In such a way that 384 subjects were selected in random as the statistical sample. The 31-item questionnaire of Alimohammadi and colleagues (2015) was used to measure the factors affecting the willingness of the football fans in stadiums and 5-item questionnaire of Magnus (2008) was used to measure their willingness to attend the stadiums. The findings of the study revealed that the level of willingness to attend the stadiums of Hamedan province was 74.2%. Results showed that the factors of installations, information and attractiveness, age of teams, timing and notification, proxy victory, presence and support, interaction and escape and thrill are significantly effective on football fans' willingness to attend the football stadiums of Hamedan province.

Keywords: Willingness for presence in stadiums, installations, information and attractiveness, performance and age of teams, presence and support, interaction and escape.



Introduction

Sports is one of the important categories of the industrial societies where much of the population of each country is involved in it (Alimohammadi, 2011). This industry has considerably been affected by the changes in the lifestyle of the individuals (Yoon and Chole, 2005) and sports is considered as one of the most important, useful and varied activities for spending leisure time of the people in the society (Abduli, 2005). Watching sports matches could be referred to as activities associated with sports where thousands of enthusiastic people attend. The presence of sports enthusiasts in the events of different sports fields and given the point that individuals including men and woman, old and young and individuals from different races and ethnics from different social classes attend and watch sports events, indicates that sports activities play an important role in the health of society. The audience, given the role they play in creating the excitement and atmosphere of various events, are considered one of the most important components of the leagues and different sports events (Woo Bae, 2003), and the sports organizations must constantly be assessed in terms of meeting or satisfying the needs and expectations of the customers for the purpose of maintaining and increasing the number of audience and the loyal fans attending the sports events. Since the fans and audience play a direct role in determining the revenues of a sports event through selling tickets on one hand, and they play an indirect role through selling other products, on the other hand. It is necessary to perceive the behavior of the audience and study factors affecting the presence of fans for the purpose of raising the knowledge as to why the fans attend the sports events since meeting the needs of the audience provides more opportunity for sports clubs to attend the play of the team (Alimohammadi, et al. 2014). Increasing the number of audience and fans is the most important factor in boosting professional sports. In addition to creating revenues directly for the professional clubs and leagues, fans have a large share in income by attracting financial supporters and selling television broadcasting rights (TV commercials) and extra services (Hansen and Gauthier, 1992).

These days selling tickets provides a trivial part of the income of the sports clubs so the financial costs of the clubs are met mostly be governmental organizations, but the Macropolicies of the Asian football confederation and the ministry of the young and sports is toward privatization of the clubs and financial independence and self-sufficiency and in this way in near future, the clubs must look for ways to attract their fans and audience more and ultimately increase their income (Parsamehr, 2000). Thus the managers and marketers of sports teams must identify factors affecting the attendance of the fans in sports clubs in order to raise the presence of the audience in the stadiums and obtain more income. For this reason, a growing interest has been created toward studying the motivations and factors affecting the presence of the given audience in order to understand their behavior better in sports events. This question that what factors are effective on the presence of the audience is of special importance to the marketers of sports events or competitions. If the influential factors in the presence of the audience are determined, the sports marketers will be able to design more appropriate marketing strategies for the presence of the audience in stadiums (Dehghani, 2014). This issue in football clubs of Hamedan province has turned into the main and serious concern of the sports authorities of the province. Since after the presence of pas team in Hamedan province in 2007 and the victories gained by this team in the premier league in the first years attracted a lot of football fans toward football stadiums and among these affective factors on the welcome of fans we can refer to the high level of premier league matches, the presence of national team players, the brand of pas team and raising the name of Hamedan



province in the country but this success was short-term and this team fell to its downside rapidly. These events disappointed a lot of football fans in this province, of course, it is worth noting that Alvand and Shahrdari (Municipality) football teams are other teams of Hamedan city that have almost been growing, but the presence of pas team was a new experience for the fans and after this failure, the passion and motivation of the fans were adversely affected. So the research in this study seeks to answer this question that to what extent the football fans in Hamedan province tend to attend the football stadiums and what factors it is associated with?

Now given above explanations. The hypotheses of the study are as following:

First hypothesis of research: There is a significant relationship between installations and willingness of the football fans to attend football stadiums of Hamedan province.

Second hypothesis of research: There is a significant relationship between information and attractiveness with tendency or willingness of football fans to attend the football stadiums of Hamedan province.

Third hypothesis of research: There is a significant relationship between the performance and the age of teams with the willingness of football fans to attend the football stadiums of Hamedan province

Fourth hypothesis of research: There is a significant relationship between timing and notification with willingness of the football fans to attend the stadiums of Hamedan province.

Fifth hypothesis of research: There is a significant relationship between proxy victory and willingness of football fans to attend football stadiums of Hamedan province.

Sixth hypothesis of research: There is a significant relationship between presence and support with the willingness of football fans to attend the stadiums of Hamedan province.

Seventh hypothesis of research: There is a significant relationship between interaction and escape with the willingness of football fans to attend the stadiums of Hamedan province.

Eighth hypothesis of research: There is a significant relationship between thrill and the willingness of football fans to attend the stadiums of Hamedan province.

Theoretical Foundations

Today, the competitive environment and high costs that are caused as a result of weak decision-makings, require investment into the market in order to obtain correct, logical and flawless information. The problem that marketers are encountered with is that how they can assess their financial support effect of the sports consumer behavior and how to determine its commercial value (Harvey, 2001). Logical decisions cannot be made based on feelings, inspiration and even personal judgment and in case of lack of access to correct information, the correct decision will also be faced with difficulties. Today, researchers in the field of market face more problems in regard with decision- making day by day and marketing managers are involved in the problems associated with investigations more than past. Including the target markets, audience and organizations including federations, groups, teams, clubs and fans are considered the motivators and persuaders of the audience and present customers for higher attendance and more times, being their basic objectives (Hasanzadeh, 2005). Given the role the audience play in creating excitement and the atmosphere of different sports events, they are considered as one of the most important components of the leagues and different sports competitions (Sang woo, 2003). Sports organizations must constantly evaluate the better meeting of the needs and expectations of their customers so as to maintain and



increase the number of audience and loyal fans attending sports events. A large number of researchers and service marketers have recognized the cognitive and emotional responses of the customers and proportionate to their perceptions, they provided them with services for the purpose of earning profit through meeting the needs of consumers or an effective approach. They consider the consumer satisfaction as the most basic issue in the field of services marketing since it can create loyalty and repurchase of the product or services (Gi yong, 2009). Sports enthusiasts, on one hand, have a direct role in determining the revenues of the sports events through selling tickets and on the other hand, they play an indirect role, through selling other products. Understanding the behavior of viewers or audience is necessary in order to increase the knowledge as to why individuals take part in sports events. When the needs of the audience are met in relation with the sports games, there will be more chance for them to take part in the game (Sang woo, 2003). Therefore, the principles of marketing management should be known in order to attract more audience and create the basis for their presence in the stadiums for supporting their desired teams that are completely explained below:

1-2- Factors affecting the presence of the audience in the stadiums

Different factors affect the level and quality of the presence of the audience in sports events of which the games attractiveness, economic factors, anthropological factors, sports-related factors, the value of sports in society, the identity of the audience and motivation factors could be referred to (Yong Koo and Hardin, 2008). The attractiveness of a play or game depends on the amount of the game importance, the skill level of the players and its position in the league or tournament (Shank, 2001).

Economic factors are also divided into two groups of controllable and non-controllable ones. For example, the price of ticket is controllable and the income level of individuals is non-controllable (Welfare et a1, 2008). Anthropological variables such as age, gender, education level, job, income level and race are also effective on the presence of individuals in sports events (James & Ridinger, 2002; shank, 2001; Robinson & Trail, 2005). Access to stadiums, aesthetics of the stadiums, its cleanliness, comfortable chairs, safety and security of the stadiums are also among the very important factors in attracting the audience, known under the title of stadiums-related factors (Wakefield & Sloan, 1995). Other effective factors including the value and importance of sports in society that consist of cases such as community solidarity, public behavior, supremacy, social equality and health awareness level (Zhang & et a1., 1996).

2-2. Experimental studies on sports audience

Studies that have been carried out in relation with sports in terms of sociology are mainly divided into five categories, that is, economic, social, cultural, political and anthropological (Lahsaeezadeh, et al., 2006). Researchers have studied different factors and reasons affecting following and watching different sports games (Milne & McDonald, 1999). Some studies conducted on the factors affecting the individuals, and motivation for taking part in sports events show individual factors such as attractiveness and entertainment, passion and thrill and spending spare time (James & Ridinger, 2002; Milne & McDonald, 1999). And some researchers have studied the mutual or interactive effect of individual and social variables like race, age, gender, etc. In supporting sports teams (Won, et a1, 1999). According to studies conducted it could be concluded that a lot of variables are affective on supporting sports teams especially football by individuals. In the following, the results of some sports studies carried out in Iran are stated.



Lahsaeezadeh and colleagues have studied influential factors on the interest of students in sports, the case study of Shiraz Medical University. They aim at revealing or studying the factors that could be effective in the willingness of the students for sports and physical exercises. This research studied twelve hypotheses in connection with the effect of parent's income, pocket money, education level, field of study, age, gender, nationality or ethnicity, place of birth, access to sports tools inside the university, access to sports tools outside the university, awareness of the physical effect of sports on students' interest in sports. Results showed that five variables, in general, have the highest impression on the interest of students in sports including awareness of the mental effect of sports, awareness of the physical effect of sports, access to sports facilities outside the university, gender of respondents and sufficiency or inadequacy of sports facilities (Lahsaeezadeh et a1., 2006).

Methodology

Present study is applied in terms of objective, descriptive of correlative type in terms of methodology and quantitative in terms of data collection method. Its statistical community that is called statistical population refers to the set of individuals or elements that have a common feature or features and the study is carried out about them. Overall, the statistical community is identified by one or more common characteristics. The statistical community of this study consists of football fans in stadiums of Hamedan province in 2017. Given the fact that the statistical society of this study is indefinite, thus Cochran formula was used to estimate the statistical samples, in a way that 384 subjects were selected randomly. To collect date in present study, two questionnaires were used that are described in the following. Also, valid domestic and foreign sources, books and magazines were used in order to enrich the research literature and increase its credibility. To measure factors influencing the tendency for presence of football fans, Alimohammadi and colleagues' 31-item questionnaire (2014) was used. This questionnaire consists of eight factors of installations (questions 1 to 5), information and attractiveness (questions 6 to 11), performance and age of teams (questions 12 to 16), timing and notification (questions 17 to 21), proxy victory (questions 22 to 23), presence and support (question 24 to 26), interaction and escape (questions 27 to 29) and excitement (questions 30 to 31). The method of this questionnaire was according to Likert Spectrum as follows: 1= very little, 2= little, 3= somewhat, 4= much, 5= very much. This questionnaire consists of two aspects of the fans' satisfaction, oral and spoken. Also, the reliability of the questionnaire in Magnus study was equal to 0.88 (2008).

Findings

Prior to studying the hypotheses of the investigation, it is necessary to assess the normality of the variables using Kolmogrov-Smirnov (KS) test. Hence, table(1) demonstrates the normality ofthevariables.

Table 1. Normality of variables

Variables	Statistics Z	Significance level
Willingness of football fans to attend stadiums	1.09	0.124
Installations	0.912	0.208
Information and attractiveness	0.824	0.277
Performance and age of teams	1.079	0.131
Timing and notification	1.114	0.097



Proxy victory	0.818	0.287
Presence and support	0.725	0.355
Interaction and escape	1.071	0.139
Excitement	0.919	0.204

According to table (1), it could be concluded that the significance level of all variables is more than 0.05.

4-1- Pearson parametric correlations test was used to study the hypotheses of the research. Therefore, table (2) studies the relationship between installations and willingness of the football fans in the stadiums of Hamedan province using above-mentioned test.

Table 2. Study of research hypotheses

Hypotheses	Correlation Coefficients	Significance level	Results
H_1	0.446	0.001	H ₁ confirmed
H_2	0.564	0.001	H_1 confirmed
H_3	0.543	0.001	H ₁ confirmed
H_4	0.271	0.001	H ₁ confirmed
H_5	0.161	0.002	H ₁ confirmed
H_6	0.36	0.001	H ₁ confirmed
H_7	0.256	0.001	H ₁ confirmed
H_8	0.235	0.001	H ₁ confirmed

The significance level obtained from Pearson test is lower than 0.01, showing that there is a significant relationship between the two variables with a confidence level of 99%. Also, the positive correlation coefficients indicate this point that the more the factors of installations, information and attractiveness, performance and age of teams, timing and notification, proxy victory, presence and support, interaction and escape and excitement in the stadiums of Hamedan province increase, willingness of football fans to attend the stadiums will be more in the stadiums of Hamedan province. Thus, the study hypotheses are proved and Null (zero) hypothesis is rejected.

Discussion and Conclusion

Considering the first hypothesis of the research that studies the relationship between installations and the presence of football fans in the stadiums of Hamedan province, it could be said that there is a significant relationship between installations and willingness of football fans to attend the stadiums of Hamedan province and in other words, the more the quality of installations in the stadiums of Hamedan province, the more the willingness of football fans for presence in the stadiums will be. To this end, the results of studies carried out by Abbaslu (2016), Shahamat and colleagues (2016), Dehghani (2014), Emadi and Naseh (2014), Alimohammadi and colleagues (2013), Nemati and colleagues (2012), Parsamehr and Turkan (2009), Disk and Kernick (2016), Anderson (2015), Teodaryx and colleagues (2013), Masayuki and Jeffery (2010), Caro and Garcia (2009), Pease and Zhang (2009) and Aminodin and Lee (2008) were in agreement with the result of the first hypothesis. Since they showed that different factors affect the willingness of the football fans for presence in football stadiums.

Easy access of the fans to stadiums in terms of the availability of public free transportation system, existence of large parking lots with high capacity and lack of confusion about



choosing a place in the stadium lead to the fans' feeling more satisfaction and this could result in an increase in their willingness for presence at the stadiums. On the other hand, appropriate treatment of the stadium personal and police or law enforcement forces with fans cause them feel more security in addition to feeling satisfaction and this feeling could raise the willingness level for watching the next matches of their desired teams and show more interest.

Cleanliness of the stadiums and hygienic facilities send this message to the fans that the related authorities pay much attention to the desires and needs of them and as a result the fans are encouraged to go to the stadiums more and more to watch the football matches. Since the existence of problems in one part of stadium installations create problems and difficulties for the fans and take his mind away from encouraging his desired team and this can create negative changes in his willingness for presence in the stadium.

Now, given this result or outcome, it is recommended to all football authorities of Hamedan province to raise the willingness level of football fans for presence in stadiums by more principled and better management of the physical conditions of the stadiums in terms of stadium platforms, toilets (washrooms), way of handling by the personnel while distributing tickets or their way of treatment with fans and also creating appropriate security in the stadiums by trained police (security) forces.

Considering the second hypothesis that studies the relationship between information and attractiveness with the presence of football fans in the stadiums of Hamedan province, it could be said that there is a significant correlation between information and attractiveness and the willingness to attend stadiums and in some sense, the more this component is among fans, their willingness to attend the stadiums will be more.

It could be concluded that there is a significant correlation between the factors of information and attractiveness including the interest of fans in football field, interest in watching the football skills of the players from near, excitement and importance of the given match, interest in high competition among the teams attending the match and also high knowledge in regard with football rules and the presence or willingness of the fans for presence in stadiums.

Now, given the result, it is recommended to all football authorities of Hamedan province to increase the willingness level of fans in stadiums through presenting brochures at the beginning of the matches aiming at both a promotion aspect (that is the cost of the brochures be provided by sponsors) and educational aspect about the information of both teams and their present position in the league.

Considering the third hypotheses that studies the correlation between the performance and age of the team with the fans' willingness to attend the football stadiums of Hamedan province, it could be said that there is a significant relationship between the team performance, its age and its fans' willingness for presence in the stadiums of Hamedan province. And in other words, the more the performance and age of a team is in the viewpoint of the fans, the more their willingness for presence in the football stadiums of Hamedan will be. It can be concluded that there is a significant relationship between the factors of performance and age of the team including the high position of the team in the league table, getting good an appropriate results by the team in recent weeks, the long history of the team in the league, presence of prominent and style-owner players in the team, long history or record of the team, in other words, being a rooted team and appropriate performance of the team proportionate to the general capabilities of the team and the presence level of its fans in the stadiums.

Now, given above result, it is suggested to all football authorities of Hamedan province to raise the football fans' willingness level for presence in stadiums by installing photos of the



old players of the desired teams in the stadiums in a way that they remind the age of the team to the fans and also by using or utilizing the experience of pioneers in team affairs.

Considering the fourth hypothesis, that studies the correlation between timing and notification with the willingness level of fans in the stadiums of Hamedan province, it could be said that there is a significant relationship between timing and notification with the fans willingness for presence in the stadiums of Hamedan province. In other words, the more the timing and notification in viewpoint of the fans, the more the fans willingness for presence in the stadiums of Hamedan province.

It could be concluded that there is a significant correlation between the factors of timing and notification including suitability of tournament time in terms of not having interference with the plans of life, work and education of the audience, having enough time for watching the matches in terms of holding them on formal holidays or at weekends, exact notification, on time notification, by authorities according to the time and place of the match and suitability of weather conditions and willingness of fans for presence in the stadiums.

Now, considering the result, it is suggested to all authorities related with football of Hamedan province to increase the willingness level of football fans by installing banners informing the day and place of team play in highly visited places and also selling tickets in recreational centers and purchase with special discounts throughout the city with coordination with the municipality and also accurate planning in terms of lack of coordination in regard with interference in the day and time of the match and work days.

Given the fifth hypothesis that studies the relationship between proxy victory and willingness of fans for presence in the stadiums of Hamedan province, it could be said that there is a significant correlation between proxy victory and the willingness of fans for presence in the stadiums. In other words, the more the proxy victory in view of fans is, the more their willingness to attend the stadiums will be.

So it could be concluded that there is a significant relationship between the factor of proxy victory including the feeling of the desired teams victory in the match, feeling pride toward being a fan of the team and strong feeling of belongingness of fans toward the background and performance of the desired team and willingness to attend the stadiums.

Now, according to above result, it is recommended to all football authorities of Hamedan province to grow the fans' Willingness for presence at the stadiums by holding gatherings and work or business meetings prior to matches among the public relations authorities of the team and the leaders and some of the fans with long history for the purpose of creating motivation in them so that they can transfer the feeling of victory and proude energetically to other fans.

According to the sixth hypothesis that studies the correlation between presence and support with the fans willingness for presence at the stadiums of Hamedan province and, in other words, the more presence and support in view of the fans is, the more the fans' willingness for presence at stadiums will be.

It can be concluded that there is a significant relationship between the factor of presence and support including giving more importance to the future of the team, membership in the club of team fans, material and spiritual contributions to the team and also belief in effectiveness of their individual presence in the stadiums and the willingness of the fans for presence in the stadiums.

According to above result, all football authorities of Hamedan province are advised to increase the willingness level of football fans for attendance at stadiums by presenting



material and non-material motivations including interviewing the long-lasting fans of the team and asking for their opinions and also awarding sports prizes including The dress and flag of the team for the purpose of more and more support of the team and also giving sports awards and/or giving discount for tickets of future matches by drawing lotteries among the fans after the match.

According to the seventh hypothesis of the study, that studies the correlation between interaction and escape with fans' willingness for presence at the stadiums of Hamedan province, it could be said that there is a significant relationship between interaction and escape with willingness for presence at the stadiums of Hamedan province and, in other words, the more/ higher the interaction and escape in view of fans are, the higher the willingness to attend the stadiums of Hamedan province will be. It could be concluded that the factors of interaction and escape including being with friends at the stadiums, interest in presence in social environments such as stadiums, interest in agreement in encouraging their desired teams, enjoying watching the match and reducing life pressures through attending stadiums are associated with the fans' willingness for presence at stadiums.

According to above result, it is suggested to all football authorities of Hamedan province to increase willingness level of fans for presence at stadiums by increasing the entertainment and recreation in the stadium environment through performing athletic movements and dramatic activities along with playing motivational and exciting songs between the two half-times and also by building suitable culture at the stadiums through distributing brochures among the audience toward observing the existing rules and regulations and also by raising questions in the brochures relating presenting awards by drawing lottery.

According to the eighth hypothesis of the research that studies the relationship between excitement and willingness to attend the football stadiums of Hamedan province, it could be said that there is a significant correlation between excitement and willingness of fans for presence in the stadiums of Hamedan province and in other words, the more the excitement in view of the fans is, the more their presence at the stadiums of Hamedan province will be. It can be concluded that there is a significant correlation between the factor of excitement including enjoying watching matches from near, emptying the excitement at the stadiums, expressing excitement while watching the matches, more domination on the aspects of competition, interest in encouraging their desired team and participation in sadness and happiness and willingness of football fans for presence at the stadiums.

Now based on above result, it is recommended to all football authorities of Hamedan province to raise the willingness level of football fans through establishing more and more security in the stadiums toward creating appropriate background for expressing healthy excitements and lack of any kind of tension and conflict among the audience and, in other words, establishing a healthy environment in the stadiums through full control of respected authorities and law enforcement forces.



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