

STADIUM ATMOSPHERE: CONCEPT AND MEASUREMENT

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ABSTRACT

The atmosphere at the stadium is widely cited as the most pivotal reason for people to attend sports events (Uhrich and Koenigstorfer, 2009). We define stadium atmosphere as the behavioral response that originates from a set of interactions between a spectator and every aspect of stadium environment. Prior literature on atmospherics in retail, architecture, tourism and hospitality suggests that emotionally appealing environments satisfy hedonic consumption needs by contributing to individual's sensory experiences. Unlike retail atmosphere, the stadium atmosphere has a much stronger effect on spectator behaviors as it provides additional value to the core service product (sports event) by creating unique entertainment value (Wakefield & Blodgett, 1999). Despite this, there has been little empirical research into the phenomenon of stadium atmosphere and its influence on spectators' behavioral outcomes. This study addresses this literature gap by first developing and validating a stadium atmosphere measurement scale and then empirically testing the influence of stadium atmosphere on behavioral outcomes.

Based on the review of pertinent literature, we conceptualized stadium atmosphere to encompass five related dimensions: (1) the physical layout of the stadium, (2) the design and décor of the stadium, (3) the intangible background characteristics, (4) the live game or the sports event and (5) behavior of spectators in affecting social interaction. Six studies were conducted to develop and validate the stadium atmosphere scale (SAS). Indian Premier League (IPL 2010), the domestic twenty20 cricket competition was used as study context.

In Study 1, an extensive review of literature was carried out along with depth interviews with spectators, sports journalists, and sports organizers to generate an initial pool of 95 items along the five dimensions of SAS. Based on the representation of these items by marketing faculty and PhD students, 39 items were retained for further scale purification. In Study 2, exploratory factor analyses of 346 responses resulted in a 13-item, four-factor stadium atmosphere scale. Corrected item-to-total correlations and factor analysis decision rules were used for scale purification. The four factors extracted were facility aesthetics, ambient arrangement, entertainment experience, and spectator participation. Ambiance and layout items loaded on single factor. In Study 3, confirmatory factor analysis was carried out on 186 usable responses of IPL 2010 spectators to confirm the four factor structure of stadium atmosphere. Following this, we obtained nomological validity and generalization for the four-factor stadium atmosphere scale by assessing the scale structure equivalence across cricket and non-cricket spectators in Study 4. In Study 5, discriminant validity of the SAS was obtained by assessing its relationship with overall stadium evaluation and key motivational factors such as sports identification, domain involvement, sports interest inventory, and attendance frequency. In Study 6, structural equation modeling was used to examine the relationship between stadium atmosphere, affect and behavioral outcomes of spectator satisfaction and revisit intentions. The results show that affect to mediate the relationship between stadium atmosphere, and spectators' satisfaction and revisit intentions.

The results of the six studies showed that the resulting scale possess psychometric properties that are both theoretically and managerially relevant. The scale is simple and consists of 13-items divided over four dimensions namely facility aesthetics, ambient atmosphere, entertainment experience, and spectator participation. Based on the studies presented earlier, SAS emerged as a single higher-order construct that consisted of elements drawn from four dimensions: evaluating the design and architecture of the stadium, value attached to layout and physical condition of the stadium, experience from watching a live game and behavior of spectators.

References Available on Request.