Development of a Stadium Stimuli and Local Image Fit Scale

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Extant research shows the impact of the sensory experience on sport fans' satisfaction with the stadium experience (Lee, Heere, & Chung, 2015; Lee, Lee, Seo, & Green, 2012). In effort to create a competitive advantage, sport stadiums are beginning to offer unique services that stimulate one or more of the human senses. Howver, it is not entirely understood how the different types of sensory experiences might be enhanced in the stadium space. One of the ways in which some stadiums are approaching sensory marketing is to utilize inimitable region-based characteristics. Each city or region has its own peculiarities that influence society and culture for those individuals in close proximity (Dinnie, 2011). For instance, New Orleans is famous for jazz music, Chicago is well known for thick pizza, and New York City is famed for visual arts. It is not surprising, then, to have stadiums feature unique sensory experiences as a means to capitalize on local fans' sense of home, and affect non-local fans' perceptions of the stadium and destination (Ballouli & Heere, 2015). Visual designs, music, and food selections are all sensory factors that can be incorporated within the sport stadium experience, whereby local culture can be featured and introduced to old and new audiences alike.

The purpose of this study was two-fold. First, we review current literature on sensory marketing and propose a guideline for utilizing visuals, music, and food to positively impact the stadium experience using classical and modern theoretical approaches. Secondly, our primary aim is to develop a reliable, valid scale for measuring the stadium stimuli and local image fit. Accordingly, this study expands the understanding of prior sensory experience research to the field of sport consumption.

Literature Review

Several researchers have investigated the impact of image congruence on customers' behavioral responses to brands (e.g., Grubb & Grathwohl, 1967; Hogg, Cox, & Keeling, 2000; Onkvisit & Shaw, 1989; Sirgy & Samli, 1985). The fundamental premise of image congruence is cognitive dissonance theory, which states individuals aspire to seek out congruence between their beliefs and behavior for the sustainability of self (Festinger, 1957). Cognitive dissonance occurs when individuals have views and feelings regarding an object that are inconsistent or in conflict with each other. Hence, if the image an individual has of a product or brand is congruent with his or her preconceptions, he or she will experience less cognitive dissonance, and thus, form positive attitudes. Accordingly, the greater the match between sports fans' image of a local area where a stadium is located and the sensory experience within the sport stadium, the more likely fans are to have a favorable attitude toward their overall stadium experience. Previous scholars consider sport stadiums to be popular landmarks of local regions to which individuals attach identity and shared values (Lee et al., 2015; Lee et al., 2012). Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that fans' beliefs about a specific city or region might be associated with expectations they have regarding a visit to the local sport stadium. For example, fans who attend a Philadelphia Eagles game may expect to eat local food such as a Philly cheesesteak, whereas fans who attend a Houston Astros game may find that a mechanical bull enhances their cognitive concurrence in the sport stadium. In other words, fans who perceive fit between stadium stimuli—which appeals to the visual, auditory, and gustatory senses—and their preconceived image of the local area will have greater overall satisfaction with the stadium experience.

Method

The research design for developing the stadium and local image fit scale is based on the eight stages presented by Churchill (1999). In Stage 1, the stadium stimuli and local image fit constructs will be developed. There are three dimensions for the scale (sight fit, sound fit, and taste fit) and each dimension represents to what extent visual,

auditory and gustatory stimuli are congruent to the local image. Then, sample items for a pilot study will be developed in Stage 2. The purpose of developing stimuli and local image fit scale is to measure spectators' perceived congruence level between their stadium experience and the local image. Thus, the items will be created by combining scales from stadium experience measures (Lee et al., 2012; Wakefield et al., 1996) and local image and brand measures (Sims, 2009). Once common denominators between stadium and local image measures are identified, sample items will be generated based on a modified brand-self connection scale (Whan Park, MacInnis, Priester, Eisingerich, & Iacobucci, 2010). In Stage 3, a pilot study will be completed at a large Southeastern university in the United States. In Stage 4, the reliability and content validity of the initial items will be reviewed and evaluated by a panel of experts. If it is necessary, the proposed scale items will be revised in Stage 5 grounded on the result of the reliability and validity check from previous stages. In Stage 6 a second set of data collection will be conducted at the same university. After analyzing the second data set, in Stage 7, reliability and validity tests will be conducted again. Lastly, in Stage 8, theoretical and practical implications will be given providing a basic standard for future research to test multiple types of validity of the proposed scale.

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