

Segmenting the Greek Football Market

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It is generally recognized that the benefits sought method is an optimal way to segment markets. Social identity theory also explains why people make choices and has been used in explaining various behaviors, such as church attendance and sport games. The social identity theory is used in addition to benefits sought to segment the Greek football market. Based on the results, the football market in Greece can be segmented into three distinct benefit segments. These are "Moderate fans", "Fanatic fans" and "Indifferent fans." In addition, each of the three segments are described using various descriptors, such as motivation, demographic information, and information source. An important contribution of this study is to employ social identity in addition to using motivator factors to segment the market.

Field of Research: Football, Segmentation, Benefits sought, Social identity theory

1. Introduction

Professional sports make up a significant part of the entertainment and leisure industry (Euchner 1993) and of many countries' gross domestic product (Theodorakis et al. 2011). Football, in particular, is the world's most popular sport (Chadwick 2006). Major events such as the FIFA World Cup and UEFA Champions League are followed by millions of people (Merelo et al. 2013). The number of people watching football in, both, stadiums and on television has increased many-fold in recent years.

Notwithstanding the popularity of the sport, managing a football club is challenging due to important challenges from other sports, leisure, and entertainment options (Mullin et al. 2007). This makes the ability to market professional football clubs and events more effectively at a premium (Keaton, Watanabe & Gearhart 2015). The motivation for the study is to provide a better understanding of the factors that motivate people to attend football games. This understanding is important for designing more sound marketing strategies to help increase football ticket sales (McDonald et al. 2002). In addition, since football fans differ in their motivations to attend football games, marketing managers can use knowledge of such motives as segmentation bases to differentiate among target football fans (Trail & James 2001).

Due to increased competition in recent years and the desire to improve the quality of their marketing effort, football executives need to develop proper marketing plans based on accurate knowledge of the characteristics of the various football segments. A fundamental aspect of any marketing plan is to segment the market into homogeneous groups with similar needs or wants (Wind 1978; Yannopoulos 2007). Segmentation provides guidelines to the marketing strategy and resource allocation among markets and products or services. Each segment is evaluated and the marketer selects the segment(s) that will be the target market.

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Following Haley's seminal study (1968), it is generally recognized that the benefits sought method is an optimal way to segment markets. Football fans are decision makers who make choices on the basis of benefits they seek and what football clubs offer. For this reason, benefits directly correspond to the underlying people's needs and motivations as they affect their consumption behavior. Consequently, benefits sought segmentation offers more diagnostic value than socioeconomic approaches to segmentation. Therefore, the benefits sought technique is an excellent way to gain an understanding of the reasons for consumer choice and behavior.

Social identity theory also explains why people make choices when they are faced with different choices (Callero 1985), and has been used in explaining various behaviors, such as church attendance and sport games (Kleine et al. 1993; Laverie & Arnett, 2000). Although benefits sought has been used in many segmentation studies, social identity theory has yet to be employed as a possible basis for market segmentation. Social identity theory is used in addition to benefits sought to segment the Greek football market. Inclusion of the social identity theory can increase our understanding of the factors that distinguish among various football fans.

The research question in the present study is to find out how many segments there are in the Greek football market. The purpose of the study is to segment the Greek football market by using survey data collected from Greek football fans. An important contribution of this study is to employ social identity in addition to using benefits sought to segment the market. In addition to segmenting the Greek football market, segment profiles will be developed using demographic and other relevant information. Since this is the first study that segments the Greek football market, the research findings are different from previous studies. It is understood that the data cannot be considered representative of the entire Greek football market.

This article is organized into the following sections. First, a descriptive analysis of some basic demographic information such as age, household composition, education level, household income and gender is provided. In the second section, principal component analysis will be conducted to analyze benefit and social identity factors separately. In the third section, the identified underlying factors from benefit and social identity factors are used to run cluster analysis. Lastly, football fan segments are identified and detailed cluster profiles for each football fan group are provided, followed by conclusions and managerial implications.

2. Literature Review

Several studies have been conducted recently to find the motivating factors that affect sports attendance. The main conclusion of all of these studies is that motivation drives sport attendance (Funk et al. 2002). This conclusion has led to various studies in an attempt to find the specific motivations that affect sport events attendance.

Sloan (1989) grouped the motives of sport spectators into five categories: salubrious effects, stress and stimulation seeking, catharsis and aggression, entertainment, and achievement seeking. On the basis of these factors, Sloan (1989) developed the Sports Need for Achievement and Power Scale (SNAPS). Wann (1995) developed the Sport Fan Motivation Scale that included eight factors: escape, economic, eustress (euphoric stress), self-esteem, group affiliation, entertainment, family, and aesthetics.

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Trail and James (2001) expressed concerns about the content validity, discriminant validity, and to some extent the criterion validity of the Sport fan Motivation Scale and developed the Motivation Scale for Sport Consumption (MSSC). The MSSC included nine motivational factors: achievement, knowledge, aesthetics, drama, escape, family, physical attraction, physical skills, and social interaction. A modified version of the MSSC without the physical attraction motive was tested and it demonstrated validity and reliability and significantly predicted attendance at basketball games (Trail et al., 2003).

Research shows that consumption behavior and a person's identity are related (Burke & Reitzes 1981). Football fan behavior is hypothesized to enhance the role of identity and fans obtain satisfaction by acting out that identity (Laverie & Arnette 2000). In the case of football, social identity may explain why people attend football games and support a specific team and why they buy team paraphernalia (Karakaya, Yannopoulos & Kefalaki 2016; Mehus 2005).

Social identity theory helps us understand why individuals behave in a certain way (Laverie & Arnett 2000). Mead (1934) first described an individual as reflecting the larger social structure and also it reflects individual differences. Mead's idea was further explored by Stryker (1968) who argued that the self is made up of multiple roles and people have a distinct identity for each of these roles. Social roles that are personalized and linked to specific individual roles become identities (Stryker, 1980).

Despite the importance of the research question, the literature review indicates that the research question has not been addressed in past studies. Researchers in this area have done a good job in terms of finding people's motivations to attend football and other sports. Also, researchers have begun incorporating identity theory in their studies. However, no study has attempted to use both of the constructs to segment the football market.

3. Methodology

A questionnaire was developed to enable data collection through participant interviews. The first five questions in the questionnaire measure the level of football game attendance. The second section (question 6) measures people's motivation to attend football games. The third section (question 7) is in accordance with social identity theory, measuring identity salience, another important factor impacting football game attendance. In the final section, demographics and other classification variables are measured. Participants in this study were spectators attending two football games between local football teams in Athens, Greece. The same method of data collection at both games was used. Five university students who were trained by the author helped to distribute and collect the questionnaires. The questionnaire was distributed in five randomly selected sections in both stadiums. The questionnaires were distributed to spectators an hour and a half before the start of the game, and were collected a few minutes before the start of the game. The questionnaire was distributed to male and female spectators aged 16 and older. Interviewers explained the purpose of the research, ensured the confidentiality of the answers, and requested the spectators' participation in the study.

A sample size of 280 spectators received the questionnaire and 252 were completed, resulting in a response rate of 86.4%. Finally, 217 were fully completed for a final response rate of 77.5%. The sample size is considered adequate for carrying out the statistical analysis required for this paper. The majority of the participants were in the age category of 19-34 (64%) followed by the

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age category of 35-54 (19%). Seventy-four percent of the respondents were single while 21% were married. The majority of the respondents were male (72%) and 42% was either college students or had completed a college education. Thirty-nine % were full-time students, 6% were students with employment, and 2% were unemployed. Sixty-three percent of the respondents had annual household income of €24,999 or lower, while 23% had income levels of €25,000-€49,999.

4. Results

There are two broad methods for segmenting markets. The a priori method requires the analyst to select a basis for segmentation prior to the collection of the data. In the posteriori method, data are first collected and then some type of taxonomic method is used to group respondents into groups. In this paper the a posteriori method is followed. This method is a valid one for conducting such an analysis and it has been used in other studies (see Yannopoulos & Rotenberg 1999).

Principal component analysis with varimax rotation procedures was conducted to reduce the number of benefits sought into a few factors. Varimax rotation is used because our objective is to find uncorrelated factors within the motivation and social identity constructs that impact football game attendance. As motivation factors and social identity factors may have certain correlations beyond our control, two factor analyses are conducted separately on motivations and social identity variables.

The preliminary three-factor solution explained 57% variance and has satisfactory Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy (.889) and highly significant Bartlett test ($p < .000$). The rotated matrix indicates that variables are split into three factors and each factor seems to reflect a clear construct. Variables that cross-loaded or had factor loadings lower than 0.50 were deleted. Some variables that clearly do not fit with the underlying theme of any factor were deleted too. After this iterating process, the final model confirmed three distinct factors containing 13 variables.

Principal component factor analysis using the finalized variables was then rerun. Three factors emerged accounting for 65.5% of the total variance (Table 1). As is normal, factors with eigenvalues one or greater were retained. The scree technique was also employed for additional information about the number of factors to be retained. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy ($KMO=.860$) is satisfactory indicating the data are appropriate for factor analysis (Sharma 1996).

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Table 1: Factor Analysis of Benefits Sought Variables			
Variable	Emotional excitement	Socialization	Sports atmospherics
Fanaticism	.862		
Feelings of expression	.754		
Vicarious achievement	.732		
Excitement	.722		
Group affiliation – pressure	.710		
Thrill	.609		
Feel companionship		.812	
Be with friends		.760	
Entertainment		.697	
Be with family		.670	
Interest about football			.836
Aesthetics			.810
The quality of football fields			.700
Variance explained:	43.15	12.89	9.48
Total variance explained:	43.15	56.04	65.51
Eigenvalue:	5.61	1.68	1.23
Cronbach's alpha:	.872	.779	.800
Kaiser-Meyer-Olin Measure of Sampling Efficiency = .860			
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity: Significance = .00			

Bartlett's Test of Sphericity is highly significant (Chi-Square=1229.376, df=78, p=.000), implying that there is enough correlation to proceed with factor analysis (Sharma 1996). Communalities of all 13 variables are above 0.50 and factor loadings are all above 0.60. The internal reliability of the factors was assessed with Cronbach's alpha (Churchil 1979). The Cronbach's alpha for the three factors are .872 for emotional excitement, .779 for socialization, and .800 for sports atmospherics, all exceeding the minimum level of .70 recommended by Nunnally and Bernstein (1994).

Based on face validity, the first motivation factor reflects the construct "emotional excitement", as it includes the variables of fanaticism, expressing feelings, vicarious achievement, excitement, group affiliation and thrill. The second motivation factor is labelled "socialization", consisting of variables feeling companionship, be with friends, entertainment, and be with family. The third

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factor reflects the construct of “sports atmospherics”, as it includes interest about football, aesthetics of football, and quality of the football field.

Similarly, principal component analysis on question 7 was conducted to reduce the social identity related variables into fewer underlying dimensions. The preliminary three-factor model explained 53% variance and again has a satisfactory Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy (.832) and a highly significant Bartlett test ($p < .000$). The rotated matrix indicates that variables are split into three factors and each factor seems to reflect a clear construct. Thus, the three-factor solution was retained.

Next, variables that cross-loaded or had item loadings lower than 0.50 were deleted. Also, variables that clearly did not fit with the underlying theme within certain factor were deleted. After this iterating process, a final model confirmed three distinct factors containing 12 variables. The varimax rotation of the statements resulted in three factors which accounted for 57.4 % of the total variance (Table 2). Cronbach’s alpha for the first two factors are .789 and .709, both exceeding the minimum level of .70 recommended by Nunnally and Bernstein (1994). The third factor has a Cronbach’s alpha of .680, which is very close to the 0.70 minimum level. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy ($KMO=.800$) is satisfactory and Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity is highly significant ($Chi-Square=627.759$, $df=66$, $p=.000$), both implying the data are appropriate for factor analysis. Communalities of all 12 variables are above 0.40 and factor loadings are all above 0.50.

The first social identity factor is named “ardent football fan”, as it includes the variables feeling football is like religion, buying team merchandise, using the Internet to discuss football and playing video games related to football. The second social identity factor is labeled “rational football fan”, as it includes the variables of attendance based on opposing team, cost of the games, team standing and being selective about games attending. The third social identity factor was termed “casual football fan”, as it includes the variables having an outgoing personality, liking to take risks, liking all types of sports and watching games of other teams. Thus, people’s motivation and social salience that impact their football attendance can be represented by six factors. In the following section, these six factors are used to group football fans into different segments so that football clubs can better target their customers and optimize their marketing strategy.

Cluster analysis was conducted using the six factors as behavioral characteristics to cluster respondents into different football fan groups. K-means was adopted as the clustering technique rather than hierarchical cluster analysis because it’s difficult to visually judge appropriate number of clusters using dendrogram with a large sample size. Because there is a need to predetermine the number of clusters using K-means technique, and it is arbitrary to decide this number, different numbers of clusters were tried. After trial and error, a three-cluster solution was opted because it’s easier to interpret the clusters and theoretically makes more sense to retain three clusters. Also, the three clusters differ significantly with regards to the six behavioral factors. Another consideration for a satisfactory cluster solution is that all resulting clusters segments should be of a substantial and similar size, and this condition is only met when three clusters are used.

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Table 2: Factor Analysis of Social Identity Variables			
Variable	Ardent Fan	Rational Fan	Casual Fan
Football is like religion to me	.824		
Use the Internet to discuss about football	.744		
I buy team merchandise	.726		
Like playing video football games	.698		
Team standing affects my attendance		.770	
The cost of the game affects my attendance		.727	
The opponent affects my attendance		.693	
I am very selective about the games I attend		.574	
I have an outgoing personality			.740
I like to take risks in life			.719
I like all types of sports			.651
I watch games of other teams			.556
Variance explained:	.32.41	.13.35	.12
Total variance explained:	.32.41	.45.76	57.41
Eigenvalue:	.3.84	1.60	1.40
Cronbach's alpha:	.789	.707	.681
Kaiser-Meyer-Olin Measure of Sampling Efficiency = .800			
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity: Significance = .00			

The final cluster centers Table 3 shows the standardized mean of each factor for the three clusters. Based on the face value, it can be seen that all factors vary among the three groups, suggesting that three clusters work well in this case. The ANOVA table indicates that all six factors have significant clustering characteristics ($p < .001$), validating the use of these six clustering factors. Finally, the number of cases in each cluster split well in the three-cluster model. Although the size of one cluster is twice as another cluster, this is considerably better than a two cluster and a four cluster model. And this is normally considered appropriate for cluster analysis.

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Table 3: Cluster Analysis			
	Cluster		
	Moderate Fans	Fanatic Fans	Indifferent Fans
Emotional excitement	.207	1.029	-1.159
Socialization	.047	.616	-1.071
Sports atmospherics	.137	.619	-1.197
Ardent football fan	.356	1.049	-.907
Rational football fan	.134	.419	-.889
Casual football fan	.174	.507	-1.098

Next the three clusters are named on the basis of the mean factor scores of motivations and social identity factors as well as demographic factors such as age, income, and others. The first segment is labelled “Moderate fans.” This is a segment that consists of football fans that only have moderate interest in football games. They attend games on a rational basis and are not particularly committed to football. They enjoy the atmospherics but do not experience much emotional arousal during the game. People in this group also tend to attend football games often or very often, have a favorite team and are adequately or very committed to the sport. Generally, they do not belong to any sport club and do not hold season tickets. They also perceive information about football from television, newspaper, radio, friends and family, Internet and other sources as moderately important. In terms of demographics, they tend to be 19-34 years of age, mostly single, work as civil or private servant or student without jobs, most of them hold or are pursuing an undergraduate degree, earn 15,000 to 24,999 euros annually and are mostly males.

The second segment is termed “Fanatic fans.” Football fans belonging to this segment are crazy about football. They attend football games on an emotional basis and are very committed to football. They enjoy the atmospherics and socialization, but most importantly they want to experience the emotional arousal during the game. People in this group also tend to attend football games very often, have a favorite team and are very committed to it. Around one third of them belong to a football club and half of them hold season tickets. They perceive information about football from various sources as very important. In terms of demographics, they tend to be 19-24 years of age, mostly single, are pursuing an undergraduate degree, with annual income below 24,999 euros and are mostly males.

The third segment is called “Indifferent fans.” Members of this segment generally do not have an interest in the game of football. This group is also the smallest one. It’s inconclusive why

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people in this segment attend football games but they do so anyway. In addition to rarely attending football games, and only somewhat or not committed to a team. They do not belong to any sport club and do not hold season tickets. They consider information about football from television as important but regard other information sources as unimportant. And in terms of demographics, they tend to be 19-34 years of age, mostly single, work in the private sector or are students without jobs, most of them are pursuing an undergraduate degree or have an undergraduate or higher degree. Lastly, they earn 25,000 to 49,999 euros annually and they are split evenly among males and females.

5. Summary and Conclusions

The present study has provided an answer to the research question posed in the introductory section. How are football fans segmented based on benefits sought and identity theory concepts? The results support previous theories and studies which claim that people attend sports based on their motivations and identity theory considerations. This study is the first one to empirically derive different football fan segments. In this process, it has created new knowledge regarding our understanding of how football fans can be segmented in similar groups according to their motivations and identity salience that characterizes their behavior. Overall the present study has improved previous theory by providing a novel way of using motivation and social identity theory to come up with segments of football fans.

This study provides valuable insights on the factors that influence people's decision to attend football games. Using principal component analysis, the underlying psychological processes of what motivates people to attend football games were explored. Specifically, both benefits sought and the social identity dimension were examined to understand why people attend football games. Several variables were analyzed and six factors resulted that allow us to examine the research problem in a parsimonious way. Using the six factors as clustering characteristics, K-means cluster analysis was undertaken to help group football fans into distinct clusters.

Based on the results of the statistical analysis, the football market in Greece can be segmented into three distinct benefit segments. They are "Moderate fans", "Fanatic fans" and "Indifferent fans". Each of the three segments was further described using various descriptors, such as motivation, life style, demographic information, and information source. This description provides managers of football organizations the reasons that affect attendance of soccer games and the motivation of football fans to consume football-related products as well as demographic and other factors that help enrich the description of the clusters.

Findings from this study have strong managerial implications. First, the study sheds new insights on which factors impact the attendance of football games, and this is the fundamental question sports marketing managers need to address. Only if they can better understand this phenomenon, they can develop more effective marketing initiatives to attract more fans. For example, managers can learn that sometimes people attend a football game for social reasons instead of personal interest. They may come to the game to accompany a family member or to entertain a business partner. And accordingly, they can develop differentiated strategies in attracting different types of fans.

Members of the "Fanatic fans" segment are crazy about football and regard football as their faith. Members of this group have a strong emotional affection related to football and have the highest

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attendance rate compared to people in the other two segments. Most of them are male and fanatic about all football-related activities. They are the most important segment as they consume football-related merchandise, for example, football team merchandise and football video games.

These characteristics of the “Fanatic fans” segment could be used to develop marketing and promotional strategies. Since fans in this “Fanatic fans” segment demonstrate the highest football attendance and highest passion for football, football executives should take them into consideration. Marketing managers of football clubs should focus their strategies and money on this segment to earn the highest returns. They should put more effort on this group of fans and develop football related merchandise to attract those people, such as football video games. Fanatic fans are more likely to purchase season tickets, are more likely to attend football games frequently, and are loyal to their club.

Managers, in addition to concentrating their resources on retaining “Fanatical fans” should attempt to convert other fans into fanatic fans. For example, they can create some buzz around important matches to draw fans’ attention and put more information in their ads to inform fans about the deep heritage of their club. This can help to build emotional feelings and convert fans into the fanatic category. For example, an advertising campaign targeting this group could focus on the affection and football spirit, since these are the reasons that drive them to attend football games. In sum, advertising should focus on arousing their deep affection about football, which can be an effective way to motivate these fans. Advertising should focus on television, radio, internet and even newspaper since the people in this group use them as important ways to get football information.

“Moderate fans” is the segment of football fans that have particular reasons to attend a football game. They are fans who are rational and reasonable about activities related to football. The reason for them to attend a football game depends of a lot of circumstances such as team standing, cost of tickets, and the opponent of the team. However, although they are interested in football, they are very selective about the games they attend. And they do care about the quality and facility of football studio. The marketing strategies for this segment should focus on football atmospheric factors. In order managers to attract people in this group they need to provide high quality football fields and convenient facilities to spectators. Integrated campaign strategies should focus on the dramatic process of football games, highlighting the quality of stadiums and the skills and tactics of teams and individual players. Also, managers should keep ticket prices low and use television and radio in their communication efforts.

Regarding the segment “Indifference spectators”, this segment consists of people who do not care much about football. The reasons for them to attend a football game may not be football-related. They are outgoing people and might consider attending a football game as a social activity, as a good chance to make friends, have fun with family, or to gamble for money. People in this group already attend some football games yet they are not interested in football per se. How to transfer their behavioral loyalty into psychological loyalty is a major question marketers should address. Strategies to attract these fans could include appeals to make friends, going out with family to attend football games and perhaps attract people who gamble in football.

As is the case with every research study, the present study has some limitations. Although the results are quite innovative and potentially valuable to researchers and managers of football

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clubs, the results should be seen as exploratory and indicative of how the Greek football market is segmented. Future studies should select more representative samples using stratified sampling methods from different regions of Greece and from different locations within these regions. Also, future researchers should conduct the same study in different countries and see if the results hold the same in various countries. It is possible that motivations and identity salience is different in different countries. This would be useful knowledge and inform football club executives that they need to conduct separate segmentation studies in different countries.

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