

Spectators' Awareness, Attitudes and Behaviors towards a Stadium's Social Media Campaign

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Abstract:

The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between spectator's awareness, attitudes, and behaviors related to social media efforts developed by a major sports stadium. Data was collected through in-person interviews from individuals who attended a sports event at a major stadium. The hypothesized relationships were assessed by using structural equation modeling technique. The results confirm the relationships between awareness, attitudes, and behavior; awareness of a stadium's social media presence influences following the stadium on social media directly and indirectly by promoting positive attitudes toward a stadium's social media campaign. In addition, following the stadium on social media is positively related to attendance and sharing of information using stadium's social media. Implications of these findings for stadium marketers are discussed.

Keywords: social media marketing, sports marketing, awareness, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram

1. Introduction

In the United States, social media tools have become a widely-used method to build relationships between stadiums and venues, sports teams, and fans (Aicher, Paule-Koba, & Newland, 2014; Hammond, 2014; Mullin, Hardy, & Sutter, 2015; Pronschinske, Groza, & Walker, 2012; Watkins & Lewis, 2014). In 2011, revenue from fans' use of sports on mobile devices was valued at \$4 billion annually and was projected to reach more than \$10 billion by the year 2020 (Fullerton, 2016). Currently, roughly half of sports stadiums are monitoring Facebook and Twitter use by fans at the venue during events (Spanberg, 2016) and roughly two-thirds of sports stadiums have developed social media efforts involving Twitter, Facebook and YouTube and related platforms (Rothschild, 2011). Social media helps sports marketers assess fan satisfaction with teams, events, and experiences at the stadium (Fullerton, 2016; Miranda, Chamorro, Rubio, & Rodriguez, 2014; Newman, Peck, Harris, & Wilhide, 2013; Watkins & Lewis, 2014). Sports fans use different social media platforms for distinctly different purposes (Clavio & Walsh, 2013). Kim, Kim, Kim, Keegan, & Oh (2015) suggest that many sports fans use Facebook to socialize with others, while Stavros (2013) found that some fans of the NBA teams used Facebook to experience comradery with others, express passion and boost self-esteem. In contrast, sports fans are motivated to use Twitter to express opinions during live events. During live events, many sports fans prefer to use Twitter to share insights, passions, and photos (Delia & Armstrong, 2015; Logan, 2014). Instagram is a popular social media that individuals use to share photos from sports events (Bruton, 2015). To facilitate the increased fan demand for social media, many sports stadiums and arenas are expanding the wireless capabilities of venues and are creating new social media platforms (Hammond, 2014). Four Squares enables fans to identify the geographic location at which they are watching sports and other events; sports marketers are using this platform to encourage fans to tweet photos and comments from sports stadiums (Mullin et al., 2015). At Major League Baseball stadiums, teams are posting Twitter hashtags on the outfield walls to encourage fans to tweet (Blaszka, Burch, Frederick, Clavio, & Walsh, 2012). In National Football League stadiums, tweets and Facebook posts of fans are displayed on large scoreboards (Applebaum, 2013). Teams in the National Basketball Association have posted Twitter hashtags on the court in several arenas to motivate fans to express themselves through social media (Marchionna, 2012). The New Jersey Devils are one of several National Hockey League teams that have created a strong social media presence; they established a command center to respond to fan concerns and recently developed apps that provide fans at the arena with multiple views of game action (Mullin et al., 2015).

Globally, sports stadiums and arenas are also developing social media programs to engage fans. In France,

Roland Garros Stadium prompts fans to share their thoughts about the French Open tennis championship via social media (Delia & Armstrong, 2015). Throughout the United Kingdom, English Premier League soccer clubs display hashtags on stadium scoreboards to encourage fans to post on social media during games (DeMel & Boccardo, 2014). Along the route of the Tour de France, tour organizers encourage fans to tweet photos of the riders and the streets they are racing on (Hoeber, Hoeber, Wood, Snelgrove, Hugel, & Wagner, 2013). In Turkey, announcements made in stadiums and arenas prompt soccer and basketball fans to post their passions on Facebook and Twitter (Ozsoy, 2011).

As a result of the overall growth of social media and the strategic efforts of stadiums and event managers, more fans are using social media at live sports events. Recent industry reports suggest that nearly 40% of fans connect to a wi-fi device while at a stadium for a live to access social media (Stoffel & Kapustka, 2015). Many fans are using social media at venues before, during and after sports events (Ball, 2015), and are creating user-generated social media content (Stavros, 2013). As a result, the increased use of social media by spectators at sports venues is creating greater awareness and buzz for the stadium, the teams that play there, the sites that host sports competitions, and the events that take place at these sites (Hambrick, 2012; Vorvoreanu, Boisvenue, Wojtalewicz, & Dietz, 2013). Several studies point out how greater numbers of fans are sharing information on social networks while watching sports events on television and other media platforms (Lim, Young, Kim, & Biocca, 2015; Master, 2015) thus it seems likely that fans will also want to share on social media while at live sports events. During the 2012 Olympics, NBC reported that more than 1 billion sports fans viewed the network's social media pages and platforms (Bruton, 2015).

Despite the explosive growth of social media, there is a lack of studies that explored how and why fans use social media while at a stadium for live sports events. Little research has been devoted to the understanding the factors that motivate individuals to use sports-related social media (Gantz & Lewis, 2014; Logan, 2014; Mahan, 2011; Ozsoy, 2011; Seo & Green, 2008; Witkemper, Lim, & Waldburger, 2012), but none of these studies have examined how and why sports fans use, follow, and share social media developed by sports stadium professionals. The current study aims to fill important gaps in the academic literature by examining the relationship between spectator's awareness, attitudes, and behaviors associated with social media efforts developed by a major sports stadium. It seeks to explore the process through which individuals become aware of, form attitudes towards and follow the social media efforts of sports stadiums that ultimately influence attendance and information sharing behavior on social media while at live sports events. Understudying the spectators' awareness, attitudes, and behaviors associated with a stadium's social media campaign is critical to stadium marketers.

2. Conceptual Framework and Research Hypothesis

The proposed framework (see Figure 1) builds on consumer behavior and advertising literature that delineates the relationship between awareness, attitudes, and behaviors (Aaker & Day, 1974). It theorizes the effects of social media awareness on attitudes which in turn impact behavior. The central thesis of the model is that spectators' awareness of a stadium's social media presence is essential to forming attitudes and beliefs about the stadium's social media which in turn leads to behaviors (following, sharing, and attendance) associated with the stadium's social media.

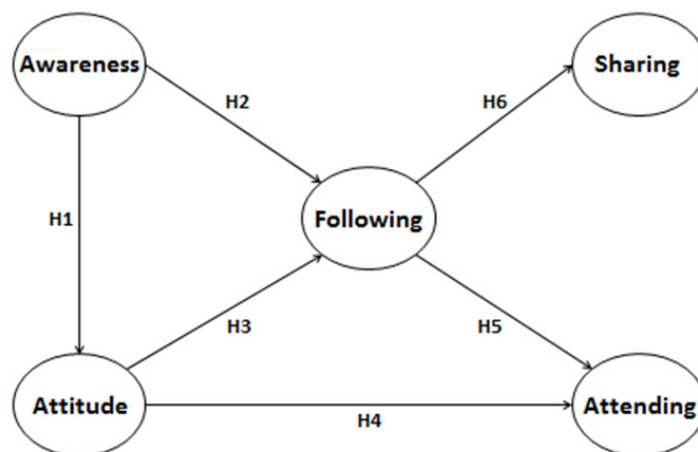


Figure 1. Theoretical model of sports stadium social media awareness, attitudes, and behaviors

2.1 Awareness-Attitude/Behavior Relationship

Several studies indicate that brand awareness leads to a favorable behavior for the brand which influences purchase behavior (Yoo, Donthu, & Lee, 2000; Farquhar, 1990; Brown & Stayman 1992). Logan (2014) suggests that customer awareness is an important antecedent that affects the intentions of individuals to follow brands in social media. Spectators' must become aware of a stadium's social media before they develop attitudes towards and follow a stadium's social media. Hence we predict the following.

H1: Awareness of a sports stadium's social media presence is positively related to attitudes toward following a stadium's social media.

H2: Awareness of a sports stadium's social media presence is positively related to following a stadium on social media.

2.2 Attitude-Behavior Relationship

The technology acceptance model (Davis, Bagozzi, & Warshaw, 1989) and the theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 1991; Kidwell & Jewell, 2003; Orbell et al., 1997) can be used to understand why individuals might follow a sports stadium on social media. Both theories posit that attitudes are directly related to behaviors. Mahan (2011) utilized the technology acceptance model to study why individuals follow sports on social media; the research suggests that attitudes of individuals about the ease-of-use of social media influence decisions to follow. Delia & Armstrong (2015) studied the social media experiences of fans at the French Open tennis tournament and found that the opinions of fans about event sponsors played a role in the extent to which they followed the event on Twitter (Logan, 20104). Research by the Warsaw Sports Marketing Center at the University of Oregon (Guerra, 2015) shows that the attitudes of individuals about social media can influence decisions to attend sports events; this study suggests that fans might be motivated to attend sports if they feel the social media platforms of sports organizations are thought to provide useful information and incentives for fans. From the above discussion, we hypothesize that the attitudes of spectators about the stadium's social media may influence spectators' decisions to follow stadiums on social media and attend a game the stadium.

H3: Attitudes toward a stadium's social media are positively related to following a stadium on social media.

H4: Attitudes toward following a stadium's social media are positively related to stadium's social media influence on attendance.

2.3 Effect of Following on Sharing and Attendance

Evidence suggests that sports fans that follow sports stadium on social media are more likely to exhibit positive behavior including the desire to attend sports events and share the game information using a stadium's social media (Albarracin & Wyer, 2000). An industry report of Major League Soccer fans (Broughton, 2014) suggests that avid fans who follow sports teams and events on social media are more likely to want to attend future games; Broughton suggests that more than 80% of these fans had connected with teams and sponsors on social media while 36 percent had actually purchased products and services from teams and sponsors. Research by the Warsaw Sports Marketing Center at the University of Oregon (Guerra, 2015) found that college students who followed a sports team on Facebook were more likely to attend games than people who did not follow the team on Facebook and similar trends were noted for other social media (e.g., Twitter, Instagram, and Snapchat). Another industry report (Howes, 2015) suggests that individuals who follow the social media programs of sports organizations are the most engaged fans, and thus may want to attend events. Organizers of the 2011 Rugby World Cup in New Zealand reached out to engaged fans that followed the All-Blacks national team on Facebook and social media and offered online ticket sales promotions; results show that engaged fans that followed the event on Facebook were motivated to buy tickets and attend the tournament (Mullin et al., 2015). The above discussion leads to the following hypotheses.

H5: Following a stadium on social media is positively related to stadium's social media influence on attendance.

H6: Following a stadium on social media is positively related to sharing information using stadium's social media.

3. Methodology

3.1 Participants and Data Collection Procedure

Data were collected during a college football game between Notre Dame University and Syracuse University at MetLife Stadium. Field interviewers randomly approached participants and asked to participate in the survey just after the halftime show was completed. A total of 237 individual participated in the survey. The majority of them were neither Notre Dame nor Syracuse fans; about one-fifth of the participants indicated they were Notre Dame

die-hard fans followed by avid Syracuse fans (about 15%). Six out of ten participants were males. Almost 30 percent attended at least one NFL game and about 35 percent attended college football game in the past year.

3.2 Measures

In this study, all measurement items were measured on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). As shown in Table 1, four items assessed spectators' awareness of the sports stadium's social media efforts. Sample items included: "I am aware that MetLife Stadium uses Facebook to interact with fans on game days" and "I am aware that MetLife Stadium uses Twitter to interact with fans on game days". Three questions that were adapted from Logan (2014) measured fans' attitudes towards following the stadium's social media. The measure assessed the extent to which participants thought following the stadium's on social media is useful and valuable. Four items measured if participants follow the stadium on social media; sample items were: 'I follow MetLife Stadium on Facebook' and "I follow MetLife Stadium on Twitter". To assess if the stadium's social media influenced spectators to attend the game, the participants were asked three questions. Three items assessed whether participants posted comments about the game they were attending using stadium's social media. A similar measure was utilized by Hughes, Rowe, Batey, & Lee (2012).

4. Results

4.1 Measurement Model

The measurement model and structural relationships were estimated using AMOS 18. The goodness-of-fit indices for the measurement model are: $\chi^2_{(109)} = 231.625$; $p < .00$; goodness-of-fit index (GFI) = .91; root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) = .068; Tucker-Lewis index (TLI) = .96; normed fit index (NFI) = .94; and comparative fit index (CFI) = .97. The RMSEA is below and close to the cut off value of .08 suggested by MacCallum, Browne, & Sugawara (1996). The values of TLI and CFI are above the cutoff value of .95 (Hu and Bentler, 1999). GFI is higher than .90 recommended by Hair et al. (2005). The normed chi-square value (χ^2/df) is 2.125, which is below the cut off value 3 recommended by Fornell & Larcker (1981). The overall model fit is acceptable.

Table 1 presents factor loadings, average variance extracted, and construct reliabilities. All factor loadings are significant at an alpha level of .05 ranging from .619 to .944, exceeding a threshold value of .5 (Gerbing & Anderson, 1988). The construct reliabilities are higher than the recommended level of .60 and average variance extracted estimates for all hypothesized constructs are higher than the recommended level of .5 (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988; Fornell & Larcker, 1981). These findings provide support for the convergent validity.

Table 1. Factor Loadings (FL), Average Variance Extracted (AVE), and Construct Reliabilities (CR)

<i>Constructs/Items</i>	<i>FL</i>	<i>AVE</i>	<i>CR</i>
Awareness		.783	.935
I am aware that MetLife Stadium uses Facebook to interact with fans on game days.	.872		
I am aware that MetLife Stadium uses Twitter to interact with fans on game days.	.906		
I am aware that MetLife Stadium uses Instagram to interact with fans on game days.	.897		
I am aware that MetLife Stadium uses other social media (e.g., LinkedIn, Pinterest) to interact with fans on game days.	.863		
Attitude		.864	.951
Following MetLife Stadium on social media is useful.	.905		
Following MetLife Stadium on social media is valuable.	.944		
Following MetLife Stadium on social media is good.	.939		
Following		.623	.856
I follow MetLife Stadium on Facebook.	.878		
I follow MetLife Stadium on Twitter.	.870		
I follow MetLife Stadium on Instagram.	.763		
I follow MetLife Stadium on other social media (e.g., LinkedIn, Pinterest).	.619		
Attending		.630	.835
MetLife Stadium's Facebook influenced me to attend this game.	.874		
MetLife Stadium's Twitter influenced me to attend this game.	.827		
MetLife Stadium's Instagram influenced me to attend this game.	.665		
Sharing		.621	.830
I used MetLife Stadium's Facebook to communicate/post content about this game.	.756		
I used MetLife Stadium's Twitter to communicate/post content about this game.	.782		
I used MetLife Stadium's Instagram to communicate/post content about this game.	.823		

4.2 Structural Model

The fit indices indicate that the structural model is acceptable: $\chi^2_{(113)} = 259.109$; $p < .00$; GFI = .90; RMSEA = .074; TLI = .95; NFI = .93; CFI = .96; and normed chi-square = 2.293. The values of fit indices were close to or above recommended levels. The results of hypothesis testing are presented in Table 2 that shows path coefficients and t -values for each structural path. Consistent with hypothesis 1, awareness of a sports stadium's social media presence is positively associated with attitudes toward following a stadium's social media ($\beta = .367$, $t = 6.312$, $p < .001$). Hypothesis 2 predicted that awareness of a sports stadium's social media presence is positively related to following a stadium on social media. The data supports the hypothesis ($\beta = .162$, $t = 3.186$, $p < .01$). Participants' attitudes toward a stadium's social media are positively related to following a stadium on social media, thus supporting hypothesis 3 ($\beta = .170$, $t = 3.108$, $p < .01$). The results show that individuals may become more inclined to follow a stadium's social media if they are aware of and have positive attitudes towards a stadium's social media (e.g., they believed it was informative, valuable and useful).

Hypothesis 4 predicted a positive relationship between attitudes toward following a stadium's social media and its influence on attendance; however, the data did not support the hypothesis. It may reflect the complexities that result in decisions to attend which may be influenced by other factors such as the ability to pay, the state of the economy, the distance to the stadium, and competing events and obligations.

Table 2. Structural parameter estimates and fit indices

Hypotheses				Estimate	t-value
H1	Attitudes	<---	Awareness	.367	6.312***
H2	Following	<---	Awareness	.162	3.186**
H3	Following	<---	Attitudes	.170	3.108**
H4	Attending	<---	Attitudes	.072	1.741
H5	Attending	<---	Following	.603	8.507***
H6	Sharing	<---	Following	.443	4.189***

Note. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

As hypothesized in Hypothesis 5, following a stadium on social media is positively related to stadium's social media's influence on attendance ($\beta = .603$, $t = 8.507$, $p < .001$). Providing supports for Hypothesis 6, following a stadium on social media has a strong association with sharing information using stadium's social media. ($\beta = .603$, $t = 8.507$, $p < .001$). This means stadium's social media influences spectators to attend sport events and they are more likely to share information via stadium's social media at live events if they follow stadium's social media.

5. Discussion

The current study examined the relationship between spectator's awareness, attitudes, and behaviors associated with a stadium's social media campaign. The results suggest that there is a significant relationship between consumer awareness and subsequent attitudes and behaviors. In essence, the findings indicate that individuals must be aware of a stadium's social media presence before they can form attitudes about it, choose to follow it, use social media in the stadium at live events, or use the stadium social media to decide whether to attend future events. Sports organizations should make potential fans aware of social media campaigns and apps developed by the stadium. Sports stadiums can make fans more aware of social media while at live events by posting messages on scoreboards, the field of play, websites and game programs (Delia & Armstrong, 2015). Other ways sports stadium professionals might increase awareness of sports stadium social media efforts include announcements made during the game, advertising, and promotions (Pronschinke et al., 2012), and by encouraging owners, coaches and star players to post user-generated content on Twitter and Facebook about sports stadiums (Hambrick, 2012); social media has also been shown to enhance the positive word-of-mouth that attendees at venues share about other events such as concerts and festivals (Hudson, Hudson, Roth, & Madden, 2015). The MetLife Stadium uses an interesting approach in which fans are made aware of the stadium's social media program through posters and signs throughout the venue and messages displayed on the giant score board. Barclays Center in Brooklyn focuses on expanding the uses of wi-fi in the arena to best meet the needs of young, tech-savvy fans. The Boston Celtics of the NBA provide an example of how social media can increase awareness and boost attendance; the team created a Facebook promotion and fans quickly purchased large numbers of tickets (Mullin et al., 2015).

The results, consistent with the technology acceptance model (Davis et al., 1989) and the theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 1991), show that there are significant relationships between consumer attitudes about a stadium's social media programs, the decision to follow the stadium in social media, and the use of social media at events at the stadium. Individuals who had positive attitudes about the stadium's social media were more likely to follow the stadium in social media and share information on social media during live events. Sports stadiums should make spectators at events form a positive attitude towards the venue's social media by providing useful and believable information. Study results also show that the decisions of individuals to follow a stadium on social media influence fan decisions to attend a game and share game information using stadium's social media during live events. Sports stadium managers can encourage customers to follow on social media by providing multiple social media sites with distinct appeals and rewards to fans. Some sports stadiums are rewarding fans for following their social media and sharing memories during live events; at Yankee Stadium, soccer club New York City FC makes it a priority to encourage fans to send selfies and photos and the best user generated content is demonstrated on the scoreboard.

This study presents some of the first attempts to assess the social media marketing efforts of venues (e.g., stadiums, arenas, etc.) where sports and other events take place. While some previous studies have been done to examine the teams and events that occur at venues, the idea of examining the social media strategies of the venue has been ignored. Hopefully this effort may lead to more studies of this sort.

It is acknowledged that this study has some limitations. A larger sample size would have been preferred and more venues have to be studied.

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