Introduction

It is often said that without sport spectators, sports events could not happen. This statement, which is largely but not entirely true, is based on an economic view and highlights the importance of spectators in generating financial income to organise and sustain the existence of sports events. This typically concerns the economic model of professional sports, whether they are leagues, tournaments, franchises or clubs. However, it does not concern all sports and does not concern low-profile, minority, amateur and semi-amateur sports. For these sports events, spectators, whether they are actively targeted or not by organisers, represent an added value but are not core in the organisation of the sports event. Actually, the sports event will happen whether or not there are spectators. From a sporting perspective, the statement could even be generalised to all sports events: would games, tournaments or leagues be cancelled because of a lack of spectators? Probably not, even if there would certainly be serious consequences upon their sustainability, in particular for professional entities.

The need for spectators is therefore at the heart of sporting events’ economic model which determines sport organisations’ focus on spectators and in turn the sports events’ marketing and management. However, it would probably be too simplistic to only consider the economic aspect. The experience aspect should also be taken into consideration and, here again, spectators’ contribution is crucial. Indeed, spectators are also co-creators of sports events. This is supported by the fact that one usual sporting sanction for teamsports is to play in an empty stadium and arena and that sport events’ organisers often offer free tickets to fill the sporting arenas as they believe it will improve the sporting performances, particularly for local athletes and teams, and the overall lived experience of participants as well (see Chapter 7 – “The athletes’ Perspective”). Very recently, British soldiers were even invited to fill empty seats during the London 2012 Olympics! According to this perspective, which is shared by many, the more spectators there are the better it is. But again, this statement is not generalizable to all cases and two arguments can contradict it. First, spectators are not always good event co-creators. They are co-creators for the good when they cheer, sing, display ‘tifos’ and do the Mexican wave, but also for the bad, when they insult, invade pitches, fight with each other and harm athletes. The first behaviours should be praised and encouraged although the latter behaviours should be banned and prevented. However, and this is the second point, this does not only consist in de-marketing dysfunctional fans (Hunt et al.
1999), it also consists in managing them well to favour certain types of behaviour. For instance, the recent outcomes of the Hillsborough Independent Panel report (Hillsborough Independent Panel 2012) revealed the direct and indirect responsibilities of various stakeholders (e.g. the local football club, local authorities, the local police, safety consultants, stewards, etc.) in the death of 96 spectators and fans and the injuries of hundreds in the Hillsborough Stadium (England) on the 15 April 1989, provoked by an unsafe terrace, poor policing and management of the crowd and an underestimation of the seriousness of the casualties. However, ‘following unsubstantiated allegations made by senior police officers and politicians and reported widely in the press, it had become widely assumed that Liverpool fans’ behaviour had contributed to, if not caused, the disaster’ (p. 4). Consequently, the above statement should be amended to become: the more well-behaving spectators there are the better it is, while keeping in mind that it is both linked to the types of spectators and the types of experience they seek but also in the way they are managed.

Finally, spectators are not only directly important to the sports events themselves but are also important for diverse sporting events’ stakeholders. High numbers of spectators will further attract the interest of tourism agencies and local businesses (see Chapter 13), sponsors (see Chapter 16) and media (see Chapters 17 and 18), as well as local communities (see Chapter 12) and public authorities (see Chapters 14 and 15), whose contributions and involvement will often be vital to the sports events’ success.

This chapter comprises two main sections. In the first section, the homogeneity of sport spectators is discussed and several theoretical frameworks are analysed. Some of these concepts and frameworks are then used and applied to two case studies. The first case specifically looks at the live spectators of the Manchester United Football Club’s home games, whereas the second case looks at the Super Bowl XLV’s crowd composition. The second section aims to analyse the main theoretical and management issues faced by sporting events, looking at various theoretical concepts and marketing approaches in order to attract spectators to sports events, manage and satisfy spectators and make them become loyal when possible. Several sporting examples will be used to illustrate these managerial approaches.

Sports spectators – who are they?

When talking about professional sports, the terms fanship and fans are frequently used to qualify the consumers, either in live or mediated contexts, of sports events. However, this term appears reductionist and does not embrace the complexity and heterogeneity of these consumers as it refers to a specific type of spectators who display a significant level of attachment with specific teams and athletes in competition and behave in a certain way, often displaying their support. However, not all spectators display the same level of attachment and/or the same behaviours. For this reason, it is important to use the term spectator which encompasses many different individuals. Especially, many commentators have been observing a diversification of sport audiences and spectators from various points of view. For instance, sports events are being attended by more women in absolute figures but also in comparison with the proportion of men, certain sports such as tennis and golf have been democratised and now appeal for more lower economic and cultural capital groups, although other sports and leagues, such as cycling and the English Premier League of football are being gentrified. Under the strain of globalisation, sports, athletes, leagues and events extensively cross historical, traditional and historical boundaries and now reach new geographical territories and spectators. The 2012 Super Bowl TV audience reached a record of 111.3 million viewers (Kearney 2012) and 2.1 million e-viewers (Dicker 2012), the final of the 2013 UEFA Champions League was aired in more than 200 countries to an estimated global audience of 150 million and reached about 22 million followers on UEFA social media channels.
The spectators’ perspective

(Ashby 2013), while the 2012 edition of the Tour de France was broadcasted in 190 countries gathering 3.5 billion views worldwide, 11.5 million unique visitors hits in July, 925,000 fans on Facebook and 12 million spectators lining the route from 38 different nationalities (Road Bike Action 2013). All these factors and phenomena reinforce the heterogeneity of sports crowds and the necessity to identify the different groups which compose them but also their specific profiles, characteristics, needs and expectations. This is the purpose of segmentation. Segmentation is defined as ‘the subdividing of a market into distinct subsets of customers, where any subset maybe selected as a target market to be reached with a distinct marketing mix’ (Kotler 1980: 1248). As stated by Mullin et al. (2000), sport is intangible, ephemeral, experiential and subjective in nature, creating various experiences and associated benefits which in turn lead to a need to segment sport spectators using specific classifications and frameworks.

Based on a similar observation regarding spectators’ heterogeneity of profiles, Stewart et al. (2003) aimed to examine various approaches to classify sport spectators. Specifically, these authors critically analysed three approaches using respectively dualistic, tiered and multidimensional models. Dualistic approaches represent the earliest and most basic approaches and consisted of identifying two main patterns of behaviours or groups (e.g. old versus new; traditional versus modern; die-hard versus less-loyal). Although these models represented interesting foundations to start with they were too simplistic and missed numerous subtleties in spectators’ behaviours (Stewart et al. 2003). For this reason, they evolved towards tiered models. Tiered models integrated more variations of intensity in behaviours and identified for instance low, medium and high-intensity in spectators’ behaviours and attitudes. This approach is illustrated by the work of Wann and Branscombe (1993) who ‘laid the foundation for a sport fan continuum that provided multiple levels of attachment, loyalty and identification’ (Stewart et al. 2003: 208). Several other authors (e.g. Kahle, Kambra and Rose 1996, Clowes and Tapp 1999) used the same kind of approach even if they used different concepts and terminology, which can cast some confusion about the existence of only three types of spectators irrespective of the variables and concepts taken into consideration. Moreover, our knowledge and understanding remained basic about the theoretical and practical links between the various tiered models and the movements from one level to another within each tiered model. Consequently, Stewart et al. (2003) recognised the importance of multi-dimensional models and approaches. This type of multidimensional classification corresponds to the broad range of attitudes, behaviours, motivations and beliefs sport spectators can display but it has to be recognised that their operationalization can remain a tough challenge for practitioners. In terms of multidimensional segmentation approaches, Bodet and Bernache-Assollant (2012) identified two further types: observation-driven and theory-driven segmentations. Observation-driven segmentation consists in identifying visible groups and profiles within a chosen sport crowd, whereas theory-driven segmentation consists in building segments using several theoretical variables and concepts (i.e. multidimensional approaches) to re-construct the complex reality. There is no one-best approach, as there is no one-best framework, as they often correspond to different purposes and contexts. For instance, it can be thought that observation-driven segmentations will be more applied and in turn useful for sport managers, whereas theory-driven segmentation may better reflect the complexity of viewership and spectatorship phenomena. Although the purpose of this chapter is not to solely review the different types of spectators and the ways of classifying them (see Bodet and Bernache-Assollant 2012, for further details), it appears necessary to review a few classification frameworks that could be used to illustrate the diversity of the sports crowds with real examples.

Possibly the most theoretically founded among the earliest fan typologies, the work of Holt (1995) has been seminal in its description of the diversity of ways of consuming and its discussion of the meanings associated with various sport spectators’ practices, which in turn could describe
different groups of consumers. Based on the participation and the observation of numerous baseball games at Chicago’s Wrigley Field, the author identified four metaphors for consumption structured upon two dimensions which were the structure of consumption (i.e. object versus interpersonal actions) and the purpose of consumption (i.e. autotelic, which has a purpose for itself, versus instrumental actions). Consuming as experience, which is characterised by autotelic and object actions, focuses on ‘consumers’ subjective, emotional reactions to consumption objects’ (Holt 1995: 2). This metaphor refers to accounting, evaluating and appreciating actions used to make sense and respond to the sport in general and the sport event in particular. The second metaphor, consuming as integration is characterised by instrumental and object actions used by consumers to ‘enhance the perception that a valued consumption object is a constitutive element of their identity’ (Holt 1995: 6). Within this type of consumption, spectators integrate the sport event and its various elements (e.g. merchandising, players, terraces, etc.) into their identity, either to reinforce or reshape it. To facilitate this integration, spectators can use assimilating practices, where spectators become experts of the sport event’s world, producing practices, where spectators’ actions and participation contribute to the creation and the proceedings of the sport event and personalising practices, where spectators modify the sport event to assert the uniqueness of the link they have with it (Holt 1995). The third metaphor, consuming as play, is characterised by autotelic and interpersonal actions and describes how people use the sport event to interact with other spectators. It is manifested through communing, when spectators share the same mutual experience, and socialising, when spectators ‘use their experiences with the game to entertain each other’ (Holt 1995: 9). The last metaphor is named consuming as classification and is characterised by instrumental and interpersonal actions. Through this metaphor, spectators use the sport event to classify themselves in relation to others, either through affiliation or distinction practices using either objects or actions. This framework is particularly interesting because it provides a thorough understanding of these practices in a sport event context and also emphasises the importance of other spectators and interpersonal relationships in this type of consumption. However, Holt (1995) did not identify spectator segments per se as, for him, all metaphors can be found expressed at various levels and at various moments by all spectators. Consequently, the practical managerial implications issued by this typology remained unfortunately limited.

Following another approach, another relevant fan classification is the one developed by Hunt et al. (1999). This conceptual typology identified five types of fans based on a combination of three theoretical orientations: basking in reflected glory, information processing and attachment as related to the self. According to these authors, consumers develop into fans of a sports consumptive object through a halo process (Hunt et al. 1999), which explains that when a consumer holds enough information about a specific sport object (e.g. a team), he/she will develop an overall attitude which will be extended to other related sport objects (e.g. players from this team, the league). Based on motivational and behavioural distinctions, five types of fans were identified. For the temporary fan, being a fan is not central to his self-concept and after the phenomenon has passed, the temporary fan is no longer interested or motivated to exhibit specific behaviours in relation to the sport object. Temporary fans are particularly observable during major international sporting events such as the Olympics or the FIFA World Cup. Unlike temporary fans that are bound by time, local fans are bound by geography. According to this classification, a local fan ‘exhibits fan-like behaviour because of identification with a geographic area’ (Hunt et al. 1999: 444). For this type of fan, being a fan is closely related to a local and territorial identification, as studied for instance by Bernache-Assollant et al. (2012). For Hunt et al. (1999), local fans use being a fan only as a peripheral object of their self and their level of support or interest should be reduced if they had to relocate. Although these authors considered this type to be situational, it is very common to observe a local or regional dimension for enduring involvements as expressed by
devoted and fanatical fans for instance. Devoted fans might have started as temporary or local fans and saw their motivation and interest in the sport object growing to break time and geographic boundaries. They show a certain level of loyalty and attachment to the sport object as it is a significant constitutive part of their self-concept, of who they are. In comparison to devoted fans, fanatical fans show more attachment and loyalty, and being a fan is for them a very important part of who they are. According to Hunt et al. (1999), ‘it is the degree to which one engages in fan-like behaviour that differentiates a devoted fan from a fanatical fan’ (p. 446). Specifically, fanatical fans are more committed and more extreme in their behaviour than devoted fans. It has to be noted that this ‘fan-like behaviour’ is not universal and varies according to sports and contexts, which explains that what can be considered as fanatic or extreme in one context, for instance making noise during the badminton games’ play in Europe, maybe considered as normal in another one, doing the same in badminton games in Asia in this example. Last, the dysfunctional fans represent another increase in terms of attachment, and being a fan represents for them the primary element to define their self-concept, which can hinder them to perform normal social roles and make them become disruptive, anti-social or violent (Hunt et al. 1999). This category of fan, of which hooliganism is an extreme example, represents a threat to other fans. However, the authors of this classification did not clarify whether or not this category represented a unique and separate category of fans or if fanatical fans could switch to the dysfunctional category according to special circumstances. Although this classification can be criticised for not relying on empirical evidence and because the distinction between certain types of fans is not conspicuous, this represents an interesting framework to appreciate the diversity of fans in relation to their level of attachment and identification.

The next segmentation frameworks which are worth studying are the ones developed by Tapp and Clowes (2002). Particularly, and contrary to the two previously discussed approaches, these authors heavily relied upon empirical data, which make these classifications very relevant and useful for practitioners. The first classification segmented English football spectators according to their value to the clubs, while the second classification segmented them according to their product need. As for the first one, the supporter value was defined by the number of games attended, which is quite similar to the loyalty and attachment aspects included by Hunt et al. (1999). They clustered them into three groups: casual fans (0 to 9 games per season), regulars (10 to 18 games per season) and fanatics (18 home games plus some or all away games) and the amounts of expenditure were consistent with the number of games attended. Most fanatics live and breathe football, are more oriented towards winning than entertainment and have a strong attachment to the local community. Unlike fanatics, football is not the top priority for regulars and they are more glory hunters, following winning teams (Tapp and Clowes 2002). As for casual supporters, the link to the local community is far less important than for fanatics, which mean that they are more likely to be professional wanderers (Tapp and Clowes 2002). They are also more oriented towards ‘entertainment’ than ‘winning’. This profile seems to be different from the local fan discussed by Hunt et al. (1999). Casual fans are further distinguished between carefree casuals and committed casuals. In comparison with carefree casuals, committed casuals see themselves as genuine fans of the club they support but do not or cannot attend regularly, probably because non-football activities are of greater priority for them (Tapp and Clowes 2002). Similarities can be drawn respectively with the temporary, devoted, fanatical and dysfunctional fans identified by Hunt et al. (1999), but in this case the frequency of attendance was combined with attitudinal loyalty measures in order to practically identify them from a managerial perspective. Tapp and Clowes (2002) used a second classification based on fans’ product need, which focuses on match day activities, behaviours and habits. The authors identified six categories which are relevant but possibly limited to English football: The mine’s a pint segment comprises spectators who like sharing a drink with casual...
acquaintances; the juggling the kids segment comprises families; the thermos at row D segment comprises regular lonely spectators; the season ticket friendlies segment comprises loyal supporters enjoying the company of other regular fans; the loyal cash and chanters segment comprises active regular fans who like singing. Dads and sons compose the last segment; they are quiet and loyal. In comparison with the former framework, the latter one, which focuses on product need, tends to be very specific and is able to put a face on each spectator by combining psychographic and socio-demographic characteristics, which are often under rated.

The fourth and last relevant framework to understand the diversity of sport events’ spectators and to segment them is the one theoretically developed by Bourgeon and Bouchet (2001) and Bourgeon-Renault and Bouchet (2007) and the measurement tool that was developed by Bouchet et al. (2011). The original authors extended the work of Holt (1995) and estimated, based on interviews, focus groups and observation of sport spectators, that four profiles could be identified in terms of type of experiences sought when going at a sport event. Interestingly the experiences sought and the values associated with them were constructed upon three types of relationships: relationships of complementarity, discordance and contradiction. Spectators with a supporter profile are mainly oriented towards the victory of a certain athlete or team; they are active and demonstrate a partisan behaviour. This profile shares communalities with the devoted, regular, fanatical and dysfunctional fans previously discussed. The second profile, the aesthete profile, characterises spectators who are mainly oriented towards the beauty, quality, theatrical, drama and spectacle dimension of the sporting event. According to Bourgeon and Bouchet (2001), they can isolate themselves from the rest of the crowd to better appreciate the spectacle, which seems to be similar to the ‘thermos at row D’ segment described by Tapp and Clowes (2002) and the aficionado described by Stewart and Smith (1997). The third profile is the interactive profile, which characterises spectators who look for interaction, fun, pleasure, emotions and entertainment. This profile gathers the play and experience metaphors defined by Holt (1995) and shows some similarities with the ‘carefree casuals’ (Tapp and Clowes 2002) and the theatre goer (Stewart and Smith 1997) types. The last profile, the opportunist profile, is probably the most innovative one because it reintroduces the importance of instrumental and utilitarian objectives in relation to sporting event consumption. Opportunist spectators aim to obtain benefits or utilities from their presence; they are generally passive and tend to express a neutrality or a spurious support if it is perceived to be profitable to them. Spectators going to sporting events to do business, some politicians, journalists and celebrities can be ranked into this category. They can be useful to raise the profile (see later section about Managing spectators’ awareness) of the event but too many of these spectators would have consequences on the stadium or arena’s ambiance and sometimes on the sporting outcome of the event. Beyond the interest each profile represents in the understanding of sport crowds’ diversity, the relationships between the various profiles are highly relevant because they allow sport event managers to realise that not all profiles have the same expectations and therefore the same compatibility. For instance, the interactive profile is theoretically in contradiction with the opportunist profile, and the supporter profile is in contradiction with the aesthete profile (see Bouchet et al. 2011 for further detail). On the opposite, there is a high theoretical compatibility between the supporter and opportunist profiles on one hand, and the interactive and aesthete profiles on the other hand. Such relationships are important when identifying which sport spectators are targeted and what kind of offer and services should be supplied to attract and satisfy these various groups.

As previously mentioned, there is no one-best framework and different frameworks should be used, combined and chosen according to the sport events in consideration. For instance, if the sport event is a one-off competition or tournament, the framework of Bourgeon and Bouchet (2001) is particularly suitable. However, if the sport event deals with a franchise or club game,
the one of Tapp and Clowes (2002) might be more relevant, especially if it deals with English football as for the product need classification. Combining frameworks and segments appears then to be the most appropriate approach but socio-demographic characteristics should also be combined as significant differences in terms of sport spectatorship and viewership are influenced by variables such as gender, age, education, occupation and ethnic background (Bodet and Bernache-Assollant 2012).

In order to illustrate the use of these different frameworks and the way they can be combined and applied to specific situations, two specific cases are analysed. As most of the figures used in the following case studies represent secondary data and spectator segments are sometimes difficult to practically identify, the estimates should be taken with caution, mainly to serve an illustrative purpose. The proportions and the relative size should be considered more than the exact numbers and percentages.

Case study 1: The Manchester United FC home games’ live spectators

Manchester United Football Club (MUFC) is a football club based in Manchester (England) competing in the English Premier League and the UEFA Champions League. For the 2013/14 season, Old Trafford stadium, MUFC’s home stadium, had a capacity of 75,731 (The Football Association Premier League Limited 2013) spectators. For the 2012/13 season, the average attendance was 75,530 with a peak at 75,605 (The Football Association Premier League Limited 2013) for the game against Reading. It means that almost every game was sold out. In terms of socio-demographic characteristics, most MUFC’s fans were male (84 per cent), earned on average £38,000 a year, and lived on average 78 miles away from the home ground, which was the second highest average distance in the Premier League (SportsWise 2008), indicating that not many fans can be considered as local. As for certain characteristics, no specific information is available but can be extrapolated from the Premier League National Fan Survey (NFS) (SportsWise 2008) considering all Premier League teams’ fans in general. The age average was 42-years-old, and unsurprisingly, season-ticket holders were older than non-season-ticket holders. Female fans were more likely to be younger than older, 71 per cent were either married or living with a partner, came from the middle class (respectively 42 per cent from upper middle and 32 per cent from lower middle). However, non-season-ticket holders (i.e. casual fans) fall more into the upper middle category than season ticket holders (44 per cent versus 39 per cent). As for ethnicity, 94 per cent of the fans surveyed qualified themselves as ‘white’.

Most of MUFC’s home spectators have a supporter profile (Bourgeon and Bouchet 2001) and can be considered as devoted and fanatical fans according to the classifications of Hunt et al. (1999) and Tapp and Clowes (2002). The size of this segment can be estimated by looking at the number of season ticket allocation, which was about 52,000 (Mathieson 2012) in 2012. This figure tends to indicate that devoted and fanatical fans represented at least 75 per cent of the crowd considering that regular spectators may not necessarily hold a season ticket. A few could be considered as dysfunctional fans (Hunt et al. 1999) with approximately 150 match day arrests in 2011/12 involving MUFC fans (von Behr 2012), representing less than 0.2 per cent of the overall crowd. Interactive spectators (Bourgeon and Bouchet 2001) or casual fans (Tapp and Clowes 2002) may come occasionally to game with friends and family for an entertaining and social day out, and therefore will not hold a season ticket. Families could fall into this category as they may not be able to commit for every game, or could not afford them. Tourists could be included within this segment as well, as
many of them want to experience a match day in Old Trafford (more than 200,000 people visit the
Old Trafford museum every year). Considering the aesthete profile, it first could be said that many
season-ticket holders could fall into this category considering the quality of football provided by the
English Premier League and MUFC in particular. Even if Bourgeon and Bouchet (2001) considered
them theoretically opposite, it could be thought that devoted fans could sometimes be considered as
aesthetes as well. According to the NFS, about 47 per cent of MUFC fans initially came to watch a
game because of the quality of play; they could have become supporters and devoted fans afterwards.
As for the opportunist spectators, it is always difficult to provide an estimate as they are likely to hide
this utilitarian behaviour. It is possible to provide an imperfect approximation by looking at the ca-
pacity of the suites and executive boxes. The club had 44 suites for hospitality and 169 boxes hosting
between 5,000 and 7,500 (Feast Magazine 2007) spectators on a match-day. Obviously, not all of
them can be considered opportunist, such as business people and other guests, and many of them are
devoted fans and/or aesthete spectators; some will be also interactive fans who want a day out with
family and friends, possibly for a celebration. However, as we can consider that an over-estimation
using these figures will compensate for the opportunist spectators who hold regular seats. We could
therefore estimate, using the guest lower figure, the opportunist spectators to represent less than 5 per
cent. In conclusion, the size of each spectator segment for MUFC’s home games could roughly be
estimated as follows: 75 per cent supporters/fanatical fans, 10 per cent aesthete/committed casuals,
10 per cent interactive/carefree casuals, 5 per cent opportunist.

Case study 2: The Super Bowl XLV’s live spectators

The Super Bowl is the game between the American Football Conference (AFC) champion and
the National Football Conference (NFC) champion to determine the champion of the National
Football League (NFL). For the 2010 season, the game opposed the Pittsburgh Steelers (AFC) to
the Green Bay Packers (NFC) (The Packers beat the Steelers: 31 to 25) at the AT&T Stadium
(formerly Cowboys Stadium) in Arlington, Texas. The stadium had an official maximum capacity
of 111,947 spectators (Mosier 2010). For this particular game, 103,219 spectators attended but
400 spectators could not be seated (Leahy, 2011). It is also reported that the attendance figure can
be broken down into 91,060 paid customers and 12,159 credentialed people (Leahy 2011). In
terms of socio-demographics, no specific data are available for live spectators but it is possible to
approximate them by looking at the TV viewer demographics of this particular event. According
to these figures (SportsBusiness Daily 2012), 56 per cent were male, which is lower than usual
NFL male attendance which is usually about 66 per cent; 80 per cent were Caucasian, 11 per
cent African-American and 9 per cent Hispanic. Age distribution was balanced with the less than
17 years old representing 16 per cent, the 18–34 representing 23 per cent, the 35–49 representing
25 per cent, the 50–64 representing 22 per cent and the 65 and more representing 14 per cent. It
is likely that the in-stadium crowd was older than the TV audience as few very young spectators
would attend. In terms of income, 12 per cent of them earned less than $25,000 a year; 22 per
cent between 25 and $50,000; 20 per cent between 50 and $75,000; 16 per cent between 75 and
$100,000 and 30 per cent more than $100,000. It could be assumed than the live spectators would
on average earn more than the TV viewers considering the cost of the tickets, travelling and
accommodation as well as the younger age of TV viewers.

The NFL formula for dividing the game’s tickets was as follows: 17.5 per cent to each participat-
ing team, 5 per cent to the host team, 34.8 per cent for the other clubs and 25.2 cent for the league
The spectators’ perspective

As illustrated with the two previous case studies, sport event crowds are diverse and therefore will not imply the same management. For instance, when it is a one-off event, the focus will be more on attracting temporary fans, although regular season games could rely more on devoted and fanatical fans. Because of this diversity, different stages and approaches should be taken into consideration. This is what was proposed by Funk and James (2001) with the framework they developed: The Psychological Continuum Model (PCM). The PCM ‘describes motives relating to the sport object and the evaluative processes by which a person internalises features of a social situation’ (Funk and James 2001: 121). Although it concerns an individual’s connection to a sport object, here a sport event, it can also be used to understand the different stages associated with various spectators and fans as identified in the previous section. The PCM comprises four stages: awareness, attraction, attachment and allegiance. Awareness represents the first stage when an individual has some knowledge of a particular sport event; attraction is found when this individual has some interest in this particular sport event; attachment is the stage whereby this individual has developed a psychological connection to the sport event; allegiance represents the last stage, which

How to manage spectators?

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(Reuters 2011). Considering the cost associated with attending such a game, it can be considered that most of the tickets allocated to the participating teams would be purchased by supporters (Bourgeon and Bouchet 2001) and fanatical fans (Tapp and Clowes 2002) looking for a victory of their team. This would represent about 35 per cent (2 x 17.5 per cent) of the overall crowd, accounting for about 36,126 spectators. Considering that this game is the climax of the season and should see competing the two best teams in the country, it is highly probable that many aesthete spectators, who look for beautiful displays and great performances, would want to attend this event. They might be American football connoisseurs and might also support another team in the league. Based on this information, it can be estimated that a high proportion of the tickets allocated to the other teams would go to these aesthete fans. Furthermore, as the Super Bowl is always considered a great show and a great entertainment (Apostolopoulou et al. 2006), many interactive spectators would be also be present for instance to see as much the game as the halftime show with the performance of the Black Eyed Peas in this particular event. Women were probably very well represented within this segment as women are dominant among the non-avid fans of the Super Bowl and for whom the halftime show appears to be very important (Apostolopoulou et al. 2006). Five per cent of them can be considered as casual spectators who live in the local area. As no local team was involved in this game, it is difficult to determine which profile they may have had. They could be either aesthetic, interactive or even opportunist spectators, but were probably more interactive spectators and carefree casuals considering the spectacular dimension of the show. Last, as noted earlier, many spectators were credentialed people and could be considered opportunist spectators, looking to achieve utilitarian purposes, even if it is not completely exempt from hedonic benefits. Based on the comparison between regular NFL games and the Super Bowl demographics, it seems that opportunist spectators tend to be older than the regular audience. In this case, about 15 per cent of the crowd, accounting for about 15,500, could be considered as opportunist spectators. In conclusion, the size of each spectator segment for the Super Bowl LVX could roughly be estimated as follow: 35 per cent supporters/fanatical fans, 20 per cent aesthetes/connoisseurs, 25 per cent interactive/temporary fans, 5 per cent local spectators, 15 per cent opportunists.
shows spectators having developed a loyalty to the sport event (Funk and James 2001). Although, this framework represents a relevant framework to structure managerial actions targeting different potential and current spectators, it is necessary to add an experience stage focusing on what is happening during the event in order to maximise spectators’ satisfaction. Consequently, the four PCM stages enriched by an experience stage are used to structure the analysis of the possible managerial actions.

Managing spectators’ awareness

As noted by Funk and James (2001), managing the awareness level consists in responding to the two questions of when and how people become aware of a particular sport event. These authors emphasised the role of socialising agents and other factors for both children and adults as people can become aware of a sporting event at various points in their life. In particular, Funk and James (2001) emphasised the role of parents, siblings, family and friends, teachers and coaches in making children aware of a particular sport event, athlete or team. This is indirectly supported by the work of Jones (1997) who found that parental influence was key in the decision to become fan of a particular team. Many sport events and leagues have realised the importance of these socialising agents and have tried to use them to increase first awareness and second attendance with ‘bring a friend’ or ‘a kid for a quid’ (i.e. pound sterling) schemes. However, these socialising agents are not very much controllable by sports events’ managers. They are not only relevant for children but also for adults, particularly when talking about small or medium-size sports events which do not benefit from a clear notoriety. Funk and James (2001) also noted the importance of the local community and the geographic proximity, also noted by Jones (1997). Other crucial factors are media, either through the news or particular programmes, which can be now extended to social media and the Internet on one hand and the promotion and marketing aspects on the other hand. In this regard, the concept of awareness has been widely studied in relation to the concept of brand equity and is often considered as one dimension of customer-based brand equity (Keller 1993). As sports events should be considered brands (Bouchet et al. 2013), this approach seems particularly relevant as well. For Keller (1993), brand knowledge comprises brand awareness associated to brand image. Brand awareness consists of brand recognition, which ‘relates to consumers’ ability to confirm prior exposure to the brand when given the brand as a cue’, and brand recall, which ‘relates to consumers’ ability to retrieve the brand when given the product category, the needs fulfilled by the category, or some other type of probe as a cue’ (p. 3). Brand recognition and recall then characterise different levels of awareness and consequently knowledge of the brand. As explained by both Keller (1993) and Funk and James (2001) from two different perspectives, awareness is fundamental for a sports event to be considered as a consumption option. Nevertheless, it should be noted that even if individuals develop a certain level of awareness towards a particular sport event, it does not mean that they will automatically move towards the next stage, which is the attraction stage. However, all the consumers who move towards the attraction stage go through the awareness level. In this regard, awareness is not an issue for all sports events. For instance it is not an issue for most major sports events which are internationally known. However, awareness of particular issues such as the place of the event when it moves from city to city, like the Olympics and Commonwealth Games, or country to country, like world cups and championships, can be an issue. As for the case studies previously analysed, awareness could be an issue for the Super Bowl as it has to communicate about the place it is organised in, the date and the prices. It is truer for non-North American spectators, which
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highlights the territorial and geographical dimension of awareness that is only global for a few
mega sports events. It will not, however, be an issue for MUFC as each game is almost sold
out and the club consequently does not need to focus on getting more live spectators. It is an
issue for mediated spectators or satellite fans (Chanavat and Bodet 2009), but this will rarely
concern live games.

Managing spectators’ attraction

Attraction is the next stage of the Funk and James (2001) continuum and characterises a state
of interest towards the sport event. As noted by these authors, ‘attraction is thought to result
from psychological features of the social situation and hedonic motives’ (p. 128). Motives are
closely related to the benefits associated with the consumption of the sport event and the type
of experiences associated. They can be linked to different motives such as eustress, self-esteem,
escape, entertainment, economic, aesthetics, group affiliation and family, achievement, drama,
knowledge, social interaction and physical skills (Wann 1995, Trail et al. 2003), to different
consumption metaphors (i.e. experience, play, classification and integration, Holt 1995) or to
different types of experiences sought (Bourgeon and Bouchet 2001, Bouchet et al. 2011), as
detailed in the previous section. Attraction will be the consequence of the sport event’s ability
to be perceived as being associated with and offering some of these features. It is important to
note here that if the individuals have not experienced these particular features in a specific sport
event, they will rely on the image of the event to determine whether or not it is attractive to
them. This aspect is directly linked to another dimension of customer-based brand equity, which
is brand image. According to Keller (1993: 3), brand image is defined as ‘perceptions about a
brand as reflected by the brand associations held in consumer memory’. According to this
author, brand associations can be attributes, benefits and attitudes. The attributes of the sports
event represent its various descriptive features such as the competitors and athletes involved, the
city, the stadium, the period, the number of athletes, the length of the event, the number of spec-
tators, the price, the type of spectators who go to this event, the typical situations associated with
this event etc. The second type of association, the benefits, represents the personal value con-
sumers attach to the sport event as mentioned above (e.g. drama, interaction, personal expres-
sion, vicarious achievement, networking etc.). The last type of association comprises attitudes
which are overall evaluations of the sport event, of its attributes and its benefits. To be attractive
to potential spectators, a sports event needs to produce favourable and positive associations,
to have strong associations, meaning that they are sustainable and robust, and finally unique
associations to differentiate itself from the competition and other sports events. Brand image is
closely related to another construct, considered by Aaker (1991, 1996) to be another compo-
nent of customer-based brand equity, which is perceived service quality. Again, it is important
to note that perceived quality does not necessitate for the consumer to have experienced the
sport event. Without any past experience, potential consumers will mainly rely upon the sports
event’s image and associations, which can be constructed by various media, communications,
promotions and word-of-mouth. Several studies (e.g. Hill and Green 2000, Theodorakis et al.
2001, Bodet and Bernache-Assollant 2009, Byon et al. 2013) have looked at the importance of
perceived service quality in the context of sports events but they mainly considered spectators
with a prior experience of the events. Spectators’ attraction to a sport event is also thought to
be influenced by individuals’ involvement in the sport related to the event, considering that the
more people are involved in their sport, either as participants or spectators, the more they will
be attracted by a related sport event.
Managing spectators’ experience

The stage after which potential spectators are attracted to a sports event is to transform them into actual spectators. It is not always feasible to do so; and, for instance, many individuals attracted by national or international sports events cannot attend them because of cost issues, work and family commitments. This transformation of potential to actual spectators is the objective of the marketing mix and its components, the 7 Ps, which are more appropriate to sports events than the traditional 4 Ps. They are product, price, place, promotion, people, process and physical evidence (Zeithaml et al. 2009). In this expanded mix for services, people refers to all human actors (e.g. employees, volunteers, spectators) who play a part in the service deliveries; physical evidence refers to the environment in which the service is delivered and its tangible components, which comprise facility design, equipment, signage, employee dress and other tangibles; process refers to the ‘actual procedures, mechanisms, and flow of activities by which the service is delivered – the service delivery and operating systems’ (Zeithaml et al. 2009: 25). Transforming attracted individuals into actual spectators is not easy and relies on a good management of the demand and the capacity. As capacity is often fixed due to the facilities, demand is often the first variable sports event managers try to manipulate by playing on the price and information aspects. Many systems can be put in place such as paid membership for football clubs as an entry right to have access to tickets; lotteries and ballot systems as for the 2012 London Olympics Games or the 2014 FIFA World Cup; various ticket packages (e.g. per team or per city) for major sports events; yield management techniques or simply promotions, reductions and free tickets for many local sport events.

Nevertheless, transforming them into actual consumers is not enough and managing spectators’ experience and their satisfaction should be at the core of a manager’s focus as it produces various positive consequences for sports events (Bodet and Bernache-Assollant 2011). Furthermore, the concept of satisfaction is particularly important when spectators are not strongly identified with the teams or athletes involved (Bodet and Bernache-Assollant 2011), and have probably not developed a strong attachment or loyalty to the sports event. Spectators’ satisfaction is influenced by various service quality attributes which do not have the same impact according to the characteristics of the spectators, which directly relates to the first chapter part and the nature of the crowds. Sport spectators between sports events and within the same sport event do not have the same expectations, and therefore will not be satisfied by the same service attributes: fanatical fans will not be satisfied by the same elements as temporary fans; interactive spectators will not be satisfied by the same attributes as aesthete spectators, women might not be satisfied by the same services as men etc. For instance, in the US minor league hockey context, it was found that women were less critical regarding the teams’ performance than men, older spectators were less critical than younger spectators regarding the facility and the staff, spectators with higher income levels were less critical of the service personnel and highly identified spectators were less critical about the facility and the team’s performance (Greenwell 2002). Moreover, service quality attributes will not have the same importance and impact on spectators’ satisfaction. Bodet and Bernache-Assollant (2009) compared the contribution of service quality elements in the context of the French ice-hockey premier league for three groups of consumers based on their level of team identification and found both similarities and differences. For instance, the quality of the game, the behaviour of the home team’s players and the availability of a match-day programme were keys for all three groups, whereas pre-game entertainment, fans’ behaviours and the functionality of the arena were secondary for all three groups (Bodet and Bernache-Assollant 2009). On the opposite, various service attributes do not have the same contribution between spectator segments and differences were found, for instance, regarding the result of the game which was a key element for the spectators (i.e. lowly-identified consumers) and the supporters.
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(i.e. highly-identified consumers), whereas it was secondary for connoisseurs (i.e. medium-identified consumers). Another example among many of these differences concerns the seating comfort aspect which was a basic element for the spectators but a secondary element for the connoisseurs and the fans (Bodet and Bernache-Assollant 2009). However, it should be added that, unfortunately, few results could be considered as universal, and it is not because Bodet and Bernache-Assollant (2009) or Greenwell et al. (2002) found these results in their particular sports contexts that they can be generalised to all sports, countries and sports events. Specific primary research will need to be conducted by sports event managers regarding the specific expectations of their spectators and fans. Based on these results, it appears then crucial to be consistent regarding the spectators’ segments targeted by the sports events and the importance of the quality of the various services and elements offered by them.

However, the relationship between perceived (experienced) service quality and spectator satisfaction is not automatic; other non-controllable factors intervene. Many authors include the result of the sport contest as part of the offer, but it is difficult to have control over this issue. In the same vein, many outdoor sports events are strongly influenced by the weather conditions, which will have a strong impact on spectators’ satisfaction despite the lack of control from the managers. Nonetheless, even if a direct control is impossible, an indirect control is sometimes feasible. This is, for instance, what the Wimbledon Championships tennis tournament did in installing a retractable roof on the centre court in 2009. Another important factor which is difficult to control is the behaviour of other spectators and fans. Tournament and game atmosphere is a dimension of service quality (Yoshida and James 2011), which is particularly important for interactive spectators, but it is difficult to guarantee it because it depends on the behaviour of other fans and spectators which cannot always be predicted. Inflatable cheering sticks can, for instance, be given for free by the sports events’ organisers but there is no guarantee that spectators and fans will actually use them.

In the wave of the publications of Pine and Gilmore (1999) and Schmitt (1999), an experiential marketing approach has been promoted focussing less on service quality, tangible and controllable factors and more on extraordinary experiences, surprise and emotions. This is for instance what was done, without necessarily being fully conscious of this strategy, by the Super Bowl (Apostolopoulou, et al. 2006) and the Stade Français Rugby Club (Bodet 2009a) by transforming traditional sports contests into big entertaining and enriched shows. This approach has been quite successful and in both cases has managed to attract new segments of spectators looking for special and non-traditional sporting experiences.

Managing spectators’ attachment

Funk and James (2001: 132) argued that ‘attachment is based more on intrinsic than extrinsic processes’, which indicates that less managerial action is possible regarding this stage of the continuum. It corresponds to the capacity of the sports event’s attributes and benefits to be psychologically internalised and meaningful for the individuals (Gladden and Funk 2001). It may or may not involve a live experience of the sport event by the consumers; some consumers and spectators can be attached to a certain sports event without having directly experienced it but by following it through broadcast and other media. Funk and James (2001) noted that various characteristics influence the formation of a positive overall attitude and an attachment towards a sports event: importance (i.e. psychological meaning attached to an attitude), knowledge, direct experience, certainty, extremity, intensity, personal relevance, cognitive-evaluative consistency and accessibility. Among these factors, these authors considered importance to be a fundamental element as attachment is developed when the sports event and its association are increasingly linked
with important spectators’ attitudes, values and beliefs, making these associations of value and of importance. The activation of these particular links, by providing more information or promoting specific attributes, between sports events’ associations and individuals’ personal, social and psychological characteristics represents one way to strengthen this attachment. The sports event’s managers can also leverage the existing attachment potential spectators can have with specific athletes, teams, clubs, cities or stadiums to increase the attachment they could have towards the sports event and benefit from the halo effect.

Managing spectators’ allegiance

The final stage of the PCM is allegiance; it refers to the concept of loyalty, which is better known in the literature. It represents the ultimate target for sports event managers because loyal spectators mean steady financial income; they resist alternative offers; they are price elastic, meaning that they would continue buying despite a price increase; and they become advocates of the sports event, which in turn brings a sustainable competitive advantage (Dick and Basu 1994). However, when talking about loyalty, it is important to make a distinction between attitudinal and behavioural loyalty not only based on theoretical grounds but also because a gap between attitudes and behaviours has been frequently observed (Ajzen 2001, Sheeran 2002, Bodet 2012). Attitudinal loyalty refers to a psychological connection characterising a resistance to change, whereas behavioural loyalty can be measured by the attendance, the frequency of attendance, the length of attendance and the money spent to follow a specific athlete, team or sport (Matsuoka et al. 2003). Particularly when sports events do not occur in the same place, it is difficult to consider that spectators and fans could attend the following events considering the costs involved. Only a minority of fanatical fans and opportunist spectators might be able to attend for instance several Commonwealth or Olympic Games in a row. In regard to spectators’ allegiance, most studies have looked at spectators and fan loyalty towards clubs and franchises. For this reason, team identification, defined as the ‘extent to which individuals perceive themselves as fans of the team, are involved with the team, are concerned with the team's performance, and view the team as a representation of themselves’ (Branscombe and Wann 1992: 1017), was probably the first concept to be identified as a direct antecedent of both attitudinal and behavioural loyalty (see Wann 2006 for a review). In addition to team identification, spectators’ satisfaction was identified by several authors (e.g. Cronin et al. 2000, Bodet et al. 2009) as an antecedent of attitudinal loyalty; behavioural loyalty has been found to influence attitudinal loyalty (Hill and Green 2000, Bodet and Bernache-Assollant 2009; perceived service quality and perceived service value, defined as a cost-benefit ratio, were also found to influence attitudinal loyalty (Cronin et al. 2000) and involvement in the sport was also found to influence attitudinal loyalty (Hill and Green 2000).

In order to maintain spectators’ loyalty to sporting events, the relationship marketing approach encourages managers to focus less on the discrete transactions and on filling stadia but more on the creation of a sustainable relationship with the spectators (Ferrand and McCarthy 2009). Although this approach is relevant for recurring events such as MUFC’s games, it may appear less relevant for the Super Bowl for instance, even if it is still relevant to build a relationship with some of the aesthetes and the interactive spectators who may attend other Super Bowls in the future, if only live attendance is at stake. Core in the relationship marketing approach are the Customer Relationship Management (CRM) techniques which rely heavily upon database marketing and upon new media and technology. In this regard, Adamson et al. (2006) called for real Fan Relationship Management (FRM) practices which truly focus on relationships with fans and do not only costume advanced transactional approaches. Although these relationship approaches seem relevant and are called for by both managers and academics, CRM and FRM tools seem to be
still predominately used to increase transactions’ value and achieve short-term goals; which was qualified by Adamson et al. (2006: 159) as “‘talking the talk’ of relationships, but ‘walking the walk’ of transaction marketing’. Moreover, these approaches rely on the assumption that most, if not all, spectators aim to establish long-term relationships with sports events, which is debatable as sports consumers are increasingly seen as inconstant, chameleon and zappers (Bodet 2009b).

Chapter summary

The overall aim of this chapter was to provide an overview of the various issues faced by sports event managers regarding the management of their live audiences. The first objective was to demonstrate that sports events’ crowds are not homogeneous either between sports events or within sports events. In order to demonstrate this diversity of sport spectators, several theoretical frameworks have been chosen and discussed in relation to the segments they identified and their theoretical and managerial contributions. It is important to restate here that there is no one-perfect framework; and because sports events are extremely diverse, it is necessary to choose the most appropriate frameworks for a specific context, to combine them, to mix them in order to obtain the most accurate picture of the sports events’ spectators as possible. This is what we tried to do by looking at the cases of Manchester United FC and the Super Bowl XLV. In many cases, the accuracy of the picture drawn will be influenced by the availability and the quality of data, and primary research will often appear necessary to compensate the shortcomings of secondary data. This preliminary step was necessary as different spectators will require different management practices. This was the second objective of this chapter. Based on the diversity of the spectators, we have proposed several stages which could serve as a basis for the identification of managerial actions. Managing spectators’ awareness and attraction corresponds to the management of the pre-event period; managing spectators’ experiences corresponds to the management of the sport event itself; and managing spectators’ attachment and allegiance corresponds to the management of the post-event. For each of these stages, we have tried to identify the key issues in relation to potential, actual and past spectators and the most recent management and marketing approaches, which should help sports events’ managers to attract enough spectators, to satisfy them and to make them loyal when possible, which in turn should ensure the success of their sport event.

The academic literature dealing with spectators and fans has been primarily concentrating on devoted and fanatical fans and there is a clear need to further study the expectations, attitudes and behaviours of casual and interactive spectators. Particularly, more research is needed to appreciate the experiential dimension of sports events’ experiences from a spectator perspective, which will probably require less focus on cognitive and information-processing psychological models to fully appreciate the diversity of experiences. This could be done, for instance, in line with the Consumer Culture Theory (CCT) research programs related to (1) consumer identity projects, (2) marketplace cultures, (3) the sociohistoric patterning of consumption, and (4) mass-mediated marketplace ideologies and consumers’ interpretive strategies’ (Arnould and Thompson 2005: 871). The first and third research programmes have already received significant attention in the context of sport events but the same cannot be said for the two others. Within these diverse sport spectator experiences, the role of other spectators and fans, their influence on spectators’ satisfaction and loyalty, and the way they can be managed need further study as it is a very important factor which is hardly under the control of sports event managers. Also, the recent publication of studies relying upon a theory of customer value co-creation (Vargo and Lusch 2004) (see suggested future readings) opens an interesting and promising research stream. Another relevant research direction could concentrate on the nature of the relationships sport spectators and fans want to create with sports events in order to establish accurate foundations for CRM and FRM practices,
in order to avoid having too ‘sports event–centric’ approaches which do not fully respond to consumer needs. It would be also relevant to analyse spectators from a more holistic perspective, through the lens of spectators who often establish diverse relationships with various sporting events, rather than looking at spectators from the sport event’s point of view, which tends to isolate spectators in their attitudes and behaviours and underestimate their complexity. For instance, the attachment process to a particular sports event might be closely related to a dis-attachment process to another sports event. Also illustrated with this particular example is the need to consider longer periods and longitudinal approaches, which allows us to better understand processes in comparison with the isolated ‘pictures’ provided by cross-sectional studies.

**Suggested readings**


**References**


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