THE LOYALTY ATTRIBUTES AND SPECTATORS’ INTENTIONS TO WATCH FOOTBALL GAMES: CASE STUDY IN MALAYSIA

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Abstract - Sports are socially significant activities to enhance national identity. The aim of this study is to investigate the loyalty attributes that have influenced spectators’ intentions to watch football in Malaysia. The variables that were intended to analyze is loyalty factors on spectators’ their intentions to Malaysian football match. The instruments that were used are Model Point of Attachment Index (Trail, Robinson & Dick, 2003) and Behavioral Intentions Scale (Hightower, Brady, Baker, 2002). Stepwise regression were used to analyze data. The results revealed that there is a significant linear regression between loyalty and spectators’ intentions to watch football games is strong. Analysis regression stepwise shows that the predictor for spectators’ intentions to watch football consists of variables, such as Malaysia Cup football league, team, community, player, and football game. These variables affect 54% (p = .01) variance towards their intentions to watch football game at stadium. According this result, sport organization continue their assessment and loyalty attributes to plan strategies to increase the usage of the stadium as leisure activities and national identity programme. Therefore, the sport organization should consider loyalty elements in planning strategies to enhance ‘One Malaysia’ identity through sports activities.

Keywords: ‘One Malaysia’, spectators, loyalty attributes, football league, stadium

INTRODUCTION

In the era of promotion sports culture development in Malaysia, the sports sociology concept should take into account the psychological factors that influence spectators’ intention to watch Malaysian football league. Sports are related to the social and cultural context in which we live. Sports are socially significant activities to enhance national identity towards ‘One Malaysian’ through difference ethnicities such as Malays, Chinese, Indian and others minority groups. Malaysian cities tend to place a high value on the presence of sports activities in their communities. Various efforts have been done to enhance this sports culture such as the organizing football league, sports and leisure facilities construction throughout the country. The aim of this study is the relationship between loyalty and spectators’ intentions to watch Malaysian football match at the stadium. [1] found that football club image and home team are the domain factors that influence the satisfaction among seasonal football spectators. [2] have determined 19 items that motivate participation of K-League spectators (South Korea). They found four clustered reasons that influence spectators’ intention such as game venue, product, price, and promotion. The result also shows that loyalty and motivation factors influence the correlation between sportscape and spectators’ intention return to stadium. In addition, [3] conclude that team success influences spectators’ enjoyment. Team loyalty is also the main factor influence spectators’ intention to watch Korea professional football league. [4] stated that loyalty is the main attribute towards intention to watch game at stadium. [5] stated that stadium facility, parking and safety influence spectators’ satisfaction. [6] found that the most dominant attribute that influences football spectators of Chilean National Soccer to watch games at the stadium is the team quality, size of population and stadium size. However, [7] found that there is a correlation between loyalty and the intention of using the facilities of fitness and health centres. They also found that there is a positive correlation between commitment and satisfaction among club members towards their intention of using the facilities of fitness and health centres. The physical factors such as stadium facilities, fitness, and health centre influence the spectators or club members’ interest. Meanwhile, [8] studied towards 651 Australian Football League fans and discovered that interest towards team gets the highest score (min = 6.3) in determining the frequency of watching football game at the stadium. [9] Asiah, Aminuddin and Jamil (2010) finding that motivation attributes influence the correlation between sportscape and spectators’ intention return to stadium. Thus, there are various factors that could determine spectators’ intention to watch football games at the stadium.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

The Model Point of Attachment Index (Trail, Robinson & Dick, 2003) and Behavioral Intentions Scale (Hightower, Brady, Baker, 2002), as the conceptual study of intention to watch football match at the stadium. There are limitations in Model Point of Attachment Index, where Trail, Robinson and Dick (2003) did not specify which of the elements loyalty is the main variable that influences spectators’ intention to watch football game at the stadium. The result of this study could be used to fill in the weakness in Model Point of Attachment Index in Malaysian national identity perceptions towards spectators’ behavioral intention.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study is to investigate the correlation between loyalty and intention to watch Malaysian Cup football league among the spectators’ at stadium. The first null hypothesis (Ho1); there is no relationship between loyalty and spectators’ intentions. The second null hypothesis (Ho2); there is no influence loyalty
attributes towards spectators’ intentions to watch football games.

**METHODOLOGY**

A convenience sampling method was employed in this study by conducting a survey (Greenwood, Kanter & Casper (2008). A total of 370 spectators’ football Malaysia Cup successfully completed survey questionnaire. Linear regression and stepwise regression analysis were used to identify the relationship between variables and to specify the influence of loyalty attributes towards spectators’ intention to watch football match at stadium. The result of the pilot test has shown that alpha item of the instrument between .80 and .90.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>R Square</th>
<th>R Square Change</th>
<th>F Change</th>
<th>Standard Beta</th>
<th>Sig value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Malaysian Cup Football</td>
<td>.426</td>
<td>.427</td>
<td>274.444</td>
<td>.381</td>
<td>p= 0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Football League</td>
<td>.516</td>
<td>.091</td>
<td>69.640</td>
<td>.209</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Team</td>
<td>.536</td>
<td>.017</td>
<td>13.630</td>
<td>.134</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Community</td>
<td>.542</td>
<td>.006</td>
<td>4.954</td>
<td>.118</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Player Football game</td>
<td>.549</td>
<td>.007</td>
<td>5.811</td>
<td>.132</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**R = 707, R Square .549 ; Adjusted R Square = .543, p < 0.01**

Table 1 showed that the R Square of .543 suggests that loyalty attributes predictors variables explained 54.3% variance in the spectators’ intention. Stepwise regression shows that loyalty attributes; Malaysian Cup football league 42.6% variance followed by R Square Change team loyalty 9.1% variance, R Square Change community loyalty 1.7% variance, R Square Change player loyalty and football loyalty 0.6% in predicting the Malaysian Cup football league spectators’ intention to watch games at stadium. Coefficient regression found that the largest standard beta is .381 which is Malaysian Cup football league. This loyalty factor which most is predicting towards spectators’ intention. ANOVA test shows that the influence between predictor variable and criteria variable is $F (5,364) = (49.534)$ at significant level $p = 0.01$. Thus, the second null hypothesis (Ho2) is rejected. The finding has proven that there is significant influence between loyalty attributes towards spectators’ intention. The result shows that Malaysian Cup football league loyalty is the most influential factor in determining spectator intention to watch Malaysian football league at stadium. The five attributes loyalty could determine 54% variance of predicting spectators’ intention. The Durbin Watson analysis shows that there is no independent error with the value 1.840.

**DISCUSSION**

There is a relationship between loyalty attributes towards Malaysian football spectators’ intention. It shows that the spectator loyalty has high correlation towards spectators’ intention attendance at stadium. Loyalty attribute which is Malaysian football league has strong correlation and player factor has low correlation towards spectators’ intention. It could be concluded that in the accordance of the spectators’ perception, Malaysian Cup football league towards their supported team encourage spectators’ attendance in future at the stadium. This also applies towards their perception that loyalty is the factor that gives intention in watching the matches. It also explained that better Malaysian Cup football league could influence higher intention to attend among spectators. According to [10] spectators are satisfied with the team loyalty football league, will spend more time at the stadium and will have the intention of coming back for more fames in the future. Sports organization and sports sociologist should upgrade the promotion national identity and strategies planning to attract and entertain spectators to the stadium, thus in hope it could enhance the spectators’ motivation gradually. Based on Motivation Scale For Sport Consumption (Trial & James, 2001), spectators’ enjoyment could be elevated if they are constantly informed of the sports league tournament, teams and players’ performance. From the aspect of information flow about the football games, sports’ organization and sports sociologist should be more open about Malaysian football league tournament. Furthermore, high loyalty will show a constant attitude of the spectators and their national identity towards sports and leisure activities.

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The results show that there is a relationship between loyalty attributes towards spectators’ intention of re-viewing game among Malaysia Football Cup league. The loyalty factors and behavioural intention are found to have strong relation towards spectators’ intention. It can be implied that according to the spectators’ perception, loyalty could enhance spectators’ frequency to come to the stadium for more matches in the future. This is because they are loyal to the Malaysian Cup football league. [10] stated that spectators’ loyalty gives the impression of interests and their intention of coming back at the stadium. Meanwhile, they also have the perception that teams, community, the players, or football game will enhance their intention of game re-view at the stadium for more matches. This shows that in accordance of the spectators’ perception, better loyalty attributes will encourage them to come back to the stadium for games in the future (Bitner, 1992; Wakefield, Blodgett & Sloan, 1996). To assist the increase of spectators’ intention, the loyalty factors should be given more attention by sports organization and sports sociology in planning strategies to enhance One Malaysia as national identity through sports programme. The finding could contribute the sports sociology concept that loyalty attributes should be taken into consideration in valuing spectators’ behavioural intention in Malaysia.

Finding from this study revealed that loyalty attributes which are teams, community, the players, or football game significantly predicted that influences spectators’ intention to attend. However, this finding is the opposite with [11] where his findings show that physical facility influences the spectators’ intention to attend baseball league. In contrast, the result of this finding shows that Malaysian Cup football games, teams, community, players and football game affect spectators’ intention of coming back to the stadium for more games towards Malaysian spectators. However, this result is not supports [7] stated that factor motivation which is stress freedom is the factor that most influence spectators’ intention of watching games among basketball spectators. [8] reported that the interest factor for a team gets the highest score towards spectators’ participation.

Coefficient regression shows Malaysian Cup football league (β = .381) has the highest influence towards spectators’ intention of game re-view. This means, when the level of spectators’ loyalty on Malaysian Cup football league increased by one stage, the spectators’ intention will increased by 0.38. The result of this study is consistent with [8] study, loyalty is the main element that influences spectator’s intention to return at stadium. This means that the higher the level of loyalty on Malaysian football league, the higher the level of spectators’ intention of participating in a live game will be. [12] spectators’ loyalty in their intention of game re-view is caused by the loyalty elements which are team’s win-lose record, supporting teams and players, updates on team’s development through printed media and the usage of the team’s image This result is parallel with [5] findings where they found that there is loyalty influence towards sports’ events spectators’ satisfaction. The factor loyalty towards teams is the most influenced predictor towards spectators’ enjoyment and frequency in watching games among university’s games spectators. The loyalty factor towards a team will attract spectators’ interest to continue watching the football match. Also, they intended to buy tickets for the upcoming games. The spectators’ loyalty will also make them stay for longer hours in the stadium to watch their team’s performance [10]. This implies that the spectators’ loyalty is an important attributes that should be noted by sports sociologist in planning their strategies to promote national identity through sport and leisure activities. This attributes are related in loyalty is towards Malaysia football league, teams, community, players and football games. In overall, strong loyalty towards Malaysia football league will encourage spectators’ return to watch games at the stadium. The findings show that the loyalty attributes influences the spectators intention, even though football game has low influence, it still gives significant and important effect when combined with the Malaysian football league, teams, community and loyalty to players. This study clearly supports [10] and [11] research that considered loyalty factor as part of aspect that affect the spectators’ intention of game re-view among football spectators. This implied that the loyalty attributes are closely related with the spectators’ intention of re-view game. The result from the analysis shows that loyalty attributes influence spectators’ intention of re-view more games with 54 percent variance among football spectators in Malaysia. However, 46% variance is specified by others attributes that not included in the model such as stadium features, team performance and spectators’ interest to attend at stadium. The sports sociologist should take into consideration the factor loyalty in enhancing the client’s conscience towards Malaysian football league. The promotional activity such as advertisement and announcement could be enforced as it could understand and attract the spectators’ more national identity towards Malaysian football league. The loyalty factors are the mechanism that should be taken into serious consideration by sport organization and NGO to promote ‘One Malaysia’ to a success. Firstly, it is suggested based on sports sociology in Malaysia more active throughout school, higher learning, youth programme and leisure activities for majority and minority group. Also, updated technology and communication information in the effort enhance national identity. This could also be done by preparing quality Malaysian football league match will generate spectators’ enjoyment and their intention supports Malaysian football league tournament at stadium. Second strategy is to opportunity to the spectators to have interaction with the football organising team, football teams, players or community by preparing official webpage of Malaysian Fan Football Club. This could be justified by the study that influence of loyalty which are loyalty towards football league, towards players, towards teams and towards coach are the factors that is affecting spectators’ satisfaction and their enjoyment of coming back in the future to watch football. The spectators’ loyalty could be taken into advantage as they are support One Malaysian football team. Thus, the finding of this study suggest that if the constructed loyalty is merged into the Model Point of Attachment Index (Trail, Robinson & Dick,
2003), it could clearly explain the influence of loyalty attributes towards spectators’ intention Malaysian football league match. Furthermore, this study is limited towards Malaysian football spectators at stadium. The same study could be done for other types of sports and leisure activities. Also, suggested that further study on demographic factors of the spectator. This type of study could strengthen spectator loyalty model.

References


