

Original Article

Motivations, attitudes and behavioral intentions of soccer games spectators

AMALIA ZORZOU¹, JULIA ZORZOU², ATHANASIOS LAIOS¹, EVANGELOS BEBETSOS¹, DIMITRIS KOBODIETAS² NIKOLAOS APOSTOLIDIS²

¹School of Physical Education and Sport Sciences, Democritus University of Thrace, GREECE

²School of Physical Education and Sport Sciences, National & Kapodistrian University of Athens, GREECE

Published online: December 30, 2014

(Accepted for publication November 30, 2014)

DOI:10.7752/jpes.2014.04078;

Abstract:

The present study investigated the psychological consuming behavior, the attitude and the motivations of professional soccer games spectators, aiming to increase the consumption of sports products. Due to this purpose, 2322 fans of all the participating clubs in the Greek Super League championship supplemented three established questionnaires and an informative data sheet, which recorded their motivations, attitude and intentions, throughout the first round of a championship period. The applied instruments were: (a) Planned Behavior questionnaire (Ajzen & Madden, 1986), (b) Socialization, Performance, Excitement, Esteem and Diversion questionnaire of Funk et al., (2009) and (c) Sport Fan Motivation Scale of Wann et al., (1999). Due to the representativeness of the sample, the questionnaires were delivered randomly and voluntarily. All the items of the three questionnaires were adjusted for soccer game spectators, and for the evaluation of the internal consistency of their dimensions, Cronbach alpha index was applied. Additionally, cross tabulation analysis was applied for the connection of the personal characteristics of the participants with the factors of the questionnaires. The results of the investigation revealed that all of the questionnaires constituted valid and reliable instruments which provided useful information regarding games attendance. Conclusively, the package of the four in total questionnaires consist valid and reliable evaluation tool. The most important factors among the instruments revealed self-identity, information, socialization, financial reasons and escape, so that part of the strategy of the athletic clubs should reinforce these five factors.

Key words: sport marketing, fans, match, attendance

Introduction

The sports product is considered as one of the most important show species around the world and millions of people are committed on this kind of show. One of the most prevalent type of sports product is soccer game, which is the most popular sport in the world and is played by men, women and children of all ages (Stolen, 2005). The involvement of all these people with soccer sport influencing on the increment of the spectators number, which in turn become supporters of various clubs and buyers of entertainment products. Observation of the fans' attitude leads to the conclusion that the various types of matches monitoring (in the stadium, tv, radio, newspapers) the differences in responses between them. Regardless the reaction type of the fans which may be due to their specific characteristics and personality all the fans are somehow "tied" more or less with the club they support. This special characteristic of the fans, has become a fertile field for scientific research in recent years having started from the theory of social identity (Ellemers, Spears, & Doosje, 2002; Stets & Burke, 2000).

Monitoring sports events is a very competitive market mainly due to the existence of many options available to the spectators (Robinson, 2006). The possibility of attracting as many fans in professional, and in amateur competitions, is an important objective of all the clubs and the organizers of games and championships. According to the Mashiach (1980), understanding the factors motivating fans to attend a match to the football stadium, is a multidimensional issue, due to the fact that attitudes and behavior are determined by a complex combination of incentives.

Positive attitudes (eg positive comments about the club and its provided services), and the behavior of fans (eg frequent monitoring of the club's matches), refer to a very important concept for the marketing, which is the "customer's loyalty". The interest of researchers and managers on the specific concept, stems from the finding of the positive relationship between customer's loyalty and achievement of strategic business objectives such as: revenue growth, cost reduction of promotional products, creation of positive image and customers'

retention (Rundle, Thiele, & Mackay, 2001). Therefore, loyal customers are an important competitive advantage, particularly in services aspects.

The dedication reflects both to the attitudes and to the consumer behavior toward a product, a service, a company (Backman & Crompton, 1991; Park, 1996). Regarding the measure of the customers' loyalty, literature have proposed two dimensions: the measurement of behavior which is expressed by parameters such as duration, frequency and time which someone devotes to follow a sport activity (Iwasaki & Havitz, 2004) and the measurement of variables related to attitudes towards a specific club; for example intention for positive comments concerning the club, importance of the club for the fans, knowledge about the club (Funk & Pastore, 2000). According to Wakefield and Sloan (1995), taking under consideration the relationship between loyalty to the team and motivations, dedication holds an important role in the fans' desire to visit and stay in stadium. This is a necessity to be considered by the clubs because as possible devoted a fan can be, the visit and stay in the stadium watching soccer matches, depends on a variety of factors, for which mainly responsible are authorities and organizers of the championships.

Sport research has used a series of discrete facets motives among spectators and supporters. (Funk, Ridinger, & Moorman, 2004; Madrigal, 2006; Pease & Zhang, 2001; Trail & James, 2001; Wann, 1995). Generally, these motives can be categorized to utilitarian and pleasure motives. The utilitarian motivations are functional and consists the objective desires or the tangible characteristics of a product or sport service, including space services, cost of players and coaches, promotions, scheduling of matches, new stadiums, accessibility, and the relationship between socio-demographic variables and sports attendance (Ross, 2007; Wakefield & Sloan, 1995). In contrast, pleasure motivations are experiential characteristics related to subjective and emotional reactions for the product, such as enthusiasm, imagination, energetic stress, representative achievements, escape, aesthetics, membership of the club, and social interaction (Funk et al, 2004; Madrigal, 2006; Trail & James, 2001; Wann, 1995). The dominance of scales to measure pleasure motivations compared to the utilitarian motivations, stems from the subjective nature of the sport and the experience and unique aspects of various sports experiences (Madrigal, 2006; Kahle, Kambara, & Rose, 1996).

Papakonstantinou and his colleagues (2009), in their review research referred that the main motivations affecting the fans' attendance of games were: (a) the "attractiveness" of the club, such as individual skills of the players, (b) the "internal and external relations" within the club, such as relations between the players and the administration and between the club and its opponents and their fans, (c) the "financial" factor, such as the price of the ticket, and (e) the "preference" of supporters, such as the quality of the stadium facilities. At the same time through the research examining the motives of supporters in constant games attendance, it was found that stadium's parking, cleanliness, number of spectators, food service and fans' control of behavior are the most significant factors.

Zorzou and her colleagues (2011), in a relative study, referred fans attending frequently soccer matches are more pretentious than other fans regarding services offered to them. Education level, age, gender and occupation of the fans are main factors affecting frequency of games attendance. This finding is considered significant because these fans can afford to spend money on the club, sufficient to offer the appropriate services that will enhance their motivations. Also, the concept of "matching" between the fans and the sports club seems to be a reference point and is included in the previous mentioned investigations. The increased interest stems from the fact that "matching" is an important prerequisite for the development of loyalty of the fans to the clubs (Kolbe & James, 2003). According to Trail and colleagues (2003), the matching level between fans and clubs, affects their expectations of the match result and performance, and indirectly their decision to attend the games in the future. Pease and Zhang (2001) found that "matching" was the most significant predictor of attending basketball games in U.S.A. professional league (NBA). According to Matsuoka, Chelladurai and Harada (2003), and Wann et al. (2004), the stronger the tying between fans and club, the more likely of games attendance in the future.

Given that satisfaction and understanding the behavior of the fans consists the more significant factors, which the marketing stuff of the clubs should take under consideration for the development of effective marketing programs, the evaluation of psychological and consuming behavior, as well as the motives of the soccer fans are requisite. Therefore, the purpose of the present study is to record and evaluate attitudes, intentions, motivations and demographic characteristics of the professional soccer league spectators.

Materials and Methods

Participants

The sample of the present study, were 2500 male soccer fans which voluntary participated. 2322 of them properly completed all the instruments and consistent the final sample. The demographics characteristics and the profile of the participants are presented in the table 1 below.

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of the sample

Age (y) $X^2=265.5$ $p<0.001$	Education $X^2=1208,5$ $p<0.001$	Profession $X^2=790.2$ $p<0.001$	Income (€) $X^2=639.9$ $p<0.001$	Matches attendance $X^2=4245.9$ $p<0.001$
<19 (15,1%)	Primary school (2,6%)	Students (22,4%)	< 500 (18,4%)	0 (13,4%)
20-29 (28,6%)	High school (9%)	Civil servant (12,5%)	501-700 (9%)	1 (14,3%)
30-39 (27,1%)	Lyceum (38,3%)	Privet employee (27,3%)	701-1.000 (19,3%)	2 (27,5%)
40-49 (17,4%)	Technological Educational Institution (18,8%)	Businessmen (6%)	1.001-1.300 (17,8%)	3 (16,5%)
50> (11,4%)	Higher Educational Institution (21,3%)	Freelancer (19,6%)	1.301-1.700 (9,3%)	4 (16,4%)
	Master- PhD (7,7%)	Unemployed (6,3%)	1.701-2.000 (6,4%)	5 (1,9%)
		Other profession (5,2%)	>2.001 (11,6%)	

Instrumentation

The measured variables in the present study were investigated with the most established scales which extensively used in resent years regarding the specific topic of sports marketing. The four applied instruments are described below.

(a) Planned Behavior questionnaire

Regarding motivations and psychological consuming behavior, the Planned Behavior questionnaire was used (Ajzen & Madden, 1986; Theodorakis, 1994), which is a Likert-type scale from 1 (*never or not at all*) to 7 (*every day or very much*). The specific thirteen items instrument investigates five factors: attitude (2 items), intention (3 items), self-identity (2 items), strength (2 items), and information (4 items).

(b) Socialization, Performance, Excitement, Esteem & Diversion questionnaire

The SPEED questionnaire (Funk D.C., Filo K., Beaton A.A., & Pritchard, 2009) is a Likert-type scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*) to record the factors of socialization, interest for the club, interest for the players, excitability – enthusiasm and escape, throughout 10 items.

(c) Sport Fan Motivation Scale

The SFMS questionnaire (Wann, Schrader & Wilson, 1999) is a Likert-type scale from 1 (*not at all*) to 7 (*very much*), throughout 23 items to record the following eight factors of: escape, creative stress, financial reasons, esthetic reasons, self-esteem, club links, entertainment and family status.

(d) Demographic data sheet

For the needs of the study a demographic data sheet was applied in order to describe the sample's profile regarding age, education, profession, financial status and frequency of visiting the stadium to attend a match.

Data collection

Measurements were accomplished during the first round of the Super League championship, in stadiums of all participating clubs.

The Questionnaires were completed voluntarily and anonymously under the supervision and assistance of the research team, to be given the appropriate clarifications and resolved any questions in the case of not understanding questions, after approval from the Institution's Ethics Committee.

Statistical analysis

For the data analysis the statistical package SPSS 21.0 was used. The statistical analyses of the data included: (a) descriptive statistical indices (means, deviations, frequencies) and (b) reliability analyses for the scales (Cronbach alpha) and (c) cross tabulation analysis for the detection of the connection between personal characteristics of the sample and the factors of the instruments. Statistical significance for all the analyses was accepted at $p<0.05$.

Results

Regarding the characteristics of the participants is observed that the majority of them aged between 20 to 39 years (55,7%), approximately the 50% had a significant level of education, mostly they were students and private employees (49,7% in total), and finally 37,1% of them had monthly income between 701 to 1300 €.

Results controlling reliability of the instruments for the present sample, internal consistency coefficient Cronbach Alpha observed .889 for Planned Behavior questionnaire, .857 for SPEED and .888 for SFMS questionnaire.

Planned Behavior questionnaire

From the 2322 consumers of the sport products 1963 of them completed properly and integrated the instrument. The factorial analysis of the instrument revealed five factors with eigenvalue greater than 1 and the most important among them "self-identity" and "information", adjunctively explaining 83,70% of the total variance (KMO 0.881, $X^2=13301.9$, $df=78$, $p<.001$). Specifically in figure 1 below are presented the explained variance of each of the five factors.

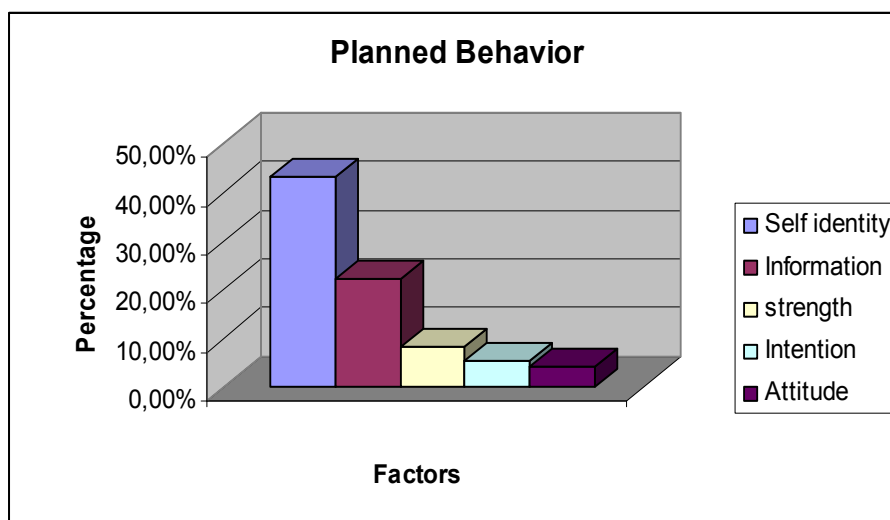


Fig. 1. Explained variances of the factors of Planned Behavior questionnaire

SPEED questionnaire

From the 2322 consumers of the sport products 2141 of them completed properly and integrated the instrument. The factorial analysis of the instrument revealed five factors with eigenvalue greater than 1 and the most important among them "socialization" and "performance", adjunctively explaining 84,55% of the total variance (KMO 0.819, $X^2=10292.7$, $df=45$, $p<.001$). Specifically in figure 2 below are presented the explained variance of each of the five factors.

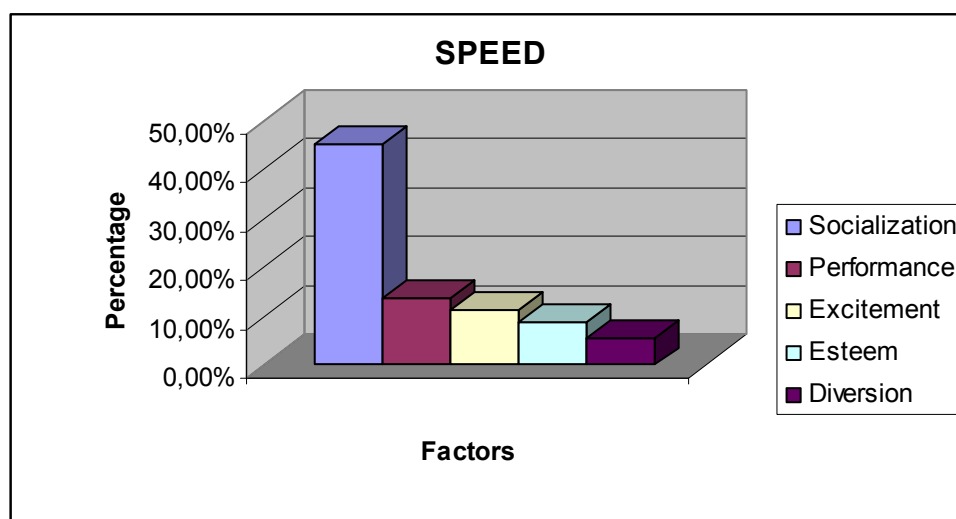


Fig. 2. Explained variances of the factors of SPEED questionnaire

SFMS questionnaire

From the 2322 consumers of the sport products 2139 of them completed properly and integrated the instrument. The factorial analysis of the instrument revealed eight factors with eigenvalue greater than 1 and the most important among them "financial reasons" and "escape", adjunctively explaining 70,15% of the total

variance (KMO 0.888, $X^2=18304.8$, $df=253$, $p<.001$). Specifically in figure 3 below are presented the explained variance of each of the eight factors.

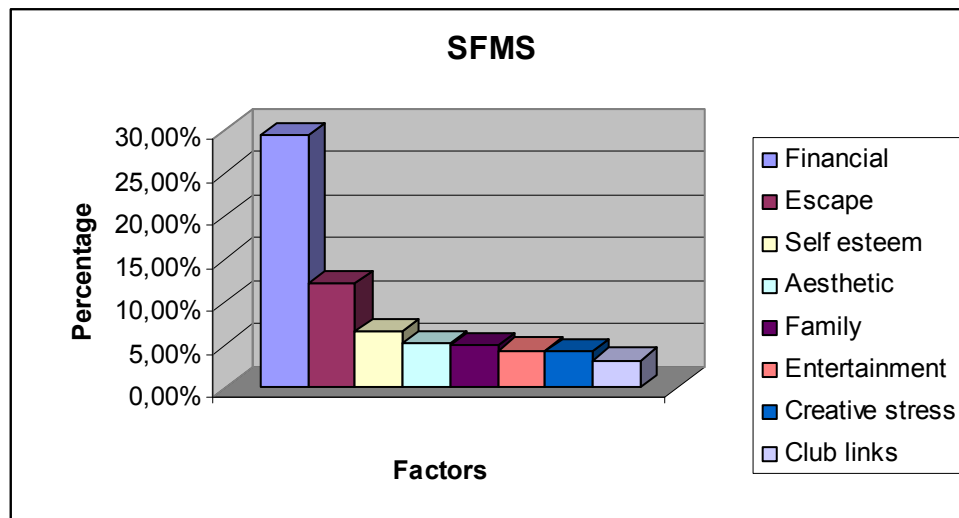


Fig. 3. Explained variances of the factors of SFMS questionnaire

Discussion

The researchers of the present investigation documented that their effort helped to distinguish the profile of the spectators and their most essential common motivations. In other words, what exactly they feel and why every weekend they visit the stadiums, oblivious for the weather conditions, just because they motivated by something. This seems to be influenced by the different psychological profile of every fan/sports product consumer. We addressed and investigated male fans, because according to Papaioannou et. al., (2009) this specific population regularly attending games in more than double rate comparatively to females. Additionally, the proportion of males enrolled in athletics and sports clubs is more than double also, comparatively to females. Previous studies revealed ambiguity regarding the motives of the fans of various sports in games attendance. This research clarified and defined throughout the applied questionnaires, motives, intentions and behavior of the fans of professional soccer game.

The age of sports product consumers mostly ranges from 20-29 and 30-39 years, and that could be explained by the fact that this is the age of soccer players. The dominance of two points of the 20-29 age-group versus 30-39 one, perhaps occurs because the athletes involved in professional soccer quit from the game approximately in the age of 33-34. Only a small minority of soccer players remain in competing until 36 and 37 years old. Regarding the education level of the sample, it was revealed that $\approx 50\%$ of them had graduated preliminary school and high school and the other $\approx 50\%$ had graduated university. Within the higher education group $\approx 9\%$ of them held Master and Doctoral degree. The above findings are in accordance with Tolka et al., (2009) results, which referred that 14% of the sample fans they examined held Master (degree), 40% had graduated university and 36% of them had finished high school. In addition, the findings of the present research are in accordance with Thamnopoulos research (2012), in which participants held higher or highest educational institutions degree. Master and PhD degree, consistent the second largest group of the sample (45,8%). In contrary to our investigation, Funk and colleagues (2009) supported that only 30% of the spectators in professional sports in Australia, held a degree in higher or highest educational institutions, Master and PhD degree. In regard to the spectators' main profession, the results of the study showed that private employees constitute the largest part of the sample (27,3%), followed by the students (22,4%), freelancers (19,6%), civil servants (12,5%), unemployed (6,2%) and other professions (5,2%) and are in accordance with Appelbaum et al., (2012) research. Finally regarding fans' salary, 27,4% of them declared that their monthly income fluctuated up to 700 €, 46,4% from 701- 1700 € and 18% more than 1701 €. Comparatively to Tolka et al., (2004) research when financially the environment was much better comparatively to now days, researchers found that 25% of the sample declared monthly income fluctuated between 1174-1467 €, with second best 22% of them with 880-1174 € per month. In contrast to the local financial environment and salaries, Funk and colleagues (2009), supported that 56% of professional soccer fans in Australia, declared monthly salary 2500-6000 \$ AUD. The findings of the present study regarding monthly incomes of the fans, may provide adequate information to the marketing specialists of the professional soccer clubs, in order to create target groups and priorities for the attraction of new consumers.

A further objective of the study was to assess the psychometric properties of attending professional games throughout the scales of Planned Behavior, SPEED and SFMS. Regarding planned behavior questionnaire, factor analysis revealed KMO test of sphericity 0.881 and emerged the following five factors of self-identity, information, strength, intention and attitude, explaining 83,70% of the total variance. Self-identity and information revealed as the two most important factors presenting significant loads among all the five ones. Self identity factor focuses on how capable feels the person and consequently influenced by its intention and by the power of attitude in order to attending games regularly. The factor analysis of SPEED questionnaire resulted KMO test of sphericity 0.819 and emerged the following five factors of socialization, performance, excitement, esteem and diversion, explaining 84,55% of the total variance and are in accordance to Funk, et al. (2009) research. These five unique factors have been associated with "why the fans seek experiences throughout sports as spectators?", and the answer is "because consumption of such experiences provide opportunities to gain benefits and cover needs" (MacInnis et al., 1991). The two most important factors presenting significant loads among all the five ones revealed socialization and performance. Finally, SFMS questionnaire's factor analysis revealed KMO test of sphericity 0.888 and emerged the following eight factors (eigenvalue>1.0.) of financial reasons, escape, self esteem, aesthetic reasons, family, entertainment, creative stress and links of the club explaining 70,15% of the total variance. The factors of financial reasons, escape and self esteem explained in total ≈50% of the variance and revealed as the three most important factors presenting significant loads among all the eight ones. The findings of the present research are consistent with Wann (1995) investigation, which was held in psychology graduates with various nationalities and found to express the specific questionnaire. Conclusively, the most important target groups of fans that marketing specialists should take seriously under consideration are these of 20-39y regarding age, the graduated from lyceum and higher educational institutes regarding education, students, privet employs and freelancers regarding occupation and finally those who earns less than 500€ and between 700-1300€ regarding monthly income. Additionally, the personal characteristics of self identity, information, socialization, performance, financial reasons and escape should also seriously considered by the marketers in order to attract more spectators and preserve them long time.

Conclusions

The method of questionnaires distribution and analysis is a procedure which can help the clubs to recruit new fans and preserve them in long, contributing to their financial strengthening. Although the generalization of the results must be gingerly, the provision of motivation to future researchers in order to use this investigation as a model, reproduce the findings and continue developing the topic and could be attained by the test of more personal characteristics and even more by psychological and environmental factors. Finally, this kind of research could be expanded in other team sports (e.g. basketball, volleyball, handball), in order to copy prosperous tactics of fans recruitment.

References

- Ajzen, I. & Madden, (1986). Predictions of goal-directed behavior. Attitudes, intentions and perceived behavioral control. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 22, 453-457.
- Ajzen, I., (1985). *From intention to actions: A theory of planned behavior*. In: Action Control: From Cognition to Behaviour, J. Kuhl & J.Beckman (Eds.), New York: Springer Varlag. pp.11-39.
- Appelbaum, G., Cain M.S., Darling E.F., Stanton S.J., Nguyen M.Th. & Mitroff S.R., (2012). Corrigendum to "What is the identity of a sports spectator?" *Personality and Individual Differences*, 52 (2012) 422–427.
- Backman, S. (1991). Aninvestigation of the relationship between activity loyalty and perceived constraints. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 4: 332-344.
- Ellemers, N., Spears, R., & Doosje, B. (2002). Self and social identity. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 53, 161-186.
- Funk D.C., Filo K., Beaton A.A. & Pritchard (2009). Measuring the motives of sport event attendance: Bridging the academic-practitioner divide to Understanding behavior. *Sport Marketing Quarterly*, 18, 126-138.
- Funk, D.C., & Pastore, D.L. (2000). Equating attitudes to allegiance: The usefulness of selected attitudinal information in segmenting loyalty to professional sport teams. *Sport Marketing Quarterly*, 9(4), 175-184.
- Funk, D. C., Ridinger, L., & Moorman, A. J. (2004). Exploring origins of involvement: Understanding the relationship between consumer motives and involvement with professional sport teams. *Leisure Sciences*, 26, 35-61.
- Iwasaki, Y. & Havitz, M.E. (2004). Examining relationships between leisure involvement, psychological commitment and loyalty to a recreation agency. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 36(1), 45-72.

- Kahle, L.R., Kambara, K.M. & Rose, G.M. (1996). A functional model of fan attendance motivations for college football. *Sport Marketing Quarterly*, 5(4), 51-60.
- MacInnis, D. J., Moorman, C., & Jaworski, B. J. (1991). Enhancing and measuring consumers' motivation, opportunity, and ability to process brand information from ads. *Journal of Marketing*, 55, 32-53.
- Madrigal, R. (2006). Measuring the multidimensional nature of sporting event consumption. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 38, 267-292.
- Mashiach, A. (1980). A study to determine the factors which influence American spectators to see Matsuoka, the Summer Olympics in Montreal, 1976. *Journal of Sport Behavior*, 3(1): 16-28.
- H., Chelladurai, P., & Harada, M. (2003). Direct and indirect effects of team identification and satisfaction on intention to attend games. *Sport Marketing Quarterly*, 12(4), 244-253.
- Neale, L., & Funk, D. C. (2006). Investigating motivation, attitudinal loyalty and attendance behaviour with fans of Australian Football. *International Journal of Sports Marketing and Sponsorship*, 7, 307-317.
- Papaconstantinou, D., Methenitis S., Salasidou, C. and Chatziri, K. (2009). Motivational factors and motivations for fans watching a football game. *Proceedings of the 10th National Congress of Sport Management*. Kavala.
- Papaioannou, A., Karastogiannidou, C. & Theodorakis, Y. (2009). Sport involvement, sport violence and health behaviors of Greek adolescents. *European Journal of Public Health*.
- Park, S.H. (1996). Relationships between involvement and attitudinal loyalty constructs in adult fitness programs. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 28(4), 233-250.
- Pease, D.G., & Zhang, J.J. (2001). Socio-motivational factors affecting spectator attendance at professional basketball games. *International Journal of Sport Management*, 2(1), 31-59.
- Robinson, L. (2006). Customer expectations of sport organizations. *European Sport Management Quarterly*, 6: 67-84.
- Ross, S.D. (2007). Segmenting sport fans using brand associations: a cluster analysis. *Sport Marketing Quarterly*, 16(1): 15-24.
- Rundle-Thiele, S., & Mackay, M.M. (2001). Assessing the performance of Brand loyalty measures. *Journal of Services Marketing*, 15(7), 529-546.
- Stets, J. E., & Burke, P. J. (2000). Identity theory and social identity theory. *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 63, 224-237.
- Stolen, T., Chamari, K., Castagna, C. & Wisloff, U., (2005). Physiology of Soccer. *Sport Med*, 502-535.
- Thamnopoulos, I. (2012). *Assessing the effectiveness of the management organization of football facilities in Greece in terms of quality, satisfaction and value services spectators*. Unpublished PhD Thesis, Democritus University of Thrace.
- Theodorakis, Y. (1994). Planned behavior, attitude strength, self-identity, and the prediction of exercise behavior. *The Sport Psychologist*, 8, 149- 165.
- Tolka, B. Tzetzis, G. & Krachalios N. (2004). Evaluating the effectiveness of sponsorship in the field of soccer: A case study. *Sport & Recreation Management*, 1 (1), 3-14.
- Trail, G.T., Fink, J.S., & Anderson, D.F (2003). Sport spectator consumption behavior. *Sport Marketing Quarterly*, 12(1), 8-17.
- Trail, G. T., & James, J. D. (2001). The motivation scale for sport consumption: Assessment of the scale's psychometric properties. *Journal of Sport Behavior*, 24, 108-127.
- Wakefield, K.L. and Sloan, H.J. (1995). The effects of team loyalty and selected stadium factors on spectator attendance. *Journal of Sport Management*, 9(2): 153-172.
- Wann, D. L. (1995). Preliminary validation of the sport fan motivation scale. *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*, 19, 377-396.
- Wann, D.L., Bayens, C., & Driver, A. (2004). Likelihood of attending a sporting event as a function of ticket scarcity and team identification. *Sport Marketing Quarterly*, 13(4), 209-215.
- Zorzou, A., Souglis, A., Zorzou, I., Laios, A., Bebetos, E., and Sotiropoulos, A. (2011). The motives of amateur soccer games spectators. *12th Greek National Conference of the Greek Sports Administration Company*. Volos 2-4/12, pp. 28-31.