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Segmenting J. League Spectators Based on Length of Time as a Fan

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between length of time as a fan, motives to attend games, and involvement with the J. League (Japan Professional Soccer League). Data were collected using a self-administered questionnaire during J. League games at five stadiums in 1997. Using proportionate sampling methods stratified by gender and age, researchers collected a total of 2,843 responses. Spectators were then categorized into three segments according to J. League attendance trends. This study suggests that length of time as a fan, which demonstrates valid correspondence to both spectators' motivation and involvement, represents a useful independent variable for creating marketing segments. The paper discusses the utility of different strategies for each segment. In particular, the current study examined the potential usefulness of supporter clubs in future marketing strategies. Fi-

nally, the potential application of the strategies suggested for the J. League to other new sport leagues was explored.

Introduction

In 1993, the Japan Professional Soccer League (J. League) was established as the first professional soccer league in Japan. Prior to the creation of the J. League, the Japan Soccer League (JSL), an amateur corporate soccer league that operated for 28 years, was the highest level of soccer in Japan. Similar to the industrial leagues that were popular in the United States during the middle of the 20th century (Gregorich, 1993), players in the JSL were employees of the corporations owning the team. Historically Japanese corporate sports were developed to form a corporate identity among the employees and financed from employee welfare and advertising budgets. The JSL was no exception. Most of the JSL teams were owned and operated by major manufacturers, such as Mitsubishi Heavy Industries and Toyota Motors, and were used to enhance corporate identity. Based upon this structure, the potential spectator market for the JSL was quite small and comprised a limited number of core fans, including employees of the corporations owning the teams and soccer players and coaches. In fact, marketing efforts to attract the general public were rarely attempted.

The declining popularity of the JSL promoted the Japan Football Association (JFA) to establish a committee in 1988 to examine possibilities for revitalizing the JSL. The committee concluded that the JSL should be transformed into a profes-

sional league in order to develop and maintain the popularity of Japanese soccer and the level of soccer performance. Following the JFA's decision, the JSL was dissolved in 1993, and the J. League was created. The new league was immediately popular and interest was "booming." For the league's first game, 800,000 individuals applied for 60,000 available tickets. The league became a kind of social phenomenon, commonly referred to as the "J. League Phenomenon" (J. League Phenomenon, 1996). The new league also attracted many fans who had never attended any previous soccer games. In fact, 74.8% of the current J. League spectators began attending soccer games sometime after the J. League began (Nakazawa, 1998).

The new league launched a \$600-million promotional campaign in order to cultivate new fans, create exposure, and increase attendance (Awata, 1994). This large commitment was believed to be 10 times greater than that of the Japanese professional baseball league. The JFA integrated various strategies, including the use of famous people, such as former Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev, golfer Isao Aoki, jockey Yutaka Take, sumo wrestler Chiyo-no-fuji, and enka singer Haruo Minami, in commercials designed to promote the league ("Expectation," 1993). Awareness among male spectators was also increased through the acquisitions of world-famous players such as Gary Lineker from the United Kingdom; Arthur Antunes Coimbra, known as "ZICO," from Brazil; and Pierre Littbarski from Germany ("Attractiveness," 1993). The organizers also

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focused on stimulating the local community in order to create a local soccer culture.

The J. League also benefited from promotions for which the JFA was not responsible. One was a penalty-kick game on a well-watched TV program hosted by one of the most popular comedy duos, "Tunnels." Because the ratings for their program were quite high and its viewers were mainly young females, many believe the show contributed to bringing young female spectators to J. League games. Another promotion, also not under the direct control of JFA, was the use of big-name players by many corporations in their TV commercials, which provided additional media exposure for soccer and the league. Despite the success of these promotions in creating interest in the J. League during the early years, the league has experienced decreasing attendance, as shown in Figure 1, since the beginning of the fourth year.

In the 6-year history of the J. League, there have been two critical periods. The first period was during the first three years of the J. League. During this time, a dramatic change was occurring among the soccer spectator base. For example, the league attracted many new female fans during the early years. In fact, 67.9% of females at-

tending games during the first year were newcomers to soccer (Nakazawa, 1996b). In addition to demographic changes in spectators, behavioral changes were also observed at games. During this boom period, fans began to exhibit some unique spectator behaviors, such as more associating with supporter groups, making early decisions to attend games, and purchasing team merchandise (e.g., horns, flags, clothing) to cheer for their team. The supporter clubs were organized and operated by the corporate team owners. Although these clubs were initially formed to facilitate a communication network among fans, players, and teams, the opportunity to get tickets through the club was a strong factor leading to substantial membership increases.

The second critical period for the J. League began after its third year as the initial boom receded. Significant changes emerged among spectators who began attending games during this period. New fans had less interest in soccer and were less likely to have a strong attachment to a particular team. In addition, many JSL fans, who had avoided games because of the overcrowding during the boom, gradually returned to the stadiums. Incentives to join supporter clubs declined as ticket availability in-

creased. Fans could now delay their purchase decisions until the day of the game. In order to capture the fans during this postboom period, it appears new marketing strategies will be needed.

When considering the changes observed in the profile of the spectators who began coming to soccer games during the three time periods (i.e., preboom, during the boom, and postboom), it seems a strong relationship exists between the length of time as a fan and both motives to attend games and involvement with the J. League. Although little attention in prior research has been given to the use of length of game attendance as a means of segmenting fans, the current study suggests that length of time as a fan may be a useful method for segmenting the marketplace. By adopting this new segmentation perspective, different strategies could be employed depending upon which fan group is being targeted.

Research on Spectator Behavior

The use of segmentation marketing in sport is not a new concept (Mullin, Hardy, & Sutton, 1993; Pitts & Stotlar, 1996). Segmentation marketing has become a popular way to increase the efficiency of marketing efforts. Sport market segmentation has been defined as "the division of total markets into relatively homogeneous segments" (Pitts & Stotlar, 1996, p. 106). Although many have chosen to use demographic factors, such as gender (e.g., Branch, 1995), to segment markets, other factors, such as the motivations and past behaviors of the consumers, have proven to be quite useful in market segmentation (Pitts & Stotlar, 1996). Studies on U.S. sport fans have identified a number of factors that may be useful in segmenting markets, including team loyalty (Wakefield & Sloan, 1995), fan identification (Sutton, McDonald, Milne, & Cimperman, 1997), spectator knowledge level (Zhang, Smith, & Pease, 1996), level of involvement (Kerstetter & Kovich, 1997), and desire for social opportunities (Melnick, 1993).

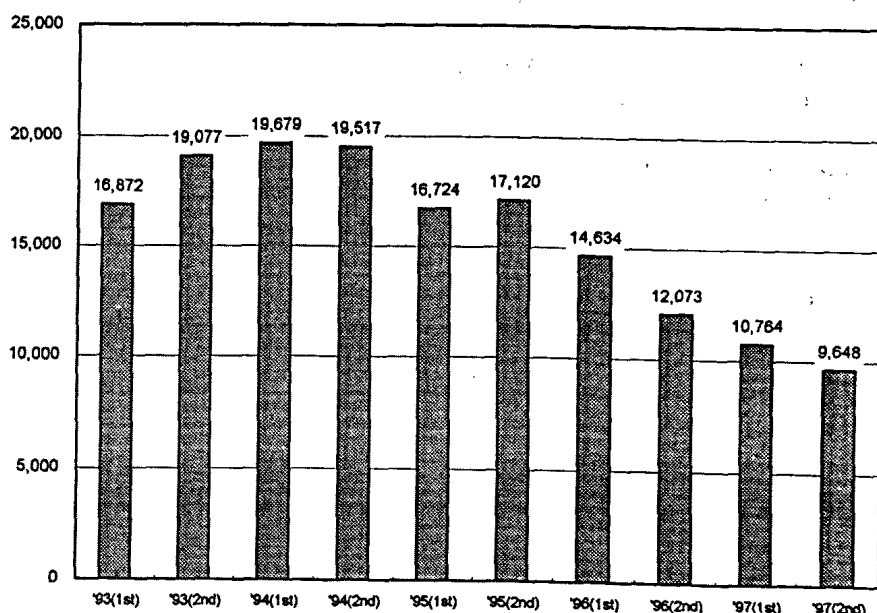


Figure 1. Average Attendance per Game—Chronological Trend

Although some research has been done on the operation of teams and games (Nakazawa, 1996a), most previous studies on the J. League have been descriptive studies using quantitative methods. They focused on demographic analysis of J. League spectators (e.g., Hakuhodo, 1994; Nakazawa, et al., 1998), examinations of their behavior as spectators (e.g., Hata & Udo, 1994; Nakazawa, 1995), and examinations of their motivation for attending J. League games (e.g., Enoki, et al. 1996). Based on this research, much is known about J. League spectators.

Demographic analysis in prior studies on J. League spectators indicated that 60.9% of them are male, over 50% are in their 20s or 30s, 38.0% have attended a university, and 59.7% of them have an annual household income between \$44,000 and \$130,000 (Nakazawa et al., 1998). In terms of attitudes and involvement, studies have found that 88.5% of them have a favorite team and 65.3% have a favorite player, spectators travel an average of 69.3 minutes to the stadium, 57.8% purchase tickets in advance, and 52.6% attend in pairs (Nakazawa et al., 1998). In one of the most recent studies, Nakazawa et al. (1998) reported some chronological trends including (a) the percentage of female fans was decreasing, (b) the percentage of fans having a favorite team was increasing, whereas the percentage of fans having a favorite player was decreasing, (c) the bipolarization of the frequency of attending was increasing, (d) the percentage of fans buying advance tickets was decreasing, (e) the use of general newspapers and magazines for getting information on games was decreasing, and (f) the use of ticketing agencies to buy tickets was decreasing.

Prior studies have also identified a number of factors that could be used to predict attendance including (a) the presence of a J. League team in the community (Kimura, Oga, & Sato, 1995), (b) levels of media exposure (Takeda, Harada, &

Nagai, 1995), (c) having a favorite team or player (Hirakawa, 1995), (d) knowledge of players (Takahashi, 1996), and (e) transportation time (Takahashi, 1996). Prior studies have also examined various fan motives, and the items used in the current study were the same (Hakuhodo, 1994; Japan Professional Soccer League, 1996). Although results related to the impact of each of these factors were fairly similar to the current study, the prior studies did not use factor analysis to better synthesize the results related to fan motivation. Moreover, the current study is the first to suggest using segmentation strategies in order to determine the most appropriate methods of marketing to various J. League fans.

Purpose of Study

The purposes of the current study were as follows: (a) to examine the relationship between spectators' motivations to attend J. League games and the length of time as a fan, (b) to examine the relationship between spectators' involvement with the J. League and the length of time as a fan, (c) to determine implications of these relationships for marketing the J. League, and (d) to determine possible implications for other new leagues.

Method

The data for the current study were collected using the following procedures. During the period between August 23, 1997, and September 24, 1997, 2,867 fans were surveyed at a total of six J. League regular season games at five different stadiums in the Tokyo Metropolitan Area. The respondents in the current study were gathered by using proportionate sampling methods stratified by both age and gender and were representative of the spectators in the stadiums. Before distributing the questionnaires, each surveyor observed an assigned block of the stands to estimate the percentages in six categories by gender (1 = female, 2 = male) and age-group (1 = ages 12-18, 2 = ages 19-29, 3 = ages 30 and above). Each surveyor was responsible for distributing 24 self-administered questionnaires according to the percentages in the six categories. Participation was voluntary, so someone in the same category replaced those who chose not to participate. However, it was very rare that a surveyor's request was rejected. It took the respondents approximately 10 minutes to complete the questionnaire.

The questionnaire included items related to demographics (e.g., age, gender, occupation, shown in Table 1), motivations to attend the game (5-point Likert-type scale,

Table 1
Demographics by Length of Time as a Fan.

	Total	Preboom	Boom	Postboom
Age				
Mean	31.7	32.1	32.0	30.4
SD	17.4	16.3	17.6	18.4
Gender				
Male	60.9%	72.5%	56.5%	57.8%
Female	39.1%	27.5%	43.5%	42.2%***
Occupation				
Student	25.4%	22.8%	23.6%	31.9%
Housewife	8.7%	5.4%	9.8%	9.8%
Employee	48.4%	53.0%	48.9%	42.7%
Public Servant	8.1%	10.5%	7.7%	6.0%
Unemployed	2.8%	2.9%	2.6%	2.8%
Other	6.6%	5.3%	7.3%	6.8%***
Note	* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.			

Table 2
The Motivation to Attend Games

Item		Mean	SD
M1	The team of my town is playing.	3.63	1.53
M2	My favorite player(s) and/or a favorite team is playing.	4.26	1.12
M3	I want to have a sense of unity with the players.	4.19	1.00
M4	I want to enjoy excellent performance.	4.31	0.87
M5	I want to feel the atmosphere of the game.	4.36	0.90
M6	I want to watch what TV does not show.	4.43	0.89
M7	The game is not broadcast on TV.	3.17	1.48
M8	I want to participate in the game by cheering/supporting.	3.78	1.19
M9	I want to get rid of stress by cheering.	3.24	1.35
M10	I want to have a sense of unity with people who cheer/support the same team.	3.41	1.26
M11	I happened to get tickets.	2.35	1.65
M12	Just to see what J league is like.	2.13	1.40
M13	J league is getting into the news.	1.98	1.18
M14	I accompanied a friend(s).	2.07	1.43
M15	I have to provide entertainment for my family.	1.83	1.29
M16	It has become easier to get tickets recently.	2.44	1.45
M17	I want to learn skills or strategies for my own play or my team.	2.03	1.36
M18	I want to get firsthand information.	3.93	1.32
M19	I like soccer.	4.58	0.75

1 = *Strongly Disagree*, 5 = *Strongly Agree*, shown in Table 2), and involvement with soccer and the J. League (e.g., accessibility to sources of information on the game, soccer experience, shown in Table 6). The motivation items, as well as most of the other items, were obtained from prior studies on the J. League (Hirakawa, 1995; Nakazawa, 1995, 1996b, 1998). A

factor analysis using maximum likelihood extraction and oblique rotation was employed to determine whether different dimensions existed among the motivation items. Alpha coefficients were computed to confirm the interreliability of the factor analysis. Because the investigators were interested in the relationship between motivations and the length of time as a fan, analysis of variance

(one-way) procedures and post hoc tests were also conducted.

Results

Of the sample of 2,867, 2,843 questionnaires were returned for a response rate of 99.2%, and 2,841 qualified for analysis. Fans were then categorized into three segments based on the length of time as a fan. "Preboom fans" were those

Table 3
Correlation Matrix among Items of Motivation

	M1	M2	M3	M4	M5	M6	M7	M8	M9	M10	M11	M12	M13	M14	M15	M16	M17	M18	M19
M1	—	0.36	0.32	0.17	0.20	0.17	0.14	0.25	0.20	0.23	-0.02	-0.03	0.11	-0.05	0.09	0.00	0.04	0.14	0.08
M2		—	0.51	0.35	0.30	0.28	0.15	0.44	0.23	0.31	-0.27	0.25	-0.09	-0.26	-0.10	-0.09	-0.09	0.24	0.33
M3			—	0.55	0.55	0.44	0.15	0.51	0.32	0.41	-0.16	-0.11	0.01	-0.18	-0.04	-0.04	-0.06	0.29	0.31
M4				—	0.55	0.49	0.16	0.41	0.27	0.34	-0.06	-0.01	0.06	-0.06	0.01	0.02	0.01	0.31	0.31
M5					—	0.56	0.13	0.42	0.30	0.38	-0.06	0.01	0.06	-0.07	0.01	0.02	-0.04	0.28	0.22
M6						—	0.25	0.36	0.26	0.30	-0.07	0.01	0.06	-0.06	-0.01	0.03	0.03	0.32	0.32
M7							—	0.30	0.30	0.26	0.03	0.10	0.19	0.08	0.11	0.11	0.06	0.16	0.11
M8								—	0.57	0.68	-0.11	-0.03	0.11	-0.08	0.01	0.00	-0.01	0.33	0.28
M9									—	0.59	0.01	0.10	0.23	0.06	0.11	0.14	0.04	0.22	0.15
M10										—	-0.02	0.08	0.23	0.00	0.07	0.07	0.05	0.25	0.22
M11											—	0.55	0.43	0.49	0.35	0.22	0.25	-0.06	-0.18
M12												—	0.63	0.50	0.39	0.28	0.26	-0.01	-0.25
M13													—	0.47	0.47	0.35	0.30	0.07	-0.09
M14														—	0.31	0.30	0.24	-0.04	-0.19
M15															—	0.32	0.29	0.03	-0.16
M16																—	0.28	0.12	-0.01
M17																	—	0.09	0.13
M18																		—	0.26
M19																			—

who have been fans for six years or longer. "Boom fans" were those who have been fans for at least three years, but shorter than six years. "Postboom fans" were those who have been fans for two years or less. The proportion of respondents in each segment was as follows: (a) 25.2% were preboom fans, (b) 53.6% were boom fans, and (c) 21.2% were postboom fans.

An examination of demographic variables, shown in Table 1, indicated that although similarities existed among the three segments, differences among these segments also emerged. Although there were no significant differences related to age, the percentage of males was highest among the preboom fans. In addition, when comparing preboom fans to postboom fans, the results indicated that the preboom fans were more likely to be employed, whereas the postboom fans were more likely to be students.

Motivations for Attending and Involvement with the J. League

Based upon the observed correlation matrix of the 19 motivation items, shown in Table 3, an exploratory factor analysis using oblique rotation was conducted using only subjects who completed all 19 motivation items ($N = 2,537$) to determine the relationships among the observed variables (e.g., Norusis, 1990). A maximum likelihood procedure was employed to understand both the unique and common proportion of total variance that each variable contributes to the common factors extracted (e.g., Gorsuch, 1983; Tabachnik & Fidell, 1989). Oblique rotation was utilized given the theoretical consideration that the derived factors would likely be interdependent (e.g., Dimanche, Havitz & Howard, 1991; Stevens, 1992). The appropriateness for the factor analysis procedure was confirmed after inspection of the diagonals within the anti-image correlation matrix (MSA range .81 to .90), the KMO statistic of .86, and Bartlett's test of sphericity ($15,276$, $df = 171$, $p < .001$)

(e.g., Hair, Anderson, Tatham, & Black, 1995). The initial statistics revealed that five factors extracted 60.7% of the variance and were suitable for further analysis (Hair et al., 1995).

Although the five-factor solution was tenable, interpretation of the rotated factor loadings in the pattern matrix indicated that a four-factor solution may be more stable and reliable (e.g., Gorsuch, 1983; Stevens, 1992; Tabachnik & Fidell, 1989). Based upon interitem reliabilities, M3, M7, M16, M17, and M18 were dropped from the analysis. As a result, a final factor analysis procedure with oblique rotation, specifying a four-factor solution, was conducted using 13 observed variables. The specified four-factor model analysis revealed that four factors had eigenvalues greater than 1 and fell within the sharp descent as indicated by the scree plot. The final rotated solution extracted 72% of the total variance, and the four factors were deemed suitable (e.g., Stevens, 1992). The proportion of common variance extracted by each of the derived factors was 28% for Factor 1, 27% for Factor 2, 27% for Factor 3, and 18% for Fac-

tor 4. The average proportion of variance in the 13 variables (i.e., commonalities) explained by the four factors was $(SMC) = .52$. The factor loadings, eigenvalues, proportion of total variance, and common variance are shown in Table 4.

The resulting model contained 13 items that loaded on four factors that met the salient loading criteria (e.g., Stevens, 1992). Items M10, M8, and M9 loaded on Factor 1 and consisted of attendance items related to the benefits derived from cheering activities, such as a sense of unity with others cheering, participation in the game by cheering, and releasing stress through cheering. Therefore, the first factor was named "Experiential Participation." Items M13, M12, M14, M11, and M15 loaded on Factor 2 and represented attendance motivated by recent media coverage of soccer games, the desire to observe J. League games, the accompaniment of friends, greater accessibility of tickets, and the prospect of providing family entertainment. Factor 2 represented motives that encouraged attendance unrelated to emotional attachment to the team and/or a player and hence, was

Table 4
Factor Loadings—Oblique Rotation Maximum Likelihood

Item	Experiential Participation	Passive Consumption	Direct Presence	Attachment	Communality
M10	0.86	0.01	-0.01	-0.03	0.71
M8	0.73	-0.10	0.08	0.09	0.69
M9	0.72	0.05	-0.01	-0.03	0.50
M12	0.06	0.79	0.07	-0.09	0.64
M13	0.12	0.78	-0.01	0.13	0.65
M11	-0.02	0.65	0.01	-0.01	0.45
M14	-0.03	0.63	-0.01	-0.11	0.42
M15	-0.01	0.55	-0.03	0.13	0.30
M5	0.04	0.01	0.78	-0.04	0.62
M6	-0.02	0.01	0.72	-0.01	0.49
M4	0.01	0.01	0.67	0.08	0.50
M2	0.05	-0.20	0.10	0.65	0.60
M1	0.02	0.07	0.02	0.48	0.25
Sum of squares	2.68	2.47	2.48	1.68	9.31
% of total variance	20.63	18.97	19.07	12.93	71.60
% trace	28.81	26.50	26.63	18.06	100.00

labeled "Passive Consumption." Items M5, M6, and M4 loaded on Factor 3 and reflected the desire to be physically present in the stands and experience the atmosphere at the game, observe what TV broadcast does not cover, and enjoy the aesthetics of performance. These items represented the notion of direct experience, so Factor 3 was named "Direct Presence." Items M2 and M1 loaded on Factor 4 and consisted of attendance motives related to affection toward a team or player(s) as well as support of the community's team. Therefore, Factor 4 was labeled "Attachment."

Although the attachment factor was represented by only two items, the size of the sample ($N = 2,537$), the standardized partial regression coefficients (M2, $b = .68$ and M1, $b = .48$), and simple correlations (M2, $r = .88$ and M1, $r = .70$) were deemed reliable and suitable to include in further analysis (e.g., Stevens, 1992). Furthermore, two randomly selected subsamples ($n = 1,522$) and ($n = 1,015$) were factor analyzed to test the internal stability of the specified four-factor model (e.g., Hair et al., 1995). Results of the cross-validation procedure indicated that the four-factor solution was internally reliable and stable. As shown in Table 5, there were significant differences in the four motivating factors among the three segments. However, the variability among the three segments on direct presence was relatively small. Furthermore, each segment reported relatively high scores on this factor. Therefore, it was suggested that direct presence was a common mo-

tive regardless of the length of time as a fan. The differences on the other three factors were not as small, so much of the analysis focused on those differences.

Both preboom fans and boom fans were more likely to be motivated by attachment and less likely to be motivated by passive consumption. This is consistent with an examination of spectator involvement, shown in Table 6, which indicated that both were more likely than postboom fans to have a favorite player and a favorite team, be members of supporter clubs, read club newsletters, and buy tickets through the club. These results suggest that the motivation of attachment would be a key to produce repeat attendance for these segments.

However, differences also emerged between preboom fans and boom fans. The boom fans were more likely to be motivated by experiential participation. In contrast, the preboom fans, as shown in Table 6, were more likely to have soccer playing experience, said they had a better understanding of soccer rules, and were most likely to get information on the J. League from reading soccer magazines. It seemed that the preboom fans attended due to positive feelings about the sport of soccer and even indicated that they liked soccer more than did the other segments. In fact, preboom fans were even willing to attend games alone and often watched games on television when they could not attend in person. These fans resembled the soccer "purists" who were fans of the JSL.

In contrast, boom fans were more

affected by their enjoyment of the experience of being a fan. Because of their desire for unity with other fans, they often attended games with family members and tended to be involved more with the supporter clubs (see Table 6). For example, they were more likely to use club newsletters as a source of information and to purchase tickets through the supporter clubs (see Table 6). Although high levels of repeat purchasing would be expected from both preboom and boom fans, the preboom fans appear to be the most committed. Their strong attachment to soccer, combined with their attachment to their favorite teams and players, would make it unlikely that attendance rates would decrease even if the J. League continues to decline. In contrast, the boom fans appear to be more strongly attached to the experience of being a fan. As attendance declines, the atmosphere at the games and the overall fan experience could also be expected to decline, which would decrease the incentive for boom fans to attend games.

Although postboom fans also indicated attachment was an important motive, they rated it significantly lower than the other two segments did. However, passive consumption was rated significantly higher for this group. The significant differences among segments suggest the postboom fans are less attached than preboom and boom fans. Although they did indicate that they are fans of sports in general, they often bought their tickets late or received them as a gift, attended games less often, watched games

Table 5
Reasons for Attending Scores and Results of One-Way ANOVA of Difference Among Segments

Difference score	Pre-J. Boom Fans		J. Boom Fans		Post-J. Boom Fans		F	p
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Experimental participation	3.33	1.14	3.64	1.06	3.32	1.05	26.365	0.0001
Passive consumption	1.94	0.97	2.07	1.00	2.67	1.01	91.373	0.0001
Direct presence	4.33	0.77	4.44	0.68	4.26	0.82	13.196	0.0001
Attachment	4.00	1.06	4.09	1.04	3.54	1.19	52.115	0.0001

Table 6
Involvement with Soccer and J. League by Length of Time as Fan

	Total	Preboom	Boom	Postboom
Favorite team				
Don't have	11.5%	8.2%	6.7%	26.9%
Have	88.5%	91.8%	93.3%	73.1%***
Favorite player				
Don't have	34.7%	31.1%	31.0%	47.7%
Have	65.3%	68.9%	69.0%	52.3%***
Understanding rules				
Well	24.8%	45.6%	19.7%	13.1%
Enough	57.7%	49.8%	63.0%	53.7%
A little	15.5%	3.7%	16.5%	26.7%
Not at all	2.0%	0.9%	0.7%	6.6%***
Experience of soccer				
Don't have	64.2%	43.9%	70.0%	73.6%
Have	35.8%	56.1%	30.0%	26.4%***
When decide to go				
Day of game	5.2%	6.1%	3.8%	7.0%
Before day of game and after pregame	20.1%	17.3%	17.5%	29.4%
Before previous session	74.7%	76.6%	78.7%	63.7%
How to get information (M.A.)				
Newspaper	19.7%	24.0%	21.1%	11.3%***
TV/Radio	8.7%	8.7%	9.6%	6.4%
Soccer magazines	25.5%	31.5%	27.6%	14.0%***
General magazines	7.2%	6.7%	6.6%	9.5%
Friends/Acquaintances	23.4%	18.3%	19.2%	39.4%***
Posters	4.3%	3.8%	5.3%	2.4%**
Club newsletters	29.1%	31.0%	34.7%	13.5%
Others	19.3%	18.0%	19.3%	21.3%
How to get tickets				
Purchase tickets in advance	57.8%	56.3%	62.4%	48.3%
Purchase tickets at stadium	9.0%	11.0%	7.6%	10.0%
Purchase with package tour	1.8%	1.7%	2.0%	1.5%
Receive as gift	21.1%	19.9%	17.9%	29.8%
Others	10.3%	11.1%	10.0%	10.3%***
How to purchase tickets				
Through ticketing agency	37.1%	34.1%	35.6%	46.5%
Through supporters' clubs	39.2%	40.9%	43.0%	25.0%
At game	11.3%	14.0%	9.3%	13.3%
Others	12.3%	11.0%	12.0%	15.2%***
Transportation time (min.)				
Mean	75.0	73.9	74.3	78.1
SD	52.4	52.8	52.8	51.2
Size of party				
Go alone	13.0%	17.4%	11.8%	10.7%
Go in pair	52.6%	50.0%	52.8%	55.4%
3 persons	12.8%	12.6%	13.5%	10.7%
4 persons	12.4%	8.9%	14.0%	12.8%
More	9.2%	11.1%	7.8%	10.4%***
Who to go with				
Friends	36.6%	39.9%	35.5%	36.6%
Work friends	10.6%	10.5%	9.9%	12.8%
Social contract	4.8%	5.6%	4.0%	6.1%
Family Relatives	42.8%	37.9%	46.6%	37.4%
Others	5.2%	6.1%	4.1%	7.1%***
Belonging to supporter clubs				
I am a member	45.0%	50.7%	50.1%	19.2%
I want to be	17.0%	14.6%	17.1%	20.7%
I do NOT want to be	37.9%	34.7%	32.7%	60.1%***
Frequency of attendance (games)				
Mean	4.4	6.0	5.1	1.7***
SD	5.3	6.0	5.2	3.3
Watching games on TV				
Often	67.0%	77.9%	71.2%	44.4%
Sometimes	25.7%	19.3%	23.3%	38.4%
Seldom	4.6%	2.0%	3.8%	9.4%
Almost never	2.7%	0.7%	1.7%	7.7%***
Watch other sports				
Don't	56.2%	36.9%	47.8%	41.4%
Do	43.8%	63.1%	52.2%	58.6%***

Notes: * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

on television less often, and received much of their information from friends rather than by reading about the J. League (see Table 6). Their decision to attend is generally related to the influence of others rather than their own internal motivation. In other words, postboom fans are less likely to attend games in the future and may be more easily convinced to use their leisure time and disposable income for other leisure activities.

Recommendations

Preboom Fans

The reported spectating characteristics among preboom fans indicates the existence of a rather stable and independent involvement, different from that of the other segments. Because they are committed and knowledgeable fans of soccer, promotional efforts utilizing peripheral activities would appear unlikely to have a significant impact on preboom fans' attendance decisions (Engel, Blackwell, & Miniard, 1993; Sujan, 1985). Because knowledgeable consumers are most concerned with the technical aspects of the product or service (Anderson & Jolson, 1980; Sujan, 1985), traditional attributes, such as quality of play, adherence to the rules, and attention to the traditions of soccer, are likely to be of considerable importance to preboom fans. As long as the league maintains its high quality of play and does not change its core product, preboom fans will most likely continue to be frequent attendees and to obtain information on the J. League from soccer magazines. Therefore, advertisements in soccer magazines that focus on the high quality of the J. League games may be the most effective means for attracting this segment (McCarville, Flood, & Froats, 1998).

A key marketing strategy for preboom fans is to maintain and stress the high quality of soccer being played in the J. League, while utilizing promotions to attract fans in the other segments. Although preboom attendance has historically been

very stable, this segment indicates a willingness to watch J. League games on television or to watch other sports. Another concern with this segment is its affinity for day-of-game ticket-purchase decisions. Marketers may be well advised to create discounted multigame packages that will generate advanced ticket sales from this segment. For example, ticket coupon books that would allow fans to wait and pick the games later may be particularly appealing to this segment. Although their attendance was the highest, they still only attended an average of 6.0 games during the 17 games in the first 1997 season. Increasing the consistency of behavior among consumers who are committed to a product or service is a commonly used and often successful marketing strategy (Cialdini, 1993), so the discounted multigame packages would be a logical means for increasing the number of games attended by this segment. Although the team ticket revenue may decrease on a per ticket basis because of the discount, an increase in games attended by this segment would lead to greater concessions sales and would help contribute to the atmosphere at the games.

In fact, this strategy was common among many of the JSL teams. For example, the JSL's NISSAN Football Club offered season passes of \$7 for children, \$20 for adults, and \$25 for a family. In contrast, J. League tickets average close to \$20 for one game. Moreover, the JSL fans were given a stamp every time they attended a game and received promotional prizes for collecting a certain number of stamps. This effort was successful for NISSAN, which had the second highest attendance in the league, and created a core fan base. Although many of these preboom fans have continued to come to games, they appear to attend less frequently. It is possible that some of these fans have stopped coming to games because of the increased costs and the availability of J. League games on regular and cable television. Some U.S.

cities have had similar problems when moving from minor league hockey, which is a relatively inexpensive form of entertainment, to having an NHL team, which generally offers only expensive tickets (Howard, 1999).

Boom Fans

It is important to keep the boom fans as stable repeaters because they are the most supportive of the teams and make up the largest percentage of fans at the stadium. In addition, because they have strong relationships with their supporter clubs, the clubs' efforts to foster their spectating behavior are pivotal. The clubs originally expanded their organizations by giving the members easier access to tickets. However, now that tickets are more accessible, the clubs' distribution channel no longer offers a strong incentive for membership. Therefore, it is now necessary for the clubs to reconsider their purpose and allow the membership to have more control and input into the club operations. This would allow club members more freedom to shape club activities and would encourage recruitment of new members. In other words, members will start to feel a sense of ownership of the clubs and greater feelings of affiliation. In addition, prior research suggests that allowing club members a more active role in organizing club activities may also be useful in increasing their levels of commitment because of their desire to appear consistent to others (Cialdini, 1993). This desire to appear consistent tends to lead consumers to continue these behaviors (e.g., working on behalf of the club) and to exhibit other similar behaviors (e.g., attending games, purchasing team merchandise; Cialdini, 1993).

This segment's strong desire for affiliation also provides other opportunities for sport marketers. Boom fans would appear to be the best target market for team merchandise. In particular, merchandise identifying them as a member or a leader in a particular supporter club may be

very popular (Brooks, 1994). The sale of team merchandise increases team revenue whereas the wearing of team merchandise tends to increase the fan's identification with the team and the supporter club (Sutton, 1998). Prior research has found that public consumption, such as wearing an article of clothing, increases the consumer's desire to be committed to a product or service in order to remain consistent in the eyes of others (Cialdini, 1993; Engel et al., 1993). In addition, marketing research has found that the use of multiple incentives tends to be effective in "producing more lasting effects on purchasing behavior" (Engel et al., 1993, p. 491). Although teams provide some incentives for club members, they are currently insufficient, and marketers would be wise to provide additional incentives for continued membership (e.g., free or discounted team merchandise, better tickets, discounted tickets; Mullin et al., 1993).

Because supporter clubs provide a means to communicate team-related information and purchase tickets, encouraging continued membership in clubs remains crucial to maintain attendance patterns. In addition, because this segment often attends with their families, the use of more pre- or post-game family-oriented activities, such as picnics, opportunities for children to interact with the players, or picture sessions with popular players, may be successful in increasing their attendance (Mullin et al., 1993). However, prior research would suggest that more information is still needed regarding the decision-making process among these families in order to determine the best marketing strategy (Engel et al., 1993). Although this segment already attends significantly more games than do the postboom fans, they averaged only 5.1 games in the first 1997 season, so there is still substantial room for growth.

Postboom Fans

Postboom fans are the most unstable of the three segments, and their

attendance often depends upon the influence of friends, colleagues, and families. This is not surprising because younger consumers tend to be influenced by interpersonal contact more than older consumers do (Engel et al., 1993). Because this segment has the lowest level of commitment to the league and to soccer in general, promotional efforts are needed to attract and retain their attention. Research suggests that consumers with low levels of involvement and a number of options often seek higher levels of stimulation and variety (Engel et al., 1993). Fortunately, the league was successful in acquiring newcomers during its sixth year, partly due to the excitement related to the 1998 World Cup in France. Even now that the World Cup is over, the J. League has several more opportunities to draw people's attention, including the establishment of a two-division system and the beginning of the soccer lottery. The lottery will allow entrants to win a large amount of money by accurately predicting the outcome of J. League games. However, a clear strategy will still be needed to attract this segment and to encourage them to be stable repeaters.

In order to accomplish this, the authors of the current study believe it may be necessary to make use of boom fans as market leaders for postboom fans. Although marketing research has consistently found that mass media advertising may be effective in creating interest and awareness in a product or service, social influence tends to be more effective in impacting purchase behavior (e.g., Herr, Kardes, & Kim, 1991). Although preboom fans may also be used, the boom fans would appear best suited for this role because they are more motivated by a desire to enjoy the experience of being a fan and to share this with other fans. In addition, they appear to have more in common with postboom fans, and research suggests that individuals are more susceptible to influence by people who are similar to them, in part because

they tend to like similar others more (Cialdini, 1993; Wann & Branscombe, 1993).

The authors believe a strategy must be developed to involve postboom fans in the supporter clubs. Although they are quite resistant to joining these clubs, they do appear to be susceptible to influence by others. In fact, they continue to attend games with friends despite their relatively low level of interest in the J. League and its teams. Once control of the supporter clubs is taken from the team and given to the fans, the current club members could be encouraged to develop various strategies to increase membership. They could be given prizes, such as free or discounted team merchandise, better tickets, or discounted tickets, for recruiting new members (Mullin et al., 1993). This type of strategy is already quite popular and successful with intercollegiate athletic department donor groups in the United States (Hall & Mahony, 1997). Moreover, this strategy may also be useful for increasing the commitment of the boom fans. Once they see themselves as loyal club members and committed fans of the team, their desire to remain consistent will again result in continued supportive behavior with little need for encouragement by the team (Cialdini, 1993).

Once new members are recruited, clubs can start to plan social activities related to the games, such as parties to watch away games on television. These activities would be attractive even to those who may not have a strong attachment to the team, and the activities could eventually lead to higher levels of affiliation among all club members. Although postboom fans are not as strongly attracted to soccer as the other segments are, they do tend to be sport fans in general, so they appear to be a reachable segment, which is critical in market segmentation (Engel et al., 1993). However, their lower levels of interest in the J. League and its teams would suggest that creative strategies should focus on product

extensions to increase attendance among members of this segment.

New Leagues in General

It is important to note the segmentation pattern based on length of time as a fan suggested in the current study is probably not unusual for new and emerging sport leagues. Before a league begins, generally a fan base exists comprised of individuals who are already following the best option available (e.g., major college programs, semipro leagues), similar to the support of the JSL exhibited by the preboom fans. These hard-core fans of the sport are attracted to games because of their intrinsic love of the sport and their desire to see the highest quality of play available. As long as marketers do not substantially change the core product, these fans are likely to continually support the league and attend games.

Many new leagues also experience the boom seen by the J. League. New leagues are a novelty and often attract a large group of fans who want to try something new. In the United States, Major League Soccer (MLS) had its highest levels of attendance during the first year (Trecker, 1998). However, most of these new leagues experience a leveling off or decline in attendance after a period of time (Trecker, 1998). The challenge for sport marketers then is to find ways to turn both the core fans and new fans of the sport into stable repeat purchasers in order to prevent declines in attendance. Surviving the period when interest levels off or declines is critical to the long-term survival of many of the emerging leagues around the world, and the current study provides a number of strategies that may be useful to these leagues.

Conclusion

Overall, this study suggested the length of time as a fan can be a useful independent variable for creating segments that demonstrate valid correspondence to both spectator motivation and involvement. It is important to note that although such a

segmentation strategy is unusual in the sport marketing literature, marketing researchers have long believed that there are differences in consumers based on the timing of their first purchase (e.g., Rogers, 1962). However, the definitions of these segments in the current study are different from the descriptions in the marketing literature (Engel et al., 1993) and do appear to be somewhat unique to sport settings.

The current study also suggests different strategies that will be useful in increasing attendance for each of the three segments identified. In particular, the supporter clubs could be useful in maintaining a substantial fan base that can be utilized as market leaders for the postboom fans. Moreover, the current study suggests this method of segmentation and the related strategies may be useful in other new and emerging leagues in Japan and in other parts of the world.

Notes

1. Understanding of rules (Table 6.): In our questionnaire, a 4-grade scale was used for measuring the level of understanding rules. Those are as follows:
 - Well: I know the rules so well I could be a referee.
 - Enough: I know the rules enough to play soccer myself.
 - A little: I know the rules a little and enough to enjoy watching soccer games.
 - Not at all: I do NOT know the rules at all.
2. Experience of soccer (Table 6.): In our questionnaire, we defined having experience as participating in a soccer club of some sort.
3. Previous session (Table 6.): J. League sessions, or games, are held on Wednesday and Saturday during each season. There were 34 sessions in 1997 season.
4. Frequency of attendance (Table 6.): In the J. League, there are two seasons in a year. Frequency of attendance was measured by the total number of times one went to a game during the 17 games in the first 1997 season.

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