The relationship between stadium sportscapes dimensions, desire to stay and future attendance

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Abstract

Leisure and sport services require spectators to spend extended periods of time in the physical surroundings of the service provider. Servicescapes play an important role in determining whether or not spectators are satisfied, which in turn may influence how long they desire to stay in the facility and whether they intend to re-patronise the leisure facility. Research on servicescapes and to a limited extent on sportscapes has sought to establish the importance of cues in service environments. This study is part of a wider study that examined various dimensions of sportscapes using a quantitative approach in establishing the reliability and validity of a sportscapes scale. Seven sportscapes dimensions were established, namely, scoreboard quality, refreshments, facility aesthetics, space allocation, stadium accessibility, seating comfort and stadium cleanliness. The purpose of the study was to examine the relationship of the identified seven sportscapes dimensions on desire to stay in a sport facility and future attendance. Significant positive correlations were found between the seven sportscapes dimensions; desire to stay within a facility and future attendance. The regression analysis reported significant predictive relationships between the stadium sportscapes and desire to stay within the stadia and future attendance. With increasing competition among various sport industries, managers and owners of stadiums need to take cognisance of sportscapes which shape spectators’ experience in service provider’s environments.

Key words: Servicescapes, sportscapes, desire to stay, future attendance.

Introduction

Leisure and sport services require spectators to spend extended periods of time in the physical surroundings of the service provider (Wakefield & Blodgett, 1996). Servicescapes play an important role in determining whether or not spectators are satisfied, which in turn may influence how long they desire to stay in the facility and whether they intend to re-patronise the leisure facility. If spectators perceive the servicescapes to be of a low or poor quality, they become less interested to return to the facility (Wakefield & Blodgett, 1994). Sport organisations often rely on the “field of dreams...if we build it they will come” philosophy (Garland, MacPherson & Haughey, 2004:1). However, designing sport stadium is an art that takes considerable time and effort which can be expensive to implement. Once designed and built, sport stadia are not always
easy to change (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2007). These changes entail substantial sums of funds to be injected either to demolish or refurbish existing stadia.

Sportscapes is a valuable tool to service providers in their quest for image uniqueness (McGoldrick & Pieros, 1998). The increasing competition among various sport industries encourages managers to take into account spectators’ experiences in the service provider’s environments as a potential tool for differentiation (Andreu, Bigne, Chumpitaz & Swaen, 2006). The creation of a pleasant environment for sport stadia has become a competitive strategy to enhance spectators’ positive reactions in a sport environment setting.

Primarily, sportscapes encompasses two broad aspects of spatial layout and functionality, and elements related to the aesthetic appeal of an environment (Wakefield, & Blodgett, 1994). Aspects such as seating comfort, aisles, hallways, walkways, food service, rest rooms, entrances, exits are arranged to create the required space and reduce perceptions of overcrowding. The architectural design, facility upkeep and signage in the sportscape also contribute to a pleasant and enduring environment. Each sportscape factor serves as an input to spectators’ affective response or judgment of pleasure or displeasure with a stadium (Shank, 2005) which may elicit an approach or avoidance behaviour for future attendance to a facility (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974).

For the purpose of consistency, the study employed the term sportscapes, adapted from Bitner’s (1992) study of servicescapes and Wakefield, Blodgett and Sloan’s (1996) study. These terms are used interchangeably. Sportscapes is defined as the design of the physical environment and service staff qualities that typify a context which encompasses various service encounters that may lead to a display of approach or avoidance behaviours in an environment.

The study is part of a wider study that examined various dimensions of sportscapes using a quantitative approach in establishing the reliability and validity of a sportscapes scale (Dhurup & Mofoka, 2010). Seven sportscapes dimensions were established namely scoreboard quality, refreshments, facility aesthetics, space allocation, stadia accessibility, seating comfort and stadia cleanliness. Table 1 lists the seven dimensions together with a brief description of each dimension.
Table 1: Established sportscapes dimensions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimensions</th>
<th>Brief description of the dimensions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Scoreboard quality</td>
<td>Entertaining scoreboard with essential statistics shown with high definition and quality.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refreshments</td>
<td>Variety of appealing foods, freshly prepared and appealing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facility aesthetics</td>
<td>Stadia attractiveness, features, architecture and decorativeness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Space allocation</td>
<td>Adequate restrooms, walkways and signage in order to handle large crowds.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stadia accessibility</td>
<td>Easy entrance, exists, safe parking, general stadia layout</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seating comfort</td>
<td>Plenty of knee and elbow room between seats, big enough concession stands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stadia cleanliness</td>
<td>Clean restrooms, seating, entrance and exists</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Dhurup and Mofoka (2010).

Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study was to examine the relationship of the identified seven sportscapes dimensions on desire to stay in a sport facility and future attendance. Figure 1 provides an overview of the seven identified sportscapes factors and the proposed relationships with the variables.

Stadia sportscapes in perspective

An early conceptualisation of atmospherics as a marketing tool by Kotler (1973) has provided an impetus to scholars and researchers to pursue research within the realms of servicescapes. Not long after Mehrabian and Russell (1974) provided an invaluable framework from an environmental psychology perspective to the understanding within which consumers react and respond to their environments by developing a model of environmental influence. These aspects comprise different emotional states, namely pleasure/displeasure, arousal/non-arousal and dominance/submissiveness. Aubert-Gamet (1997) and Hoffman and Bateson (2001) affirm that the responses of spectators to a set of stimuli are influenced by these three basic emotional states. The pleasure/displeasure emotional state reflects the degree to which spectators feel satisfied with a service experience (Cockrill, Goode & Emberson, 2008). The arousal/non-arousal state reflects the degree to which spectators feel excited and stimulated (Donovan & Rossiter, 1982). Dominance/submissiveness reflects feeling of control and the ability to act freely within environments that appeal to pleasure, dominance and arousal state and avoid creating atmospheres that create displeasure, non-arousal and submissiveness.
According to environmental psychologists, these emotional states result in individuals reacting to environments with two general and opposite forms of behaviour: approach and avoidance (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974).

Research has demonstrated that spectators who perceived the servicescapes to be of a higher quality are more satisfied with a leisure service experience and are more likely to return to the stadium for future events (Wakefield & Blodgett, 1994). Conversely, those stadia with lower quality servicescapes result into lower levels of satisfaction and spectators are less likely to return to the facility. Baker (1986) provided a framework of generic servicescapes factors in services retailing and delineated the factors into three broad categories, namely, ambient factors, design factors and social factors. Ambient factors relate to the background conditions that impact upon the subconscious which consumer does not become aware immediately. Design factors work on the premise that there are various stimuli that exists in the consumer’s mind that influences the functional and aesthetic appeal of an environment. Social factors are the people component within an environment such as the spectators and the facility
personnel. These factors were also found to be applicable within sport environment settings (Wakefield et al., 1996).

Desire to stay

Those spectators who find that a leisure environment such as stadia does not lend itself to levels of excitement if the sportscapes are not pleasing and stimulating (Wakefield & Blodgett, 1994). Research has demonstrated that the degree of arousal or excitement which consumers experience while consuming a leisure service may be a major determinant to stay within the facility for prolonged periods of time and subsequently return to a facility (Russell & Pratt, 1980). Apart from aesthetically appealing environments, the sportscapes must be designed such that spectators of the leisure facility feel comfortable to stay within the facility (Wakefield & Blodgett, 1994). In addition, spectators do not like to feel confined, restricted in small spaces or uncomfortable because of cramped seating arrangements or because ancillary facilities such as restrooms, hallways, walkways or food service areas are not adequately designed to allow for freedom of movement. The longer time spectators spend in a facility, the greater the propensity that the perceived facility will create satisfaction which may lead to future attendance. As spectators visit a sport facility which is enduring and pleasant they will spend more time in the facility in order to experience the service encounter.

Problem statement

There is relatively little empirical research addressing the role of sportscapes in a sport consumption setting (Bitner, 1992). Whilst sport organisations and governments in various countries continually plan, build, change and control stadia and its external and internal physical environments, the impact of these designs or design change on the ultimate users of such facilities are not fully understood. The design including the physical surroundings is rich in cues which may be influential in communicating a stadia's image and purpose to its spectators. Few studies on sportscapes, desire to stay and future attendance have been reported in literature. Therefore ample information is lacking to draw conclusions on the relationships with sportscapes variables, desire to stay and future attendance (Wakefield et al., 1996).

A two-way analytical procedure was conducted with the intention of evaluating the data by way of correlations and regression analysis. With inconclusive results on the relationship between sportscapes, desire to stay and future attendance, the study tests the following hypotheses:

\[ H_1 \quad \text{Stadia sportscapes exhibits a positive relationship with the desire to stay within a facility.} \]
The desire to stay within a sportscapes exhibits a positive relationship with future attendance to stadia.

Materials and methods

Target population

The target population of the study was restricted to spectators 18 years and older who attended soccer games at Soccer City Stadia (formerly FNB Stadia) and Orlando Stadia in Soweto, Johannesburg. The facility location (stadia) was used to draw the sample in the absence of a sample frame. Males and females of the four main population groups in South Africa constituted the sample. These stadia were chosen for two reasons. First, its situational variable (geographical distance) was suited for establishing sportscapes dimensions and its relationships with desire to stay within the facility and patronage intentions. Second, these two stadia were deliberately chosen as one of them (Soccer City Stadia) has undergone major refurbishment for the 2010 FIFA Soccer World Cup™ for the opening and closing matches and the other stadium (Orlando Stadium) is a relatively older stadium with minor refurbishment. These stadia were chosen as they provide a ‘rich’ platform for further comparative studies on the impact of sportscapes on spectator attendance.

Sampling

A convenience sampling method was used for the sample selection. Hair, Bush and Ortinau (2000) are of the view that convenience sampling allows a large number of respondents to be interviewed in a relatively short period of time and with lower costs. The sample size (n= 170) was chosen on a historical basis by establishing the sample sizes that were used in previous studies (Wakefield et al., 1996; Turley & Shannon, 2000; Theodorakis, Karibitsis, Laios & Koustelios, 2001; Theodorakis, Arthinos & Nassis, 2005; Dale, Jos, Wiele & Roger, 2005). In order to randomise the data collection procedure, the survey was conducted with spectators who attended different matches over a three months period.

Development of the instrument

Statements used in the development of the questionnaire were based on a review of multi-item scales developed by previous research studies (Wakefield & Sloan, 1995; Wakefield, et al., 1996; Harrell, Hutt & Anderson, 1980; Hoffman & Turley, 2002; Bitner, 1992) on servicescapes and sportscapes. A further dimension relating to refreshments was added in the pilot testing of 50 respondents in order to refine the measuring instrument. The pilot testing of the
The questionnaire was done by personal interviews (face-to-face) using snowball sampling by one of the researchers in order to observe respondents’ reactions and attitudes (Malhotra 2004) towards stadia sportscapes. Debriefing occurred after the questionnaire was completed and changes were made to questions with regard to re-phrasing, sequence and layout (Chisnall 2005). The final questionnaire was then developed. The description of the questionnaire development, reliability and validity of the instrument was reported in a previous study (Dhurup & Mofoka, 2010).

The questions on the desire to stay and future patronage were based on a 5-point Likert format with 5 = strongly agree with 1 = strongly disagree.

Reliability and validity

The internal consistency of the dimensions is reported in Table 2. The Cronbach $\alpha$ for the individual factors ranged from 0.791 to 0.875. The reliabilities for the desire to stay and future attendance scales were 0.762 and 0.777, respectively. All the factors were above the acceptable benchmark levels of 0.70 (Malhotra 2004). Construct validity of the scale was assessed by the computation of the Cronbach alpha coefficient for the scale which was acceptable and an indirect indicator of construct validity (Parasuraman, Zeithaml & Berry, 1988). Convergent validity was assessed through the computation of Pearson correlation coefficients. The seven sportscapes dimensions reported significant correlations with desire to stay and future stadia attendance, thus providing evidence of convergence. The results of the multiple regression analysis provide evidence of predictive validity whereby a direct relationship was hypothesised between the seven sportscapes dimensions, desire to stay and future stadia attendance.

Results

A correlation analysis was undertaken to examine significant relationships between the identified dimensions with desire to stay and future attendance. Regression analysis was subsequently undertaken to examine the predictive relationship between the sportscapes dimension, desire to stay and future attendance to the facility. This was necessary in order to overcome the limitations of correlation analysis which only show a linear relationship. The regression analysis was conducted to obtain the entirety of effects between the sportscapes dimensions with desire to stay and future attendance (Harris & Ezeh, 2008).

*See Dhurup and Mofoka (2010) for a full description of the questionnaire.*
Table 2: Scale reliability

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension description</th>
<th>Number of items</th>
<th>Cronbach alpha</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Scoreboard quality</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.875</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refreshment provisioning</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.844</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facility aesthetics</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.849</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Space allocation</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.791</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stadia accessibility</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.850</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seating comfort</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.765</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stadia cleanliness</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.797</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desire to stay</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.762</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future attendance</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.777</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Correlations

The Pearson’s Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (r) was used to analyse the bi-variate relationship between the seven dimensions with desire to stay and future attendance. These results are reported in Table 3.

Table 3: Correlations between seven sportscape dimensions with perceived crowding, desire to stay and future attendance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors</th>
<th>Factor 1</th>
<th>Factor 2</th>
<th>Factor 3</th>
<th>Factor 4</th>
<th>Factor 5</th>
<th>Factor 6</th>
<th>Factor 7</th>
<th>Desire to stay</th>
<th>Future Attendance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Scoreboard</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.285**</td>
<td>.433**</td>
<td>.283</td>
<td>.394</td>
<td>.220**</td>
<td>.301**</td>
<td>.263</td>
<td>.317**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refreshment</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.296**</td>
<td>.345</td>
<td>.412</td>
<td>.418</td>
<td>.396**</td>
<td>.404</td>
<td>.404</td>
<td>.445**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aesthetics</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.437</td>
<td>.490</td>
<td>.389**</td>
<td>.378**</td>
<td>.404</td>
<td>.445**</td>
<td>.629</td>
<td>.373**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Space</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.520</td>
<td>.784**</td>
<td>.609**</td>
<td>.475</td>
<td>.327**</td>
<td>.370**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.543**</td>
<td>.504**</td>
<td>.475</td>
<td>.327**</td>
<td>.370**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comfort</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.909</td>
<td>.612</td>
<td>.550</td>
<td>.299**</td>
<td>.408**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cleanliness</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.550</td>
<td>.299**</td>
<td>.408**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

** Correlations are significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
Relationship between stadium sportscapes dimensions and future attendance

Regression analysis

Of interest was the relationship between the seven sportscapes factors and desire to stay whereby regression models were computed in order to examine the strength of the relationships. In addition, since desire to stay within a stadium yielded strong correlations with future attendance, regression models were also computed in order to establish the predictive relationships. The results of the regression models are presented in Table 4.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable to enter</th>
<th>Beta</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>sig</th>
<th>Variable to enter</th>
<th>Beta</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>sig</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Factor 1 Scoreboard</td>
<td>-.147</td>
<td>.883</td>
<td></td>
<td>Factor 1 Scoreboard</td>
<td>.167</td>
<td>2.081</td>
<td>.039</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Factor 2 Refreshments</td>
<td>.139</td>
<td>2.128</td>
<td>.035</td>
<td>Factor 2 Refreshments</td>
<td>.131</td>
<td>1.729</td>
<td>.086</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Factor 3 Aesthetics</td>
<td>.088</td>
<td>1.245</td>
<td>.215</td>
<td>Factor 3 Aesthetics</td>
<td>.291</td>
<td>3.566</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Factor 4 Space allocation</td>
<td>.380</td>
<td>3.521</td>
<td>.001</td>
<td>Factor 4 Space allocation</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-.296</td>
<td>.768</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Factor 5 Accessibility</td>
<td>.081</td>
<td>1.068</td>
<td>.287</td>
<td>Factor 5 Accessibility</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-.296</td>
<td>.768</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Factor 6 Seating comfort</td>
<td>.032</td>
<td>.157</td>
<td>.876</td>
<td>Factor 6 Seating comfort</td>
<td>.560</td>
<td>2.363</td>
<td>.019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Factor 7 Cleanliness</td>
<td>.163</td>
<td>1.023</td>
<td>.308</td>
<td>Factor 7 Cleanliness</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>.038</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

R = 0.690; R² = 0.476 R² = 0.453 (adjusted) R = 0.542; R² = 0.294 R² = 0.264 (adjusted)

Discussion

The results of the Pearson correlation coefficients revealed that statistically significant positive correlations existed between all seven stadia sportscapes dimensions and desire to stay within a facility and future attendance. The correlations for the seven sportscapes dimensions and desire to stay within the stadia ranged from r=0.263 to r= 0.629 (p<0.01) indicating that high presence of stadia sportscapes play a significant role in the desire among spectators to stay within the facility. Aspects such as the quality of scoreboards to enhance the atmospherics of a facility, variety and quality of refreshments available, space utilisation and accessibility to essential facilities without discomfort, and general cleanliness of the environment seem to be related to a spectator’s desire to stay within stadia for the duration of soccer games. The correlations between desire to stay and future attendance also reported strong positive linear relationships r=0.408 (p<0.01) indicating that the desire to stay within a stadia influences
spectators' future attendance to a facility. Based on the results of the positive correlations evidence is found in support of $H_1$ and $H_2$.

Regression analysis in Table 4 shows significant predictive relationships between the stadia sportscapes and desire to stay within the stadia ($R^2 = 0.453$) and ($R^2 = 0.264$), respectively. Results show that of the seven possible linear relationships, refreshments and space allocation dimensions were found to be significantly related to the desire to stay within a stadium. Four dimensions namely, scoreboard quality, refreshments, seating comfort and stadia cleanliness were found to be significantly related to future stadia attendance. The hypotheses $H_1$ and $H_2$ are therefore partially supported.

Expressed as a percentage, the adjusted $R^2 = 0.453$ and $R^2 = 0.264$ values in Table 4 signify that the regression model explained approximately 45 per cent and 26 per cent, respectively of the variance in desire to stay and future stadia attendance. The Beta coefficients indicate that factor 1 scoreboard quality does not positively contribute to the prediction of spectators’ desire to stay within a stadium facility. The desire to stay within a stadia predicted by refreshment provisioning ($\beta = 0.139$), aesthetics ($\beta = 0.088$), space allocation ($\beta = 0.380$), accessibility ($\beta = 0.081$), seating comfort ($\beta = 0.032$) and stadia cleanliness ($\beta = 0.163$) made significant contributions, with spatial allocation within the stadia making the largest contribution. Future attendance to a stadia is positively predicted by scoreboard quality ($\beta = 0.167$), refreshment provisioning ($\beta = 0.131$), stadia aesthetics ($\beta = 0.291$) and seating comfort ($\beta = 0.560$). Seating comfort, followed by aesthetics made the largest contributions to the prediction of future match attendance.

The fact that the quality of scoreboard and its various functional and technological abilities did not predict spectators desire to stay within a stadia does not make the dimension unimportant as choice behaviour is a rather complex phenomenon and it is quite unrealistic to assume that all variables can account for substantial proportion of variability (Schiffman, Dash & Dillon, 1977). Research has also shown that the more a spectator visits a stadia, the more spectators place some factors in their subconscious level and unless the factors such as the availability of quality scoreboards causes a substantial (negative or positive) surprise the spectator will not notice it (Spies, Hesse & Loesch, 1997). This theory is embedded in Kano's quality model and more specifically, the basic needs dimension (must-be-needs) (Zhang & Von Dran, 2002). Basic needs are the minimum attributes acceptable to spectators (Shen, Tan & Xie, 2000) and encompass attributes spectators take for granted. Their presence goes unnoticed, but their absence will generate complaints and dissatisfaction. Previous research did not highlight refreshment provisioning as


an essential attribute within a sportscapes. Given that the stadia sportscapes is a form of a leisure setting whereby spectators come in very much earlier to witness an entertaining game in order to avoid traffic congestions and spend extended periods of time within the facility, adequate and appropriate meal provisioning may be essential.

The environmental aesthetics is influenced by the architectural design and decor which contribute to the attractiveness of sportscapes (Wakefield, et al., 1996). Hence, when spectators enter a stadium they are likely to evaluate the attractiveness of the facility either consciously or subconsciously which may increase the positive or negative effects of the aesthetic qualities. Bitner (1992) is of the view that visual elements related to aesthetic appeal are implicit communicators of an environment where a service is performed and these tangible cues convey and enhance a certain mood or image of the service environment. Research into environmental psychology affirms that the layout and functionality, entrances, exits, interior and exterior design features influence social intimacy which provide intrinsic cues upon which beliefs are formed about an organisations’ effectiveness (Nguyen & Leblanc, 2002). Arnold and Devlin’s (2002) use of an experimental approach concur that in part, an individual makes an assessment of a servicescapes based on the design features and furnishing of the facility. Wakefield and Blodgett (1994) found that aesthetic factors and the facility layout in leisure service settings may attract spectators or discourage them from frequenting or returning to a facility.

Space allocation and facility layout refer to the ways in which the seating, restrooms, restaurants within the stadia is arranged and the spatial relationship between them. In addition, many items in the physical environment such as a stadium serve as explicit or implicit signals that communicate layout of the facilities. Russel and Pratt (1980) concluded that the emotion-eliciting qualities of environments such as seating comfort, space utilisation and accessibility are captured by pleasure-displeasure and stimulation or excitement. For example, environments that elicit feelings of pleasure are likely to be the ones where spectators want to spend time and money (Donovan & Rossiter, 1982) whereas unpleasant environments are avoided (Mehrabian & Russel, 1974). Similarly, arousing environments are viewed positively unless the excitement is combined with facilities which are unpleasant. Other environmental dimensions such as clear signage, adequate space may also increase the perceptions of personal control within a facility (Bitner, 1992).

Stadia accessibility is of initial concern for a spectator approaching the sportscape. The availability, proximity and entry to a stadia parking may enhance or detract from spectators’ pleasure with the sportscapes (Wakefield, et al., 1996). A properly planned layout of a stadium enables spectators to reach their desired
destinations such as seats, restaurants or restrooms with a minimal amount of discomfort. Ineffective layouts in a sportscape may prohibit free movement and are expected to result in spectators feeling confined and restricted. Problems regarding stadia accessibility may occur with poorly designed stadia as well as space allocation especially when the service areas are hidden behind huge concrete walls which may give the impression that the service areas are difficult to reach.

Assessments related to the physical experience, as noted by Wakefield et al. (1996:54) affirm that seating comfort becomes essential where spectators sit in a venue on the “same seat for extended periods of time”. Most people attending a soccer game or other spectator sport expect and may even want a ‘good crowd’ but they do not want to feel overcrowded or uncomfortable because seats are too narrow, too close together or because ancillary facilities are not adequately designed to handle the crowds effectively (Eroglu & Machleit, 1990; Hui & Bateson, 1991). Hence, “the internal layout of a stadium may either ease or restrict movement, thereby evoking a sense of crowding or spaciousness” (Aubert-Gamet, 1997:28). Finally, the importance of cleanliness is manifested in a high number of studies which directly associates cleanliness with spectators’ evaluation of the servicescapes and future consumption behaviour. Spectators demand a high level of cleanliness regarding levels of sanitation and hygiene when they are present within a sportscape (Rosenquist, 2005). The importance of cleanliness within a service environment has been highlighted in literature (Berta, 2005) and Marinucci (2002:7) aptly sums up that “marketing-wise, cleanliness makes perfect good sense”. Wakefield and Blodgett (1994) assert that cleanliness is an essential component of servicescapes.

In summary, the regression models depict that spatial allocation and functionality followed by stadia cleanliness made the greatest impact on spectators’ desire to stay within a sportscape and seating comfort and facility aesthetics significantly contributes to future patronage intentions.

**Limitations and implications for further research**

The results of this study were gathered and reported on two stadia only. Therefore, one should be cautious to generalization of the results to a broader population. A useful addition to this area of research would be to examine different stadia across the country. However, this shortcoming should not negate usability of results. These results provide several pertinent avenues for management of stadia to nurture alluring relationships with spectators by developing meaningful sportscape within a stadia environment. Despite the limitations, the findings of the study point toward several useful directions for future research. Different sportscape and image attributes need to be brought
into the equation mainly driven by changing spectator preferences and needs. Additional variables added to the sportscapes equation such as perceived crowding may enhance our understanding of salient sportscapes attributes. In addition, other intervening variables such as being a fan of the team playing were not included in the study. Future studies can examine the influence of such variables on attendance. Personal space and interpersonal distance norms may be subject to cultural variations (Baldassare, 1979) and therefore the relationship between perceived crowding and space may yield rewarding outcomes if researched across different cultures in South Africa. The importance of a particular sportscapes component is likely to vary across different leisure settings.

Conclusion

A complex mix of environmental features constitutes the sportscapes in stadia which may influence the behaviours of spectators. Environmental psychologists contend that individuals respond to their environments holistically by creating perceptions of the environment which ultimately determine their response to such environments. The study represents a theory-driven framework for modelling the role of sportscapes in stadium service setting which was developed from retail literature, including environmental psychology, consumer behaviour and sport servicescapes. It reinforces previous streams of research which demonstrates the value of salient sportscapes dimensions, the desire to stay within sportscapes and re-patronage intentions.

References


Dhurup, Mofoka and Surujlal


