

## FEMALE FANS' SATISFACTION IN RELATION TO SPORTSCAPE FACTORS IN GREEK SOCCER SUPER LEAGUE

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### Abstract

The purpose of the present study was to investigate the relationship between female fans' satisfaction and sportscape variables in Greek Soccer Super League. 142 female fans attending two Greek Super League football matches, during soccer period 2016-2017, participated in the present study. Measurements included the use of sportscape questionnaire (Wakefield, Blodgett, & Sloan, 1996). Correlation and Regression analysis were used to identify the relationship and predictive variables of female fans' satisfaction in relation to physical and environmental facility of soccer games. Results indicated from the variables of sportscape scale, cleanliness, facility aesthetics and stadium security were the most predictive variables of female fans' satisfaction. In conclusion, environmental and physical facility variables of a soccer game such as cleanliness and aesthetics of the stadium have strong positive effects on female fans' satisfaction and intention to attend soccer games in Greece in the future.

**Key words:** gender, women, motivation, sports industry, spectators.

### Introduction

In the field of sports industry, fans and spectators play a crucial and central role in the success and popularity of sports teams, due to their impact on creating an atmosphere during the game, giving significance and authenticity on the televised sporting event and helping the economic success of the team in a variety of ways such as: buying tickets and spending money on merchandise (Chung, 2015; Mahony & Howard, 1998; Sloan, 1989). A great emphasis has been given last years on the role of gender and its relationship with sport's consumption (Deaner, Balish, & Lombardo, 2016; Dietz-Uhler, Harrick, End, & Jacquemotte, 2000; Fink, Trail, & Anderson, 2002; James & Ridinger, 2002; Jones & Lawrence, 2000). Most of the studies, examined gender differences between male and female athletes (Deaner et al., 2012; Deaner & Smith, 2013; Ogles & Masters, 2003). However, according to Sveinson and Hoerber (2015), the term sport fan actually refers to a homogenous group consisting primary of white, adult men, while Richards (2015) refers that both male fans and scholars are occupy in the sport field. Participation of women in sport competitions, as a spectator, has increased significantly in recent years (Farrell, Fink, & Fields, 2011; Mintert & Pfister, 2015). Women are attending an increasing number of sporting events (Cere, 2002) and in the sports industry the female consumer segment has perhaps the greatest potential (Bush, Bush, Clark, & Bush, 2005). However, research interest for the participation of women fans at sporting events and their patterns for consumption, has not been examined well (Crawford & Gosling, 2004; Pfister, Lenneis, & Mintert, 2013). Women's motives (reasons) to consumer sport are different than those of men (Wann, 1995; Wann, Srader, & Wilson, 1999). Most of the studies investigated

women's motives used Sloan's (1989) work relative to sport spectator's motives. Except motives, the type of sport women are involved and participate differs than those of men (Sargent, Zillman, & Weaver, 1998), while external factor such as attendance and participation in sport create gender differences (Wells, Southall, & Peng, 2000). Therefore, motives for attending or watching sport events for women are different than men, due to this issue some authors suggest that men predominate in the field of spectatorship than women. According to Guttman (1986), in every society males are even more likely than females, to be spectators, while Gantz and Venner (1991) have suggested that women's lesser consumption of sports is due to a lack of free time. Soccer is one of the main parts of sports industry, which advantages are the attraction and motivation of spectators, sponsors and media (Aycan, Kiremitci, Demiray, & Gencer, 2014). According to Kim and Trail (2011), the budget of soccer clubs depends on media and on attendance fees. In Europe especially, professional soccer generates huge amount of money and sponsorship (Giulianotti & Robertson, 2004). Female fan's participation in soccer has increased significantly recent years (Richards, 2015; Yuce & Katirci, 2016). In the soccer industry fan's satisfaction is of high importance (Greenwell, Fink, & Pastore, 2006). Understanding what motivates, satisfies and the reasons for fan's attending soccer event, is a key for effective soccer product management (Kahle, Duncan, Dalakas, & Aiken, 2001; Mintert & Pfister, 2015). However, research for female football fans and their motives or reasons for participation is very limited (Pfister, Lenneis, & Mintert, 2013). Fan satisfaction and services are key factors in the sports industry.

Quality of services is one of the most important factors leading to satisfaction of spectators and their attention to be present in soccer matches (Beyrami & Najafzadeh, 2015). Some definitions of quality in services have to do with accessibility. Based on the view of Chelladurai and Chang (2000), these definitions include core service, physical environment and interaction among individuals in service-performance. Most of the studies examined female spectator's motives and reasons for participation in sport events, used Sloan's work (1989) with a variety of social and psychological needs (Farrell, Fink, & Fields, 2011). Factors such as entertainment, beauty and grace of the game, players as role models, social needs and aesthetics of the physical environment are strong predictors of female fan's satisfaction and motivation to participate a sport event (Funk, Mahony, & Ridinger, 2002; James & Ridinger, 2002; Yuce & Katirci, 2016). The physical environment where the core service is being present and consumed by the fans of the team, known as sportscape, is a variable may affect fans' motivation and satisfaction (Wakefield, Blodgett, & Sloan, 1996). It includes the interior and the exterior elements such as environment of stadium, beauty of facilities, quality of scoreboard, rest seats, decoration of stadium, space of stadium, signs inside the stadium and quality of staff.

Spectators, who perceive sportscape quality in higher level of satisfaction, are more encouraged to return to stadium for future events (Wakefield & Blodgett, 1994). In soccer, a positive perception of the sportscape can enhance future attendance intentions for some spectators (Hill & Green, 2000). Instead, poor soccer stadium factors may play a significant role on fans' satisfaction and decrease their attendance (Douvis, 2007). Review of literature has showed that there is a significant relationship between some of the sportscape factors and male fans' satisfaction during soccer games. In a study in Greek Soccer, factors such as staff and quick-easy access, have found to be the most important dimensions for spectators' satisfaction (Athanasopoulou, Skouris, Zafeiropoulou, Siomkos, & Assiouras, 2012). In South Africa, factors such as space allocation and refreshments were found to be significant related to spectators' desire to stay within a stadium (Dhurup, Mofoka, & Surujlal, 2010). Furthermore, in a study in Malaysia Soccer Cup, predictors of customers' satisfaction were signboards and stadium's aesthetic (Pilus, Yusof, Bojei, Fauzee, Samah, & Aziz, 2010).

### **Problem and aim**

Female fan's satisfaction in relation to environmental and sportscape factors in the sports industry has not been examined well by the researchers. Few studies in Greece have focused in the relationship between sportscape factors and the influence of the physical environment on male fans' satisfaction during soccer game (Athanasopoulou, Skourtis, Zafeiropoulou, Siomkos, & Assiouras,

2012). Female fan's satisfaction in relationship with sportscape factors during a soccer game is missing from the present literature. Therefore the purpose of the present study is to investigate the relationship between female fan's satisfaction and stadium factors during two soccer matches in Greek Soccer Super League.

### **Methods**

#### *Participants*

A total of 142 female spectators who attended two soccer games of the Super League in Greece participated in the present study. Demographic characteristics of spectators are presented in Table 1. Mean age of the spectators was 29.2 (SD = 6.3 years).

#### *Procedure*

Data were collected from female fans who viewed two football games of the Super League in Northern Greece, during football period 2016-2017. Participants were selected with the design of random sampling. A total of 200 questionnaires were distributed and 142 (71%) were returned usable for the analysis and the purpose of the present study. In order to ensure representation of all fans in the stadium, questionnaires were distributed in all the parts of the stadiums (Robinson, Trail, Dick, & Gillentine, 2005). All questionnaires were collected prior to the beginning of the football games, before the fans enter the stadium, by a team of four experienced interviewers and one supervisor.

#### *Data instruments*

Female fans completed a questionnaire packet containing two sections: the first section included a demographic form (age) and the second section consisted of several subscales designed to measure perception of environmental and physical facility. Perceptions of the physical facility were measured using the scales developed by Wakefield, Blodgett and Sloan (1996) which is a 26 items sportscape scale with five components: stadium access, facility aesthetics, layout accessibility, stadium security and cleanliness. Inclusion of the non-fixed stadium elements (stadium security and cleanliness) in the sportscape questionnaire is in accordance with the work of previous researchers (Hill & Green, 2000; Wakefield & Sloan, 1995). To measure sportscape as a constraint for attendance, female fans had to answer the question "To what extent the following motives affect your decision to attend the game?" The five items were scored on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Reliability of the questionnaire using Cronbach Alpha was calculated at 0.93.

#### *Statistical analysis*

Statistic package program IBM SPSS Statistics 22.0 version was used. Descriptive statistics were used in order to summarize the mean and standard deviation of variables. Pearson's correlation analysis was used to examine the relationship between sportscape variables and female fans'

satisfaction. Regression analysis was used furthermore to investigate the predictive relationship between sportscape variables and female fans' satisfaction. Level of significance was set at  $p < 0.01$ .

**Results**

Table 1. Descriptive characteristics of female fans examined as age. Values are presented as mean ± standard deviation.

Fans	Age	Total
Female	29.2±6.3	142

Table 1 shows the number of female fans, examined according to their age.

Pearson's correlation coefficient (r) was used to analyze the relationship between the five variables of sportscape scale and female fans' satisfaction. As it shown in Table 2, correlation of female fans' satisfaction was statistically significant with cleanliness ( $r=0.498$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), facility aesthetics ( $r=0.457$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) and with security-safety variable ( $r=0.307$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ).

The other factors of sportscape scale did not have a statistical significant relationship with female fans' satisfaction.

Table 2. Correlation analysis between sportscape variables and female fans' satisfaction.

Factors	Stadium Access	Facility Aesthetics	Layout Accessibility	Stadium Security	Cleanliness
Female Fans' Satisfaction	.172	.457**	.189	.307*	.498**

\*\* $p < 0.01$  level, \* $p < 0.05$

Regression analysis was used to determine the predictive model of female fans' satisfaction from the five selected variables of sportscape scale. As it shown in Table 3, cleanliness and facility aesthetics were the most predictive variables of female fans' satisfaction. Cleanliness could explain and predict female fans' satisfaction approximately at  $R^2=24.8\%$  ( $r=0.498$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Cleanliness and facility aesthetics could explain and predict female fans' satisfaction at a percentage of  $R^2=33.2\%$  respectively.

Table 3. Regression analysis between female fans' satisfaction and sportscape factors.

Model	Factors	R	R Square Change	Beta	Sig. Value
Female Fans' Satisfaction	1	.498	.248	.139	.003
	2	.571	.332	.147	.043

1: Cleanliness, 2: Cleanliness and Facility Aesthetics

**Discussion**

The purpose of the present study was to examine which the relationship between female fans' satisfaction and sportscape variables, during soccer games (Premier division) in Greece. In recent years, participation of women in sport competitions, as a spectator, has increased significantly (Farrell, Fink, & Fields, 2011; Mintert & Pfister, 2015). Reasons for participating and female fans' motives have been investigated by the research literature in a variety of social and psychological needs of the spectator, according to Sloan's theory (Farrell, Fink & Fields, 2011). Other surveys used factors such as entertainment, beauty and grace of the game, escaping from daily routine, commitment and interest in sports, players as role models, social needs and aesthetics of the physical environment to examine their relationship fan's satisfaction and motivation to participate a sport event (Funk, Mahony, & Ridinger, 2002; James & Ridinger, 2002; Yuce & Katirci, 2016). Some studies showed that environmental factors such as facility aesthetics and security of the stadium have strong effects with fans' participation during a soccer game (Yuce & Katirci, 2016). Review of the literature has shown that sportscape variables enhance spectators' satisfaction and their intention

to attend games in a variety of sports like professional golf, (Lambrech, Kaefer, & Ramenofsky, 2009), baseball (Hightower, Brady, & Baker, 2002; Wakefield & Blodgett, 1994), professional football (Gustafson, 2005) and soccer (Dhurup, Mofoka, & Surujlal, 2010; Pilus et al., 2010). Most of these surveys used male spectators as a sample. In Greece a survey in soccer in a sample of male fans during soccer games in first division (Super League) has shown that sportscape factors such as staff and quick-easy access, have found to be the most important dimensions for fans' satisfaction (Athanasopoulou et al., 2012). However the investigation of sportscape variables and their relationship on female fans' satisfaction in soccer and specifically in Greece is not enough examined. In the present study female fans were used as a sample. They asked, to which extend sportscape motives affect their decision to attend in the future soccer games. Our results showed that from the five variables of the sportscape instrument, only cleanliness and facility aesthetics had the strongest relationship with fans' satisfaction. The relationship between cleanliness and fans' satisfaction was significant ( $r=0.498$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), while facility aesthetics had the second significant relationship with fans' satisfaction ( $r=0.457$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ).

Furthermore, regression analysis showed that the model of female fans' satisfaction could be explained by the combination of cleanliness and facility aesthetics at a percentage of 33.2%. Of the five variables of sportscape questionnaire, cleanliness was the factor with the strongest relationship with female fans' satisfaction and explained the model of at a percentage of 24.8%. Importance of cleanliness has also been referred in the literature as an essential component of servicescapes (Marinucci, 2002; Wakefield & Blodgett, 1994). According to Rosenquist (2005), spectators demand a high level of cleanliness regarding levels of sanitation and hygiene in the physical environment of the stadium. Stadium architectural design and age as well as the stadium service levels, can influence stadium cleanliness (Wakefield & Sloan, 1995). Facility aesthetics is known as the architectural design, the interior design and the décor of the stadium (Wakefield, Blodgett, & Sloan, 1996). In the present study, facility aesthetics was the second significant factor related to spectators' satisfaction ( $r=0.457$ ,  $p<0.01$ ). This finding is in agreement with the results of Yuce and Katirci (2016), which showed that facility aesthetics was the second main reason motivating female fans' participation in football competitions in Turkey. Security is a variable which relates to safety issues in and around the stadium (Westerbeek & Shilbury, 2003). In the present study, security-safety in the stadium had the third significant correlation with female fans' satisfaction ( $r=.0.307$ ,  $p<0.05$ ). This finding is in agreement with the results of Correia and Esteves (2007), which stated that football spectators will be satisfied only when there are stadium's facilities, car park and stadium's safety. In the present study,

other variables of sportscape instrument such as layout accessibility and stadium access did not have significant relationship and impact on female fan's intention to attend in the future soccer games. It seems that spectators in Greek Soccer super League are not satisfied well by those variables. This result is not in agreement with an earlier study in Greek soccer where factor such as quick and easy access was strong related to spectators' satisfaction (Athanasopoulou et al., 2012) and also in other surveys in soccer where signposting was important factor for future re-view of the game (Pilus et al., 2010). Findings of the present study support the idea that female fans enjoy stadium characteristics such as cleanliness and facility aesthetics, during a soccer game. Soccer marketers and soccer clubs should acknowledge these sportscape variables that drive and motive fans to attend and participate.

### Conclusion

Female fans' satisfaction during a soccer game is influenced by a mixed model of the physical environment of the stadium during a soccer game in Greece. More studies should focus in the relationship between sportscape variables and female fans' satisfaction in Greek Soccer Super League of lower divisions. It seems that factors such as cleanliness, facility aesthetics and security-safety, are important to female spectators' intention to attend in the future soccer games in Greece. According to that, issues such as cleanliness and facility aesthetics should be considered in the future by the Greek Football Federation to create a pleasant soccer environment and enhance fans' motivation and satisfaction.

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## ZADOVOLJSTVO OBOŽAVATELJICA U ODNOSU SA SPORTSCAPE FAKTORIMA U GRČKOJ NOGOMETNOJ SUPER LIGI

### Sažetak

Svrha ovog istraživanja bila je ispitati odnos između zadovoljstva i sportscape varijabli obožavateljica u grčkom nogometu Super lige. 142 obožavateljice koje su pohađale dvije nogometne utakmice Super lige, tijekom nogometnog razdoblja 2016-2017, sudjelovale su u ovom istraživanju. Mjerenja uključuju korištenje sportscape upitnika (Wakefield, Blodgett, i Sloan, 1996). Korelacija i regresija analiza koriste se kako bi se identificirali odnos i prediktivne varijable zadovoljstva obožavateljica u odnosu na fizičke i ekološke objekte nogometne igre. Rezultati su pokazali da su od varijabli sportscape skale, čistoća, estetika objekta i sigurnost stadiona najprediktivnije varijable zadovoljstva obožavateljica. U zaključku, varijable okoliša i objekta nogometne utakmice, kao što su čistoća i estetika stadiona imaju jake pozitivne učinke na zadovoljstvo i namjeru obožavateljica da prisustvuju nogometnim igrama u Grčkoj u budućnosti.

**Ključne riječi:** spol, žene, motivacija, sportska industrija, gledatelji.

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