South African Journal for Research in Sport, Physical Education and Recreation, 2012, 34(1): 75-91.
Suid-Afrikaanse Tydskrif vir Navorsing in Sport, Liggaamlike Opvoedkunde en Ontspanning, 2012, 34(1): 75-91.
ISBN: 0379-9069

TEAM PERFORMANCE AND SPORT ATTENDANCE OF SOUTH AFRICAN SUPER RUGBY AND CURRIE CUP RUGBY FANS

Charlene GERBER & Nic S. TERBLANCHE
Department of Business Management, Stellenbosch University, Stellenbosch, Republic of South Africa

ABSTRACT

To compete successfully in the expanding sport market, sport marketers need a thorough understanding of sport consumers, who include sport participants and sport spectators. Sport spectators are, in many instances, fanatical about the performance and success of their teams. It is thus obvious that ultimately their satisfaction with the experience of attending sporting events will be an important predictor of whether they will attend future events. Understanding the factors that influence spectator attendance is fundamental to understanding decisions about sport consumption. In professional rugby, competitions such as the Super Rugby and Currie Cup benefit from the lucrative money-generating opportunities offered. This study focuses on team performance and spectator attendance of the Super Rugby and Currie Cup competitions. Results indicated some interesting relationships between team performance and spectator attendance, and that a team's final log position could predict future spectator attendance.

Key words: Team performance; Sport attendance; Spectators; Rugby; Fans; Marketing.

INTRODUCTION

Marketing practices have also become part of traditionally non-business organisations, causes and issues. One area where the application of marketing principles has gained considerable attention globally is the marketing of sport and marketing through sport. The production, distribution and consumption of sport have characteristics unique to sport, and these characteristics make the marketing of sport quite a challenge (Irwin *et al*., 1999:1). Both marketing sport and marketing through sport have become well-known examples of spectacular marketing campaigns and applications of marketing principles. The annual Superbowl Final is an example of such an event.

Sport competes with various other forms of entertainment for the attention and money of consumers. Today, the role of marketing is well entrenched as a means to provide in the financial needs of sport bodies and teams. It is probably correct to say that initially most sport teams or leagues used to rely on ticket sales at the gate to meet financial obligations. Today, professional sport receive income from a wide range of sources, depending on the popularity of the sport and the level at which the sport is operating, namely local, regional or international, and where the level is not confined to particular geographic boundaries. Examples of the latter would be soccer and rugby in England, and baseball and ice hockey in Northern America. Sources of income today include television and various other media

revenues (Chandler, 1991; Rowe, 1995), the selling of merchandise and clothing (Steinbreder, 1992; Gorman & Calhoun, 1994; Burton, 1996;), sponsorships (Grimm, 1993; Schaaf, 1995; Cousens & Slack, 1996), and the letting of stadiums to other sport such as soccer teams playing matches in rugby stadiums.

The fact that sport potentially has access to various sources of finance has led to a vicious circle of players demanding more and more money (together with the administrators' perks), and sport bodies are forced to raise ticket prices and explore more avenues for finances. As an example of how much sportsmen earn, one can refer to David Beckham who earned $40 million between May 2010 and May 2011 (Highest paid footballers, 2011). The Springbok rugby players who were part of the squad who won the World Cup in 2007 also benefited handsomely from their success. It was reported that the most popular Springbok players were paid up to R1 million for each product or service endorsement because of their Rugby World Cup success (Boks to become cash cows, 2007). This amount is apart from the R1 million per player that SA Rugby paid to the members of the Springbok team who won the cup. It is not difficult to calculate how many spectators should attend matches and what incomes should be derived from sponsorships and other deals to pay such salaries. In 2004, Sasol announced that it would sponsor SA Rugby over the next six years to the tune of R120 million, and so became the official team sponsor of the Springboks, the SA "A" team, the Springbok Sevens, and the Under-21 team (Sasol invests R120 million in SA rugby, 2004). The most recent sponsorship of Springbok rugby by ABSA is worth R50 million per year for a period of five years (Absa new Springbok sponsor, 2011).

The number of sport spectators is important when sponsorships are negotiated and when decisions related to advertising and promotions have to be made. Individual players are often major draw cards to lure supporters, for instance, Real Madrid paid Manchester United as much as €94 million for Cristiano Ronaldo (*New York Times*, 2009). Television broadcasts and the sale of merchandise are most probably the biggest income generators of many sport bodies. Ticket sales, directly dependent on the number of spectators attending a game, are also big money. Real Madrid's total revenue for 2009 was €401 million. This achievement made them the first sport team ever to generate revenue of more than €400 million in a year (Houlihan *et al*., 2010). Almost a quarter of Real Madrid's income in 2009 (€101.4 million) came from ticket sales. Even in South Africa, top rugby franchises such as the Sharks regard ticket sales as a major income generator (Lamberti, 2002).

SPORT SPECTATORS AND SPORT ATTENDANCE

One common denominator in the marketing of sport, which directly or indirectly affects most of the income-producing activities, is the number of spectators who attend games, watch television broadcasts, and purchase merchandise to illustrate their affiliation with a team. In sport marketing, sport consumers consist of sport spectators (also known as "fans") and sport participants (Wakefield, 2002:1). Sport participants are people who participate in sport (Shank, 2002:145) and sport spectators or fans are defined as people who (Wakefield, 2002:1):

- identify with and follow the behaviour or actions of a team and/or individual players of sport teams on or off the field;
- purchase the licensed merchandise of sport teams;

- buy season tickets;
- travel to watch the games of a specific team outside of their geographical area; and
- devote significant social time attending, watching and discussing a team with others who are committed and devoted to the same or other teams.

The extent to which sport spectators are interested in and follow sport and sport teams ranges from occasionally watching a televised game or attending a live event, to owing season tickets and attending or watching as many games as possible (Funk & James, 2001). Wann and Branscombe (1990) believe that sport spectators identify with a team in order to feel a sense of belonging to a larger social structure.

FAN IDENTIFICATION

According to Tajfel (1982), the way an individual (or in this case sport spectator) feels about belonging to a specific social group and the emotional attachment that occurs whilst being a member of that group are referred to as social identity. Social identity refers specifically to those aspects of a person that are defined in terms of his or her group memberships (Deaux, 2002). It enables people to distinguish themselves from other groups because they identify with a particular group(s). Tajfel and Turner (1979 in *Social Identity Theory*, 2010:2) identify three variables whose contribution to the emergence of in-group favouritism is particularly important:

- firstly, the extent to which individuals identify with an in-group to internalise such group membership as an aspect of their self-concept;
- secondly, the extent to which the prevailing context provides ground for comparison between groups; and
- finally, the perceived relevance of the comparison group, which itself will be shaped by the relative and absolute status of the in-group.

Individuals are likely to display favouritism when an in-group is central to their self-definition and a given comparison is meaningful or the outcome is contestable.

Dionisio *et al*. (2008:19) point out that, in respect of sport fans, "the primary assumption of the social identity theory is that individuals will seek to resolve attitudes that are not balanced or equitable" and go on to emphasise that the phenomenon of basking in reflected glory (BIRG) is well known and serves to mirror the psychological character of fandom and the basis of explicit triumph. Then again, when a team fails, fans tend to dissociate themselves through a process labelled "cutting off reflected failure" (CORF) (Snyder *et al*., 1986).

Wann and Branscombe (1990) showed how identification with a sport team positively influenced the self-concept of sport fans. For example, a rugby supporter's self-concept can be expressed as follows: "I am a South African, I am male, I am a Bulls supporter." High self-esteem is achieved through motivation and it is maximised through creative social comparison. An example of the latter is the selection of dimensions on which the individual's group excels, for instance: "The least tries were scored against the Stormers" or "the Sharks scored the most tries in the 2011 Super 15 competition". When a number of particular groups

compare the group with "worse" groups, the group-esteem is enhanced and consequently association improves the member's self-esteem.

One result of a strong connection to a sport team is that an individual feels a sense of personal success when the team wins and a sense of loss when the team loses (Funk & James, 2001). Fans are informed about how their teams perform in respect of various measures. Each week of a competition, a new set of statistics is produced with the updates of the previous week's results. Apart from the reports in daily newspapers and television broadcasts, various Internet sites also keep track of the detailed statistics of teams' performances in the competition. Statistics such as games won or lost, points scored or scored against, number of tries scored or scored against and a team's points in the competition (or log standing) are aspects that sport fans follow and keep track of. According to the social identity theory, fans' behaviour will largely depend on the dimensions selected by fans to differentiate their team from those of competing teams.

TEAM PERFORMANCE AND SPORT ATTENDANCE

Many attempts have been made to better understand the factors that influence sport spectators to attend sporting events (Wells *et al*., 2000; Fink *et al*., 2002; Boyd & Krehbiel, 2003; Trail *et al*., 2003; Ferreira & Armstrong, 2004; Robinson *et al*., 2005). The main factors that were identified include psychological factors, economic variables, game attractiveness, and stadium factors (Shank, 2002; Boyd & Krehbiel, 2003; Ferreira & Armstrong, 2004). Specifically, game attractiveness is a situational factor that varies from game to game and from week to week. Game attractiveness is influenced by the perceived quality of an opponent, the importance of the game and team performance, where *team performance* refers to the team's actual performance on the field (in sport terms, games won or lost, points scored or scored against, number of tries scored or scored against, and a team's points in the competition or log standing).

Winning and spectator attendance probably go together for most sports teams, but the direction of causation is not unmistakable in a particular direction (Davis, 2008). Stated otherwise, does winning go hand-in-hand with an increase in attendance, or does an increase in attendance result in more wins as teams have more resources to spend on players' compensation? In a study of major baseball teams, Davis (2008:1) found "that the direction of causation runs from team success to greater attendance, and that an … increase in fans does not" necessarily result in more wins later on.

Since the needs and demographics of sport consumers have become more complex, and competition for spectators' support has increased, the demand for professional sport marketing has also grown (Mullin *et al*., 2000). Sport marketing demands a thorough understanding of sport consumers. For instance, understanding how fan identification impacts on spectators attending sport events is essential, and determining why spectators attend sport games is therefore necessary. A great number of studies have been conducted on team performance and spectator attendance (Wells *et al.*, 2000; Fink *et al.*, 2002; Boyd & Krehbiel, 2003; Trail *et al*., 2003; Ferreira & Armstrong, 2004; Robinson *et al.*, 2005). Most studies focus on spectators' perception of their attendance behaviour (Jones, 1997; Shank & Beasley, 1998; Dietz-Uhler *et al*., 2000). In South Africa, however, research on spectator attendance is

limited. For example, since the introduction of Super Rugby in 1993, the performance of the South African Super Rugby teams has not been consistent; South African Super Rugby teams only won the competition in 1993, 2007, 2009 and 2010 (Rugby in South Africa, 2010). In spite of the fact that, during the Super 12 competition, no South African Super Rugby team won the tournament, South African viewership grew (Van der Berg, 2001:1). Even when viewership in New Zealand and Australia decreased, South African viewership and attendance of the Super Rugby matches increased (Ray, 2011). Team performance and the effect it has on sport attendance was the main focus of the study on which this article is based. Specifically, the team performance and sport attendance of two major rugby competitions, the Currie Cup and Super Rugby, were focused on.

THE SUPER RUGBY AND CURRIE CUP COMPETITIONS

The Currie Cup (only played in South Africa) is the oldest of its kind in rugby competitions (Currie Cup, 1999). Owing to South Africa's policy of separate development, the South African rugby team's participation in world rugby ended in 1981. South Africa was only readmitted into international competition in 1992. During this period of isolation, the Currie Cup became the passion of South African rugby (Currie Cup, 2000). Claassen (2001) states that the isolation contributed to a tradition of provincialism in South Africa.

Over the years, the Currie Cup has assumed various forms (Rugby in South Africa, 2010). Initially it was a centralised tournament, but thereafter all 14 provincial teams were divided into two sections of seven teams each. Each section played a single round within the section and the top four teams in each section advanced to play for the ABSA Currie Cup, while the remaining three teams in each section played for the ABSA Cup (Roos, 2001:5). From 2003, the ABSA Currie Cup reverted to a strength versus strength format. It featured two sections, namely a top section of six teams and a lower section of eight teams. A double round of games is then played with the top two teams in each pool qualifying for the finals (Currie Cup, 2002). Since the Currie Cup took on various forms, only the teams that featured most in finals and semi-finals during the last 10 years (i.e. Blue Bulls, Cheetahs, Lions, Natal Sharks and Western Province) were included in this study.

Super Rugby was introduced in 1993 and took on various forms: Super 10 (1993 to 1995), Super 12 (1996 to 2005) and Super 14 (Rugby in South Africa, 2010). From 2011 onwards, the Super Rugby competition will be called the Super 15. The Super competition was the first in which South African teams annually competed in an international competition directly below the level of national sides. South African rugby fans have always been regarded as fanatical, and the introduction of the Super competition offered the opportunity to identify the performance measures that bring fans to the rugby stadiums. One of the major challenges for the management of a Super side is to develop and maintain fan support for the team. Before the introduction of the Super competition, provincial players generally came from the geographical area which constituted the home of the team. With the introduction of the Super competition, players became professionals and started to move around from one team to another. "Local" fans thus had to become familiar and supportive of players joining their team, whom they previously might not have liked at all.

PROBLEM STATEMENT AND OBJECTIVES

Marketing success comes from identifying and meeting customer needs or wants (Rix, 2004:10). This also holds true for companies who want to compete successfully in the expanding sport market, where a thorough understanding of sport consumers is essential (Shank, 2002:145; Wysong, 2002:1). It can thus be stated that satisfaction with the experience of attending a sporting event and team performance is likely to be important when predicting the likelihood of spectators attending future events (Matsouka, 2003). A comprehension of the factors that influence sport consumers' preferences and behaviour is essential to understand their sport consumption decisions (Ferreira & Armstrong, 2004).

For many years, South African sport was characterised by passion and pride of mainly White spectators, especially for local brands, because of the international sport boycott. With the introduction of professionalism and the commercialisation of rugby, the focus has shifted to regional teams that compete internationally (Basson, 2003:16; Rugby in South Africa, 2010). Even though a popular belief amongst sport marketers is that winning teams attract great crowds, little research has been conducted in South Africa to confirm this notion. There seems to be a paucity of research in respect of sport spectators' consumption behaviour in South Africa. The primary purpose of this study was to assess the relationship between team performance and sport attendance. Even though some research has been conducted on the specific topic, researchers have attempted to explain the relationship between team performance and sport attendance by interviewing sport spectators. This study proposed a different methodology to assess the relationship between team performance and sport.

METHODOLOGY

To achieve the objective of this study a meta-analysis of match results was performed. A meta-analysis is a statistical technique for amalgamating, summarising and reviewing previous quantitative research. A meta-analysis allows the researcher to investigate a wide variety of questions on condition that a reasonable body of primary research studies exists. The purpose of a meta-analysis is to integrate the findings of earlier results to uncover new insights relevant to a particular phenomenon. For purposes of this study, the spectator attendance figures for the 2000 to 2005 Currie Cup games, as well as South African Super 12 home games from 2000 to 2005 were used as the dependent variable (as the Currie Cup as well as the Super Rugby competitions took on various formats, only the period 2000 to 2005 provided data that were comparable for purposes of this study). The performances of the Blue Bulls, Cheetahs, Lions, Natal Sharks and Western Province (i.e. 2000–2005 Currie Cup competition), as well as the Bulls, Cats, Sharks and Stormers (2000–2005 Super 12 tournament) were therefore analysed (Colquhoun, 2001; Colquhoun, 2002; Colquhoun, 2003; Colquhoun, 2004; Colquhoun, 2005; Colquhoun, 2006). Since only attendance figures of the home games for the Super 12 tournament were available, only home games were taken into account. Semi-finals and finals were not taken into consideration.

In an endeavour to achieve the objective of this study, namely to assess the relationship between spectator attendance and team performance, team performance was measured by investigating the actual performance of rugby teams on the field. Team performance measures which were studied consisted of number of games won by the relevant team,

number of games lost by the team, actual points scored by the relevant team, actual points scored against the team, number of tries scored by the team, number of tries scored against the relevant team, and final points at the end of the competition (i.e. competition points). The following hypotheses were postulated:

H_1: A positive relationship exists between spectators' attendance and number of games won by the particular team

H_2: A negative relationship exists between spectators' attendance and number of games lost by the team

H_3: A positive relationship exists between spectators' attendance and points scored by the particular team

H_4: A negative relationship exists between spectators' attendance and points scored against the team

H_5: A positive relationship exists between spectators' attendance and number of tries scored by the team

H_6: A negative relationship exists between spectators' attendance and number of tries scored against the particular team

H_7: A positive relationship exists between spectators' attendance and tournament points

H_8: The variance in spectator attendance can be explained by team performance variables (i.e. number of games won and lost, points scored by and against a team, number of tries scored by and against a team and tournament points)

Pearson's product moment correlation was used to test H_1 to H_7. Simple linear regression was used to test H_8. The significance level of 0.05 was considered sufficient (α =0.05).

RESULTS

Since this study focused on spectator attendance and game attractiveness of South African Super 12 and Currie Cup teams, only the performances of South African teams were investigated. A summary of the actual team performance results of the Bulls, Cats, Sharks and Stormers is given in Table 1.

TABLE 1: **ACTUAL PERFORMANCE OF SOUTH AFRICAN SUPER 12 TEAMS 2000-2005**

	Variables	N	Min.	Max.	Mean	Std. Dev.
Bulls	Number of games won	6	0	7	3.50	2.881
	Number of games lost	6	2	11	6.00	3.347
	Points scored by the relevant team	6	231	320	271.17	40.701
	Points scored against the team	6	229	500	361.17	89.584
	Number of tries scored by the team	6	19	36	29.83	6.494
	Number of tries scored against	6	25	67	44.17	13.541
	Final tournament points	6	4	34	19.67	12.469
Cats	Number of games won	6	1	7	3.17	2.994
	Number of games lost	6	0	10	7.00	4.099
	Points scored by the relevant team	6	226	320	268.67	37.713
	Points scored against the team	6	244	459	361.33	75.804
	Number of tries scored by the team	6	23	34	27.17	4.792
	Number of tries scored against	6	17	59	41.50	14.869
	Final tournament points	6	6	34	18.17	11.788
Sharks	Number of games won	6	1	8	3.67	2.658
	Number of games lost	6	1	9	5.67	3.077
	Points scored by the relevant team	6	205	322	248.50	41.549
	Points scored against the team	6	246	384	315.17	45.640
	Number of tries scored by the team	6	25	34	27.83	3.764
	Number of tries scored against	6	24	50	36.33	8.454
	Final tournament points	6	9	38	20.50	10.932
Stormers	Number of games won	6	3	7	5.17	1.329
	Number of games lost	6	1	7	5.00	2.191
	Points scored by the relevant team	6	215	310	273.67	34.273
	Points scored against the team	6	260	354	301.50	34.350
	Number of tries scored by the team	6	22	37	29.17	5.776
	Number of tries scored against	6	28	45	34.50	6.091
	Final tournament points	6	18	33	26.33	5.428

Given that a popular belief is that the Currie Cup is central to the passion of South African rugby focus (Currie Cup, 2000), investigating the team performance and attendance figures for the Currie Cup competition was essential in this study. As previously mentioned, the Currie Cup has taken on various forms. Only the attendance figures for the top five Currie Cup teams (during the relevant period) were therefore included. A summary of the actual team performance results of the Blue Bulls, Cheetahs, Lions, Natal Sharks and Western Province (WP) are given in Table 2.

TABLE 2: **ACTUAL PERFORMANCE OF CURRIE CUP TEAMS 2000-2005**

	Variables	N	Min.	Max.	Mean	Std. Dev.
Blue Bulls	Number of games won	6	12	21	18.00	3.347
	Number of games lost	6	0	7	4.50	2.429
	Points scored by the relevant team	6	760	1061	940.83	125.653
	Points scored against the team	6	509	665	624.50	60.285
	Number of tries scored by the team	5	89	142	120.00	23.054
	Number of tries scored against	5	55	80	71.40	9.864
	Final log position	5	1	10	4.60	3.912
Cheetahs	Number of games won	6	12	16	14.17	1.472
	Number of games lost	6	1	11	7.00	3.406
	Points scored by the relevant team	6	717	987	805.17	94.641
	Points scored against the team	6	464	746	600.83	93.779
	Number of tries scored by the team	5	81	189	108.60	45.357
	Number of tries scored against	5	52	91	70.60	14.673
	Final log position	5	2	5	3.60	1.140
Lions	Number of games won	6	11	19	14.83	3.061
	Number of games lost	6	1	9	6.17	2.927
	Points scored by the relevant team	6	701	911	812.33	90.831
	Points scored against the team	6	560	654	621.17	39.807
	Number of tries scored by the team	5	78	112	98.00	14.629
	Number of tries scored against	5	68	71	69.60	1.517
	Final log position	5	3	4	3.40	0.548
Natal Sharks	Number of games won	6	7	15	11.83	2.639
	Number of games lost	6	1	13	7.67	3.933
	Points scored by the relevant team	6	565	744	652.00	77.967
	Points scored against the team	6	432	586	525.33	57.200
	Number of tries scored by the team	5	67	94	81.00	13.210
	Number of tries scored against	5	44	70	58.60	10.431
	Final log position	5	1	5	2.20	1.643
WP	Number of games won	6	7	21	13.33	4.676
	Number of games lost	6	0	12	6.83	4.215
	Points scored by the relevant team	6	584	964	743.17	125.085
	Points scored against the team	6	491	659	585.83	72.112
	Number of tries scored by the team	5	67	121	93.00	19.429
	Number of tries scored against	5	53	77	64.80	9.628
	Final log position	5	1	5	2.60	1.517

Since attendance figures are classified confidential information that is used by sport marketers to negotiate sponsorship deals and contracts, the researchers were asked not to publish the data relating to attendance.

Hypothesis testing: Relationship between spectator attendance and team performance

The objective of this study was to assess the relationship between spectator attendance and team performance. Table 3 provides a summary of the findings.

TABLE 3: **PEARSON'S CORRELATION: TEAM PERFORMANCE AND ATTENDANCE FIGURES**

	HYPOTHESES		**Test statistic**	**H_0 rejected/accepted**
Super 12	H_{1a}:	Number of games won	r= 0.685 (p<0.05)	H supported
	H_{2a}:	Number of games lost	r= -0.431 (p<0.05)	H supported
	H_{3a}:	Points scored by the relevant team	r= 0.450 (p<0.05)	H supported
	H_{4a}:	Points scored against the team	r= -0.688 (p<0.05)	H supported
	H_{5a}:	Number of tries scored by the team	r= 0.366 (p>0.05)	H not supported
	H_{6a}:	Number of tries scored against	r= -0.650 (p<0.05)	H supported
	H_{7a}:	Final tournament points	r= 0.712 (p<0.05)	H supported
Currie Cup	H_{1b}:	Number of games won	r= 0.368 (p<0.05)	H supported
	H_{2b}:	Number of games lost	r= -0.063 (p>0.05)	H not supported
	H_{3b}:	Points scored by the relevant team	r= 0.298 (p>0.05)	H not supported
	H_{4b}:	Points scored against the team	r= -0.051 (p>0.05)	H not supported
	H_{5b}:	Number of tries scored by the team	r= 0.145 (p>0.05)	H not supported
	H_{6b}:	Number of tries scored against	r= -0.203 (p>0.05)	H not supported
	H_{7b}:	Final log position	r= 0.650 (p<0.05)	H supported

Table 3 clearly illustrates that, in respect of Super 12 Rugby, only in the case of $H_{5a,}$ the hypothesis (i.e. no relationship between number of tries scored and attendance figures) could not be supported. The remaining hypotheses were supported. Number of games lost showed a moderate negative relationship with attendance figures (r = -0.45), and points scored by the relevant team showed a moderate positive relationship with attendance figures (r = 0.45). Points and tries scored against the team displayed strong negative relationships (r = -0,688 and r = -0.650 respectively), whereas number of games won and final tournament points showed strong positive relationships with attendance figures (r = 0.685 and r= 0.712). One could therefore conclude that, in the Super 12 case, team performance on the field, the number of games won, points scored by teams and specifically the final log standing of teams, influenced spectators to attend games. However, if teams allow opponents to score tries, lose and specifically give up points, spectators are less likely to attend games.

The results showed differences between the Super 12 and Currie Cup data. The hypotheses of H_{2b}, H_{3b}, H_{4b}, H_{5b} and H_{6b} could not be supported for Currie Cup rugby. This implies that, in the case of Currie Cup games, the number of games lost, points scored by the relevant team, points scored against the team, number of tries scored by the team and the number of tries scored against a team do not have a significant relationship with the attendance of games. Only the number of games won and specifically final log position showed significant positive relationships with attendance figures ($r = 0.368$ and $r = 0.650$ respectively). One could therefore conclude that in Currie Cup games, spectators attend games only if their teams are doing well and winning in the competition.

Hypothesis testing: Variance in spectator attendance

The final hypothesis in this study stated that variance in sport attendance can be explained by team performance variables (i.e. number of games won and lost, points scored by and against a team, number of tries scored by and against a team and tournament points predicted). The hypothesis was tested by performing a simple linear regression analysis for Currie Cup and Super 12 competitions. Both models were not significant ($p < 0.05$). Table 4 gives a summary of the findings of the regression analysis.

TABLE 4: **REGRESSION: TEAM PERFORMANCE VARIABLES AND ATTENDANCE FIGURES**

	VARIABLE	**t-value**	**p-value**
Super 12	(Constant)	1.858	0.081
	Number of games won	-0.534	0.600
	Number of games lost	0.113	0.911
	Points scored by the relevant team	-0.491	0.630
	Points scored against the team	-0.410	0.687
	Number of tries scored against	0.224	0.825
	Final tournament points	1.029	0.318
Currie Cup	(Constant)	1.308	0.214
	Number of games won	-1.355	0.198
	Number of games lost	-.0170	0.868
	Points scored by the relevant team	0.570	0.578
	Points scored against the team	0.850	0.411
	Number of tries scored against	-0.368	0.719
	Final log position	-0.756	0.463

None of the variables are significant, and could therefore not be used to explain variance in sport attendance. Stepwise regression was performed to eliminate nonsignificant variables. For the Super 12 competition, results showed that final tournament points predicted variance

in sport attendance ($p < 0.05$, adjusted $R^2 = 0.485$). For the Currie Cup, final log position predicted variance in sport attendance ($p < 0.05$, adjusted $R^2 = 0.35$). One could therefore conclude that variance in sport attendance can be explained by the performance of teams according to their final tournament points. Table 5 gives a summary of the stepwise regression findings.

TABLE 5: **STEPWISE REGRESSION: TEAM PERFORMANCE VARIABLES AND ATTENDANCE FIGURES**

		Model Summary			Anova	Coefficients		
	Predictor	**R**	**R^2**	**Adjusted R^2**	**F (df)**	**B**	**Beta**	**t**
Super 12	Dependant variable: Spectator attendance							
		0.621	0.385	0.351	11.272* (1)			
	Final log position					-1944.49	-0.621	-3.357*
Currie Cup		0.656	0.431	0.406	17.393* (1)			
	Final log position					-18004	-0.656	-4.140*

* Significant at the 99% confidence level

From the above it is clear that, in the case of the Super 12 competition, rugby teams should attend to most of the "components" that constitute team performance. In the Currie Cup competition, however, teams need to win. Components such as tries scored are irrelevant to fans. This finding could be ascribed to the fact that, when comparing Currie Cup and Super Rugby teams fans identify stronger with Currie Cup teams as these teams are "local" and have a long tradition. Historically, the core players in Currie Cup teams were local people with whom spectators associated easily. The Super teams have yet to become strong and preferred brands.

CONCLUSION

To be successful in sport marketing, sport marketers have to understand both the nature of sport marketing and the specific application of marketing principles and processes to the sport context (Parkhouse, 2001). To complicate matters, three things are happening simultaneously: the needs and demographics of sport consumers have become more complex, competition for the spectators' support has increased, and the demand for professional sport marketing has

also grown (Mullin *et al.*, 2000). More attention needs to be paid to developing a theory of sport consumption (McDonald *et al*., 2002), in particular the way fan identification impacts on spectators attending sport events (Wysong, 2002).

The main objective of this study was to assess the relationship between team performance and sport attendance by following a different methodological approach than previous research. Specifically, a meta-analysis was performed on sport attendance and team performance of the Currie Cup and South African Super Rugby competitions. Team performance was measured by assessing the actual performance of the Currie Cup and the South African Super Rugby teams on the field (i.e. number of games won, number of games lost, points scored by the relevant team, points scored against the team, number of tries scored, number of tries scored against the team, and final tournament points). Results showed that, in the case of the Super Rugby competition, a significant relationship existed between the number of games won, points scored by teams and the final log standing of teams and spectator attendance. In the Currie Cup competition, results showed a significant relationship between spectator attendance and games won and final log position.

Even though results showed that a relationship does exist between team performance and sport attendance, only the final log position of a team (i.e. final points in the tournament) explained variance in spectator attendance (i.e. the higher the log position, the more spectators attended). It is, however, obvious that the final log position is a composite figure and depends on a number of "positives", such as points scored and games won by rugby teams. The notion that winning teams attract crowds is thus supported in this study. However, the study has also shown that, in the case of the Super 12, poor performance on the field (i.e. tries and points scored against teams) will in fact lead to fans not attending games. This result supports Ray's (2010) comment that spectators want to see the best players playing their best rugby.

Sport marketers need a rational, coherent system that can match sport consumers to sport products (Mullin *et al.*, 2000:8). The results showed that for both the Currie Cup and Super Rugby tournaments team performance is essential. The results also revealed that spectator attendance decreased when Super Rugby teams performed not as good as could be expected on the field, but more so for Currie Cup games. One can conclude that the spectators' expectations of their teams were not as high in international competitions as in local competitions. Thus, to attract spectators to Super Rugby home games, teams should perform well on the field. They should score tries, get a good log standing and not give up points. However, in local competitions, like the Currie Cup, teams should win.

Understanding the factors that influence sport spectators' preferences and behaviour is fundamental to understanding sport consumption decisions. The current study assessed team performance only in South Africa, and only amongst rugby fans. Future research could be extended to other sport attendance factors such as economical, psychological and stadium factors, as well as other sport such as cricket and soccer.

The social identity theory has been proposed as a theory to explain the behaviour of fans. The findings in respect of fan behaviour for both the Super Rugby and Currie Cup competitions support the social identity theory. If a team performs well the fans attend games but when a

team fails, less fans attend games. The latter is also in line with the social identity theory which states that fans tend to dissociate themselves from a team when the team does not perform. The latter behaviour takes place through a process labelled "cutting off reflected failure".

REFERENCES

ABSA NEW SPRINGBOK SPONSOR (2011). Hyperlink [http://www.sport24.co.za/rugby/springboks/absa-new-springbok-sponsor-20110203]. Retrieved on 2 October 2011.

BASSON, D. (2003). SA Rugby: A spontaneous rugby revival. *Finance Week*, 17 December: 15-18.

BOKS TO BECOME CASH COWS (2007). Hyperlink [http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set_id=6&click_id=4&art_id=iol1193500605207B220]. Retrieved on 21 April 2007.

BOYD, T.C. & KREHBIEL, T.C. (2003). Promotion timing in major league baseball and the stacking effects of factors that increase game attractiveness. *Sports Marketing Quarterly*, 12(3): 173-183.

BURTON, R. (1996). A case study on sports property servicing excellence: National Football. *Sport Marketing Quarterly*, 5(3): 26-30.

CHANDLER, J.M. (1991). "Sport as TV product: a case study of Monday Night Football". Hyperlink [http://books.google.co.za/books?hl=en&lr=&id=MsXHFM84fBsC&oi=fnd&pg=PA48&dq=CHANDLER,+J.M.+(1991).+Sport+as+TV+product:+a+case+study+of+Monday+Night+Football.+&ots=zfGr-hzZXJ&sig=T3qOfzHDL9Z-S7ZqjkH6gYk1MnY#v=onepage&q&f=false]. Retrieved on 6 October 2011.

CLAASSEN, W. (2001). Super 20: Out of the question. *Sharks Magazine* (4) March: 4.

COLQUHOUN, A. (2001). *South African rugby annual 2000*. Cape Town: South African Rugby Football Association.

COLQUHOUN, A. (2002). *South African rugby annual 2001*. Cape Town: South African Rugby Football Association.

COLQUHOUN, A. (2003). *South African rugby annual 2002*. Cape Town: South African Rugby Football Association.

COLQUHOUN, A. (2004). *South African rugby annual 2003*. Cape Town: South African Rugby Football Association.

COLQUHOUN, A. (2005). *South African rugby annual 2004*. Cape Town: South African Rugby Football Association.

COLQUHOUN, A. (2006). *South African rugby annual 2005*. Cape Town: South African Rugby Football Association.

COUSENS, L.C. & SLACK, T. (1996). Emerging patterns of inter-organisational relations: A network perspective of North American professional sports leagues. *European Journal for Sport Management*, 3(1): 48-69.

CURRIE CUP (1999). "Sir Currie and his cup". Hyperlink [http://www.rugby365.com/stories/countires/south_Africa/history/HIS_991109_2125.shtm]. Retrieved on 9 March 2001.

CURRIE CUP (2000). "Winners of the Currie Cup". Hyperlink [http://www.rugby 365.com/stories/countries/south_Africa/history/HIS_001024?21328.shtml]. Retrieved on 9 March 2001.

CURRIE CUP (2002). "SA Rugby unveils new format for Currie Cup, Vodacom Cup". Hyperlink [http://www.epherald.co.za/herald/2002/06/28/sports/sp08_28062002.htm]. Retrieved on 9 April 2003.

DAVIS, M.C. (2008). The interaction between baseball attendance and winning percentage: A VAR analysis. *International Journal of Sport Finance*, 3(1): 58-73.

DEAUX, K. 2002. "Social identity. City university of New York". Hyperlink [http://www.utexas.edu/courses/stross/ant393b_files/ARTICLES/identity.pdf]. Retrieved on 4 October 2011.

DIETZ-UHLER, B.; HARRICK, E.A.; END, C. & JACQUEMOTTE, L. (2000). Sex differences in sport fan behaviour and reasons for being a sport fan. *Journal of Sport Behaviour*, 23: 219-231.

DIONISIO, P.; LEAL, C. & MOUTINHO, L. (2008). Fandom affiliation and tribal behaviour: A sports marketing application. *Qualitative Market Research*: *An International Journal*, 11(1): 17-39.

FERREIRA, M. & ARMSTRONG, K.L. (2004). An exploratory examination of attributes influencing students' decisions to attend college sport events. *Sports Marketing Quarterly*, 13(4): 194-208.

FINK, J.S.; TRAIL, G.T. & ANDERSON, D.F. (2002). Environmental factors associated with spectator attendance and sport consumption behaviour: Gender and team differences. *Sports Marketing Quarterly*, 11(1): 8-18.

FUNK, DC & JAMES, J. 2001. The psychological continuum model: A conceptual framework for understanding an individual's psychological connection to sport. *Sport Management Review*, 4(2): 119-150.

GORMAN, J. & CALHOUN, K. (1994). *The name of the game: The business of sports*. New York, NY: John Wiley & Sons.

GRIMM, M. (1993). Big spenders, big sports aren't just dating; they're mating. *Mediaweek*, August 23: 20-24.

HOULIHAN, A.; PARKES, R.; BULL, A.; HAWKINS, M.; HEARNE, S. & SCHMICK, C. (2010). Spanish masters. Football money league 2010. Sports Business Group at Deloitte, Manchester, March: 34.

HIGHEST PAID FOOTBALLERS 2011 – RICHES FOOTBALLERS (2011). Hyperlink [http://www.therichest.org/sports/highest-paid-football-players/]. Retrieved on 2 October 2011.

IRWIN, R.L.; Zwick, D. & Sutton, W.A. (1999). Assessing organisational attributes to marketing excellence in American professional sport franchises. *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, 16(6): 603-615.

JONES, I. (1997). "Mixing qualitative and quantitative methods in sports fan research". *The Qualitative Report*, 3(4). Hyperlink [http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/QR3-4/jones.html]. Retrieved on 3 October 2011.

LAMBERTI, T. (2001). Sarfu keen to market Bok merchandise. *Business Day*, 16 January: 18.

MATSOUKA, J. (2003). The travelling fan: Understanding the mechanisms of sport fan consumption in a sport tourism setting. *Journal of Sport and Tourism*, 12(3&4): 155-181.

MCDONALD, M.A.; MILNE, G.R. & HONG, J. (2002). Motivational factors for evaluating sport spectator and participant markets. *Sports Marketing Quarterly*, 11(2): 100-113.

MULLIN, J.M.; STEPHEN, H. & SUTTON, W.A. (2000). *Sport marketing* (2nd ed.). Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.

NEW YORK TIMES (2009). "Ronaldo to Join Real Madrid for Record Price". Hyperlink [http://www.nytimes.com/2009/06/12/sports/soccer/12iht-RONALDO.html?pagewanted=all]. Retrieved on 16 Octber 2011.

PARKHOUSE, B.L. (2001). *The management of sport: Its foundation and application* (3rd ed). New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.

RAY, C. (2011). "Lots of nodding off in Super derbies". *Sunday Times*, 9 July. Hyperlink [http://www.timeslive.co.za/sport/rugby/2011/07/09/lots-of-nodding-off-in-super-derbies]. Retrieved on 13 October 2011.

RUGBY IN SOUTH AFRICA 2010. "Super 14". Hyperlink [http://www.southafrica.info/about/sport/rugby.htm#super14]. Retrieved on 6 October 2011.

RIX, P. (2004). *Marketing: A practical approach* (5th ed.). Boston, MA: McGraw Hill.

ROBINSON, M.J.; TRAIL, G.T.; DICK, R.J. & GILLENTINE, A.J. (2005). Fans vs spectators: An analysis of those who attend intercollegiate football games. *Sports Marketing Quarterly*, 14(1): 43-53.

ROOS, S. (2001). "SA Rugby (Pty) Ltd: Match programme for the 2002 season". Hyperlink [http://216.239.53.100/…/Competitionrules2002.doc]. Retrieved on 9 April 2003.

ROWE, D. (1995). Coming down the line: Media sport and the right to pay. *The ACHPER Healthy Lifestyles Journal*, 42(3): 18-21.

SASOL INVESTS R120 MILLION IN SA RUGBY (2004). Hyperlink [on http://www.sasol.com/sasol_internet/frontend/navigation.jsp?articleTypeID=2&articleId=9900004&navid=4&rootid=4]. Retrieved on 22 April 2007.

SCHAAF, D. (1995). *Sports marketing: It's not just a game anymore*. Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books.

SHANK, MD. (2002). *Sports marketing: A strategic perspective* (2nd ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

SHANK, M.D. & BEASLEY, F.M. (1998). Fan or fanatic: Refining a measure of sports involvement. *Journal of Sport Behaviour*, 21: 435-443.

SNYDER, C.R.; LASSEGARD, M.A. & FORD, C.E. (1986). Distancing after group success and failure: Basking in reflected glory and cutting off reflected failure. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 51(2): 382-388.

SOCIAL IDENTITY THEORY (2010). "University of Twente". [Online] Available [http://www.utwente.nl/cw/theorieenoverzicht/Theory%20clusters/Interpersonal%20Communication%20and%20Relations/Social_Identity_Theory.doc/]. Retrieved on 4 October 2011.

STEINBREDER, J. (1992). Hot properties: The National Football League has a big winner in its marketing and licensing arm. *Sports Illustrated*, 76(9): 4-5.

TAJFEL, H. (1982). Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations. *Annual Review of Psychology*. 33(Feb): 1-39

TRAIL, G.T.; ROBINSON, M.J.; DICK, R.J. & GILLENTINE, A.J. (2003). Motives and points of attachment: Fans versus spectators in intercollegiate athletics. *Sports Marketing Quarterly*, 12(4): 43-53.

VAN DER BERG, C. (2001). Rugby gets rich. *Sunday Times Business Times*, 3 March.

WAKEFIELD, K.L. (2002). The application, research and theory of sports marketing. Proceedings of the American Marketing Association: Faculty Consortium on sport marketing, 3-6 October 2002, Lexington, KY. Gatton College of Business Economics.

WANN, D.L. & BRANDSCOMBE, N.R. (1990). Die-Hard and Fair-Weather Fans: Effects of Identification on BIRGing and CORFing Tendencies. *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*, 14(2): 103-117.

WELLS, D.F.; SOUTHALL, R.M. & PENG, H. (2000). An analysis of factors related to attendance at Division II Football games. *Sports Marketing Quarterly*, 9(4): 203-210.

WYSONG, S. (2002). The fan, the beer and the big game: an exploratory study of consumer involvement and purchasing behaviour. Proceedings of the American Marketing Association: Faculty Consortium on sport marketing, 3-6 October 2002, Lexington, KY. Gatton College of Business Economics.

Dr. Charlene GERBER: Stellenbosch University, Department of Business Management,Private Bag X1, Matieland, 7602, Republic of South Africa. Tel.:+27 (0)21 8082679, Fax.:+27 (0)21 808 2226, E-mail:cgernel@sun.ac.za and nst@sun.ac.za

(Subject Editor: Prof. Wim Hollander)