

What brings youngsters into the stadium? Sociopsychological predictors of soccer attendance among Belgian and Portuguese young fans

KEYWORDS:

Soccer attendance motives. Sociopsychological factors. Lifestyle. Team identification. Youngsters.

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ABSTRACT

While in some countries across Europe soccer games attract full stadiums on a regular basis, in other countries, such as Portugal, the stadiums reveal many empty seats in big up-to-date facilities. On the other hand, in Belgium, the construction of bigger stadiums is being planned to substitute the current out-dated facilities. In both cases, it is important to understand why people, and specifically the young fans, attend or do not attend games. Therefore, the main objective of this research is to find out what takes Belgian and Portuguese youngsters into the soccer stadium. We performed a fandom related survey to 16-19 years old fans, more specifically 173 Belgian (81.5% male) and 188 Portuguese (50.5% male) high school students. We analysed data employing structural equation modelling in AMOS. Lifestyle, defined as a set of patterns, distinct from others, based on values, attitudes, and orientations, emerged as the strongest predictor of soccer attendance for youngsters. Team identification was also a significant predictor for Belgian young fans. Marketing implications of these findings are discussed.

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Enfim, a Universidade hodierna naufraga no mar da convulsão e do conformismo. Ela e os seus membros têm muita dificuldade em acompanhar o pêndulo no seu movimento da confusão para a simplicidade, da penumbra para a claridade.

Serão estes dias de uma impenetrável complexidade ou seremos nós que temos pouca apetência para a clarividência? A nossa atenção não consegue ser indivisa e caminhar o suficiente para chegar à clareira da Humanidade.

Que grandeza do humano ansiamos edificar no nosso tempo, no nosso mundo? Em vez de um mundo mercantilizado, calculista e desumano, importa dar prioridade à erradicação das grandes fontes de sofrimento.

Que contributo quer dar a Universidade para isso? Talvez devesse voltar a cultivar o jardim do ócio criativo e abandonar a tentação do negócio lucrativo!

Como a cantora brasileira Ana Carolina, concluo com esta proclamação: “Minha esperança é imortal. E eu repito, IMORTAL! Sei que não dá para mudar o começo, mas, se a gente quiser, dá para mudar o final.”

O que traz os jovens ao estádio?

Preditores psicossociais da assistência ao futebol de jovens adeptos belgas e portugueses

RESUMO

Enquanto em alguns países europeus os jogos de futebol enchem regularmente estádios, noutros países, como por exemplo Portugal, os modernos estádios estão muitas vezes vazios. Por outro lado, na Bélgica está a ser planeada a construção de estádios maiores para substituir as instalações antigas e desatualizadas que existem atualmente. Em ambos os casos, é importante perceber porque é que as pessoas, e especificamente os jovens, vão ou não assistir a jogos de futebol. Assim, o objectivo principal deste trabalho é descobrir o que leva os jovens belgas e portugueses aos estádios de futebol. Jovens adeptos entre os 16 e os 19 anos, especificamente, 173 estudantes belgas (81.5% do sexo masculino) e 188 estudantes portugueses (50.5% do sexo masculino), responderam a um questionário sobre os seus hábitos de consumo de futebol. Os dados foram analisados através de modelagem por equações estruturais, com o programa AMOS. Estilo de vida, definido como um conjunto de padrões de comportamento, distinto de outros, baseado em valores, atitudes e orientações, emergiu como o maior preditor de assistência a jogos de futebol entre os jovens. Identificação com a equipa também emergiu como preditor de assistência a jogos para os jovens adeptos belgas. As implicações de marketing destes resultados são discutidas.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE:

Motivos para assistência ao futebol. Factores sociopsicológicos. Estilo de vida. Identificação com a equipa. Jovens.

INTRODUCTION

Can someone imagine a Real Madrid vs. Barcelona or a Chelsea vs. Manchester United with empty stands? Hardly, we would say. The soccer industry is almost inseparable from the spectators that fill the stadium with colourful shirts and chants. Still, while some countries across Europe, such as Germany, Spain, England, or the Netherlands, have full stadiums during the regular professional league soccer games, others have to deal with empty seats.

Portugal is one of the countries facing this problem of absence of spectators and empty stadiums⁽⁸⁾. Several stadiums were built or rebuilt for the European Championship of 2004, and, for that reason, the facilities are modern and big. Nevertheless, despite the tradition in soccer, both at the organisational and the competitive level, the occupation rate of the Portuguese stadiums is only 40%⁽⁵⁾. The stadiums of Algarve, Aveiro, and Leiria, are examples of so-called 'white elephants', that is, empty stadiums that fight to keep running due to the lack of use⁽¹⁴⁾. The problem is accentuated by the fact that in Portugal, the majority of the fans are affiliated with the three main clubs, which are located in Porto (Futebol Clube do Porto) and in Lisbon (Sport Lisboa e Benfica, and Sporting Clube de Portugal)⁽⁹⁾. Even when people live in the countryside or Algarve, they often are fans from a club that is located at a rather far distance from their home, and therefore, much more difficult to reach, when it comes to the distance and to the time it takes to get there. This situation constitutes a financial problem for the local clubs, for the cities, and for the country in general.

By contrast, in Belgium the stadiums are old and rather small. However, Steven Martens, the General Secretary of the Royal Belgian Football Association, recently stated '(...) our long-term goals include an increase of the number of football fans (...). This is only possible if we have modern stadiums that can assure a good hospitality for the fans. Therefore, we would like to establish five brand new stadium cases'⁽²³⁾. Regardless of these contextual differences, Belgium and Portugal are in a similar situation when it comes to the number of inhabitants (around 11 million) and to the number of spectators who attend soccer games (around 10.000 spectators/ game)⁽³⁰⁾. The possibility to collect data from Belgium and Portugal within the same research design was a good opportunity to include two different soccer attendance cultures, and to compare some results regarding the profile of the fans (e.g., financial status and interest for soccer).

Hence, the main objective of this paper is to identify predictors of soccer attendance on 16-19 year old youngsters in Belgium and in Portugal. The reasons why we chose for youngsters are explained next. The potential of the youth consumer has been acknowledged by the sport industry, for example, by the largest sporting goods companies⁽³⁶⁾. Teens are important target groups for marketers because they are considered to be trendsetters, because they influence their parents' spending, and because they are a future market^(18, 50). In Western societies youngsters have substantial amounts of money to spend on their needs and wants, which qualify them as an important primary market⁽²⁶⁾. Besides, they develop brand loyalty

at an early age, and those positive attitudes toward brands last into adulthood ⁽²⁶⁾. However, previous research on sport attendance has not paid attention to this target group, making it a gap on the literature. The main focus so far was on adult fans and university students. In this research we want to understand if young fans have the same motives as adult fans to attend soccer games. A better understanding of the young sport consumers and their motives to go into the stadium, can help to build a more complete framework about the sport consumers. It can also provide evidence for sport marketers and for the clubs to find the best strategies to market their core product, that is the game itself and their supplementary services, with the specific target constituted by the youngsters.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The value that fans create at the stadium is undeniable, either for the show they help to perform, or for the influence they have in the decisions of the stakeholders. Not only the revenues from tickets, merchandising, food, and drinks are dependent on the number of spectators during the games, but also the sponsorships, advertising partners, and media rights are related to it ⁽¹⁰⁾. Clubs could not survive without their fans, nor without their spectators. While a fan is an enthusiastic devotee of a team, an athlete, or a sport, ⁽²¹⁾ it does not mean that he/ she attends games on a regular basis. Which are the motives that take fans into the stadium, and turn them into live spectators as well?

Based on several studies ^(20, 28, 32, 33, 39), de Carvalho and colleagues categorised the factors influencing attendance in professional team sports in four clusters, from the perspective of the fan ⁽¹¹⁾. Their model includes (1) demographics; (2) *fanographics* – features relative to the person as a fan, such as interest in soccer, or age at which they became a fan; (3) external factors – factors related with the supply, that is, sportscape or physical environment, game related, marketing actions of the club, and economical issues; these factors are similar to the ones proposed by Smith and Stewart ⁽³³⁾; and (4) sociopsychological factors – were not included in previous categorisations and include the sociopsychological motives for attendance, team identification (TI) and place attachment to the stadium. Although all these factors are important, in this paper we give emphasis to the sociopsychological motives, with a specific focus on social interaction, and to the relationship of social interaction with TI, specifically among youngsters.

SOCIOPSYCHOLOGICAL MOTIVES

Numerous authors have examined sociopsychological motives influencing sport consumption and attendance in particular ^(6, 16, 17, 24, 39, 45). Social interaction (SI), also named socialisation by some authors ⁽¹⁶⁾, has been included in the majority of the models. SI is the desire for contact with spectators, participants, friends, and family ⁽¹⁶⁾. Sport is mostly consumed in the presence of others (less than 2% of people attend games on their own), and market-

eers may remember that the sport product creates social facilitation ⁽²⁸⁾. Weed ⁽⁴⁷⁾ showed that watching significant sport events remotely, but in the presence of others, could produce just as much delight or disappointing as actual attendance. The author focused on people attending soccer games at the pub. He suggested that the need for proximity was not for proximity to the event, but to others partaking in the experience of watching the event, enhancing in this way the social aspect of spectatorship. However, Melnick ⁽²⁷⁾ stated that live sport spectating has developed into a major urban organisation where people come together to enrich their sociopsychological lives through the relationships accessible. Even though other sociopsychological motives might be important for the sport attendance, social interaction is gaining place in a modern society full of urbanisation, individualism, interpersonal competition, technology, and geographical mobility, and where people, namely the young people, have difficulties to find social ties. Sport attendance might be a way for young people to find these social ties. In this way, we propose that *SI is positively related to attendance* (Hypothesis 1).

TEAM IDENTIFICATION (TI)

TI refers to the extent to which a fan feels psychologically connected to a team, is involved and invested in the team, and sees the team as an extension of the self; it is a particular instance of social identification ^(42, 43), which is a concept from the social identity theory ⁽⁴¹⁾. Identification with a certain team corresponds to the concept of in-group identification ⁽⁴⁰⁾. In-group identification is the part of social identity related to the degree to which the in-group is included in the self. In fact, an individual forms a relationship with the group in order to maintain his or her self-definition, and, consequently, behaves in accordance with group norms and expectations. In this manner, a member who is identified with the group behaves in order to show his/ her loyalty. Group membership and the adoption of an identity based on group membership are really important to take into account in the sport context ⁽¹⁵⁾. In this context, attendance is one instantiation of group loyalty. Thus, a soccer fan shows this behavioural loyalty to the group by, for instance, attending games ⁽²⁾. Accordingly, TI was shown to predict attendance in adults ^(22, 42, 49). During adolescence, the peer influence within the group is even stronger as groups are chosen on the basis of existing similarities, but also seem to foster resemblance in behaviour and attitudes, once the relationship has been established ⁽³⁷⁾. Hence, we predict that also among young fans, *TI is positively related to attendance* (Hypothesis 2).

When a fan identifies with the team, and moreover largely enjoys being at the stadium because of the SI with other people, such as family, friends and other fans, the gathering of both instances might accelerate the attendance numbers. We predict that for youngsters with a strong TI, the relationship between SI and attendance will be maximised. Therefore, we hypothesise that *the interaction between TI and SI is positively related to attendance* (Hypothesis 3).

MATERIAL AND METHODS

SAMPLING AND DATA COLLECTION

Two cities with respectively 97.000 (Aveiro, Portugal), and 78.000 inhabitants (Leuven, Belgium) were selected for the data collection. One medium level soccer club played in the first league in each city, namely Sport Club Beira-Mar, and Oud-Heverlee Leuven. We chose these cities because they are rather similar when it comes to the dimension of the local clubs (e.g., number of fans, ranking, and importance within the country), number of inhabitants, and they both are university cities.

Six secondary schools from Aveiro and five secondary schools from Leuven participated in this research with some classes of different levels and study areas. Individuals were addressed at their classroom, with the presence of their teacher, with a brief explanation about the content of the study.

The students filled out a twenty minutes survey, and as an extra motivation to do it properly, a lottery of a prize was carried out across the schools. This sample was not representative of the overall population, it was a convenience sample instead, because only some selected classes filled out the survey. However, because the entire classes had to do it, we could collect data from a varied range of youngsters (different financial status, different interest in soccer, different number of games attended, etc.). The surveys have been completed during March and April 2012.

We collected data from fans (people who mentioned that they were fans of a specific club) and from non-fans (not a fan of any specific club). From the Belgian students, 62% were non-fans, whereas among the Portuguese students, 13% were non-fans. However, in the present study we want to focus on fans only, and on their relationship with their club. Therefore, we kept the 38% of Belgian youngsters and the 87% of Portuguese youngsters who were fans. The final sample consisted of 361 fans, including students from the last two years of secondary school from Aveiro ($n_{PT} = 188$) and from Leuven ($n_{BE} = 173$). Among these students, 32% were female ($n = 113$; $n_{PT} = 88$; $n_{BE} = 25$), and 68% were male ($n = 236$; $n_{PT} = 95$; $n_{BE} = 141$). Portuguese respondents were only slightly older than their Belgian counterparts ($x_{age PT} = 17.74 \pm 1.43$; $x_{age BE} = 17.43 \pm 0.95$, $t_{(319)} = 2.40$, $p < .05$).

INSTRUMENT

After the implementation of a pilot study⁽¹¹⁾, the final version of the survey was completed both in Dutch and in Portuguese including (i) a part on sociodemographic items (age, sex with Female = 0 and Male = 1, origin with Portugal = 0 and Belgium = 1, financial status measured in a scale from 1 = *really difficult to live at home*, to 5 = *really easy to live at*

home, education, favourite sport(s) to attend and to practice, and active sports participation); and (ii) a part on the person as a fan (or not), with questions about their soccer consumption habits, that is interest in soccer measured in a scale from 1 = *not interested at all*, to 5 = *very much interested*, attendance (number of games attended during the season), favourite professional soccer club, since what age they were fans, who were their socialisation agents in order to become a fan⁽⁷⁾, the sociopsychological motives scale, and the sport spectator identification scale.

SOCIOPSYCHOLOGICAL MOTIVES SCALE (SMS)

The items regarding the sociopsychological motives were collected from the work of several authors, as shown before; all the items of the SMS are presented in Table 1. After an in-depth analysis of different scales and with the support of the pilot study we maintained items related to interaction with other fans (two items), family (two items), friends (two items), vicarious achievement (two items), escape (two items), tradition (two items), entertainment (two items), and team (one item). The options ranged from 1 = *totally disagree*, to 5 = *totally agree*.

An exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was conducted for the total sample on the 18 items of the SMS with oblimin rotation (Table 1). The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) was .92. Bartlett's test of sphericity $\chi^2_{(153)} = 3242.67$, $p < .001$, indicated that correlations between items were sufficiently large for EFA. An initial analysis was run to obtain eigenvalues for each factor in the data. After analysis of the scree plot and eigenvalues together, three factors were retained explaining 62% of the total variance. The content of the items that loaded highly on Factor 1 suggest that it represents Enjoyment (e.g., 'A soccer game at the stadium is a good entertainment for me', or 'I enjoy being with friends at the stadium'). Enjoyment refers to the fun that the person has with the activity⁽³¹⁾. The items loading on this factor represent this joy and pleasure of being at the event itself. Factor 2 represents Lifestyle. Lifestyle is a set of patterns, distinct from others, based on values, attitudes, and orientations, and the items loading on this factor relate to the way of life, and the traditions of the individual and of the people surrounding him/ her (e.g., 'It is a tradition to attend SG at the stadium in my family', or 'Attending SG at the stadium is part of my lifestyle')⁽³⁵⁾. Finally, Factor 3 represents Vicarious Emotions, that is, feeling together or in harmony with the team (e.g., 'I get a success feeling when the team I'm supporting wins')⁽¹⁾. The SMS factors showed a good reliability ($\alpha \geq .79$). Factors 1 and 2 include items related to social interaction. In fact, the totality of items loading on Factor 2 is related to social interaction. Because we want to investigate social interaction, we use both dimensions in our model.

TABLE 1. Factor loadings for exploratory factor analysis with oblimin rotation of the SMS (n = 361)

ITEMS	FACTOR		
	ENJOYMENT	LIFESTYLE	VICARIOUS EMOTIONS
13 – A SG at the stadium is a good entertainment for me	.882		
5 – I enjoy being with friends at the stadium	.728		
15 – I feel relaxed when I attend a SG at the stadium	.715		
12 – I like following rituals at the SG	.674		
6 – I enjoy being with other fans and part of the crowd at the stadium, I feel like I belong to a group or tribe	.615		
16 – I feel that I can let go my emotions when I attend a SG at the stadium	.604		.327
14 – I feel that I can escape from reality when I attend a SG at the stadium	.501		.315
2 – It is a tradition to attend SG at the stadium in my family		.849	
1 – Attending SG at the stadium is part of my lifestyle		.665	
3 – It is a tradition to attend SG at the stadium in my group of friends		.611	
7 – It is important meeting/networking with people that can help me in my professional life at the stadium		.592	
18 – I like to celebrate special occasions (birthdays, holidays or others) attending a SG at the stadium		.534	
4 – I enjoy being with family at the stadium		.457	
9 – I get a failure feeling when the team I'm supporting loses			.676
8 – I get a success feeling when the team I'm supporting wins			.664
17 – I feel that a SG can be too exciting or stressing			.638
10 – I enjoy guessing the plays that are going to happen next during the SG			.408
11 – My presence is important either economically or sentimentally			.316
Number of items	7	6	5
Eigenvalues	8.28	1.52	1.35
% of variance	46.01	8.44	7.50
α	.91	.85	.79

Note. Factor loadings <.30 were suppressed to assist the screening; SG = soccer game(s)

SPORT SPECTATOR IDENTIFICATION SCALE (SSIS)

The SSIS was used to assess levels of TI among the soccer fans^(38, 42, 43). The options ranged from 1 = *low identification*, to 7 = *high identification*. An EFA was conducted on the 7 items of the SSIS with oblimin rotation. The KMO measure confirmed the sampling adequacy for the analysis, KMO = .91. Bartlett's test of sphericity $\chi^2_{(21)} = 1499.07$, $p < .001$, indicated that correlations between items were sufficiently large for EFA. An initial analysis was run to obtain eigenvalues for each factor in the data. One factor had an eigenvalue over Kaiser's criterion of one and explained 64% of the variance. The SSIS with seven final items (e.g., 'How strongly do you see yourself as a fan of the team?') showed an excellent reliability ($\alpha = .90$).

DATA ANALYSIS

We conducted descriptive analyses using SPSS 21.0, and multivariate analyses using AMOS 21.0. For the multivariate analysis, AMOS requires a listwise deletion. Thus, a sample with no missing values was analysed (n = 223; n_{PT} = 133; n_{BE} = 90). We performed curve estimation for all the relationships in our model, and determined that all relationships were sufficiently linear to be tested using a co-variance based structural equation modelling algorithm used in AMOS.

MULTICOLLINEARITY DIAGNOSIS AND CONFIRMATORY FACTOR ANALYSIS

To confirm the EFA, we conducted a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) of the measures included in this research, that is, the SSIS, and the factors of the SMS that included the concept of social interaction items, that is, Enjoyment, and Lifestyle. The CFA measurement model displayed in Figure 1 represented a good fit. We declined four items with loadings below .60. Based on the modification indices proposed to improve the model, we allowed some error terms to co-vary. The absolute fit measures goodness-of-fit index (GFI = .91), standardised root mean square residual (SRMR = 0.05), and root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA = 0.06, $p > .05$) indicated moderate and good fit respectively⁽¹⁹⁾. The chi-square test statistic ($\chi^2 = 186.7$, $df = 98$, $\chi^2 / df = 1.9$) was good, but significant ($p < .001$); this was likely inflated by the size of the calibration sample⁽²⁵⁾. The incremental fit measure adjusted goodness-of-fit index (AGFI = .88) and the parsimonious fit measure comparative fit index (CFI = .96) indicated great fit⁽¹⁹⁾. We tested the invariance between groups (Belgian and Portuguese sample) and the model showed invariance. We also tested for common method bias, employing the unmeasured latent factor method⁽²⁹⁾, and we concluded that this was not a serious concern, as there was less than 50% of common variance between factors.

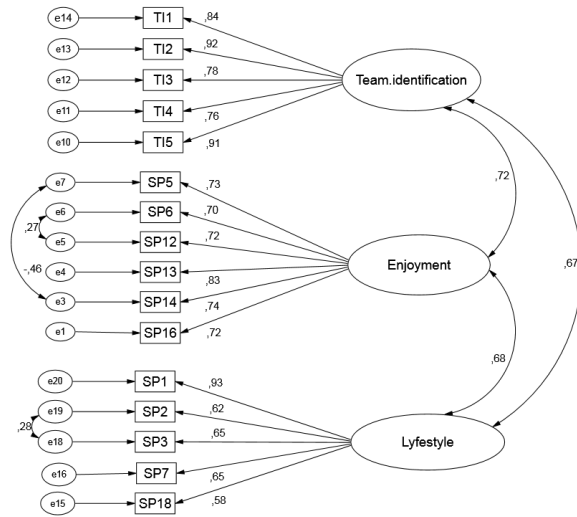


FIGURE 1. Measurement model illustrating the relationship among the three latent variables tested using CFA.

Table 2 shows the means and standard deviations of the main constructs of this research, that is, SSIS, Enjoyment and Lifestyle. In the same table we see that the measurement model presented convergent and discriminant validity as well. The average variance extracted (AVE), the maximum shared variance (MSV), and the average shared variance (ASV), were good. The composite reliability (CR) of each scale was above .7 and CR > AVE. The correlations among the scales were statistically significant and moderate ($r \leq .72$, $p < .001$). The magnitude of the correlations demonstrated that it was feasible to test a theoretically based structural model.

TABLE 2. Factor correlation matrix, convergent and discriminant validity, means, and standard deviations for scores of the latent variables TI, Enjoyment and Lifestyle (n = 223)

Measure	TI	Enjoyment	Lifestyle	CR	AVE	MSV	ASV	M	SD
Team identification (SSIS)	.84	-	-	.92	.71	.51	.48	5.07	1.43
Enjoyment (SMS Factor 1)	.72***	0.72	-	.88	.55	.51	.49	3.45	0.98
Lifestyle (SMS Factor 2)	.66***	0.68***	0.70	.82	.49	.46	.45	2.38	0.95

Note: SSIS = Sport Spectator Identification Scale (7-point scales); SMS = Sociopsychological Motives Scale (5-point scales); CR = Composite reliability; AVE = Average variance extracted, with square root of the AVE on the diagonal; MSV = Maximum shared variance; ASV = Average shared variance

*** $p < .001$

The structural model consisted of the previously hypothesised relationships. The structural model included paths from TI, Enjoyment and Lifestyle to attendance (Hypothesis 1 and Hypothesis 2). We specifically tested the interactions of TI with Enjoyment and of TI with Lifestyle (Hypothesis 3). We also included paths to attendance from several control variables such as age, sex, financial situation, and time to stadium. Finally, we performed multigroup moderation in order to find differences between the Belgian and the Portuguese samples. We performed model modifications by eliminating a single path with a non-significant t-value at a time, and then re-estimating the model. We removed paths with non-significant t-values because no substantive meaningful interpretation can be delivered for the parameter estimates.

RESULTS

Table 3 shows the results for the entire sample, including comparisons between the Belgian and the Portuguese sample. As we can see in the table, respondents in the Belgian sample showed a stronger financial status, and a stronger interest in soccer. Moreover, Belgian students were three times more likely to attend games than the Portuguese students. Portuguese students became fans at a younger age, and they were significantly more influenced by a family member to become a fan than the Belgian participants ($\chi^2_{(1)} = 115.54$, $p < .001$). Portuguese students also lived further from the stadium of their club. We found that 86% of the fans followed the clubs Futebol Clube do Porto, Sport Lisboa e Benfica, or Sporting Clube de Portugal. Only 7% of the Portuguese fans were fans of Sport Clube Beira-Mar, the local club. In the Belgian sample, it was also found that Sporting Anderlecht and Club Brugge attracted 45% of the fans, but Oud-Heverlee Leuven, the local club, still attracted 29% of the Belgian fans.

TABLE 3. Summary of descriptive statistics about the fans (total sample, Belgium Vs. Portugal)

	Total M (SD) / (n = 223)	Belgium M (SD) / (n = 90)	Portugal M (SD) / (n = 133)	
Financial situation	3.50 (0.86)	3.90 (0.82)	3.23 (0.78)	$t(221) = -6.22^{***}$
Interest in soccer	3.97 (1.18)	4.31 (0.98)	3.74 (1.25)	$t(216) = -3.79^{***}$
Attendance (n. ^o games attended/season)	4.70 (6.59)	7.37 (8.33)	2.89 (4.25)	$t(121) = -4.70^{***}$
Time to stadium of their team (hours)	2:15 (1:34)	1:16 (0:41)	2:55 (1:39)	$t(191) = 10.13^{***}$
Age they became a fan	7.52 (3.85)	9.54 (3.93)	6.14 (3.13)	$t(162) = -6.86^{***}$
Team identification (SSIS)	5.07 (1.43)	4.96 (1.30)	5.14 (1.51)	$t(209) = 0.93$
Enjoyment (SMS Factor 1)	3.45 (0.98)	3.47 (0.92)	3.44 (1.02)	$t(221) = -0.23$
Lifestyle (SMS Factor 2)	2.38 (0.95)	2.40 (0.91)	2.37 (0.97)	$t(221) = -2.61$
Vicarious Emotions (SMS Factor 3)	3.32 (0.89)	3.06 (0.85)	3.50 (0.87)	$t(221) = 3.70^{***}$

Note. SSIS = Sport Spectator Identification Scale (7-point scales); SMS = Sociopsychological Motives Scale (5-point scales); *** $p < .001$, two-tailed.

STRUCTURAL EQUATION MODELLING

The final structural model presented in Figure 2 represented an enough good fit to the data. The absolute fit measures GFI = .96, SRMR = .085, presented a good fit, and the RMSEA = .09 ($p = .02$), presented a moderate fit⁽¹⁹⁾. The chi-square test statistic ($\chi^2 = 37.49$, $df = 13$, $\chi^2/df = 2.88$) was significant ($p < .001$); this was likely inflated by the size of the calibration sample ($n = 223$)⁽²⁵⁾. The incremental fit measure AGFI = .89, and the parsimonious fit measure CFI = .97 presented a good fit⁽¹⁹⁾.

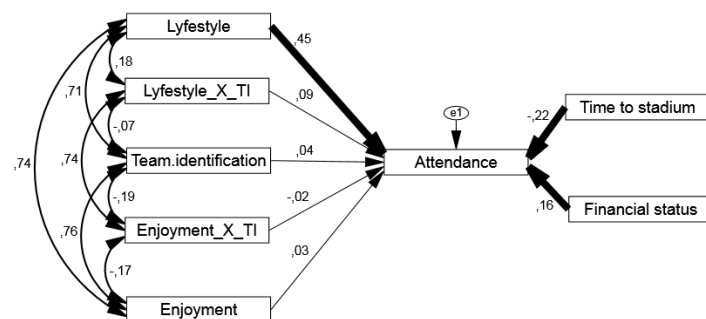


FIGURE 2. Results of the structural model with the regression standardized coefficients (β). To improve the clarity of the figure, the items are not included, and significant relationships are presented in bold ($p \leq .001$). e = disturbance term.

Lifestyle positively predicted attendance confirming Hypothesis 1. There was no significant relationship between attendance and TI, or between attendance and Enjoyment. Therefore, Hypothesis 2 could not be confirmed.

The control variables time to stadium, and financial status were related to attendance. The variable time to stadium showed a negative relationship with attendance. The variable financial status presented a positive relationship with attendance. From our findings it was clear that sex and age were not predictors of attendance for youngsters.

We tested both the interaction of TI with Lifestyle and the interaction of TI with Enjoyment. None of the interactions was a significant predictor of attendance. TI was not found to be a positive moderator in the relationship between Lifestyle and attendance, or between Enjoyment and attendance. Thus, Hypothesis 3 was not confirmed.

The model explained 34% of the variance in attendance, with Lifestyle explaining the biggest part of this variance. In this manner, the more games youngsters attended, the higher they scored on the Lifestyle motive, the closer they lived to the stadium, and the higher their financial status was.

To investigate the differences between the Belgian sample and the Portuguese sample, we tested multigroup moderation. We found several differences between the Belgian sample and the Portuguese sample. There was a significant difference ($p < .05$) on the relationship between TI and attendance. While the relationship between TI and attendance is positive in the Belgian sample ($\beta = .32$, $p < .05$), in the Portuguese sample is negative and non-significant ($\beta = -.16$, $p > .05$). The control variable time to stadium also presented a significant difference ($p < .05$) between countries. While for the Belgian sample, the relationship between time to stadium and attendance was negative ($\beta = -.20$, $p < .05$), for the Portuguese sample, there was no significant relationship between time to stadium and attendance ($\beta = .13$, $p > .05$). Relative to the financial status, there was a significant difference between countries as well. For the Belgian sample, the relationship between financial status and attendance was positive ($\beta = .18$, $p < .05$), for the Portuguese sample there was no significant relationship.

DISCUSSION

First, we present the discussion about the comparison between the sample from Belgium and the sample from Portugal, including the multigroup moderation. Second, we present the discussion of the structural model for the total sample.

Although the sample is not representative of the general population, in both countries data was collected in the same way, as we described before. We found a difference between the financial status of the Belgian and of the Portuguese fans. This result is in consonance with the current economic situation in Europe, where inhabitants from countries such as Portugal, and others in Southern Europe, face economic problems.

The interest in soccer varies according to the origin of the youngsters, with fans from Belgium being more interested in soccer than the ones from Portugal. There is a general cultural engagement of Portuguese people with soccer⁽⁸⁾. This means that in Portugal almost everyone is a fan of a club, even when they are not specifically interested in soccer. Accordingly, almost all respondents in the Portuguese sample were fans (87%), whereas only around one third of the Belgian students were fans (38%). The interest of the Portuguese overall participants, that is, fans and non-fans, is more homogeneous, whereas the Belgian sample shows a huge gap between the ones that were involved with a club as fans and the ones that were not. This may indicate that the Portuguese people are, in general, fans of a club whether they are interested in soccer or not, but the Belgian people who are really into fandom are more interested in the sport itself. In Portugal, soccer belongs to the identity of the people, and it is omnipresent in society⁽⁸⁾. For instance, there are three daily sport newspapers, and several daily television debates and shows about soccer during the entire week. For Belgian people, cycling takes a similar central place in their national sport identity⁽¹²⁾.

Portuguese fans live further from their home stadium than the Belgian fans. This difference is in harmony with the results showing that Portuguese people are fans of one of the three big clubs, regardless the place where they live. These three clubs are so hegemonic in the country that children learn to distinguish between red (SL Benfica), blue (FC Porto) and green (Sporting CP) referring to the colours of these clubs⁽⁸⁾. Only 7% of the Portuguese fans are fans of Beira-Mar, the local club. This finding also confirms that Portuguese people are fans of a so-called big club firstly, and only second one is a fan of a local club⁽¹³⁾. In the Belgian sample, Anderlecht and Club Brugge attract a lot of fans, but Oud-Heverlee Leuven still attracts one third of the Belgian fans, showing that the connection with the local club is stronger.

The average number of games attended by the Belgian fans is also much higher. Since Portuguese fans live further from the stadium of their club, it might be more difficult for them to reach the stadium, physically, and therefore they are going significantly less to the games. The financial situation of the respondents might also contribute to their absence from the

stadium. In the Portuguese culture, soccer is commonly considered as a religion⁽⁹⁾. Resembling other religions, Portuguese people proclaim their passion for their clubs but do not practice what they preach, given that paradoxically the attendance numbers are really low⁽⁸⁾.

In addition, Portuguese fans are fans of the club since a younger age than it is the case for Belgian fans. This finding can also be related to the fact that the Portuguese fans are significantly more influenced by a family member to become a fan than the Belgian ones.

Relatively to the multigroup moderation, we identify that there are some differences between groups, when it comes to predicting attendance. Differently to what the SEM shows to the Belgian and the Portuguese fans together, TI is positively related to attendance for the Belgian fans. This result partially confirms Hypothesis 2 and it is in accordance with previous research^(22, 42, 49). For the Belgian fans financial status positively predicts attendance, and time to stadium negatively predicts attendance. For the Portuguese fans, there are no unique predictors of attendance. This lack of relationship between number of games attended and other factors such as team identification, time to stadium or financial status, might be related to the fact that attendance presents a small variability in the Portuguese sample. The fact that TI was not a predictor of attendance as it is described in previous literature^(22, 42, 49) might have another explanation for the Portuguese sample: the fact that the respondents are mainly fans of one of the three big clubs in Portugal, which are located pretty far, might condition their will to attend games. In other words, if these youngsters lived in the city of their team, maybe TI could take them to the stadium. However, because they live far and they cannot decide for themselves to travel, as they are still living with their parents and dependent of them, they are conditioned not to attend games at the stadium.

Lifestyle can be considered the strongest predictor of attendance, both for young Belgian and Portuguese fans. This relationship is much stronger than the relationship of TI with attendance for both subsamples. This may mean that for young people, the decision to attend a soccer game or not is less related with TI, and much more related, for example, with tradition within the family and within the group of friends, and the kind of life stage. Within sports research, the concept of lifestyle has been previously related to the practice of extreme sports, such as windsurfing, skateboarding or rock climbing⁽⁴⁸⁾. In the present study, we define lifestyle from a sociological perspective, more specifically as a distinctive mode of living, with routines and tangible behaviour patterns,⁽³⁴⁾ such as sports attendance. We found that the number of games attended is higher when the lifestyle enclave in which the youngster is involved, includes the game attendance behaviour. The lifestyle enclave is formed by people who share some features of private life, patterns of appearance, and consumption and leisure activities⁽⁴⁾. In the youngsters' life, this enclave is, still mainly constituted by the parents. Therefore, at this age, the parents still primarily influence consumption, as has been described in research on consumer behaviour⁽³⁾.

The interaction between TI and Lifestyle or between TI and Enjoyment do not represent significant relationships with attendance. This might be related with the fact that neither TI nor Enjoyment are significant predictors of attendance, as the only clear predictor of attendance was Lifestyle.

CONCLUSIONS

In the present study, we wanted to test whether the findings from previous research on sport attendance of adults could be replicated among youngsters. We did not find previous research about sport attendance conducted specifically with youngsters, and this paper improves this field of knowledge in that sense. Moreover, we found that the motives for youngsters to attend soccer games are different from the ones previously found for adults. As a summary of the major findings of this research, we can conclude that for young Belgian and Portuguese fans, Lifestyle is the strongest predictor of attendance, and not TI, as previous research showed among adults. The distance to the home stadium is negatively related to attendance. The model explained 34% of the variance in attendance, with Lifestyle explaining the biggest part of this variance.

One added value of this research is that we reach attendants and non-attendants by means of the educational system, instead of asking people who are attending at the stadium. In this manner, it is possible to understand the factors influencing attendance for spectators with different kind of attendance habits, including people with a limited amount of games attended. Also the fact that we collected data from two countries allows us to ascertain an interesting international perspective.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

The current study includes a convenience sample of high school students, limiting its generalisability. The fact that the sample consists of young people involves that variables related to age (such as age itself, age at which they became a fan, and the number of years as a fan) have a smaller amount of variability than it would happen with a larger sample including other age groups. Also the fact that Portuguese youngsters do not attend games on a regular basis, limits the establishment of some relationships.

The fact that data were collected in cities without big clubs might also have somehow biased the results. More specifically, only a small percentage of youngsters were fan of the local club, especially in Portugal. In this manner, they possibly were much more conditioned by the distance to the stadium to attend games of their favourite team, than if they were living in the city of their club. In other words, maybe if the data were collected in a city with a big club the results would have been different, and TI would have been a stronger predictor than lifestyle. Future research could try to find if these relationships still remain by replicat-

ing this study with youngsters in a city with a big club. However, it is important to notice that lifestyle still emerged as a much stronger predictor than distance to the stadium in this research, which enhances its importance. Besides, from our perspective, the fact that we conducted this research in a city without a big club is also an added value, because usually research about attendance and TI is always conducted in big clubs. In this manner, this study adds to the knowledge about fans and their consumption behaviour.

Future research should also try to understand if lifestyle as a predictor of attendance is something that happens during a certain period of the person's life, in this case, during youth, especially, because the youngsters are still dependent on their parents to decide, or if this relationship between lifestyle and attendance is an imminent cultural change, with these youngsters becoming adults and still having lifestyle as main predictor of attendance, instead of TI from the older generations.

In this research, we focused on consumer behaviour related to soccer clubs, such as motives to attend games. However, in addition to being a fan of their club, or sometimes, even when they are not following a particular club, people support the national team. From our perspective, it would be interesting to understand what moves fans towards the national team games. The motives of these national team fans might be totally different and from a sociological perspective, it would be noteworthy to understand them.

MARKETING IMPLICATIONS

Lifestyle is a major predictor of attendance in professional soccer both for Belgian and Portuguese young fans. Clubs should put emphasis on family activities, group promotions, special offers, and social activities with the friends, or for instance the school. To maintain and build attendance, opportunities for attendees to socialise with others before and during the game should be provided. For instance, youngsters like to celebrate special occasions, such as their birthday, at the stadium (Table 1). Therefore, clubs could present special packages, including the ticket for the game and other special features, such as a small present or a special activity with the team, if the person decides to spend a special occasion at the stadium.

The distance fans live from the stadium, in general, and specially in Belgium, is negatively related with attendance. This is an expected result, but marketers cannot mistreat that fact. For fans living further from the stadium, the total price of the game is not only the price of the ticket itself, but the price of the food and of the travel, as well ⁽¹¹⁾. Besides, the time people have to spend to reach the stadium can also demotivate youngsters to attend a soccer game, or they can even be forbidden by their parents to go so far, and eventually they must choose for another entertainment activity. Special prices and special transportation should be provided, and for certain games a 'youngsters bus' could be a great investment on the future loyalty of the future consumers.

Moreover, we found that a lot of people are fans of a club from another city, especially in Portugal, with the three main clubs getting the majority of the attention. In a world of entertainment full of consumption offers for the youngsters, the local clubs should listen to the city inhabitants since a young age. Co-creating value with the locals, for instance through the social networks or activities at their schools or sports school, getting to know them and using their ideas, expectations and motivations should be a huge opportunity to establish a relationship with the children, and try to attract them to be fans of the club of the city, and not of a team from far away.

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Adaptação para a população portuguesa de instrumentos de avaliação da qualidade, satisfação e fidelização de clientes em centros de fitness

PALAVRAS CHAVE:

Qualidade de serviços. Satisfação. Fidelização. Centros de fitness. Análise factorial confirmatória.

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RESUMO

A elevada proliferação de centros de *fitness* registada nos últimos anos desencadeou uma forte concorrência neste sector. Esta competitividade incentiva uma crescente e generalizada exigência de mais e melhor qualidade dos serviços prestados, pois só essa qualidade leva à satisfação e consequentemente manutenção dos clientes. A presente investigação procurou avaliar as características psicométricas de instrumentos de avaliação da Qualidade, Satisfação e Fidelização de clientes em centros de *fitness*. As escalas foram traduzidas para a língua portuguesa, após o que foi avaliada a sua fiabilidade - através do cálculo dos alfa de Cronbach e da análise das correlações item-factor - e a validade de constructo - através da Análise Factorial Confirmatória - das suas versões portuguesas. A análise dos resultados evidenciou que todas as escalas revelaram valores aceitáveis relativamente à sua consistência e validade de constructo, razão pela qual se recomenda a sua utilização, em conjunto ou individualmente, por parte dos investigadores nacionais interessados em desenvolver estudos sobre esta temática.

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