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which you can use to change the world.
- Nelson Mandela

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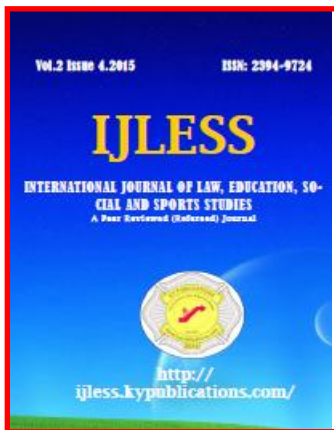
LIVE BROADCAST OF MATCHES ON TELEVISION- A BOOSTER OR BLIP TO FANS ATTENDANCE

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ABSTRACT

This study used a qualitative approach to conducting this study. The aim was to obtain deep insights into the connection between live broadcast of matches and attendance to stadiums during competitive contest. Twelve respondents were used using convenience sampling. The interview was carried out in a TV studio to provide a natural climate conducive for data gathering. Semi structured interviews were used which allowed for probing in the effort of collecting an array of data suitable for qualitative studies. Coding dominant themes and using axial coding ensured that sub themes and related common themes were merged for coherent analysis. The study found that broadcasting live matches during domestic encounters with each league center having their turns will up figures at the stadium. Showing highlights of the domestic league on free to air TV will boost stadium attendance. Televised matches on pay TV have a neutral effect on attendees. The study also found no adverse effect of televised European matches on attendance in the domestic league. This study will bring an informed dimension to the heated debate on the impact of TV broadcasting of European matches on attendance at stadiums in Ghana.

Key words: Television, fans, attendance, league, broadcast, impact

INTRODUCTION

Football is a sport that has enjoyed massive fellowship in Ghana. Football is arguably considered to be number one sport in Ghana. Despite this enviable status, fans attendance in Ghana has taken a back slide. This situation has set tongues wagging with the Ghana Football Association (G.FA) coming for biting flak. Spectators make the football game click. Football is often described as a beautiful game but this will accolade will jade if fans are not around to cheer and the economic power the football game wields will suffer. Therefore, many researchers and practitioners have touted the importance spectators actively attending football matches at the stadium (Kruger, Botha & Saayman, 2012).

Teams will find financing their ever growing expenditure a daunting endeavor if fan numbers continue to shrink. Teams derive funds from gate proceeds during matches. Sponsorship deals will be difficult to clinch if evidence of declining spectator numbers shows no symptoms of abating. Fan attendance constitutes a significant source of funding. For clubs with low fan base, proceeds from gate fees emanating from fans demand may be the sole source of funds. Therefore, the need to initiate that will galvanize fans into stadiums during matches' needs no further emphasis (Dietl and Hasan 2007).

Whilst it has been acknowledged that spectator attendance is influenced by multiplicity of factors (Shank,2001). Ardent followers of the game love the excitement, euphoria and entertainment it generated and are loyal attendees to matches despite setbacks and shock defeats, budgetary considerations and social constructs (Brokaw 2000). These loyal fans display unshaken resolve to attend games because of their passion and strong support for their respective clubs and other stars (Ross 2006). Soccer crazy fans serve as regular attendees and give the game a financial lifeline and bring buzz and vibrancy to stadiums (Mahony, Madrigal & Howard 2000). Some fans can be described as casual and are driven by promotion and publicity of games. Their size in the stands during games can be colossal (Ross, James & Vargas 2006). Discounting gate tickets on match day and media hype can attract such fans to stadiums (Allen 2007).

A major challenge confronting many teams is to understand what will induce fans to show up at the stadium during matches (Ouray 2006).Therefore, delving into the factors that impact on stadium attendance is a worthwhile venture. This will allow marketing executives to design plausible marketing schemes that will create the desired level of awareness and persuasion to attract fans to the stadium (McDonald, Milne & Hong, 2002; Snelgrove, Taks, Chalip & Green, 2008).

Football fans do not only provide revenue life lines to clubs, they also provide players with the impetus to give their all during football contest. It is common sight to find a team stepping up their game as a result of fans roar. Some fans enjoy the atmosphere around football stadiums and could be one of the variables in the equation of decision making to attend football matches (Holt, 1995; Wochnowski, 1996; Pfaff, 2002; Bauer, Sauer, & Exler, 2005).

Borland and MacDonald (2003) defined fans to be a collection of persons with profound interest in a sports discipline, club or player. People who attend sports events in droves perceive themselves to be fans (James & Ridinger, 2002). Sports fan studies scrutinized by Quick (2000) revealed that fans exhibit different motivations for game attendance. Finding the undercurrents that propel fans to watch and enjoy and at times endure the game is an inviting challenge (Armstrong, 2002).

Researchers have made appreciable inroads into identifying the factors that determine demand for live attendance of stadium to observe teams compete for glory (Skourtis, Zafeiropoulou & Assiouras, 2011; Wann, Grieve, Zapalac & Pease, 2009; Isabirye and Surujlal, 2008; Won & Kitamura, 2007; Correia & Esteves, 2007; Robinson & Trail, 2005; Funk, Ridinger & Moorman, 2004). Fans and their motivations to attend football matches at stadiums in Europe and some parts of Asia have caught the attention of researchers resulting in numerous studies being conducted in Britain, Australia, America, Spain and Japan(e.g. Isabirye, & Surujlal, 2012; Wann et al., 2008; Won & Kitamura, 2007; Correia & Esteves, 2007; Robinson & Trail, 2005; Funk, Ridinger & Moorman, 2004). However, these studies are generic in their approach and fails to analyze close up with individual factors. Beside, these numerous works are preoccupied with European fans attendance resulting to scant focus on spectator attendance in Africa (Isabirye, & Surujlal, 2012) This study will fill the void by undertaking an in-depth analysis of the impact of live televised matches' on stadium attendance in Ghana.

Matheson (2003) opine that there has been a blip in stadium attendance in Scottish and English leagues. The reduction in fans attendance in UK has been striking. In the Saudi Premier League, fall in stadium attendees has been recognized and blamed on live television broadcast of football matches (Binjwaied, Richards & O'Keeffe 2015). In Europe, literature on declining stadium attendance has found considerable space (Baimbridge, Cameron, & Dawson, 1996; Garcia & Rodrigues ,2002; Forest and Simmons, 2006). Factors that impact on match day attendance in other continents may not have the same impact in other parts of the globe. This study will concentrate on examining the impact of live television broadcast of matches on fans attendance in Ghana, a strong football nation in West African sub region with three consecutive appearances in the last three soccer world cups but whose fans have shied away from football matches. This worrying trend has prompted the premier league board to declare the last match of the top flight football season free of charge in an apparent attempt to draw crowds to the Accra Sports Stadium (Daily Graphic, 10th September, 2015). This study will serve a useful purpose by enriching the debate on the impact of live television broadcast of matches on spectating because so far, the debate has not been anchored on empirical research.

Literature review

Fans now have a couple of options to choose from when they contemplate watching football watching. Television is one of such options. Pay per view and free to air television are now widely available across the world. Domestic and international football leagues are broadcast for fans to watch. The sheer numbers of football fans who watch games on TV make football one of the most popular sports around the world (Szymanski 2005). Borland and MacDonald (2003) highlight some of the difficulties with these observations which provide evidence that if match-day is televised then fans' attendance at the stadium will decrease. Buraimo, Forrest and Simmonds (2009) concluded that fans' attendance decrease to a lesser extent when a football match is aired on a subscribed TV sports channel; when the football match is broadcast on a free- to air television. Baimbridge et al. (1995) also examined the effect of broadcasting English FA Premier League football matches on fans' attendance and they found that there was a considerable negative impact on fans' attendance due to the screening of football matches. Furthermore, Kuypers (1996) and Buraimo et al. (2010) highlighted the fact that scheduling of a match can also negatively influence fans' attendance. However, Garcia and Rodriguez (2002) disagreed with Kuypers' (1996) findings pointing out the negative impact broadcasting visited on levels of spectating during the La Liga in Spain during the 1992 to 1996 league seasons. Although previous studies have discussed the impact of televised matches on fans' attendance, it cannot be said with certainty that only the proliferation of televised matches has influenced fans' attendance (Binjwaied, et al., 2015).

Establishing whether live broadcasting harms match-day attendance is especially important in countries and in sports where club revenues depend less on income from broadcasting rights than on general recurrent expenditures of core supporters. This could generally be less important in major sporting leagues such as the English Premier League, but will be important in smaller soccer leagues (Allan & Roy, 2008). Kringstad and Solberg (2012) posited that matches shown on free-to-air TV had higher attendance than those on pay TV or those that were not on TV.

Live broadcast of matches has been met with apprehension by sports stakeholders. The pessimism is borne out of TV broadcast propensity to get match day attendance figures tumbling (Noll, 2007). Baimbridge et al., (1995) stressed that the attention given to this topic leaves a lot to be desired citing scant attempts to delve in this important phenomenon (Sloane, 1980; Cairns, Jennett & Sloane, 1986; Bird, 1982).

Borland and Macdonald (2003) confirmed the findings of earlier research regarding the adverse effects on stadium attendance due to televised matches but hinted of some positive impact on the evidence of available evidence (Kuypers, 1995). Finding common ground on the influence of TV broadcast on fans attendance has been elusive (see Dobson & Goddard, 2001; Price & Sen, 2003; Humphreys, 2002; Leadley & Zygmunt, 2006; Baimbridge et al. 1995; Carmichael, Millington, & Simmons, 1999). Most of these studies have adopted a statistical approach method (e.g. Allan & Roy, 2008; Solberg & Hammervold, 2008). This work is anchored on qualitative path.

Methods and Materials

This study seeks to understand the motivations behind watching live match broadcast of football matches at the expense of stadium attendance. Since the the aim is to discover the insights that underpin TV fans choice for TV instead of stadium, the appropriate pathway is qualitative approach. Henning, Van Rensburg and Smit (2004) express the view that the collection of detailed information about an issue to allow for in-depth comprehension of a phenomenon is facilitated through qualitative research. They contend that this type of information broaden our horizons, allowing us to understand issues in their broad dimensions.

Inglis (1992) also posited that qualitative techniques elicit relevant answers to research questions as researchers maintain intimate contacts with their participants in data collection.

In their work, Johnson and Christensen (2011) revealed that qualitative research involves gathering non statistical data for exploratory motives.

This work used non probability techniques in targeting respondents. Specifically, convenience sample was used because the researcher used natural environment, , most suited to the participants were used (Creswell, 2009). The researcher conducted the interviews at TV studios where the respondents watched matches on television during televised matches. This created easiness for the respondents because they found themselves in familiar terrain Merriam, 2009)

Qualitative research thrives on smaller samples because the outcome of the work is not for purposes generalization. This study used twelve participants- a small size that promotes probing and understanding of the subject under consideration (Patton, 2002; Brown and Kandirikirira, 2007). The small size of respondents constitutes a source of strength of qualitative studies. In a qualitative study of factors that induces fans to attend matches at stadiums, Isabirye & Surujlal (2012) relied on seven respondents.

In the exercise of gathering original data for the study, the researcher used semi- structured interviews. The relevance of interviewing is expressed by Seidman (2006) who stipulated that interviews opens understanding about the contextual behavior of respondents which enriches the researchers understanding of participants responses. Merriam (1998) agreed that, qualitative work should be not be rigidly structured. In this connection, the researcher conducted semi-structured interviews via open ended questions. This allowed the investigator to probe for in-depth responses, understanding and delving into new lines of thought whilst re-posing questions to check for consistency (Yin, 2003; Gray, 2004; Henning et al., 2004; Ezzy, 2010). These interviews were spiced with interaction and informality to ensure comfort of participants in order to acquire research specific data and recording the process of interviewing (David & Sutton, 2004). The researcher also observed the body language of participants such as head nodding, tone of voice and pauses before answering questions to augment data gathered. This gave the researcher a semblance of multiple data sources (Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2003; Creswell, 2009) which improves validity and dependability

Drawing understanding out of qualitative data is a function of coherence endeavor. Burnett (2009) emphasized the need to be meticulous in qualitative data analysis to ensure that common themes are pieced together for fluid presentation of outcomes. Consequently, interviews were documented supported by audio taping. Documented data was perused several times to build understanding of each interview session. The audio tape was then carefully transcribed to avoid costly omissions. The documented information was examined and emerging themes were flagged and coded (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Coding was to help categorize common ideas that emerged from the interviews in the knowledge that they constituted dominant themes worth interpreting and reported. Each dominant theme was then chosen and placed in a position that allowed for sub categories to be correctly put under it dominant segment for fluidity of analysis (axial coding).

Results

All twelve participants are soccer lovers and follow the game passionately. The study produced mixed outcomes. The informants believe that TV broadcast of the Ghana Premier League on free to air channels will impact positively on stadium attendance. They argued that by bring live pictures of match day action in fans houses, they will begin to follow the exploits of domestic teams which will lead to stadium attendance. Another result of this study has to do with highlights of actions across all league centers. They hinge their stance on the fact that not all matches can be televised and showing highlights on free to air television should spiced the interest of fans. The participants posited a weak link between attendance and live broadcast of matches on pay per view television. Indeed, the market share of pay per view television in Ghana is negligible. In terms of the vexed issue of live broadcast of European matches on pay per view television in Ghana, the participants held the view that it has not impacted negatively on fans attendance stressing that most European matches are played and broadcast on Saturdays whilst the Ghana premierships is mostly played on Sundays.

Discussions

It emerged that airing Ghana premierships league on free to air TV can reignite interest in the matches and draw crowds to the stadium. In their view, if domestic football should dominate the screens free of charge, football fans will have the opportunity of appreciating the talents on display. This will motivate them to start attending live matches because of the initial interest generated. They put the responsibility of getting the premierships action on television on the doorstep of the G.F.A and partly on the teams. The informants believed the G.F.A has a stronger muscle to negotiate and secure deals from television broadcasters. Importantly, it emerged that respondents were fond of TV highlights of premierships action at all league centers in Ghana. They decried the showing of actions regarding top clubs at the expense of other non- traditional clubs saying that did not give fans a panoramic view of the league to spur them attend matches at the stadium. The informants were convinced that highlights of football matches on Mondays attract massive audiences and showing the actions across all free to air channels will be plausible. They

traced the disinterest to attend league matches to the time when highlights of the matches were blacked out on national television which ensured that most fans lost out.

The informants also attributed weak links to the broadcast of Ghana premiership matches on pay TV saying that most Ghanaians are not within the bracket of ownership of pay TV. Asked why most TV studios do not show the domestic matches, they laughed it off saying that it will be surprising if a fan pays to watch domestic matches on TV. They however conceded that televising matches on pay TV is a good advertisement for the local game since it gives it a global access and appeal.

When it came to the broadcast of European matches on TV, nine of the informants believed it has not impacted adversely on match day attendance in Ghana. They latched on to the fact that most Ghana premiership matches are played on Saturdays whilst the domestic league is played on Sundays. When the researcher drew their attention to some crucial matches being played and shown on TV on Sundays, they put it down to isolated cases. Four of the informants recalled that the domestic league was still in session when the curtains on the European leagues were drawn during the 2014/2015 season.. In spite of this, fans did not rush to fill the stands in Ghana during football matches. They protested the calls to ban the broadcast of European matches saying it was a desperate move that flies in the face of globalization and rule of law. The researcher raised the issue of the standard of the domestic league coming under criticism because fans unfairly compare the local league to the European games. Nine of the respondents agreed that it was not a fair measure to compare these disparate leagues but maintained their grounds that televised European matches has no links to tumbling attendance figures in the domestic league.

Limitations and implications for further research

By restricting the study to the impact of TV broadcast of live matches, it disabled the researcher from assessing the impact of other factors that impact on match day attendance at stadiums. The researcher also targeted respondents who normally watch matches at TV studios. Widening the base of respondents to include those who own their pay per view channels will boost representation. The qualitative nature of the research ensured the use of small sample sizes. The general heat generated by live broadcast of TV matches in soccer circles in Ghana warrants a survey approach with sizeable samples to give rise to generalization of outcomes. These limitations aside, the outcomes of this study provides an addition to the body of knowledge on this thorny issue in Ghana.

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