TALLINN UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY

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Motivation for Finnish students to attend live sporting events

Bachelor's thesis

Programme International Business Administration, specialisation in Marketing

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I hereby declare that I have compiled the thesis independently
and all works, important standpoints and data by other authors
have been properly referenced and the same paper
has not been previously presented for grading.

The document length is 8703 words from the introduction to the end of the conclusion.

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ABSTRACT

The attendance in sports has been in decline and this phenomenon is not only due to the Covid-19 pandemic, since it has been declining before it. The aim of this thesis is to figure out what motivates Finnish male university students to attend a game live and what does not. Previous research done in different countries have found that motivational factors affecting attendance in sports are for example quality of the contest, aesthetics, and teams' involvement in the contest. The sample that was researched in this thesis consisted of five students with whom semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted. To answer the research question, a guided thematic analysis of the data was done with the help of previous research. The results of the study found that live sports games are heavily a social gathering, and the most important part that people seek when attending is the atmosphere within the stadium. The main constraint was found to be having no one to attend a game with. Recommendation for sports clubs is to make the events for everyone, not only the most passionate fans. This way you can minimize the main constraint the participants had.

Keywords: Motivation, Consumer Behaviour, Sports, Sports Marketing

INTRODUCTION

Sports have been a popular past-time not only in Finland but everywhere in the world for many decades. Finnish people come together every spring to watch ice hockey's world championships and together they cheer for Finland to win. However, this phenomenon can only be seen with the national ice hockey team. The attendance for the finnish ice hockey league has been declining a lot in the last decade. In fact, the attendance in other sports and countries such as the United States, England and Germany have also been declining as well (Wyld, n.d.). This drop in attendance is not explained by Covid-19, although it might have an impact, because the average attendance in "Liiga", the finnish national hockey league, has dropped from an average attendance per game of 4872 in 2013 to an average attendance per game of 4178 in 2022 (Liiga, n.d). That is over 14% decrease in attendance in a decade. The decrease in attendance will become a problem in the long-run, due to the fact that in Finland the two biggest sources of revenue for teams is from sponsorships and ticketing revenue (Nuutinen & Pulkkinen, 2015). However, if there are no people seeing the logo of the company in the arena, there is no reason for a sponsorship deal.

The motivation for the author to do this research comes from his interest in the business of sports and his observations for the problem of empty seats in the arenas. It is also important for the author to figure out the motives for attendance, because exercise among Finnish kids has been declining and there is a possibility that the positive experiences in sports events motivates kids to play sports themselves. This could potentially lead to better overall health of people, physical as well as mental.

The research problem of this study focuses on the attendance in sports events and the reasons why it has been decreasing in the last decade. Even though the viewership through TV and streaming platforms can be at a good level, the live attendance is decreasing. This becomes a problem when ticket revenue is one of the third biggest sources of revenue for sports clubs.

This thesis tries to understand the phenomenon of why there have been a growing number of empty seats in the arenas the last decade. It aims to give information on when male Finnish university students feel motivated to attend a sporting event and when they do not. This is important due to the fact that the demographic of people attending sports events are more typically men than women (Thrane, 2001). In addition, the university students will be the ones that have the money to spent in the future and sports clubs needs to focus on the long-term profitability in order to stay in business. University students were also decided to be taken as the sample because of the availability of data gathering for the author. The intention is to arrange in-depth interviews to further understand the behavior of the students for live events, in addition to gain knowledge on what motivates and demotivates them in a sporting event context. The research question was designed to answer this problem, and is the following:

- What are the motivators and demotivators of Finnish university students' towards attendance in live sporting events?

The paper includes of three parts; Theoretical framework, research methodology and research results. The first part explains what previous research has been done before on the topic, as well as explains the differences in sports marketing and traditional businesses marketing, discusses what makes people become fans and of course explains the concept of motivation in general and in the sports event landscape. The second part of the thesis explains the research methodology used and describes how the data was sampled, how it was collected and how the research was designed. The third part of the thesis consists of the analysis and results of the research. Conclusions of the thesis is the last part of the paper. It includes conclusions of the findings of the research, limitations, recommendations for further research, as well as recommendations for sports clubs.

The author would like to thank his family and friends for the support during this research and a special thank you for the supervisor of the thesis Kristel Kaljund, without whom the completion of this thesis would not have been possible.

1. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The first chapter provides the reader the theoretical framework. These are collected from previous research and academic literature. This framework goes through the sources of motivation and constraints in consumer behavior as well as the determinants of the target market of sporting clubs. The difference of sports business from the traditional businesses is explained and lastly the author goes through the factors affecting the live sports attendance in previous research.

1.1.   Consumer behaviour, motivation and its constraints

This thesis's main focus is on consumers' motivation to consume a certain product and this is linked to consumers' behavior. Hence, the author needs to explain what controls buying behavior among consumers. In this chapter the author explains where the needs and wants for people come from.

Consumer behavior and motivations have been researched previously to a large extent. The Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs is often being used when studying consumer behavior. It was first introduced by Abraham Maslow in 1943 and it explains how motivation is steered by different levels of need. (Corporate Finance Institute, 2022) The following figure (see Figure 1) presents the Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs in a triangle shape.
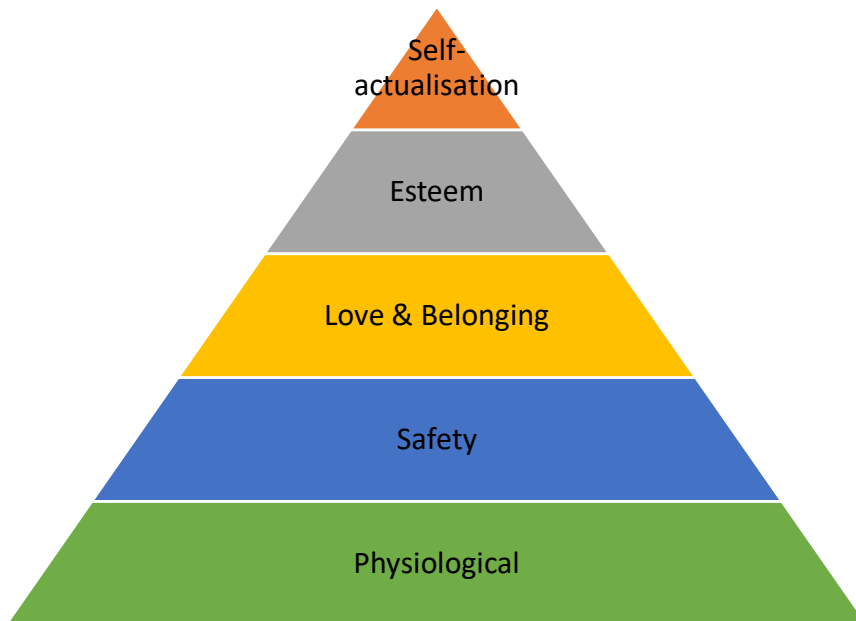
Figure 1. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1954)
Source: McLeod (2018, 2)

The pyramid of needs has five different levels. These are from lowest to highest:

- Physiological needs (Food, water, rest, shelter)
- Safety and security (Health, money, resources)
- Love and belonging (Family, Friendship, Intimacy)
- Self-esteem (Recognition and achievement)
- Self-actualization (Morality, creativity, happiness)

In his theory, Maslow proposed that people first have to satisfy the needs in the bottom category; Physiological needs in order to step into the next level, which is safety and security. After a person has satisfied the needs in the safety and security level he/she moves to the love and belonging level. This cycle goes on until a person has reached the last level; Self-actualization. The last level of needs is about personal growth and ultimately finding happiness. (Maslow, 1954)

Motivation can also be negative and that is why it is important to acknowledge and understand the obstacles a fan needs to overcome in order for him/her to attend a game for this research. Hence, the author has to discuss the limitation part of the consumer's motivation in a live sport attendance context.

Constraints have a slightly different meaning in literature depending on the circumstances. In the context of this research paper, which focuses on sports leisure activities and participation, the constraints can be defined according to Kim and Trail (2010), "factors that impede or inhibit an individual from attending a sporting event."

Constraints from the point of view of attending a sporting event can be things such as financial expenses (expensive parking, ticket costs, concessions costs), alternative free-time activities, seat and stadium locations, the time of the event, poor performance by the playing teams and also the weather has been found to have a negative effect on attendance in sporting events (Hansen & Gauthier, 1989).

Just as motivation depends on internal and external motivators, there are also internal and external constraints that people have on attending a sports event. Motivators have a positive effect on attendance and constraints have a negative effect on attendance. A person would not participate in attending a match if the internal constraints are larger than internal motivation and a person's probability of attending a match will increase if the internal constraints are smaller than internal motivators. (Rizvandi, et al. 2019) The following figure (see Figure 2) illustrates the four steps leading to the sport consumer behavior.

Figure 2. Motivators and constraints in SCB
Source: Rizvandi et al., (2019, 2232)

From Figure 2 we can see that a person needs to first overcome internal constraints before external motivators will have an effect on consumer's behavior. An example of internal constraints might be that a person simply does not care about a specific sport. However, he/she

has been given free tickets to a game (external motivator) and thus decides to attend it. Thus, in conclusion there are four factors having an impact on the consumer' behavior in sports.

1.2. Factors making people become fans

For every business there is the target market and audience they are trying to reach. The same applies to sports clubs. In this subchapter the author will explain the target audience of sports clubs and the reasons behind it.

Before a human being can be considered as a consumer for sports teams he or she needs to be a fan. However, there are very different levels of fandom, from attending a game just because you got free tickets and you have nothing else to do that evening to the other end of the spectrum where a fan attends every single home game and sometimes even travels to the away games with the team to show their support. This level of passion is rarely seen in a traditional business setting and this is why we need to understand what makes people become fans no matter the level. Research of this has been done by a company called Octagon where they found 13 factors to have an effect.

Octagon is a sports and entertainment marketing agency and they represent a lot of different athletes from various sports. Because sports spectatorship is largely driven by passion, Octagon made a study called "Passion Drivers", and this research examines why fans become fans. This idea was originally generated by Simon Wardle, vice president of research at Octagon (King, 2010). In this study, they found out 13 different factors affecting the passion towards sports among fans. These are; " 1. Active Participation (Personal participation), 2. All Consuming (Ability of the event to draw you in), 3. Gloating (Reveling in the agony of others), 4. Love of the Game (Fundamental love for the sport), 5. Nostalgia (History and personal memories), 6. Player Affinity (Human relationship with players), 7. Lifestyle (Good representation of one's life), 8. Player Excitement (Admiration of talent), 9. Personal Indulgence (Personal selfishness), 10. Sense Of Belonging (Being identified as part of a tribe), 11. Talk & Socializing (Social interactions), 12. Team Devotion (Obsession & Loyalty), 13. TV Preference (Consumption preference)" (Octagon, 2016).

As we can see from the listing, there are many factors that affect the consumption of sports from being friends with an athlete to feeling like being a part of something bigger. When comparing these 13 aspects from Octagon's research to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs it can be concluded that the consuming of sports fall into the three top levels of the triangle; Love and Belonging, Self-Esteem and Self-Actualization.

1.3. Core product of professional sports and sports marketing

In order to understand what motivates consumers to attend live sporting events we first have to know what is the core product that marketers are trying to sell and consumers demand. This subchapter explains the different products that sport clubs can offer and how they market it.

The core product in professional sport is defined by Sutton and Parret (1992) as, "the game itself, that is whatever takes place on the field of play including the manner in which the contest is conducted, the style and strategy employed and the interpretation of understood laws, rules, regulation and historical precedents." There is often a possibility for the consumer to buy products associated with the contest, either from the contest itself or from different outlets such as team stores, retail stores or order online. Products that are associated with the core product might be team merchandise, gambling or team sponsors products. However, the core product is the game between two teams in the contest. (Borland & McDonald, 2003)

In sports the product on the field is intangible, however many teams offer tangible objects as a side product whether they are jerseys, hats, flags and so on. Teams also market the events around the core product from time to time differently. These different events might be for example; Family game (where kids attend free), Student game (students attend free or with a significant discount) or a celebration of a club legend (Paying respect to a previous player by lifting his/her jersey to the rafters of a stadium).

The business of sports differs a bit from the classic business industry. For example, oftentimes the teams and clubs competing are not trying to maximize their profit which is the goal for traditional businesses, but to maximize their "product", which is the team itself. The owners of the teams might use a significant amount of money to buy skilled players in order to compete for a championship. That is why there are a few aspects that have to be considered by sports marketers. In a traditional business the producer of the product or service is considered to be experts in that field. However, because sports creates a lot of positive and negative thoughts among the fans or consumers they often think that they are the specialists (Da Silva & Casas, 2017). The relationship between a traditional business and a customer differs from the relationship between a sports club and their customers (fans). In business in general the business provides a product or a service and they expect a payment for it from their customers. In sport business there are alternatives that a sport club can expect from their customers. According to Da Silva and Casas (2017) these alternatives can be "passion, energy, enthusiasm, excitement".

As a sports marketer you also need to be aware of the fact that your consumers (fans) are a part of the product you are trying to sell. This stems from the fact that sports are an entertainment business and your consumers are the ones attending an event. With loud fans in the stands of a stadium you can change the atmosphere of the stadium, which can be for many people a motivator to attend the game. In other words, there is a possibility to create a better product only by marketing and acquiring customers. In a traditional business setting this is very rarely the case.

1.4 Motivation for attending live sports events

The sport consumer's motivation to attend a live sport event has been studied previously to a large extent. Past research found the main motivators to be aesthetics, self-esteem, escape, vicarious achievement, eustress, team identification and group affiliation. It has been found that the sports consumers' motivation is intrinsic or extrinsic depending on their wants, (Kim & Mao, 2021) much like motivation in any other area. The intrinsic motivation means that a person does something just because they want to. Reiss (2012), defined intrinsic motivation, "doing

something for its own sake." Extrinsic motivation however means going after an instrumental objective. Reiss (2012) used this example, "when a child plays baseball in order to please a parent or win a championship."

Research conducted by Hall, O'Mahony and Vieceli (2010) used seven factors to study the attendance factors specifically in Australia. These seven factors were found using a qualitative method based on previous literature. The first factor to have an effect on attendance from their research is "The Entertainment Factor". This means general joy and fun from attending an event. Second factor is called the "Emotional Arousal Factor", this includes the attendees emotions and whether the event was stimulating or satisfying. Third is the "Back Room Factor". This stems from the overall experience including the ease of getting into your seats, accessibility of the stadium and parking. "True Fan Factor" is the fourth factor found and it means the attendees that feel like the most important part of the event is the game itself. These true fans care about the process of outcome and the teams' performance. Next factor Hall, O'Mahony and Vieceli (2010) found is the "Front Room Factor". This describes the facilities of the whole event experience, such as bars and restaurants. These are directly related to the experience of the attendees. Sixth factor is the "Event Factor", which is a mixture of backroom and circumstantial variables. Lastly, the seventh factor is the "Social Factor". This means the effect of family and friends on the enjoyment of the game.

The demand for the product can be derived from identification with a team and the quality of the contest. The first point, identification with a team is often established by geographic or emotional connection. (Borland & McDonald, 2003) Emotional connection can be derived from family or parents. It is not rare that fandom goes from "father to son". Geographic and emotional connection can also be intertwined. People tend to root for their home city or country, where you have a positive emotional connection due to the geographic location. However, you should also keep in mind that the sizes of the population in the teams' home cities have an effect on demand. More people living in a city leads to an increase in the possibility of creating demand. In addition, the maximum supply for teams depends on the capacity sizes of the stadiums teams are playing in from the attendance point of view.

The quality of the contest depends on the skill, extraordinary physical skill and the uncertainty of the outcome. (Rottenberg, 2000) In previous research Hansen and Gauthier (1989) concluded that demand in the sports industry can be measured by "attendance; factors such as price,

population size, complementary commodities, consumer preference for sport, substitute form of entertainment."

Previous studies have shown that the most dominant factors affecting the attendance are the quality of the team compared to the visiting team and the teams' involvement in the competition. (Hansen & Gauthier, 1989). Involvement in the competition refers to the team's success during the whole season. For example, if a team is playing towards making the playoffs, they are more involved in the competition than teams that are out of the playoff race.

Other studies on demand for attending a sport event have found many different factors affecting it. For example, the degree of product differentiation of the team has a heavy influence on attendance, according to Hansen and Gauthier (1989). In the sporting industry product differentiation means the different style of play (fast, slow, passive, aggressive), because the core product is the game itself. The players and their skill level are also a part of the product differentiation.

Lots of the previous studies have used the same overlapping determinants when evaluating sport consumption. The most important aspects that were found were identification with the team, quality of the contest, product differentiation and a team's involvement in the contest (season). However, these studies did not evaluate attendance in sports events individually. Kim and Mao (2021), found through qualitative interviews that specifically for live attendance the motivation factors are; History witnessing, Identity cultivation and Authenticity. Because the substitute forms of consuming sports, whether it is through TV or social media etc. have an effect on motives to attend it live, it is not possible to study the motives only with these aforementioned factors.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The second chapter explains the research design and plan for the thesis. It also explains the sample used and method on data collection as well as analysis of the data.

2.1. Research design and plan

The aim of this research is to find out the motivation for male Finnish university students to attend live sports events. Qualitative research methods were used due to the fact that the research examines buying behavior and motivation within the sports landscape. Because this research examines motivation and behavior, it is very hard to examine it by quantitative methods, hence qualitative research methods were selected. (Hammarberg et al., 2016)

Qualitative research methods allow you to get answers on people's attitudes and experiences in particular fashion with different techniques such as, semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions and in-depth interviews (Hennink et al., 2020). The use of qualitative methods are described by Hammarberg et al., (2016) as "to answer questions about experience, meaning and perspective, most often from the standpoint of the participant".

In this thesis, the author uses semi-structured interviews as a way to get insight into the topic. Semi-structured interviews can be used when there is a need to find different views to a selected topic or detailed information (Hammarberg et al., 2016).

The interviews for this thesis consisted of 27 open-ended questions. These 27 questions gave a framework to the interviews, and extra questions were asked when seen necessary by the author. The author designed the interview in order to find out the motivators and demotivators of the participants to attend live sports events. The constraints to attend of the selected participants were also examined, due to the fact that the interview used the Sport Consumer Behavior Model as a basis to collect the data, which includes internal and external motivators, in addition to internal and external constraints. The seven factors that Hall et al., (2010) used to

examine the attendance in sports in Australia were used as an outline in the semi-structured interviews. After the interview plan was done, the author collected improvement recommendations from the supervisor to further develop the data gathering to be better for the interviewee as well as for the interviewer. The interview first gathers information on where the sports consumption of the students stem from and after that, the possible motivators and constraints of the individuals on the topic are being investigated.

Opportunity sampling was decided to be used by the author due to the fact that the criteria for the participants in the interviews were strict and the collecting information by opportunity sampling minimized the risk of not getting enough data to analyze. Opportunity sampling is a non-probability sampling method, where representatives of a target population meet fixed criteria. These fixed criterias might be things such as, availability, willingness to participate and attainability for the researcher (Etikan et al., 2016). The sample of this research consists of five Finnish male university students and the use of opportunity sampling made it possible for the author to reach the right individuals for the research. The interviewees were contacted via the author's own relationships.

2.2. Data collection and analysis

The data used in this thesis was only primary and it was gathered through in-depth interviews. In-depth interviews were conducted in order to get a deeper understanding of the interviewees attitudes and opinions on the topic of the thesis. The method is effective in getting insight into how people, in this case Finnish male university students, interpret the topic of the interview. The interviewees can talk about their personal feelings, experiences and thought processes in a comfortable setting (Milena & Dainora, 2008). The interviews done for this thesis were conducted in a few comfortable settings, in a coffee shop and in different interviewees' homes and in the Finnish language. This was done in order to make the interviewees feel as comfortable as possible, in addition to reducing the possibility of misunderstandings. This could have led to better insights into the individuals' opinions and motivations on the topic. The interviews were conducted in a semi-structured manner. Every participant was asked the questions in the same order and when seen required by the interviewer, more descriptive questions were asked from the interviewees. Before the recording of the interviews started the participants were made aware that there are no right or wrong answers, and their anonymity is being granted. Each of the

interviews lasted between 25 to 32 minutes. The interviews were conducted between 20th of March and 27th of March. After the interviews were done, the author transcribed the data into a text format and anonymized the text.

To be able to analyze the qualitative data from the interviews, a qualitative guided thematic analysis was conducted. This was done in order to find central themes that came up in the interviews and the found themes were formed with the help of the model Hall et al., (2010) used in their research. The data was coded after the interviews had been reviewed. Then, the data was divided into categories according to the codes and through that the five main themes were identified in order to get the answers to the research question.

3. RESEARCH RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

The third chapter introduces the qualitative thematic analysis of the data collected from the interviews, in addition to discussion of the results.

3.1. Thematic analysis

To understand more thoroughly the students' motivators and constraints to attend a live sporting event, a qualitative semi-structured interview was conducted among five Finnish male students (see Appendix 1). The promise of anonymity was granted to the interviewees, thus the five names of the interviewees were; Mikko, Pekka, Jukka, Kai, and Roope. It was also made clear that there are no right or wrong answers in the interview and the author is only interested in their own opinions.

The interviews were carried out in coffee shops and homes of the participants. The interview was recorded in the Finnish language due to it being everyone's native language, and then transcribed (see Appendix 2). The transcribed text was divided into five different themes, according to the interview questions and codes resulting from the answers of the interviews (see Appendix 3). The theory functions as an inspiration here, especially the seven factors presented in the subchapter 1.4. Starting from there but being open for possible changes, five following themes emerge from the interview text:

1. Personal Factors
2. Social Factors
3. Environmental Factors
4. Consumer Decision Making
5. Sports Fan Satisfaction

From these five themes the author gets an understanding on the participants' biggest motivators and biggest constraints in attending a sporting event.

Theme 1: Personal Factors

Theme 1 of personal factors include the personal experiences with sports in general, in addition to the self-identification as a sports fan and favorite athletes or clubs.

The sports fandom and the interest towards sports are very much coming from the youth of every participant. As Mikko puts it, " *I have always liked to play different sports from when I was a little kid, so I think that's where the interest comes from*." Kai had the same experience as a kid, "*From the time I was a kid I have always had all kinds of different sports as my hobby*" but Kai also adds that, "*All of my siblings have had different kinds of hobbies, so I believe that has an impact as well.*" The importance of friends is also a part of the self-identification as a sports fan. When asked about why his favorite team is what it is, Roope says that "*the team is iconic and has a lot of history as well as many of my friends support the team too.*" The city that the participants were raised in has also an affect on the self-identification part. Kai puts it as, "*As a kid there were the city's two rivalry teams and I had to make a decision on which one to root for. All of my friends were following that teams' games so I picked that one.*" The home city is also important in order to easily attend the games when you want to, " *It is easy for me to go watch the games, when the arena is close to where I live.*", says Jukka.

There is strong evidence that the love for sports comes from the youth of the individuals. Whether it is from seeing your friends play or taking an example from your older siblings that have different sports as their hobbies. The interest towards different sports does not go away easily either, so if you have played sports as a kid most likely you will at least follow the same sport to some degree your whole life.

Theme 2: Social Factors

Social factors include the influence of family and friends on consuming sports in addition to whether you personally know any professional athletes and how that affects your consumption of sports.

As the stadiums and arenas for professional sports are made for thousands or tens of thousands of people, the attendance of games is very much a social event for many. Friends are usually the ones students go to the games with, but if for some reason their friends can not attend, then they "*turn to ask dad or little brother*" as Roope puts it. Another important aspect is the interest towards the same sport within your friend group. Pekka says when asked about whom he does most of the time attend a sporting event with, that "*Almost every time I go with someone and usually both of us have interest towards the same sport. - Most of the time with my friends*" Participating alone is not completely out of the question for the interviewees, however the game itself has to be personally very interesting. For example, Kai says that "*I have no problem with going to a game alone if the game or the event is something that I am really interested in.*" It is never the first option for the student's but basically a last resort. As Jukka puts it, "*I could go alone if it is a really good game and I could not get anyone else to go with me, then yes I might go.*"

When asked about if the participants know personally any professional athletes, and if it affects their following of the sport Pekka says that: " *Yeah, I follow that how they are doing plus they play the sport that I usually anyways follow.*" However, the following is more regular if there are people that you know playing in a certain team. Pekka adds that he will watch every game if it fits his schedule and if not, "*Results of the games I will check every time from my phone.*" The support for friends does not even have to be professional sport. Interviewees will still follow and show support for athletes, for example just playing overseas, "*It's always nice to see when friends are somewhere around the world, it does not even have to be professional, but always when some of the people I know play somewhat seriously I will pay closer attention to it.*", Kai says.

It is clear that Social Factors have a large effect on the motivation of students to attend a sporting event live, at least when the game in question is not a special event personally. When the game is personally interesting the social factor is minimized, due to the fact that the game itself is creating enough interest. Otherwise, live sports games are very much a social gathering and use of free-time whether it is with friends or family-members.

Theme 3: Environmental Factors

The third theme is Environmental Factors affecting the motivation to attend a live sporting event. It includes the availability and accessibility of sports games including transportation to the stadiums and traffic, in addition to restaurants, bars and other concessions.

When participants were asked to describe their day when they are attending a sports game, there is a very clear theme; Eating before going to the stadium and arriving early to the venue. "*Before going to the stadium, usually we go somewhere out to eat and then after that we will go the stadium early - perhaps 45 minutes to 30 minutes before it begins*" (Pekka) ; "*Leave from home early then go eat some sporting event food, such as chicken wings or burgers - and after that starting to move towards the arena.*" (Jukka) ; "*Leave early to the arena by a tram and then before the match we will go out to eat and have a few drinks.*" (Kai) ; "*We will usually go eat somewhere before the game and after we have eaten then go early to the stadium*" (Roope). Due to the fact that the students go somewhere to eat before attending the game the importance of restaurants within the stadium diminishes. However, for some the motivation to attend increases slightly if there are good restaurants in the venue. When asked about in-stadium restaurants Mikko says that, "*Not at a younger age, but now it could be considered a motivating factor if there is a good supply of different foods at the stadium.*" He adds, that " *I would not pick the whole event based on the restaurants, they are just a kind of a side factor.*" There is a clear consensus that at the stadium there needs to just be some snacks available, food is not a big internal motivator for students. For example, Jukka says that "*You basically go there to watch the game, not to eat at the end of the day. You can eat before or after the event.*" He also adds that, "*It's enough that there is some concessions where you can get a beer, a coke, water, popcorn etc. There does not need to be any gourmet food.*" Kai had a similar opinion, "*There has not been a situation where I would not go or would go only because of restaurants or bars. But I'd say that if there are some small restaurants that would be cheap, then it would just be a plus.*"

All of the participants are from the greater Helsinki area. So when thinking about the availability and accessibility opinions are based on the capital of Finland. It helps that there are different teams playing in the same leagues in the area. However, it is clear that most of the time the journey to the arena or stadium is done by some sort of public transport. When asked about how easy it is to commute to stadiums in Finland, Mikko says that "*Public transportation is good in*

Finland and the stadiums are located so well that it is easy to go there, so there have not been any problems there." The biggest constraint for the interviewees to attend by a car is the traffic jams and finding a parking spot near the stadium might be a problem. Kai says that he would rather use public transportation, because when driving to the arena: "*You always have to search for a parking spot and sometimes you have to leave the car really far from the arena. That might lead to you being late and it creates like a stress momentum.*" Pekka has a same kind of view especially in the Helsinki metropolitan area about parking; "*Finding a parking spot if for example you go to watch even junior events in the metropolitan area it is tough to find a parking spot.*"

The interviewees will all prefer to make the journey to a stadium or arena by public transport. It is most likely that their demographic location in Finland does have a correlation to that. The problems that they have experienced in parking before has also an effect on how they would travel. However, having to go with a car to the stadium is not that significant that it would be considered a constraint to the motivation to attend. The traffic jam and the possible stress factor that would arise from the difficulty of finding a parking spot can have an impact on the future motivation to attend a sports event by a car, but not to the overall attendance.

Theme 4: Consumer Decision Making

The fourth theme that rose from the interviews held was consumer decision making. This includes the factors that influence whether to attend or not and the expectations that the students have about the experience in a sporting event.

The main theme that rose from the expectations of the interviewees when attending a sporting event was clearly the importance of atmosphere in the stadium. That is the number one thing that student's expect and go there for. When asked about personal expectations of a game, Mikko answered that: "*The atmosphere would be created well by the organizer of the event, that the settings are working and that there would have been taken the trouble to make a good show around the game itself.*" Jukka thinks pretty much the same way, he expects from the event that there is a good atmosphere in the stadium in addition to a good game. This is because, "*you have bothered to pay the x amount of money for the event.*" says Jukka. The experience of going to the stadium is more than the game itself. It is a social event, where you go to have a good time with

your friends and family. Kai describes the live attendance of sports events: "*I would say that in live events, the actual game it's not like, or it is more like the whole picture of the event that is the most important.*" Thus, the expectation of witnessing a good game is there, but the number one expectation is that there is a loud audience, people are having fun and there is a great atmosphere.

The factor of seating in the stadium towards motivation depends clearly on the sport individuals are going to go watch. If you have played the sport you are going to go watch it appears to have a factor to whether the individual will attend or not. "*Maybe in football it does not matter where I sit, because I do not care about football that much at the end of the day. - In ice hockey I would rather stay home and watch the game than go to a seat in the upper deck of the bleachers, where you can't even see the puck.*" Says Jukka, who used to play ice hockey himself. Roope, who used to play football as a kid, said the opposite "*I would say that it depends on the sport. In ice hockey it does not matter as much, I can still see where the players are skating, but if I think about football I would rather be sitting in the middle of the stadium where I can see both ends of the pitch.*" However, when the games' uncertainty of outcome is smaller, the bigger influence the seat at the stadium has. For example, if two of the best teams in whatever league are facing, the seat does not matter. The only important part is just to witness the game. When you flip the teams to two of the worst in a league, then seating does have an affect on motivation to attend. Pekka described it as; "*If the event I am going to is a little bit low-quality (*in terms of the game*), then it is way nicer to have a better seat.*"

In sports there are athletes that are way more skilled than their competitors and people often want to see the best of the best. Thus, they often get more people to attend an event live in the stadium. However, this seems not to be the case in Finland, "*In Finland it does not really matter, but if I would fly to London to watch games then it does*" says Roope, when asked if a certain player affects his decision making to attend a specific game. Because Finnish leagues do not possess the best players in the world in any sport, the importance of seeing a specific player diminishes. Only if the player in question is a friend or otherwise a familiar person, then the motivation to attend is affected positively. Kai also puts it as, "*In Finland there are not as big of a star players that it would affect my decision making.*"

The decision making of the participants depends heavily on the sport they are going to go watch. If they have played the sport themselves before, oftentimes they decide to use more money on

better seats inside the arena. This can be explained by the fact that the prior knowledge of the game can lead to interest in analyzing the game itself when witnessing it. On the other end of the spectrum, attendance in a not so familiar sport is more based on the search for great atmosphere and unity among spectators. Student's also pick a team to root for in a game, "*If there are two teams playing you'll always cheer for one of them, even though you are not a fan of that particular team*", says Pekka. This brings the feeling of unity that is expected and hoped from the sports event.

Theme 5 : Sports Fan Satisfaction

The last and fifth theme from the qualitative data is Sports Fan Satisfaction. This includes the opinions on the costs of attending a sports event, things that participants would change in the events and recommendations for sports clubs to increase attendance in the future.

The opinions about the cost of attending a sports event were very similar among the participants. The biggest thing was the fact that the participants know beforehand that the price of the evening will be greater and they are prepared for it and accept it. Jukka says that "*I would not say that the price affects my decision to not go, after all you are aware that in an evening like that there are more costs than in a normal night.*" Mikko also had a similar opinion: "*I always recognize beforehand that the game and everything around it will be more costly and I prepare for it mentally.*" However, this is not always the case as students still want to get enough value for their money. "*It depends on the game you are going to watch, but I would say that it needs to be inline with the level of play - I think the prices need to be at the same level of quality.*" To sum up, the costs of going to a stadium becomes an internal constraint, when the individual does not think that they can get enough value for their money from the game itself.

Interviewees had different ideas when asked what they would recommend for sports clubs to do in order to increase attendance within the stadium. However, the two topics that came up most frequently were; to think about everyone that is attending the event, and increasing the importance of a single game. For example, Roope says that "*I have never understood why there are so many games, for example in hockey. So, I think lowering the number of games I think could increase the attendance and interest at least for a regular fan.*" Jukka had a similar opinion, but also added that, "*games could be moved more towards the weekend.*"

Participants also thought about the future generation of sports fans. They thought that in the event there needs to be something for everyone, if for someone the game itself is not the priority there could be some alternative products or services to keep their interest. Kai recommended that, "*Set up some activities for example for kids and then have different kinds of theme days. - Try to lure everyone towards the sport, especially kids, because I know they will be the ones that buy the season tickets in the future.*" Pekka had also similar opinion and gave an example of having a tailgating theme day; "*Even though game would start at four, people would come at one to the parking lot of the stadium to grill and have a good time and then attend the game together.*" In addition to recommending theme days and making games more important, the participants thought that the marketing of games in Finland is lacking a bit. Whether it is in social media where there can be a lack of clips and highlights of the games to seeing the local sport club in the street scene generally. "*Marketing these games more and like the feeling surrounding the game. - Put an emphasis on creating the atmosphere.*", said Mikko.

Future recommendations from the participants were clearly about pulling in the people that perhaps are not as interested in the sport itself by creating some sort of side products from theme days to making different styles of food stands available within the area. The overall fan engagement could be increased with those decisions along with expanding the marketing of the games. Important factor was also to think about kids, and the future target market of the sports clubs, in addition to making the games more meaningful.

3.2. Discussion

This research is aimed to figure out the motivations to attend live sporting events of a Finnish male university student. It aimed to identify the internal and external motivators, in addition to internal and external constraints towards the attendance. It also aimed to give future suggestions to sports clubs in order to increase the attendance in Finland.

The first theme gives answers on where the interest towards sports first even stems from. It is clear that it comes from your youth, family and friends. So it can be a generational factor, going

from parents to kids etc. The second theme shows that the events are very much a social past-time, and having a friend playing a sport makes it more appealing towards a person automatically. However, if the game is interesting enough personally, the social factor diminishes. The third theme, environmental factors, gives insight on the effect of accessibility of a stadium, and the importance of restaurants and bars within a stadium. Student's clearly go eat somewhere before going to attend the event, so the importance of restaurants is not significant, although when the restaurants are especially good, they do play a role. The accessibility of arenas is viewed at being in a good level. Public transportation is the main vehicle for the students. However, the author has to take in consideration that the interviewees all live in Helsinki metropolitan area where the public transportation is greater than in other Finnish cities, in addition to Helsinki having a lot more sports clubs in the city in different sports, than other cities.

 The fourth theme goes through the decision making of the interviewees. It is very clear that the biggest thing that interviewees expect from a game is the atmosphere within the arena. The atmosphere could be created with a stunning pre-game show, or just with the passion of the fans in the stadium. Seating was also found to be a motivating factor, especially when the game is not perceived as high-quality by the attendee. The last and fifth theme investigated the satisfaction of the students from the viewpoint of costs, in addition to giving future recommendations for sports clubs. The costs of attending a game is not a constraint to the students to an extent. They expect to get entertainment for their money's worth, however at the same time they mentally prepare that the evening of consuming sports live will have a big impact on their wallet. In addition, the participants recommended to increase the marketing for sports clubs, whether it is by creating different theme days or adding more advertising to the city's street scene and news cycles of the people. This kind of marketing will lead to bigger audiences and thus, greater atmosphere within the venue. By creating a better atmosphere in sports, you create a better product.

CONCLUSION

This research aimed to identify the motivators and constraints for a Finnish male university student when they are attending a live sports event. Male students were selected as the sample because they are more typically to attend sports events (Thrane, 2001) and the availability of the respondents for the author. The attendance in sports has been declining for a long time (Wyld, n.d.) everywhere in the world but in Finland as well. Thus, in addition to finding the motivators of students, this research aimed to figure out possible changes that sports clubs should make or factors that they should focus on more. The biggest spectator sport in Finland is ice hockey, and the attendance of the biggest league has dropped by 14% in a decade. Due to this trend, there needs to be an understanding of the attitudes of twenty something year olds towards sports. This is because they will be the next generation that have the money to be spent and professional sport clubs have to figure out a way to get that target market to them. If sports clubs can get younger consumers to be long-time fans, then they have a larger possibility to have a long-term success, especially financially. Keeping in mind that the fandom often goes from generation to generation. The interviews held answered the main research question; What are the motivators and demotivators of Finnish university students' towards attendance in live sporting events.

From the qualitative data gathered from the interviews, the live events are highly seen as a social gathering and a past-time still. Due to this, the external constraint can be the fact that you can not get anyone to go with you to the stadium. The fact that the broadcasting of sports games have been developing rapidly is also another constraint to attend, if the game is not personally appealing. Then, the participants would rather stay home to watch the game. Seating in the stadium is also a motivator or a constraint depending on the personal appeal for the attendee. The restaurants and bars inside the sports stadium are seen as an added value. It does not have a negative effect on attendance, they will only have a positive influence or no influence at all. When comparing the results from this research to the others discussed in the theoretical framework chapter, we can see that the product differentiation that was found to have an effect in other countries does not have as large of an effect in Finland. This is due to the lack of star-power in the domestic leagues. However, the authenticity and aesthetics that had been found to

be motivating factors in previous research, also holds true in Finland based on the participants' answers in the interviews. Previous research found group affiliation to be one motivating factor. This remains accurate in this thesis because the attendance was found to be a social event.

Recommendations for the sports clubs that emerged from the research is that they should focus on a larger demographic of people. Not only the most passionate fans, but also for the people that only come there to have a good time with their friends and family. This can be done by creating more theme days around the game, focusing on youth and the future season-ticket holders and making sure that the clips and highlights from games can be seen in the news cycle of more people. Also, due to the fact that participants' main thought about the most important part of a game is the atmosphere, more emphasis should be placed in pre-game shows, music volume and other factors that could have a positive impact towards atmosphere. In other words, focus on fan engagement initiatives. These aforementioned factors will have a positive impact on the number of people in attendance.

Regarding possible future research about the topic, there should be more focus on motivators and demotivators of different demographical backgrounds, as well as conducting focus group interviews to get opinions and perhaps more deep discussion. This way you could have a possibility to get concrete ideas on how to attract people from different demographical backgrounds to the stadiums. Another recommendation for future research would be to figure out if making the broadcasting of games available to more households by not placing it behind a pay wall increase or decrease the attendance within the venues.

Limitations in this research did come up during the task. The data sample could have been a bit larger, even though there were similar answers emerging from the participants. Although the results do represent the exact sample, it is hard to generalize the results to the whole Finland, however in the greater Helsinki area the results can be generalized.

In general, this thesis' findings give valuable insight for sports clubs or businesses within the sport realm on how to increase the attendance in their events and how to motivate the next generation that has wealth to attend a game.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1. Interview Guide

1. Demographic questions
2. Do you identify yourself as a sports fan or rather no? If yes, to what extent and where do you think it comes from?
3. Have you played a lot of sports yourself or not that much? What, how long?
4. Is sports a big thing within your family and friends or rather not? (if yes how can it be seen in your everyday life?)
5. Do you personally know any professional athletes? Does that make you follow the sport more or rather not?
6. What is your favorite sports team and/or athlete, and why (where does it stem from)?
7. How often do you attend a sports game, and with whom usually? (Why with them?)
8. Do you often decide to use your free-time to watch sports or do you rather do something else? How do you consume it (TV, streaming or attendance etc.) and why?
9. If you rather watch sports from TV or streams can you explain why that is?
10. If you are not watching sports in your free-time, what do you do?
11. When you do have attended a game can you describe your whole day leading up to it? (The journey to the game and back to home) Have you experienced difficulties to and from the stadium or rather not? (what? (parking))
12. What is the most important and fun part of attending a game live, can you explain why?
13. What might be the reasons you will not attend a game live, why?
14. How much of an emphasis do you place on the teams playing when thinking about attending a game, can you explain why that might be the case?
15. How much of an emphasis there is if a certain player is playing, why?
16. Is there more of a possibility for you to attend if the other team is most likely a way better team? Or do you prefer to attend when the uncertainty of the outcome is bigger, why do you think that is?

17. What do you think: How much does it motivate you to attend a game if you know that in the stadium there are good restaurants and bars, or do you think it is insignificant?

18. What do you think: Does your seat at the stadium affect your decision making process, or rather not? Why do you think that is?

19. Can you describe a perfect game day experience for you? (Why?)

20. If you think about the last time you attended a sports event what would you change in the experience and why?

21. When you attend a sports event, what do you expect from the experience? Why?

22. Does the time of the game affect your chance of attending a game or rather not? Can you explain why/why not?

23. Do you think it is rather easy to attend any games in Finland, or rather not? why/why not? (ease of buying tickets, ease of getting to a stadium)

24. What do you think: Does the style of play of the teams affect your motivation to attend a game, or rather not? why?

25. Can you explain the emotions you expect to feel when leaving a sports match?

26. When thinking about sports clubs, what would be your recommendations in order to boost their attendance? Can you explain?

27. How do you feel about the costs of attending a game?

Appendix 2. Transcription of in-depth interviews

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1MfGcpMcsSoROkPuOlXaqBvVMwsEcjsS1eyAlY5dXH
KM/edit

Appendix 3. Thematic analysis table

Themes	Category	Codes
Personal Factors	Personal experiences, Self-identification	Youth, Friends, Sport
Social Factors	Influence of family and friends	Everyone in the family, Interest in the same sport, Familiar with professional athletes
Environmental Factors	Availability and accessibility of sports games, Bars and restaurants	Public transportation, Eat before going to the stadium, queues, traffic jam
Consumer Decision Making	Factors influencing to attend or not, Expectations of the experience	Pre-game shows, Atmosphere, Unity, Quality of the teams/game, Weather
Sports Fan Satisfaction	Costs of attending, Future recommendations	Pumped prices, The game itself, Atmosphere, Theme days, Value

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