Cognitive–affective model of consumer satisfaction. An exploratory study within the framework of a sporting event

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Abstract

The aim of this research is to better understand the consumer satisfaction process within the framework of a sporting event. The literature reveals two different ways of introducing affect into the cognitive satisfaction model: as a mediator or as an independent factor. Empirical analysis of these rival models supports the second conceptualization. The study of the relationships among the constructs of the final hypothesized model shows that the key affective factor that determines satisfaction is “arousal”, as opposed to “pleasure”, which has a non-significant effect. The cognitive element is also important for determining satisfaction and future behavior intentions, and all of the antecedents are independent in the satisfaction process.

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1. Introduction

Knowledge of customer perception about the performance of a service company is a fundamental question in marketing orientation and customer-focused management. Customer satisfaction is one of the determinants of company performance that is attracting the most attention in services marketing literature on private and public organizations. The growth of leisure culture has increased sports consumption and competitiveness within the sports industry. This has forced organizations to focus on ways to outdo their competitors in satisfying consumer needs.

Studies have proliferated in the sport management literature about consumer satisfaction (e.g. Triadó et al., 1999; Murray and Howat, 2002; Greenwell et al., 2002; Van Leeuwen et al., 2002). Nevertheless, all research has focused on services such as private sports centers, public sports services or attendance at sporting events. None of them has studied specific periodic events with short operating times and repeat participation in future editions.

This research has focused on the measure of consumer satisfaction in this type of an event: a popular long-distance race organized every year by the City Council of Cartagena (Spain). The runners are in this case the consumers of the service, and municipal managers are in charge of efforts to satisfy them.

In accordance with the latest dominant perspective on the conceptualization of the satisfaction process (Mano and Oliver, 1993), cognitive and affective elements are antecedents of satisfaction, and consumer loyalty is a consequence. According to this approach this research has the following aims: (1) to select the cognitive–affective model from among the competing models available in the literature; and (2) to study the relationships among the constructs that make up the satisfaction model.

2. Cognitive–affective model of consumer satisfaction

Consumer satisfaction has attracted much attention in the literature because of its potential influence on consumer behavioral intentions and customer retention (Cronin et al., 2000). The literature on consumer satisfaction has focused primarily on people as cognitive beings, whereby the outcome of a comparison process between expectations and perceived performance leads to satisfaction (Wirtz and Bateson, 1999). Recently, however, several researchers proposed that cognition and affective responses to a product stimulus mold consumers’ evaluative