

INFLUENCE OF TICKET PRICING ON SPECTATORS' ATTENDANCE AT PROFESSIONAL FOOTBALL LEAGUE MATCHES IN NORTHERN NIGERIA.

BY

MUSA NJIDDA (PhD)

**DEPARTMENT OF PHYSICAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION BAYERO UNIVERSITY,
KANO, NIGERIA**

Email. mnjidda.phe@buk.edu.ng, musa.njidda@gmail.com

**DEPARTMENT OF PHYSICAL & HEALTH EDUCATION, BAYERO UNIVERSITY
KANO, NIGERIA**

PROFESSOR O. O. OBIYEMI

**DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN KINETICS EDUCATION,
UNIVERSITY OF ILORIN, ILORIN, NIGERIA**

&

PROFESSOR M. B. GAMBARI

**DEPARTMENT OF PHYSICAL & HEALTH EDUCATION, BAYERO UNIVERSITY
KANO, NIGERIA**

Abstract

The study investigated the influence of ticket pricing on spectators' attendance among professional football clubs in Northern Nigeria. Descriptive survey design was used in this study. All the spectators at the professional football league matches in Northern Nigeria formed the population of the study. A simple random sampling technique was used to select 337 spectators attending matches at the Gombe united, Zamfara, Plateau and Niger Tornadoes stadia. Researchers' developed questionnaire was used as an instrument for data collection. The questionnaire was validated and subjected to reliability testing using split half method and a coefficient of 0.81 was obtained. 384 copies of the questionnaire were administered by 3 research assistants and 337 were duly completed, returned and used for analysis. The data collected were analyzed using one sample t-test and ANOVA at the 0.05 level of significance. The finding of this revealed that sport pricing has a significant influence on spectators' attendance at professional football club matches in Northern Nigeria ($t=18.94$, $df\ 336$, $p < 0.05$). It also revealed that the influence of pricing differs based on the respondents' state/club stadium ($f=2.69$, $df\ (3,333)$, < 0.05). It is therefore suggested that the organizers of professional football league matches should continually review the price placed on the matches so that more football lovers may be able to afford it

Introduction

Ticket price is the amount of money charged for the service rendered to a spectator. More broadly, price is the sum of all the values that the customer gives out in order to gain the benefits of having a service in sports arena (stadium). Pricing is the only element in the marketing mix that produces revenue; all other elements represent costs (Shipley & Jotter, 2001; Kotler & Armstrong, 2008). Price is also one of the most flexible marketing mix elements, unlike product features and channel commitments. It is also concerned with communicating to the market the clubs' intended value positioning of its service or brand. It is also considered as an exchange for the service offered. It is the most quantifiable way of measuring the value spectator place on an offering. Price is the measurable value a spectator attaches to a product/service; spectators do not pay for a service, but for the solution the service would offer (Adiat. 2007).

Traditionally, price has operated as the major determinant of spectator choice. Although non-price factors have become more important in recent times, price remains one of the most important elements in determining market share and profit (Kotler & Keller, 2006). Some sport managers view ticket pricing as a big headache and prefer to focus on the other marketing mix elements. However, smart managers treat pricing as a key strategic tool for creating and capturing spectators/customers value (Hunt, 2005). A given marketer recognizes that spectators often actively process price information and interpret prices in terms of their knowledge from the prior purchasing experience through both formal and informal communication at the point of purchase. Therefore, spectators arrived at their perception of ticket prices based on three factors (reference price, price quality and price cues). In reference price, spectator often compared to an internal reference price or an external frame of reference (Jamszewski, Donald & Lichtenstein, 1999). While price quality references enable the spectators to use ticket price as an indicator of quality (Welsh, 2003), price cues enable the spectator to prefer prices that end up with 0 and 5 which are common in the market-place, as they are thought to be easier to process and retrieve from memory (Schindler & Kirby, 1997). Spectators' perceptions somehow link price with value. Sports marketers must recognize this and attempt to explain the connection. Product values may include such elements like convenience, aesthetics, cleanliness, comfort, security, entertainment and costs (Chamberlain, 1997).

There are several things to consider in setting a ticket price. In most cases, a common set of factors comes into play. These factors include the market condition, club objective and the spectators in question (Nayle & Hogan, 2006; Wagner, 1996). Specifically, sports marketers consider factors such as new arena, give away days, superstar factor, record breaking performance and violence (Fallali et al, 2011), quality of service (Yusuf & Lee, 2008). Others include Schedule of matches, media development, new technologies, length of time, ticket selling strategy, car parking and matches that can be televised (Jumaah, 2014) entertainment options, reputation of the club (Alshalash, 2013), stadium environment (Binjwaid, Rechard & O'Keeffe, 2015). In making pricing decision, the club

must consider the cost and availability of substitute products. The sport manager must try to determine how much this sport really competes with other forms of entertainment, as well as how people view it in comparison to the other forms.

Price is a critical element and the most flexible in marketing mix. Mullin, et al (2000) pointed out a number of reasons; price most readily charged, consideration of market condition, price is highly visible where changes are easily communicated, resulting in possible changes in consumers' perception and price is never far from the consumer's mind. Therefore, it is regarded as one of the most effective tools a marketer could use to influence consumers.

Premier football league matches is the highest league in Nigeria. Sport managers and other stakeholders' assumed that sport consumers will patronize the league matches by going to the stadium and watch live matches irrespective of time, day of the week and the amount charged for a match. It could be noted that the issue of fluctuation in attendance becomes a major concern for professional football clubs because spectators play a significant role in the league, as they obtain tickets for the matches as one of the major sources of income to the clubs. Unfortunately, however, researchers observed that attendance at the professional league matches in Northern Nigeria appear to be very low because sports consumers also consider certain issues before attending live matches in the stadium. For instance, the average attendance in Gombe was 1582, Plateau (Jos) , 782, Zamfara (Gusau) 709, Niger (Minna)3500 These include, among others, time, strength of the visiting team and the amount spent to watch the match, including transportation, which many sport consumers opt for. This is because the presence of other entertainment alternatives like watching English premier league, LALIGA, Champions league at any near by viewing center that others described as more entertaining and satisfying. It must be remembered that those who watch live football matches in Nigeria are lower- and middle-class people. As such when prices are unreasonably too high for them to afford, attendance to matches will be definitely affected. The low attendance being recorded recently at professional football league matches may be linked to this reality. The study therefore investigated the influence of ticket pricing on spectator's attendance at professional football league matches in northern Nigeria.

Methodology

The population of the study comprised all the spectators attending professional football league matches in northern Nigeria. A stratified simple random sampling technique was used to select 337 spectators from Gombe United, Zamfara United, Plateau United and Niger Tonadoes stadia where these matches are being played. Researchers developed questionnaire was used as an instrument for data collection. The questionnaire contained two sections. Section 1 contained demographic information of the respondents, such as status and state of living while Section 2 contained statements on the variable of the study. The questionnaire was structured on a modified Likert scale, which allowed for the following scoring system Strongly Agree 4 points, Agree 3 points, Disagree 2 points and Strongly Disagree I point. The instrument was validated and a reliability coefficient of 0.81 was obtained.

Permission of the stadium managers were sought, the researcher with the help of nine research assistants in the stadia administered 384 copies of the questionnaire to the respondents before the commencement of the game and 377 (Gombe, 81; Plateau, 38; Zamfara, 35 & Niger 183) were duly completed, returned and used for analysis. Mean score was used to answer the research question; one sample t-test and ANOVA were used for statistical analysis at the 0.05 level of significance.

Result

Table 1: Respondents' opinion on the ticket pricing as a factor to spectators' attendance at Nigerian Professional football league matches in Northern States of Nigeria.

	SA	A	DA	SD	Mean
1 Consideration of income of consumers in deciding Gate fees for football matches influence spectators Attendance	161 (46.9%)	137 (39.9%)	24 (7.0%)	14 (4.1%)	3.32
2 Consideration of economic situation of the country In fixing gate charges would attract spectators to Attend Football league matches	116 (33.8%)	167 (48.7%)	37 (10.8%)	14 (4.1%)	3.15
3 Consideration of the standard of the football club in deciding gate fees spectators to attend Football matches	83 (24.2%)	170 (49.6%)	54 (15.7%)	23 (6.7%)	2.84
4 Fixing gate fees based on the top class players of the club motivate spectators to attend Football matches	79 (23%)	163 (47.5%)	67 (19.5%)	23 (6.7%)	2.83
5 Consideration of the popularity of the visiting team in deciding gate fees spectators to attend Football matches	94 (27.4%)	137 (40.1%)	72 (21%)	32 (9.2%)	3.08
6 Given consideration to families, corporations and youth clubs for group ticket plan enhances match attendance	89 (25.9%)	162 (47.2%)	51 (14.9%)	25 (7.3%)	3.06
Aggregate Mean					3.05

In Table 1 above, the pattern of responses relates to whether ticket pricing motivates spectators to attend professional football league matches or not. It was discovered that it has a positive influence as the mean score for each of the items used to test for pricing and spectators' attendance was more than the benchmark of 2.5, and the average mean score of 3.05 was also more than 2.5 which is positive in this study. This suggests that ticket pricing contributes to spectators' attendance at professional football league matches in Northern Nigeria.

Table 2: One sample t-test summary on the influence of ticket pricing on spectators' attendance at Nigerian professional football league matches.

Variable	N	Mean	Sd	df	t	Sig.
Pricing	337	3.05	.54	336	18.94	.001
Fixed mean		2.50				

= 18.94, df 336, $p < 0.05$

Table 2 above indicated a calculated mean of 3.01 as against the fixed mean of 2.50. The statistical computation revealed that $t = 18.94$, df 336, $p < 0.05$. Therefore, this means that ticket pricing has significant influence on spectators' attendance (at stadia) at professional football league matches involving Gombe United, Zamfara United, Plateau United and Niger Tornadoes stadia in Northern Nigeria. This implies that the amount charge for ticketing per spectator is affordable which encouraged large number of spectators to watch live professional league matches in the stadia

To test whether the opinion of the respondents differs on the influence of ticket pricing on spectators' attendance, ANOVA was used and the result could be seen below:

Table 3: ANOVA summary on the influence of ticket pricing on spectators' attendance at Nigerian professional football league matches based on club.

Variable	SS	MS	Df	f	Sig.
Between Groups	1.939	.646	3	2.69	2.68
Within Groups	80.004	.240	333		
Total	81.943				

$F = 2.69$, df (3,333), < 0.05

Table 3 above shows that the influence of ticket pricing on spectators' attendance differ based on state/club as $F = 2.69$, df (3,333), $P = 0.02$. This implies that the influence of the ticket pricing depends on the strength of the visiting club.

To locate where the difference lies LSD post hoc test was carried out and the result shows that ticket pricing as one of the factors that encourage spectators' attendance at Nigerian professional football matches differ significantly between Gombe United and Niger Tornadoes. The LSD comparison shows that spectators in Gombe United differ only with Niger Tornadoes at the 0.05 level of significance. This explains that the variation in the patronage of professional football league matches is only between Gombe United and Niger Tornadoes based on the ticket prices.

Discussion

The findings of this study revealed that ticket pricing was perceived by the respondents to have a positive influence on spectators' attendance. This finding supports the previous study of Adiat (2007), who observed that ticket price is the most quantifiable element of measuring the value consumers/spectators place on offering. Price is the measurable value a spectator attaches to a product/service. Therefore, consumers do not pay for a product, but for the solution the product would offer. Mullin, et al. (2000) identified a number of reasons that should be considered in setting a ticket price. Firstly, the price must be readily charged; secondly, it must be highly visible, so that changes can easily be communicated, resulting in possible changes in spectators/consumer perception; lastly, the price is never far from the consumer's mind. The price of a sport product varies and is the function of the consumer's income, interest, need and taste that compete with other products. In order to avoid loss of patronage, in deciding the price of sport products, the purchasing

power of the individuals and the community should be looked into. The state of the economy, the priority of the product and the profit margin should be considered.

Similarly, Mullin, et al. (1993) observed that a correct price could help to give a product a high-perceived value which in turn can help in tickets selling. In making decisions, sports managers must try to determine how these clubs compete with others as well as how spectators view it in comparison with other forms of entertainment, because spectators' perception somehow linked price with value. Marketers must recognize this and attempt to explain the connection of price and product value. This may include such elements like convenience, aesthetics, cleanliness, comfort and security, among others (Chamberlioni, 1997). As pointed out by Odegbami (2012), football is about stars in the game. Stars are exceptional and sometimes extraordinary on the field of play. No league can strive well and be marketable without them. Tickets prices should be fixed base on certain factors like the strength of the visiting team and significance of the match in determining the position of a club on the league table.

However, White (1997) maintained that penetration strategy is normally applied when the goal is to get a large market share as quickly as possible, thereby setting the price low at the initial stage while increasing it gradually. A product choice is greatly influenced by economic circumstances, spendable income and attitude towards spending. Therefore, in a situation where economic indicators point to a recession, especially in Nigeria, marketers can step to redesign, reposition and re-price the product or introduce or increase emphasis on discount, so that they can continue to offer value to the target spectator/customer (Kotler & Keller, 2006). A thorough examination of the economic factors requires marketing managers to gauge and anticipate the general economic conditions of the nation, region, state and local area in which they operate. Equally, some important economic factors like consumers overall impressions of the economy and their ability and willingness to spend also have influence on marketing. Consumers' confidence can greatly affect what the organization can or cannot do in the market-place. In times of low confidence, some consumers may not be willing to pay higher prices for premium products, even if they have the ability to do so. In other cases, consumers may not have the ability to spend, regardless of the state of economy. (Society for Competitive Intelligence Professional, 2004). Family is also recognized as one of the most important conscious buying organisations in a society. If one among the family members has interest in sports and recreation, there is likelihood that he would educate other members on the need and significance of recreation either as an active or passive consumer (Palan & Wikes, 1997).

Based on the experiences of the present attendance at the ongoing professional football league matches, it is advisable that club management/organizers should set the price as low as possible, so that it will attract massive audience.

Conclusions

Based on the findings of this study, the following conclusions were drawn:

1. Ticket pricing charge in Gombe, Zamfara, Plateau and Niger (stadia) encouraged spectators to attend professional football league matches
2. The application of ticket pricing as a marketing strategy on spectators' attendance at Nigeria professional football league matches differ based on state/club of the respondents.

Recommendations

In line with the findings of the study, it is recommended that in view of the current economic realities in the world and Nigeria inclusive, that the organizers of professional football league matches should review the price placed on the matches so that more football lovers may be able to afford it. The price should also be based on the strength of the visiting team, so that the amount charged should justify the value of the match played.

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