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## **FOOTBALL CLUB BUSINESS MANAGEMENT AND SATISFACTION OF SPECTATORS. A COMPLEXITY APPROACH.**

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# **FOOTBALL CLUB BUSINESS MANAGEMENT AND SATISFACTION OF SPECTATORS. A COMPLEXITY APPROACH.**

## **Abstract**

COVID-19 pandemic has pushed us to face a complex and turbulent environment where businesses' survival requires drastic adaptation and change (Huang and Jahromi, 2021). On these grounds, long-term strategic planning based on past behavior may not bring much benefit and, therefore, innovative practices should be emphasized to maintain a competitive advantage (Duchek, 2020). Therefore, it is not strange that, in recent years, studies on innovation and resilience, often focus on value-creating innovative and creative strategies and practices. Mainly, these studies have centered their attention on specific sectors or regions, but we have not been able to identify studies focused on the ludic activities industry, more precisely, on the attendance to football matches. Due to the fact theoretical and applied aspects of innovation and resilience need to be approached from a multidisciplinary point of view, to enable a better understanding of the internal and external dynamics that affect the evolution, planning, and delivery of events at times of uncertainty, we believe our study makes a contribution in this field.

The pathway to success in this current environment lies on the overall innovative stance adopted by event stakeholders and the resilience demonstrated by clubs' fans alike to externalities that bear opportunities for fundamentally rethinking clubs' practices of planning and delivering events. In this paper, we examine the complexity of sport spectators' perceived satisfaction in a very complex and turbulent environment considering different factors, i.e., stadium and ticket service quality, the image of the football club, fear, delight, and also gender, age, and involvement with one the most famous football clubs in the world: the Barcelona Football Club.

Attained satisfaction is first discussed using the classical approach of the linear regression analysis and then compared to the fuzzy-set qualitative comparative analysis (fsQCA) (Abbate, Cesaroni, Cinici, and Villari, 2019) to highlight the complex relations between different facets of satisfaction perception, finding that this innovative methodology is better suited for uncertainty contexts.

Considering the increase of interest in controlling business systems' chaos, we discuss managerial implications to help football club managers make suitable decisions to improve customer satisfaction. We have identified three pathways that can lead to

satisfaction: (i) prestige focused, (ii) experience generated, and (iii) uncertainty oriented. These can assist clubs' managers to better understand complexity and thus to make better informed decisions that increase the perceived experience of spectators, and ultimately their satisfaction. The provision of three different pathways generates three different determinant alternatives. Football club managers can select and employ any of these, or even to combine them to increase satisfaction levels in a wider extent of spectator segments.

From a theoretical perspective, the paper provides a better understanding concerning the complex relations affecting spectator satisfaction in sport events. Methodologically, this paper uses fsQCA, a rather new method in sports management research. fsQCA can highlight the importance of complexity aspects due to its ability to provide multiple sufficient configurations, expressing different market segments and ultimately differential business interests and desirable enterprising strategies may provide insights and inform the decision-making of football club managers. Therefore, this research makes a methodological contribution, demonstrating the suitability on non-parametric analysis when compared with the dominant correlational one (regression) in sports events. This is very important facing complex and turbulent environment because the instability of the sports business environment is substantially rising due to the rapidly changing internal (competition; new trends etc.) and external (COVID-19; economic instability etc.) conditions.

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