Do football fans care about destinations? The football fans' travel motivation to sports events and their post-travel behaviours

Mert Öğretmenoğlu, Kartal Doğukan Çıkı, Orhan Akova and Rob Law

Abstract

Purpose – *This study aims to explore the relationships amongst football fans' travel motivations (FFTMs), their satisfaction (SAT), their perceived destination image (PDI) and their behavioural intentions (BIs). On the other hand, the mediating effects of SAT on the relationships among FFTMs, PDI and BIs are analyzed.*

Design/methodology/approach – *An approach based on a quantitative research method was used, and the data were gathered from Italian and British tourists who visited Istanbul, aiming to attend the Champions League Final match of Manchester City versus Inter Milan.*

Findings – *Based on 277 applicable surveys, Smart-PLS was conducted to test the conceptual model. The results indicated positive and meaningful relationships amongst FFTMs, SAT, PDI and Bis. Moreover, the results also demonstrated that the effect of FFTMs and PDI on BIs is mediated by SAT.*

Originality/value – *This research makes a contribution to the football tourism literature by first examining the theory of planned behaviour in conjunction with FFTMs, SAT, PDI and BIs. Furthermore, the findings of this study could offer valuable insights to assist tourism marketers in gaining a deeper understanding of FFTMs, BIs, SAT and PDI.*

Keywords *Football tourism, Mega sports events, Mega event tourism, Behavioural intentions Theory of planned behaviour*

Paper type *Research paper*

足球迷是否关心旅游目的地？足球迷的旅游动机和旅游后行为

摘要

研究目的: 本研究探讨了足球迷的旅行动机、满意度 *(SAT)*、感知目的地形象 *(PDI)* 和旅游后行为*(BI)* 之间的关系。另一方面, 分析了 *SAT* 对 *FFTMs*、*PDI* 和 *BIs* 之间关系的中介效应。

研究设计/方法: 采用定量研究方法, 数据收集对象为前往伊斯坦布尔观看曼城对阵国际米兰的欧洲冠军联赛决赛的意大利和英国游客。

研究结果: 基于 *277* 份调查问卷, 采用*Smart-PLS*对概念模型进行了检验。结果表明, 足球迷的旅行动机、满意度、目的地形象感知及旅游后行为之间存在积极且有意义的关系。此外, 结果还表明, *FFTMs* 和 *PDI* 对 *BIs* 的影响是由 *SAT* 介导的。

原创性/价值: 这项研究首先将计划行为理论与 *FFTMs*、*SAT*、*PDI* 和 *BIs* 结合起来进行检验, 为足球旅游文献做出了贡献。

关键词 足球旅游, 大型体育赛事, 大型赛事旅游, 行为意向, 计划行为理论

文章类型 研究型论文

¿Se preocupan los aficionados al fútbol por los destinos? La motivación de los aficionados al fútbol Para viajar a acontecimientos deportivos y sus comportamientos posteriores al viaje

Resumen

Objetivo: *Este estudio explora las relaciones entre las motivaciones de viaje de los aficionados al fútbol (FFTM), su satisfacción (SAT), su imagen percibida del destino (PDI) y sus intenciones de comportamiento (BI). Por otra parte, se analizan los efectos mediadores de la SAT en las relaciones entre las FFTM, la PDI y las BI.*

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Diseño/metodología/enfoque:: *Se adoptó un enfoque de investigación cuantitativa y se recopilaron datos de turistas italianos y británicos que visitaron Estambul con el objetivo de asistir al partido de la final de la Liga de Campeones entre el Manchester City y el Inter de Milán.*

Resultados: *Sobre la base de 277 encuestas aplicables, se llevó a cabo un PLS-Smart para probar el modelo conceptual. Los resultados indicaron relaciones positivas y significativas entre los FFTM, el SAT, el PDI y los BI. Además, los resultados también demostraron que el efecto de los FFTM y el PDI sobre las BI está mediado por el SAT.*

Originalidad/valor: *Esta investigación contribuye a la literatura sobre el turismo futbolístico al examinar por primera vez la Teoría del Comportamiento Planificado en conjunción con los FFTM, el SAT, el PDI y las BI. Además, los resultados de este estudio podrían ofrecer ideas valiosas para ayudar a los profesionales del marketing turístico a comprender mejor los FFTM, los BI, el SAT y el PDI.*

Palabras clave *Turismo de fútbol, Megaeventos deportivos, Turismo de megaeventos, Intenciones de comportamiento, Teoría del comportamiento planificado*

Tipo de papel *Trabajo de investigación*

1. Introduction

Some studies investigated the motivation of football fans to travel to sports events (Cho *et al.*, 2019) and others touristic trips of football fans (McManus, 2020). However, the relationship among football fans' travel motivations (FFTMs), their satisfaction (SAT), their perceived destination image (PDI) and post-trip behaviours, such as behavioural intentions (Bis), has often been overlooked (Helal *et al.*, 2023). A more comprehensive study, therefore, is needed to examine FFTMs, PDI, SAT and BIs. This research, thus, attempts to bridge this gap by illustrating the relationships among FFTMs, their PDI and their BIs. Another aim of this attempt is to demonstrate how SAT mediates this relationship. The relationships investigated in this research are grounded in the theory of planned behaviour (TPB) (Ajzen, 1991). TPB is frequently favoured by scholars in the field of tourism to explain tourists' post-travel behaviours (Liu *et al.*, 2021). As outlined in TPB, human intentions or repeat intentions are the drivers of individual behaviour (Abbasi *et al.*, 2021). This research contributes to the existing literature by bringing forward some important theoretical insights for future research directions. Comprehending the relationship among FFTMs, SAT and PDI as distinct constructs and their influence on BIs can enhance our insight into the decision-making process of football tourists. Therefore, the findings provide strategies that can guide a lucrative tourism industry.

2. Literature review and hypothesis development

BIs are frequently studied in tourism research (Liu *et al.*, 2021). For example, in their study, Helal *et al.* (2023) examined the effect of social media content on football fans' BIs. However, there is a scarcity of empirical studies delving into the motivations of football fans (Jensen and Limbu, 2016). In previous studies, the effects of motivation (Karagöz *et al.*, 2023) and SAT (Syakier and Hanafiah, 2022) on BIs were examined for different types of tourists, and it was shown that these variables had an effect on BIs. Hence, based on previous research results and TPB, this study proposed the following hypotheses:

H1. FFTMs influence their RI.

H2. FFTMs influence their WoM.

H3. FFTMs influence their SAT.

In the tourism domain, quantitative studies noted that PDI has a considerable influence on tourists' BIs (RI and WoM) and SAT (Cifci *et al.*, 2022). Drawing from the results of prior research, it is plausible that the favourable destination image perceived by football fans could likewise influence their BIs. Drawing upon prior research findings and the TPB, this study formulated the subsequent hypotheses:

H4. PDI affects football fans' SAT.

H5. PDI affects football fans' RI.

H6. PDI affects fans' WoM.

The tourism literature examining the link among SAT, WoM and RI proposed that satisfied visitors are very much the most likely to recommend others and revisit (Syakier and Hanafiah, 2022). Moreover, SAT has been considered a mediating variable in many studies (Rodrigues *et al.*, 2022). Obtaining support from the above-discussed literature and TPB, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H7. Football fans' SAT influences their RI.

H8. Football fans' SAT influences their WoM.

H9. The impact of FFTMs on RI and WoM is mediated by SAT.

H10. The impact of PDI on RI and WoM is mediated by SAT.

3. Methodology

The questionnaire consisted of two separate sections (demographic questions and multi-item scales) to measure the proposed conceptual model (see Appendix for details). The following items were adopted as appropriate for the current research: seven-item FFTMs (Florek *et al.*, 2008), two-item PDI (Jeong and Kim, 2020), two-item tourists' overall SAT (Jalilvand *et al.*, 2014) and four-item BIs (Jeong *et al.*, 2019). Data were collected data from Italian and British tourists who visited Istanbul to attend the Champions League Final match of Manchester City versus Inter Milan. A random questionnaire was applied to 277 football fans who volunteered to participate in the study. Appendix shows respondents' characteristics. In this study, partial least squares (PLS) was used for data analysis, using structural equation modelling.

4. Results

Appendix presents the reliability analysis results and demonstrates the validity of the structural model. The coefficients of Cronbach's alpha for the scales are above the threshold value of 0.70 (Hair *et al.*, 2017). The average variance extracted (AVE) values exceed the threshold of 0.5, indicating adequate convergent validity. All composite reliability (CR) values are above the threshold of 0.7, indicating satisfactory internal consistency (Hair *et al.*, 2017). A thorough collinearity evaluation was also executed to investigate the common method variance. In this instance, every factor score of VIF was below the criterion of 5.0. There was no CMV in this study model (Hair *et al.*, 2017). The findings (Appendix) show the research's proper discriminant validity based on the evaluation using the Fornell–Larcker criteria (Ali *et al.*, 2018). The items' loading of constructs should be higher than 0.7 to assess the indicator reliability. Appendix and Figure 1 shows that most item loadings of scales and factors were higher than 0.7. Thus, the indicator reliability for all items of constructs in this paper was acceptable (Hair *et al.*, 2017; Ali *et al.*, 2018).

For hypothesis evaluation, the authors used bootstrapping with 5,000 iterations. Appendix shows a small but positive relationship among the constructs. All hypotheses are supported. In the literature, a small effect size is less than 0.02, a medium effect size is 0.15 and a large effect size is 0.35 and above (Hair *et al.*, 2017). Appendix also presents the effect size of this study and presents the indirect effect results. Considering the previous statement, these values are acceptable (Ali *et al.*, 2018), and all hypotheses are confirmed.

5. Conclusion, limitations and recommendations for future studies

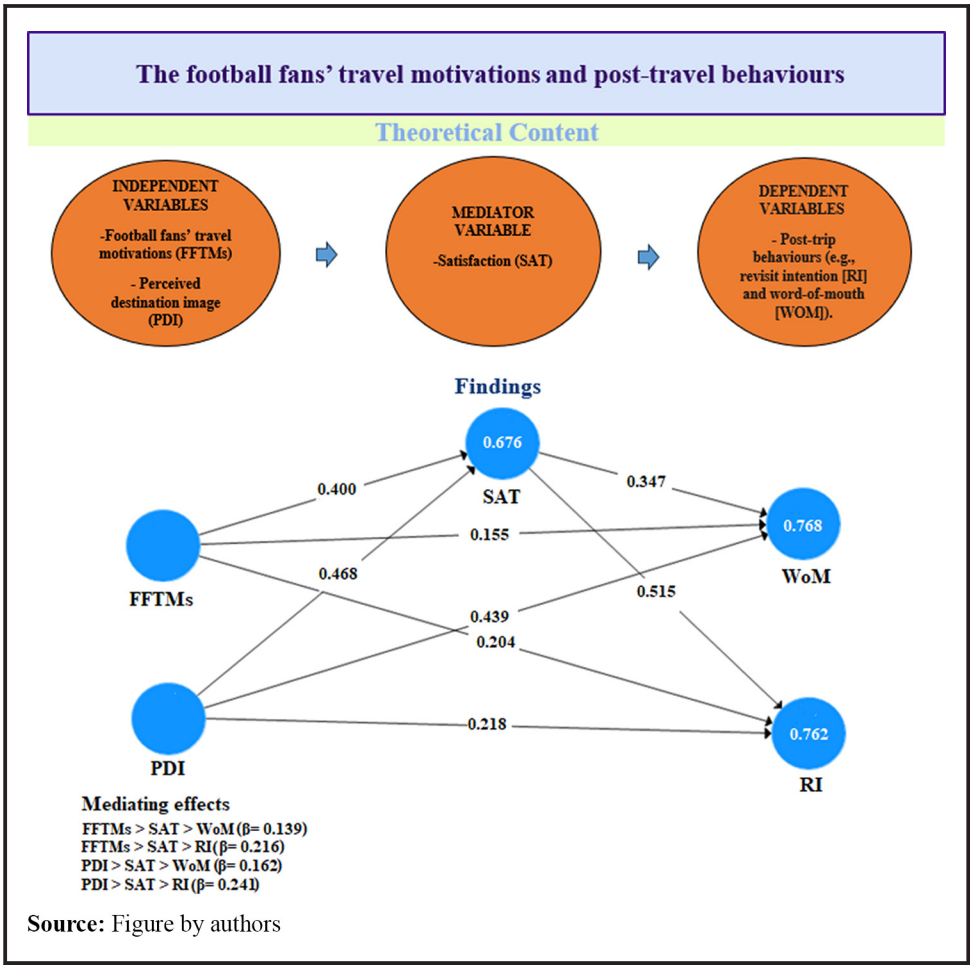
This research focused on the relationships amongst FFTMs, SAT, PDI and their post-travel behaviours using data collected from football fans visiting Istanbul. The analysis yielded several meaningful results, making a significant theoretical and practical contribution to the tourism literature.

In a theoretical sense, results of this research may contribute to the current body of knowledge on football tourism by providing a better comprehension of the role of FFTMs, SAT and PDI in shaping football fans' BIs. Previous studies have looked into how football fans' motivation to travel to sports events affects their post-trip behaviours. However, the mediating role of SAT in these relationships has been overlooked. By identifying and investigating these relationships, this research can advance new insights into the tourism literature.

In a practical sense, the outcomes of this study can offer valuable insights to tourism marketers seeking a deeper comprehension of the factors influencing the SAT and BIs of football tourists. By understanding FFTMs, their PDI and their post-travel behaviours, tourism marketers can provide a more sustainable and effective service. These insights may subsequently inform the development of novel marketing strategies tailored to this specific group. Thus, the findings of this study can be useful both practically and theoretically.

This study has some limitations. The research sample consisted mostly of men and specific nationalities such as Italian and British. Therefore, it is recommended that a similar study be conducted with the participation of more women and different nationalities participants. Additionally, this study provides evidence from a developing country. A similar study can be carried out in underdeveloped and developed countries. Although the mediating effect of SAT on the effect of FFTM and PDI on BIs was confirmed, the well-being of football tourists has been ignored. Future studies may add well-being to this model as a mediating variable.

Figure 1 Results of hypothesis test



Source: Figure by authors

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Appendix

Table A1 Tables of results

Respondent characteristics	*Counts* (N)	%
Gender		
Male	261	94.2
Female	16	5.8
Marital status		
Single	131	47.3
Married	146	52.7
Nationality		
Italian	145	52.3
British	132	47.7
Age		
18–25	89	32.1
26–35	103	37.2
36–45	51	18.4
46 and above	34	12.3
Education		
Below high school	68	24.5
High school	29	10.5
Bachelor	153	55.2
Master or PhD	27	9.7
Annual income		
1,600 units and below	27	9.7
1,601–3,500	111	40.1
3,501–5,000	88	31.8
5,001 and over	51	18.4

Construct reliability and validity

Scale	Cronbach's α	rho_A	CR	AVE
FFTMs	0.928	0.931	0.943	0.704
PDI	0.862	0.867	0.935	0.878
WoM	0.905	0.907	0.955	0.913
RI	0.840	0.842	0.926	0.862
SAT	0.826	0.830	0.916	0.852

Discriminant validity (Fornell–Larcker criterion)

	PDI	FFTMs	WoM	RI	SAT
PDI	*0.937*				
FFTMs	0.794	*0.839*			
WoM	0.835	0.772	*0.956*		
RI	0.784	0.774	0.860	*0.928*	
SAT	0.785	0.771	0.811	0.843	*0.923*

Results of direct effect

Relationships	f^2	Direct effect	*t*-values	*p*-values	Supported
PDI > WoM	0.245	0.602	6.584	0.000	Yes
PDI > RI	0.060	0.218	2.246	0.025	Yes
PDI > SAT	0.245	0.468	4.173	0.000	Yes
FFTMs > WoM	0.029	0.294	3.019	0.003	Yes
FFTMs > RI	0.050	0.204	2.192	0.028	Yes
FFTMs > SAT	0.193	0.400	3.520	0.000	Yes
SAT > RI	0.376	0.514	5.475	0.000	Yes
SAT > WoM	0.186	0.364	3.787	0.000	Yes

(*continued*)

Table A1

Results of the indirect effect

Relationships	Indirect effect	*t*-values	*p*-values	Supported
FFTMs > SAT > WoM	0.139	2.417	0.016	Yes
FFTMs > SAT > RI	0.216	2.951	0.003	Yes
PDI > SAT > WoM	0.162	2.799	0.005	Yes
PDI > SAT > RI	0.241	3.226	0.001	Yes

Scales' items, items' factor loadings (CFA), means and SDs

Constructs	Items	Factor loadings	Means	SDs
Football fans' travel motivations items	Experience the atmosphere of a mega sport event	0.890	4.00	1.18
	Prestigious event	0.853	4.14	1.15
	Experience new places	0.888	4.08	1.21
	Escape from routine life	0.842	4.12	1.09
	Socialise with other football fans	0.909	4.05	1.26
	Learn more about Türkiye	0.672	3.96	1.05
	Represent origin country as a fan	0.783	4.06	0.982
Perceived destination image	Istanbul is a safe city	0.931	3.94	1.08
	Istanbul is an interesting city	0.943	3.92	1.16
Satisfaction	The visit was exactly what I needed	0.876	4.11	1.17
	The visit was a good experience	0.959	4.05	1.12
Intention to recommend (WoM)	I will recommend Istanbul to other people	0.959	4.12	1.20
	I will encourage friends and relatives to visit Istanbul	0.952	4.02	1.09
Intention to revisit	If had to decide again I would choose Istanbul again	0.933	3.79	1.21
	I want to revisit Istanbul	0.924	3.73	1.21

Note: Annual income is in euros for Italians and in sterling for British
Source: Table by authors

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