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For a better campus sporting experience: Scale development and validation of the collegiate sportscape scale

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ABSTRACT

A collegiate sportscape scale is developed to measure the elements contributing to students' sport-related experiences on campus. The results revealed a 14-item scale. Specifically, the collegiate sportscape scale consists of four factors: sport and physical education classes (4 items), sport facilities (4 items), varsity teams (3 items), and intramural sports (3 items). The scale was found to be a valid and reliable measure to assess students' sport-related experience on campus. Furthermore, collegiate sportscape positively influenced students' loyalty toward the university both directly and indirectly through satisfaction. This scale can be useful for administrators to better understand students' experience on campus.

1. Introduction

Students' experience in higher education is dependent upon the set of interactions that occur between students and educational institutions. This affects their emotional, rational, physical, spiritual, and sensorial levels as well as the development of knowledge, skills, and abilities (Gentile, Spiller, & Noci, 2007). Taking a managerial perspective to examine educational administration, it is imperative to understand which experience prominently affects a student's satisfaction with his or her institution. Gaining a better understanding of this relationship can assist university administrators in creating an optimal student experience and attracting prospective students.

A comprehension of the parts of the experiences and its interconnection is necessary to understand a whole—holistic—experience. To understand a student's holistic university experience, an interdisciplinary lens can be used to look at the phenomenon from multiple disciplines. For instance, when we apply a managerial perspective, considering students as the primary customers of universities, identifying the experiences universities provide that students perceive to be most valuable can be a critical factor in evaluating a university's service quality (Athiyaman, 1997; Woodall, Hiller, & Resnick, 2014). Universities must also provide opportunities for positive extracurricular experiences in order to better promote the optimal experience—achievement of high gratification (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990)—for students. Yu and Kim (2008) argued that such effort from universities, promoting better university experiences, can generate not only the loyalty of students through satisfaction, but can also reveal the quality of life factors that attract potential students. In addition, to evaluate the holistic student experience, it would seem rational to use a measurement tool that utilizes previously identified determinants from multiple domains to evaluate not only the teaching component of higher education institutions, but also the total service environment (Abdullah, 2006; Hill, 1995; Tan & Kek, 2004). Hence, in this study, we

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adopted the blended viewpoints from management and quality of life to better elucidate the various aspects of a university student's experience. Specifically, we've explicated student experiences related to sports activities on campus and assessed a collegiate sportscape scale and examined its effect on satisfaction and loyalty.

From a physical and mental health standpoint, [Disch, Harlow, Campbell, and Dougan \(2000\)](#) asserted that matters related to physical health are an essential element of college students' on-campus experience. Accordingly, a large body of research has demonstrated how sport plays an important role in the higher education sector. For example, intramural sports programs provide a powerful medium for students' interaction ([Belch, Gebel, & Maas, 2001](#)). Also, numerous benefits have been found for recreational sports involvement, including: stress reduction ([Kanters & Forrester, 2000; Ragheb & McKinney, 1993](#)), self-esteem ([Collins, Valerius, King, & Graham, 2001; Evans, Hartman, & Anderson, 2013; Haines, 2001; Kanters & Forrester, 1997a, 1997b](#)), enhanced GPA ([Belch et al., 2001; Bryant, Bradley, & Milborne, 1994; Huesman, Brown, Lee, Kellogg, & Radcliffe, 2009; Trudeau & Shephard, 2008](#)), student development ([Huesman et al., 2009; Nesbitt, 1998; Trudeau & Shephard, 2008](#)), and ease of social integration ([Bryant et al., 1994; Evans et al., 2013; Huesman et al., 2009](#)).

By measuring various aspects of students' sport-related experience, administrators can develop a more comprehensive understanding of the roles and benefits of sport-related services offered on campus. Furthermore, testing its influence on students' satisfaction and loyalty can provide essential data to better manage universities. As we've reviewed in the previous paragraphs, lens from management, quality of life, and physical and mental health can be applied to investigate students' sports-related experience. However, there was no study comprehensively scrutinizing students' sports-related experience and its effect on satisfaction and loyalty, particularly in the context of higher education. Moreover, there is no measurement tool that can be used to assess the various experiential aspects of sports activities on campus. Hence, in order to fill the void in the extant literature, the current study attempted to develop and validate a new scale to measure environmental factors of collegiate sports activities. Naming it the collegiate sportscape scale, we applied theories from spectator sport management, service marketing, and participant sport administration to develop a more holistic measure.

Given the importance of environmental factors of collegiate sports activities for both students and administrators, the main purpose of this study was to develop and validate the collegiate sportscape scale in order to better understand students' sport-related experience on the campus. For the purpose, specifically, we adopted the theories from various disciplines explaining the environmental setting of a service experience. Further, a systematical procedure was employed to develop, assess, and test the measures.

2. Theoretical background

"Sportscape" is a neologism created by [Wakefield and Sloan \(1995\)](#) and has developed into one of the most important factors influencing spectator satisfaction and attendance. It stemmed from the term "servicescape" which was initially defined as the built environment surrounding the service ([Bitner, 1992](#)). Furthermore, Bitner expanded this definition to include the social environment, and further defined servicescape as "immediate physical and social environments surrounding a service experience, transaction or event" ([Bitner, 2000](#), p. 37). She argued that the physical and social environment surroundings would affect an individual's behaviors toward a particular destination, such as the desire to stay, explore, affiliate, and return or avoid.

Servicescape contributed to the literature of service quality by considering and identifying the environmental aspects where a service is provided. Servicescape plays a significant role in influencing customers' experience of the service encounters. Given intangibility of services, customers' evaluation is often influenced by visible and tangible cues. Servicescape creates not only impressions of the service but also expectations about the price and quality of the service ([Bebko, Sculli, & Garg, 2006](#)). Moreover, servicescape can also entertain customers, thereby creating emotions and changes in the state of mind through the sensory qualities of the environment ([Baker & Cameron, 1996; Fernandes & Neves, 2014](#)), further affecting their satisfaction and future intentions of re-patronage ([Fernandes & Neves, 2014; Wakefield & Blodgett, 1996](#)).

Aligning with the definition of servicescape, sportscape was defined as the entire experience of physical and social environment evaluated by a fan attending a sporting event ([Wakefield & Sloan, 1995](#)). It has been found that spectators' perception of sportscape affects their level of satisfaction, which in turn led to their desire to stay longer in the stadium ([Lambrecht, Kaefer, & Ramenofsky, 2009; Wakefield & Blodgett, 1994, 1996](#)). More importantly, empirical studies supported the idea that spectators' experiences of sportscape have a positive influence on their repeat attendance and loyalty toward the stadium ([de Carvalho, Boen, & Scheerder, 2015; Fernandes & Neves, 2014; Hill & Green, 2000; Lee, Heere, & Chung, 2013; Wakefield & Blodgett, 1996](#)). Some scholars have also investigated the influences of sportscape on individual's participation in sport, and found that sportscape had a strong impact on participation frequency at multiple sport facilities ([Hill & Green, 2012; O'Reilly, Berger, Hernandez, Parent, & Séguin, 2015](#)).

However, these previous studies were primarily conducted in the contexts of spectator sports, including golf events, football, and baseball games. In the context of higher education, a student's sporting experience can include both participation sports and spectator sports. Many opportunities are provided on the campus for students to experience sports activities. For example, universities generally house various sport facilities for student use, such as fitness centers or gyms ([Ko & Pastore, 2007](#)). Students can also enroll in a diverse array of physical activity courses ([Evans et al., 2013; Trudeau & Shephard, 2008](#)). Many also provide opportunities for students to participate in intramural sports organized by university recreation departments ([Sturts & Ross, 2013; Webb & Forrester, 2015](#)). In addition, students can spectate varsity sport competitions on campus. Hence, the collegiate sportscape needs to reflect each of these environmental aspects of sport opportunities provided on campus.

As aforementioned, higher education can be regarded as a primary service good, and therefore students can be viewed as customers like other service sectors ([Athiyaman, 1997; Woodall et al., 2014](#)). In the same vein, the collegiate sportscape plays a similar role with servicescape or sportscape in the context of higher education. In addition, the collegiate sportscape may significantly

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