

**DETERMINANTS OF SPORTS TV AUDIENCE:
THE CASE OF THE FIFA WORLD CUPS IN CHILE**

Abstract

Sports competitions are one of the main collective identification events in modern life. In this context, the TV broadcasting rights of sports mega-events -like the FIFA World Cups- have acquired an increasing relevance, because the growing demand of these competitions over mass media. Taking the case of Chile, this paper presents a revised and expanded examination of the determinants of the TV consumption of the soccer matches during these competitions, analyzing the audience size of the 2002, 2006, 2010 and 2014 events. Evidence is exhibited supporting that the participation or absence of home team configures two significant different broadcasting scenarios.

Keywords: Football Soccer, World Cup, Television Audiences, Rating, Sports Marketing

Antecedents

Sports are, at local, regional or national level, one of the main collective identification events in modern life (Bale, 1986, 2007). Therefore, the study of the demand for sports, expressed as their media audience, has attracted significant attention in the field of econometrics, media management, and sports marketing.

In this context, the television broadcasting rights of sports mega-events -like the FIFA World Cups- have acquired an increasing relevance, mainly because the growing demand of these competitions over the mass media. In fact, payment of this fee represents one of the more relevant sources of revenue for these events. On the other hand, broadcasters compete and disburse large amounts of money to get the transmissions rights, betting in the idea that these events both will increase their audience level, and will attract a relevant number of advertisers (Horne & Manzenreiter, 2006; Uribe, Valenzuela, & Buzeta, 2011).

Until now, approaches to the study of the determinants of TV Audience have mainly focused on local sports events (like soccer leagues, national basketball championships, and similar). Sports mega-events have remained in the background, without a deeper analysis over their audience determinants. In the last years, just a few pieces of research have analyzed the issue, detecting the variable “patriotism” as a strong audience determinant for soccer competitions (Feddersen & Rott, 2011; Nüesch & Franck, 2009) and road cycling races (Rodriguez, Perez, Puente, & Rodriguez, 2015).

This study examines the consumption of soccer on TV and establishes the determinants of television audience size for these matches. Taking the case of Chile, this paper presents a revised and expanded examination of the determinants of the TV consumption of the soccer matches during FIFA World Cups, analyzing the audience size of the 2002, 2006, 2010 and

2014 competitions. Two significantly different scenarios are presented, one with the presence of National Team (Chile) and other without the participation of that national representative, detecting strong differences between them. To develop this analysis, it was developed a model including variables defined by previous studies as predictors of the audience size of sports.

Literature review

Sports Audience determinants

A relevant number of studies has previously reported several determinants of the sports audience attendance and TV consumption at local level, for Baseball leagues (Chung, Lee, & Kang, 2014; Hausman & Leonard, 1997), American football (Paul & Weinbach, 2007; Tainsky & Jasielc, 2014; Tainsky & McEvoy, 2012; Tainsky, 2010), and Soccer (Alavy, Gaskell, Leach, & Szymanski, 2010; Buraimo & Simmons, 2009; Forrest, Simmons, & Buraimo, 2005; García & Rodríguez, 2006; Pawlowski, 2013). However, scarce research has look into these determinants for international sports competitions. All of these studies have concluded the main determinants of sports TV audience are elements associated to the *ex-ante* attractiveness of the match (*Outcome Uncertainty, Match Quality and Spectators identification with a team*) and other Non-Sporting related factors.

a) Ex-ante attractiveness of the Match

a. Outcome Uncertainty

Studies have recurrently mentioned the *Outcome Uncertainty* as a relevant factor. This has been one of the most fundamental variables in the study of audience consumption of sport contests. According to this hypothesis, the greater the uncertainty of outcome of a sporting event, the greater the TV demand. In fact, different authors such as Forrest and colleagues

(2005) tested the effect of outcome uncertainty on viewership. They found that although the impact is modest, it is a significant determinant of audience size. There are several pieces of research devoted to measure the relationship between demand and outcome uncertainty, which have focused on a variety of different measures for uncertainty. In the vast majority of them the outcome uncertainty has mostly been derived from both teams' performance, even during the match (Alavy et al., 2010; Buraimo & Simmons, 2009; Paul & Weinbach, 2007). For that reason, in the case of a soccer World Cup, this variable has been often operationalized as the difference in the FIFA ranking of the teams participating in the match (the smaller the difference, the lower outcome uncertainty the contest has). That is to say, matches between teams with similar performances should be considered more uncertain (Baimbridge, Cameron, & Dawson, 1996; Garcia & Rodriguez, 2002).

b. Match Quality

In addition, the quality of the match has been another variable recurrently mentioned in the studies. It is generally suggested that viewers and spectators are, in part, drawn to sporting contests to watch the teams on the field and their players displaying their superior skills (Hausman & Leonard, 1997; Solberg & Hammervold, 2008; Tainsky, 2010). Thus, in the context of a soccer world cup it may be expected that contests involving teams with higher international reputation should exert greater drawing power on viewers. For that reason, operationally speaking, the better FIFA ranking the teams of the match have and the more advanced the match is located in the progress of the tournament (stage), the more attractive the match should be for the audience (Feddersen & Rott, 2011; Forrest et al., 2005; García & Rodríguez, 2006; Paul & Weinbach, 2007).

c. Spectators identification with a team

The extent of identification with at least one team involved in the competition has been demonstrated as a relevant determinant for audience size. In this respect, several studies have reported that being a fan of a particular player or more commonly a team is one of the strongest predictor of the attendance or viewership of a match (Borland & MacDonald, 2003; García & Rodríguez, 2009; Solberg & Hammervold, 2008; Tainsky & McEvoy, 2012; Tainsky & Jasielec, 2014). In the context of an international competition, there is the possibility that this identification was based in “patriotic” sentiments or similar. Assuming the potential occurrence of a "Home Team effect" (Garcia & Rodriguez, 2002; Nüesch & Franck, 2009; Rodriguez et al., 2015), the main operational variable of this factor is defined in terms of the presence –or absence- of the national team in the contest (Kuypers, 1996). In fact, in World Cups where the national team is qualified, this team represents the “local team” for the overall audience for that specific tournament. Previous research has demonstrated fan allegiance to their local team plays a central role in the viewership of all games in a competition, even those in which the local team is not explicitly involved (Tainsky & Jasielec, 2014).

d. Familiarity

But with the absence of a local team in the tournament, Familiarity appears as a variable that increase the audience size. This could be operationalized as a measure of geographical distance to the specific country or using the number of played tournaments as an awareness proxy (Tainsky & McEvoy, 2012).

b) Non-Sporting related variables

Variables as the climate conditions, the particular moment in the year, the scheduled date and time and the broadcaster are included in this factor. All of these variables are related with

audience availability. In fact, *Broadcast Schedule* is frequently mentioned as a factor explaining the audience size of televised competitions. Match demand is expected to increase during those hours with higher audience availability, in particular during prime-time hours and during the weekends. Data allowed evaluating this factor in terms of three variables: day of the week (weekday versus weekend), programming schedule (four different dayparts) and time of day (early morning, during the morning or midday) (Feddersen & Rott, 2011; Forrest et al., 2005; García & Rodríguez, 2006).

Research Hypotheses and Research Questions

Vast majority of research have worked over the determinants of Sports TV audience based in local competitions. Scarce research has been developed in the context of international tournaments. Added to this, no research previously has assessed the influence of the national team over television consumption and other determinants. In most studies a local team or athlete is always present, affecting the overall interest of the competition, and increasing the media consumption.

With this, and based in the results of previous research, the following hypothesis are raised

- H₁: Match result uncertainty is a relevant factor affecting the audience size of tournament matches, with or without the presence of the local national team
- H₂: Participant teams Quality have a significant effect over the audience size of tournament matches, with or without the presence of the local national team.
- H₃: The presence of the local national team in a match is a relevant factor that increase the match audience size.

- H₄: Spectators familiarity with participant teams is a relevant element over the audience size of tournament matches, with or without the presence of the local national team
- H₅: Matches broadcasted in schedules and dayparts with higher audience availability will have a higher audience size, with or without the presence of the local national team.

In addition, a Research Question is raised related to the different scenarios, considering the presence or absence of a local team in the competition. It is plausible to believe that depending of the context, the effect of the different variables could be affected, positively or negatively.

- RQ₁: What difference is produced in the effect of the different variables under analysis, considering the presence or absence of the local national team.

Method

Based on the above-mentioned hypotheses and research questions, this article has used audience ratings from four FIFA World Cups (2002, 2006, 2010 and 2014) evaluating the determinants of their TV audience size in Chile.

[INSERT TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE]

This study use aggregate ratings data from the television audience measurement of Kantar IBOPE Media using peplemeters. This system is based on a panel sample of above 2100 people over four years old, whose TV consumption behavior is recorded by an electronic

device installed in all of the TV sets of the 600 households participating in the study in order to record the level of viewership and the selected TV stations on a minute-to-minute basis. The sample of this panel covered almost 6.6 million urban residents of Chile's major cities (Kantar IBOPE Media, 2014).

Two scenarios were tested, considering the participation (2010 and 2014) or not (2002 and 2006) of Chile National Team in the competition. The unit of analysis in both studies was the average audience of the matches broadcasted on free TV the whole period the soccer World Cup took place. The rating measure was used to represent the average audience. The number of matches included in each case corresponded to the full number of matches broadcasted live on free TV in Chile. The data was extracted at the "all Individuals" level and segmented in a socio-demographic approach using Kantar IBOPE Media TV Data software. Ratings data have largely been used as the classic method to express any specific audience size, representing the number of viewers from a given target group attending a TV event at a particular time on a percent basis.

Finally, it is important to notice that only the consumption of households is reported in the Kantar IBOPE Media audience panel measurement. All the incidental consumption made at out-of-home (OOH) is not incorporated. This is a relevant characteristic of the study and has to be taken into account at the time of analyzing and interpreting the results.

Through regression analysis, this study tested the performance of independent variables to predict and correctly represent the match audience size. According to previous literature, the independent variables incorporated were:

- *Uncertainty of the result*: Prior studies have used different measures of outcome uncertainty either in terms of using either betting odds to extract probabilities of

match outcomes or the differences in the performance of the teams including current and aggregate home and away performance (see for example Buraimo & Simmons, 2007). As there is only a marginal presence of home and away teams in the world cup and betting odds (from European or North American countries) have a significant bias in the prediction of other markets, we adapted the traditional definitions of Hart et al. (1975) and García and Rodriguez (2002) in terms of Quotient of points in teams' FIFA ranking points. That is to say, matches between teams with similar performances should be considered more uncertain and, supposedly, more attractive (Baimbridge et al., 1996). In addition, this factor was also measured using some match information, like the result of *Tie at the end of the first half* and the *definition of the match via Penalty kicks* (Alavy et al., 2010). Both variables were measured using a dichotomous variable.

- *Quality of the match*: Within the context of a soccer World Cup it may be expected that matches involving teams with a higher international reputation should exert greater drawing power on viewers. For that reason, two indicators were used to explore the relevance of this variable. In this vein, the better FIFA ranking the teams of the match have (historical quality) and the more advanced the match in the tournament (stage), the more attractive the match should be for the audience. This measure is analog to that used by previous studies in terms of the historical and recent performance in the league (Paul & Weinbach, 2007). Deeping in the sources of Match Quality, it was incorporated a measurement of the quality of players on field, through the use of the points achieved for a player in the "Ballon d'Or" poll, in order to evaluate the presence of "Superstars" (Hausman & Leonard, 1997; Feddersen & Rott, 2011). Finally, a last variable representing the presence of any past champion team on

field was included, in order to address the historical performance of a specific team in previous competitions.

- *Presence of the national team*: What the vast majority of the members of the audience have in common in a particular country is their support for the national soccer team. This way, assuming the occurrence of the mentioned home team effect associated with patriotism, the operationalization of this variable was using a dichotomous variable representing the presence / absence of the national team in the match (Bale, 1986; Nüesch & Franck, 2009; Tainsky & Jasieliec, 2014; Tainsky & McEvoy, 2012; Rodriguez et al., 2015).
- *Familiarity*: In the case of absence of the local national team in the tournament, previous research has proposed Familiarity with other teams is a relevant factor affecting the audience size (Tainsky & Jasieliec, 2014; Tainsky & McEvoy, 2012). For this study, this factor was analyzed for both scenarios: with and without Chile National Team. As a measure of familiarity, two variables were used: the geographic distance between the capital city of Chile and the capital city of the teams playing the match and the *Number of previous World Cups played* by the teams.
- *Scheduling*: Previous research supports the idea that daypart and scheduling of a match could affect the audience size (Feddersen & Rott, 2011; Forrest et al., 2005; García & Rodríguez, 2006). This allowed the evaluation of this factor in terms of two main variables: day of the week (weekday versus weekend), and Schedule, fractioned in four dayparts (early morning, during the morning, evening or night).

A linear regression model was tested, using *TV audience rating* as dependent variable. The five factors were expressed by 13 independent variables representing *outcome uncertainty*, *match quality*, *home team effect*, *familiarity* and *broadcast schedule*.

$$TV\ Rating = Presence\ of\ National\ Team + Quality\ of\ the\ Match + Uncertainty\ of\ Outcome + \\ Scheduling\ of\ the\ broadcast$$

Results

Findings are presented in two main scenarios, regarding competitions with and without the participation of Chile National Team. In detail, World Cups 2002 and 2006 data represents the case where the local team did not classify to the tournament. In the other hand, World Cups 2010 and 2014 data shows the scenario where a local team achieve its classification to the competition. The objective is to assess the differences and coincidences produced at each context, related to the audience behavior and its incidence in the variables under study.

Scenario 1: 2002 and 2006 World Cups (Without local team participation)

Table 2 shows the results of the Scenario 1. Regarding H_1 about Outcome Uncertainty it is showed the possibility of a penalty defined match increase the audience size. Effects of other variables in this factor are quite limited, regardless this factor is not useful to define which matches has to be broadcasted.

Looking into H_2 , the presence of a past World Cup champion team field signalizes better Match Quality and, therefore, an increased audience size. This is consistent with findings previously reported by Forrest et al. (2005), about the impact of this variable over the size of television audiences in matches involving the historical best teams in a local league (“Derbys”).

Detailing on H₄, there is evidence that greater the distance between the local market (and its audience) and the countries of teams on field, lesser is the audience size of that match. This is consistent with the evidence previously reported (Tainsky & Jasielec, 2014; Tainsky & McEvoy, 2012).

Considering H₅, results show that Broadcasting Scheduling is a significant factor, mainly because the daypart and weekday in which a match is programmed, could increase audience size. In fact, represents the greater factor affecting the volume of spectators of a match.

[INSERT TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE]

From these results, it is possible to infer that when National Team does not participate in the World Cup, viewers choose to watch the games based on their time availability and match attractiveness.

Scenario 2: 2010 and 2014 World Cups (With local team participation)

In this scenario, it could be supposed the matches with the participation of National Team raised the audience size by itself. Having this expected effect, results are break into two tables. Table 3 shows the results of the Scenario 2, including Chile matches. Regarding H₁ about Outcome Uncertainty it is showed that, with similarity to the results exhibited in Scenario 1, the possibility of a penalty defined match increase the audience size. Also, effects of other variables in this factor are quite limited, although this factor is not useful to define which matches has to be broadcasted.

[INSERT TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE]

Looking into H_2 , the stage of competition becomes a more relevant variable into the Match Quality factor. Therefore, the more advanced the competition stage, the greater will be the match audience size. Other variables in this factor have a limited effect.

Reporting the Home-Team Effect, as stated in H_3 , the presence of the National Team is the more significant and relevant variable increasing the Match audience size.

Detailing on H_4 , in this Scenario context there is no evidence that the Familiarity with the on-field teams was a relevant factor.

Considering H_5 , once again results show that Broadcasting Scheduling is a quite relevant factor, represented in the values associated to daypart and weekday in which a match is programmed.

Table 4 shows the same regressions, but the analysis now discards the matches were the National Team played. In general, findings originally described to the Scenario 2 are maintained. In absence of Chile National Team, the Presence of team on field from of the same group as the Home Team belongs is a variable that increase audience size.

[INSERT TABLE 4 ABOUT HERE]

Conclusion, Limitations and Future work

This research aimed to identify the factors that determine the size of the television audience of sports mega-events in Chile, using as a case study the last four editions of the FIFA World Cup. The main objective was to find elements that can be used by broadcasters to predict the

behavior of spectators, and thereby, to deliver a tool for channels can make more accurate programming decisions. Also, to provide advertisers have more information when investing. Given the magnitude of the investment that broadcasters and advertisers make to be present in these tournaments, the understanding and knowledge about the behavior of the audience at these events is essential to maximize their economic benefit.

Tested regression models show the enormous effect that “Home Team effect” has over the audience size. Also, it represents that a proper scheduling strategy (by casting the match at weekend) is relevant in order to determine TV audience rating.

In the path of previous research, the uncertainty of the result has little but significant effect and also the *stage of the competition*, becoming a significant element present mainly in the contests without the participation of a local team.

As the main contribution of this study, regarding its research question, is to show that the participation or absence of home team in the competition configures two significant different broadcasting scenarios. Audience demand of overall World Cup matches is increased in the case the home team participates on it. This could be tautological, but this model can help to quantify the size of the expected effect of this variable on audience rating. It provides support to previous research incorporating this issue and claiming the existence of a home team effect, mainly motivated by patriotic sentiments (García & Rodríguez, 2006; Nüesch & Franck, 2009; Rodriguez et al., 2015). In fact, the main difference between both scenarios is the impact that the Match Quality factor and particularly its Presence of a Past champion team on field variable have influencing the audience size.

Also, the scheduling of the matches is a relevant decision. The matches played on weekend have more share of audience compared with the ones played and broadcasted along the workweek.

The uncertainty of the result is a relevant variable, but its contribution to rating size is not as important in magnitude as previous literature had highlighted (Baimbridge et al., 1996; Garcia & Rodriguez, 2002). Moreover, this variable becomes more relevant in the particular case of 2010 and 2014 World Cups (Scenario 2). It could be hypothesized that we are in presence of a “halo” effect in the consumer attitude to the competition, explained by the participation of a local team in that event. In fact, it is plausible that fans of the local team are also interested in watch other teams’ matches, and to know how these teams in their group perform, as they have the most direct impact on the local team’s probability of qualifying for the playoffs (Tainsky & Jasielec, 2014).

All in all, these results tend to corroborate in this region (and particularly in Chile) and for the case of a World Cup (rather than a local league), the elements described by previous literature. Moreover, they have relevant implications for broadcasters and advertisers looking for get large audiences.

Finally, it is important to note some limitations of the study. Despite being a census of the FIFA World Cups broadcasted matches, the number of observations (165 matches) is limited. This is due to a structural problem of the case study, which sporadic occurrence of these events every four years. Other limitations are related to measurement bias and the incorporation of a single country (Chile).

As mentioned previously, this study measured only traditional households' TV consumption, leaving out the potential consumption that occurs in public places such as bars or restaurants, or if people organize a social gathering to watch a game.

Regarding the study of a single country, in this case the National Team of Chile, a line for further research to assess the results of this study and analyze the variables proposed in other contexts (other countries and cultures) and incorporating new own variables opens of these new contexts.

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TABLE 1

Tournament	Number of live matches under analysis	Presence of local team in the competition (Chile)
Korea – Japan 2002	36	No
Germany 2006	53	No
South Africa 2010	33	Yes
Brazil 2014	43	Yes

*Table 1: Summary of live matches under analysis***TABLE 2 – Scenario 1**

Factor	Variables	2002 WC	2006 WC	2002-2006 WC's
		β	β	β
	<i>(Constant)</i>	-1.979	-3.978	-0.979
<i>Outcome Uncertainty</i>	Quotient FIFA ranking points	0.158	0.483	0.350
	Tied at the end of the first half?	1.504	-0.407	0.458
	Penalty definition	1.808	2.704	1.368
<i>Match Quality</i>	Stage of competition	0.524	0.432	0.867
	Past champion team on field?	2.597	1.572	2.855
	Star-player in field?	-0.521	-0.290	-0.656
	FIFA Ranking of teams (sum)	0.460	-0.328	-0.412
<i>Home Team</i>	Presence of Home Team	--	--	--
	Presence of team of the same group	--	--	--
<i>Familiarity</i>	Previous appearance on FIFA WC (n)	-0.174	-0.255	-0.635
	Geographic distance to the country	-0.798	-0.471	-0.368
<i>Broadcast Schedule</i>	Were the match played at weekend?	0.277	2.407	1.356
	Daypart of the Match	3.152	3.278	1.695

R ²	0.710	0.764	0.570
Corrected R ²	0.577	0.701	0.508
F	5.348	12.098	9.274
Cases (broadcast emissions)	36	53	89

Factor	Variables	2010 WC dataset β	2014 WC dataset B	2010-2014 WC's β
	<i>(Constant)</i>	-2.044	-1.294	-1.052
<i>Outcome Uncertainty</i>	Quotient FIFA ranking points	-0.037	0.471	0.180
	Tied at the end of the first half?	0.130	0.574	0.870
	Penalty definition	-- ¹	0.988	--
<i>Match Quality</i>	Stage of competition	1.479	0.840	1.190
	Past champion team on field?	-0.272	-0.016	0.463
	Star-player in field?	0.290	0.633	-0.025
	FIFA Ranking of teams (sum)	0.484	0.190	0.396
<i>Home Team</i>	Presence of Home Team	16.974	15.495	16.661
	Presence of team of the same group	--	--	--
<i>Familiarity</i>	Previous appearance on FIFA WC (n)	0.303	0.717	0.416
	Geographic distance to the country	-0.812	-0.602	-0.660
<i>Broadcast Schedule</i>	Were the match played at weekend?	4.222	1.862	3.333
	Daypart of the Match	2.493	2.694	1.634
	R ²	0.908	0.823	0.846
	Corrected R ²	0.859	0.752	0.819
	F	18.756	11.624	31.852
	Cases (broadcast emissions)	33	43	77

Factor	Variables	2010 WC dataset β	2014 WC dataset β	2010-2014 WC's β
	<i>(Constant)</i>	-5.449	1,606	-2.500
<i>Outcome Uncertainty</i>	Quotient FIFA ranking points	-0.528	,551	0.071
	Tied at the end of the first half?	0.015	-,108	0.214
	Penalty definition	-- ²	1,497	--
<i>Match Quality</i>	Stage of competition	1.469	0.801	1.248
	Past champion team on field?	0.344	,038	0.482
	Star-player in field?	0.303	,872	0.483
	FIFA Ranking of teams (sum)	0.995	-,071	0.271
<i>Home Team</i>	Presence of Home Team	--	--	--
	Presence of team of the same group	3.916	7,978	4.785
<i>Familiarity</i>	Previous appearance on FIFA WC (n)	0.780	,832	0.441
	Geographic distance to the country	-0.372	-,948	-0.593
<i>Broadcast Schedule</i>	Were the match played at weekend?	4.788	2,336	3.248
	Daypart of the Match	3.429	2,695	2.524
	R ²	0.800	0,704	0.669
	Corrected R ²	0.670	0,567	0.604
	F	6.172	5,143	10.293
	Cases (broadcast emissions)	29	39	69

1 There was no Penalty defined broadcasted matches

2 There was no Penalty defined broadcasted matches