

Sport fans' motivations: an investigation of Romanian soccer spectators

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the present study was to add to the existing spectator motivations literature (e.g. Kim, Greenwell, Andrew, Lee & Mahony, 2008; Won and Kitamura 2007; Trail and James 2001; Funk, Mahony, Nakazawa, and Hirakawa 2001) by investigating the buyer motivations of Romanian sport fans. In response to the suggestions of earlier researchers concerning new research that spans across different countries and cultures, the present study seeks to explore sports fans' motivations in Romania. To respond to sport consumers and develop effective communication strategies requires marketers to investigate spectator motivations to better understand this type of buyer behavior.

The present study investigated the motivations of Romanian sport fans toward soccer by adopting and reinterpreting scales of earlier studies. The investigative procedures were very similar to those reported in earlier research (e.g. Kim, Greenwell, Andrew, Lee & Mahony, 2008; Won and Kitamura, 2007; Trail and James, 2001; Funk, Mahony, Nakazawa, and Hirakawa, 2001, etal), who have investigated similar phenomena and developed fans' spectator motivation scales. The study will further the understanding of the constructs that affect sport fans' consumption motivations. Although, the present study appears to be somewhat supportive of the work of earlier researchers of sport fan motivation scales, the findings suggest that more analysis is needed.

Key words: spectator motivations, buyer behavior, soccer, Romania, sport marketing

INTRODUCTION

As the European Union (EU) is joined by new members from Eastern Europe, sports markets there have garnered greater attention due to their perceived economic development potential (Vasilescu, Pirvu & Mehedintu, 2008). The main objective of this study is to develop a measurement instrument to analyze the sports consumer motives specific to Romania and to add to the literature of spectator motivations through this investigation. To launch this research objective, survey items were adapted from existing sports consumer motivation scales to the Romanian language. The scales evaluated for the current study were adapted from Motivation Scale for Sport Consumption (MSSC) by Trail and James (2001) and Sport Interest Inventory (SII) by Funk, Mahony, Nakazawa, and Hirakawa (2001). Additionally, recent findings from other researchers whose studies were influenced by these two scales were reviewed in the overall selection, refinement, and adoption process for the selected items (e.g. Kim, Greenwell, Andrew, Lee & Mahony, 2008; Won & Kitamura, 2007; Trail & Anderson 2003; and James & Ross, 2004).

Soccer in Romania

Soccer has been historically the dominant sport in Romania in terms of number of events, media presence, and attendance (IRES, 2009). Compared with other sports, soccer offers events practically all year. In Romania there are two main levels of competition: 1) Romanian Championship, and 2) Romanian Cup. Competitive soccer levels are typical in almost all European countries. Both levels of competition start in mid-August (the end of the international cup championships) and end in mid-May, with a two month (mid-December through mid-February) winter break. Within the national championship, teams vie for rank in a group-type of competition (each team plays two matches with all other teams). Romanian Cup teams meet in a play-off type of competition (ProSport Romania, 2010). Besides internal competition, there are 2 levels of competition at the European level (international) that involve the best teams from each country. These two levels of competition, organized by Union of European Football Associations (UEFA), are UEFA Champions League and UEFA Europa League Super Cup. Both of these competitions are held between mid-August and mid-May, overlapping the national competitions, thus completing the year long cycle of play (UEFA, 2011).

In addition, there are 2 larger international quadrennial competitions held 2 years apart and played during the interval between mid-May and mid-July — the UEFA Europe Cup and the Federation Internationale de Football Association or FIFA World Cup competitions between best national teams — 24 European teams and 32 Worldwide national teams, respectively (UEFA, 2011; FIFA, 2011). The last European Cup of 2008 was won by Spain which qualified to play in the 2010 World Cup which Spain subsequently won in South Africa (FIFA, 2011). These final tournaments are preceded by an 18-month qualifications stage, with all the national (country) teams. Finally, the gap between mid-July and mid-August is filled with the UEFA Intertoto Cup, where club teams that ranked lower compete in an international based competition (UEFA, 2011; FIFA, 2011). As a result, within the many yearly intervals, Romanian spectators have a wide variety of soccer matches for watching. There are many motivations for Soccer spectators in Romania and other countries and it is important that marketers understand the reasons for this type of consumer behavior.

Like many of its neighbor countries in Eastern Europe, Romania's economy is one that is characterized as in transition, moving from a state-run to a market-driven economy (Vasilescu, Pirvu & Mehedintu, 2008; De Arriba Bueno, 2010). At the same time, Romania's admission into the European Union in 2007 introduced another transformation as the country seeks to create economic partners with other EU countries and abroad during the transfer of enterprise ownership from the state to private organizations (Vasilescu, Pirvu & Mehedintu, 2008; Rusu, 2010). For most of Europe, in the field of sports, soccer dominates the competitive landscape, from intramural sport activities to semi-pro sport clubs up to top professional leagues. As the Romanian economy progresses it is important for sports and event marketers to understand the consumer motivations of soccer spectators (IRES, 2009).

LITTERATURE REVIEW

Spectator Motivation Scales

Fans from a wide range of sports and settings attend or watch events for a variety of different reasons. Researchers of earlier studies have investigated the factors that motivate spectators to attend or watch sporting events (e.g. Wann, Grieve, Zapalac & Pease, 2008; Won & Kitamura, 2007; Correia & Esteves, 2007; Robinson and Trail, 2005; Funk, Ridinger & Moorman, 2004; Trail, Fink & Anderson, 2003; Mahony, Nakazawa, Funk, James & Gladden, 2002; Kahle, Kambara & Rose, 1996; Sloan, 1989; etal). Motivational theories from various sociological and psychological perspectives have been suggested by researchers desiring to develop buyer behavior sport consumer motivation scales. The main body of research began in 1987, when Sloan, Bates, Davis, and Schweiger presented a sport consumer motivation measure – Sports Need for Achievement and Power Scale (SNAPS). Sloan (1989) later presented an analysis of the SNAPS deriving 5 motivations: 1) salubrious effects, 2) stress (release) and stimulation seeking, 3) aggression and catharsis, 4) entertainment, and 5) achievement.

In 1995, Wann presented a scale called Sport Fan Motivation Scale (SFMS) that identified 8 motivation factors: 1) eustress [drama], 2) self-esteem, 3) escape [from ordinary life], 4) entertainment, 5) economic [gambling] factors, 6) aesthetics, 7) group affiliation [socialization] and 8) family needs. Milne and McDonald (1999) presented the Motivations of the Sport Consumer (MSC) a scale which suggested 12 slightly different sport fan motivation factors: 1) risk taking, 2) stress release, 3) aggression, 4) affiliation, 5) skill mastery, 6) aesthetics, 7) self-esteem, 8) self-actualization, 9) value development, 10) social facilitation, 11) vicarious achievement and 12) competition. However, Trail and James (2001) argued that these earlier scale measures were methodologically limited particularly with respect to construct validity and reliability. After conducting more rigorous statistical tests, they developed a motivation scale called the Motivation Scale for Sport Consumption (MSSC), which consists of nine motivation constructs: 1) knowledge [acquiring], 2) aesthetics, 3) drama, 4) escape, 5) family, 6) physical attraction, 7) physical skills [players], 8) social interaction [group affiliation] and 9) achievement [vicarious].

Also in 2001, Funk, Mahony, Nakazawa, and Hirakawa (2001) developed the Sport Interest Inventory (SII). The SII is a 10 factor scale for measuring women's soccer spectator motivation: 1) drama, 2) vicarious achievement, 3) interest in team, 4) interest in player, 5)

interest in soccer, 6) national pride, 7) aesthetics, 8) excitement, 9) social opportunities and 10) support for women's opportunities.

In some more recent studies, researchers have investigated sports consumer motives to a greater degree than presented in the past (e.g. Funk, Mahony, & Ridinger, 2002 - women's individual difference factors, and Donovan, Carlson, & Zimmerman, 2005 - personality traits). Other researchers have introduced developments and refinements to existing sports consumer motivation scales by measuring differences in types of sports and spectators (e.g., James & Ross, 2004; Mahony, Nakazawa, Funk, James, & Gladden, 2002; Robinson & Trail, 2005; Won & Kitamura, 2007; and Correia & Esteves, 2007). In a number of recent studies, spectator motivations to attend sporting events have been analyzed across 13 different sports: Wann, Grieve, Zapalac & Pease (2008) – mixed martial arts; Kim, Greenwell, Andrew, Lee & Mahony (2008) – men's football and basketball, women's basketball; Robinson & Trail (2005) – men's baseball and wrestling, women's softball.

Cultural Differences in Sport Consumer Motivations

In order to develop a sport motivation scale for use in Romania, the authors reviewed the work of other researchers who examined sport consumer motivations across various sports and cultures to measure differences in spectator motives. Sport fans' motives to attend or support a particular sporting event may vary across different contexts and cultures (Kwon and Trail, 2001). Some researchers have investigated race and cultural motivation factors affecting spectator behavior. For example, the Armstrong and Paretto Stratta (2004) study of attendance found that black spectators were more influenced than white spectators on seven motivations particularly entertainment, social atmosphere, and special promotions. The Funk, Mahony, Nakazawa and Hirakawa (2001) league surveys of 1998 and 1999 revealed that four motivational factors (i.e. team attraction, sport attraction, player attraction, and community pride) significantly predicted length of time as a fan. The Mahony, Nakazawa, Funk, James and Gladden (2002) Japan-League study suggested that vicarious achievement and team attachment were also positively related to fan length of time. This study also indicated a positive relationship between current attendance frequency with team and sport attachment.

While researching motivations for attending intercollegiate sports, Kwon and Trail (2001) compared international and American students' consumer sport motivations using a market segmentation approach in their investigation. However, finding only minor differences in sport consumption motives with drama ranking highest for both groups, Kwon and Trail concluded that there was little support for separate sport marketing plans aimed at these 2 segments and realistically, could only be justified at colleges where the international student population was sufficiently large. More recently, a Japan League and Korean League study by Won and Kitamura (2007) found that spectators from both countries were motivated mainly by three factors: drama, vicarious achievement and entertainment. Among the spectator differences were that Japanese were more likely to attend alone or with family members, whereas Koreans were more likely to socialize with a boy/girl friend. In a study of spectators in Portugal, Correia and Estevez (2007) found support for the notion that, among international spectators, various cultures and ethnic backgrounds can influence sport motivation factors. Thus, cultures should be considered as researchers aim to understand the factors that may explain spectator motivations.

Kotler and Armstrong (2004) state that, "... international researchers deal with differing markets in many different countries. These markets often vary greatly in their levels of economic

development, cultures and customs, and buying patterns." (p. 166). These statements suggest that, since sport markets vary in different countries, more cross-cultural studies are needed to identify and refine existing motivation theories. The present study continues the research in sport consumer motives in different countries as the authors begin the investigative process of identifying soccer fans' motivations in Romania.

METHODS

Instruments

Unable to find any prior research or studies in Romania or in any similar economies in Eastern Europe pertaining to soccer spectator motivations, the authors searched for related studies. Their initial research uncovered several soccer association reports of general observations about Romanian soccer consumers and attendance characteristics (IRES, 2009; ProSport Romania, 2010).

With respect to overall interest in soccer games, the results from a non-scientific 2009 survey conducted by the Romanian Institute of Strategy Evaluation (IRES) showed that 65% of Romanians surveyed stated a passion for soccer. Of those who were indicated a passion for the sport, 71% stated they watch at least one soccer game per week; 62% claimed to watch sport news on TV daily; and 92% follow a Romanian club team. However, the same study showed that Romanian spectators watch more games on TV instead of attending live events at a stadium: 92% watch games at home, 4% in clubs or sports bars, and 2% at friends' homes, while only 1% attend live soccer events. However, the results are consistent with statistics regarding soccer attendance for First League games (the top Romanian Championship, where top 18 club teams compete) which showed average attendance of 5,000 spectators per game in the 2009-2010 soccer mid-August to mid-May season (ProSport-Rom., 2010). Average attendance appears low as most soccer stadiums in Romania have spectator seating capacity of 12,000-20,000.

Due to the lack of formal studies in spectator motives, the authors began to develop the use of measures adapted from the existing literature of sport consumer motivation scales (e.g. Motivation Scale for Sports Consumption (MSSC) by Trail and James (2001); and Sport Interest Inventory (SII) by Funk, Mahony, Nakazawa & Hirakawa (2001). While the scales of earlier studies identified as many as 13 different motivation factors: achievement (vicarious), aesthetics, drama, entertainment, escape, family (socialization), interest in the sport (soccer), knowledge, physical skill, player interest, pride (community), socialization (with others), and team affiliation many could not be used in Romania.

After a quick check among English-speaking Romanian college students recruited to participate in the translation of the scale items it was revealed that Romanians, and probably a good deal of other Eastern Europeans, are relatively under-surveyed and were unfamiliar with many of the constructs. However, in an attempt to identify which sport consumer motives may be more salient and potentially universal, the authors drew input from a collaboration of researchers (James, Trail, Wann, Zhang and Funk, 2006) who "embarked on a quest to bring parsimony to the study of these [sport] motives" (Kim, Greenwell, Andrew, Lee & Mahony, 2008, p.111). The results of James, et al. (2006) identified 5 motives that have shown a wide applicability in different sports over a range of cultures and settings. The five motives thought to share some universality with Romania are aesthetics (physical skill/ability), drama, escape, social interactions (family & others), and vicarious achievement (self esteem). The authors added

entertainment because this motive was represented in approximately 50% of all studies reviewed and the results were significant in two recent studies (Won and Kitamura, 2007; (Kim et al., 2008).

After settling on the 6 motives (subscales), the scales were translated into Romanian. During the process of reviewing items for each subscale, the socialization motive was altered. To make this motive more understandable to Romanians, socialization was interpreted into two separate motives: one while ‘attending’ a live match; and one while ‘watching’ the telecast of a match. Having derived 7 motives, the study turned to a three stage translation process.

In Stage One, four 4-person teams were formed consisting of English-speaking Romanian college students, 12 from the school of economics and business and 4 from the school of physical education and sport science. In Stage Two, the four teams submitted their translations to faculty members from both schools who made recommendations after reviewing the students’ translations. During Stage Three, 2 discussion panels were conducted among members from the teams with faculty from both schools participating as discussants until a single translation of the scales was completed.

In Romania, as in many other parts of the world, college students’ vocabularies are more broad and filled with more new-use words than their parents’ generation. However, consistent with the overall longitudinal goals of the research, the scales needed to be generally interpretable outside of academic settings where the population is older and uses more traditional language. Thus, in Stage Three, an English/Romanian language specialist from the School of Foreign Languages “word smithed” the final translation to better assure historical word content and correct for potential language ambiguity. Satisfied that the translated instrument met face validity, the scale was pretested.

The translated scale was pretested with seventy-eight college students from the Faculty of Physical Education and Sport at a large Romanian public university. Fifty-two of these students responded affirmatively to the item “I consider myself a strong supporter of soccer.” The data from the latter group was used in an exploratory component analysis, with Chronbach’s alpha used to measure internal consistency of the scale items. The results of the exploratory component analysis as indicated in Table 1 (Appendix).

The SPSS Principal Components analysis with Varimax Rotation produced 6 components with Eigenvalues from 3.704 to 1.344 and explained 70.040% of variance. Based on these pre-test results, the authors designed the questionnaire for the collegiate sample consisting of 7 motives and 25 items. Two items were added for identification with the sport (soccer), along with four demographic items. A five-point Likert-type scale (from 1 totally disagree to 5 totally agree) was used with the components for sport consumer motives and identification with the sport.

Sample and Procedure

Questionnaires were collected from 486 undergraduate marketing students at 3 major public universities in the capital Bucharest (227), and two other major cities in Romania -- Cluj-Napoca (154), and Iasi (105). These are the largest cities from the three Romanian historical regions: Vallachia, Transylvania, and Moldavia, respectively. After eliminating 104 responses for missing data and non-sport preference, the sample size was 382, approximately 79% (382/486). In the remaining sample, there were 155 females and 227 males. All respondents were given adequate time to complete the questionnaires and were assured of their anonymity.

Table 2 (Appendix) shows that two-tailed t-tests revealed significant ($p < .05$) differences in responses between males and females on all items except VA11, DRA325, SOA328 and ENT 536. This indicates that both genders responded with similar feelings on the following four items:

- 1) VA11 – I feel like I have won when my soccer team wins (Vicarious Achievement).
- 2) DRA325 – I am very disappointed when my soccer team loses (Drama). [Reverse coded]
- 3) SOA 328 – Soccer games are great opportunities to socialize with other fans (Socialization While Attending Soccer Matches).
- 4) ENT536 – I am more interested in watching individual players than the soccer team as a whole (Entertainment).

Though soccer attendance in Romania is a predominantly male spectator sport, 65% of all Romanians who responded in a recent survey indicated a passion for soccer (IRES, 2009). While this finding was unscientific, it may still provide partial explanation for items VA-11 and DRA-325 shown in List of Variables (Appendix).

At soccer games, is not uncommon for male spectators to use vulgar language to express their emotions, especially when their favorite teams are behind in scoring. Mainly for this reason, female stadium attendance is usually low. A similar situation can be observed with respect to unescorted females entering traditional sport pubs, particularly near industrial areas where rude male language can be heard.

However, there are times when female spectators attend stadium soccer games and/or sport pubs. Female spectators will attend soccer games or watch on TV when they have invitations from soccer players or other sports officials, or when they “party-up” with groups of male spectators. When female spectators attend as invitees, they usually locate in special “VIP” areas of the stadium, separated from regular spectator seating. When women attend soccer matches, they are there for the social aspects of the gathering. Thus, high scores on items SOA 328 and ENT 536, shown in List of Variables (Appendix), for female spectators could be expected. Women spectators and invitees watch with a special motivation to see familiar soccer players, which could be a brother, son, boy friend or husband in some cases. As these women spectators attend regularly, they get to know one another and other attendees who have similar interests. Fraternalization continues as they socialize and often become friends even outside the stadium. While, female spectators may not have as much technical interest in soccer team strategy, they focus on the more aesthetic elements of the game, which usually are the players, because they are seen as being physically appealing.

Table 2 (Appendix) shows the results of Principal Component analysis with Varimax Rotation. A Cronbach’s alpha of .8398 for all scale items suggests good internal reliability of the data. This analysis produced 6 components with Eigenvalues from 3.289 to 1.201 and explained 54.432% of cumulative variance. These results are similar to the pre-test, except for the lower percentage of variance explained. The authors suggest this lower number may result primarily from the fact the one third of the Romanian students surveyed were female, while the pretest consisted of only 3 females. When one considers the fact that all but four variables’ means were significantly different between males and females, it is not surprising that somewhat less variance may be explained by the factors developed with more females surveyed.

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to add to the existing literature on sport fans' motivations. The study began the scale development process aimed at developing a measurement tool to analyze sport fans' motivations in Romania. Reviewing the scale development work in sport fans' motivations of earlier researchers provided the basis for developing a scale to use with Romania spectators. Application of extant theory and existing scales provided items that could be translated and rewritten in Romanian language. After interpreting factors and scale items, the authors presented a six factor model. The exploratory analyses indicate that a six factor model appears adequate to begin explaining the motives for Romanian consumers to be soccer spectators.

However, the study presents two issues. The first is that a number of items from different scale constructs cross-loaded on the six factors. It will be necessary to review these factors and determine if the cross-loadings indicate whether an item was misinterpreted, a wording usage problem, or in fact there is a construct validity issue in terms of meaning. The Romanian language is a far more literal language than many others. Thus, the meanings of certain translations in Romanian can be misunderstood by the appearances of similar word groups or phrases. The second issue is the present study was conducted in collegiate settings with student respondents from several Romanian universities. For the study scales to be generally interpretable among adult populations, these spectator motivation scales will need to be tested with adult soccer sports fans. Thus, the next stage of research in Romanian sport fans' motivations could address these issues.

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APPENDIX

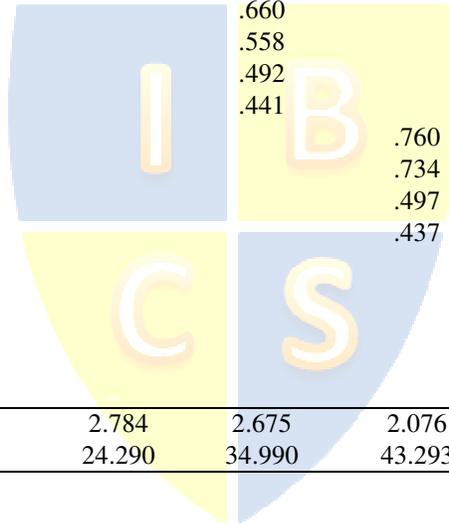
Table 1

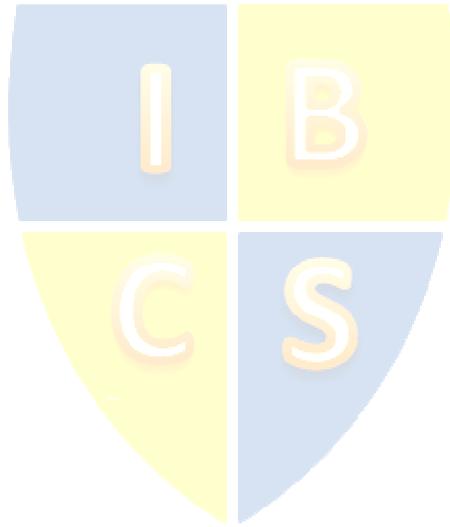
Results of Component Analysis of Romanian Pre-Test (Principal Components w/ Varimax Rotation)

	1	2	3	4	5	6
ESC13	.860					
DRA325	.749					
ESC323	.738					
SOC235	.708					
ENT330	.618					
ESC213	.499					
PHS217		.773				
PHS327		.729				
PHS114		.637				
ENT220		.468				
ENT110		.421				
VA211			.803			
VA321			.728			
VA11			.633			
SOA218				.842		
SOC14				.708		
DRA431					.756	
SOA18					.717	
DRA15						.707
SOA328						.623
Eigenvalues	3.704	2.629	2.456	2.011	1.865	1.344
Cumulative %	18.521	31.664	43.942	53.996	63.322	70.040

Table 2
Results of Analysis of Romanian Students (Principal Components w/ Varimax Rotation)

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6
SOC14	.693					
PHS217	.655					
ENT434	-.599					
PHS144	.581					
PHS327	.539					
VA321		.689				
DRA325		.659				
DRA215		.654				
VA211		.618				
VA11		.451				
ESC323			.721			
ENT220			.692			
ENT330			.660			
ESC13			.558			
ESC213			.492			
ENT110			.441			
SOA328				.760		
SOC535				.734		
SOA218				.497		
SOC224				.437		
DRA15					.779	
DRA431					.695	
SOA433					.425	
ENT536						.720
SOA18						.392
Eigenvalues	3.289	2.784	2.675	2.076	1.584	1.201
Cumulative %	13.155	24.290	34.990	43.293	49.628	54.432





List of Variables and Item Descriptions

Vicarious Achievement

- VA 1-1 I feel like I have won when my soccer team wins
VA 2-11 I feel proud when my soccer team plays well.
VA 3-21 I feel a sense of accomplishment when my soccer team plays well.

Escape

- ESC 1-3 Soccer games provide me with an escape from my day-to-day activities.
ESC 2-13 Watching soccer games helps me forget my troubles.
ESC 3-23 Soccer games are a great change of pace for what I regularly do.

Socialization While Watching Soccer (Televised games)

- SOC 1-4 I like to watch National Team soccer games on TV with family and/or friends.
SOC 2-35 Watching televised soccer games is a great opportunity to socialize with other people.
SOC 3-24 I enjoy meeting with other fans to watch televised soccer games of my team.

Drama (Suspense)

- DRA 1-5 I enjoy soccer games when the score is close.
DRA 2-15 I get excited when my soccer team comes on to the field.
DRA 3-25 I am very disappointed when my soccer team loses.
DRA 4-31 A game is more enjoyable when the outcome is not decided until the very end.

Physical Skill

- PHS 1-14 I enjoy watching the skillful performances of soccer players.
PHS 2-17 Watching a well executed athletic performance is something I enjoy.
PHS 3-27 I enjoy the gracefulness I see in soccer games.

Socialization While Attending Soccer Matches

- SOA 1-8 Interacting with other fans is an important reason to be at soccer games.
SOA 2-18 Attending stadium soccer games gives me the feeling of belonging to a group.
SOA 3-28 Soccer games are great opportunities to socialize with other fans.
SOA 4-33 Attending soccer games gives me the opportunity to see players mixing with fans, such as when signing autographs.

Entertainment

- ENT 1-10 I look forward to soccer games because they are exciting entertainment.
ENT 2-20 Soccer games offer an alternative pastime.
ENT 3-30 Attending soccer games is a fun way to spend time.
ENT 4-34 I don't find soccer games to be very exciting. [reverse scored]
ENT 5-36 I am more interested in watching individual players than the soccer team as a whole.