Chapter 35
An Integrated, Multi-Agency, Consumer-focused, Safety Management Approach in the Sports Industry

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ABSTRACT

Over the past decades, European football went through a large number of tragedies, mainly due to the absence of an integrated framework that could enable every involved agency to operate under specific safety procedures and laws. It is commonly perceived that disorder behaviour has adverse effects on football, minimising potential revenues and obliterating the consumer's experience. Football's unique structures involve a large number of agencies that need to constantly adopt specific safety approaches in order to create a sustainable environment and provide entertainment and pleasure to the consumers. The purpose of this chapter is to theoretically recognise the generic football safety management guidelines introduced by the European institutions over the years in order to minimise the problem and create a safe atmosphere for the consumers. In addition, the research will identify and decode the key actions taken by the authorities in Cyprus as a response to the problem in order to draw critical lessons both for and from the case study.

INTRODUCTION

Football is a rising business, generating a tremendous economic interest among a variety of consumers and a large number of stakeholders; as well as forcing constant changes that significantly strengthen the value of football as a business (Thrassou et al., 2012). Engaging and involving fans in various match activities is a vital goal which creates the need of sustaining a friendly environment in order to enable them to interact, bond and consider themselves part of the overall club community (Loureiro et al., 2015). Football fans, are loyal to their club, consuming many products, such as match tickets, club merchandizing, sponsors' brands etc. (Loureiro et al., 2014), repetitively expressing their love by actively engaging themselves to a large number of activities, directly linked to their club. Consumers who experience brand love are more passionate and willing to engage actively (Kaufmann et al., 2016). To build customer loyalty, the event organizers should provide fan experience based on the customers' own needs (Signori et al., 2019).

Football has been related to commercialisation and high-level competition and a consequence of this connection is the surface of disorder and violence between fans (Spaaij, 2000). Hooliganism is defined as the fans' disruptive, antisocial and violent behaviour, intervening with any normal sporting activity. Disorder incidents usually involve clashes between rival fans, insults or racist behaviour, object throwing, flares or other flammable objects usage, pitch invasion, property damages, etc. (Carnibella et al., 1996; Frosdick and Marsh, 2005).

It is commonly perceived that hooliganism behaviour and disorder incidents have adverse effects on football consumerisms, minimising potential revenues and obliterating the consumer's experience. A number of European countries have been affected by hooliganism, with United Kingdom, Germany, Netherlands and Italy being among of the countries that have experienced the biggest problems over the past years (Spaaij, 2007). For decades hooliganism has been one of the major issues in football, widely recognised as a social problem that directly affects the business of football.

This resulted in the awakening of several agencies in Europe, forcing, in the early 1980s, the European Union and the Council of Europe to step into the problem and take a keen interest in finding an immediate solution to the scourge called football hooliganism. Under this scope, in 1985, the Council of Europe under the Convention ETS No.120, introduced a number of measures and encouraged all parties to implement them in order to prevent violence and control the problem.

Safety management at sports grounds has progressively become more sophisticated and more professional over the past thirty years, primarily based on an ongoing assessment in order to ensure that football and other sports events provide a safe, secure and welcoming environment for the fans - consumers. These consumers are the lifeblood of every sport. They should enjoy the event in a festive environment without concerns about their safety and well-being. Therefore, their safety always comes first and in order to maintain this principle, a number of agencies need to work closely and together.

Research Aim And Methodology

The purpose of this book chapter is to theoretically recognise the generic football safety management guidelines, procedures, models and concepts introduced by the Council of Europe and proposed to every member country as a strategic management tool, in an effort to minimise hooliganism, recover the business value. In addition, the research will identify and decode the key actions taken by the authorities in Cyprus as a response to football hooliganism, in order to draw critical lessons both for and from the case study.

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