DO THE HOT DOGS TASTE BETTER WHEN THE HOME TEAM WINS?

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ABSTRACT

With most functionally (i.e., problem solving) oriented services, the process of accurately measuring performance and satisfaction has become fairly straightforward. However, when services are designed to involve and stimulate consumers in an experiential fashion (i.e., an entertainment event), obtaining accurate measures of service quality and satisfaction is potentially more difficult. This study investigates the premise of predictable halo effects based on the quality of performance. The results of this study suggest that measuring patron satisfaction with specific services related to an entertainment experience is subject to potential halo effects. The more closely tied the service is to the actual performance/event, the more likely a halo effect will be present.

INTRODUCTION

Research in the area of services marketing is currently at an all time high. This intense level of interest in services stems from their significant contribution to the growth of many national economies. It has been reported that in some countries as much as 75 percent of the labor force is employed in the service sector (Bateson 1989). Additionally, in many countries, including the United States, the service sector is responsible for producing nearly 70 percent of the Gross National Product (Lovelock 1991).

Services are distinguished by their simultaneity of production and consumption (Bateson 1989; Zeithaml, Berry, and Parasuraman 1985). When services are performed, in many cases, they result in a direct interaction between the service provider and the customer. Under these conditions, the evaluation of service quality is based on the customer's evaluation of both the service process and its outcome (Gronoos 1982; Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry 1985). Many service providers, realizing the importance of service quality and customer satisfaction, have developed programs which measure and evaluate performance.

With some functionally-oriented (i.e., problem-solving) services, the process of accurately measuring performance and satisfaction has become fairly straightforward. However, when services are designed to involve and stimulate the customer in an experiential fashion (i.e., mentally or physically), obtaining accurate measures of service quality and satisfaction are potentially more difficult. This is especially true with the evaluation of services that support an entertainment performance, such as a sporting event or a concert.

The outcome of a sporting event (e.g., whether or not the home team won) is likely to affect the evaluation of the sporting event (e.g., it was a good game) and perhaps have an impact on the overall evaluation of the entertainment experience (e.g., I had a good time). However, does the outcome of the sporting event have an impact on the evaluation of related services (e.g., parking, concessions, etc.)? Specifically, will perceived levels of service and satisfaction be affected by the customers perceived quality of the performance? Will there be a halo effect created by the perceived quality of the performance and reflected in the subjective evaluation of related services?

While the impact of the halo effect has been studied in a variety of marketing (cf., Bass, Talarzyk 1971; Bass, Pessemier, and Lehmann 1972; Beckwith and Lehmann 1975; Han 1989; Holbrook 1983; James and Carter 1976; Johansson, MacLachlan and Yalch 1976; Lehmann 1971; Wu and Petroshius 1987) and personnel evaluation (cf., Balzer and Sulsky 1992; Becker and Cardy 1986; Mount and Thompson 1987; Murphy and Balzer 1986; Ostroff 1993) contexts, its influence on service and satisfaction evaluation has received little attention.

Research on the halo effect in personnel performance evaluations has produced fairly uniform results. If a rater generally likes the ratee, they tend to evaluate the ratee more favorably on specific performance dimensions. The question is, will a similar effect occur in a service performance situation? If a patron is

generally happy with the outcome of a performance, will they evaluate services associated with the performance more favorably?

It is the purpose of this study to explore a series of performances (basketball games) and assess how their outcome might impact the customers perception of service quality and satisfaction toward the service provider. It is the intent of this study to show that customer performance expectations and the events ultimate outcome result in a halo effect which biases individual evaluations of service quality dimensions and customer satisfaction. Since quality and satisfaction data often serve as a means of understanding service strengths and weaknesses, the existence of an uncontrolled halo effect could impair the diagnostic usefulness of the analytical results. Managerial recommendations are offered to address the halo bias.

DEFINING PERFORMANCE AND ITS CONSUMPTION

One area of services which has barely been explored is performance marketing (Deighton 1994), although some notable research exceptions exist (cf. Boissac 1987; Deighton 1992, 1994; Grove and Fisk 1983, 1992). A "performance" is defined as an action which is carried-out in order to fulfill an obligation or contract to another party (Deighton 1992, 1994). This stands in contrast to an "occurrence" which is an event which simply happens with no intent to satisfy another party (Deighton 1994). A "staged performance" is an act which is directly concerned with the impression it makes on the other party with no attempt to hide the staging (Deighton 1992, 1994). Since a staged performance requires an audience, which possesses the right to hold the actor to a set of standards, the service provider must be concerned with the management of expectations. Ultimately, it is the customers perception as to what constitutes a satisfactory performance and becomes the providers responsibility to understand their expectancies. Only then will the provider be capable of providing outcomes which maximize customer expectancies and result in a positive evaluation of the performance.

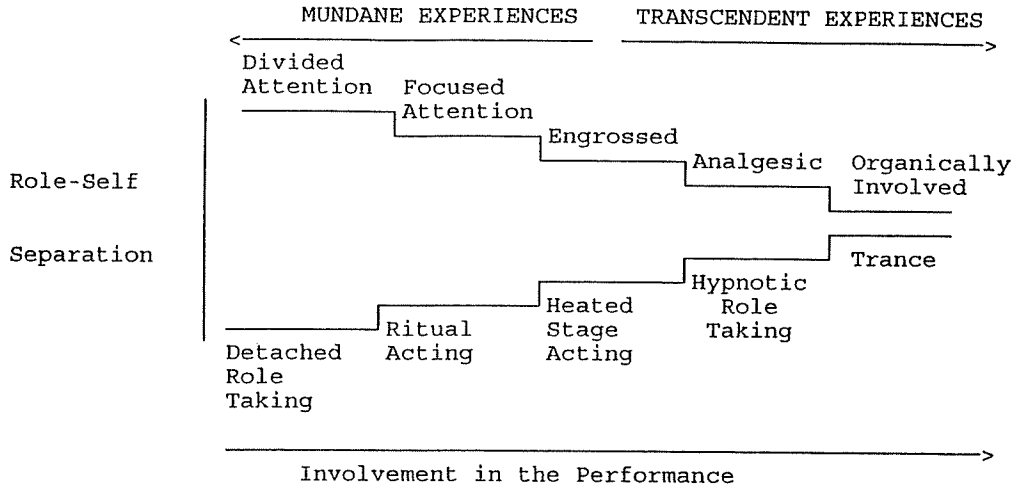
The motivation behind staging a performance might be identified by assessing the degree to which the customers role is active or passive, and the degree to which the events emphasis is directed toward the creation of realism or fantasy (Deighton 1992, 1994). Using this framework of analysis, performances might be categorized into four groups. A "Skill" performance involves a relatively passive audience consuming the event in a naturalistic setting (competitive sports). A "Show" performance also involves a passive audience, this time, experienced in an artificial setting (ballet). In the case of a "Thrill" performance, the emphasis is on realism but, the audience is highly integrated into the event (safari). Finally, a "Festive" performance entails customer interaction in an artificially created environment (Mardi Gras)(Deighton 1992, 1994).

A Skill performance, such as a basketball game, is defined as an act requiring competence and which is exhibited in a naturalistic setting to a passive audience (Deighton 1992, 1994). A Skill performance fails when the audience perceives either a lack of competence on the part of the actor(s) or a contrived outcome (Deighton 1992, 1994). Deighton (1993) has proposed that a successful performance is one which results from a high degree of involvement. This involvement, he suggests, exists on a continuum which runs from mundane to transcendent. While most performances do not reach the level of trance, they could elevate the individual to the level of hypnotic. When experiences occur they activate both cognitive and emotional systems. This results in an amplification of the event producing a richer and more complex significance (Deighton 1994). This information is then stored in memory to be recalled at a later time.

COGNITIVE CATEGORIZATION AND THE HALO EFFECT

One concept that has been identified as an important component for understanding the cognitive process of evaluation is categorization (Feldman 1981; Ilgen and Feldman 1983). Individuals perceive and process incoming information using either abstract categories or concrete prototypes stored in memory (Mount and Thompson 1987). The information stored in these existing schema, created from a variety of formal and informal sources, serve the individual by

Figure 1
Involvement in the Performance Continuum



Source: Deighton 1994

providing "cognitive economy" through the reduction in processing requirements (Behling, Gifford and Tolliver 1980; Smith, Adams and Schorr 1978). Once information has been stored in a particular category, later retrieval and recall of that information tends to be biased by the category (Cantor and Mischel 1977). Therefore, categorization of events has important implications on halo, leniency and accuracy of evaluations.

Although, a number of models exist for explaining the halo effect (cf. Lance, LaPointe and Stewart 1994; Murphy and Anhalt 1992), we adopt for this study the initial conceptualization of the phenomenon first observed by Wells (1907) and Scott (1908) and later formally defined by Thorndike (1920). Thorndike (1920, p. 25) defines the halo effect as follows:

> A marked tendency to think of a person [event] in general as rather good or rather inferior and color the judgments of the specific performance dimensions by this general feeling.

This definition suggests that halo is a within-rater phenomenon that results in the generalized or global impression of the ratee [event]. In the context of categorization this would suggest that dimensions being evaluated are perceived as being consistent with the categorization schema. For example, the basketball game might serve as a prototype and service expectancies at the event generalized to the same categorization schema. This might be analogous to trait ratings of individuals which have been found to be recalled collectively and tend to covary with the general category (Feldman 1981). Additionally, it has been found that evaluations of the least important dimensions in a category are determined almost exclusively by the halo effect (Beckwith and Lehmann 1975).

THE IMPACT OF MOOD STATE ON CATEGORIZATION AND THE HALO EFFECT

Similar to the findings addressing cognitive processing, mood state, satisfaction, and other affective responses are thought to impact the evaluation process (Williams, Alliger and Pulliam 1988). Research indicates that affect influences the evaluation process resulting in an alteration of rating outcomes (Murphy and Cleveland 1991). For example, it has been shown that mood state alters the information retrieval process during performance appraisals resulting in judgments which are consistent with those found in mood congruency research (Bower 1981; Isen et al.,

1978; Teasdale and Fogarty 1979).

In the context of categorization and the halo effect, it has been shown that a positive affective state results in more lenient categorization (Isen and Daubman 1984). For example, O'Malley and Davies (1984), studying mood state in the context of reward allocation, found that subjects in a positive mood did not discriminate in terms of performance level when assigning reward allocations. They argued that this suggests more lenient categorization and a greater halo effect. Alternatively, those subjects in a negative mood, were much more critical of performance level and their allocation of reward. This might reflect less assimilation of information and a more stringent categorization of information. They also suggest that this might indicate greater evaluation accuracy and limited halo effect. Similar research results have been reported by Sinclair and Mark (1986).

HOW WILL THE HALO EFFECT MANIFEST ITSELF? A PROXIMITY MODEL

Factual information and the affect associated with the event, according to network theory, are stored in a configuration of linkages which form a structure resembling a web (Bower 1981; Bower and Cohen 1982). Successful retrieval of information at a later time is a function of both the formation of memory linkages (proximity) and the recency of the information (Higgins and King 1981). In addition, it has been argued that memory operates on a last-in-first-out basis (Higgins, Rholes and Jones 1977). This would suggest that the most recently processed information will be the easiest to recall given the appropriate retrieval cue (Tybout, Sternthal and Calder 1983). In the context of a basketball game, under positive mood state conditions, it would be expected that the degree of halo would decrease as the service provided became more remote (e.g., parking). Under negative conditions, although harder to recall, all services should be discriminately evaluated.

SETTING THE STAGE

The halo effect phenomenon was studied in the context of a series of basketball games played at a large southwestern state university. A survey was developed to acquire information about the level of satisfaction among patrons for the ancillary and event services provided by the Thomas and Mack Center and the changes and renovations made in the arena.

The survey was administered at three separate games to ensure that the results were not biased by the results of any one game. All three games took place in the span of seven days. Efforts were taken to insure that the level of service in the areas studied were as consistent as possible. For example, the prerecorded music scripts and sound levels were kept consistent, as were concession stand menus and giveaways. This situation provided a good test of the possible existence of the halo effect based on the outcome of the event. The three games in the study provided a wide range of expectations and outcomes.

The first game was against a conference opponent, San Jose State University. Going into this game, the home team had a record of 8 wins and 1 loss, and had won all 23 previous contests with the opponent. In addition, the home team had a 54 game home winning streak. The visiting team had a record of 3 wins and 8 losses and was in last place in the league. On paper, the game appeared to be no contest. The game turned out to be closer than expected. The home team lead nearly the whole game by margins of 5 to 15 points, and eventually won 84-77. The local newspaper headline read, "UNLV Survives Spartan Scare." Quotes from the newspaper included, "...a stunning nail biter," and "When things get out of sync, things like this happen." The home team won but did not perform as well as expected. The home town fans went home disappointed in the quality of play by their team.

The second game was against a non-conference opponent that the home team had not previously played. Going into this game, the home team had a record of 9 wins and 1 loss, and a had 55 game home winning streak. The visiting team had a record of 5 wins and 8 losses. On paper, the home team was clearly favored, but since the opponent was a relative unknown, the crowd appeared to be nervous. The game turned out to be very close and entertaining. The home team eventually won in overtime by the score of 98-96, after trailing by as much as 12 points with less

than 10 minutes remaining in the game. The win preserved the team's 55 game home winning streak. The local newspaper headline read, "REBELS Escape in Overtime." Quotes from the newspaper included, "When UNLV made its run, it was due to some of the best defense they have played as a team," and "A disappearing first half defense showed up just in time." The home team did not perform as well as expected, but the heroic win seemed to make up for the lack of execution early in the game. The home town fans left the arena, relieved, still buzzing about the finish.

The third game was against a nationally ranked non-conference opponent that had a 5 win and 1 loss record against the home team. Going into this game, the home team had a record of 10 wins and 1 loss, was ranked 15th nationally, and had a 56 game home winning streak. The visiting team had a record of 11 wins and 1 loss and was ranked 18th nationally. It was a "big" game for both teams. On paper, the game was even, especially since the home team was coming off two closer than expected wins. The game was a blowout. The home team won by 16, 96-80, but lead 25-6 early and by as many as 35 points in the second half. The win was cause for celebration and NCAA tournament talk for the home town fans. The local newspaper headline read, "REBELS Race by Hoyas." Quotes from the newspaper included the home team coach saying, "I hadn't never in my wildest dreams, felt we'd win this way," and "We just about had as good a first half as we possibly could have." The home team performed well above expectations. The home town fans left the arena, in a state of euphoria.

After the data was collected, but prior to the data analysis it was hypothesized that the first game would result in generally lower satisfaction evaluations, while the third game would result in generally higher satisfaction evaluations. This would be consistent with performance involvement (see figure 1) (Deighton 1994). The performance of the home team in Game 1 was below expectations and appeared to result in relatively low levels of performance involvement by the patrons. Alternatively, in games 2 and 3 the patrons were highly animated and vocal, and appeared to be much more involved in the performance.

Based on the Proximity Model discussed previously, it was postulated that the evaluation of the services and factors that affected the overall

Figure 2
Proximity Model for Predicting the Amount of Halo Effect

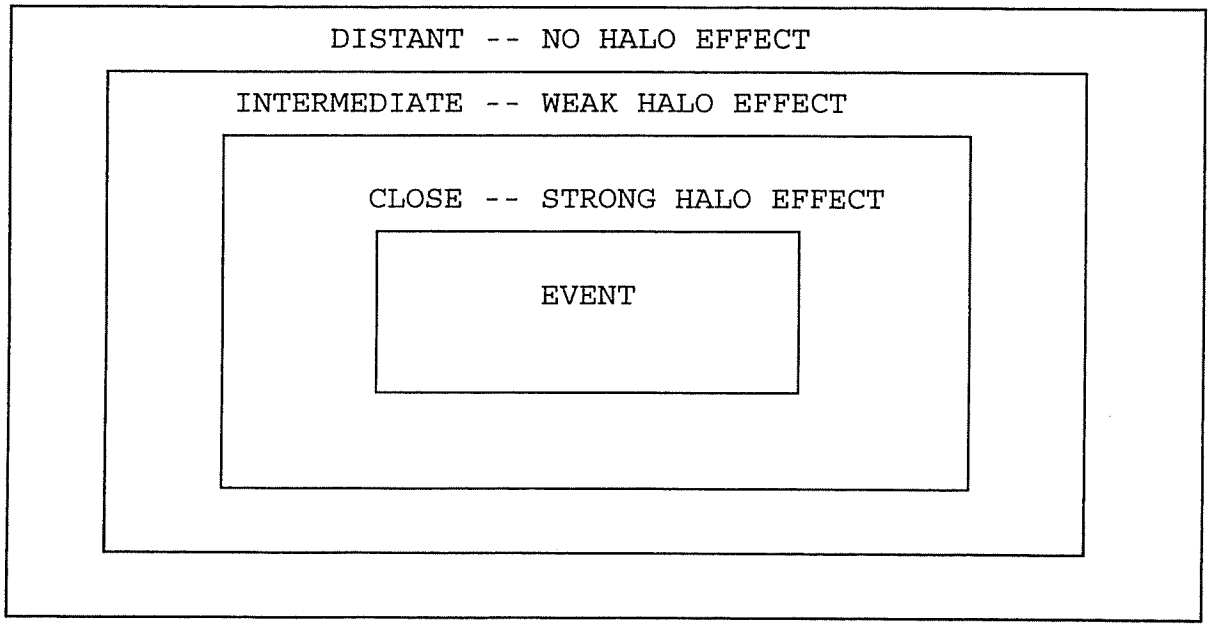


Table 1
Mean Differences Between Games

	GAME 1	GAME 2	GAME 3	F Value	Prob.	Stat Sig.
REMOTE						
Parking	3.908	3.964	**4.038**	.467	.628	No
Staff	**4.519**	4.507	4.439	.562	.571	No
No Smoke Policy	4.426	4.394	**4.523**	.533	.588	No
Start Time	**3.964**	3.697	3.900	2.367	.095	No
Average	4.199	4.141	4.250			
INTERMEDIATE						
Food	3.733	3.856	**3.944**	1.614	.200	No
Food Quality Impr	3.611	3.796	**3.832**	1.780	.170	No
Cleanliness of Arena	4.500	4.568	**4.570**	.520	.596	No
Menu Variety	3.919	**4.019**	3.960	.458	.633	No
Restrooms	4.217	**4.361**	4.236	1.552	.213	No
Directional Signs	3.929	**4.170**	4.113	**3.330**	**.037**	Yes
Concourse Appear	3.966	**4.207**	4.148	**3.108**	**.046**	Yes
Average	3.982	4.140	4.115			
CLOSE						
Sound level	3.663	**4.206**	4.129	**9.547**	**.000**	Yes
Band music	3.667	3.995	**4.082**	**5.698**	**.003**	Yes
Pre-rec Music	3.455	**4.009**	3.931	**10.456**	**.000**	Yes
Giveaways	3.098	3.797	**3.854**	**19.508**	**.000**	Yes
Sound Quality	3.932	**4.239**	4.101	**3.764**	**.024**	Yes
Average	3.563	4.049	4.015			
COMPREHENSIVE MEASURES						
Overall Average	3.905	4.112	4.119			
Overall Satisfaction	3.716	3.952	**4.079**	**5.336**	**.005**	Yes
Number of times individual measures were:						
the highest	2	7	7			
the lowest	13	2	1			
DEMOGRAPHICS						
Age	51	44	41	11.616	.000	Yes
Sex (% male)	58%	65%	64%	2.872	.058	No
Income	$68,229	$59,750	$55,952	.615	.541	No
Adults in party	2.354	1.961	2.350	1.976	.139	No
Children in party	0.133	0.225	0.229	.995	.370	No
1st game attended (% Yes)	1%	8%	11%	1.926	.147	No
Zip (% Local)	99%	94%	92%	.469	.627	No
Attendance	11,729	11,386	18,723			

satisfaction experience and were close in their proximity to the event would experience a strong halo effect (see Figure 2). Those services and factors that affected the overall satisfaction with the experience, but were intermediate in their proximity to the event would experience a weak

halo effect. Those related services and factors that affected the overall satisfaction with the experience, but were remotely connected to the event would be least subject to a halo effect.

A priori, the various factors and services were classified as remote, intermediate, and close. Those factors and services that were experienced outside the arena and/or prior to the game were classified as remote. Those factors and services that were experienced in the concourse area of the arena during the game were classified as intermediate. Those factors and services that were experienced in the arena itself, during the game were classified as close. Table 1 provides a list of the various factors and services, and their classification.

Method

Surveys were randomly distributed to 1400 patrons over a three night period. Respondents were able to return the surveys when they left the arena or by mail. As an incentive, respondents were given a coupon good for a free soft drink, a $2.00 value. A total of 484 completed surveys were returned, resulting in a 34 percent response rate. Information was collected on perceived quality and satisfaction on a variety of factors along with demographic information to determine the composition of each audience.

Demographics

First, the survey respondents were compared on a number of demographic factors to determine the similarities and differences across the three samples. The results are presented in Table 1. The respondents were compared on seven factors including age, sex, and income. The only significant difference between the groups was age. The survey respondents at the first game averaged 10 years older than those responding to the third survey. A correlation analysis between age of respondent and overall evaluation scores did not prove to be significant. These results were encouraging and suggested that respondents were similar enough to allow for evaluative comparisons between the three events.

General Halo Effect Results

Recall, that it was hypothesized that the first game would result in the lowest satisfaction evaluations and the third game would result in the highest evaluations. This was based on the hypothesis that game 1 provided the patron, theoretically, with the poorest entertainment experience and that game 3 provided the patron with the best experience. The measure of overall entertainment experience (see Table 1) was statistically significant across the three games. Game 1 was evaluated as the least satisfying (3.716) and game 3 was evaluated as the most satisfying (4.079). Game 2 (3.952) was evaluated nearly as high as game 3. These findings support the validity of the hypothesis.

To test the general halo effect hypothesis, the 16 specific satisfaction measures were investigated. Table 1 shows these 16 measures across the three games. Of the 16 satisfaction measures game 1 had the lowest evaluation 13 times. Conversely, game 1 had the highest evaluation only 2 times, While game 2 and game 3 each had the highest evaluation score 7 times. The overall average satisfaction evaluation score was the lowest for game 1 (3.905), and virtually the same for games 2 and 3 (4.112 and 4.119). In summary, these results support the premise of predictable halo effects based on the quality of performance. In the context of this study, the game 1 evaluations are dramatically different from the other two games.

A Test of the Proximity Model of Halo Effects

Recall, that the Proximity Model of halo effects posits, that when the individual is in a positive mood, those evaluations categorized as close to the event are likely to be affected by the quality of the performance. Those satisfaction evaluations that are considered intermediate will be weakly influenced by the performance. Those evaluations that are classified as remote will be even less affected by the event itself.

Table 1 shows the data used to test this model of the halo effect as it applies to satisfaction measures surrounding a performance. A total of four satisfaction measures were classified as remote. None of the evaluations were significantly different between the games. This suggests that

the evaluations were not at all affected by the performance/game.

A total of seven satisfaction measures were classified as intermediate. They ranged from satisfaction with cleanliness of the arena to the satisfaction with the directional signs on the concourse. Two measures (concourse appearance and directional signage) were statistically different across the three games. This suggests a weak (2/7=29%) halo effect. In both cases, the measures for game 1 were substantially lower than those for games 2 and 3. This finding is consistent with the predicted halo effect. It should be noted that the two factors with the significant differences were structural items that were exactly the same for all three games.

A total of five satisfaction measures were classified as close. They ranged from satisfaction with the prerecorded music to satisfaction with the sound level. All five measures were statistically different across the three games. In each case, the measures for game 1 were substantially lower than those for games 2 and 3. This finding suggests a strong halo effect for the measures that were classified as close.

In conclusion, the Proximity Model does an excellent job of predicting halo effects. For the remote satisfaction measures no halo effects were observed, with the average of the measures ranging from 4.141 to 4.250, a difference of .109. For the intermediate measures two out of seven halo effects were identified. The average measures ranged from 3.982 to 4.140, a difference of .158. Finally, all five close measures displayed a halo effect with the average measures ranging from 3.563 to 4.049, a difference of .486.

MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

The managerial implications of these findings are threefold. First, researchers who are surveying patrons regarding satisfaction with services related to experiential products and services need to be aware of the potential for halo effects related to the overall experience. In these cases, it is very difficult for patrons to separate the satisfaction with specific services from satisfaction with the overall experience. This would include products and services such as, sporting events, concerts, plays, movies, amusement parks, resorts, national and state parks, zoos, restaurants, golf courses, etc. This is problematic, since in many cases, a number of extraneous factors (e.g., weather, quality of performance) affect the overall experience, but are not controllable by the service provider.

There is no doubt that patrons at an amusement park register more complaints on a bad weather day than they would on a nice weather day. The service provider must be careful not to overreact when an increase in the number of complaints or low survey satisfaction scores are attributable to uncontrollable factors. On the other hand, personal experience suggests that most experiential service providers attempt to collect data in the best case scenario. The authors have personally experienced situations where satisfaction surveys were canceled due to "bad weather" or the fear that the performance would not be up to expectations. In fact, this practice might exacerbate measurement problems associated with the halo effect. This approach is likely to lead to a halo effect that over-states the perceived level of quality and associated satisfaction. Previous research indicates that halo effects are much more likely to be found in positive affective states (Isen and Daubman 1984; O'Malley and Davies 1984). When individuals are in a more negative mood, hey are more critical and accurate in their evaluation, thus reducing the halo effect(Isen and Daubman 1984; O'Malley and Davies 1984).
The simplest solution is for experiential service providers to take multiple measures of service quality irrespective of perceived patron expectancy level. Besides customer satisfaction measures, the marketer should measure and monitor inputs (e.g., number of concession stand lines per 1,000 patrons) and process (e.g., average length of waiting line time at the concession stand). By using all three types of measures a more complete evaluation of specific services is possible.

The second managerial implication is that satisfaction researchers should attempt to identify ways to minimize halo effects in the measurement of service satisfaction. The distinction between a service encounter and overall satisfaction (Bitner and Hubbert 1994) should be considered in the design and administration of satisfaction survey instruments. A service encounter has been defined as a discrete event in which a customer and service

provider directly interact, while overall satisfaction is more global (Bitner and Hubbert 1994). In practice, this suggests that researchers interested in obtaining an accurate measure of a particular service dimension should interact with the patron immediately following the encounter rather than delaying the measurement. This suggestion is consistent with research conducted by Nathan and Lord (1983), which found that memory-based evaluations were subject to greater halo effects compared to evaluations made immediately after a particular behavior. In addition, researchers should guard against creating a time pressured situation for the respondents of satisfaction surveys. Individuals that are rushed are more likely to engage in yeasaying or heuristic processing, which in turn leads to halo effects. Recommendations include shortening surveys to a few questions and avoiding those individuals that appear to be in a hurry.

The third managerial implication deals with the long-run management of the experience. Over time, few factors are truly uncontrollable. The experiential service provider needs to continue to find ways to enhance the experience. Not only will the patron be more satisfied with the overall experience, but they will also be more satisfied with the related services. While attention must be paid to the quality of services, at least some time should be spent on improving the experience and reducing the likelihood that extraneous variables are going to negatively affect the experience. An example of this is the addition of water misters at Sun Devil Stadium in Phoenix. While the hot weather is uncontrollable, the addition of the misters reduces the effect of the weather. If this enhances the overall experience, it is easily worth the time and money.

CONCLUSION

The results of this study suggest that measuring patron satisfaction with specific services related to an entertainment experience is subject to potential halo effects. The more closely tied the service is to the actual performance/event, the more likely a halo effect will be present. While the study suggests that the hot dogs don't necessarily taste better when the home team wins, the music sure sounds better.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Research support was provided by the First Interstate Bank of Nevada.

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