
Citation:

Rocco Junior, AJ and Gasparetto, T and Tranchitella, M and Monteiro de Barros, FL and Brum, LA and Macedo, R (2022) Who wants football back? Surveying fans in Brazil during COVID-19. In: Research Handbook on Sport and COVID-19. Edward Elgar, Cheltenham, pp. 178-190. ISBN 9781802207569

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Document Version:

Book Section (Submitted Version)

This is a draft chapter. The final version is available in Research Handbook on Sport and COVID-19 edited by Paul M. Pedersen, published in 2022, Edward Elgar Publishing Ltd <https://doi.org/10.4337/9781802207576>

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Chapter 16. Who wants football back? Surveying fans in Brazil during COVID-19

Abstract

In March 2020, when the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the novel coronavirus a global pandemic, the Brazilian football clubs were playing in state championships. Immediately after the WHO announcement, and with the first death in Brazil caused by COVID-19 on March 12, 2020, professional football competitions were interrupted. For four months, no professional football matches were held in Brazil. Official matches returned in the second half of July 2020, but behind closed doors. The aim of this study was to investigate whether, in the face of the pandemic, fans were willing to return to football stadiums as well as uncover the characteristics of those individuals that are more likely to support the return of professional football. The findings of this study may help clubs and sports federations to identify potential fans willing to consume sports goods under singular conditions, like new variants of the coronavirus.

Keywords: brazilian football, consumer behaviour, sports fans, stadiums.

Chapter 16. Who wants football back? Surveying fans in Brazil during COVID-19

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With the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak declared a global pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO) in the second week of March 2020, many outdoor activities were prohibited to avoid crowds and virus dissemination. As a result, official football competitions were suspended indefinitely in most countries. The football market in Brazil was deeply affected by these measures, as Brazilian football clubs were playing in regional and continental tournaments and suddenly had to stop their activities.

At the start of the pandemic, official football competitions in Brazil were suspended for four months (from March to July 2020). In July 2020, the main professional football competitions restarted, but without attendees in stadiums. Supporters were allowed in stadiums in October 2021, more than one year after the restart of football competitions in the country.

Brazil was severely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. In May 2020, when the survey upon which this chapter based was conducted, Brazil was the worlds' second country in terms of

confirmed COVID-19 cases, behind only the United States. In September 2020, Brazil was surpassed by India. By January 07, 2022, 620,000 people had died in Brazil due to COVID-19, with more than 22 million people affected by this infectious disease.

Despite these numbers, a relevant part of the Brazilian population was against the adoption of many measures to fight the virus dissemination (e.g., use of face masks, restrictions, vaccines, social distancing). Most of these people also wanted the return of professional football competitions, arguing the population needed entertainment during the lockdown and that professional football players would hardly suffer from the disease or that economic activities should not be interrupted during the pandemic.

Considering the above, the survey upon which this chapter is based was conducted in May 2020, at the height of the crisis caused by the novel coronavirus in Brazil. It was during this time when sports activities were interrupted across the country and thus this study sought to investigate whether, despite the pandemic, football fans would be willing to return to the stadiums. The survey also aimed to identify the characteristics of individuals most likely to support the restart of professional football competitions and what hygienic, sanitary, and safety measures would be required, in the perception of fans, to allow the return of audiences to Brazilian stadiums in official professional football competitions.

Our intention with this research was to help managers of the most popular sport in Brazil understand the effects of COVID-19 on the behavior of fans, spectators, supporters, and consumers of Brazilian professional football, in an extremely complex and unique moment such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

Before presenting the theoretical framework and the literature review that motivated this study, it is important to briefly introduce Brazil and, in particular, how the Brazilian football

market is structured, highlighting that football is the most popular sport in the country and one of the main cultural elements for which Brazil is known around the world.

Brazil, Football, and the Pandemic

Brazil, officially the Federative Republic of Brazil, is the largest country in South America and Latin America, the fifth largest country in the world by area, with a total area of 8,514,876 km² (IBGE, 2021), and the sixth most populous country, with more than 213 million inhabitants (IBGE, 2021). Brazil is the largest Portuguese-speaking country in the world and the only one in the Americas (Central Intelligence Agency, 2008). It is also one of the most multicultural and ethnically diverse nations as a result of immigration from several regions around the world. As a federative presidential republic, Brazil consists in 26 states and the Federal District, with 5,570 municipalities (Constituição da República Federativa do Brasil, 1988).

The structure of states that constitute the Federative Republic of Brazil is also seen in the organization of professional football competitions in the country. Unlike several countries around the world, the football competitions in Brazil are held from January to December. First, state championships take place in the first months of the year, from January to April. These competitions have regional characteristics and include the main professional football teams of each Brazilian state.

From April to December, after the state championships, national competitions are held involving clubs from all over the country. Twenty main football teams in Brazil play in the *Campeonato Brasileiro Serie A* (the Brazilian Championship – First Division), the most important nationwide competition, which determines the Brazilian representatives for the *Copa Libertadores da América*, the main football competition gathering clubs from South America.

In March 2020, when the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the novel coronavirus a global pandemic, the Brazilian football clubs were playing in state championships. Immediately after the WHO announcement, and with the first death in Brazil caused by COVID-19 on March 12, 2020, professional football competitions were interrupted. For four months, no professional football matches were held in Brazil. Official matches returned in the second half of July 2020, but the matches were played behind closed doors.

The survey upon which this chapter is based was conducted in May 2020, when official professional football competitions were interrupted in Brazil and governments, managers, specialized media, sponsors, fans, and other stakeholders of the Brazilian football universe discussed about the ‘future’ of this sport in Brazil and the necessary measures to have fans back in stadiums with safety and no risk to contract or spread the virus, in a context of uncertainties never seen before by any football organization in Brazil.

Sport Consumer Behavior

Football, like sports in general, can be consumed in different ways. Identifying the reasons why fans consume sports and trying to predict their behavior are essential aspects for the organizations involved in the sport industry. However, despite the expansion of businesses in the sports universe, understanding the consumer behavior of fans is still an important topic for managers and companies that are interested in investing in sports. Stewart et al. (2003) assessed several studies related to sport consumer behavior. For these authors, sport consumers have different relationships with sport products or services. They posited that not all supporters are fanatical or support or identify with the club with the same intensity. Stewart and colleagues conducted a critical review of some typologies of sport consumers observed until the beginning of the 2000s. They highlighted three main models of sport consumer behaviors: models based on

dualistic approaches, models based on tiered typologies, and models based on the sport spectator identification scale.

Models that assess sport consumer behaviors based on dualistic approaches present simple typologies seeking to understand the connections between fans and clubs, sport competitions and events. Studies analyzing these models include Clarke (1978) and Boyle and Haynes (2000). The authors of these two studies developed simple typologies to compare fans who had been marginalized by the commercial transformation in English football in the early 1990s with the creation of the English Premier League. Both studies compared genuine fans who saw all matches and built a strong sense of identity and community with other fans who viewed football as a 'pleasant afternoon's entertainment' (Boyle & Haynes).

Other studies also used dualistic approaches to analyze European football consumers in the late 1990s and early 2000s. The main studies showed an ideological assertion identified in a change in sports from a state product, typical of the Cold War period (1945-1990), to a market product, which became predominant after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1990 (Bristol & Sebastian, 2001; Hughson, 1999; Lewis, 2001).

The second typology of sport consumer behavior proposed by Stewart et al. (2003) was identified as tiered typologies. In the early 1990s, several studies conducted in the United States expanded the analysis of sport consumers, measuring the level and intensity of attachment between fans and their teams, sports, or sport events and competitions. Several authors found that sport consumers could be differentiated and tiered according to their beliefs and behaviors.

The third typology proposed by Stewart et al. (2003) uses the study by Wann and Branscombe (1993) as one of its most important theoretical references. In this study, the authors classified North American sport consumers based on the level of identification of fans with a

club or team and developed a methodology to measure such intensity named Sport Spectator Identification Scale (SSIS). After applying the SSIS, the authors identified high identification fans, who had a strong attachment to their favorite team and did not hesitate to publicly demonstrate their loyalty to such team (Stewart et al.). On the other hand, fans with weak attachment read and talked less about sport, attended matches less frequently, saw less sport matches or programs on television, and had less knowledge about the subject (Wann & Branscombe). These were low identification fans. Then, the model proposed by Wann and Branscombe provided the basis for a scale of sport consumers (fans) to assess multiple levels of attachment, loyalty, and identification.

Mullin et al. (1993) also used similar assumptions about North American fans to develop their own sport consumption model. The authors identified sport consumers could be classified according to a frequency scale, with highly committed consumers who regularly attended matches at the top of the scale, while low commitment consumers were at the bottom, and moderately committed consumers were near the middle of the scale. With this instrument, Mullen and colleagues concluded the main objective of sport marketing professionals was to take consumers to a higher level of commitment on the scale and, consequently, increase the consumption of sport products and services.

Multidimensional Models of Sport Consumption

The development of studies focused on building sport spectator identification scales caused an advance in studies, providing a better understanding of consumers of sport products, services, and events. However, multidimensional models of sport consumption emerged with the growing economic importance of the sport industry.

One of the first studies to bring several dimensions to the sphere of sport consumption was the ‘Consuming Professional Baseball: a Model of Spectator Consumption Practices’ developed by Holt in 1995, using consumers of the Chicago Cubs (a professional baseball club affiliated with Major League Baseball in the United States) as primary data. In this multidimensional model, the first dimension centered on the subjective experience of consumers and how they connected to the team using rational and emotional behaviors. The second dimension centered on the ways consumers integrated the club and its personality into their sense of self. The third dimension centered on the ways consumers used the sport experience to classify their relationships to the club and project that relationship to the wider community. The final dimension was focused on the play element in consumption and how consumers played out their sport experience with other consumers. As a result of his studies, Holt created a universe of four types of sport consumers: those who consume sport as an experience, those who consume it as integration, those who consume it as classification, and those who consume sport as a match (play).

The conclusion of Holt (1995) was very important for our study. For Holt, sport consumption not only involves a forum to express emotional attachments to a team, but it is also used to engage in strategic analysis, confirm individual identity, signify one’s social position, and converse with other sport consumers in a common setting with playful exchanges.

When analyzing the reasons for attending matches and the frequency of match attendance, Smith and Stewart (1999), in another important study, identified five different types of sport consumers: passionate partisans, champ followers, reclusive partisans, theatergoers, and aficionados. Smith and Stewart noted that the first three groups referred to consumers who

valued team affiliation above all, while the other two types were more interested in the quality of the match than the club.

Mahony et al. (2000) adopted a similar conceptual approach to that presented by Smith and Stewart (1999) when assessing North American sport consumers. Mahony and colleagues created a Psychological Commitment to Team (PCT) scale to measure commitment levels and reveal the strength of an individual's relationship with a team. They identified four types of team loyalty, combining fan commitment with match attendance: true loyalty, spurious loyalty, latent loyalty, and low loyalty.

One of the most interesting typologies developed to study sport consumer (fan) behaviors was developed by Hunt et al. (1999). The authors proposed five different types of sport fans (consumers): temporary, local, devoted, fanatical, and dysfunctional fans. Hunt and colleague noted that each of these types has differentiated sport consumption behaviors, offering sports organizations a chance to provide specific and segmented strategies for each of these types of fans. In our study, fanatical and dysfunctional fans, as proposed by Hunt et al., should be highlighted. As noted by Hunt and colleagues, fanatical fans use sport consumption as part of their personal identification and dysfunctional fans use the sport team, player or whatever their target of consumption as the main method of self-identification for the others and themselves.

In addition to its conceptual contributions, the typology of sport fans proposed by Hunt et al. (1999) presents important implications for professionals of the sport industry, in particular for a fan segmentation, supporting the development of better products or services for a specific consumer, with more targeted and assertive strategies and techniques.

One of the most relevant, complex and influential models developed to assess sport consumer behavior is the Psychological Continuum Model (PCM), proposed by Funk and James

(2001). Instead of using classification levels and scales like the models described above, the authors adopted an incremental stage metaphor to frame their analysis. For Funk and James, sport consumers move through four stages or levels of sport relationship and team identification: awareness, attraction, attachment, and allegiance.

Gladden and Funk (2002) used the concepts of brand equity and brand association to create a three-dimensional approach to measure fan identification with a team. By examining the attitudes and behaviors of a sample of North American sports consumers, the authors found that consumer association with teams was built in three specific ways. First, consumers connected to teams through product features that included the coach, the team management, the team logo, the team colors, main players, its facilities and services. Second, the connection between consumers and teams was through product benefits from experiences provided by the relationship with the team or symbolic connections. Third, consumers were connected to teams through attitudes (Gladden & Funk). In total, Gladden and Funk identified 16 factors for the consumer association with the brand of a club or sports business. The authors used all these elements to build the Team Association Model (TAM), which provided the foundation for the development of sport consumer profiles (Gladden & Funk, 2002).

Another scale that measures the motivation of sport fans is the Sport Interest Inventory (SII), developed by Funk et al. (2001). This scale addresses 10 factors regarding fan motivation: football, vicarious achievement, emotion, team interest, supporting women's opportunity in sport, aesthetics, socialization, national pride, drama, and player interest. For Funk et al., factors such as indirect achievement, aesthetics, socialization, and drama are considered in sport fan motivations.

In another important study, Trail and James (2001) proposed a scale based on psychometric criteria named the Motivation Scale for Sport Consumption (MSSC). The MSSC addresses nine factors of sport fan motivation: vicarious achievement, aesthetics, drama, escape, knowledge acquisition, physical skills of athletes, social interaction, physical attractiveness of athletes, and family. Unlike other scales, the MSSC proposes new factors such as knowledge acquisition, physical skills of athletes, and physical attractiveness of athletes. Knowledge acquisition proposes that fans are motivated to consume sports due to the knowledge it can provide.

The multidimensional models described above clearly show that sport consumption involves a wide range of motivations and beliefs. These different motivations can be grouped into a number of behavioral clusters that highlight the different ways in which consumers express their sporting interests and connect to them (Stewart et al., 2003). These clusters include primary motivators, emotional commitment, economic and financial commitment, levels of identification, loyalty, connective focus, overt experiences, and frequency of match attendance (Stewart et al.).

The results obtained with all these multidimensional models of sport consumer behavior not only confirm that sport consumption has cognitive, effective and behavioral components, but also question the view that loyalty and commitment are directly translated into active consumption (Stewart et al. al., 2003). Multidimensional models also provide a richer description of the factors that support sport consumption, revealing a multiplicity of social and psychological factors that shape the behavior of sport consumers.

According to Smith and Stewart (2014), there are at least four different ways to consume sport: as consumers of sporting goods, as consumers of sport services, as participants and

volunteers, and as spectators and fans. Football consumers, like other consumers, have motivations related to desires and needs to be fulfilled.

According to Engel et al. (1995), needs represent a core variable of motivation. They have two basic categories: utilitarian needs, defined as functional and practical benefits, and hedonistic needs, defined as subjective and emotional benefits.

Other studies like the ones mentioned above address motivation in sport consumption from the perspective of fans and spectators (Funk et al., 2001; Mahony et al., 2002; Sloan, 1989; Wann, 1995).

The characteristics of the society in which the supporter is involved are clearly relevant. One characteristic of postmodern society – which Debord (2000) defines as the Society of the Spectacle – is its consumer culture. This society, which characterizes the moment we experience now, reduces individuals to a condition of consumers as a result of the production system automation.

With the COVID-19 pandemic, all elements mentioned above have some impact. It is exactly this impact that we investigate in the Brazilian context. More specifically, this study is focused on assessing what type of fans want the restart of football competitions, who they are, and how safe they feel about returning to the stadiums.

Method

This study has an exploratory design. For Vergara (2006), an important Brazilian researcher, an exploratory study “is conducted in a field with little accumulated or systematized knowledge. Due to its nature of analysis, it does not include hypotheses that may arise during or at the end of the study” (p. 47). The unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic scenario worldwide caused a number of uncertainties and an unexpected situation regarding the behavior of fans who

frequently attended football matches at stadiums and arenas as a result of measures of social distancing, interruption of competitions and, after the return of matches, a scenario of competitions without fans in the stadiums. It also caused uncertainties in the universe of sport management regarding the post-pandemic behavior of fans attending sporting events. The above literature review on sport consumer behavior revealed studies and articles that somehow could help assess similar scenarios to those moments experienced in Brazil and around the world during the novel coronavirus pandemic.

The most relevant studies we found which analyzed the interruption of professional sports championships were related to the lockout in the National Hockey League (NHL) in the 2004–05 season (Crepeau, 2004; Jasina & Rotthoff, 2015; Winfree & Fort, 2008). All 1,230 matches of the NHL, which should have started in October 2004, were officially canceled on February 16, 2005 due to an unresolved lockout that started on September 16, 2004 (Crepeau). Then, the NHL was the first professional sports league in North America to lose an entire season because of labor disputes (Jasina & Rotthoff; Winfree & Fort; Crepeau). It was also the first time the Stanley Cup had no winner since 1919, when the Spanish flu pandemic canceled the championship (Crepeau). However, despite these studies related to the NHL lockout, no other study could be so far compared to the context and restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic around the world.

Then, considering the objective of this study – to investigate whether, with the pandemic, fans would be willing to return to football stadiums and identify the characteristics of the individuals most likely to support the restart of professional football competitions and what hygienic, sanitary, and safety measures would be required, in the perception of fans, to allow the return of audiences to Brazilian stadiums in official professional football competitions – we built

a data collection instrument that addressed several elements from the various theories of sport consumer behavior mentioned above and that would, at the end, suggest future paths regarding the relationship of managers with fans and consumers of professional football matches in Brazil.

This study was conducted between May 5 and 8, 2020, at the height of the pandemic in the country, when Brazil had an average of 9,500 new cases of COVID-19 per day. For this reason, primary data were collected using an online form created with Google Forms, which was sent to survey respondents via social networks using the Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and LinkedIn pages of the study researchers, who were all directly involved – academically or professionally – with the Brazilian football universe.

Then, a convenience sample and the snowball sampling technique were used to distribute the instrument on social media. “Snowball sampling technique has been used in qualitative studies in recent years,” notes Bockorni and Gomes (2021). They add that the reason for this usage is primary because snowball sampling “reaches hidden or difficult-to-reach populations” (p. 106). Bockorni and Gomes add that “snowball sampling is ideal for exploratory studies using non-probability samples” (p. 107).

The questionnaire sent to respondents had 16 questions: eight addressed football consumption habits – one about the engagement of respondents with football and seven about their perception of COVID-19 risks in sports venues, restrictions and health safety protocols that could be adopted due to the pandemic and the impact of these measures on the motivation and intention of respondents to return to football stadiums in professional competitions in Brazil when authorized by government and sports authorities.

For the theoretical conception of the instrument, elements of the dualistic theory (Boyle & Haynes, 2000; Clarke, 1978) were used to create a comparative scenario of football consumer

behavior in Brazil before and during the pandemic (time of data collection) and questions exploring multidimensional variables to assess the intention and motivation of consumers (Funk & James, 2001; Trail & James, 2001; Mahony et al., 2002) to return to football stadiums in Brazil when authorized by the authorities still during the COVID-19 pandemic, despite the high number of deaths reported across the Brazilian territory.

Initially, we observed the data collected through a descriptive statistical analysis, since the main concern of this study was to provide fast information to managers of Brazilian sports organizations that were experiencing an unprecedented, peculiar, and unique moment.

Later, the data were analyzed using an econometric approach. The applied model consists of a logistic regression model for the binary dependent variable: the value of 1 was assigned when a respondent supported the return of football matches, and 0 when a respondent did not support the restart. Explanatory variables addressed the following elements: gender, age, education, monthly income, whether or not the respondent was from a membership program of a football club, how often the respondent attended football matches, how safe the respondent felt to go to football matches in 2020, how willing the respondent was to comply with safety protocols when attending football matches, and how willing the respondent was to respect the recommendations issued by the WHO. All explanatory variables used in this study were categorical variables.

Results and Discussion

As mentioned above, the survey included questions about personal characteristics, socioeconomic factors, and football consumer behaviors. In total, 3,022 respondents answered the questionnaire, but some were excluded due to incorrect and/or missing information. The final sample consists in 2,827 respondents with valid responses.

Responses were obtained from all five geographic regions of Brazil: 62% of respondents were from the Southeast Region, where important cities like São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, and Belo Horizonte are located and home to some of the football teams with most fans in the country; 24% from the South Region, whose most important city is Porto Alegre, another relevant football center in Brazil; 9% from the Northeast Region; 2.5% from the Central West Region, where Brasília, the country's capital, is located; 0.50% from the North Region; and the remaining 2% did not provide their location. To illustrate the representativeness of each region in the *Campeonato Brasileiro Serie A* – the main football competition in the country – of all 20 teams that competed in the 2020 championship, 50% were from the Southeast Region, 20% from the South and Northeast regions; 10% from the Central West Region; and 0% from the North Region.

The sample was mostly comprised of male individuals (81%), while 19% were female individuals. Of the total valid sample, 55% were part of any club's membership program, that is, they pay a monthly fee to the club they support to obtain ticket advantages and/or other benefits from the club's partners, and 45% were not in membership programs. These programs (*sócio-torcedores*, in Portuguese) are like loyalty programs and have been implemented by the main clubs in Brazil. It slightly differs to traditional season tickets since *sócios-torcedores* commonly have voting rights beyond tickets and discounts in merchandising.

The majority (74%) of the respondents had a higher education degree: 39% with an undergraduate degree and 35% with a graduate degree. This characteristic does not actually reflect the level of education of the Brazilian population, whose access to university has not yet been effectively democratized. We attribute this distribution to the relationship networking of the

study researchers, basically of individuals with more opportunities and access to the Brazilian universities.

It is interesting to observe that 25% of respondents had a monthly financial income above 10 minimum wages, a high level of income when compared to the country's standards, while only 10% of the sample received less than one minimum wage, which is the income level of a significant part of the Brazilian population. Also regarding the profile of respondents, 43% of the sample consisted of individuals aged 35-to-50 years, followed by the age group of 26-to-35 years (30%).

Regarding football consumption in arenas and stadiums, 48% attended most of their team's matches before the pandemic; 33% attended sporadically, regardless of the match importance; 13% attended only decisive and/or important matches; and the remaining 7% rarely went to the stadium to support their clubs. Then, most respondents comprising our sample (48%) showed 'true loyalty' to their clubs (Mahony et al., 2000) and had already reached the level of allegiance proposed by Funk and James (2001).

It is relevant to highlight that our study was conducted in May 2020, at the height of the novel coronavirus in Brazil, with interrupted football competition and uncertainties about the restart of professional football competitions and return of audiences, and it aimed to investigate whether, with the pandemic, fans would be willing to return to football stadiums, and identify the characteristics of the individuals most likely to support the restart of professional football competitions and what hygienic, sanitary, and safety measures would be required, in the perception of fans, to allow the return of fans to Brazilian stadiums for official professional football competitions.

To achieve the objectives mentioned above, a descriptive analysis was performed showing that 36% of the sample supported the return of football matches during the COVID-19 pandemic (May 2020). The sample had mostly male individuals (81%), with significant differences in educational level and monthly income among respondents, as described above. When analyzed by gender, 39% of male and 23% of female participants supported the restart of football matches in May 2020, even with a high number of daily deaths by COVID-19 in the country.

To obtain these results, a regression model was used with the following variables: A = How many times a month do you attend football matches? S = Do you feel safe to attend football matches in 2020? W = How willing are you to comply with additional security protocols to attend football matches? WHO = How concerned are you about the World Health Organization's recommendations? I = Monthly income; E = Level of education. The following standard errors were used when analyzing the variables: $p < 0.01$, $p < 0.05$, $p < 0.1$. Table 1 shows the output of the econometric model.

{Insert Table 1 about here}

This analysis showed some expected results; for instance, fans who were more concerned about the safety measures and recommendations of health agencies tended to be against the restart of professional football matches, while those who were less concerned about safety supported the restart of professional football competitions.

However, an interesting finding was that fans who usually attended football matches were statistically opposed to the return of football competitions. One possible explanation is that these fans, as frequent attendees, would probably prefer not to have football matches at all

instead of matches with closed gates. They are defined by Mahony et al. (2000) as ‘true loyalty,’ individuals who have reached the level of allegiance proposed by Funk and James (2001).

In addition, the results suggested that individuals with higher education level were statistically opposed to the restart of football matches than other respondents, while those with higher monthly income showed an opposite behavior – they favored the return of football matches, even during the pandemic.

The first group, opposed to the return of football competitions, could be classified as devoted fans, while the second group presents typical characteristics of dysfunctional fans (Hunt et al., 1999). The second group of fans, despite the pandemic and the health risks associated with it, uses aspects such as socialization and drama as motivations to attend football matches, without considering the consequences (Funk et al., 2001).

Conclusions and Implications

Our study concluded that socioeconomic conditions have a statistical impact on sport consumer behavior, influencing a person’s opinion about the restart of football competitions during a global pandemic. The results also demonstrated that a person’s level of concern about safety statistically affects their judgment.

As its main contribution, this study explored, for the first time, the perceptions of fans about a potential restart of football matches in Brazil during the COVID-19 pandemic. As fans tend to react differently under identical conditions (pandemic), football governing bodies and health authorities must work together to decide when and how matches should be held, without the influence from fans and their tendentious wishes.

In the second half of November 2021, Brazil had a moving average of deaths of 114 people, well below the month of April 2021, when this number reached 1,082 deaths a day. As

mentioned before, attendees were back to arenas and stadiums only in October 2021, that is, more than one year after the restart of football competitions in the country and one year and five months after this study was conducted.

As for managerial implications, we believe the results of this study can contribute to a better management of professional football facilities in Brazil, in a period when the novel coronavirus pandemic seems to be under control in the Brazilian territory. In December 2021, when this chapter was being finished, several European countries and the United States are once again facing problems with the COVID-19 pandemic due to the Omicron variant. In the event that Brazil faces a new outbreak of the disease, this study and its findings may contribute to the Brazilian authorities if professional sports have to shut down or stadiums and other sports facilities are obliged to operate behind closed doors for the consumer public. We believe the findings of our study can help managers of the main facilities for professional football in Brazil have a better understanding of the perceptions of fans and the variables that influence the current behavior of sport consumers in this peculiar and unprecedented moment for Brazil and the whole world, therefore supporting more adequate management responses to the current context so that fans would feel more secure regarding the pandemic and enjoy a better sporting experience.

In addition, similarly designed surveys may be useful to understand sports consumer behavior under exceptional conditions. The findings of such studies may help clubs and sports federations to identify potential fans willing to consume sports goods under certain conditions. Thus, identifying the audiences and understanding their decision-making processes – both individual and collective – expect greater satisfaction from them.

Future studies can also use our findings and conduct analyses based on the dualistic typology (Boyle & Haynes, 2000; Clarke, 1978), comparing consumer perception of sporting

events before, during, and after the COVID-19 pandemic. Future studies can also explore the multidimensional models presented here to assess the impact of changes caused by the novel coronavirus on the beliefs and motivations of sport consumers (Stewart et al., 2003), in a new post-pandemic context.

Our study and suggested future studies can provide a global understanding of the impact caused by the COVID-19 pandemic on consumers of sport products and services and, therefore, help decision makers in their activities.

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Table 1

Logit Regression for COVID-19 Survey in Brazil

Variables	COVID-19 Survey
	1=Yes; 0=No
<i>How Often Do You Attend Football Matches?</i>	
Most of matches	-0.483** (0.213)
Frequently	-0.409** (0.201)
Only Derby and Decisive Matches	0.150 (0.235)
<i>Do You Feel Safe Attending Football Matches in 2020?</i>	
No	-0.739** (0.326)
Yes, Only After Vaccine	-0.0935 (0.325)
Yes, Under New Protocols	1.257*** (0.321)
Yes, Regardless of Any Measure	3.063*** (0.473)
<i>How Willing Are You to Comply With Additional Security Protocols to Attend Matches?</i>	
2	0.542 (0.334)
3	0.413 (0.342)
4	-0.726* (0.415)
5	-0.678* (0.401)

How Concerned Are You About WHO's Recommendations?

Unconcerned	0.531*
	(0.319)
Little Concerned	0.306
	(0.309)
Very Much Concerned	-0.607**
	(0.300)

Club Membership

Yes	-0.111
	(0.111)

Age

18-25	-0.191
	(0.446)
26-35	0.142
	(0.445)
36-50	0.323
	(0.445)
50+	0.387
	(0.458)

Gender

Male	0.581***
	(0.134)

Monthly Income

From R\$1,000 to R\$3,000	0.0653
	(0.190)
From R\$3,001 to R\$6,000	0.191
	(0.204)
From R\$6,001 to R\$10,000	0.248
	(0.216)
More than R\$10,001	0.453**

	(0.218)
<hr/>	
<i>Level of Education</i>	
High School	-0.319
	(0.407)
Bachelor Degree	-0.810**
	(0.411)
Postgraduate	-0.844**
	(0.418)
<hr/>	
<i>Constant</i>	
	-0.842
	(0.684)
<hr/>	
<i>Observations</i>	
	2,825
<hr/>	
<i>Prob > Chi²</i>	
	0.000
<hr/>	
<i>Pseudo R²</i>	
	0.2638
<hr/>	

Note. Standard errors in parentheses.

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1