

THE EFFECT OF SOCIETAL COMMUNICATION ON
CUSTOMER BEHAVIOR: EVIDENCE FROM THE ENGLISH
PREMIER LEAGUE*

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Abstract

We present a simple model to estimate the effects on behavior of a group of societal campaigns, aimed at fostering racial equality attitudes. The activity of the Kick it Out is confronted with attendance of English Premier League games. The results support the idea that people weight benefits against results in appraising their willingness to adhere to a campaign. When the foreign player of their own team contributes to results, he is appreciated. At parity of results, the fans prefer players of their own nationality. This indicates that although the campaign may have changed attitudes, it has not changed behavior yet.

Keywords: Societal communication, customer behavior, racial discrimination in soccer

JEL: M21, M31

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1. Societal communication and behavior: the research question and a testable hypothesis

Corporate social responsibility is becoming an all-round strategic approach for viable firms, even more so when these firms are in the sports business. Sports are intrinsically exposed to high public visibility, therefore their impact on social interaction and character-building of future generations is paramount. This makes sport clubs an elective field to test the effectiveness of societal campaigns on fan's behavior.

As far as societal campaigns are considered, communication is the main tool, in joint forces with cause-related marketing strategies (Bronn and Vrioni, 2001). According to Osterthus (1997) the main influences on the behavior are of the normative, the economic, and the structural types; the effectiveness of societal campaigns depend upon the activation of important moderators that are also linked to trust and to credibility of the campaigners. With respect to the economic influences, the results obtained by Vaidyanathan and Aggarwal (2005) highlight the role of customer's costs associated with supporting the cause when observing the customers' actual behavior in the presence of a strong commitment. According to the message-to-the-desired-action model, an effective communication strategy should change the customer behavior (Therkelesen and Fiebich, 2001), but when the associated cost is too high for the customers, both in terms of direct spending or benefit reduction, customers might lose interest for the cause and communication proves ineffective. According to the authors a message should be received, attended to, understood, believed, remembered and acted upon. They stress the importance of the final step: "If the message does not result in the desired action, the entire message creation and targeting process has failed" (Therkelesen and Fiebich, 2001, 385).

The purpose of the paper is to present empirical evidence to this issue. Thus, our research question (RQ) is the following:

RQ: customers lose interest in a social cause that accompanies a product or service if it increases the cost (or decreases the benefits) too much.

To turn this RQ into an empirical hypothesis to be tested, we focused on a societal campaign. The cause of concern is racism. We analyzed the effects of the "Kick it Out" (KIO) societal campaign (<http://www.kickitout.org>). Activated in 1993 by the English Premier League as a campaign with the claim and brand name "Let's Kick Racism Out of Football", the campaign addressed racism and explicitly fought against discrimination.

Discrimination has been extensively studied using sport data with mixed and inconclusive results (Kahn and Sherer 1988; Andersen and Lacroix, 1989; Nardinelli and Simon, 1990; Kahn, 1991; Brown, Spiro and Keenan, 1991; Burdekin and Idson, 1991; Kanazawa and Funk, 2001; Coleman, Dumond and Lynch, 2008).

To address this very complex issue, we have kept some aspects fixed. The essence of discrimination is choosing players not for their sporting merit, that is,

for their performance on the field, but because they belong to a specific category; it is a bias based not on competence, ability, merit, or on any other indicator of talent, but on idiosyncratic stereotypes and prejudices. Thus, first of all we had to control for field results. Given equal sporting performance, fans should be indifferent as regards nationality. In soccer teams a proxy that indicates lower racial discrimination (or higher inclusion and equality) is national diversity – in itself a concept strictly linked to racial issues. In sports, attendance to a match is linked to many factors, among which are those influencing the decision to spend leisure time or the absolute devotion to the favored team. Attendance is also influenced by field results of the team. Apart from these factors, other irrational repulsion effects, among which we count racial discrimination, should be non-existent and irrelevant in the decision. Thus, the RQ becomes the following testable hypothesis:

H: attendance appreciates diversity only when it brings about sporting results, but given equal talent, diversity is not valued per se.

In the paper we use the KIO as a case study to test an econometric model set up to evaluate the specific results of this campaign. Since we do not have the possibility of testing the change in attitude, we will focus on behavior.

The structure of the paper is as follows. In Section 2 we outline the underlying forces behind the relationship between attitudes and behavior, a long-standing issue in psychology. In Section 3 we present the case study and the model to test our hypothesis. In Section 4 we present the results. Section 5 concludes with comments on some pitfalls of our model and suggestions for future research.

2. A long standing dilemma: attitude versus behavior in evaluating the effectiveness of the campaign

As explicitly stated by KIO (2010, 2), “The Kick It Out is about promoting positive attitudes amongst everyone involved in football to achieve equality and fair treatment for people of all backgrounds.” This is a large and far reaching scope. The promotion of attitudes is a common feature to all societal campaigns, but some of them expect that people implement what asked by the claim and change behavior. After all, a campaign needs to be persuasive, and persuasion implies conducive behavior (towards attaining a goal), not only a positive attitude. Indeed, what the KIO really wants is also a change in the behavior of those who, among the 13 millions of people watching Premier League games, are prone to racial comments. The KIO also requires an active role of clubs in transmitting their effort against all forms of racial discrimination.

In this section we address the natural question that arises in communication campaigns when one considers the connection between stimulus and behavior: Is attitude a prelude to behavior? This question has occupied a whole branch of research in social psychology since the 1930s. At that time the common opinion was that once an attitude was acquired then behavior, conformant to that opinion,

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would ensue. In the 1960s several researchers in the USA started to put this commonplace, concerning the coherence of behavior with what declared by the subjects, under scrutiny.

Without pretence of completeness on a vast literature (among others, see the overviews by Eisner and Pligt, 1998; Williams, 1986), our starting point is the model proposed by Rosenberg and Hovland (1960).[‡] In empirical analysis we observe a stimulus and we observe a behavior, sometimes separated by a large time interval (as is the case in this paper). The causal connection between stimulus and response/behavior passes through a black box, inside which the psychologist located a theoretical construct, the attitude. The attitude is sometimes called opinion, when the investigation still remains at the level of thought evaluations, but in this paper we are interested to proneness towards an action, or a certain kind of behavior. In Rosenberg and Hovland's model, attitude is an unobserved, intervenient variable, composed of three components (Eisner and Pligt, 1998, 34): affectivity (concerning sentiments, emotions, evaluations), cognition (concerning the beliefs on verity or falsity of something of interest), and behavior (concerning intentions and decisions to act).

As pointed out by Ajzen and Fishbein (1977), for the researcher willing to assess the coherence between attitudes and behavior, one of the major issues on the methodological front is compatibility. The psychologist distinguishes attitude towards a behavior (such as yelling racial insults) and attitude towards the object (such as racial discrimination). Attitudes and behavior must be compatible, that is the analysis must be kept at the same level of specificity. The researcher must not ask a comment on a very abstract or general issue and at the same time investigate the behavior on a very specific instance (for an early appraisal of this point, see Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975). In our case, it is a mistake if the researcher asks to a subject: "Are you against apartheid?", or "Are you against racial discrimination?" and then investigates if the respondent at the stadium sings along with the racial chorus against the major player in the opponent team that has just scored.

The same level of specificity must be assured. In our paper we kept things at the same level by comparing devotion to a club (as influenced by sporting results and players' talent) versus the devotion to the same when the players' talent has reached a point in which the only difference across players is nationality (all other things considered).

Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) presented a model aimed at explaining voluntary action. According to this model people develop: (a) beliefs, concerning the consequences of their behavior, that influence the attitude towards the behavior; (b) normative beliefs on the behavior that influence how they individually assess the norms concerning the behavior. Both beliefs impact on the intention to behave, which is the last step before the behavior. According to the authors a change in behavior depends on the cognitive component of attitudes, more than

[‡] We cite these two comprehensive books only because an Italian translation is available.

the affective; by changing beliefs (which depend upon available information), the rational side of the individual will take control and the subject will behave appropriately.

Let us apply this model to our issue. Imagine that at the stadium entrance, a fan is interviewed and declares that he is absolutely against all forms of racial discrimination (attitude against the object). Then, in the heat of the moment and with the belief that the result will change in favor of his team, that very person addresses racial insults to an opponent player. In the mind of the fan this behavior is not to be intended as contradictory and the fan will surely absolve himself, by sustaining that he was not being a racist, those insults were not meant to harm out of the field, and he just wanted his team to win. (Incidentally, note that we controlled for such an effect by focusing on the players of own team; we counted attendance at home and compared that to the nationality of players in the home team.)

The model suggests that something can be done to convince that person that his inappropriate behavior is: (a) irrelevant and (b) despicable. As for (a), the fan may be rationally convinced, for example, by showing him that the result does not depend on his insults and therefore his behavior is stupid. One step in this direction would be to show that what really qualifies the presence of fans at the stadium is that they enjoy the game, that they have the privilege to entertain a sporting event in an exclusive way, that the result is not influenced by the attendance, as demonstrated by various studies (e.g., Amenta and Di Betta, 2008). Notice that this goes against the commonplace that the attendance is “the twelfth man” on the field. As for (b), one can approach the problem by trying to influence the fan’s normative point of view. The fan would have to be convinced that even in the rare occasion in which those insults may be effective, the other fans consider a victory obtained with such insults a downgrading of the whole club and a betrayal of the club’s traditions. Indeed, this may be difficult to obtain in countries where cheating is not negatively commented upon.

Will these rational explanations put a dam against the despicable behavior? Theories such as Fishbein and Ajzen’s (1975) support the idea of influencing behavior by acting on the rational side of the individual. Recall, however, that attitude consists also of an affective component, therefore influencing the rational side may be insufficient; one has to influence the affective components of the decision, too.

When studying conducive behavior we must consider not only rationally pursued actions but also uncontrolled behavior. As demonstrated by Loewenstein (1996) and more recently by Ariely and Loewenstein (2006), visceral behavior is difficult to control, even more so under the “heat of the moment”. In cases where individuals may find themselves in dangerous situations, “avoiding temptation altogether is easier than overcoming it” (Ariely, 2009, 131). In order to reduce risks, one can either try to control some aspects of the situation or, simply put, ban the fan from the stadium.

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Fazio (1986) presented a model in which preeminence is given to the affective aspects of attitude. In situations in which the subjects do not have a complete control of themselves, the psychologist that accounts for arousal and affective aspects of the attitude will deliver a better forecast of future behavior. In such cases, people behave according to what they think is the appropriate behavior. Behavior now depends on what the fan thinks is an appropriate behavior at the stadium. As shown by Fazio, the behavior also depends on the accessibility for the individual of his own previously declared attitudes, which must present in the memory on the heat of the moment in order to be effective in calming down the passion. By making previously declared attitudes accessible to the fan, behavior will be less at risk. In Fazio's model a great role is given to those factors that reinforce the ability to retrieve attitudes in the memory, such as direct experience, watching the others in a similar situation, and having more information on the object itself. For example, the fan may think appropriate, to receive the approbation of the mate sitting next to him, to insult the opponent team's players. Now the theory suggests to elaborate a strategy of communication valid for the very specific context that forms at the stadium, when people experience the idea of being a part of a larger whole that pulses together. For example, the interviews to fans at the stadium entrance, in which they declare their opposition to insults, should be diffused inside the stadium. Profiles concerning the visitor team's players may instill more respect from the at-home fan. In this regard, a great influence will come from the presence of youngsters at the stadium, who will influence the behavior of the elder fans. This implies that the KIO actions will have to go on its meritorious activity.

3. Methodology

3.1 The case study: the KIO and the Kick It Out campaigns

The KIO was established in 1997 and the campaigns are supported and funded by the soccer game's governing bodies, which included as the founding bodies, the Professional Footballers Association (PFA), the Premier League and the Football Association. The KIO also plays a role at the European level by participating to the Football Against Racism in Europe (FARE) network (see KIO, undated; KIO, 2010).

Each year KIO organizes a wide range of activities that involve several communities within specific projects addressing racism and social inclusion; it also organizes activities for school-age children and grassroots players. The most relevant projects are the weeks of action labeled "One game, One community" and the "Equality Standards". The former is the brand-name for the events that KIO organizes together with football's governing bodies, professional teams, community groups, schools and libraries in October (e.g., for 2011 the events are scheduled in two weeks, 14-31 October). Around 1,000 events are managed

during this period, with a day of action that involves all 92 professional clubs, where both the home and away teams warm up in “One Game, One Community” t-shirts, and attendance is involved in activities before and after the match.

What is nowadays dubbed the “Equality standard” was launched in 2004 as the “Racial Equality standard program”. It is awarded by KIO to the teams that agree in reaching a series of key objectives established to support the development of equality and diversity practices across all areas of the club’s operations. There are three different levels of achievement: “PRELIMINARY” (Where are we now?), “INTERMEDIATE” (What are we doing?) and “ADVANCED” (What has changed?).

Football clubs willing to scale up the different levels should accomplish some key tasks and provide evidence of their commitments to the KIO. The key tasks cover all the aspects of club operations, from the developing of an “Equality Action Plan” to the complete eradication – at the stadium – of abuse and harassment associated with discrimination, to the change in the employment policies and the strengthening of the club links with the community. Since 2004 over 40 clubs in the Premier League and the Football League have worked towards the standard and today 31 clubs have achieved at least the Preliminary Level.

3.2 The model

The dependent variable is stadium attendance for each team in the season, *attendance*. The model is as follows:

$$attendance_{it} = C_0 + u_i + \beta_1 foreignpl_{it} + \beta_2 foreignpl2_{it} + \beta_3 dmanch_{it} + \beta_4 points_{it} + \beta_5 wageandsalariescosts_{it} + \beta_6 homegrownplayersnumber_{it} + \beta_7 intensityoftradinginout_{it} + \varepsilon_{it}$$

Table 1: Description of the variables and summary statistics

Variables used in the model. Sources are reported in the second column. The nature of the variable and additional comments are reported in the third if needed. The last three column report descriptive statistics: mean, standard deviation, minimum and maximum for the 98 observations in the sample. All the data are referred to seasons 2001/02 through 2005/2006.

D=dependent variable, R=regressor, with (+) expressing expected positive and (-) negative effects.

| Variables | Source | Description | Mean | Std.dev. | Min | Max |
|------------------------|---|---|----------|----------|-------|--------|
| <i>attendance</i> D | <i>European Football Statistics, database from post, Football Database, football Database</i> | <i>Football Football racing stadium.</i> <i>International Players International League</i> | 34.44824 | 11.38598 | 16.24 | 68.765 |
| <i>foreignpl</i> | <i>Wikipedia</i> | Number of | 11.68 | 4.357462 | 2 | 24 |

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| | | | | | | | |
|---|--|---|---|----------|----------|--------|---------|
| <i>R (+)</i> | | | foreign players in the team's roster | | | | |
| <i>foreignpl</i> ² <i>R(-)</i> | Wikipedia | | <i>foreignpl</i> squared | 155.22 | 113.2492 | 4 | 576 |
| <i>dmanch</i> <i>R (+)</i> | European Statistics, database post, Football Database, football Database | Football from racing International Players League | Dummy variable = 1 when the team changed the manager in the season | .21 | .4093602 | 0 | 1 |
| <i>points</i> <i>R(+)</i> | European Statistics, database post, Football Database, football Database | Football from racing International Players League | Points gained in the season. | .52.46 | 16.17232 | 15 | 95 |
| <i>wageandsalariescosts</i> <i>R(+)</i> | Deloitte | | Salaries paid to the players | 39.41289 | 21.01967 | 11.542 | 114.784 |
| <i>homegrownplayers</i> <i>number</i> <i>R (+)</i> | European Statistics, database post, Football Database, football Database | Football from racing International Players League | Number of grassroots players in the roster. | 4.1 | 2.409996 | 0 | 11 |
| <i>intensityoftradingout</i> <i>R(+)</i> | European Statistics, database post, Football Database, football Database | Football from racing International Players League | Sum of the number of players acquired and sold during the transfer window | 10.56 | 4.856153 | 2 | 32 |

The variables, together with the source, the descriptive statistics and some comments when needed, are indicated in Table 1. We included sporting variables on team performance and economic variables from the club's balance sheets that may influence the demand for live attendance at the home stadium. Subscripts indicate clubs (*i*) and season (*t*). Our main interest in testing *H* concerns the effect on the attendance of the number of foreign players per season per team, *foreignpl*. The variable of interest is built as a parabola: *foreignpl* and *foreignpl*², and we are mostly concerned on β_1 and β_2 . The rationale of this specification is the following. Foreign players acquired first are usually the most expensive and talented; they have a positive impact on sporting performance. The fans perceive them as a valuable addition to the team, so attendance increases ($\beta_1 > 0$). When the number of foreign players exceeds a threshold, their impact on performance is less evident, as their marginal contribution to the performance of the team decreases. If the

parabola has a maximum (the parabola is concave and a threshold or bliss point exists), then $\beta_1 > 0$ and $\beta_2 < 0$.

We add a few covariates to control for specific effects: a measure of the team's sporting results (points earned in the season, *points*), a proxy for talent (*wageandsalariescost*), an index of attractiveness of the team (the number of home-grown players that effectively played in the season, *homegrownplayersnumber*), and two indices that give an idea on the stability of the organization (the total number of players acquired and sold in the season, *intensityoftradinginout*, and a dummy variable for the change of the manager during the season, *dmanch*). In the model C is an overall constant (all the clubs share a constant level of subscription), u_i are club-specific effects (some clubs have more attendance than others or more loyal fans), and ε_{it} is idiosyncratic error that included unobserved variables.

As common in the literature (Dobson and Goddard, 2001, chapter 7; Downward and Dawson, 2001), in calculating *attendance* we did not distinguish between season and matchday tickets, nor did we consider the stadium capacity as a constraint. The variable *foreignpl* counts the number of foreign players that were in the team roster in each season. We did not consider the number of foreign players that actually played during the season, but the variable is a good proxy for team's perceived national identity. An important variable concerns the costs reported in the balance sheet for wages paid to the players, *wageandsalariescost*. Player's earnings are positively correlated with its talent and a talented team will attract more attendance, because people flock to the stadium expecting talented teams to win the match.

Investing on young players is a very important aspect of managing a football team; *homegrownplayersnumber* counts the number of young players that come from the teams' soccer schools. F.C. Barcelona is a striking example of how to nurture grassroots players and fully and successfully exploit this strategy for the club's benefit; a lot of teams all over the world are trying to mimic it. It is a very important aspect both for the improvement of the national soccer movement that for the financial health of the club. Grassroots players do not earn a lot at the initial stage of their career and very talented one can be sold to top teams for a very high value. In our model it can be considered a proxy of the attractiveness of the team in term of local identity. Teams that heavily invest on players from the local community can reduce their chance of winning game but the attendance can appreciate the strong link between the team and the community. A proxy for team cohesion is *intensityoftradinginout*; the total number of players sold and acquired tells us how much a team renews its organization in each season. A higher players turnover can undermine team cohesion and does not give fans the time they need to get accustomed to the players and to increase their affection to the team. A dummy variable, *dmanch*, tracks the changes in the team manager (=1 if the team has changed its manager in the season, =0 otherwise). The effect of manager change on team performance has been widely investigated in the literature

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(Dobson and Goodard, 2001: chapter 6). We added the variable to consider its effect on fans; a change of the manager is usually the result of a poor performing team so its change can revamp fans support to the team.

4. Results

4.1 The dataset

To test our model we built an original dataset on a panel of $i=28$ English Premier League clubs for the four seasons, $t=2001/02, \dots, 2005/06$ (the total number of observation is 98). We report the descriptive statistics of the variables under scrutiny in Table 1 and the correlation matrix in Table 2, the latter in order to hypothesize the sign of the relationship between the dependent and the independent variables.

Table 2: Correlation matrix of the variables in the dataset

| Variables | <i>attend ance</i> | <i>foreig npl</i> | <i>Foreig npl2</i> | <i>dmanc h</i> | <i>points</i> | <i>wagean dsalarie scosts</i> | <i>homegrownpl ayersnumber</i> | <i>intensityoftr adingout</i> |
|------------------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|--------------------|---------------|---------------------------------------|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <i>attendance</i> | 1.0000 | | | | | | | |
| <i>foreignpl</i> | -0.0457 | 1.000 | | | | | | |
| <i>foreignpl2</i> | -0.0280 | 0.9753 | 1.000 | | | | | |
| <i>dmanch</i> | 0.0183 | -0.0091 | 0.0104 | 1.000 | | | | |
| <i>points</i> | 0.5325 | 0.4539 | 0.4684 | -0.2023 | 1.000 | | | |
| <i>wageandsalarie scosts</i> | 0.6430 | 0.4863 | 0.5399 | 0.0321 | 0.8052 | 1.000 | | |
| <i>homegrownplay ersnumber</i> | 0.5543 | -0.1664 | -0.1821 | 0.1406 | 0.1142 | 0.2445 | 1.000 | |
| <i>intensityoftradi ngout</i> | -0.2875 | 0.0395 | 0.0450 | 0.3844 | -0.3714 | -0.2092 | -0.1584 | 1.000 |

Note that the correlation matrix shows a negative sign between *attendance* and *foreignpl* and *foreignpl²* respectively. The points gained by the team in the season, *points*, indicate a successful team which therefore obviously attracts more fans at the stadium; as expected, *points* is positively correlated with the dependent variable. As expected, the correlation is positive and quite strong between wages and attendance, and between grassroots players and attendance. As expected, the intensity of turnover in the players is negatively correlated with the attendance. The correlation is weak and positive between change in manager and the attendance, which can be interpreted that when the manager changes the clubs signals the attempt to ameliorate future results, so people are more willing to go to the stadium.

Although the dataset is not up-to-date, it is enough distanced from the campaign to be deployed in order to assess its impact. The KIO is well into the second decade of activity and the seasons we deal with were played ten years after

the start of the KIO campaign of interest, so time is ripe to measure the effects on behavior. (The effects on behavior should already be almost complete.)

4.2 Estimation

We present a fixed effect panel estimation. Fixed effect is preferred to random effect estimation mainly because it allows for the possibility of a correlation between the covariates and other unobserved variables that are collected in the error term. The results are reported in Table 3.

Table 3: Estimation results of attendance, fixed effect panel model

Significance levels are: * p<.10, ** p<.05, *** p<.01

σ_u is the standard deviation of the individual effect u_i

σ_ε is the standard deviation of the idiosyncratic error ε_i

ρ is the fraction of variance due to u_i

| Regressors | Coefficient | Std.dev. |
|-------------------------------|--|------------|
| <i>constant</i> | 26.7331*** | 3.456267 |
| <i>foreignpl</i> | .8792737* | .44272 |
| <i>foreignpl²</i> | -.0317483** | .0148767 |
| <i>dmanch</i> | .2707514 | .5647624 |
| <i>points</i> | .0094824 | .0266834 |
| <i>wageandsalariescosts</i> | .0570947*** | .017194 |
| <i>homegrownplayersnumber</i> | .0665404 | .1213468 |
| <i>intensityoftradingout</i> | -.0475366 | .0402556 |
| $\sigma_u = 9.641$ | $F(7,27) = 5.09, p\text{-value} = 0.000$ | |
| $\sigma_\varepsilon = 1.908$ | Observations: 98 | Groups: 28 |
| $\rho = .9623$ | | |

The estimates are obtained with robust variance-covariance matrix. All the variables present the expected sign of the relationship. The only significant variables are *foreignpl*, *foreignpl²* and *wageandsalariescosts*.

The significance of the proxy for talent confirms that people flock to the stadium when talent increases, therefore people care about team's endowment of talent. The number of foreign players has a positive impact on attendance, and this is evidence in contrast to the results of the correlation matrix. Therefore one expects that the presence of foreign players should increase attendance. For each foreign player in the team we witness an increase in stadium attendance ($\beta_1 > 0$ and marginally statistically significant, at the 10% level). But the desired number of foreign players reaches a bliss point, a maximum, from this threshold on the effect becomes negative and people at the stadium decrease ($\beta_2 < 0$ and statistically

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significant at 5% level). People tend to slow down in their flocking at the stadium as soon as there is a significant number of foreign players in the roster. Having controlled for all the other factors, this is a display of lower affection to the team. Presumably, the foreign players that were initially acquired were the most talented and so they tend to increase the team quality, and this positively connects *foreignpl* to attendance (because it can be considered a proxy for the talent). The excess of foreign players do not add talent to the team and therefore they are probably perceived to “harm” the team’s identity or to depreciate the teams as an expression of local identity.

As for the correlation between the actual and fitted values of the dependent variable (that ignores the contribution of individual effects), the within, the between, and the overall R^2 are 0.1794, 0.3486, and 0.3354 respectively. The correlation between the individual effects and estimated explained variables is 0.4781.

As for the standard deviation of the error components, the model reveals that 96,23% of the combined error is due to individual effects, stemming from the diversity of clubs; thus, the idiosyncratic error is very small. This implies that almost all the variation in attendance is club-specific, thus confirming what described in Section 3.1 when we illustrated the levels of club involvement in the “Equality standard”. The F -test following the regression indicates that there are significant individual (club level) effects (the p-value is less than 1%), implying that pooled ordinary least squares would be inappropriate.

With regard to the variable of interest (*foreignpl*) the need for the non linear form has been also tested using the regression specification error test (RESET; see Wooldridge, 2009). The test is used to detect general functional form misspecification and the null hypothesis is that the model, in its linear form, satisfies the zero conditional mean assumption and thus is correctly specified. We rejected the null at the 10% significance level so that *foreignpl*² was appropriately inserted in the model.

The fans’ reaction can be considered a measure of the effectiveness on behavior of the social campaign that wanted to fight racism and foster social inclusion and diversity. We interpret this as evidence against the eradication of the problem by the Kick it Out campaign. After ten years the KIO campaign has not radically changed the behavior of people attending the stadium (*attendance*), at least when the attractiveness of having foreign players in the team (a proxy for diversity) is considered.

5. Discussion and conclusion

Our results show that foreign players are appreciated only when they make the favored team win. We found out that, after controlling for the added value to sport results and team specific features, it seems that too much foreign players are not welcome. When their number grows too much, the “national character” of the team is undermined and people start to show their disappointment by forfeiting

the stadium. Given an equal level of talent, foreign players are not preferred. Fans maintain mental reserves as to the presence of too many foreigners and probably dislike that the team displays international inclusion and diversity. *H* is not rejected, so we cannot detach interest on the social cause from the consumer's perceived benefits – the sporting performance of the team. Our results are coherent with Therkelesen and Fiebich's model (2001) that people weight costs and benefits even when assessing societal campaigns. As a matter of fact, we cannot state anything more specific on the improvement brought about by the campaign on attitudes, because: 1) we have not got a direct measure on the features of the campaign involving the teams; 2) we have no data on racial discrimination before 1993, against which we could have compared the results in the seasons under investigation.

Our results confirm the need for more accurate evaluation measures for social communication campaign. We showed that quantitative methods have the advantage of analyzing people's actual behavior without taking in account their attitude toward the social cause or without taking notice of the image of themselves the respondents want to convey to the interviewer or to other people. The preliminary results of this study underline the importance of using econometric models to evaluate the impact of social campaigns. From this we derive a normative suggestion. Every social program should consider the collection of data to be used to run (not necessarily complex) econometric models. Thus, it is important, especially for social campaign, that specific and measurable goals are set up ex-ante in order to ensure proper accountability ex-post.

We are not concluding that KIO campaign is ineffective or not useful. On the contrary, we are pointing towards the need for the campaigners to consider a way to evaluate the impact of actions, not only on behavior, as we have done here, but at least on attitudes, which is the main declared aim.

We suggest that the measurement of the impact of communication strategy in changing the behavior is not properly addressed or resolved. Social communication is a fundamental tool for corporate social responsibility strategy but accountability towards the stakeholders could be improved; most of all, the success of a campaign should be measurable and verifiable. Despite the huge efforts, as required to obtain the desired change in the attitude towards racial discrimination and to foster social inclusion in football, the KIO did not develop an assessment and evaluation phase for the entire program. In the Report there are statistics such as the total number of people and organization involved, or the number of events organized, but there is not an attempt to understand if all these activities really changed the way people feel and act when dealing with such issues. This is a common failure of many social campaigns. In the Report there is not even a survey or some interviews to the people to which the campaign is directed. We suggest that a survey be activated at the stadium to test the attitude of the attendance. We expect that from this survey a surprising result will be obtained, that the fans will declare their positive attitude towards the campaign.

SEZIONE 2

We expect that the campaign was effective in pointing against racial discrimination. Ethnographic investigation would be also useful to assess how the fans influence each other. Is one chorus with racial implications hushed up?

We are aware of the limitation of our results. In general, results on attitudes take time to seep through, sometimes the advent of new generations is needed. We cannot conclude that the KIO program is not reaching its goals, because we did not tested attitudes directly. But there is a need for more specific and measurable aims to be tested in the field, with specific econometric models. In that sense we sustain that a message that it is not followed, sooner or later, by the desired action is a failure from the behavioral standpoint, although this does not imply that attitudes have not changed. Maybe small influences at the stadium (the context that embeds behavior), exerted at the appropriate time in which the behavior is more at risk, will induce the required reaction.

More to the specifics of our model, we did not consider a variable that directly measures the involvement of the team in the KIO program. If such a variable were available (for example, expenditures on the KIO programs), we could add robustness to our model. We could set up a more complete model, in which *foreignpl* will also be present as a dependent variable, and the variable measuring the level reached by the club within the KIO program will be included as a regressor.

Least but not last, it is possible that, in the case of football fans, social and economic influences in the sense depicted by Osterthus (1997) crowd out, at least to a certain extent, the normative influences on which KIO campaigns focus their messages, but this conjecture needs to be evaluated with the appropriate data.

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