

How Identification with Subculture Fosters Social Spending During a Sport Event: A Quantitative Examination

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Poster**

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The opportunity for attendees to parade and celebrate subculture is a particular attraction of sport events (Green, 2001). Green and Chalip's (1998) ethnographic account of a woman's football tournament demonstrated that participants came to the event to share and affirm their identities as football players. Thus, they were motivated to travel to the event, rather than to the site, for socializing with other players who share similar identities. Green and Chalip's ethnographic data also suggest that tournament participants who use the tournament as a social opportunity focus their spending on activities that enable them to parade and celebrate their shared identities as football players, such as drinking, shopping, and dining out. This is consistent with other work showing that subcultures can organize themselves around shared forms of consumption (Algesheimer, Dholakia, & Herrmann, 2005; Yoder, 1997).

The literature suggests that identification, social motivation and a sense of community (typically described as "communitas") play a pivotal role in event socializing and consequent consumption choices. Identification with a sport subculture has been shown to be fundamental to event attendance and the desire to socialize with other attendees (Green, 2001). Other work demonstrates that socialization at events with others who share the sport's subculture engenders a deep sense of community - communitas - among participants (Green & Chalip, 1998; Kemp, 1999). Since socialization and celebrations of community are expressed through shared consumption at the event, attendees will spend a higher proportion of their budget on activities that enable them to celebrate and parade their shared identities (e.g., drinking, shopping, and dining out).

In order to test this proposition, 220 women football players at a national tournament on the East Coast of the United States were surveyed. Players ranged in age from 19-38 years ($M=28.7$). They had participated in the event for an average of 3.35 years ($SD=2.42$). Sport identity was measured by the composite scores of the Identity Salience Scale (Shamir, 1992) and the Social Commitment Scale (Callero, 1985). Social motivation for attending the tournament was measured by three items from the social motive subscale of the Leisure Motivation Scale (Beard & Ragheb, 1983). Sense of community at the event was measured using three items from the Neighborhood Sense of Community Scale (Nasar, 1995). Total spending and the pattern of spending were determined by using Turco and Navarro's (1993) measure of event spending activity. Social spending was represented by the proportion of each participant's spending at the event that was allocated to discretionary activities (i.e., dining out, drinking alcoholic beverages, and retail shopping).

Structural Equation Modeling method with maximum likelihood estimation was used to analyze the hypothesized relationships among constructs (all the error terms uncorrelated). The initial model predicted paths from identification to social motivation and sense of community, from social motivation to sense of community, and from social motivation and sense of community to the proportion of discretionary spending. The initial model rendered a satisfactory fit ($\text{Chi-square}=25.995$, $p=.301$, $df=23$, $CFI=.991$, $RMSEA=.024$). Examination of the regression coefficients revealed that the paths from identity to the sense of community, and from social motivation to the percentage of discretionary spending were insignificant. After eliminating the two insignificant paths, the model fit was improved ($\text{Chi-square}=27.435$, $p=0.335$, $df=25$, $CFI=.993$, $RMSEA=.021$). All paths were statistically significant ($p<.01$). Identification predicted 19% of the variance in social motivation; social motivation predicted 35% of the variance in sense of community, and sense of community predicted 6% of the variance in proportion of spending that was discretionary.

These findings provide converging evidence for Green's (2001) claim that the desire to celebrate subculture by socializing with other event participants yields outcomes that are significant to event marketers and the host destination. They also support Green and Chalip's (1998) claim that women football players' identification with their sport's subculture drives their motivation to attend the national tournament. Findings suggest the value of capitalizing on subculture identification to market a sport event, and enabling activities that foster a sense of community among event attendees. Means for so doing are suggested.

References

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