

Sport nostalgia: An investigation of the effects of evoked sport nostalgia on sport identification

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Abstract 411**

Nostalgia has been studied in sport management in the context of sport halls of fame and sport tourism (e.g., Fairley, 2003; Snyder, 1991; and Wilson, 2004). The findings generally suggest nostalgia influences sport fans behavior by encouraging fans to travel for the enjoyment of sport. Very little research has been performed on the effects of nostalgia and consumer behavior. The purpose of this proposed research is to investigate the relationship between evoked sport nostalgia and team identification.

Snyder (1991) found in a qualitative study on sport halls of fame that exposure to historical remnants in a museum provoked a nostalgic feeling and identification with universities and athletic programs, even when the person exposed to the nostalgic item did not experience the original event that was being represented by the historical remnant. The finding suggests that a relationship between nostalgia and identification exists, which is the catalyst for quantitatively investigating the relationship between evoked sport nostalgia and team identification.

Social identity theory connects the relationship between nostalgia and team identification by purporting that individuals find social networks important because the formed networks are based on common identities between individuals (Callero, 1985). Individuals choose to identify with groups that correspond to the individual's perspective of their personal identity.

Nostalgia is defined as "a preference (a general liking, positive attitude, or favorable affect) toward objects (people, places, or things) that were more common (popular, fashionable, or widely circulated) when one was younger (in early adulthood, in adolescence, in childhood, or even before birth)" (Holbrook & Schindler, 1991, p. 330). It is also said that nostalgia entices "positive affects of being" (Davis, 1979, p. 14). The reaction nostalgia causes within people proved to be beneficial in Pascal, Sprott, and Muehling's (2002) study on ad-evoked nostalgia. Their findings suggest that advertisements invoking nostalgia caused consumers to respond more favorably toward the perception of the product that was being advertised.

Social identity theory elucidates how nostalgia creates commonality between groups. The relation works by members of the group identifying with a nostalgic object, which provides identity to the group and its members. Nostalgia that is widely shared by hundreds of people is known as collective nostalgia (Davis, 1979). Collective nostalgia is the type of nostalgia that this project focuses on since the goal is to gain information on a large group of people (i.e., the fans of a sport team).

Identification is "an orientation of the self in regard to other objects, including a person or group, that results in feelings or sentiments of close attachment" (Trail, Anderson, & Fink, 2000, p. 165-166). A fan identifies with a team because they associate themselves with the team, which provides them with a sense of belongingness to a group. Understanding identification as it relates to fans is crucial for sport marketers because fans with higher levels of identification behave differently than fans with lower levels of identification (Motrano, 1999; Wann & Branscombe, 1993).

Social identity theory promotes the notion that identifying with a team increases the identities of fans (Wann, Royalty, & Roberts, 2000). It has been found that when one associates themselves with an organization or sport, he or she creates "a oneness with or belongingness to the organization, where the individual defines himself or herself in terms of the organization of which he or she is a member" (Mael & Ashforth, 1992, p. 104). Therefore, one creates an identity by associating him or herself with an organization (e.g., MLB, Cincinnati Reds, and Indiana Pacers).

From the relationship between nostalgia and identification (as they relate to social identity theory), it is hypothesized that scores on a post-test team identification measure will be higher after evoked nostalgia than the pre-test fan identification measure. This hypothesis suggests that nostalgia will affect a fan's identification level. It is also hypothesized that fans with higher team identification scores on the pre-test team identification measure will be more affected by evoked nostalgia than a fan that scores low on the team identification measure. This hypothesis follows the trend that previous scholars have found (e.g., Motrano, 1999; Wann & Branscombe, 1993), which suggests that highly identified fans behave differently than lowly identified fans. Therefore, it is predicted that highly identified fans will be more likely to be affected by nostalgia.

The procedure of the study will begin with a panel of ten experts from the field of sport management who will analyze six items (e.g., photographs of players, song lyrics, and photographs of historic items) of nostalgia as they relate to a specific mid-western professional baseball team. The experts will score each item on a seven point Likert-scale based on the experts' perception of

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the fit of the item as it relates to nostalgia and the specific mid-western professional baseball team. The nostalgia item scoring the highest will be used in the study.

The instruments used in the study will be Trail and James's (2001) Motivation Scale for Sport Consumption (MSSC) and Pascal, Sprott, and Muehling's (2002) Evoked Nostalgia Scale (NOST). Data will be collected from 250 university students who are enrolled in educational activity classes at a large, mid-western university. Each participant will be given a binder that includes pre and post MSSC questions (dependent variable), a nostalgia item, and NOST questions (independent variable). The participants will be instructed to complete the questionnaire in the order it was given. Therefore, they will complete the initial MSSC, which will be followed by an evoking of nostalgia. They will then complete the NOST questions and finally, the participants will complete a post MSSC.

The findings of this study will be relevant to the field of sport management because they will expand our knowledge of nostalgia as it relates to consumer behavior. Implications for sport administrators and marketers will be discussed. Future research regarding nostalgia will also be proposed.