

Emotion and Memory in Nostalgia Sport Tourism: Examining the Attraction to Postmodern Ballparks through an Interdisciplinary Lens

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Sport and tourism scholars have generally accepted Gibson's (1998) three forms of sport and tourism—active sport tourism, event sport tourism, and nostalgia sport tourism—as their dimensions for study. In contrast to Gibson's first two dimensions, nostalgia sport tourism has received little scholarly attention (Gibson, 2002, 2003; Fairley, 2003; Ritchie & Adair, 2004). When scholars have studied nostalgia sport tourism, their early work has primarily examined the role that nostalgia has played in fans' attendance at sport halls of fame (Redmond, 1973; Snyder, 1991) and, more recently, stadium tours (Gammon & Fear, 2005) through qualitative and often interpretive means. Many scholars, though, have found that nostalgia plays a role in the sport and tourism experience beyond these parameters (Fairley, 2003, 2009; Kulczycki & Hyatt, 2005; Ramshaw & Gammon, 2005; Fairley & Gammon, 2006).

Despite this relative lack of research, insightful and thought-provoking scholarship has emerged within this growing sport and tourism domain. In fact, sociology, one of sport and tourism's parent disciplines, has influenced much of this scholarship (Gibson, 2004; Harris, 2006). This epistemological orientation has yielded, among other things, the importance of emotion and memory to nostalgically-oriented experiences, the result of which has prompted scholars to argue for a broader interpretation of nostalgia sport tourism than was originally established within the field (Gammon, 2002; Ramshaw & Gammon, 2005; Fairley & Gammon, 2006).

In continuing this sociological emphasis, this paper considers the emergence of emotion and memory within nostalgia sport tourism and argues that a micro-sociological perspective—interaction ritual theory (Collins, 2004)—can be used to provide scholars with a deep understanding of tourists' and excursionists' motivations for engaging in nostalgia-oriented experiences. Moreover, three additional constructs from the field of sport geography—place, placelessness (Relph, 1976), and topophilia (Tuan, 1974)—can serve as useful tools for sport and tourism scholars who wish to develop a more nuanced conceptualization of those elements inherent within nostalgically-oriented sport sites. The combination of these interdisciplinary perspectives represents a manifestation of Gibson's argument that sport and tourism studies “should not limit themselves to a single theoretical domain” (1998, p. 68).

This paper has two objectives. The first is to argue for the appropriateness of interaction ritual theory as an interpretive device in scholars' attempts to understand the motivations of those who engage in nostalgia sport tourism. The second is to advocate for three sport geographical concepts as helpful constructs in articulating those physical elements associated with sport stadiums that facilitate a nostalgic experience. To accomplish this, a brief overview of the previous literature within nostalgia sport tourism is required, as is a brief explanation of interaction ritual theory and place, placelessness, and topophilia. Interaction ritual theory will then be combined with the sport geographical concepts of place, placelessness, and topophilia to examine the recent phenomenon of 'retro', or 'postmodern' (Ritzer & Stillman, 2001), major league baseball parks in the United States so as to arrive at a nuanced understanding of those elements that are inherent within an important phenomenon of nostalgia sport tourism. Thus, this paper's intent is to address the 'why' of sport tourism (Gibson, 2004) particularly as it applies to nostalgia to aid in constructing “an edifice of sports tourism knowledge” (Weed, 2006, p. 23) through interdisciplinary analysis.