

## Identifying Emotions Associated with Professional Sport Team Brands

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Recently, the emergence of the “emotionomics” has been widely recognized in consumer research (Hill, 2007). Particularly, neuroscience approach suggests that the primacy of emotion over cognition happens more frequently in the human mind (Gordon, 2002; LeDoux, 1996). For example, consumers tend to utilize an emotion-driven shortcut to simplify their decision-making (Zaltman, 2003). In this regard, even tangible brands are positioned and branded on the basis of emotions (Gobé, 2001). Since spectator sport consumption is experiential and hedonic in nature, it is not surprising that sport teams try to build and connect positive emotional experiences with them. Despite the important role of emotions in consumer decision-making, past studies have largely focused on how cognitive characteristics (e.g., success, star player, stadium, tradition) of sport team brands are organized in consumer memory and their effects on sport consumer behavior. Although some of these works (e.g., Bauer, Stokburger-Sauer, & Exler, 2008; Gladden & Funk, 2002) propose that emotional experiences are an important part of experiential benefits, a major component of brand associations, they did not clarify what kind of emotions are associated with sport teams. As a result, the affective nature of sport team brands remains largely unexplored. The purpose of this study was to identify key emotions associated with professional sport team brands, and to develop a valid, reliable scale to measure these emotions.

This research consists of three sequential studies: emotion generation stage, exploratory factor analysis (EFA), and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). To generate an initial pool of emotions that are related to professional sport teams, the study has content-analyzed 21 seminal studies in general psychology, consumer psychology (including advertising and brand), and sport fan psychology on emotions and emotion words (e.g., Edell & Burke, 1987; Izard, 1977; Mehrabian & Russell, 1974; Plutchik, 1980; Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988) combined with qualitative research (N = 67) using the Psychological Meaning listing technique. The results of the content analysis and the qualitative research identified 365 potential emotion words that could be applicable in the context of sport team brands. In order to reduce the number of the 365 emotions, frequency analysis was conducted. Four different survey checklists that contain one-fourth of the total emotions was created to reduce the fatigue effect for respondents (N = 560; total 140 full survey sets). As a rule of thumb, the emotions marked by more than 40% of participants were chosen (cf. Shaver, Schwartz, Kirson, & O'Connor, 1987). However, since it was expected that the frequencies of negative emotions associated with favorite sport teams would be much less than the cut-off, it was assumed that the negative emotions could also be an important part of emotions associated with favorite sport teams, thus the cut-off of more than 10% of participants was chosen for negative emotions. The emotions chosen from frequency analysis was categorized based on Shaver et al.'s (1987) emotion prototype (6 basic-level emotions and their subordinate-level emotions), which has been widely used in consumer psychology, due to its robust hierarchical structure between basic-level and subordinate-level emotions and its stability across cultures (cf. Cornelius, 1996). Of the emotions over the cut-off, the most frequent but best representative emotions for Shaver et al.'s subordinate-level emotions remained for EFA. Since sport team-specific emotions that are over the cut-off but may not fit in Shaver et al.'s categorization emerged, four additional subordinate-level emotions were newly identified: supportive, connected, competitive, and aggressive. One subordinate-level emotion (i.e., relief) was dropped in the model, due to its low frequency. Based on the frequency analysis and the categorization process, 30 (subordinate-level) emotions were generated for 6 dimensions of emotions associated with professional sport team brands. Shaver et al.'s six basic emotions (Love, Joy, Surprise, Anger, Sadness, and Fear) were renamed in this study to reflect spectatorship-specific nature: (1) Connectedness, (2) Elation, (3) Surprise, (4) Anger, (5) Unhappiness, and (6) Worry.

Two hundred sixty surveys were collected from undergraduate classes at a large public university in the Southwestern United States. Participants were asked to write down their favorite professional sport team and then rate the degree to which they agreed or disagreed with each of the 30 emotions when they think about the team on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). EFA was conducted to identify dimensions representing the 30 emotions. Data were subjected to a principal components analysis with varimax

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rotations. EFA showed that the original 6 dimensions were not upheld; one new dimension (i.e., Competitive Aggression) emerged. Six of the 30 emotions were deleted based on bi-dimensional loadings (above .32; cf. Costello & Osborne, 2005). As a result, 7 dimensions containing 24 emotions remained: Connectedness (passion, nostalgia, supportive, and connected), Elation (happy, excited, pleased, proud, optimistic, and entertained), Competitive Aggression (competitive and aggressive), Surprise (amazed, surprised, and astonished), Anger (annoyed, frustrated, and rage), Unhappiness (suffering, sad, regret, and dejected), and Worry (fearful and anxious). The 7-component extraction accounted for 76% of total variance. Total variance close to or above 70% is considered very appropriate (Stevens, 1996).

A new sample of 286 respondents was collected via classroom surveys from the same university. Like EFA, participants were asked to write down their favorite professional sport team and then rate the degree to which they agreed or disagreed with each of the 24 emotions when they think about the team on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). CFA was employed using AMOS to confirm the identified relationships between subordinate-level emotions that are extracted in EFA and latent (basic-level) emotions. The results of the CFA showed that the data are a good fit to the model (CFI = .947, RMSEA = .052, SRMR = .051). Emotion loadings ranged from .56 to .96 on their respective dimensions. All dimensions were internally consistent. The reliabilities for all 7 dimensions were satisfactory, ranging from .75 to .89 (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). In addition, in order to examine the validity of the emotion scale, the research employed nine external variables: fanship, team loyalty, game attendance intention, and six other consumer behaviors (i.e., watching a live game, watching sports news, searching the Internet, talking about the team, reading the sports section of newspaper, and licensed merchandise consumption). Nine regressions were utilized to examine the effects of the seven dimensions of the emotion scale on each of the nine external variables.

The results of the regressions exhibited that both Connectedness and Elation dimensions had a positive effect on all of the nine external variables while Anger and Competitive Aggression dimensions positively affected six and seven of the nine variables, respectively. On the other hand, Surprise dimension negatively affected game attendance intention while both Unhappiness and Worry dimensions negatively affected licensed merchandise consumption. The 24 item, 7 dimension scale is a reliable, valid measure of emotions associated with professional sport team brands. The development of emotions associated with professional sport teams may provide sport marketers with some insight into emotional aspects of sport teams as brands in building their fan base.