What Gives You a Sense of Pride? Effect of Fans’ Associations with Team Performance and Corporate Social Responsibility on Self-Continuity, Pride, and Word-of-Mouth Intention

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A sense of pride is considered a complex emotion, with the psychology literature arguing that the concept is not easy to clarify (Lewis, 1995). From various studies investigating the overlapping concepts of what is admittedly a complicated emotion, pride can be defined as a feeling of superiority resulting from achievements (Decrop & Derbaix, 2010; Ellsworth & Smith, 1988; Han, Lerner, & Keltner, 2007; Jones, 2010; Katzenbach, 2003; Lewis, Haviland-Jones, & Barrett, 2010; Oveis, Horberg, & Keltner, 2010; Rafaeli & Worline, 2001; Tracy, Shariff, & Cheng, 2010). Pride is an important factor with many implications and is found in the psychology, business, communication, and sport literature. Feelings of pride can be easily observed in the sport context because each sport team has its own group of fans. Sport fans feel various emotions in relation to their sport team, and pride is a common emotion that can be seen in fan behavior (Chang, Kang, Ko, & Kim, 2014, Chang, Ko, Kang, & Connaughton, 2015; Decrop & Derbaix, 2010).

Recent psychology studies have argued that pride is an important factor in explaining human behavior (Dickens & DeSteno, 2014; Holbrook, Piazza, & Fessler, 2014; Horberg, Kraus, & Keltner, 2013; Lewis et al., 2010; Oveis et al., 2010; Tracy, Robins, & Lagattuta, 2005; Tracy et al., 2010). Business research indicates that a sense of pride can improve consumer attitude, repurchase intention, and word-of-mouth (WOM) intention (Du, Bhattacharya, & Sen, 2010; Jones, 2010; Katzenbach, 2003; Soscia, 2007; Tyler & Blader, 2003). Interestingly, Du et al. (2010) has argued that customers can experience pride from their associations with the corporate social responsibility (CSR) messages of a certain brand. Their argument stems from the communication literature, which claims that effective advertising messages can be positively related to customer emotions (Batra & Ray, 1986). Recent studies empirically support the relationship between CSR associations and pride (Chang et al., 2014; Chang et al., 2015). Although structural equation modeling has confirmed this relationship, we need more supportive evidence using different samples and methods such as experimental design. Association with corporate ability (e.g., quality of products/services), as with CSR, is also considered an important indicator for product evaluation (Brown & Dacin, 1997), repurchase intention, positive information sharing regarding a preferred brand (Soscia, 2007), and pride (Katzenbach, 2003).

The literature suggests that feelings of pride cannot occur from a one-time event (Decrop & Derbaix, 2010; Dickens & DeSteno, 2014; Jones, 2010; Lewis, 1995; Rafaeli & Worline, 2001; Tangney, Stuewig, & Mashek, 2007). Therefore, consistent relationships between fans and teams may be required for strong ties that contribute to a sense of pride. In this context, this study seems to be more logical than prior research considering that it includes concepts of continuity—how the present self is a continuation of the past self (Sedikides, Wildschut, Routledge, & Arndt, 2015). Most of the time, fans and teams are likely to share a long rather than short-term relationship, and fans would derive a sense of continuous self from supporting their teams because being a fan can contribute to self-identity across one’s lifespan. Pride is a self-related, social-moral emotion, resulting from comparing and evaluating oneself (Tangney et al., 2007). Studies have argued that positive memories and feelings of continuity from the past (self-continuity) can produce self-referential emotions such as pride and embarrassment (McAdams, 2013; Tangney et al., 2007). Although the relationship between self-continuity and pride is worth exploring, very few studies have considered this argument, which has not been supported empirically.

Therefore, this study aimed to investigate whether (1) the associations with team performance and/or CSR positively influence pride, (2) self-continuity messages positively influence pride, (3) self-continuity or associations with team performance and CSR causes a greater sense of pride, (4) associations with team performance and CSR are positively related to pride and WOM intention, and (5) gender has a moderating effect.
We developed the following hypothesis:

H1: Fans’ pride in a team increases from associations with positive messages about the team (e.g., team performance and/or CSR).

H2: Fans’ pride in a team increases from being stimulated by self-continuous messages about the team.

H3: A sense of pride can be differentiated according to type of message, such as self-continuity and associations with team performance and CSR.

H4: Associations with team performance and CSR is positively related to self-continuity, pride, and WOM.

H5: Gender moderates these relationships.

The analyses will employ statistical approaches such as descriptive statistics, confirmatory factor analysis, t-Test, ANOVA, structural equation modeling (SEM), and multi-group SEM. This study will target professional/collegiate sport fans during the off-season (when they would be less sensitive about team performance). We will administer two pre-tests (n = 100) to manipulate checks and review items, exposing 400 participants to eight types of stimuli (e.g., self-continuity, associations with team performance, and associations with CSR). The whole data set will be used for the SEM and multi-group SEM analyses.

The result will provide theoretical and managerial implications. First, the results will show that individuals feel a sense of pride when they associate with positive messages such as excellent team performance and/or community efforts. Second, the results will confirm that sustainable strategies contribute to making fans feel proud of their team. Third, the results underline the importance of CSR in providing fans a sense of pride from a long-term perspective. Fourth, this study is expected to provide empirical evidence on how to enhance word-of-mouth behavior. In other words, fans share positive information when they feel a sense of pride. Messages that make fans feel connected to the past influence pride positively. Fifth, we expect to find differences between male and female fans. Sixth, the results will support the argument that emotions are important indicators to predict human behavior (Lewis et al., 2010), especially in a sport context (Kang, Bagozzi, & Oh, 2011). Seventh, the theoretical model is expected to provide systematic understanding of human/fan behavior (e.g., associations are positively related to self-continuity, pride, WOM intention).