
Examination on the Relationship Among School Identification, Team Identification, and Sport Consumption of College Students

Submitting author: Dr Li-Shiue Gau
Asia University, Taiwan,
Taichung, 41354
Taiwan

All authors: Jong-Chae Kim, Li-Shiue Gau (corresp)

Type: Professional Practice
Category: 5: Marketing In and Through Sport

Abstract

The current study examined the effect of college students' school identification on their sport consumption levels through their team identification. The current study was interested in investigating college students' sport media consumption and sport merchandise consumption as measuring their current sport consumption levels, and the current study also included college students' intentions to donate money as measuring their future sport consumption levels. The sport media consumption, merchandise consumption, and the intention to donate were important consequences of school identification. Generally, many researchers (Heere & James, 2007; Gau, James, & Kim, 2009) already approved that sport team identification has a positive impact on sport consumers' behavior. Our conceptual framework includes team identification in the middle of the relationship between school identification and the three sport consumption variables.

University (School) identification is defined as "the bond and association one has with a university or college attended" (Bass, Bunds, & Kim, 2011). Team identification is the personal commitment and emotional involvement fans have with a team. Highly identified fans would form psychological connection with a team, think of themselves part of the team, and feel vicarious achievement when the team performs well. Individuals characterized with high team identification would be more involved with a team, and have high expectations for consumption-related behaviors such as the investment of time and money in following the team (Sutton, McDonald, Milne, & Cimperman, 1997; Gau, James, & Kim, 2009). The current study examined how school identification could influence team identification levels, and then the different levels of team identification could be favorably or unfavorably related to college students' current and future sport consumption levels. Based on the balance theory, when a person has a positive (or negative) attitude

toward a “unit” (for example, a school), the person will have a similar attitude toward what is associated with the unit (for example, the school’s team). Otherwise, imbalance or cognitive dissonance would occur (Gau & Kim, 2011; Heider, 1958; Woodside & Chebat, 2001). Therefore, it is hypothesized (H1) that school identification levels lead to a positive relationship with its (sport) team identification.

The team identification would then contribute to the team-related consumption and donation as a behavioral demonstration in following the team (Sutton et al., 1997; Gau, James, & Kim, 2009). The behavior of media consumption, merchandise consumption, and intention to donate money for the athletic department is related to the team and to the school. When the media broadcasts the team’s game, the school’s name would be frequently mentioned by the broadcasters. The merchandise logo is possibly the team’s name or the school’s name. The donation to the athletic department is likely considered part of school financial sources as a whole. Therefore, this study proposed that higher school identification levels lead to higher media and merchandise consumption (H2.1), and higher donation intention levels (H2.2) partly through the team identification (H3).

The scale of school identification had 16 questions (Goodenow, 1993; Voelkl, 1996). The scale of team identification (James & Ross, 2002) included 4 questions. The scale of sport (media and merchandise) consumption levels had 7 questions derived from James and Ross (2004) and 3 additional questions added by the authors. The scale of intention to donate had 4 questions. All items used seven-point Likert scales. The reliabilities of the five scales were between 0.82 and 0.93.

Questionnaires were distributed to 140 college students at a southeastern university. The relationship between school and team identification was significant ($p < .05$) and positive ($r = 0.37$). H1 was supported. School identification was significantly related to sport consumption ($r = 0.18$, $p = .036$) and donation intention ($r = 0.22$, $p = .011$). H2.1 and H2.2 were supported. However, compared to school identification, team identification was more closely related to sport consumption ($r = 0.70$, $p < .001$) and donation intention ($r = 0.64$, $p < .001$). An analysis of a regression model with sport consumption as the dependent variable and school identification and team identification as the two independent variables showed that only the regression coefficient of team identification was significant. Another model which included donation intention as the dependent variable and school and team identification as the two independent variables showed the similar result. These results indicated that the team identification fully mediated the relationships between school identification and sport consumption, and between school identification and donation intention. H3 was partly supported.

The finding implies that representative teams for a school help promote

the school and acquire the financial support. Alumni would transfer their school identification into behavioral consumption and donation support.

References

Heider, F. (1958). *The psychology of interpersonal relations*. New York: John Wiley and Sons.

Sutton, W. A., McDonald, M. A., Milne, G. R., & Cimperman, J. (1997). Creating and fostering fan identification in professional sport. *Sport Marketing Quarterly*, 6(1), 15-22.

Gau, L. S., & Kim, J. C. (2011). The influence of cultural values on spectators' sport attitudes and team identification: An East-West perspective. *Social Behavior and Personality: An International Journal*, 39 (5), 587 - 596.

Gau, L. S., James, J. D., & Kim, J. C. (2009). Effects of team identification on motives, behavior outcomes, and perceived service quality. *Asian Journal of Management and Humanity Sciences*, 4, 76 – 90.

Bass, J., Bunds, K., & Kim, Y. K. (2011). A conceptual framework for university identification. *North American Society for Sport Management Annual Conference*.