

# SUCCESS OF MAJOR COLLEGIATE SPORT TEAMS ON THE TRANSFORMATION OF SPORT IDENTIFICATION, DESTINATION IMAGE, AND SPORT TOURISM BEHAVIOR

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## Abstract

### Background

Winning is the most promising means for a successful sport team because it could lead to optimal consequences including better financial performance for the team and positive psychological consequences for sport consumers (Cialdini et al., 1976; Zhang et al., 2003). Sport consumer behavior literature revealed that a fan's level of sport identification is an important predictor of various sport consumer behaviors (Wann & Branscombe, 1993). Researchers have also investigated why consumers travel considerable distances on a regular basis to watch sports. Gibson (2003) identified a wide range of variables that influence factors of sport tourism behaviors. Of these, destination image has been repeatedly found to substantially impact tourism-related behaviors.

Despite the importance of theoretical contributions and practical applications of understanding the interrelationships among awareness of winning, sport identification, destination image, and sport tourism behaviors, no study has empirically examined the theoretical relationships of these variables.

### Purpose of Study

This study explored the effects that non-resident's awareness of a winning sport team may have on sport identification, destination image, and sport tourism intentions. Based on the review of literature, a theoretical model (model A) was proposed that included four constructs: (a) awareness of winning, (b) sport identification, (c) destination image, and (d) sport tourism

intentions. Additionally, an alternative model that was nested within the proposed model was developed to determine which model best fit. The hypotheses of model A indicated that awareness of winning directly affected sport identification, which had direct relationships on both destination image and sport tourism intentions. In this model, destination image was proposed to have a direct relationship with sport tourism intentions. Model B omitted a path from sport identification to sport tourism intentions.

## Methods

Participants for this study were those who requested tourism information from the Alachua County Visitors and Convention Bureau about Gainesville, Florida, United States. This list contained approximately 6,000 people from all states in the U.S. From this sampling frame, 2,000 people were selected using a systematic random sampling technique that selected every 3rd person on the list. Two mailing surveys were conducted and 236 were returned for a response rate of 11.8%. Of those, 199 were included for statistical analyses. Previous research indicated that 10-20% of response rate from mail survey was typical (Oppermann, 2000). The data had adequate normality and missing data were imputed using mean substitution and regression imputation.

To measure destination image, the Scale of Destination Image (SDI) was used that included 18 items under four factors (Infrastructure, Attractions, Value for Money, and Enjoyable). To assess team identification, we adapted the Point of Attachment Index (PAI) that included 19 items under six factors. Sport tourism intentions were measured using the Event Sport Tourism Intention Scale (ESTIS) that consists of 9 items and three factors (recommend to other, intentions to revisit, and intention to attend sport events). The awareness of winning was measured by nine questions that assessed the degree of behavioral experience of the recent Gator men's basketball and football championships.

Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and structural equation modeling (SEM) were used to examine psychometric property of the proposed model and perform a model comparison by chi-square difference test. Once the best fitting model was identified, the structural relationships among the constructs were examined.

## Results and Discussion

A CFA revealed the structural model fit the data reasonably well ( $\chi^2 = 187.79$ ,  $p < .001$ ;  $\chi^2/df = 2.68$ ; RMSEA = .092; SRMR = .07; CFI = .93). As a result of SEM, the proposed model showed the best model fit ( $\chi^2 = 188.08$ ,  $p < .001$ ;  $\chi^2/df = 2.61$ ; RMSEA = .09; SRMR = .069; CFI = .93). A SEM revealed awareness of winning exhibited positive effect on sport identification ( $\beta = .29$ ), which in turn positively related to both destination image ( $\beta = .35$ ) and sport tourism intentions ( $\beta = .47$ ). Destination image had a significant positive effect ( $\beta = .40$ ) on sport tourism intentions.

The current study contributed to the body of knowledge on sport tourism literature by finding the structural relationship of awareness of winning, sport identification, destination image, and sport tourism intentions in the context of intercollegiate sport events. Sport organizations may use such findings to promote partnerships with the host cities and local communities when seeking financial and service supports and negotiating facility agreements. In addition,

cities and communities may utilize the information to justify expenditures on sport facilities and events. City tourism bureaus may include the information in their marketing campaigns to attract visitors.

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