
National Identity & Sport Consumption: A Study of the National Team Fans in Ireland

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Synopsis:

Abstract:

The purpose of the research was to elaborate on the relationship between sport national team identity and national identity. The relationship has been documented anecdotally and in other areas of study, most notably in sport sociology (Bairner, 2001). There has been no research in sport management, however, addressing how national sport team identity may influence or contribute to the formation of national identity. One of the researcher's goals was to advance our understanding of group identities by examining the influence of national sport team identity on national identity. An additional goal was to assess the relative importance of national sport team identity in relation to regional and religious identities as a component of one's national identity. The current study also included an examination of whether there were differences in the respective identities (team, and national) due to demographic characteristics (age, gender, education, and income).

Moreover, researchers studying team identification have not examined the relationship in the context of national sport team identity and sport consumption. Research (Fisher & Wakefield, 1998; Greenwood, 2001; James & Trail, 2005; Ozer & Argan, 2006) has purported the relationship between team identity and media consumption. However, there has been no work examining the extent to which identification with a national sports team influences sport media consumption. It is believed from anecdotal evidence national sport team identity will be a significant component in predicting indirect sport consumption (media and merchandise)

The current study included an examination of whether there were differences in indirect sport consumption (media and merchandise) based on demographic characteristics (age, gender, education, and income) among individuals that identified with a national sport team.

The following seven research questions were developed:

RQ1: Is national sport team identity a significant component of national identity in Ireland?

RQ2: What is the relative importance of national sport team identity as a component of national identity compared to other group identities (e.g., region and religion) in Ireland?

RQ3: Are there differences in national sport team identity based on demographic categories (age, gender, education, and income) in Ireland?

RQ4: Are there differences in national identity based on demographic categories (age, gender, education, and income) in Ireland?

RQ5: Is national sport team identity a significant predictor of media consumption?

RQ6: Is national sport team identity a significant predictor of merchandise consumption?

RQ7: Are there differences in sport consumption based on demographic characteristics (age, gender, education, and income) among individuals that identify with a national team in Ireland?

Participants were selected from the country of Ireland (n =218). The Irish sample was a convenience online sample from residents in Ireland.

Confirmatory factor analysis was conducted on the dataset to provide evidence of reliability and validity of the GROUP*ID scale. The sample was then reduced to reflect 'only' those individuals that chose to identify with the nation of Ireland (n = 194). Multiple regression and One-Way ANOVA were used to analyze the data. The Irish sample (n = 194) was composed of males (57%) and females (43%) and their average age was 36.59. Descriptive results revealed the Irish identified with the national soccer team (37%) and rugby team (37%). The results from a series of multiple regressions revealed that the influence of national sport team identity on national identity was significant in Ireland. The proposed models explained 55% of variance of national identity in Ireland (n = 194). Further analysis revealed national sport team identity accounted for more variance than religious identity in Irish national identity, but not more than was accounted for by regional identity. Findings from the current research also included significant differences in team identity.

Further, There were no significant differences in national sport team or national identity within the Irish sample (n =194). Other findings of the current research included significant differences on indirect sport consumption (media and merchandise) based on demographic characteristics amongst individuals that identified with an Irish national sport team. Based on the findings, key research and practical implications are presented.

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