

# Effects of Social Impact through Sports on Sport Team and Club Management — Aspects of Community Attachment Point of View

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## Background and Aim

In recent years, there has been growing interest shown in the social impact of sport as a tool for regional revitalization. However, not enough is known about 1) why sport has a social impact and 2) how it benefits organizations and events. There is a need for further elucidation of these points. The objective of this study is to research the social impacts of sporting teams and clubs—what kinds of social impacts they have, and what kinds of factors are associated with those social impacts.

## Theoretical Background

This uses social identity theory as the theoretical background for the social impacts of sporting teams. Professional sporting teams are the symbols of local communities, and it is thought that local residents deepen their attachment to their local team as part of an in-group. The desire to associate oneself with known successful others (BIRGing) may be a reason for the tendency for people to want to deepen their connection to highly regarded teams. Accordingly, the construction of fans' team identity may be associated with attitude toward the local community and the reputation of the team. Meanwhile, policies for the establishment and development of comprehensive regional sporting clubs are being pursued in Japan, and attention is being focused on the social impact brought by such clubs as an index for evaluating them. Commitment to activities at such a club may serve to deepen connections with local resources and attachment to place. In addition, previous studies have shown that participating in activities at sporting clubs increases the social capital of participants, and social capital may increase attachment to place.

## Research Design

To clarify these hypotheses, three studies were conducted. Firstly, to identify the basic relationship between the team and the residents' awareness, Study 1 revealed whether residents' positive feelings toward their local community affect their attitude toward local sporting teams. Using data collected from spectators of American college baseball teams, a multiple indicator model was used to reveal the relationship between psychological home (a sense that one's own identity is linked to a particular place) and team identity. The findings suggest that psychological home has a positive impact on team identity.

Next, in Study 2, to identify how the positive emotions held by the fans of professional sporting teams toward their place and the team's reputation created by the team's activities are associated with team identity, data obtained from spectators of a J. League affiliated soccer club was analyzed. The findings of this study suggest that, while sense of community does not directly increase team identity, team reputation has a significant impact on team identity. Also, because sense of community has a positive impact on team reputation, the findings suggest that attachment to place gives rise to a tendency to hold the home team in high regard.

Study 3 analyzed the impact that local sporting club members' commitment to activities at those clubs and their social capital have on attachment to local community. The findings of this study revealed that, while commitment to sporting clubs has no direct impact on attachment to place, commitment to activities at the club does significantly increase social capital in the local community. Because social capital significantly increases attachment to place, it was found that attachment to place is not directly linked to commitment to club, but is increased through social capital.

### **Results and Discussion**

To summarize the overall findings, "attitude toward the local community," which is one form of social impact brought about by sporting teams and clubs, is associated with residents gaining a real sense of the activities of the team and the club and evaluating those activities. Team management requires the establishment of the team's position as a symbol of the local community and the active engagement in activities that will contribute to the community, as a means of elevating the team's reputation among local residents. The management of sports clubs will also require creating social capital in the form of relationships among members, as a means of fostering attachment to the local community.