

What began as a memorable experience became a long-standing tradition: Examining the formation of sport fans' traditions.

Sport tradition represents the culmination of sport consumption, as ritualistic experiences, by definition, reflect the peak of patronage. But despite the marketing benefits gained from understanding sport tradition, research has largely occurred in areas such as anthropology and sociology (Neale, 2009). The extant literature has focused primarily on examinations of cultural practices, with particular attention being paid to the role tradition plays in connecting attendees to cultural identities in a society (see Chun, Gentry, & McGinnis, 2005; Mayer & Palmowski, 2004). While this research informs ways sport consumption enables individuals with entertainment, group affiliation, self-esteem, and general escapism, it fails to mention how traditions were cultivated. This theoretical void limits the practitioner's ability to employ atmospherics that may create a sensory experience worth repeating (i.e., tradition).

Memorable experiences composed by sport stadia, lend itself to reoccurrence. Unlike theater, sport is not interchangeable. As individuals attend more games due to an affectual attachment to experience, these experiences should theoretically inspire favorable hedonics (McCullough & Kellison, 2016). This distinction makes sport uniquely positioned, based upon its architectural and experiential design, to facilitate spatial dependency (Dinckal, 2013), or as Jessen and Pyta (2012) so elegantly put it, "temples of experience." The question remains, however, what experiences manifest into tradition? Existing frameworks suggest that it is likely to be those which form and deepen an individual's fan identification. However, the demonstration of showing pride in one's team may not be enough to establish tradition. Cognitive psychology also illustrates that novelty and emotion contribute to how spatial, temporal, and contextual details are recalled and then reconstructed (Skavronskaya et al., 2020). Collectively, these associations provide insights into how memorable experiences and subsequent traditions are built, and consequently, became the basis of this study's theoretical foundation.

Data will be collected via an online survey using Amazon MTurk, an online crowdsourcing platform which has been shown to provide convenient, reliable, and valid data (Kees et al., 2017). Use of MTurk will allow the research team to collect responses across various geographical regions, sports, and teams/schools, encapsulating a wide variety of fan traditions. With the goal of ascertaining event experience aspects that develop into traditions, the survey will include a variety of sport service quality and event experience constructs including Food and Beverage, Sound/Music, Sociability, and Local Culture. Participants will also respond to items assessing the frequency of recurrence of traditions, social dynamics in tradition, and level of meaning, novelty, and anticipation. Outcome variables include social well-being, social identity, and team-related behavioral intentions. A variety of analyses will be utilized to address the research questions including path modeling and MANOVA. In summary, the study aims to bring light to the cultivation of traditions. Theoretically, the results will elucidate conditions that allow memorable experiences to evolve into meaningful, recurrent experiences. Practical implications will assist sport organizations in the identification of design elements that are most likely to foster traditions, which ultimately are intended to bolster patronage amongst fans.

References

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