

**The Dynamics of Temporal and Continuous Sensory Stimuli, Liminality, and Communitas on Team Identification: How should a New College Football Team Attract More Students?**

Kyu-soo Chung, *Kennesaw State University*  
Geumchan Hwang, *Western Michigan University*

**Wednesday, October 24, 2018**  
**6:30-7:20 PM, Ford Field**

**50-minute poster presentation**

At a live sporting event, sport spectators are exposed to a variety of sensory stimuli (Chung et al., 2015; Lee et al., 2012). Their seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, and touching are impinged by different types of stimuli (Chung et al., 2015, 2106; Lee et al., 2012). These transient sensations may last for a while or for only a moment. Spectators may be pleased to sense the temporal stimulation of mild sunshine and a gentle breeze. Their pleasure could be enhanced if these sensations are accompanied by pleasing aromas that stimulate their appetites. They are also continually perceiving facility-oriented stimuli as they watch the video board, hear sounds associated with the event, and feel their seat beneath them. The duration of stimulation plays an important role in determining the quality and degree of sensation (Woermann & Rokka, 2015); however, no systematic studies have investigated the dynamics of spectators' temporal and continuous stimuli and their sporting event experience. Exploring this dynamic is likely to reveal a new dimension of how time-related sensory stimuli affect spectators' event experience.

A collegiate football game is a festival at which university students embrace and celebrate their culture and easily bond together without giving much regard to the social status of their fellow fans. Such experiences can be explained by the twin concepts of liminality and communitas (Chalip, 2006; Lee et al., 2015). Liminal spaces are outside and in between the normal structures of everyday life that allow people to exit the norms and routines of daily life and experience something undefined. Noble and Walker (1997) argued that liminal experiences consist of three stages—separation, transition, and incorporation. In the liminal space of a sporting event, for example, spectators separate themselves from normal life as they enter the stadium, transition from their roles outside the stadium to their role as spectator inside the stadium, and then return to their normal life with a new identity that they incorporate into their sense of self.

Communitas, meanwhile, is a strong sense of community associated with liminal experiences (Hayton, 2017). When spectators come together in the liminal space of a sporting event, they frequently interact with one another and develop a sense of camaraderie as they support their team. Shared liminal experiences in a sport stadium can lead spectators to develop a sense of connection with one another (Chalip, 2006; Lee et al., 2015). This strong sense of community promotes team identification—sport fans' tendency to connect to a favorite team and to identify themselves with the team's successes and failures (Heere & Katz, 2014). A strong sense of community is essential for team identification because fans tend to attach themselves not only to the team but also to other fans (Fairley & Tyler, 2012).

Liminality and communitas are unique experiences that fans are much more likely to experience when they are together in a stadium participating as spectators in a live sporting event. Such an atmosphere may be especially critical for a new collegiate football team that needs to establish team identity among university students. The study of Lee et al. (2015) found the substantial impacts of liminality and communitas on team identification among sport spectators. In addition, Lee et al. (2013) found the effects of sensory stimuli on team identification among university students. Finally, it has been known that one tactic of theming a sport event with liminality and communitas is leveraging sensory stimuli (Chalip, 2006). Given these facts, the current study designs a model in which collegiate football game spectators' temporal and continuous sensations, liminality, and communitas affect their team identification. The main purpose of this study is to find the magnitude and significance of time-related stimuli, liminality, and communitas on team identification.

The survey consists of 15 questions and each question is asked on a seven-point Likert-type scale, ranging from not at all through moderate to very much. All questions are adapted from previous studies and are slightly adjusted to

## 2018 Sport Marketing Association Conference (SMA XVI)

reflect the context of a collegiate football game. All the constructs, measured by three items, are found to be reliable, i.e., temporal stimuli ( $\alpha = .63$ ), continuous stimuli ( $\alpha = .69$ ), liminality ( $\alpha = .83$ ), communitas ( $\alpha = .88$ ), and team identification ( $\alpha = .87$ ).

Data was collected during six home games of a football team affiliated with an NCAA Division I conference in 2017, when the team was in its third season. Researchers divided the stadium's student area into four subsections, asked spectators in each section whether they would consent to participate, and handed self-administered questionnaires to all who agreed. The final sample consisted of 434 attendees, consisting of 45.9% males and 54.1% females. For 35% of them, this was their first time attending a home game. The average age was 21.2 years.

In the hierarchical regression model, spectators' temporal and continuous stimuli were first entered on team identification. Spectators' liminality and communitas were then entered, via a stepwise method, into team identification. The first model produced results showing that continuous stimuli ( $\beta = .35, p < .001$ ) and temporal stimuli ( $\beta = .22, p < .001$ ) affected 25% of team identification. In the next model, 34% of team identification was explained by communitas ( $\beta = .36, p < .001$ ), continuous stimuli ( $\beta = .24, p < .001$ ), and temporal stimuli ( $\beta = .12, p < .05$ ). The final model indicated that 36% of team identification was predicted by communitas ( $\beta = .26, p < .001$ ), continuous stimuli ( $\beta = .23, p < .001$ ), liminality ( $\beta = .18, p < .001$ ), and temporal stimuli ( $\beta = .14, p < .01$ ). The variance changes of each model were significant at the level of .001.

Findings show how spectators' time-related sensory experience and contextual experience affect their team identification. In the context of a sporting event, temporal and continuous stimulation and an amalgam of these stimuli can contribute to the creation of a festival-like atmosphere. These transcendental experiences may help event attendees identify with the team. More results and discussion will be presented.

### References

Chalip, L. (2006). Towards social leverage of sport events. *Journal of Sport and Tourism*, 11(2), 109-127.

Chung, K.-S., Ryu, D. S., & Lee, S. (2016). The effects of prior affect and sensory stimuli on motorsport spectators' in-the-moment experiences. *International Journal of Sports Marketing and Sponsorship*, 17(4), 302-319.

Chung, K.-S., Ryu, D. S., Green, B. C., & Kang, H. M. (2015). The effects of sensory stimuli on motorsports spectators. *International Journal of Sports Marketing and Sponsorship*, 16(5), 365-384.

Fairley, S. & Tyler, B. D. (2012). Brining baseball to the big screen: Building sense of community outside of the ballpark. *Journal of Sport Management*, 26(3), 258-270.

Hayton, J. (2017). "They do treat us as a bit normal now": Students' experiences of liminality and communitas whilst volunteering on a sports-based outreach project. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 52(1), 1-21.

Heere, B., & Katz, M. (2014). Exploring the dimensions of team identity among fans of a new college football team. *Journal of Applied Sport Management*, 6(1), 25-47.

Lee, S., In, S., & Seo, W. J. (2015). Repeat attendance as a function of liminality, communitas and team identification. *South African Journal for Research in Sport, Physical Education and Recreation*, 37(1), 59-76.

Lee, S., Lee, H. J., Seo, W. J., & Green, C. (2012). A new approach to stadium experience: The dynamics of the sensoryscape, social interaction, and sense of home. *Journal of Sport Management*, 26(6), 490-

**2018 Sport Marketing Association Conference (SMA XVI)**

505.

Lee, S., Heere, B., & Chung, K.-S. (2013). Which senses matter more? The impact of our senses on team identity and team loyalty. *Sport Marketing Quarterly*, 22(4), 203-213.

Noble, C. H., & Walker, B. A. (1997). Exploring the relationships among liminal transitions, symbolic consumption, and the extended self. *Psychology and Marketing*, 14(1), 29-47.

Woermann, N., & Rokka, J. (2015). Timeflow: How consumption practices shape consumers' temporal experiences. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 41(6), 1486-1508.