



Collecting Memories in Away Games: the Effects of Team Identification, Community Identification, and Away Game Involvement

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to identify the effect of the away game involvement, community identification, and autobiographical memory towards the satisfaction of away games in the context of professional football (soccer). Unlike previous studies, which relied on the participation behavior of fans and their team identification, this study is based on the autobiographical memory of fans who attend away games in Turkey. A total of 204 fans were reached who had minimum one away game experience. The data were subjected to reliability, validity, confirmatory factor analysis, and structural equation modeling procedures. In order to test the structural model created for the purpose of the research, a questionnaire study was carried out with football fans. Results indicated that there were significant relationships between team identification and away game involvement ($R^2 = .80$, $p < 0.01$). Additionally, the relationship between away game involvement and autobiographical memory was significant ($R^2 = .95$, $p < 0.01$). This study showed that autobiographical memory has an important effect on game satisfaction ($R^2 = .89$, $p < 0.01$), while giving sports marketers a more active role in the engagement process through nostalgic cues. Our study has significant implications as to how well sports team managers design sports marketing and fan engagement strategies based on autobiographical memory.

Keywords Autobiographical memory · Sports marketing · Team identification · Game involvement · Fan behavior

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Introduction

The sports industry is one of the world's largest and fastest growing industry and its primary source for revenue is from fans (DeSarbo & Madrigal, 2011). In this context, sports' marketing is also an important aspect for sports clubs as it is essential for their business growth and survival. Sport forms one of the most important business lines of the sports entertainment industry (Stein & Evans, 2009). As a sports marketer, instead of selling a product or service, you need to sell the expectation of what will happen and give consumers or fans memories to carry it with them. More importantly, Veeck (1965) believed that what keeps sports fans coming back next season is the memories that they have experienced in the past seasons. In this context, it is possible to state that the significant issues underlined by Veeck (1962, 1965) are nostalgia and autobiographical memory. Thus, sports management researchers examined why people (fans) go to facilities to watch games. They have determined that factors such as sports event participants, team identification levels, non-sports entertainment (mascots, music, cheering, fan chants, etc.), communal/social aspects, stadium design and services, escape desire, and the desire to participate in the emotional drama of a sports competition all affect attendance recurrence (Kulczycki & Hyatt, 2005). Most of these factors are related to nostalgia or autobiographical memory. Many consumer behavior researchers have been interested in the concept of nostalgia for the past two decades (Demirbag-Kaplan et al., 2015; Havlena & Holak, 1991; Holbrook & Schindler, 1994; Marchegiani & Phau, 2013; Taniyev & Gordon, 2019).

Nostalgia has been one of the most important topics in tourism and sports tourism. In sports tourism, the athlete participates in the sports event away from home, and the activity that includes travel to attend sports events is called sports tourism and nostalgia sports tourism. Nostalgia sports tourism has a widely accepted definition, which includes traveling to sports stadiums/arenas and other areas associated with the history of a sport (Gibson, 1998). We can evaluate some behaviors of the fans traveling to away games according to this definition. The role of nostalgia may differ from the nostalgia and memory functioning in fan behavior by the close relationships between the group, the level of having high team identity, and finally participation rate of away games.

In contrast, autobiographical memory, defined as a broader concept than nostalgia (Cho et al., 2014), is about the recall rate of the events or games that the fans attended. Furthermore, revealing the relationship between these memories and team identification of the group, community identification, and satisfaction level can make an important contribution to the field of sports marketing and literature. It is well documented empirically that both professional- and college-level sports teams are winning home games more than away games (Dennis & Carron, 1999). Researchers (Bray et al., 2003) have shown the fact that those winning percentages at home games are 22% higher than the ones at away games in England Professional Soccer League.

Despite the existence of such studies in the literature focusing on the performances of teams who play away games or on the effects of locations on achievement (e.g., Lago, 2009; Pickens, 1994; Sampaio et al., 2008), studies evaluating away matches in terms of autobiographical memory of fans are extremely limited. In this respect, this study will contribute to the sports marketing literature as well.

However, “team identification” is one of the most studied research subjects in the sports marketing field. As a reflection of the theory on social identity, it can be said that there is a very close relationship between community identity and team identity. Most of the values, attitudes, and behaviors in the community can also be found among team fans. In the context of Wann and Branscombe (1993)’s approach to the frequency of participation at a game as a spectator or a fan, and also Fink et al. (2002)’s idea that high level fans have a stronger sense of attachment to their team, it is possible that the team identity feature of the fans going to the away games is more developed and that the relationship between group members who attend away games is deeper and more intense. The game involvement rate of fan groups may vary according to their level of support. Some fans regard football games as an indispensable part of their lives, while others are less concerned with matches. “Game involvement” stands out as a reflection of being a fan. Away games are another element where fan groups make more sacrifices for their teams and reinforce their identity and belonging with the teams they support. It seems that those with higher team or community identity are more concerned with away games. In this context, it is possible to suggest that fan groups that go to away games are the most loyal fans. The level of commitment of these fans is higher than that of the other fans. Likewise, it is possible that the game involvement level of fan groups who go to away games is higher than the other fans since they are more concerned with the team. This, in turn, takes their “fan level” higher than the others.

This paper argues that there is relatively little relational research emerging under the influence of a strong identification of social identity theory in sports marketing. In other words, the number of studies that examine these relationships between team or community identification, involvement, and autobiographic memory in the case of an away game is very limited. In particular, looking at the issue from the perspective of autobiographical memory regarding away games that are able to demonstrate value will generate useful results. From this perspective, the present study would contribute to the field of sports marketing. Therefore, this study aims to examine the relationships between team identification, community identification, away game involvement, autobiographical memory, and satisfaction. To sum up, this research provides a relational model of autobiographical memory by integrating different types of variables such as team identity, away game participation, and experience or satisfaction with the game. This paper can be applied in future empirical research to measure the concept of autobiographical memory in home and away games and be used to understand the foundation of memory in the context of different sport contexts or events.

Theoretical Framework and Hypotheses

Team and Community Identification

Social identity theory (Tajfel, 1970), which is derived from Festinger's (1954) social comparison theory, reveals that people relate themselves to similar features, values, and shared group characteristics (Jacobson, 1979). Social identity reflects an emotional commitment of individuals to a particular group membership, developing a sense of belonging (Tajfel, 1981). Thus, a person's social identity evolves through the emotional attachment and value of their membership to that group (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). The suggestion that social roles can affect the quality of autobiographical memories shows that different contextual factors affect the availability of personal memories and personality variables can make this effect more moderate (Nakash & Brody, 2006). In this context, personality, value, and loyalty are very high and characterized as part of a team identity or community identity (Karjaluoto et al., 2016; Kim et al., 2001). Team identity is defined as the individual perception of the relationship between individuals themselves and sports teams, and the success or failure of the team is considered as their own personal experience (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Cunningham & Eastin, 2017).

Team identity has an important effect on aggression, participation in matches (Dimmock & Grove, 2006), just as it is in the identity of the community. It is seen that team identity and community identities bear similarities in these aspects. People do not only have an identity as an individual, but they also have a social identity (Deaux et al., 1995; Gordon et al., 2021). One of the greatest reflectors of this social identity is team supporting (or being a fan) (Parry et al., 2014). Under sports management, individuals gain a sense of identity because of commitment to their teams and thus strengthen ties to their community (Heere et al., 2011; Underwood et al., 2001). There are studies (e.g., Kim et al., 2010) that indicate the fact that there is a relationship between sports identity and community identity. Korte (2007) stated that socialization leads to the development of the group identity by developing the identity of the individual. Fans and spectators may feel nostalgic due to positive memories of socializing with group members (Cho et al., 2017, 2020). Fairley's (2003) study of nostalgic behaviors of group travelers focusing on social interaction can be considered closely related to fans' away game trips. It is clear that there is a close relationship between community identity and fan identity both in terms of motivations and shared values in the group attitudes and behaviors (Gordon et al., 2021). In sports marketing literature, community identity or brand identity can be used to define fan groups (Yoshida et al., 2015). For example, Galatasaray, Fenerbahçe, or Besiktas football team's identity can define the brand as both a community and a club or a team (Özgen & Argan, 2021).

The hypothesis developed as a result of the close relationship between team identity and community identity, both as a shared value and as a characteristic of the social identity theory, is as follows.

H₁. There is a relationship between team identification and community identification.

Team identity has been the subject of many studies, especially as a central structure in understanding fan behavior (Özgen & Argan, 2017; Sutton et al., 1997; Wann et al., 2017). Theoretical structure adopted by team identity suggests that an individual's social roles (the team he/she is a fan of) influence the social behavior of the group to which he or she feels loyalty (e.g., fan communities). Sutton et al. (1997) suggest three levels of fan identification: (a) low identification (social fans), (b) medium identification (focused fans), and (c) high identification (vested fans). Low identification refers to a passive relationship with the game, while medium identification refers to an association with the team or attraction. The last level of identification, titled as high identification, refers to a devoted relationship to a sport, team, or player. Fans participating in away games can be characterized by high identification. Team identity and community identity have a potency to reveal game involvement. Fans with a high level of team identity spend much more money and time than those with low participation in matches (Sutton et al., 1997). Fans with strong identities are more likely to have higher team interests than those with lower identities, and consequently higher game involvements (Wann & Branscombe, 1993; Yoshida et al., 2015). In other words, fan groups who have a high team identity or a high sense of belonging come together to form communities to go to away games. According to these results determined in the literature, many studies investigating the decision to participate in the matches from the past to the present have caused the inclusion of team identification in structural models (Argan & Özgen, 2019; Rocha, & Fleury, 2017; Wann et al., 2004). Considering this logic and approach, it can be said that there is a relationship between the team identification and away game involvement. The proposed hypothesis for this purpose is as follows.

H₂. Team identification is positively associated with away game involvement.

H₃. Community identification is positively associated with away game involvement.

Based on the identity theory of Wann and Branscombe (1993), nostalgia as a personal identity can be understood by explaining the relationship between sports and nostalgia. The studies on the fan identity focus on the psychological, emotional, and behavioral consequences of the identity. Individuals with high fan identity have higher self-esteem (Lianopoulos et al., 2020) and feelings of belonging and solidarity are also greater. Fans who have strong or high fan identity also have more attendance in matches (Judson & Carpenter, 2005). In other words, strong associations within the fan groups constitute an important part of the team identity. The greater the sense of belonging, the stronger the phenomenon of attachment to the team. The people in the fan groups going to the away games get to know each other and the relationships between them are more intimate due to the high level of support. So, it is possible to say the fans who attend their team's away matches have a high team identity. When a fan shares general identity within a group, the autobiographical memory strengthens their identity bond with a team (Moore & Homer, 2008).

Away Game Involvement

Consumer involvement is conceptualized as the motivational reflection of the level of personal interest in a particular product in relation to one's needs and interests (Zaichkowsky, 1986). Involvement provided evidence that it can be used to

understand fan behavior that has become consumers of the sports industry, as well as across disciplines (Funk et al., 2004). Sports involvement generally refers to the degree to which a particular sporting event becomes the center of an individual's life. In this sense, it provides both hedonic and symbolic values to the individual (Beaton et al., 2011; Kim et al., 2020).

Studies on sport spectator motivations indicate diverse factors such as teams, athletes, escape, drama, social interaction, physical attraction, and physical skills (Mahony et al., 2002; Trail & James, 2001). Social interaction is a decisive factor/game involvement that needs to be evaluated in the leisure paradigm (not only sense of competition but also with a focus on leisure or experiences) (Ben Khalifa et al., 2021). Similarly, studies on sports involvement (e.g., Leonard, 2005) point out that a number of factors (eustress, entertainment, escape, family, and social interaction) are decisive. When the topic is approached as a leisure activity involvement, two or three factors are said to be effective here. Studies on game involvement reveal that geographical or spatial factors such as the city's population, territory of the country, city structure, accessibility, or presence of fans in neighboring places are all part of the studies conducted on sports participation (Leonard, 2005). In relation to the subject, Gibson et al. (2003) found evidence in their research that the fans who go to away games not only want to watch their team's matches but also want to experience different places. Away game involvement needs to be evaluated in the leisure paradigm due to the fact that fans can approach the subject not only in a sense of competition but also with a focus on leisure or experiences (Ben Khalifa et al., 2021). From this point of view, an experiential marketing paradigm can determine the experiences of away games.

Similarly, when going to an away game, during the game, and when returning home from the play, it will have an impact on the size of the experience. Spatial interaction can occur more effectively in away games. It is possible to suggest that the interaction of the fans going to the away games is more intense than the home matches. For this reason, it can be said that the team identification levels of away fans are higher than the other fans. The most loyal fans or fanatic fans watch their teams in away matches (Tapp, 2004). The hypothesis predicted based on the approach that the fans may have remembered the details of the matches due to their interest in the away games is as follows.

H₄. Away game involvement is positively associated with autobiographical memory towards away games.

Nostalgia and Autobiographical Memory

The phenomenon of recalling the past is known as nostalgia in the marketing literature and a person who is said to be prone to nostalgia uses it as a permanent reference point for enjoying previous experiences or for his/her attitudes towards products (Summers et al., 2001). Nostalgia has been extensively researched in marketing, tourism, and sports tourism. It is creating a new field in the study of its relation to sports consumption and fan behavior towards away game events. Research and studies on nostalgia have revealed that the concept should be evaluated more as an

emotion in some depth (Havlena & Holak, 1991; Summers et al., 2001). It is possible to come across many different definitions of nostalgia. Some of them mention the idea of pre-birth, emotions (Holbrook & Schindler, 1994), and one's personally experienced past (Davis, 1979).

In the research based on the nostalgic sports tourism literature, the concept of nostalgia was evaluated under four categories: experience, socialization, personal identity, and group identity (Cho et al., 2014; Fairley & Gammon, 2005; Gibson, 1998). These four features are linked together by away game experience, away game community, and team identification. While social bonding within the away game group is related to culture, group ritual, and norms group identity, the concepts of self-respect, value, the pride of being a fan, and think of accomplishment are linked to the fan identity. Besides these, other features like making friends, socializing with others, building friendships, and sharing useful information represent socialization. On the other hand, experiences cover an important part of nostalgia, such as memories regarding sports venue, atmosphere, chants (team anthems and cheers), and symbolization of players, teams, or coaches. In a study conducted on fans of college football games, it was revealed that nostalgia was positively associated with the revisit intention (Cho et al., 2014). On the other hand, experiences cover an important part of nostalgia, such as memories regarding sports venue, atmosphere, chants (team anthems and cheers), and symbolization (players, teams, or coaches).

Although autobiographical memory shows significant similarities with nostalgia, it is considered in a different field (Batcho, 2007; Cho et al., 2014). Concepts that are related to “remembering,” such as autobiographical memory, are considered more broadly. Autobiographical memory is one of the oldest and most complex areas of psychology and involves many areas such as neuropsychology, clinical psychology, and social psychology (Rubin, 1999). Nowadays, autobiographical memory seems to be involved in studies in many areas such as medicine, education, sociology, and business administration. Remembering past events is a human experience at a universal level (Nelson, 1993). We can remember some experiences more and others less or never. The remembrance phenomenon can vary according to the importance of the activity, and the experiment it provides. Sports marketers surely acknowledge that they sell the “moment” as memories that have been experienced by individuals, or collectively. Games are made by memories and these memories encourage sports consumers (spectator) to desire to come back those moments again (Summers et al., 2001). Sports events are among the most memorable events in human life. Today, people consume games to experience far more than the result, score or win.

Personal experiences of the individual shape the autobiographical memory (Fitzgerald & Broadbridge, 2013). In this sense, autobiographical memory may contain a number of memories retrieved voluntarily or involuntarily. In our study, recollection structure was used to represent the phenomenon of remembering past matches in relation to autobiographical memory. In connection with this subject, Fitzgerald and Broadbridge (2013) found that this structure represents an important area related to measuring autobiographical memory. Recollection alone is not enough to reveal phenomena such as re-living and traveling back in time (Fitzgerald & Broadbridge, 2013). Impact and rehearsal structures, although they appear different from each other, constitute other key variables in revealing the conceptual

field of autobiographical memory. The scoring of impact importance and emotional intensity refers to the frequency of remembering what is thought and spoken about, with or without being rehearsal (Fitzgerald & Broadbridge, 2013). In the context of all this information, the autobiographical memory in this study is generally related to the desire of football fans to relieve their memories while bringing back the topics they talked about by going to the away games in the past.

According to Madson and Trafimov (2001), social context tips can act as a memory base. In this context, the content and structure of the autobiographical memories are thought to reflect the instincts and effects (i.e., key aspects of their team identity) of the individuals and fans. According to Nakash and Brody (2006), during a positive mood, people are more likely to receive positive memories, while in a negative mood, they are more likely to receive negative memories. This has been titled a mood congruent effect (Bower, 1981), and the possible explanation for it is that a fan's current state reveals similar links stored in memory. Based on past fan experience, nostalgia is key element of the experience (Fairley, 2003).

Belli (1998) emphasizes that details of these special events are closely related to autobiographical memory. For example, an away game itself is a special event, and the details of this particular event are the things that happened during a match in which a team has a 4–3 victory over a 3–0 defeat. Both this particular event itself and details will affect remembrance. According to Burt et al. (2003), away games can be considered as autobiographical events on the basis of this approach, considering that a feeling of experiential stimuli (e.g., a visit to the beach) is considered as autobiographical events. Thus, engaging in a sport event has also been considered within the context of rememberable projects (Burt et al., 2003). This is also the case for away game events, as well as for visits to the away places. Therefore, it can be said that the potential for creating memorable experiences of away games is high. There are studies that reveal the relationship between sports events and memory. For example, in the context of the sporting consumption experience, the autobiographical memory recalls the familiar details of the match experiences (e.g., stadium events and team march) (Moore & Homer, 2008). These details about the match experience automatically reveal memories and associations. Such memories and connections are even more meaningful for fan groups going away games. This leads to satisfaction among the fans. All the above information and the hypothesis put forward in the light of the evaluations are as follows.

H₅. Autobiographical memory in away games is positively associated with satisfaction with away game.

The research model described in Fig. 1 shows the relationships among the variables.

Method

Sampling Method

In order to test the structural model created for the purpose of the research, a questionnaire study was carried out with football fans. The data was collected using

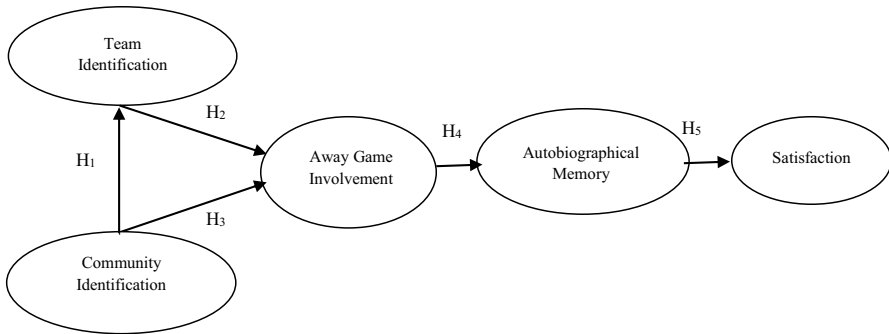


Fig. 1 Conceptual model

nonprobability convenience sampling, where fans who fit the eligibility requirements were asked to fill in a self-completion questionnaire. Convenience sampling has been used in many types of research with soccer fans (Tachis & Tzetzis, 2015; Yoshida et al., 2015). The target population for the study was Eskişehirspor's fans who had minimum one away game experience. The fans were chosen because of high level of away game participation, and its relatively high proportion of travels for their team.

A total of 204 fans were reached. The data were collected by the researchers before and after matches around the stadium by face-to-face survey method. Participants were informed in detail about the survey. All the questionnaires were filled in the presence of the researchers. The questionnaire was not distributed to those who did not want to participate in the survey or who indicated that they support another than Eskişehirspor. Each survey took approximately 15 min to complete. A total of 234 questionnaires were distributed by the researchers and 30 questionnaires were excluded from the study for various reasons (incomplete answer, incorrect answer). The proportion of the questionnaires surveyed was 87.1%.

Participants

Similar to the general participation in football matches, the majority of the sample of the study consists of male (95.1%) and 16–25-year-old (49.5%) fans. Besides, 48% of the individuals who participated in the survey were high school graduates while 47.1% were college graduates. All participants had minimum one away game experience. This provides clues that the sample was tailored to the general fan profile for the purposes of the study (Table 1).

Measures

Within the scope of the research, a two-part questionnaire was developed to identify the fans' team identification, community identification, involvement levels for matches, autobiographical memory for matches, satisfaction levels, and

Table 1 Demographic characteristics of participants

	<i>f</i>	%
<i>Gender</i>		
Male	194	95.1
Female	10	4.9
<i>Age group</i>		
16–25	101	49.5
26–35	63	30.9
36–45	28	13.7
46 >	12	5.9
<i>Education level</i>		
High school	98	48
Undergraduate	96	47.1
Postgraduate	10	4.9

All participants had minimum one away game experience

demographic characteristics. All constructs were measured on the five-point Likert scale (5-strongly agree, 1-strongly disagree).

Autobiographical Memory

Fitzgerald and Broadbridge (2013) presented a holistic approach by bringing together different latent autobiographical memory structures. Within the scope of our research, three different structures (rehearsal–impact–recollection) were used based on the approach put forward by Fitzgerald and Broadbridge (2013) for autobiographical memory of the participants. Rehearsal (3 items), impact (2 items), and recollection (4 items), which were explained in detail before, were used by revising for the purposes of the research (see Table 2). As stated in detail in the “Results,” the construct reliability values of the relevant structure were found to be between 0.92 and 94 and AVE value was between 0.75 and 85 (see Table 4).

Team Identification and Community Identifications

Within the scope of the research, an extensive literature review was conducted in order to determine the team identity and community identity levels of the participants. For team identity, a measurement tool consisting of 4 expressions and one dimension was specially developed for sports fans by Wann and Branscombe (1993). Dalakas and Melancon (2012) found the construct reliability value of this measurement tool as 0.91 and the AVE value as 0.72 in a similar sample group they conducted with football fans. The statements revised according to the purposes of the research include one dimension and 4 statements (see Table 2). For European car club members, see Algesheimer et al. (2005) based on the Mael and Ashforth’s (1992) community identification scale, the statements of the measurement tool were used. Algesheimer et al. (2005) determined the construct reliability value as 0.92

Table 2 Values related to constructs and items regarding scales

	<i>Std. loads</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>
<i>Autobiographical memory (rehearsal-REHE)</i>		4.17	0.84
I can reimagine the old away games, cheers, and environments in my mind	.91	4.20	0.93
I can see the old away games in my mind right now	.91	4.17	0.93
I can visualize fans' associations in old away games	.84	4.17	0.91
<i>Autobiographical memory (impact-IMPA)</i>		4.17	0.84
Remembering the old' shapes my feelings, my thoughts and my behavior	.92	4.10	1.01
By remembering the old, I become more aware of right now	.90	4.22	0.96
<i>Autobiographical memory (recollection-RECO)</i>		3.85	0.99
I feel like I'm re-experiencing the old away games today	.81	3.77	1.15
I can feel the conversations of the old away games at today's matches	.86	3.77	1.17
I can still feel the atmosphere of the old away games	.89	3.88	1.10
I can still feel the same feelings as in the old away games	.89	3.86	1.08
<i>Team identification (TEAD)</i>		4.22	0.77
I am very interested in what others think about my football team	.86	3.96	0.83
When I talk about my football team, I usually say "we" rather than "they."	.87	4.46	1.02
My football team successes are my successes	.78	4.15	0.91
When someone praises my football team, it feels like a personal compliment	.60	4.32	1.08
<i>Community identification (COID)</i>		4.26	0.80
I feel quite loyal to my friends who I go to away games with	.79	4.17	0.92
We have a sense of belonging (friendship) as away fans	.85	4.33	0.88
I feel like I'm a part of this group	.79	4.31	0.90
<i>Involvement (attraction-ATTR)</i>		4.22	0.76
Away games are important to me	.83	4.32	0.83
Away games are pleasant	.97	4.34	0.84
Away games mean something in my life	.82	4.14	0.95
I think only about my team when there's an away game	.77	4.07	1.07
My team's away matches have an important place in my life	.81	4.08	0.99
During away games, I enjoy talking about the game with my surroundings	.65	4.27	0.96
<i>Involvement (self-expression-SEEX)</i>		4.23	0.76
I think most things in my life are shaped according to away matches of my team	.80	3.63	1.20
I find my real identity thanks to away games	.85	3.60	1.21
People know me better on away game days	.83	3.77	1.14
<i>Satisfaction (SATI)</i>		4.26	0.75
I'm happy with the things I experience at away games	.80	4.12	0.92
I'm happy with the feelings I experience at away games	.90	4.32	0.82
I'm happy with the things the away games give me	.87	4.33	0.79
The experiences I've had in the away games are very nice	.86	4.29	0.85

and the AVE value as 0.70 in their research. The revised statements according to the aims of the research consist of one dimension and 3 statements (see Table 2).

Involment and Satisfaction

Involvement was measured using an adapted version by Kyle and Mowen (2005). The two dimensions are attraction (4 items) and self-expression (4 items). Kyle and Mowen (2005) have found all adequate internal consistency with alphas both of them were 0.79. For satisfaction, Oliver (1997) and Zeithaml et al. (1996) using the conceptual framework they put forward, a one-dimensional 4-statement structure was created in line with the purposes of the research (see Table 2). As stated in detail in the conclusion, the construct reliability value of the relevant structure was determined as 0.85 and the AVE value as 0.65 (see Table 4).

The most common method used in the literature to demonstrate measurement equivalence is translation back translation. As regards the topic, Hambleton and Kanjee (1993) stated that it is imperative to apply translation back translation for measurement equivalence. In this direction, all the expressions included in the scope of the research were first translated into Turkish by the two academicians working in the field of sports sciences and then translated into English in order to accept them as the representative of the original articles. In addition, a pilot study has been conducted with 20 fans, in the light of suggestions in the literature (Babbie, 1998), in order to ensure that the statements contained in the questionnaire form can be controlled for clarity. Feedback from the participants caused a set of alterations before the final form was given to the questionnaire.

Data Analysis

Hair et al. (2006) defined SEM (structural equation model) as a research procedure that tests multiple relationships between structures together. The use of the SEM procedure was considered appropriate in this study aims to test causal relationships between individual variables. The research model was analyzed with AMOS 20 software in line with the basic methodological principles of SEM. Firstly, the validity and reliability of the measurement tools included in the research were checked and the model presented within the scope of the research was tested.

Results

Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics for the variables in the questionnaire are presented in Table 2. For REHA dimension ($M=4.17$; $SD=0.84$), “I can reimagine the old away games, cheers, and environments in my mind ($M=4.20$; $SD=0.93$)” had the highest mean score. For IMPA dimension ($M=4.17$; $SD=0.84$), “By remembering the old, I become more aware of right now ($M=4.22$; $SD=0.96$)” had the highest mean score. For RECO

dimension ($M=3.85$; $SD=0.99$), “I can still feel the atmosphere of the old away games ($M=3.88$; $SD=1.10$)” had the highest mean score. For TEAD dimension ($M=4.22$; $SD=0.67$), “When I talk about my football team, I usually say “we” rather than “they” ($M=4.46$; $SD=1.02$)” had the highest mean score. For COID dimension ($M=4.26$; $SD=0.80$), “We have a sense of belonging (friendship) as away fans ($M=4.33$; $SD=0.88$)” had the highest mean score. For ATTR dimension ($M=4.22$; $SD=0.76$), “Away games are pleasant ($M=4.34$; $SD=0.84$)” had the highest mean score. For SEEX dimension ($M=4.23$; $SD=0.76$), “People know me better on away game days ($M=3.77$; $SD=1.14$)” had the highest mean score. For SATI dimension ($M=4.26$; $SD=0.75$), “I’m happy with the things the away games give me ($M=4.33$; $SD=0.79$)” had the highest mean score.

Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA)

CFA is a technique frequently used in the literature to confirm the validity of the factor structure and the validity of the measurement tools used in the research (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). For this purpose, besides the chi-square value, six different goodness of fit values were used. Table 3 gives us information about these values.

First, confirmatory factor analysis was applied to the three-dimensional autobiographical memory scale which is used in the study. The factor structure of the measurement tool was verified with the goodness of fit index obtained from the analyses made ($\chi^2=68,686$ $p=0.000$, $\chi^2/df=2,146$, $GFI=0.934$, $AGFI=0.887$, $CFI=0.980$, $TLI=0.972$, $IFI=0.980$, $RMSEA=0.075$). Confirmatory factor analysis was applied to the two-dimensional scale of involvement, which constitutes another structure of the study. The measurement tool has been verified in terms of the goodness of fit index which is obtained from the analyses made ($\chi^2=84,295$ $p=0.000$, $\chi^2/df=2,479$, $GFI=0.921$, $AGFI=0.872$, $CFI=0.963$, $TLI=0.952$, $IFI=0.964$, $RMSEA=0.085$).

Finally, a measurement model was formed with community identity, team identity, and satisfaction structures, all of which were included in the scope of the research and each consisting of one dimension. At the end of the analysis, the measurement model has been verified ($\chi^2=78,114$ $p=0.000$, $\chi^2/df=1,905$, $GFI=0.935$, $AGFI=0.895$, $CFI=0.978$, $TLI=0.970$, $IFI=0.978$, $RMSEA=0.067$). In the light of this information, factor structures of all measurement instruments included in the scope of the research have been verified.

Table 3 Goodness of fit values

Scale	χ^2	χ^2/df	GFI	AGFI	CFI	TLI	IFI	RMSEA
Autobiographical memory	68,686	2,146	0.934	0.887	0.980	0.972	0.980	0.075
Involvement	84,295	2,479	0.921	0.872	0.963	0.952	0.964	0.085
COID-TEAD SATI	78,114	1,905	0.935	0.895	0.978	0.970	0.978	0.067

TEAD, team identification; COID, community identification; SATI, satisfaction; χ^2/df , minimum sample discrepancy divided by degrees of freedom; GFI, goodness of fit index; AGFI, adjusted goodness of fit index; CFI, comparative fit index; TLI, Tucker-Lewis index; IFI, incremental fit index; RMSEA, root mean square error of approximation

Validity and Reliability

In order to demonstrate the validity and reliability levels of all the structures in the study, various suggested analyses in the literature were used. Convergent validity can be assessed from the measurement model by determining whether each indicator's estimated maximum likelihood loading on the underlying construct is significant (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988). As illustrated in Tables 3, all factor loadings exceed 0.77, except one item with 0.65. Many of items in the measures had factor loading higher than 0.80, which suggested satisfactory convergent validity for our measures. Carmines and Zeller (1979) indicate that the acceptable limit for factor load being 0.60 and above will confirm that the expressions are related to the relevant structures. In this direction, two items from team identification, one item from community identification, one item from satisfaction, four items from memory, and three items from involvement have been excluded from the study because they did not reach the factor load level nor had conflicting values.

Fornell and Larcker (1981) also state that each construct must have an AVE (average variance extracted) value greater than 0.50 in order to be able to determine the discriminant and convergent validity of the constructs. In this context, the AVE values of all the structures included in the study were calculated, and all of the values of AVE (from 0.61 to 0.83). Additionally, the discriminant validity of the measurement model was examined by comparing the square root of AVE for each construct to the inter-construct correlations (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). As illustrated in Table 4, the correlation between any two given study measures was below 0.81 (Kline, 2015) and the square root of AVE for each construct (except for team identification) was greater than all related inter-construct correlations, and thus establishing the discriminant validity of all scales.

Malhotra (2006) states that Cronbach's alpha coefficient should not be 0.60 or less for the reliability of structures. For this purpose, Cronbach's alpha and CR

Table 4 Reliability and validity for measurement model

Construct	Alpha	AVE	CR	Correlations of constructs								
				(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)	(e)	(f)	(g)	(h)	
<i>REHE</i> (a)	.94	.78	.94	(.88)								
<i>IMPA</i> (b)	.91	.83	.91	.68**	(.91)							
<i>RECO</i> (c)	.92	.75	.92	.73**	.64**	(.87)						
<i>TEAD</i> (d)	.85	.61	.86	.66**	.65**	.59**	(.78)					
<i>COID</i> (e)	.84	.73	.91	.69**	.62**	.58**	.81**	(.85)				
<i>ATTR</i> (f)	.92	.64	.92	.67**	.68**	.63**	.80**	.75**	(.80)			
<i>SEEX</i> (g)	.87	.68	.88	.47**	.55**	.58**	.63**	.55**	.68**	(.82)		
<i>SATI</i> (h)	.91	.65	.85	.68**	.65**	.61**	.80**	.76**	.76**	.50**	(.81)	

(a) *REHE*, rehearsal; (b) *IMPA*, impact; (c) *RECO*, recollection; (d) *TEAD*, team identification; (e) *COID*, community identification; (f) *ATTR*, attraction; (g) *SEEX*, self-expression; (g) *SATI*, satisfaction; AVE, average variance extracted; CR, composite reliability; alpha = Cronbach's alpha; diagonal elements in the "correlation of constructs" matrix are the square root of AVE

* < 0.05; ** < 0.01

(composite reliability) coefficients were calculated in order to determine the reliability of all the structures and all of them were found to be over 0.84, and it was determined that they meet the value suggested by Nunnally (1978). Therefore, it can be said that all of measures displayed adequate reliability and validity, for attempting to investigate relations among constructs (Table 4). To assess potential multi-collinearity problems among constructs, we examined variance inflation factor (VIF) scores.

The results of VIF scores ranged from 2.050 to 4.062, below the recommended threshold of 10 (Chatterjee & Hadi, 2015). In addition, Durbin–Watson (*dw*) statistic is used to express the existence of multi-collinearity. It ranges from 0 to 4, in which the midpoint 2 (Norusis, 1993) represents the absence of correlation among the input variables. The value of Durbin–Watson was close to or below 2, a value that Norusis (1993) indicated as acceptable. Therefore, a value of 1.5 to 2.5 is favorable to obtain models unaltered by multi-collinearity (Durbin & Watson, 1950, cited in Inder, 1986). The Durbin–Watson’s value of current study ($dw = 1.794$) was between the two vital values of $1.5 < dw < 2.5$ (Norusis, 1993), thus indicating that multi-collinearity was not an issue. Moreover, we also tested the extent of common method bias with Harman’s one-test; the threat of common method bias is high if a single factor accounts for more than 50% of the variance (Harman, 1976).

The results indicated that none of the factors significantly dominated the explanation of variance (attraction dimension of involvement with the most influential factor accounting for 24.831% of the variance). Other evidence of common method bias includes exceptionally high correlations (> 0.90) among research variables (Kline, 2015). The inter-construct correlation matrix (Table 4) does not show any unusually high correlations in our sample. Therefore, we concluded that common method bias was unlikely to be a serious concern for this study.

Structural Equation Model

Following validation of the frameworks within the scope of measurement, a structural model (Fig. 1) was developed in order to test the research hypotheses. As a result of the analyses made, it has been determined that many values in the model (χ^2/df (748, 80/367) = 2.04, RMSEA = 0.072, SRMR = 0.050, CFI = 0.93, IFI = 0.92, NFI = 0.87, GFI = 0.81, and AGFI = 0.77) have the acceptable goodness of fit values. Although GFI and AGFI values are below the expected level, it can still be said that they are still at an acceptable level (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988). In the ongoing process, the hypotheses put together with the justifications in the scope of the research have been tested. The research model and relationship values are shown in Fig. 2.

The relationship among team identification, community identification, away game involvement, autobiographical memory, and satisfaction was tested using path analysis with maximum likelihood estimation. Table 5 and Fig. 2 show the results of a path analysis with maximum likelihood estimation for the linkages among the five relationship indicators. Hypotheses H_1 , H_2 , H_4 , and H_5 , which are presented in the conclusions of the analyses made, were accepted, while H_3 hypotheses were rejected. For H_1 , team identification significantly affected community identification ($R^2 = 0.95$, $p < 0.01$). Also, team identification significantly

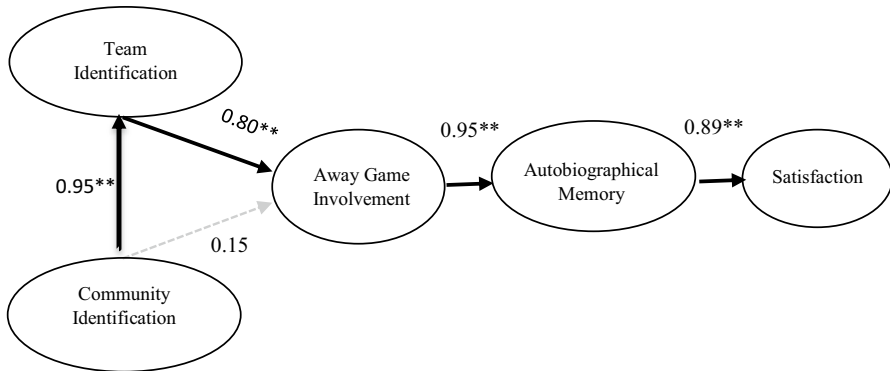


Fig. 2 Path results of structural equation model. Notes: $n=204$. Fit indices: $(\chi^2/df (748, 80/367)=2.04$, $RMSEA=0.072$, $SRMR=.050$, $CFI=.93$, $IFI=.92$, $NFI=0.87$, $GFI=.81$, and $AGFI=.77$). Lines indicate significant paths; dashed line indicates insignificant paths ** $p<0.01$

affected away game involvement ($R^2=0.80$, $p<0.01$), as predicted by H_2 . Away game involvement demonstrated very large positive effects on both autobiographical memory ($R^2=0.95$, $p<0.01$), thus H_4 hypothesis was accepted. The results of SEM model indicate that autobiographical memory was a particularly effective on satisfaction ($\beta=0.89$, $p<0.01$), as predicted by H_5 . In addition, the effect of community identification on away game involvement detected within the scope of the H_3 hypothesis was rejected as a result of the analysis ($R^2=0.15$, $p<0.01$).

In summary, it has been verified that there was a strong relationship between team identity and community identification, and that team identification had a positive effect on involvement, involvement on autobiographical memory, and autobiographical memory on satisfaction with large effect sizes.

Discussion

This research, in which the first conceptual model to include autobiographical memory in understanding fan behaviors was tested, provided pioneering empirical evidence to the relevant literature. In this context, it would help researchers develop

Table 5 Results of path analyses

Results of path analyses	r^2	t -value	Result
H_1 Community identification—> team identification	.950	12.789	Accepted**
H_2 Team identification—> involvement	.801	3.98	Accepted**
H_3 Community identification—> involvement	.150	.689	Rejected
H_4 Involvement—> memory	.950	8.929	Accepted**
H_5 Memory—> satisfaction	.891	11.228	Accepted**

** $p<0.01$

a better understanding of autobiographical memory of sports fan based on empirical data. The results obtained provide enlightening information to sports researchers about the theoretical connections between the structures associated with autobiographical memory in sports marketing literature and their functioning. In a practical sense, this research highlights the need for sports marketers to perform more activities that center on autobiographical memory.

Theoretical Implications

In this paper, we indicate new research that examines the role of team and group identification on away game involvement, autobiographical memory, and satisfaction with away game. These goals were addressed in the context of football fans who attend away games. The findings offer theoretical contributions to the literature of identification, autobiographic memory, and involvement.

Within the scope of the research, a total of five causality relationships were tested by presenting the literature justifications. The results of these five experiments highlight the predictive role of emotion on sport fans' behavior who attend to the away game. It is clear that there is a close relationship between community identity and fan identity both in terms of motivations and shared values in the group attitudes and behaviors (Gordon et al., 2021). Gordon et al. (2021) suggested that the identification of the fans with a team in relation to the team identity of the fans will cause them to establish a horizontal relationship with the other fans. The loyalty to the group formed by the fans (who go to the away games), who share the same level of commitment with their team, significantly explains the commitment to the community built on the values associated with the team. Within the scope of the research, the high level of correlation between team identity and community identity ($r^2=0.95^{**}$) can be shown as new evidence in another sample group in the literature regarding this situation.

Team identity is considered a central construct in understanding many fan behaviors (Özgen & Argan, 2017; Wann et al., 2017). James and Trail (2008) determined that team identity significantly affects sports consumption behaviors. In this sense, it can be stated that the theoretical structure expressing the team identity shapes the behavior of the fans towards the phenomena associated with their team (participating in the matches, purchasing licensed products, etc.). This conceptual framework created in the literature can be associated with the high level of involvement of team identity ($r^2=0.81^{**}$) by team identity in the context of our research. Therefore, it is seen that one of the most important antecedents of participation in an away match is team identity. In general, there are studies that reveal the effect of team identity on the decision to participate in matches (Rocha, & Fleury, 2017). Specifically, our research result on the effect on my interest in away matches has made an empirical contribution to the literature. In this context, we have presented a theoretical perspective that will expand the ongoing discussions in the literature on team identity.

Within the scope of the research, the insignificance of the relationship between community identity and involvement in away matches ($r^2=0.15$) should be evaluated from different perspectives. Various studies of the antecedents and consequences of

community identity have been conducted in the general marketing literature. Studies focusing on antecedents have reported that brand community identity is significantly influenced by consumer attitudes towards the focal brand (for example, brand relationship quality, brand identity, and brand passion) (Algesheimer et al., 2005; Carlson et al., 2008; Füller et al., 2008). In addition, results-focused studies reveal that brand community identity has an impact on certain consumer behaviors such as brand loyalty, loyalty, and trust (Füller et al., 2008; Jang et al., 2008). If the subject is evaluated from this perspective, it is seen that within the scope of our research, the identity of the fan community is not a pioneer in participation in away matches. This result may bring about new discussions in the related literature in this sense. Of course, the fact that our research group is a local football fan community indicates that there is a need for further investigation on the subject.

The most important results that the research brought to the literature are the relationships determined within the scope of autobiographical memory. Involvement phenomenon expresses a very important structure in understanding fan attitudes and behaviors (Funk et al., 2004; Ko et al., 2010). Sports involvement generally refers to the degree to which participation in a particular sporting event becomes the center of an individual's life. One of the distinguishing features of sports fans is that they have a high level of involvement and emotional commitment (Stevens & Rosenberger, 2012; Underwood et al., 2001). In this sense, it provides both hedonic and symbolic values to the individual (Beaton et al., 2011). Our autobiographical memory of events in which we have a high degree of personal interest shapes many of our social behaviors (Addis & Tippett, 2008; Muscatell et al., 2010). This process takes place through the contribution of our personal experiences to our sense of identity (Bluck, 2003). The high-level effect ($r^2=0.95^{**}$) of “away game involvement,” which we detected within the scope of the research, on “autobiographic memory” can be interpreted in this direction. Participation in away matches represents a consumption area that requires more time, money, and cost compared to other sports consumption behaviors (participating in home team matches, purchasing licensed products, etc.). For the fans who attend the away matches, the experience is not just the result of the match. The sense of acting together in relation to social identity (traveling together, cheering, eating, etc.) creates unforgettable moments in these experiences. This highlight one of our research dimensions, recollection. But only the recollection can be simple to explain this situation. Impact and rehearsal dimensions are also very important in defining the conceptual domain of autobiographical memory (Fitzgerald & Broadbridge, 2013). The desire to relive past matches and relive those moments refers to “impact and rehearsal” structures. For fans who are interested in a holistic view, away games, these matches leave a deeper trace in their autobiographical memories. This result is the first evidence on the subject in the relevant literature. In this context, it will be important to understand the subject by making new researches in the literature and expanding it to the relevant conceptual field.

Within the scope of the research, it is seen that autobiographical memory is an important antecedent of satisfaction ($r^2=0.89^{**}$). This situation refers to the causality relationships between other phenomena (identification, involvement) tested within the scope of the research. From a holistic point of view, team identity

significantly explains the interest in away matches. This causal relationship extends from autobiographical memory to satisfaction. Since these results are the first in the related literature, they filled important gaps and opened the door to new research. The fact that the identity of the supporter community has not shown a significant effect in this causal relationship should be evaluated in new researches to be made from different perspectives (mediation, moderate effect, etc.).

Practical Implications

The findings of this study provide practical implications to sports marketers. Sports marketing practitioners should note the importance of evoking special memories and rituals that serve to connect fans to teams, as suggested by Keller (2008). Additionally, the use of the nostalgic marketing strategy for fans may have an important influence on attitude and behavioral loyalty. In line with the suggestions of Holbrook and Schindler (1994), the results of their study and review of the literature on nostalgia state that autobiographical memory or nostalgia should be a relevant variable in the segmentation of away games fans (Summers et al., 2001).

Directing marketing activities with a certain socio-historical nostalgia style, brands create magical values on consumption (Hartmann & Brunk, 2019). Nostalgia has also positive effects on feelings of social connectedness (Lasaleta et al., 2014). In terms of relevance, the notion that the way something is consumed matters more than what is consumed (Holt, 1997). Positive experiences created in the memory of the consumer are important motivating factors in the decision to continue consumption. The reason for this is the desire to relive the same emotions (Wirtz et al., 2003). The nostalgic value created by sports brands with deep-rooted past and heroic memories using autobiographical memory will add significant value to the consumption pattern of their potential customers. Manthiou et al. (2017) reveal that re-collective memory, whose relationships we examine within the scope of our research, has a high level of positive effect on positive emotions. In the context of this knowledge, the results of our research provide empirical evidence that sports marketers creating nostalgic value by using retro marketing elements will have significant positive effects on the links between marketing and consumption.

This research results show that one of the most important issues for sports marketers is creating lifelong memories for sports consumers. For this, a number of activities should be developed for personal and individual interests (Bigné et al., 2005). The most important element within the scope of this research, which examines the fans who go to away games, is the community and team identity-oriented experiences during the away game trips and matches. The positive relationships we have identified between community identity, team identity, and away game engagement that can be shown as proof of this. From this point of view, sports marketers' identity-based approaches and planning events for away game trips and matches can yield successful results for fans to create strong memories that will last a lifetime. Specifically, they may want to continue to enjoy such memories because of the passionate attitude of the away game fans who participated in the study about the game involvement, and a high relationship between their autobiographical memories and

their satisfaction. In this sense, customer relationship management efforts to make these fans more loyal by making use of their memories can give more effective results. As a matter of fact, Funk (2002), who demonstrated the usability of nostalgia in micro-segmentation, found that the sense of nostalgia was higher in loyal fans compared to other fans. In this sense, approaches such as nostalgia, autobiographical memory, and retro can be used in making other fans loyal. One of the important contributions of the results of this study is that it is at the level of retro marketing or retro branding (Brown et al., 2003; Taniyev & Gordon, 2019), and sports clubs can create an important source of income with the presentation of current and future fans.

Limitation and Future Studies

In addition to several strengths, including a first attempt to reveal relationships between away team identification, game involvement, and autobiographical memory, a few limitations have to be noted. A first limitation refers to our sample size and sampling method. The survey respondents were only professional football team fans of Eskişehirspor in Turkey. Autobiographical memories likely differ on sub-culture of fan groups regarding major soccer teams. In order to validate the findings in this study, future research should be directed towards major teams, more generalized samples. Therefore, future research examining in broad sample groups, multiple cities, and different countries, and cross-cultural studies, should be clearly applied. The second important issue is based on a quantitative analysis of the study. Further studies that address the remembered details of the away games and more qualitative data will help clarify this issue. The third limitation of this study was that it was only applied to fans who participated in the away games. The fourth limitation of this research is that it ignores some variables (e.g., geographical proximity) when participating in away games. In the future, the relationship between the motivation to participate in away games and autobiographical memory can be investigated. This research was conducted only with fans participating in away games. Therefore, the results obtained are limited to this sample. In future studies, by including the fans who do not participate in the away games in the sample, the differences between the two groups can be determined in the context of autobiographical memory. Finally, it would be interesting to examine how home and away games affect remembering issues on different levels of fan identification.

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Availability of Data and Material The datasets generated during and/or analyzed during the current study are not publicly available, consistent with data protections approved by the researchers' Institutional Review Board, but are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

Declarations

Ethics Approval All procedures performed in studies involving human participants were in accordance with the ethical standards of the institutional and/or national research committee and with the 1964 Declaration of Helsinki and its later amendments or comparable ethical standards.

Consent to Participate Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study.

Conflict of Interest The authors declare no competing interests.

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