

SELF DISTINCTION AND GROUP CONSCIOUSNESS AS MOTIVES FOR ADOPTION OF FACIAL APPEARANCE AMONG ELITE MALE SOCCER PLAYERS

BY

PROF. O. O. OMOTAYO
INSTITUTE OF KINESIOLOGY, LEISURE AND RECREATION MANAGEMENT
KENYATTA UNIVERSITY,
NAIROBI-KENYA

AND

DR. O. S. A. IKHIOYA
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF SPORTS,
SURULERE, LAGOS-NIGERIA.

ABSTRACT

This paper focused on the motives for adoption of facial appearance – hair styles, facial make up and facial adornments which is now commonly exhibited among elite male soccer players in Nigeria and which tend to complement acceptable dress code in the game of soccer. The paper focused on players' facial appearance in terms of their mindset using indices such as self-distinction and group consciousness.

The study sample was one hundred and thirty two male soccer players who are employed to play professional soccer division I and II clubs. The questionnaire was the main instrument used in data collection while descriptive statistics was utilized in data analysis with chi – square enabling inferences to be made. Study revealed that the need for self-distinction was a determinant for the adoption of facial appearance among elite soccer players.

INTRODUCTION

Sport is a social institution and it is also a social situation. It is entertainment oriented with strong competitive flavors. Sport creates unique and identifiable qualities in actors who are usually active participants and so provide opportunities for star player or super star players to merge. Stardom means 'brightness' or 'visibility', easily recognizable personality that shines brightly among social actors in sports. Recognition breeds the urge for further and sustained recognition either in the form of unique identity or group consciousness (Ikhioya and Ikhioya, 2000).

Facial appearance could be explained on the basis of unique identity or group consciousness. The feeling of being identified in a crowd of players in a social context and then earn tangible or intangible benefits or to remain in a group and reinforce the values of the group and thus reap the rewards of group acceptance and recognition which could also be measured on tangible and intangible perimeters are relevant motivating factors in the adoption of hair styles and facial adornments (Ikhioya and Ikhioya 2000). Facial appearance which could be seen in terms of hair styles and facial adornments which athletes adopt tend to follow fashion trends

of the society; in some other cases it is an athlete creation which become a fad depending on how prominent the creative athlete is, his social acceptance, his influence in terms of media and commercial backings or assistance he receives from entrepreneurs, advertising agents, promoters and financiers (Ikhioya and Ikhioya, 2000). It also depends on athlete sustainability of his art forms and performances overtime which means that fad created from his unique facial appearance becomes fashionable and thus in extreme cases becomes customary – depending on the public to identify with the ‘inventor athlete’ and the durability of such invention.

Athletes as active participants in sport respond to social dynamics in the form of acceptance or rejection of social values. Athletes like other members of a society are susceptible to acculturational or enculturational influences. The accumulative effects of acculturational influences is the gradual erosion of customs and the eventual projection of new fashion trends

Maciver and Page (1961) as quoted by Ikhioya(1997) opined that fashion is the socially approved sequence of variation on a customary theme. This means that facial make – up and hair styles adopted by players cannot be alienated from or considered at variance with core culture as they could manifest as fad (change quickly after social acceptance) or as fashion (exist for a few months or years of acceptance before other forms replace it). According to Ikhioya (1997) quoting Maciver and Page (1961), fashion applied to such matters as opinion, beliefs, recreation, dress, adornment of all sort, house decoration and furniture, manner of speech, popular music, literature and art; which are vogue and have attained some levels of permanency. This is in line with views expressed by World Book (1994). This implies that hair styles and facial make-ups, which are relatively permanent amongst

athletes and the sporting public in terms of acceptance, could be said to be fashionable.

Fashion trends in sports follow the widely accepted social valued patterns with constant variations by athletes inventors’ to create unique identity, but the motives attached by individual athlete to such values normally transcend social desire as it has answers in social psychological feelings and in some cases economic interests. Fashion, relative to hair style and facial adornment and hence facial appearance amongst athletes vary from athlete to athlete and in some cases projects uniformity in trends which explain group cohesion and belongingness.

In terms of hair-style, pattern variations from previous fashions have become common place and they do acquire social acceptance, blossom and then fade away with time and in some cases face relative extinction and then resurface. In vogue in the past and at present are such hair styles as ‘Rasta’, ‘skin cut’, ‘wave’, ‘Sahara Bay,’ ‘Carl Lewis,’ ‘Afro’, ‘Baby follow me’, ‘Mike Tyson’, ‘Chris Jones,’ ‘Brother Johnson’ and other hair weaving forms and designs. Also of relevance is the fact that there are a lot of facial painting patterns reflected by athletes to create unique facial identity, a sort of individualistic behavioral disposition, which is supposed to create recognition, and identification. The project facial distinction, varied colour combinations and artistic forms are exhibited athletes. This however does not preclude the feeling of social belongingness and social acceptance to a group as could be reflected from facial paintings.

The usage of rings on ears and on nostrils has become common place amongst male athletes and this is to create individual unique identity or group social consciousness. Placement of rings on ears or nostrils and the type of rings won may explain the sentiment attached.

It is pertinent to note that hair styles and facial outlooks are in most cases a product of acculturation which are usually fashionable among youths who form the bulk participants in sports.

In Nigeria, observation has shown that youths are regularly bombarded by American, European, Caribbean, Asian and Arabian Culture and beliefs, especially where such values are projected by prominent and notable stars who are accepted as models through the influence of mass media and other cultural transmitting agents. This however does not preclude the fact that Nigerian athletes and youths do influence other cultures through cultural exchanges and acculturation processes (Ikhioya and Ikhioya, 2002). All of these explains the gradual spread of a unique hair style or facial outlook from the first athlete to others overtime.

This paper looked into the issue of self distinction and group consciousness as determinants in facial appearance among elite male soccer players.

PURPOSE

The paper was to ascertain from male elite soccer players in Nigeria, the motive underlying their facial appearance – hair styles, facial make – up and facial adornments; motives which could be classified as self distinction and group consciousness were therefore investigated.

METHODS AND PROCEDURE

The study population was professional soccer players in Division I and II soccer clubs in Nigeria. Simple random sampling of balloting with replacement was utilized in selecting 6 clubs out of 18 clubs for Division I and six (6) clubs out of 20 clubs in Division II. To obtain the study sample of 132 which was considered adequate; eleven regular players were selected from the lists of fifteen (15) names submitted by each

Head Coach of each of the clubs selected for the study.

The questionnaire was the main instrument used for data collection. It consisted of 10 questions with 5 each, to cover the two indices surveyed self and group consciousness. Response column was marked strongly agreed, undecided, disagreed and strongly disagreed. The columns were modified into three agreed, undecided and disagreed. Respondents were expected to tick columns in response to questions where applicable. The reliability coefficient of the questionnaire after test re-test is $r = .80$ and $.81$ respectively for questions relating to self-distinction and group consciousness. Data was treated with descriptive statistics and chi-square enabling inference to be made.

H_{01} = group consciousness is not a motive in facial appearance among elite male soccer players.

H_{02} = group consciousness is not a facial appearance among elite male soccer players.

RESULT

Table 1 showed the responses by respondents to questions asked as regard self-distinction as a determinant of soccer players' facial appearance. There was a strong revelation soccer, that players 90 (68.18%) always want to be self conscious, so as to project unique disposition in whatever they do; that players 82(62.88%) are interested in carving out an image for themselves hence their adoption of unique facial appearance that distinguishes them from others; that the urge to be easily identified by their looks on the field of play, made them 63(47.93%) to put on a facial appearance that is different from others; that their 56 (42.42%) unique and distinct facial appearance exalt their ego and make them feel confident and assured and that the unique facial appearance put on is a

reflection of their 63(47.78%) independent outlook to life.

The chi-square value of $\chi^2 = 25.01$ was greater than 5.99 at critical value with degree of freedom = 2 at 0.05 level of significance indicated that the hypothesis that self-distinction is not a motive in facial appearance among elite soccer players was rejected. Self-distinction is a determining factor in the adoption of facial appearance by elite soccer players.

Table 2 showed the responses by respondents to questions asked as regard group consciousness as a determinant of soccer players facial appearance. It indicated that a slight majority 49(37.12) had loved to look like some of their admired colleagues in their facial appearance. But they 47(35.61%) felt that similar facial appearance with their admired colleagues may not give them a sense of belongingness

to a group. They 51(38.64%) are of the view that when they put up similar facial appearances with star players they admire, they develop the euphoria that they will one day reach their standards of performance. Majority 57(43.18%) were however indifferent to the fact that their facial appearance may not be in line with that put on by youths, but they 76(57.56%) felt that they will continue to put on their present facial outlook as far as fans are happy with it.

The chi-square value of $\chi^2 = 1.83$ which was lesser than 5.99 at critical value with degree of freedom = 2 at 0.05 level of significance indicated that the hypothesis that group consciousness is not a motive in facial appearance among elite soccer players was accepted. Group consciousness is not a determining factor in the adoption of facial appearance by elite soccer players.

Table 1: Self distinction as determinant of facial appearance

N = 132

Statement	Response		
	Agreed	Undecided	Disagreed
I always want to be myself so as to be Considered unique in whatever I do as a professional player	90(68.18%)	18(18.64%)	24(18.18%)
I am interested in carving out an image for myself hence my unique facial appearance which distinguishes me from others	83(62.88%)	26(19.50%)	23(17.42%)
The urge to be easily identified by my look on the field of play, made me put on a facial appearance that is different from others	63(47.73%)	48(36.35%)	21(15.91%)
My uniquely distinct facial appearance is good for my ego to excel as a professional soccer player	56(42.42%)	25(18.94%)	51(38.64%)
My facial appearance mirrors my Independent outlook to life as a professional player	63(47.73%)	26(19.70%)	43(32.58%)

$\chi^2 = 25.01$ sig. at 0.05

Table 2:

Group consciousness as determinant of facial appearance

N = 132

Statement	Response		
	<u>Agreed</u>	<u>Undecided</u>	<u>Disagreed</u>
I always like to look like some of my admired colleagues in terms of facial appearance.	49(37.12%)	38(28.79%)	45(34.10%)
Having similar facial appearance with my admired colleagues give me a sense of belongingness to a group	41(31.06%)	47(35.61%)	44(33.33%)
When I put up similar facial appearance with players I admire, I develop the uphoria that I can one day reach their standard of performance.	51(38.64%)	42(31.81%)	39(29.55%)
The facial appearance I have at present is not different from those put on by youths in the sport.	37(28.03%)	57(43.18%)	38(28.79%)
I will continue to put on my present facial outlook as far as my fans are happy with it.	76(57.56%)	31(23.48%)	25(18.94%)

X² = 1.83 sig. at 0.05

DISCUSSION

Study revealed that self-distinction explains the motive for hair styles and types of facial adornment utilized by professional soccer players. Group consciousness was not considered a motive for facial appearance. The difference in response outcome could be explained a way based on the fact that at the professional level, players are pre-occupied with thoughts of how to create a niche for themselves in terms of unique outward appearance by utilizing facial adornments and distinct hair styles. Therefore, performance excellence on the field of play which projects unique attributes and easy visibility of players has to be made more conspicuous by distinct facial appearance. According to World Book (1994), people become fashionable to look attractive.

Being professional soccer players means that they play to earn a living and not just for the sake of recreation or fun. Thus, performance at the professional level, over and above other compatriots or colleagues must be tied to unique facial in order to be visible and acknowledge easily by the sporting public. This view is in consonance with Ikhioya and Ikhioya (2000). Visibility and recognition is for the consumption of the public in terms of image building; while such image building; has beneficial consequences for further identification as 'star' or 'super-star' by the sporting public. This eventually, is translated into a phenomenal feat which has potentials to attract investors, advertising agents, promoters and financiers. The fact that players want to carve an image for themselves gives credence to the above assertions.

Athletes are achievement oriented (Anshell, 1990). The need to excel in performance is reinforced with the tendency to remain unique in facial appearance in the field of play. Thus the facial appearance uniquely adopted by players is in consonance with the independent outlook projected by them that are related to the urge to continue to achieve in a unique way. However, Alderman (1974) warned that some athletes do not consider

sport competitions as pure achievement settings in that the individual may be largely motivated by reasons other than achievement.

Looking different from other colleagues make economic sense as it aids easy identification specifically in capturing events involving players and also in terms of identifying with products or goods been advertised. Therefore, economic inclination of players as explanation for motive of self distinction could provide the lead for the assertion of players that unique facial appearance is good for their 'ego'. Sustaining self-pride due to performance outcome on the field, which is appreciated by the sporting society, could also explain the need for self-distinction in whatever way, as performance on the field of play could be translated into tangible and intangible benefits outside the field of play. Thus, it makes no sense to wear identical facial looks with colleagues to portray group consciousness and togetherness, when self distinction had already been created on the field of play – through position occupied and skill displayed by players during play act.

The mere fact that soccer players cannot make out whether their facial appearance is different from that of youth in the society indicates that they have invented facial patterns that are unique and soothing to their ego. This is reinforced with the fact that having similar appearance with admired colleagues and thus fulfilling a sense of belonging may not project the needed enthusiasm.

However, the fact that players are not group conscious could be explained a way on the fact that as professionals they do not need models to relate to, as they could be seen as models for easy identification, which could be translated as 'luminous visibility' that will attract endorsement from corporate organisations; recruitment by scouts from within and abroad; who is easily identifiable by youths as a model to emulate or by the media for publicity and public relations

purpose and the society and its' government for honour, status and social privileges.

CONCLUSION

The tendency to be fashionable is prevalent amongst youths in any society. Fashion is transient but some are relatively permanent with variations emerging as fads. However, sport (soccer) as a social phenomenon has taken over as a prominent socializing medium through the emergence of television. Thus, soccer has become the real advertiser's goal oriented pursuits to promote his products; with soccer players being projected not as common subjects but as real idols. Therefore, player's unique athletic performance that engenders him to the society is projected through his unique facial appearance on T.V. with the assumption that if the 'player model' is emulated it could make the difference or provide the needed psychological leverage (real or apparent) to the admiring public.

Professionalism in soccer has been carried to a frenzied height and has only made players individualistic tendencies to be projected in a way to satisfy the crave for attention, recognition and visibility. Therefore, whatever will promote a player's image is seen as a positive development while whatever will make a player seem as a common human feature is guided against or downloaded. Professionalism breeds self-consciousness, self-distinction, self-esteem and self-confidence. Thus, the issue of carving out a niche for oneself, by looking different in terms of hair styles, facial make-up and facial adornments become paramount not only to professional players but also to interested groups who hover around to benefit optimally from such individualistic projections by players.

The issue of player's facial make-up, hair styles and facial adornments that constitute facial appearance will continue to generate study in athletes behavioral disposition to fashion; as far as sport remains an institution with beneficial motives outside sport itself. It is however important to say that continuity of acceptance of a player's or athlete's appearance follows acceptable behavioral disposition as a model to youth. However, when such athlete or player faces social disapproval based on consequences of an act, such facial appearance fails to elicit social acceptability as no one would want to associate with such player's anti-social behavior. Since, such player has the potentials of acting as a negative role model or negative significant other.

REFERENCES

- Alderman R. (1974). Psychological Behaviour in Sport. Philadelphia, P.A. W.B. Saunders. P.204.
- Anshell M. H. (1990). Sport Psychology. From Theory to Practice. Scottsdale:Gorsuch Scarisbrick, Publishers. P. 103
- Ikhioya O.S. and Ikhioya G. O (2000). Facial Appearance of National Track and Field Athletes as Factors in Unique Identity and Cultural Group Affiliation. Article Accepted for Publication in JONAPHER.
- Lynd R.S. (1939). Knowledge for what? New York; Princeton Co. P. 196
- Maciver R.M. and Page C.H. (1961). Society. An Introductory Analysis. London: Macmillan Co. Ltd. PP. 181 – 188.
- The World Book Encyclopaedia (1994). Fashion. Chicago: World Book Inc. A scott Fetze Company. Vol. 7.