

IDENTITY AND SOCIAL  
REPRESENTATION AMONG  
BASEBALL FANS: OLMECAS DE  
TABASCO CASE STUDY

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To quote this article:

Cueto, J., Cuevas, M. y Frías, A. (2019). Identidad y representación social entre aficionados al béisbol: caso de estudios olmecas de Tabasco. *Espacio I+D, Innovación más Desarrollo*. Vol. VIII (19). Recuperado de: <http://dx.doi.org/10.31644/IMASD.19.2019.a02>

— Abstract—

As part of the communicative processes that transform and establish the social dynamics, the confidence forms a part fundamentally of the foundations that determine attitudes towards institutions, groups or organizations. This article aims to analyze the confidence shown by fans of the *Olmecas de Tabasco* baseball team, which determines the relationship and behavior that exists among baseball fans in relation to the results obtained in the last season through an analysis using the theory of social representations as a basic premise for their development. To establish confidence index, the official page of the team was tracked and a five-items questionnaire was built between 100 attendees at the last of the games, revealing that the team's follow-up is generated primarily by aspects of identity, with a lesser influence of the opinions expressed in the media and based on previous results, where this team has not achieved triumphs for 25 years.

### Keywords

*Confidence, Identity, Baseball, Social Representation, Olmecas de Tabasco.*

Trust is a fundamental element to generate social relations between the human beings; that is why the social sciences, like psychology and sociology, have been in charge of its study. *Georg Simmel* (cited by Baeza, 2011: p.75) affirmed in 1906, that "without the general trust that subjects have among them, society would disintegrate".

According to the above, *Kong* (cited by Beramendi 2016: p.2289): "argues that social trust has two dimensions: social trust based on goodwill and based on competition."

The first assumes the perception that others behave in a benevolent rather than an opportunistic manner, while the second dimension implies the opinion of people about the abilities, skills and performance of others.

There are factors that directly influence the development of trust, the best known is the bond you have with family, friends and close people who have lived and formed a large part of our lives. On the contrary, the interaction and relationships with strangers is another factor, since we do not know them in depth and can generate confusing ideas when joining a new group.

#### DEVELOPMENT

Confidence in institutions is observed as part of social and emotional climates (Zubieta, Delfino and Fernández, 2008) and in turn this communication has been addressed as a social problem of insecurity and unemployment, which is why institutions get a bad evaluation of citizens, generating a negative climate in their environment.

The correlation that exists between institutional and social trust is responsible for promoting, regulating and guaranteeing coordinated social action among citizens (Beramendi, Delfino and Zubieta, 2016), since trust is necessary for the formation of institutions. However, an important consequence that this generates is low social trust, due to the levels of trust and the relationships with institutional effectiveness have decreased because the same officials in charge of carrying out operations to help society fail since they do not do their job properly.

As mentioned by *Kong* (2016), the generation of trust is directly linked to the closeness that is generated between groups of people, which would imply as part of the social processes, the representations that are handled inwards.

From the trust and representation's point of view, this link within the two dimensions that are handled there is one that is obtained free of charge and another that is reflected in the skills or results obtained.

To understand this relationship, it is necessary to comprehend that social representations are understood in varied forms, more or less complex; they allow us to interpret what happens to us, and even give meaning to the unexpected. They are categories that serve to classify the circumstances, the phenomena and the people with whom we have something to do. They are theories that allow to design the daily action. And often, when they are understood within the concrete reality of social life, social representations are all this together. (Moscovici, 1979, p.472)

Then, social representations are created by a large amount of information, images, opinions, feelings and everything that is part of our daily life and that allows interaction with other people to be able to live. Even people as subjects (family, friends, acquaintances) and social groups (sports teams, work teams), become social representations, since they generate information and knowledge for the creation of new links.

Moscovici, (1979 pages 17-18) in his book *Psychoanalysis: its image and its public*, mentions the theory of representations, as part of the social conceptualization in the dynamics of groups. Representation is an organized corpus of knowledge and one of the psychic activities "thanks to which men make the physical and social reality intelligible, they are integrated in a group or in a daily exchange relationship, they release the powers of their imagination".

The representation is the body of knowledge that is created through the thoughts of everyday life, in turn, becomes a logical and socially viewed reality for the integration of a group and exchange points of view that can be heard to exist a feedback between imagination and reality. The social representation is pure knowledge that helps the creation of a behavior that forms a system in the communication between individuals to interact with each other.

Three emergency conditions are also inferred: the dispersion of information, the focus of the individual and collective subject, and the pressure to the inference of the socially defined object.

The information had is never enough and is usually disorganized: "The data that most people have to answer a question, to form an idea about a precise object, are generally, at the same time, insufficient and superabundant" (Moscovici: 1979, pp. 176-177).

To create an objective knowledge of things, situations and thoughts, the information must be organized in a consistent manner and thus exercise informed opinions by correctly inquiring when searching for information. Therefore, the only way to achieve knowledge that exceeds the desired expectations is to investigate more than you should, so one could answer themselves the same questions that arise in the daily interaction within a particular social group.

In targeting, a person or a group is focused because they are involved in social interaction as events that move judgments or opinions. They appear as phenomena to which one must look carefully.

Sometimes there is a feedback and exchange of information that occurs with social interaction between people, and these in turn are disturbing, as they are phenomena that cause the creation of judgments or opinions within the social groups to which they belong.

For the pressure to inference, socially there is a pressure that demands opinions, positions and actions about the facts that are focused on the public interest. In ordinary life, circumstances and social relationships require the individual or social group to be able, at all times, to be in a position to respond.

Said in other terms, to be part of a social group or simply interacting due to circumstances with some person, one must have an immediate response capacity to maintain the flow of active communication, the former in order that the feedback be constant, with nothing to hinder it. In everyday life, we are faced with exchanging opinions, acquiring a position and taking actions that are a reflection of human behavior, including the society in which we live.

Moscovici (1979) defines social representations as universes of opinion; these in turn are classified into three dimensions: information, field of representation and attitude.

Within them, information is the organization or sum of knowledge that a group has about an event or phenomenon of a social nature. Knowledge that shows particularities in terms of quantity and quality thereof; stereotyped or diffused character without explicit support; triviality or originality in your case: "Dimension or concept, is related to the organization of knowledge that a group has in relation to a social object" (Moscovici: 1979, p.45).

To generate a constructive criticism about a group, person or object, it is necessary to investigate, collect, analyze and then make use of the information, building opinions based on knowledge of the subject.

The field of representation expresses the organization of the content of the representation in a hierarchical way, varying from group to group and even to the previous one of the same group. It allows to visualize the character of the content, the qualitative or imaginative properties, in a field that integrates information in a new level of organization in relation to its immediate sources. Mora (2002: p.10) mentions that the above "refers us to the idea of image, in a social way, to the concrete and limited content of the propositions that refers to a precise aspect of the object of representation".

Groups are sometimes represented by people who have a common denominator in the way of thinking and creating knowledge, transmit knowledge to new generations, so that the tradition takes its course and retains the essence that characterizes it, ordering priorities with a system completely hierarchical. From the most important ideas, thoughts and knowledge that help solve problems and create new concepts.

Social representation also has its attributes in the construction of trust, as Luhmann says (Beramendi, Delfino and Zubieta: 2016, p.2287): "Trust becomes a necessary condition for the formation of institutions, since its absence promotes social conflict, since institutions have the function of reducing the degree of uncertainty generated by social complexity and granting citizens clear guidelines that provide predictability in social interactions".

In other words, trust is the guideline to create institutions that help social improvement and thus give citizens the opportunity to make solid interactions to fully develop in social groups.

The National Electoral Institute (INE) in its Report *País* (2014) conducted a study on the level of trust in political and social institutions and organizations at the national level, where the army ranks at the highest confidence index with 65% and with the lowest confidence index are the representatives with the 20% evaluation. These standards establish civil or sports organizations in the midst of social trust. In this sense, sports become a parameter of trust building, since society looks for spaces where they can participate and generate development possibilities; teams or groups that become a space of representation where confidence is fostered.

One of them, in Mexico, is baseball, regulated through the Mexican Baseball League (MBL), which establishes a structure with various options for social participation. Baseball has become a possibility to build trust among the inhabitants of this country, through these platforms of participation; the society finds ways of expression and communication, as well as strengthening community bonds, becoming an alternative of convergence among the citizens.

In sports one of the reasons why games are transmitted, is the identity that generates a sports team from the city to the fans. In the State of Tabasco, baseball has become a symbol of social representation since 1975, when the *Cardenales* (now called *Olmecas de Tabasco*) made their arrival in the Mexican Baseball League.

Within the conditions of this investigation that determine the case of study, what Stake calls "The study of the particularity and complexity of a singular case, to understand its activity in important circumstances" (1999, p. 11).

We understand then that to study a specifically identified case is to go into all the particularities that surround it and to know the magnitude that it can generate in an investigation as to not lose sight of the elements that are important and that can stand out of it.

Within this parameter the case of the *Olmecas de Tabasco* has been taken as a priority in the section by the professional career of the team that in its history has obtained within the Mexican Baseball League (MBL) a single championship in 1993 and also has twelve appearances in the Play-offs since its affiliation in 1975, that is, its sporting behavior has been among the lowest.

As an indicator in the 2017 season, the *Olmecas de Tabasco* lost 69 games out of the 107 played in the regular season, obtaining the worst record in their history. (See table 1)

In addition, the number of people who attended the "Parque Centenario 27 de Febrero" stadium was 71,829, earning them the last place, as the team with the least attendance of fans in the season. (See table 2).

Below are the tables that contain a description of the games played and the number of spectators who attended the games, carefully detailing the results obtained by the *Olmecas de Tabasco*.

**Table 1.** Symbology: Games Played (GP) Won (W) Lost (L).

General Classification – 2017 Season			
North Conference	GP	W	L
Toros de Tijuana	110	76	34
Monterrey	109	68	41
Monclova	108	67	41
Aguascalientes	110	64	46
Laguna	109	60	49
México	109	57	52
Saltillo	108	44	64
Durango	109	43	66
South Conference	GP	W	L
Yucatán	105	63	42
Puebla	110	56	54
Quintana Roo	105	49	56
Veracruz	105	48	57
León	105	45	60
Campeche	106	43	63
Oaxaca	107	40	67
Tabasco	107	38	69

Source: MBL. 2017

As can be seen in the table, the Mexican Baseball League (MBL, 2017) divides the participating teams into two conferences (North and South), according to the geographical area in which the States are located. According to the general classification of the season, the highest number of games played was 110 and the lowest 105. The games won by a team are 76, while 69 is the worst record shown.

In the case of the *Olmecas de Tabasco*, the general classification indicates that they played a total of 107 matches in which they only won 38 (the least amount among the 16 participating teams) and lost 69 (highest amount among the 16 participating teams), occupying thus the worst record of the Mexican Baseball League (MBL) in a regular season.

**Table 2.** Symbology: Openings (Local Openings)  
Average (average of fans per game)

Attendance – 2017 Season			
Team	Total	Openings	Average
Sultanes de Monterrey	659,791	57	11,575
Toros de Tijuana	608,819	56	10,872



Leones de Yucatán	452,162	49	9,228
Acereros del Norte	392,795	55	7,142
Saraperos de Saltillo	266,847	52	5,132
Vaqueros Unión Laguna	250,596	57	4,396
Rieleros de Aguascalientes	196,439	55	3,572
Generales de Durango	180,118	44	4,094
Pericos de Puebla	152,923	48	3,186
Rojos del Águila de Veracruz	151,671	57	2,661
Tigres de Quintana Roo	147,416	49	3,008
Guerreros de Oaxaca	141,217	58	2,435
Piratas de Campeche	133,641	46	2,905
Diablos Rojos del México	127,671	51	2,503
Bravos de León	108,670	40	2,717
Olmecas de Tabasco	71,829	50	1,437

Source: MBL. 2017

The table contains the number of attendees in the stadiums of the Mexican Baseball League (MBL, 2017) in the season; ordered from highest to least quantity and with an approximate average of attendees in local games.

The team with the highest attendance record in the regular season had 659,791 attendees in 57 games with an average of 11,575 spectators per game at home. The smallest record in total is 71,829 attendees in 50 games (acceptable, taking into account that 40 is the worst record of games at home) and 1,437 on average per game.

The *Olmecas de Tabasco* registered a total of 71,829 attendees in 50 home games, averaging 1,437 spectators at the "Parque Centenario 27 de Febrero" stadium, having the worst total and average of the MBL's 2017 season.

The results of the *Olmecas de Tabasco* during the last 43 years have not statistically favored the consolidation and appearance in the best levels of sports competition at a national level. Their only strength lies in the triumph they obtained 25 years ago.

Notwithstanding the factors of social representation that condition trust towards groups, it is not necessarily determined as it has theoretically been seen with the results obtained. They come from the identification, generated by the fact of being part of the group and in turn representing an identity segment in social environments.

How has this dimension been established between representation and social trust in the case of *Los Olmecas de Tabasco*? For the integration they generate by being part of the society to which they belong, even if their results are not reciprocal to the support of the fans in each game.

## METHOD

This investigation of descriptive purpose was carried out under a quantitative method with a probabilistic sample estimated according to the average number of people attending the matches of the team located in 673 fans during the 107 games of 2017.

Based on a confidence level of 95 percent and a margin of error of 9 percent, 101 surveys were conducted in the last game of the season with a five-item questionnaire, to evaluate the confidence communication of the *Olmecas de Tabasco* baseball team's fans.

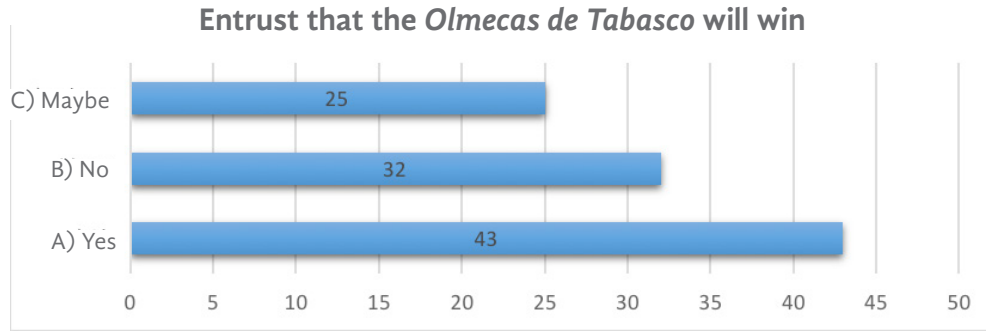
As an additional method, a web analysis of the team's publications was carried out through the only active source in the social network Twitter before and after the game that closed the 2017 season.

## RESULTS

The confidence that the fans have with the *Olmecas de Tabasco* in the negative results they obtained in the regular season, is considerable, since the team is the most important social representation that the State has, due to having a professional stadium and baseball team, in this sense the results show that 43% of the fans have the certainty that they will win the last game.

However, the remaining 32% said that their confidence in them is not enough at this time, because of the disastrous season they had. And a remaining 25% of the respondents gave the benefit of the doubt for a positive/negative result of the game.

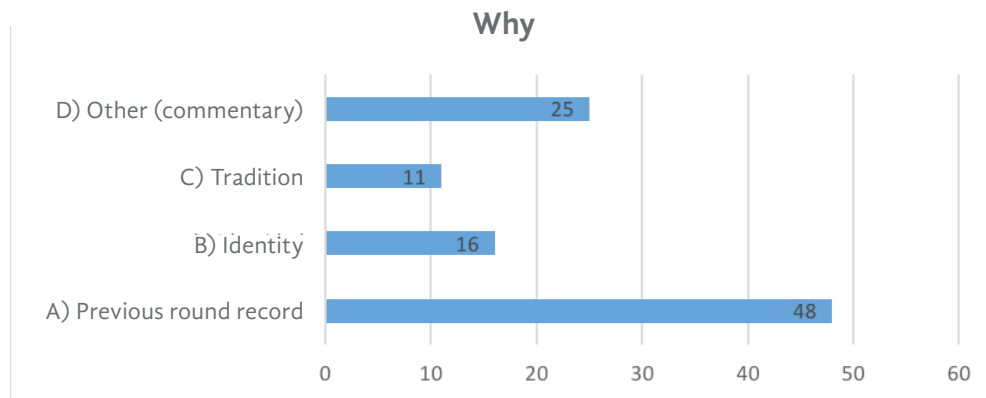
**Graph 1.** Fans' confidence in the last game of the 2017 season



Source: Own elaboration

The main reason for the confidence among fans to win the last game is based on 48% of the polls, mainly on the positive background that the team has obtained throughout its history, and although they have 24 years without winning a title of The Mexican Baseball League, continue to support unconditionally in each game. While 25% decided to use the force of their voice and comment that the administration's terrible management is guilty for the ridicule they did in the 2017 season and that players did not give their maximum professional performance. On the other hand, 16% identify themselves with the team because they remember the winning times that were increasing the popularity among the fans and that the new generations want to see. 11% of people responded that going to the stadium where every time the *Olmecas* play, has become a tradition, even from generation to generation because it has become a social representation that moves social groups.

**Graph 2.** Reasons why the fans trust in *Los Olmecas de Tabasco*

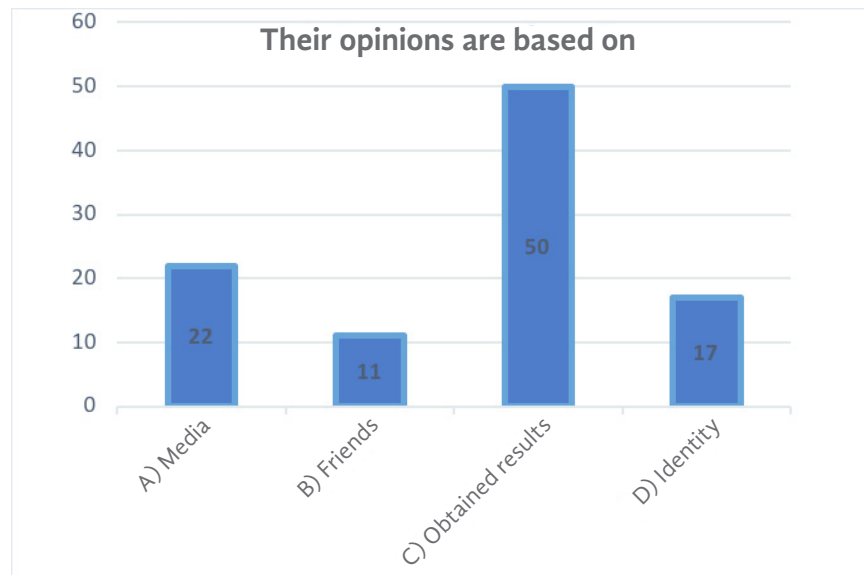


Source: Own elaboration

The opinions that people issue are based on the knowledge and trust that is generated by the experiences of everyday life. In the case of baseball, the fans of *Olmecas de Tabasco* with 50% of the poll, base all their opinions on the results obtained in the season, in other words, in what they observe

inside and outside the field, therefore, the team became a strong social representation for them, leaving the media in second place with 22% (Written Press, Television and Radio), keeping themselves informed but not issuing a strong opinion of what they read, see and listen in it. Identity with 17% is the response that the fans communicate as the third option to base their opinions, because it is not enough to feel identified with the team if there are not encouraging results that can strengthen it. The remaining 11% said that talking with friends helps the exchange of information, listening to different points of view that strengthen personal relationships and become specialists in the subject in question.

**Graph 3.** Sources of communication for the construction of trust among fans of the *Olmecas de Tabasco*

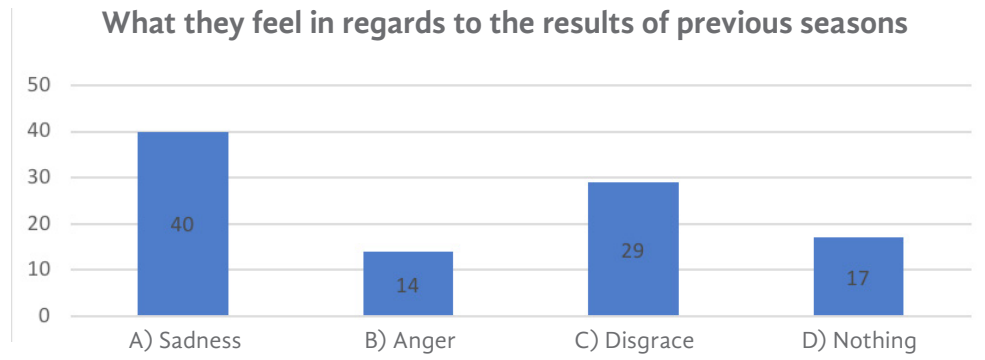


Source: Own elaboration

Feelings that fans expressed in the last game of the season and the negative results of previous years, makes the trust they had for the team, vulnerable, although the *Olmecas de Tabasco* is still a strong social representation that move crowds. For this reason 40% of people are sad to see how the team is sunk in mediocrity and the results of previous years are negative, including the 2017 campaign, the worst in its history. 29% feel ashamed to see the team always lose, although they maintain the hope of contemplating positive team results in the medium term. Not transmitting any feeling is a sign of discontent, for this reason 17% say they have no feelings for the team, they are just used to the defeats of the *Olmecas of Tabasco* every year. Anger is shown by 14% of the attendees of the game, because they consider that there

is no reciprocity of the team with good results, since they always support unconditionally until the last moment.

**Graph 4.** Fans' most significant feelings for the results obtained in the last seasons by the Olmecas de Tabasco baseball team



Source: Own elaboration

#### WEB CONTENT ANALYSIS FROM SOCIAL NETWORKS

The social network Twitter has become the most important means of communication for the *Olmecas de Tabasco* baseball team, as it has more information activity when playing regular season games, thus allowing real-time interaction with its followers.

The official account of the *Olmecas de Tabasco*, presents numerically a total of 62,971 followers, who deposit their confidence and want to be informed of what happened with the team when they play inside and outside the State. Therefore, until August 9, 2017, date in which the last game of the season was played against the *Piratas de Campeche*, the account had a total of 32,014 publications. These publications contain information regarding the tours, dates, schedules, alignment of players, final results, reactions before and after each game, messages of thanks to the fans.

In the last game of the season against the *Piratas de Campeche*, two publications were posted on the official Twitter account. The first publication referred to encourage people to attend the stadium and support the team, which did not generate any comments; however, 4 people reacted with a "like" and shared the information in their accounts before the start of the game. The second was a thanks to the fans for their unconditional support throughout the season, after the game ended the results were 33 comments in support for the players and rejection towards the board for the poor

management of the team, in turn, 46 followers "liked" the post and 22 shared the publication in their accounts. (Twitter, 2017)

## CONCLUSION

Social representation is given by the exchange of knowledge, images, opinions and feelings that are generated between people and social groups, in order to reinforce and exchange information of utmost importance in everyday relationships by which modern society is governed.

These representations in turn establish symbols that are translated into trust schemes and become a central element for the generation of a behavior based on the skills and/or attitudes of people who have the responsibility of being a representative image before the public.

As part of these conditions, social representation, identity and trust play an indispensable role in human beings, establishing a sense of belonging to a person or group with which they feel identified. These three central axes constitute a link in the case of study with the social reality of the *Olmecas de Tabasco* baseball team.

The confidence that the *Olmecas de Tabasco* baseball team provokes with the fans is based completely on the results that it can achieve during the regular season, because the greater number of games won, the greater the strengthening of confidence and what becomes an exchange where achievements obtained become support.

Within the study it was possible to verify that the social representation, the trust and the identity of the fans that attend the stadium to watch the team play, is built from the feedback that is generated in their social environment and not necessarily by the negative results during the last 24 years.

The exchange of information and feedback between fans refers to a construction of trust and social representation, this is not influenced by the opinion that virtual media publish, where the defeats of previous years is a reference for them.

The *Olmecas de Tabasco* baseball team is the largest social representation, in terms of sports, that exists in the State of Tabasco. Fans base their knowledge and opinions on the last 24 years that, without having an important achievement within the Mexican Baseball League, represents a symbol of confidence and strong identity in society, for the exchange and learning of new knowledge that passes from generation to generation.

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