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Fan Loyalty and Motivation

by

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University of Nevada Las Vegas
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of the requirements for the

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Introduction

Sports play a vital function in our society. Each year millions of people attend sporting events, watch them on television or the Internet. For most people the event is used strictly as a form of entertainment. But the die-hard fan is much more connected to the event. They subscribe to magazines, read newspapers, look at team websites, and read blogs to stay up to date with their favorite team. Smith and Stewart (2007) say die-hard fans demonstrate loyalty in certain ways like purchasing team merchandise and spending lots of money to travel out of state to see their team play. Murrell and Dietz (1992) research on the topic discovered that sports fans have a direct influence on sporting events through their emotional and financial support. Without the fan, many of the major sports would just be an obscure leisure activity that nobody would care about.

However not every fan is considered die-hard. When it comes to attending sporting events most of the population is considered casual fans. There is an enormous difference between the casual sport fan and a die-hard fan. The die-hard or highly identified fan puts a tremendous amount of investment into his or her fandom (Smith & Stewart, 2007). While casual fans are an important area of study, this paper focuses on the characteristics and processes that make up a highly identified fan and how marketing strategies can enhance the intense fandom of an individual.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this professional paper is to review psychological and marketing theory and research to explain what motivates an individual to become a highly identified loyal fan of a sports team. Implications for professional practice and future research will be presented.

Justification

Understanding what motivates a fan to become a highly identified fan is important to a team manager because fans are the primary revenue source of a team. The fundamental goal of marketing managers is to create repeat customers (brand loyalty) (Fortunato, 2006) and loyal fans represent most repeat customers.

An organization's brand is critical in creating a constant revenue stream from its consumers. Reaching the consumer is at the heart of most, if not all, branding principles. A great strategy for managers is to "Drive sports consumers' preferences and loyalty [by building] strong, positive, and unique consumer beliefs about [their organization], in other words, [constructing] a strong brand image" (Bauer, Stokburger-Sauer, & Exler, 2008, p.206). A strong brand image has a considerable impact on consumer's brand loyalty. Having a consistent brand management strategy allows organizations to create an increase in their overall value (Fortunato, 2006). That value is turned into revenue for the team or institution.

Constraints

When examining the literature for this paper a couple constraints were realized. Looking at the literature of only two disciplines can narrow the focus of the paper. Examining other disciplines may offer additional perspectives. There are also gaps in the literature. This makes understanding the phenomenon an incomplete process. One of the most important constraints realized was that the implications for managerial practice are based on my interpretations of the literature and have not been empirically tested. Realizing and understanding these constraints can guide future studies on this topic.

Part Two

The fan can be described as "someone who perceives him- or herself as a fan of a certain team or sport in general" (Bauer, Stokburger-Sauer, & Exler, 2008, p. 206). Researchers on the subject have found that the die-hard fan is becoming more common each year (Laverie & Arnett, 2000). It can be said that the die-hard fan has become deeply rooted in our culture. The highly identified fan doesn't see him or herself as a spectator, rather an extension of the game and team itself (Murrell & Dietz, 1992). The majority of people who attend a sporting event show increase levels of somatic and cognitive anxiety during the event. This is mostly likely due to the fact that sporting events can leave fans feeling various types of emotions during and after the event.

Attending or watching sporting events can leave an indelible mark on fans. Smith and Stewart (2007) say many cultural, social, and psychological needs are met by attending or watching sporting events. Die-hard see those needs as something special and unique to them. Fan motivation literature proposes that an adage of sport fandom is the fanatical nature of some fans helps to re-create their self-identity. This re-creation of ones self-identity is an essential piece in becoming a highly identified fan. The concept of fan equity is used to describe the amount of energy and time a fan puts into following their favorite team; whereas the term fanaticism measures an individuals fan loyalty (Smith & Stewart, 2007). Researchers on the topic have revealed sports fans have a direct impact on the result of sporting events through their emotional and monetary support (Murrell & Dietz, 1992).

There has been an abundant amount of research conducted on the topic of fan loyalty, identification, and motivation. Researchers have used varying theories and models to describe fan loyalty and motivation. Sports fans look for satisfaction in a number of different ways. The

theories discussed in the following paragraphs will attempt to explain how an individual can become a highly identified fan.

Fan Motivation Scale

In early research on fan motivation, Wann (1995) conducted research to try to explain what motivates a person to become a fan. His work on the topic revealed that there are several factors that make up fan motivation. The psychological motivating factors that Wann (1995) uncovered are entertainment, aesthetic pleasure, escape, eustress, family needs, group affiliation, self-esteem, and potential economic gain. Smith and Stewart (2007) have recently updated the work of Wann by including vicarious achievement and tribal connections as fan motivations. The motivating factors are separated into 3 categories: social belonging, socio-cultural, and psychological (Smith & Stewart). The psychological category is composed of entertainment, escape, aesthetic pleasure, and eustress. The socio-cultural category contains group affiliation and family needs. The social belonging category contains the recent addition of vicarious achievement and tribal connection (Smith & Stewart, 2007).

Eustress. Eustress is described as "the human need for positive stress and psychological arousal" (Smith & Stewart, 2007, p.158). This motive fits under the psychological dimension of motivation because it is directly linked to emotional forces within the body. Smith and Stewart (2007) say that pleasure and anxiety go hand and hand with sport fandom. Physiological responses within the body release chemicals like adrenalin and dopamine to produce emotional feelings. Wann, Schrader, and Wilson (1999) suggest that when individuals watch a sporting event, positive stimulation can be a result when the competition is played at an intense level. In other words, attending or watching-sporting events can bring forth positive emotions within individuals that have an intense involvement in a sports team. Wann, Royalty, and Rochelle

(2002) uncovered that positive affect and motivation were positively correlated after the event had concluded. They also found that eustress was believed to be a major contributor to the feeling of post-game positive affect. Eustress is a motivating factor that affects a person's involvement and helps to create fan loyalty.

Escapism. The stress of daily life can take a profound toll on people. Most individuals try escaping the harshness of everyday life by linking their self-identity with their beloved sports squad (Wann, 1995). Working in a modern civilization means lengthy works hours with minimal vacation time. That is why the psychological motive of escape is vital for individuals to remain in high spirits. Attendance at games can make the notion of escape a reality for fans. Many sports enthusiasts habitually take the responsibility of a cheerleader by chanting and cheering their team on. This act further increases their perceived escape from everyday life (Smith & Stewart, 2007). Research proposes there is a negative relationship between the notion of escape and proximity to the home. The further away the sporting event, the higher likelihood the feeling of escape is proposed to be (Smith & Stewart, 2007). The psychological motive of escape can also be used to enter a tranquil place. Research has shown that minorities groups like African Americans employ sports to get away from the strain of being a part of a stigmatized minority group (Bilyeu & Wann, 2002). The idea of escapism can either stimulate or relax fans watching sporting events.

Aesthetic pleasure. Wann's (1995) research revealed that attending sporting events could provide aesthetic pleasure for fans as well. Individuals are drawn to sporting events because it provides them with lasting experiences that lodge into their memory. Aesthetic pleasure can arrive from various dissimilar sources like the event itself, star performers, the attractiveness of the players performing (ex. soccer player David Beckham), the atmosphere (ex. the crowd), and

the arena in which the team plays in. Even interaction with the event itself i.e. participating in promotional events during timeouts or halftime can produce aesthetic pleasure. The fan does not just evaluate the event itself rather they look for everything that goes along with the sport experience (Smith & Stewart, 2007).

Entertainment. Wann's (1995) research found that entertainment plays an essential role in a person's fan loyalty. A fan needs to feel that they were entertained in order for satisfaction take hold. 85% of the participants in Wann's (1995) research study answered yes to the question "I enjoy sports because of their entertainment value" (p.382). Smith and Stewart (2007) say attending sporting events arouses the senses because of factors like memorable plays, loud sounds, unique colors, and group solidarity. The event isn't the only form of entertainment that fans experience. Tailgating, which consists of fans of a particular team gathering in the parking lot before games, can be just as entertaining as the game itself. During this ritual fans of similar teams can connect and share memories about their team, thus building up excitement and anticipation before the game starts (Smith & Stewart, 2007). The powerful experience that individuals get from a game or event further enhances their loyalty to the team.

Family needs. Smith and Stewart (2007) state, "Sporting events provide an opportunity for families to spend time together, and in this respect, a sport experience is a vehicle for fulfilling family needs in much the same was as a vacation or weekend outing" (p.161). Some researchers think individuals that use sporting events as a means to fulfill family needs would weaken fan identification. The explanation behind this thinking is the event loses its significance when primary focus is put on satisfying family needs. Other researchers report that spending time with the family strengthens the motivating factor of group affiliation, which reinforces social relationships and the " desire to identify with something bigger than oneself" (Smith &

Stewart, 2007, p.161). Wann's (1995) research revealed that family needs are linked to group affiliation and sports fans value the role that family plays in the fan experience. If an intense fan could merge his or her family interaction with the deep adoration he or she feels for the team, then maybe identification would proliferate throughout the entire family, thus enhancing loyalty.

Cultural connection (group affiliation). Wann's (1995) research revealed that highly identified fans use sports as a vehicle to be affiliated to an exclusive group. Cultural connection produces harmony and unites fans within the group. Fans experience this unity by sharing familiar identities. When similar fans come together to cheer for the same team a sense of togetherness permeates the group (Murrell & Dietz, 1992). Fans of the same team share the same team uniform colors, insignia, and fight song. These objects can give the fan a sense of group affiliation and cultural connection within the community (Smith & Stewart, 2007). Research proposes that the sense of common affiliation with the group helps to solidify the attachment with the fans self-concept and the group identity (Murrell & Dietz, 1992). An individual can obtain a feeling of meaningfulness connection by aligning the group identity with his or her self-concept (Albert, Ashforth, & Dutton, 2000). Social identity theory proposes people attempt to boost and preserve their sense of self within the group and personally (Murrell & Dietz, 1992). Self-categorization theory, an extension of social identity theory states, "that categorizing oneself as a group member accentuates one's self-perceived similarity to the group prototype" (Albert et al., 2000, p.16), resulting in one's group identity becoming highly salient (Murrell & Dietz, 1992). If the group identity becomes highly salient then in-group bias most likely saturates the group. Bias is a normal part of being a loyal fan. Every fan has certain teams they dislike. For instance if a person was a highly identified fan of the University of Nevada Las Vegas basketball team they would most likely dislike their teams rivals and it would probably be

reciprocated on the other side of the rivalry. It is highly likely that the entire group affiliated with the particular fan would echo the same sentiments. Group affiliation plays a pivotal role in an individual's fan loyalty and identification.

Self-esteem/vicarious achievement. Vicarious achievement and self-esteem directly link to a person's feeling of fan identity. Wann's (1995) motivation scale revealed that fans increase their self-esteem by linking their emotions with their team's performance. They share the same emotions as the players on the team do when the team has success. The die-hard fan believes they play a fundamental role in the team's win. This intense feeling of emotion can vary among fans. At one end of the fan identification spectrum you have fair-weather fans. These fans only attach their identity to the team when they win (Smith & Stewart, 2007). Many so called fair-weather fans associate themselves with various victorious teams regardless of affiliation to enhance their self-esteem. The other side of the fan identification spectrum consists die-hard fans. These fans attach their identity to the team regardless how well the team is playing (Smith & Stewart, 2007). If an individual see's his or her favorite team as an extension one's self then it is clear that positive benefits would result when the team is playing well.

Cialdini, Borden, Thorne, Walker, Freeman, and Sloan (1976) coined a famous theory called basking in reflected glory. This theory states that people have the tendency to identify themselves with the success of a team (Cialdini et al., 1976). Basking in reflected glory enhances an individuals self esteem without actually helping the team win. Cialdini et al. (1976) found that individuals are more likely to be dressed in their favorite team's apparel after a victory. When the team loses it is highly likely for fans to abstain from wearing their favorite team's apparel. For highly identified fans their self-esteem is directly linked to how the team performs. Research suggests if the team is playing well and having a good season then it is

highly likely that their self-esteem is going to be high, but if they aren't playing well or having a subpar season then their self-esteem would most likely be at a low level. Brown (2007) states that being a sport fan can create tension, which can weaken psychological well-being. Most intense fans understand that tension is a part of being a highly identified fan. If you are a die-hard fan, then you always live and therefore die with your team. Being a fan means you suffer and wait for that one moment where your team wins it all; that is what being a fan is all about (Brown, 2007).

Tribal connection. Smith and Stewart's (2007) research on fan motivation uncovered an individual's latent need for social belonging through the psychological motive of tribal connection, adding to Wann's (1995) original research. Die-hard fans use sports to "re-live or capture ancient ceremonies and primitive social practices" (Smith & Stewart, 2007, p.163). Team sports like football, basketball, and baseball give fans the opportunity to replicate tribal rituals. Fan rituals make up both pre and post game actions as well as activities during the game itself. If this were a tribal community, the players would act as tribal heroes, while the fans who cheer the players on would be tribal followers. Smith and Stewart (2007) say, the fans "accentuate inter-tribal rivalries through the purchase of memorabilia, dressing in club colors and provocatively inciting the followers of other sporting tribes" (p.164). Tribal connection is another way to explain the motive of group affiliation. Both of these motives can play a big part in the fan experience.

Obligation. Bernthal and Graham furthered the research of Wann in 2003 by adding obligation to the list of psychological motives that predict fan motivation. They suggested that the majority fans and students on college campuses are motivated to attend sporting events because of reward or fear of punishment. In other words, they feel obligated to attend games.

Bernthal and Graham say, "Obligation is the private side of compliance, where fans feel strongly about team affiliation as a matter of duty" (p.226). Many college students feel the need to be present at their team's home games because college campuses are like close-knit communities and many of the students have day-to-day interactions with the players. The concept of group identity plays a vital role in fan's feelings of obligation to be present at games. In order to stay a part of the in-group, individuals feel the need to conform to in-group ideologies. For instance, one might feel the need to attend every home game regardless of previous commitment in order to conform to in-group rules.

Racial Differences in Fan Motivation

Bilyeu and Wann (2002) conducted a study on the racial differences in fan motivation. 50 African American college students were asked to participate in a study by answering a questionnaire based on the eight motives in Wann's (1995) Sport Fan Motivation Scale. The researchers conducted the study to compare the findings with previous work they produced on European Americans. The results showed that five psychological motives (eustress, aesthetic pleasure, self-esteem, group affiliation, and entertainment) were more important to the African Americans participants in the study (Bilyeu & Wann, 2002). The results showed that African Americans scored higher than Caucasian's in overall sport fan motivation. African American's scored considerably higher on the escape subscale than European Americans. The research suggests that this finding likely relates to African Americans tendency to feel more stress because they are a part of a stigmatized minority group. The results of the study also uncovered that blacks scored higher in self-esteem, family motivation, and group affiliation. The literature suggests that African Americans' self-esteem is enhanced because their ethnic group is significantly represented in most of the major team sports in America. This makes African

Americans feel a sense of empowerment because they see people like them being successful. Ethnic minorities score higher in family motivation because they have closer familial ties than Caucasians have. African American's scored higher on group affiliation because most of the teams employ players that look like them. In other words, they feel they can relate and have something in common with individuals participating in the event. This study gives you an idea about the difference between races when examining fan motivation. While individuals are mostly similar, this study shows that there are slight differences in fan motivation among racial groups (Bilyeu & Wann, 2002).

Gender Differences in Fan Motivation

Wann and Waddill (2003) conducted a study to understand the differences in sport motivation between people with different anatomical sex and gender role orientations. They used the eight psychological motives uncovered in Wann's (1995) research as the framework for the study. Wann and Waddill (2003) asked two hundred and sixty four participants to complete a questionnaire that tested masculinity, femininity, and motivation. The findings showed femininity was the best forecaster of family motivation and masculinity best predicted entertainment, eustress, group affiliation, self-esteem, escape, and aesthetic pleasure motives in individuals. Examining the findings, one can infer that the best predictor for fan motivation is the trait of masculinity. Wann and Waddill (2003) say an individual's masculinity should be considered first when analyzing the connection between sport fandom and gender. Women scored higher on family motivation because of the gender role stereotypes to which they have been socialized. Most women feel compelled to put family first. They are usually the one's who form a major part of their identity with the family. Most sports are masculine in nature. This factor lends credibility to the study because masculinity was associated with higher scores on

most of the motives. The study shows that men and women have significantly different levels of fan motivation, which is consistent with societal norms.

Identity Salience Model

Laverie and Arnett (2000) proposed an identity salience model to explain the motivating factors of fan loyalty. The model posits four factors that make up an individual's identity salience and eventually commitment and attendance at sporting events. These factors are situational involvement, enduring involvement, attachment, and satisfaction. This theory extends Wann's (1995) research by showing the relationship between variables, while also creating a road map from casual fan to highly identified fan.

Identity salience theory examines a person's given identity in relation to other identities. Salient identities are the important identities that people display on a daily basis (Laverie & Arnett, 2000). The literature proposes that before an individual's identity can become salient they have to move through 3 different stages. The first stage is situational involvement or short-term interest in a team. Positive assessments by other individuals during the event can generate positive affect in an individual; thus creating situational involvement. Identity related products like team apparel and ties to an in-group or group affiliation can also create situational involvement. The second stage is enduring involvement or continued interest in the team. As an individual's fan identity increases and becomes more salient, certain activities like attending games, watching games on television, and following their team on blogs, and on the Internet is likely to increase. An individual's involvement directly impacts his or her attachment, which proportionately effects satisfaction and overall attendance at events. The third stage is attachment to the team. After an individual becomes attached to the team, the literature proposes that his or her identity has become salient (Laverie & Arnett, 2000). Fans who have high

identity salience are the same fans that call themselves die-hard or fanatics. Laverie and Arnett (2000) wanted to revise the model brought forth in the literature because the former model hypothesized only direct paths of each factor to fan attendance.

Involvement. Involvement is defined as "a state of motivation, arousal, or interest toward a recreational activity or associated product" (Rothschild, 1984, p.217). According to Laverie and Arnett (2000) there are two kinds of involvement, situational and enduring involvement. Situational involvement means that an individual's interest in an activity is increased because of short-term events. A perfect illustration of this concept would consist of a person attending a baseball game for the evening with his friends. The literature proposes that if the individual simply enjoys himself (eustress) then that would constitute high situational involvement for the evening. Eustress is not the only predictor of high situational involvement. In fact many of Wann's (1995) motivating factors can be used to explain why an individual develops high situational involvement: escapism, entertainment, aesthetic pleasure, cultural connection, family needs, and self-esteem. The fan needs to feel a sense of satisfaction from the event to remain involved in the event. If they are satisfied it is highly likely they will transition into becoming enduring involved with the team or activity.

The concept of enduring involvement means a person has on-going interest in an activity (Laverie & Arnett, 2000). Highly identified sports fans display enduring involvement by having continuous interest in a particular team. The literature proposes that in order for a person to display enduring involvement they must first display short-term interest in the activity in question. Continuous interest in a team or activity is a good predictor that a person would feel an attachment to the activity or team and eventually lead an individual to form an identity with that team or activity (Laverie & Arnett, 2000). Many people can experience both situational and

enduring involvement at one given time. For example, if an individual is a highly identified fan of the University of Nevada Las Vegas basketball team and was at a game having a good time, he or she would experience situational involvement. Enduring involvement would have been in play long before they stepped into the arena and would continue after they left the event. The literature suggests that both types of involvement are qualifications of fan identity (Laverie & Arnett, 2000). High situational involvement and enduring involvement eventually lead to the fan developing an attachment to the team.

Attachment. The term attachment is defined as "the extent to which an object, which is owned, expected to be owned, or previously owned by an individual, is used by the individual to maintain his or her self-concept" (Ball & Tasaki, 1992, p.158). The literature proposes that an attachment to a team could increase or preserve a person's sense of self (Laverie & Arnett, 2000). Therefore, attachment is directly correlated to identity salience. But before identity salience can occur, an individual must care about the sport, player on the team and the team itself. Many highly identified sports fans become attached to various products within the team as well. Fans even create a monument of memorabilia in their homes to remind them of past events they have attended. Fans that have moved from enduring involvement to attachment to a team often say statements like "I am a Rebels fan." These types of statements are indicative of an individual that identifies himself with the team. Laverie and Arnett (2000) propose that an essential part of becoming a highly identified fan results in taking the team and making it your own, which increases the salience of your "fan identity" (p.230). Once a fan has formed a salient identity high levels of attendance and participation will follow.

Laverie and Arnett (2000) conducted a study to test the validity of the revised model. They focused on the factors that influence fan identity salience. The study was conducted on a

college campus involving 190 participants. The participants were asked to complete a questionnaire that measured situational involvement, enduring involvement, and attachment by using a 7-point Likert scale. The questionnaire also measured attendance by posing questions about often the participants attended women's basketball games throughout an entire season. Laverie and Arnett (2000) proposed, "if a person is involved with and or attached to a sports team, he/she is more likely to rate their fan identity as more important than other identities" (p.238). The findings were consistent with the proposed conceptual model. It was demonstrated that when an individual becomes more attached to a team, his or her fan identity becomes more of a prominent part of his or her self-concept. To sum up the section, if an individual's fan identity is said to be salient then they are likely to attend games regardless if the team is playing poorly (Laverie & Arnett, 2000).

Attitude theory uses Wann's (1995) and Laverie and Arnett (2000) research as a foundation for its framework. The theory extends the researchers work by focusing on the concept of attitude formation to explain why a person becomes a highly identified fan. Funk and James (2004) constructed the Fan Attitude Network (FAN), a conceptual model to examine attitude development and change among sports fans. The FAN model entails that "the internalization of a sport identity represents one plausible determinant of attitude formation and change in sport fans due to its proximal relationship to attitude importance" (Funk & James, 2004, p.7). In other words, the FAN model explains attitude development in sports fans. The model states that dispositional needs and endearing features directly affect sport identity, which forms attitude importance or how readily accessible the attitude is in the mind. Attitude importance leads to attitude consequences, which is the materialization or outcomes of an individual's attitude importance (Funk & James, 2004).

Similar to Wann's (1995) fan motivation scale, dispositional needs consist of social psychological factors that motivate sports fans (Funk & James, 2004). Those factors include vicarious achievement, self-esteem, drama, diversion, entertainment, and aesthetics (Funk & James, 2004). Endearing features consist of striking attributes that accompany sport venues and highlight the significance and value of dispositional needs (Funk & James, 2004). These features consist of performance outcomes, wholesome environment, geographic proximity, and experiential risk (Funk & James, 2004).

Funk and James (2004) suggest an individual's attitude development and transformation can occur when their identity becomes salient in relation to the team or sport. Thus, if an individual deems an identity fulfills a particular need, then the individual puts importance on his or her evaluations relative to the sports team because the sport identity has become a vital part of his or her self-concept. Funk and James (2004) also say that optimal internalization happens when an individual completely incorporates the team with in his or her self. In other words, the team actually becomes a part of the individual.

A loyal fan would then be a person with a strong attitude toward a team, frequently thinks about the team, stands firm when the team is losing, has a personal or group bias toward the team, and regularly attends and or watches team games (Funk, Haugtvedt, & Howard, 2000). Since the Fan Attitude Network (FAN) is a conceptual model, its use is intended to guide future research on the topic of attitude formation among sports fans. The authors suggest that future research should examine the internalization of sport identity (identity salience) in combination with this model. Funk and James (2004) propose that internalizing sport identity can be a major determinant in attitude formation influenced by dispositional needs and endearing features.

The proposed psychological theories on fan motivation explain only one side of how a fan can become loyal to a team. Marketing and branding strategies bring the business side of fan motivation into play. Branding reinforces the concept of attachment proposed in the identity salience model. Sport managers play a key role in keeping a fan attached to the product they are selling. If it were not for the sport manager many of the psychological factors that create situational and enduring involvement that results in attachment would never occur.

Marketing and Branding Strategies

Marketing and branding strategies help fans feel more connected to the organization/institution, while aiding managers with revenue production and name recognition. As stated above, branding helps to reinforce a fan's feeling of attachment to the team. The use of branding principles and processes in the sports industry is essential to organizations and marketing managers. It is difficult for managers to build and maintain a strong brand. An organization's brand is critical in creating a constant revenue stream from its consumers. Reaching the consumer is at the heart of most, if not all, branding principles. A great approach for managers to practice would be to study what drives consumers and build a strong belief system about their organization by developing a strong brand image (Bauer, Stokburger-Sauer, & Exler, 2008). A strong brand image has a considerable impact on a fans attachment to the team. If an organization creates brand association by building a strong brand image through the principles of brand exposure and awareness, consumers will likely retain the organizations brand in their memories, thus creating brand loyalty or attachment (Keller, 1993). The fundamental goal of marketing managers is to create repeat customers (brand loyalty) and loyal fans represent most repeat customers (Fortunato, 2006). Having a consistent brand management strategy allows organizations to create an increase in their overall value (Fortunato, 2006). That value is

turned into revenue for the team or institution. Perfect models for managers to imitate are the professional sports organizations like the Chicago Cubs and the Boston Red Sox (Heere & Dickson, 2008). Both of these organizations have a strong and loyal fan base with relatively little success over the last 100 years. The Chicago Cubs have not won a championship since 1908, but they arguably have the strongest brand in Major League Baseball. While the Boston Red Sox have had recent success winning the World Series in 2004 and 2007, they previously had a championship drought of 96 years. Both franchises currently play in stadiums that are deemed National Historic Landmarks (National Park Service, 2010). The Red Sox organization invented the "Red Sox Nation" to unite fans and further strengthen brand loyalty (Red Sox Nation Fan Club, 2012). The Cubs have basically created a small city dedicated to the team called Wrigley Ville. This enhances the organization's entire brand.

Branding

Branding is an important application that is used by sport organizations to attract and create loyal sport consumers. The objective is to make fans attached to the team and make them want to buy and keep buying apparel, sponsored products, and anything that is associated with the team. Keller (1993) states that there are two main reasons why it is advantageous to study branding or brandings eventual outcome, brand equity. The first reason is for financial reasons, estimating the company's brand for asset valuation on the balance sheet. The second reason is to improve market productivity.

The term brand is defined as, "a name, term, sign, symbol, or design, or combination of them which is intended to identify the goods and services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of competitors" (Keller, 1991, p.2, as cited in Kotler, 1993 p.442). Managers need to understand branding principles because an organizations brand influences

what comes into the consumer's mind, thus affecting motivation. An organization's brand first comes into the mind of consumers through brand awareness. *Brand awareness* is the strength of brand recall and recognition in a consumer's memory (Keller, 1993). Keller lists three major reasons why brand awareness is important to consumer decision making. The first reason is it is critical that consumers think of the particular brand when thinking of the product category. The second reason is that brand awareness can affect the consumers' decisions when considering brands even if there are no other brands to consider. Finally the third reason is that brand awareness influences the arrangement and power of brand associations in relation to the brand image (Keller, 1993).

Brand recall refers to "consumers' ability to retrieve the brand when given the product category, the needs fulfilled by the category, or some other type of probe as a cue" (Keller, 1993, p.3). It is important for managers to create a brand where fans are easily able to recall the team's brand. *Brand recognition* refers to "consumers' ability to confirm prior exposure to the brand when given the brand as a cue" (Keller, 1993, p.3). Brand recall and recognition are directly correlated with one another. When a consumer becomes aware of a certain brand and can recall and recognize that brand while situated among the brands of competitors, brand image is therefore formed. *Brand image* is defined as "perceptions about a brand as reflected by the brand associations held in consumer memory" (Keller, 1993, p.3). A team's brand image is vital in developing a fan's loyalty to a team.

There are three types of *brand associations*; product related attributes, non-product related attributes, and benefits. Product related attributes are "the ingredients necessary for performing the product or service function sought by consumers" (Keller, 1993, p.4). Non-product related attributes refer to the "external aspects of the product or service that relate to its

purchase or consumption" (Keller, 1993, p.4). Benefits are "the personal value consumers attach to the product or service attributes" (Keller, 1993, p.4); in other words benefits refer to what the product or service can do for the consumer. There are three different types of benefits: functional, experiential, and symbolic. Functional benefits relate to the product related attributes and are usually the intrinsic advantages of the product or service consumption. Experiential benefits refer to what it feels like to use the product or service and is also connected to product related benefits. Symbolic benefits correspond to the non-product related benefits and refer to the extrinsic advantages of the product or service. Many loyal fans of a particular team might purchase products because of their symbolic benefits, mainly for social approval of the in-group and personal expression. Consumers usually purchase a brand for the bundle of benefits that comes with that brand. The benefits are extremely important to the consumer and many loyal consumers of a certain brand will pay anything to obtain that benefit (Keller, 1993). Brand benefits influence fan motivation because they are usually attached to the in-group, which can have ramifications on how an individual's identity is perceived.

A strong brand image leads to consumers forming a *brand attitude*, which refers to" the overall evaluations of the brand" (Keller, 1993, p.4). A consumer's brand attitude is very important to managers because a positive attitude forms the necessary consumer behavior that often leads to brand loyalty. The concept of brand attitude is consistent with Funk and James (2004) conceptual Fan Attitude Network model because attitude formation is dependent upon social psychological factors like self-esteem and eustress. There are two dimensions to *brand loyalty*, attitudinal and behavioral. The attitudinal dimension refers to the psychological commitment to a team (Bauer et al., 2008). "Fans show a high level of psychological commitment if they feel a deep inner attachment to their favorite team and if their commitment is

persistent over time, [resisting] criticism" (Bauer et al., 2008 p. 207). The behavioral dimension of loyalty is concerned with past behavior and intentions (Homburg & Giering, 1999; as cited in Bauer et al., 2008, p. 207). Past behavior includes past purchasing behavior and positive speak about the team (Bauer et al., 2008). Both dimensions of brand loyalty combine to create a loyal repeat purchasing consumer. A fan's brand loyalty directly contributes to the team's brand equity.

Brand equity is the favorable perceptions of brand associations that fans have in their memory (Bauer et al., 2008). The stronger the perceived brand equity increases the likelihood that a purchase of the brand or service will happen, thus stimulating fan motivation. A product or service can create a brand personality that is unique to that brand. Brand personality is defined as "the set of human characteristics associated with the brand" (Aaker, 1997, p. 347). Brand personality correlates to the symbolic benefits and non-product related attributes of a brand. Aaker suggests that personality traits are attributed to the brand by the influence of the individuals associated with the brand or through user imagery.

Many researchers claim demographics can be attached to a brand like, gender and age. Aaker (1997) conducted a study to develop a framework of, and a valid and reliable scale to measure brand personality dimensions. A total of 631 people participated in the study, rating 37 different subsets of brands on 114 personality traits. The results of the study revealed that consumers perceive that brands have five distinct personality dimensions: excitement, competence, sophistication, sincerity, and ruggedness (Aaker, 1997). Within these five dimensions other connotations can be formed like, agreeableness within the dimension of sincerity captures visions of warmth and acceptance; extroversion and excitement captures visions of sociability, energy, and activity. If a brand can capture a unique personality, it will

easier for the brand to associate itself with other brands within or outside its product category.

Building good perception and reputation in any organization is vital to that organizations brand image, equity, and success as a whole. Many university's that are not apart of the elite class struggle to gain brand image, equity and consistent fan motivation. Universities are becoming more and more entrepreneurial and commercial over the last decade (Lee, Miloch, Kraft, & Tatum, 2008). The model change has increased the importance of image enhancement and brand building through sport marketing and organizational development objectives (Lee et al., 2008). Building a good brand can motivate fans to come out and attend events.

Troy University began as a small teachers school in Alabama in 1887 (Lee et al., 2008). After years of steady enrollment increase the college moved towards a traditional university, offering Masters and Doctorial degrees. The sports program was granted Division II status in 1970, and the baseball quickly gave the athletic program recognition by winning two national championships. The University applied for Division I membership and was accepted in 1992. Now that the university was in the top athletic division, the school wanted to get their football brand off the ground and make it their top revenue stream. They quickly hired Stamats, a marketing consulting firm from Dallas Texas to help them get off the ground and create new key marketing objectives to help stimulate fan motivation. The first decision the Chancellor of the University did was to change the schools official name from Troy State University to Troy University (Lee et al., 2008). The reason for the change is because the name "State" has connotations of boundaries within a certain region and contrasts the Universities mission of national and international reach (Lee et al., 2008).

The name "Troy" gives the school a distinct image that can carry a lot of weight with prospective partners and future students. Uniform standards were the next change at the

University. The Universities standards manual states "the University's graphic identity is an outward expression of the personality, values and goals of an institution" (Universities Style and Graphic Standards Manual, 2004, as cited in Lee, et al., 2008, p.180). The school created colors consistent with the name, which gave them added brand awareness and recall. Troy University developed some key brand attributes that they hoped would set them apart in their conference (Sun Belt). These attributes included: international, friendly, proven, responsive, communities, individuals, value centered, and forward thinking (Lee et al., 2008). The university wanted to create a specific attitude formation toward the team, using attributes that clung to dispositional needs. The first vital marketing move the university did was to schedule their first primetime-televised game on ESPN versus the nationally ranked University of Missouri Tigers. The Chancellor of the university said of the scheduled game, "the event would be an unprecedented opportunity for Troy University to enjoy national exposure" (Lee et al., 2008, p.180).

Since moving to the new athletic league the schools athletic department has renovated all of its facilities and has even built new recreation centers (Lee et al., 2008). They have also created acquired naming rights deals, which further enhances their brand equity. In 2002, signed a long-term naming rights agreement for their football stadium with Movie Gallery INC. (Lee et al., 2008). This agreement allowed the university to unveil a new $18,000,000 upgraded stadium with increased seating capacity, a new field surface, new media facilities, and luxury skyboxes (Lee et al., 2008). Making upgrades like this adds to the aesthetic pleasure of the stadium, which have a considerable effect on an individual's fan motivation.

During the 2004 athletic season, Troy University accumulated over $3,000,000 in revenue, which is unheard of from a school that recently transitioned from Division II to Division I status (Lee et al., 2008). Their licensing agreement also helped their brand image and

identity. The strategies that Troy University used increased their media exposure, which increased their brand awareness. The increased brand awareness affected attitude formation and change in the surrounding community, thus stimulating fan motivation and increasing attendance.

Part Three

Understanding the consumer's motivation to buy a team's product should be the primary goal of every sport manager. If the consumer doesn't buy, then the team will ultimately fail. Using Laverie and Arnett's (2000) identity salience theory, a manager can cultivate fan loyalty within the consumer.

Situational Involvement

A manager can create situational involvement and therefore motivation before the consumer even steps inside the stadium by creating an interactive tailgate. The tailgate can be a festive event by having a band play or setting up gaming booths like a football toss station. These types of mini events within the tailgate can make the fan feel like what they purchased was worth it. Tailgates and other fan gatherings are a good way to promote group affiliation, eustress, a sense of escape and positive self-esteem, thus stimulating fan motivation. There is nothing else like it in sports when fans of a particular team gather and cheer for their team. A manager can also develop a program where the team gives away apparel to the first 10,000 fans to also peak interest before the contest begins. Free apparel can make fans feel closer to the team and stimulate motivation.

Once the consumer is inside the stadium, managers need to keep the consumer fully engaged throughout the entire event. Managers should keep the consumer fully engaged by but not limited to: passing out programs, strategically placing restaurants and merchandise stores, having a team museum on site, building a children's play land, having a fireworks show after a win, giving away free merchandise throughout the game, putting on halftime shows, and putting on sponsored mini events during timeouts. Passing out programs provides the fan with valuable information about team and player history. This makes the fan feel as though they have expert

knowledge about the team. The strategic placement of restaurants and merchandise stores makes the fan walk around the entire venue, allowing them to take in everything the event has to offer. Having a team museum on site also brings the fan closer to the team. Instead of reading about the team's history in a program they can walk through a small venue full of past hero's and team accomplishments and milestones. Building a children's play land would satisfy family needs because it would give the kids something to do during the event. A fireworks display would provide entertainment for everyone after the event has concluded; leaving a lasting impression on everyone that attended the event. Giving away free merchandise by blasting the crowd with shirt cannons during timeouts and halftime shows keeps the individual engaged during the event, creating a sense of escape. If these suggestions are put into professional practice they will satisfy most if not all of the motivating factors elicited by Wann, thus stimulating situational involvement.

Enduring Involvement

Once a manger has successfully created situational involvement, they should to work to develop enduring involvement or continued interest in the team. The consumer needs to feel that they want to come back to feel that satisfaction all over again. Managers can target consumers to get them back to the stadium by creating incentives to make them want to come back and re-live the experience. The team can hold promotional game nights were consumers who purchased a ticket within the last month could get discounted ticket prices for a subsequent game. Going to subsequent games throughout an entire season will keep the team on the individuals mind making them conjure up feelings they had during the event when they think about the team. They could also get sponsors involved and offer discounted dinners, apparel, or free food at the stadium on a return visit. Creating buzz about the team can keep the fan interested for the

duration of the season and off-season. For instance making a key trade or picking up free agents during the off-season can accelerate the anticipation for the up coming season. One big variable that would almost guarantee a fan to become continuously interested in the team is for the team to be successful. This is one crucial area where management can create enduring involvement pretty quickly, because lets face it, everyone loves a winner.

Team formation is almost just as big as stadium appeal or creating a festive environment. It is hard to create a loyal fan base without a successful team. There are some outliers out there but most teams need to be somewhat successful in order for consumers to buy the product. Managers should look for dynamic charismatic players who would love to be the face of the franchise. This would enhance the appeal of the team and get a fan that has not become attached yet to the stadium to see the player play. Star power is very influential. If the a team can get an established star that has been the face of another franchise or has been on commercials (i.e. Peyton Manning) ticket sales would most likely rise because the casual fan would want to go out and see the new look team.

Attachment

The attachment stage of the identity salience theory is the final pre-cursor before a fan's identity becomes salient. Attachment can be created maintained through the concept of branding. It is very important for a manager to build and maintain a strong brand base for their team. The first thing a manager needs to do is to create brand awareness of the service or product they are providing. Brand awareness and exposure forms an impression in the mind of consumers. If the consumer doesn't know your product, then is it highly likely that they won't buy your product. So, how do managers create brand awareness? First they should develop a strong marketing plan with short and long-term goals listing specific objectives like: using stars

to promote the team, getting players out in community for meet and greets and helping with community projects, and creating a branded fan group that brings fans together around the world. These objectives would show that the team cares about the community and would also keep the team in the minds of the fan base. A manager of a sport and recreation organization should use intelligent advertisement tactics to get the word out to the public like aligning the team with well-known sponsors in the community. If used correctly, this tactic would create even more exposure for the team by reaching every household in the surrounding community. The use of the media and social media networks are also a vital recommendation. Millions of people in 2012 use the Internet, television cable, twitter, and face book. Managers should create a team website, create a team face book page, develop a coaches show on a local cable network, create contests and promotions on twitter for fans to win tickets and merchandise. Entering into these markets will greatly enhance the awareness of an organization.

Creating awareness allows for instant brand recall and brand recognition for the product and service. A strong brand is recalled and recognized before any of its competitors within the same product category. Brand image will effect a team's reputation and ultimately their revenue. Consumers want positive brand associations attached to the products or services they are purchasing. Many want a bundle of benefits like aesthetic pleasure, eustress, and a sense of escape to feel as though the purchase was worth it. Providing the consumer with these motivating factors ensures they will come back for more. Many teams offer promotions and many give away products to make sure the consumer feels as if they are well taken of. Once a organization creates a positive brand image brand loyalty subsequently follows. Managers and owners need to be committed to winning, showing fans they care about putting a winning

product on the marketplace. If an organization has a strong marketing plan with brand knowledge principles at the heart of the plan, fan attachment should increase their bottom line.

Branding has changed within the last ten years. Due to the economic recession, many managers within the field predict that organizations need to change their branding practices in order to stay competitive in today's market. Dr. Passikoff, (2009) founder and president of Brand Keys, a branding consulting firm says many of the branding techniques are obsolete today. Some of his keys can be applied to create involvement and attachment within the consumer. The first trend that can increase involvement and attachment is "Brand's increasingly a surrogate for value" (Passikoff, 2009, p.2). This trend concept strikes at the heart of a brand wrapping a bundle of benefits (eustress, aesthetic pleasure, family needs, cultural connection) up with the purchase of a brand. Consumers want more for their money. The second trend is "Brand differentiation is brand value' (Passikoff, 2009, p.1). This concept wants managers to make sure their product or service is distinctively different from their competitors without increasing price. This concept builds off of the idea of attachment because if you can make your brand stand a part, consumers will want to follow and be a part of something unique. The third trend states, "Old tricks don't work/won't work" (Passikoff, 2009, p.2). Basically saying that appealing to a consumer's sentiments doesn't work anymore. Odd celebrity sponsorship pairing does not work either. The paring needs to be in concert in order for the consumer to believe the brand and want to come out to the event. The fourth trend that increases involvement and attachment is "Its not just buzz" (Passikoff, 2009, p.2). Managers need to create a community within their brand. Consumer feedback is all over the Internet; so creating a community that likes your products will keep the consumers coming back and increase revenue. These branding concepts will definitely help organizations create involvement and attachment as well as maintain their brand in these

times of financial regulation. Using the theoretical framework of identity salience combined with all of the concepts of branding, a manager can build and maintain a loyal fan base for his or her organization.

Future Research

In researching the topic of fan motivation some holes in the research have been found. No study was found that highlights fan motivation in cities where intense fandom is the norm (like Austin Texas). Future research should also investigate fan motivation in comparison to where an individual lives. Do individuals portray the same motivation in locations that have a large quantity of other leisure activities rather than in a place where the team is the main sports product? A study can be conducted on fan motivation between different sports. In other words, what sports make up the most highly identified fans. Another key researching area would be to look at how a new stadium/venue affects fan motivation. Future research should connect motivation theories with marketing theories like branding. A new comprehensive model could be produced to guide professional practice. Finally, with the rise of social networking, researchers should conduct a study on how that type of technology affects fan motivation.

Conclusion

Fans are the primary reason why sports teams make revenue. If it weren't for the fan, sports leagues wouldn't exist. That's why it is important for teams to understand what motivates a fan. Many individuals become fanatics of a team and are forever connected to the team, doing anything they can to watch or go to the games. The models and principles discussed in this paper can guide professional practice. Using the identity salience model to explain a fans motivation, an individual can see the full evolution of how someone goes from a casual fan to a highly identified fan. A proper marketing plan with strong brand knowledge principles is vital

for an organization to survive in their prospective market as well. Using attitude theory a manager can get inside the head of their consumers to ensure their product or service is what the consumer needs. By creating a positive brand attitude a manager will create the needed awareness, exposure, recall, recognition, and image required to construct brand loyalty. Brand loyalty brings the consumer back, while also bringing in new customers through positive consumer feedback. If an organization can figure out what motivates a fan to become loyal, they will have no problem maintaining a strong brand and creating revenue.

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