

# FACTORS INFLUENCING BRAND LOYALTY IN PROFESSIONAL SPORTS FANS

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## ABSTRACT

*Many researchers have provided comprehensive definitions for the term of brand loyalty and also examined the factors affecting brand loyalty with many empirical studies. But there is little research focusing on the brand loyalty of professional sports fans. The topic area about factors influencing brand loyalty in professional sports fans was identified because these fans bring significant financial benefits every year and stimulate economic growth in the United States. Although different conceptual models seek to explain brand loyalty, many factors influence customer brand loyalty. Different factors may influence brand loyalty in the sports industry as compared to other industries. The purpose of this review is to analyze critically theoretical and empirical literature about the factors influencing brand loyalty in professional sports fans, implications for brand management, and to identify areas of future scholarly inquiry. The forms of literature included in this review are periodicals, periodicals, periodical, books, non-periodical, doctoral dissertations, masters dissertations, and government documents. Most literature was retrieved from the ProQuest database. Types of scholarly literature included in the review are theoretical, empirical, critical and methodological inquiry. Only a little literature is explored in this area; more additional research is needed to explore the theme.*

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## INTRODUCTION

The topic about factors influencing brand loyalty of professional sports fans is a topic of worldwide interest. In the recent years, technologies improved, helping people to complete their work effectively, and to have more leisure time to join various activities after working time. Therefore, how to attract people and persuade them to spend money in professional sports are essential marketing strategies for the managers in the professional sports industry. The sports industry is playing a significant role in the business world today. In the United States, it ranks as the 11<sup>th</sup> largest industry (Bristow & Sebastian, 2001). Street and Smith reported “Americans spent \$213.5 billion on sports in 1999, a whopping \$763 per capita” (as cited in Mitchell, Montgomery, & Mitchell, 2003, Introduction section, para. 2). Therefore, it is important to understand the factors that influence brand loyalty of professional sports fans to promote effective brand management strategies.

Brand loyalty is the most significant component that many industries and many scholars are examining as factors that could influence brand loyalty. High brand loyalty could lower many aspects of cost spent by the organization. Furthermore, according to the framework of brand equity that was reported by Gladden (1999), brand loyalty is one component of brand equity. When brand loyalty increases, the brand's equity/value will increase, too. Developing effective strategies to attract professional sports fans requires understanding the relationship between professional sports fans and brand loyalty. This may help the managers who are in the professional sports industry to develop marketing strategies in the future. This critical analysis of the literature concludes with a synopsis and interpretation of theoretical, empirical, methodological literature, conclusions, and recommendations for future scholarly inquiry about factors influencing brand loyalty in professional sports fans.

Researchers report most customers exhibit significantly less brand loyalty for inferior quality products (Bristow, & Sebastian, 2001). However, professional sports fans exhibit strong loyalty to professional

sports teams, even when sports teams have losing records (Bristow & Sebastian, 2001). There are several models that explain factors that affect brand loyalty. For example, Bristow and Sebastian (2001) examined a tripartite model that found three factors that influence brand loyalty: perceived brand-performance fit, social and emotional identification with the brand, and habit and a long history with the brand. Gounaris and Stathakopoulos (2004) examined three dimensional variables (consumer drivers, brand drivers and social drivers) of brand loyalty in their conceptual model, and reported possible outcomes of consumers' behavior; buy nothing, buy an alternative brand, word-of-mouth communication, or visit other store. Tapp (2003) organized brand loyalty in two parts and tested an attitudinal loyalty and behavioral loyalty model. They found several factors about attitudinal and behavioral loyalty of football fans that influence different levels of behavioral loyalty. These factors are vicarious enjoyment, social influence of other fans, habit, change in career/job, change in family circumstance, self image, and brand symbolism. Taylor and Hunter (2003) reported loyalty could be influenced by brand attitude and satisfaction. They tested their conceptual model and found four loyalty factors, trust, affect, resistance and value. Selnes (1993) used a conceptual model testing the relationship among quality, customer satisfaction, brand reputation, and intended loyalty. Gladden and Milne (1999) reported brand equity is composed of perceived quality, brand awareness, brand association and brand loyalty. They used a conceptual framework of brand equity in the team sport setting to test the three factors, team related, organization related and market related.

The topic area about factors influencing brand loyalty in professional sports fans was identified because these fans provide important financial benefits every year, and stimulate economic growth in the United States. "It may be five times more expensive for a firm to attract a new customer than it is to keep an existing customer" (as cited in Bristow, & Sebastian, 2001, p. 257). Although different conceptual models seek to explain brand loyalty, many factors influence customer brand loyalty. Different factors may influence brand loyalty in the professional sports industry as compared to other industries. After reviewing journals regarding fanatic fans, these loyal fans were found to express strong support for the professional team, even though the team might have a losing record. This is an interesting phenomenon and different when examining brand loyalty toward general products. There may be significant "emotional" factors influencing brand loyalty of professional sports fans. The problem area of brand loyalty of professional sports fans is about the practices within the field of marketing, management, sports management, and brand management. The purpose of this review is to analyze critically theoretical and empirical literature about the factors influencing brand loyalty in professional sports fans, implications for brand management, and to identify areas of future scholarly inquiry.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

"Much of the research on loyalty has focused on fan identification with the team" (Richardson, 2004, p. 90). To explain the fans' behavior sufficiently, team identification is the significant component. "Team identification refers to a spectator's involvement with and psychological connection to a sport team" (Wann, & Schrader, 2000, p. 160). This connection that fans develop towards teams is a type of in-group favoritism. Thus, this connection helps people develop a social identity by attaching themselves and attaining group membership. The interaction of in-group members is more frequent than that of out-group members (Lo, 2000). A person may have higher positive affections toward in-group members than to out-group members. "Highly identified sport fans would be more likely to present themselves as a fan of a specific team to a rival supporter than marginally identified fans" (Wann, 2000, p. 199).

In 1979, Tajfel and Turner introduced their seminal theory of social identity. Different from identity theory, social identity theory is based on an individual's group identity. This theory identifies three major constructs of an individual's position within a group identity: social categorization, social comparison, and social identity. The four major propositions in this theory are, first, individuals classify numerous stimulations from surroundings to simplify the information and to understand self-environment better.

Second, individuals may identify themselves with the group to which they belong by social classification. Third, individuals compare the characteristics of their own group with other groups, by social comparison. Finally, individuals consider that the traits of their own group are more positive and applicable than the traits in other groups (Lo, 2001). Several empirical studies reported group identity indeed influences on-group favoritism and in-group favoritism (Lo, 2001). This theory is socially significant for addressing essential issues about an individual's group identity in the discipline of human resource management and marketing. The theory has been adapted to various research fields such as social psychology, human resource management, psychology, and marketing. This is the predominant theory used to examine individual group identity with well-developed propositions and strong empirical support.

Social identity theory can be applied to explore the fans behavior from psychological aspects. Fandom is both a public and private experience, and the two types of identity have been explored (Jacobson, 2003). Using this theory, Jacobson reported that there are two levels that influence fans' identity. The first level is an interpersonal network and community-effect level. Fans are influenced by friends, family members, or geographic areas (support local team) on identity. The second level is a symbolic level. These include the team's specific and unique factors such as the team's name, logo, color, and fight song (Jacobson, 2003). Social identity theory can be used to explain the sports fans' self and social identification. Within this theory, researchers can find the factors that will cause the sports fans to create a positive attitude toward the sports team, and lead to loyalty to specific teams. These factors are more psychological aspects, such as habit and long history, social and emotional identification, brand symbolism, basting-in-reflect-glory, and self image (Tapp, 2004).

#### Measurement of Fan Attitudes and Behaviors

Shank and Beasley (1998) conducted a methodological study to measure sports involvement. They used a non-experimental, mixed-method design. They began with six in-depth interviews using gender comparisons (three males and three females). This resulted in the first step for better understanding of the involvement construct and developing the questionnaire. After the interviews, the *Sports Involvement Inventory Survey* was developed and 136 customers in Cincinnati completed the survey. Shank and Beasley's literature review was thorough and current in comparing and contrasting measurement about sports involvement of fans. "Sports involvement measures have been used by Lascu, Giese, Toolan, Guehring and Mercer in a study of golf spectators and Walefield in a study of baseball fans (Shank, & Beasley, 1998, p. 436). Items for the *Sports Involvement Inventory* and additional survey questions were generated from the literature review of involvement studies and the interviews. A non-probability, accidental sampling plan resulted in the data producing sample of 136, but the response rate was not reported. The 8 items of *Sports Involvement Inventory* were used to examine the level of sports involvement. The base question of this sports involvement inventory begins with "To me, sports are". Responses are on a 7-point semantic differential scale, with polar responses for these 8 items as boring to exciting, interesting to uninteresting, valuable to worthless, appealing to unappealing, useless to useful, not needed to needed, irrelevant to relevant, important to unimportant. The total scale has seven scales from weak to strong. The range of scores on the Sports Involvement Inventory is from 8 (the lowest level of sports involvement) to 56 (the highest level of sports involvement).

Gwinner and Swanson (2003) conducted a study about antecedents and sponsorship outcomes of fan identification. They used a non-experimental, causal comparative and quantitative design with 1070 adult spectators at an afternoon university football game. Their literature review was thorough and current in contrasting theories about team identification. Ashforth and Mael in 1989 reported team identification is "the spectators' perceived connectedness to a team and the experience of the team's failing and achievements as one's own" (as cited in Gwinner, & Swanson, 2003, p. 276). Under this definition, it can be presented as a more specific instance of organizational identification. The propositions that were examined in the study were that highly-identified fans exhibit higher levels of sponsor recognition,

patronage, and satisfaction and have more positive attitudes toward sponsoring firms than less identified fans. Gwinner and Swanson's interpretation of these findings is that highly identified fans are more likely to exhibit several positive outcomes related to sponsorship. This led to the conclusion that greater gains in sponsorship effectiveness can be made by segmenting the sport spectator market according to the level of team identification. An implication for practice is the suggestion that team identification is an important component in sponsorship effectiveness. Therefore, sponsors can develop effective strategies by considering the component of team identification. The strength of the study reported by Gwinner and Swanson is that team identification is an important consideration in sponsorship effectiveness.

Wann, Hunter, Ryan, and Wright (2001) conducted a study about the relationship between team identification and willingness of sport fans to consider illegal acts to assist their team such as assisting athletes in acquiring banned substances (steroids), or illegally assisting the athletes in college courses (help them pass the exam). They used a non-experimental, causal correlational, quantitative design of 71 college students. Wann, Hunter, Ryan, and Wright's literature review was thorough and current in comparing and contrasting the theory of social identity about highly identified fans concerning the team's successful or unsuccessful performance. Empirical studies of the link between team identification and willingness of sport fans to consider illegally assisting their team were examined. This resulted in Wann, *et al.* study testing the proposition that persons with high levels of team identification would be more likely to consider such behavior as illegally assisting their team. Findings supported the hypothesis of the positive relationship between team identification and fans' willingness to consider cheating using correlation analysis ( $p < 0.001$ ). Wann, *et al.* interpretation of these findings is consistent with the work of Russell and Baenninger (1996) and Wann, Peterson, *et al.* (1999) that numerous people were willing to admit the possibility of committing anti-social acts under the cover and protection of anonymity. This led to the following conclusions that fans with high team identification will have a high willingness to consider using illegal ways to assist the teams they support. Limitations reported by Wann, Hunter, Ryan, and Wright are: First, the sampling population might be too small to represent the whole population and it was a convenience sample. Second, the research focused on the fans with high identification who were willing to assist the team by illegal acts, but will the general sports fans that do not have high team identification have such willingness of illegal acts, too? They generated the following areas of future study: Examine the relationship between team identification and willingness of general sports fans to consider illegally assisting the team.

### Brand Loyalty

In 1950, Brown and Cunningham began to research the concept of brand loyalty (Lim, & Razzaque, 1997). Research continues today, resulting in abundant literature about brand loyalty. Runyon in 1980 defined brand loyalty as "a special case of programmed decision making when customers adopt a decision strategy of giving all or most of their patronage to a particular brand" (as cited in Datta, 2003, p. 139). Many experts and researchers defined brand loyalty in their way, but the most notable conceptual identification of brand loyalty was presented by Jacoby and Kyner in 1973. They suggest that customer brand loyalty is "the behavioral outcome of a customer's preference for a particular brand from a selection of similar brands, over a period of time, with, importantly is the result of an evaluative decision-making process" (as cited in McMullan and Gilmore, 2003). Oliver (1999) described brand loyalty as "a deeply held commitment to re-buy or re-patronize a preferred product/service consistently in the future, thereby causing repetitive same brand set purchasing, despite situational influences and marketing efforts having the potential to cause switching behavior" (p. 34). According to Oliver's definition, brand loyalty can be separated in two aspects: behavioral and attitudinal. Dick and Basu (1994) developed a conceptual model of attitudinal loyalty and behavioral loyalty. They proposed that a customer may buy a specific brand because of the low price. However, a slight price increase may affect customer purchasing behavior and cause a shift to buy another brand. However, purchasing behavior may not be sufficient to explain brand loyalty. Sheth, Mittal and Newman in 1999 reported "For this reason-marketing scholars

argue that the customers might be considered loyal only if the consumer's attitude towards a brand is more favorable than for the competing brands" (Datta, 2003, p. 139).

### Conceptual Framework of Customer Loyalty

Dick and Basu introduced their conceptual framework of customer loyalty based on reasoned action theory and integrated concepts of brand loyalty (Dick & Basu, 1994). This framework identifies five major influencing factors of customer loyalty defined as (1) cognitive antecedents (accessibility, confidence, centrality, clarity), (2) affective antecedents (emotion, feeling states/mood, primary affect, satisfaction), (3) conative antecedents (switching cost, sunk cost, expectation), (4) social norms, and (5) situational influences (Dick, & Basu, 1994). The moderators of the relationship are relative attitude and repeat patronage, and the consequence is customer loyalty. "A number of relationships involving antecedents, moderators, and consequences of loyalty may be derived from the customer loyalty framework" (Dick, & Basu, 1994, p. 110) led to a numbers of propositions. Brand loyalty is a two dimensional construct involving relative attitude and repeat patronage/purchasing behavior (Dick, & Basu, 1994). In the last 10 years, the loyalty framework has been revised and adapted to brand management and marketing by numerous scholars in the marketing field. Several empirical studies by Lim and Razzaque in 1997, Datta in 2003, and Gounaris and Stathakopoulos in 2004, led to refinement in the conceptual framework. Gounaris and Stathakopoulos (2004) developed a conceptual model adopted from the conceptual framework and depicted direct and indirect relationships among concepts described by Dick and Basu, which the conceptual framework is socially significant, addressing essential issues about brand loyalty in the discipline of marketing, and is useful in explaining and predicting the factors influencing brand loyalty. Thus it is a well-developed guide to conduct the empirical research. The conceptual framework has a good balance between simplicity and complexity, contributing to its usefulness. Studies by Garland and Gendall in 2004 verify the propositions of a two dimensional construct of brand loyalty involving relative attitude and repeat patronage. The conceptual framework has been adapted to various research fields such as management, brand management and marketing. This is the predominant conceptual framework used to examine brand loyalty with well-developed propositions and strong empirical support.

Customer loyalty is viewed as the strength of the relationship between an individual's relative attitude and repeat patronage. The relationship is seen as mediated factors by social norms and situational factors. Cognitive, affective, and conative antecedents of relative attitude are identified as contributing to loyalty, along with motivational, perceptual, and behavioral consequences. Based on the framework, the task of managing loyalty would involve: 1. determining the loyalty status of a target population in terms of strength of the relationship and comparing it with competing offerings, 2. identifying relevant antecedents and consequences in a given market context, 3. determining the relative impact (or contributions) of antecedent factors and the likelihood of different consequences, and 4: identifying causal variables on which the target is underperforming compared to competitors, from which increase in loyalty may be affected through strategic interventions.

### Brand Loyalty: Empirical Studies

Gounaris and Stathakopoulos (2004) conducted a study about antecedents and consequences of brand loyalty. They used a non-experimental, correlational survey research design, and confirmatory factor analysis to test a model about antecedents' factors influencing brand loyalty and four types of brand loyalty. The sample included 850 consumers of whisky from shopping malls and in the street, Greece. Gounaris and Stathakopoulos' literature review was thorough, current in comparing theory of reasoned action and concept of a two dimensional brand loyalty. Empirical studies of antecedents (risk aversion, variety seeking, brand reputation, availability of substitute, brands, social group influences, and peer's recommendation) and four types of brand loyalty (buy nothing, buy alternative brand, word-of-mouth

communication, and visit other store) were examined, leading to the major gap in the literature about the need to understand direct and indirect relationships among the concepts of brand loyalty identified by many theorists. This resulted in Gounaris and Stathakopoulos' study testing the propositions of reasoned action theory developed in 1969 by Fishbein and loyalty framework developed in 1994 by Dick and Basu (as cited in Gounaris, & Stathakopoulos, 2004).

#### Behavioral and Attitudinal Factors Influencing Brand Loyalty: Empirical Studies

Lim and Razzaque (1997) conducted a study about brand loyalty and situational effects. They used a non-experimental, causal comparative, quantitative design of 160 undergraduate students from National University of Singapore. Lim and Razzaque's literature review was thorough and current in comparing and contrasting concepts about two dimensional brand loyalty. Theoretical and empirical studies of behavioral and attitudinal brand loyalty were reviewed, leading to the major gap in the literature that not only to customer attitudes influence behavior, but brand attitudes may be tied to certain situational contexts. A non-probability, accidental sampling plan resulted in the data producing sample of 160, the response rate was not reported. The researcher used a three-step procedure to conduct the experiment. The first step, focus group interviews were conducted to generate an initial list of situations in which consumption or purchases are likely to result for each product. In the second step, three principal situations were picked from seven situational dimensions using a pre-experimentation survey with a seven-point response scale. After picking these three principal situations, researchers used cluster analysis to ensure that the three situations are seldom correlated with one another. Third step, the composite scale (multi-attribute attitudinal measures, semantic differential, global attitudinal measure and attitudinal confidence measure) were used to measure the strength of attitudes toward two brands (greeting cards and computer diskettes) after classifying the subjects into two groups (high and low relative brand attitude). Reliability and validity of the composite scale were not reported in this study. Findings supported the hypothesis 1: There is a significant difference in repeat purchase rates across group with differing levels of relative brand attitude ( $p = 0.003$  for greeting cards;  $p = 0.000$  for computer diskettes); and hypothesis 3: There are significant interaction effects between attitude and situation on repeat purchase rates ( $p = 0.029$ ). Finding did not support hypothesis 2: There is a significant difference in repeat purchase rates across situations ( $p = 0.439$  for greeting cards;  $p = 0.178$  for computer diskettes), using two-way factorial analysis of Variance (ANOVA). Lim and Razzaque's interpretation of these findings is that although situational influences may not impact purchasing behavior directly, it seems to be a moderating variable that would influence the customer's relative attitude toward purchasing behavior. This led to the conclusion that the attitude-within-situation is a better predictor of repeat purchasing behavior when attitude

#### Behavioral and Attitudinal Factors Influencing Brand Loyalty in Professional Sports Fans: Empirical Studies

Bristow and Sebastian (2001) conducted a study about factors influencing brand loyalty of Chicago Cubs baseball fans. They used a non-experimental, exploratory study of 371 respondents from patrons at a restaurant located across the street from Wrigley Field. Bristow and Sebastian's literature review was thorough and current in comparing the conceptual framework about two dimensions of customer brand loyalty. Empirical studies about influencing factors of brand loyalty of Chicago Cubs fans were examined, leading to the major gap in the literature that there was no empirical evidence that shows these three factors (perceived brand-performance fit, social and emotional identification and habit and long history) have a significant influence on the fans brand loyalty in professional sports. This resulted in Bristow and Sebastian's study testing the tripartite model of consumer brand loyalty that was adopted from the conceptual framework of Dick and Basu, Sheth, Mittal, and Newman. A non-probability sampling plan resulted in the self-selected, data producing sample of 374, a response rate of 80%. The *Product Expertise Scale* developed by Mishra *et al.*, in 1993, was used to measure *perceived-performance*

*fit*; the *Desire to Win/Competitiveness Scale* developed by Confman in 1993, was used to measure *social identification variable*; the *Loyalty Proneness Scale* developed by Lichtenstein *et al.* in 1990, was used to measure *emotional identification variable*; and the *Measure of Nostalgia* developed by Holbrook in 1993, was used to measure *habit and long history variable* (as cited in Bristow & Sebastian, 2001). Reliability and validity were not reported in this study.

## DISCUSSION OF THE LITERATURE, SUMMARY AND INTERPRETATIONS

The purpose of this critical analysis of theoretical and empirical literature is to explore the factors influencing brand loyalty of professional sports fans, and to identify future areas of scholarly inquiry. The major findings of this literature review are that the topics of affecting factors of perceived brand-performance fit, social and emotional identification, habit and long history with the brand, brand symbolism, self image and basking-in-reflect-glory lead to two dimensions of brand loyalty and consequence of brand loyalty. The next two areas aim to present a synopsis of the state-of-the-art of the theoretical and empirical literature about the topic and let the reader know what is known and unknown.

### Theoretical Literature

**Sports fans-** The theoretical literature about Social Identity Theory sufficiently explains fans' attitudinal and behavioral performance through psychological aspects. This theory identifies three major constructs of individual's group identity, social categorization, social comparison, and social identity. The four major propositions in this theory are that first, individuals classify numerous stimulations from surroundings to simplify the information and to better understand self-environment. Second, individuals may identify themselves with the group to which they belong by social classification. Third, individuals compare the characteristics of their own group with other groups, by social comparison. Finally, individuals consider that the traits of their own group are more positive and applicable than the traits in other groups (Tajfel, & Turner, 1979; Hogg *et al.*, 1995; Thoits, & Virshup, 1997; Funk, 1998; Brown, & Capozza, 2000). There are two levels when applying social identity theory to fans' identity, influence fans' identity. The first level is an interpersonal network and community-effect level, fans are influenced by friends, family member or geographic area on identity (Chorbajian, 1978; Smith, 1979; Snow, & Oliver, 1995; Zillmann *et al.*, 1989; Giuliano, Popp, & Knight, 2000); and the second level is symbolic, team's specific and unique factors such as the team's name, color, and fight song will influence fans' identity (Ciadini *et al.*, 1976; Cialdini, & Richardson, 1980; Snyder *et al.*, 1986; Hirt *et al.*, 1992; Wann, 1993; Mahony *et al.*, 2000; End, 2001).

**Brand loyalty-** The theoretical literature about Theory of Reasoned Action explains a person's behavior. The theory is based on the notion that a person's behavior is determined by what information the person happens to have available to him or her. The major of propositions in this theory are that a person's behavioral intentions are a function of two different factors, attitude toward the behavior and subjective norm (Fishbein, & Ajzen, 1967). The theory can be applied to marketing to predict customer purchasing behavior (Randall, 1989; Lutz, 1991; Chang, 1998; Donald, & Cooper, 2001). For example, for the purchasing process, a person may have a strong positive attitude toward the purchase of a new product and the subjective norm could also be pointing in the favor of the person's intention to buy. However, some researchers argue the propositions reported by Fishbein, and Ajzen. The main conflict for this theory is that actions are sometimes changed by factors outside a person's control. For example, a person may have a strong positive attitude toward the purchase of a new product and the subjective norm could also be pointing in the favor of the person's intention to buy, however, if the person does not have the money, the purchasing process will be interrupted (Mackenzie, & Jurs, 1993; Godin, & Kok, 1996; Ajzen, 1996). Even though the theory of reasoned action can not predict all behavior successfully, it has been found applicable fitting in many situations in many empirical studies (Cuerrier *et al.*, 1992)

The theoretical literature about a framework for customer loyalty was developed by Dick and Basu in 1994. The conceptual framework is based on the propositions of the theory of reasoned action and integrates concepts of brand loyalty. This framework identifies five major influencing factors of customer loyalty defined as cognitive antecedents - accessibility, confidence, centrality, clarity (Mitchell, 1989; Johnson, & Eagly, 1989; Krosnick, 1989), affective antecedents - emotion, feeling states/mood, primary affect, satisfaction (Allen, et al., 1992; Oliver, 1992; Oliva, et al., 1992), conative antecedents - switching cost, sunk cost, expectation (Poter, 1980; Arkes, & Blumer, 1985; Dick, 1991), social norm and situational influence (Ajzen, & Fishbein, 1980; Dick, & Basu, 1994). The moderators are relative attitude and repeat patronage, and the consequence is customer loyalty. The major propositions in this conceptual framework are "A number of relationships involving antecedents, moderators, and consequences of loyalty may be derived from the customer loyalty framework" (Dick, & Basu, 1994, p. 110). The conceptual framework has been adapted to various research fields, especially in the marketing field. Many researchers develop their research models for conducting customer brand loyalty based on the conceptual framework for customer loyalty (Lim, & Razzaque, 1997; Datta, 2003; Gounaris, & Stathakopoulos, 2004).

### Empirical Literature

Sports fans- The research evidence consistently demonstrated that many factors will result in sports fans' behavior, and the majority of these factors are psychological aspects, such as habit and long history, social and emotional identification, brand symbolism, Basking-in-reflect-glory, and self image (Shank, & Beasley, 1998; Wann, et al, 2001; Gwinner, & Swanson, 2003). But finding more factors is needed because it may help more in the accuracy of predicting sports fans' behavior by researchers. Shank and Beasley (1998) conducted a mixed-method design, methodological, non-experimental study to measure sports involvement. The scale of *Sports Involvement Inventory* was used to examine the level of sports involvement. Findings supported the adequate psychometric qualities of the *Sports Involvement Inventory* and this new developed scale was shown to be a relatively good predictor of sports-related behavior. Recommendations reported by Shank and Beasley are that the *Sports Involvement Inventory* should be used to extend the knowledge base about how the involvement construct in general can be used, and the need to test the inventory's applicability in different types of sports. Future studies might examine the relationship between sports involvement and sport motivation from the perspectives of the participant and the spectator.

Gwinner and Swanson (2003) conducted a non-experimental, causal comparative and quantitative study to examine the antecedents and sponsorship outcomes of fan identification. A multi-item measurement instrument was used to measure six antecedent variables (*perceived prestige, sports domain involvement, fan associations, sponsorship recognition, sponsor patronage, attitude toward sponsors and satisfaction with sponsor*). The finding was that highly identified fans are more likely to exhibit several positive outcomes related to sponsorship (Shank, & Beasley, 1998). Limitation reported by Gwinner and Swanson is that additional antecedent variables may be relevant for predicting team identification in some of these alternative sponsorship contexts. They generated several areas of future study. First, explore the impact that specific "reputation" types may have on team identification. Second, what impact might a school that is perennially considered a basketball powerhouse have on team identification with that school's other athletic team? Third, image transfer might be an important variable impacting the outcome of sponsorship and relating to team identification. Wann, Hunter, Ryan, and Wright (2001) conducted a non-experimental, causal correlational, quantitative study to examine about the relationship between team identification and willingness of sport fans to consider illegal acts to assist their team. The instruments of *Sport Fandom Questionnaire (SFQ)*, *Sport Spectator Identification Scale (SSIS)*, *Sport Fan Cheating Scale (SFCS)* and *Demographic Scale* were used to measure fans' willingness to consider using illegal or violent action for the purpose of giving one's team an unfair advantage. A finding is that numerous people were willing to admit the possibility of committing anti-social acts under the cover and protection



of anonymity (Wann. *et al.*, 2001). Limitations reported by Wann, Hunter, Ryan, and Wright are first, sampling population might be too small to represent the whole population and was done for convenience. Second, the research focused on the fans with high identification and willingness in illegal acts to assist the team, but will the general sports fans that do not have high team identification have similar willingness of illegal acts. They generated several area of future study, to examine the relationship between team identification and willingness of general sports fans to consider illegally assisting the team.

Brand loyalty- The research evidence consistently demonstrated that the consequence of forming customer brand loyalty has the same processes in many fields. Some factors will affect customers exhibiting likely attitudes toward the product, such as accessibility, confidence, centrality, clarity, emotion, mood, primary affect, satisfaction, switching cost, sunk cost, expectation, risk aversion, variety seeking, brand reputation, availability of substitute, brands, social group influences, and peer's recommendation. The next phase is that customers will exhibit repeat purchasing behavior, and finally, customer brand loyalty will be formed (Dick, & Basu, 1994; Lim, & Razzaque, 1997; McMullan, & Gilmore, 2002; Gounaris, & Stathakopoulos, 2004). McMullan and Gilmore (2003) conducted a non-experimental, methodological study to develop a proposed scale of customer loyalty measurement. They discussed existing measurement scales of brand loyalty, such as Raju's *Exploratory Tendencies in Consumer Behavior Scales (ETCBS)*; Parasutaman's *Service Quality Scale (SERVQUAL)*; Oliver's *Satisfaction Measurement Scale*; Beatty's *Involved Commitment Scale* to develop a new multi-item scale instrument. The new multi-item scale instrument integrated items of reflected ego involvement, purchase involvement and brand commitment and represented dimensions of loyalty and was used to measure brand loyalty. The finding was the scale can measure the development of loyalty efficiently (McMullan, & Gilmore, 2003). They generated several areas of future study. The study is a pilot in testing the validity and reliability of the measurement scale and the next stage should apply the scale to a large population and different service sectors to allow further testing of the scale and develop a scoring system to identify different levels of customer loyalty.

#### Behavioral and Attitudinal Factors Influencing Brand Loyalty: Empirical Studies

Lim and Razzaque (1997) conducted a non-experimental, causal comparative, quantitative study to examine the relationship between brand loyalty and situational effects. The *Composite Scale* was used to measure the strength of attitudes toward two brands (greeting cards and computer diskettes). A finding is that although situational influences may not impact purchasing behavior directly, it seems to be a moderating variable that would influence the customer's relative attitude toward purchasing behavior (Lim, & Razzaque, 1997). There are three limitations reported by Lim and Razzaque: first, the research study only involved two products, and therefore, lacks generalization. Second, the manipulation of situational treatment is confined to the use of descriptors presented in survey questionnaires. Third, the measurement of the dependent variable is seen as the weakest link in the entire research process. They generated the following areas of future study, to cover wider categories of product and to use more psychometrically adequate research instruments in follow-up studies.

#### Behavioral and Attitudinal Factors Influencing Brand Loyalty in Professional Sports Fans: Empirical Studies

Bristow and Sebastian (2001) conducted a non-experimental, exploratory study to determine which factors influenced brand loyalty among Chicago Cubs baseball fans. The instruments of *Product Expertise Scale*, *Desire to Win/Competitiveness Scale*, *Loyalty Proneness Scale*, and *Measure of Nostalgia* were used to measure three variables (*perceived performance fit*, *social and emotional identification*, and *habit and long history*). A finding was that die-hard Cub (loyal) fans were generally more brand loyal, and were more likely to purchase Cubs paraphernalia than were less loyal fans (Bristow, & Sebastian, 2001). Limitations of the study are that the sample might not be representative of the population of Chicago Cubs fans or of the population of the greater Chicago area. Future studies should

expand the sample size and focus on different kinds of professional sports such as basketball, football, and hockey.

## CONCLUSIONS

Factors influencing sports fans' behavioral performance have been explored for decades, so it is not a new issue with theoretical developments based on theories. Tajfel and Turner's social identity theory is a well-developed theory to explain an individual's group identity. The theory suggests that upon joining a group, an individual will think of that group as superior to any other group. Applying the theory in sports fans' team identity, it is reasonable to assume that fans tend to incorporate both public and private fandom from interpersonal/network level when creating and maintaining a fan identity. The significance of the theoretical literature for the topic is that social identity theory can appropriately explain fans' perceptions and self-categorizations based on their social identities (passive aspects). However, the theory cannot explain the reasons fans categorize themselves into a specific group and the roles fans will use to create identities for themselves (initiative aspects).

Factors influencing customers' brand loyalty have been explored for decades, so it is not a new issue with theoretical development based on the theory cited in this review. Ajzen and Fishbein's theory of reasoned action is a well-developed theory to predict individual's behavior. The theory suggests that an individual's behavioral intentions are a function of two different factors, attitude toward the behavior and the subjective norm. When applying the theory to customer brand loyalty, it is reasonable to assume that attitude toward the behavior and subjective norms will influence customers' purchasing behavior, and will result in their brand loyalty. The significance of the theoretical literature for the topic is that although the theory of reasoned action may explain antecedent factors might influence customer purchasing behavior and result in brand loyalty, other variables, such as volitional control, and situational effects, might interrupt the purchasing behavior and brand loyalty.

There are many empirical studies about factors influencing fans' identification. These could be (a) factors influencing customer brand loyalty, (b) two dimensional brand loyalty (attitude and behavior), and (c) factors influencing fans' brand loyalty cited in this view were replicated, they also had some problems or limitations such as limited sample size, not enough antecedent variables, and a few studies did not report their reliability and validity, and no IRB reported in these empirical literatures. The strengths of these studies are that they adequately identified and measured the importance of: (a) sports fans' involvement, and customer brand loyalty; (b) factors influencing fans' identification; (c) factors influencing customer brand loyalty; and (d) factors influencing sports fans' brand loyalty. In the methodological study about sports fans and brand loyalty, Shank and Beasley developed a new instrument called Sports Involvement Inventory to measure fans' sports involvement. The instrument had good reliability and validity after the pilot test, but it needs to be determined if the inventory is applicable to different types of sports. McMullan and Gilmore generated existing validated and reliable scales to measure brand loyalty. After pilot testing, the newly-developed scale had high reliability and validity, but the scale should be applied to a large population and different service sectors to allow further testing of the scale and to develop a scoring system to identify different levels of customer loyalty. Furthermore, most empirical studies show that the sample might be too small to represent the whole population (Wann, Hunter, Ryan, & Wright, 2001; Bristow, & Sebastian, 2001; Gounaris, & Stathakopoulos, 2004). Some empirical studies show that antecedent variables should be expanded to explain fans' identification and brand loyalty sufficiently (Lim, & Razzaque, 1997; Gwinner, & Swanson, 2003; Gounaris, & Stathakopoulos, 2004).

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Expanding the theoretical formulations proposed by Tajfel and Turner's (1979) social identity theory is an area of potential future scholarly inquiry. There is a need to develop theoretical formulations of

individual group identity further to understand “sports fans’ self role-identity and group identity” better. Combining self role-identity and group identity may more sufficiently explain fans’ identification. In addition, future research should bring other aspects of social psychology into sport and fandom studies to reinforce the theory to explain sports fans’ behavior. Expanding the theoretical formulations proposed by Ajzen and Fishbein’s (1967) theory of reasoned action is an area of future scholarly inquiry. There is a need to add other variables, such as volitional control and situational effects, to explain customer purchasing behavior and brand loyalty sufficiently.

Empirical studies are needed in the fans’ brand loyalty area. There are few empirical studies provided regarding fans’ brand loyalty. Empirical studies need to support theoretical literature about factors that influence fans attitude and behavior and brand loyalty. Research should focus on attitudinal and behavioral factors of fans to explore whether fans will become brand loyal. Explorative, factor analysis, correlational design, or multi regression is needed to examine the factors influencing brand loyalty of sports fans.

Methodological study is another area of future scholarly inquiry where design, sample size, population studied, and measurement of variables are needed. Many methodological studies have too small sample sizes. The sample size should be more than 500 subjects to address external validity concerns. To measure fans’ brand loyalty, research should focus on psychological variables, perceived brand performance fit, habit, and history with the brand.

#### Research Strategies to Address Selected Recommendations

The review has been used to explore the factors influencing sports fans’ brand loyalty, and to identify future areas of scholarly inquiry. The findings of this literature review are that some factors affect customer attitudes toward the brand, and exhibit repeat purchasing behavior, and that customers will exhibit loyalty to a specific brand. Most of these factors are rational. A customer exhibits likely attitude toward a specific brand and finally becomes loyal usually based on the degree to which the brand meets or exceeds the customer’s expectations, such as high quality, low price and promotion. But for exploring sports fans’ brand loyalty, rational factors are not sufficient to explain their attitudinal and behavioral brand loyalty. Some researchers reported that fans’ exhibit strong loyalty to sports teams even when sports teams have losing records.

The phenomenon needs to be explored from the aspect of “fans’ emotional attachment”. Factors influencing fans’ brand loyalty have a more psychological dimension, such as habits and long history, social and emotional identification, brand symbolism, BIRG, and self image. With these psychological factors, fans’ will exhibit emotional attachment to specific teams, identify themselves with the teams, and be loyal to the teams, even though the teams might have losing records. Furthermore, these research strategies also can contribute new knowledge about the relationship between influencing factors and fans’ brand loyalty and the relationship between fans’ team identification and brand loyalty. To examine this relationship is valuable because it can provide information to marketing managers when developing strategies. In addition, each of these research strategies is a researchable topic because a few researchers have already measured and explored the same or similar variables and topics. These three research strategies are critical for future scholarly inquiry.

#### Research Strategy 1

Recommendation- Only a few empirical studies examine factors influencing fans’ brand loyalty. There is a need to explore whether some factors influence fans’ brand loyalty.

Research hypotheses- Directional Hypothesis (One-Tailed):

1. There is a significant, positive relationship between perceived brand-performance fit and fans' brand loyalty.
2. There is a significant, positive relationship between social and emotional identification and fans' brand loyalty.
3. There is a significant, positive relationship between habit and long history with the brand and fans' brand loyalty.
4. There is a significant, positive relationship between brand symbolism and fans' brand loyalty.
5. There is a significant, positive relationship between self image and fans' brand loyalty.
6. There is a significant, positive relationship between basket-in-reflect-glory and fans' brand loyalty.

Proposed methodology- A non-experimental, quantitative design is proposed. A survey will be used to collect data from 500 fans of one stadium to test the hypothesis.

Variables: The causal (independent) variables are perceived brand-performance fit, social and emotional identification, habit and long history, brand symbolism, self image, and BIRG. The effect (dependent or outcome) variables are fans' brand loyalty. To test the hypotheses, the statistical analysis is: 1. Correlation between influencing factors and fans' brand loyalty using a CFA.

### Research Strategy 2

Recommendation-Only a few empirical studies examine whether the differences exist between loyal fans and less loyal fans on perceived brand-performance fit, social and emotional identification, habit and long history, brand symbolism, self image, and BIRG.

Research hypothesis- Directional Hypothesis (One-Tailed):

1. Loyal fans will score higher in perceived brand-performance fit than less loyal fans.
2. Loyal fans will score higher in social and emotional identification than less loyal fans.
3. Loyal fans will score higher in habit and long history than less loyal fans.
4. Loyal fans will score higher in brand symbolism than less loyal fans.
5. Loyal fans will score higher in self image than less loyal fans.
6. Loyal fans will score higher in basket-in-reflect-glory than less loyal fans.

Proposed methodology- A non-experimental, quantitative design is proposed. A survey will be used to collect data from 500 fans of sports restaurant to test the hypothesis.

Variables: The causal (independent) variables are fans' brand loyalty. The effect (dependent or outcome) variables are perceived brand-performance fit, social and emotional identification, habit and long history, brand symbolism, self image, and BIRG. To test the hypotheses, the statistical analysis is: 1. independent t-test analysis is used to examine wherever the difference exists between loyal fans and less loyal fans on six dependent variables (perceived brand-performance fit, social and emotional identification, habit and long history, brand symbolism, self image, and BIRG).

### Research Strategy 3

Recommendation-Only a few empirical studies examine the relationship between fans' team identification and brand loyalty. There is a need to explore whether fans that have higher team identification will have higher brand loyalty.

Research question or hypothesis- Directional Hypothesis (One-Tailed): There is a significant, positive relationship between fans' team identification and brand loyalty.

Proposed methodology- A non-experimental, quantitative, and correlation design is proposed. 500 college students (subjects) from Lynn University will be selected to test the hypothesis. These subjects

are eligible because Lynn University has different sports teams (basketball, baseball, soccer) and are involved in NCAA division II. Students here might exhibit different levels of team identification to the sports teams of Lynn University.

Variables: The causal (independent) variable is team identification. The effect (dependent or outcome) variable is fans' brand loyalty. To test the hypothesis, the statistical analysis is: 1. Correlation between fans' team identification and brand loyalty using a Pearson r Correlation Coefficient.

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