

## Digital Fandemonium: An Exploration into Multidimensional Experiences and Identity in Sport

by

Tunisha J. Singleton

## Abstract

Being a sports fan is not a new concept. What has changed however are the ways in which we identify with and experience sport. Current research has largely considered sport fans to be organization members due to a set of shared, defining attributes between team, player and consumer. Yet previous scales of team identification have only been unidimensional in nature, scaling just one aspect of psychological connection and not the conduit to these experiences. The evolution of sport media consumption has progressively become more digitally-centered and immersive with the adoption of platforms such as social media and virtual reality. This emphasis in technology means that team identification is likely stimulated by new patterns of digital media consumption and participation.

This dissertation aims to explore sports' mental market from an emotional and digital perspective, asking what are the components of a multidimensional sport experience and what impact does social media have on it and team identification. By bringing a foundation of organizational psychology to the discipline of sport identification, existing literature is curated and analyzed to illustrate how modern-day sport experiences are serviced in both physical and digital spaces. This study produced a reliable and valid experiential ecosystem model to illustrate the multidimensional nature of fan identification. Overlapping fields within this network are *community, self* and *organization*.

A quantitative electronic survey has been administered to measure how digital media technology has impacted the sport experience and these three fields. It is determined that when

this system is facilitated through social media consumption and participation, the variables of team-identification, group membership, player loyalty, and team promotion are all enhanced. Furthermore, an experiential score is generated proving that the overall sport experience is valued greater than any individual game.

Keywords: Self-Sport, organizational psychology, sport affiliation, team identification, digital media, social media, multidimensional identity, experience psychology, FoMO, sport identity, sport experience, sports communication, identity utility, components of commitment

Copyright by  
TUNISHA J. SINGLETON  
2016

## Table of Contents

<a href="#">Title Page</a> .....	<a href="#">i</a>
<a href="#">Abstract</a> .....	<a href="#">ii</a>
<a href="#">Copyright</a> .....	<a href="#">iv</a>
<a href="#">Acknowledgements</a> .....	<a href="#">v</a>
<a href="#">Table of Contents</a> .....	<a href="#">vi</a>
<a href="#">CHAPTER ONE</a> .....	<a href="#">1</a>
<a href="#">Introduction</a> .....	<a href="#">1</a>
<a href="#">Background</a> .....	<a href="#">1</a>
<a href="#">Evolution of Sport Media</a> .....	<a href="#">3</a>
<a href="#">Fan Identification</a> .....	<a href="#">4</a>
<a href="#">Components of Commitment</a> .....	<a href="#">5</a>
<a href="#">Call for Multidimensional Experience and Identity Research</a> .....	<a href="#">7</a>
<a href="#">Significance of Experiential Ecosystem Model</a> .....	<a href="#">7</a>
<a href="#">Reasoning and Methodology Approach</a> .....	<a href="#">9</a>
<a href="#">CHAPTER TWO</a> .....	<a href="#">12</a>
<a href="#">Literature Review</a> .....	<a href="#">12</a>
<a href="#">Systems of Meaning in Sports Connectivity and Fan Psychology</a> .....	<a href="#">12</a>
<a href="#">Sport's Connectivity and Narrative Form</a> .....	<a href="#">13</a>
<a href="#">Social Media Sports</a> .....	<a href="#">14</a>
<a href="#">Fanaticism</a> .....	<a href="#">16</a>
<a href="#">Progression from Social Comparison to Social Identity and Intergroup Relations</a> .....	<a href="#">18</a>
<a href="#">Social Comparative Processes</a> .....	<a href="#">18</a>

<a href="#">Social Identity</a> .....	<a href="#">20</a>
<a href="#">Group Membership</a> .....	<a href="#">21</a>
<a href="#">Collective Action</a> .....	<a href="#">22</a>
<a href="#">Team Identification</a> .....	<a href="#">24</a>
<a href="#">External Group Identities and Human Autonomy</a> .....	<a href="#">26</a>
<a href="#">Human Autonomy</a> .....	<a href="#">27</a>
<a href="#">Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation</a> .....	<a href="#">28</a>
<a href="#">Applying Components of Commitment and Identification</a> .....	<a href="#">30</a>
<a href="#">Field of Community and Affective Attachment</a> .....	<a href="#">31</a>
<a href="#">Customer Recruitment and Relationships</a> .....	<a href="#">31</a>
<a href="#">Schemas and Interpersonal Scripts in Sport</a> .....	<a href="#">32</a>
<a href="#">Social Media Accelerating Recruitment and Relationships</a> .....	<a href="#">33</a>
<a href="#">Stronger Loyalty</a> .....	<a href="#">35</a>
<a href="#">Participatory Culture</a> .....	<a href="#">35</a>
<a href="#">Field of Self and Continuance Component</a> .....	<a href="#">37</a>
<a href="#">Product Utilization</a> .....	<a href="#">38</a>
<a href="#">Authenticity</a> .....	<a href="#">40</a>
<a href="#">Second Screens and FoMO</a> .....	<a href="#">40</a>
<a href="#">Resilience to Negative Information</a> .....	<a href="#">41</a>
<a href="#">Reflexivity and Content Saturation</a> .....	<a href="#">42</a>
<a href="#">Transportation Theory</a> .....	<a href="#">43</a>
<a href="#">Field of Organization and Normative Component</a> .....	<a href="#">44</a>
<a href="#">Product Promotion through Possession-Self Link</a> .....	<a href="#">44</a>

<a href="#"><u>Sport-Identifying Selfies</u></a> .....	<a href="#"><u>46</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Willingness to Invest in Company Shares</u></a> .....	<a href="#"><u>47</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Purpose of Study</u></a> .....	<a href="#"><u>48</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Research Question</u></a> .....	<a href="#"><u>49</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Hypotheses</u></a> .....	<a href="#"><u>49</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Constituents of Hypothesis</u></a> .....	<a href="#"><u>50</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>CHAPTER THREE</u></a> .....	<a href="#"><u>51</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Methodology</u></a> .....	<a href="#"><u>51</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Research Design</u></a> .....	<a href="#"><u>51</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Instrumentation</u></a> .....	<a href="#"><u>51</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Procedures</u></a> .....	<a href="#"><u>52</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Participants</u></a> .....	<a href="#"><u>53</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>CHAPTER FOUR</u></a> .....	<a href="#"><u>61</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Quantitative Results</u></a> .....	<a href="#"><u>61</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Group One</u></a> .....	<a href="#"><u>64</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Group Two</u></a> .....	<a href="#"><u>66</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Group Three</u></a> .....	<a href="#"><u>71</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Group Four</u></a> .....	<a href="#"><u>74</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>CHAPTER FIVE</u></a> .....	<a href="#"><u>78</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Discussion</u></a> .....	<a href="#"><u>78</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Group One Findings</u></a> .....	<a href="#"><u>78</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Group Two Findings</u></a> .....	<a href="#"><u>80</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Group Three Findings</u></a> .....	<a href="#"><u>81</u></a>

<a href="#"><u>Group Four Findings</u></a> .....	<a href="#"><u>83</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>CHAPTER SIX</u></a> .....	<a href="#"><u>86</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Conclusion</u></a> .....	<a href="#"><u>86</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Limitations</u></a> .....	<a href="#"><u>90</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Further Research</u></a> .....	<a href="#"><u>90</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Summary</u></a> .....	<a href="#"><u>91</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Appendix A</u></a> .....	<a href="#"><u>93</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>References</u></a> .....	<a href="#"><u>98</u></a>

## CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

*“What we try to do is not just hear and see...we try to have the fan feel what it’s like to be a part of something bigger than you” (Krzyzewski, 2016).*

Beyond rooting for the hometown team or going to the company Super Bowl party, sport holds meaning far beyond wins and losses. Aside from viewing sports as a revenue-generating business, it is also a barrier defying, universal language. Watching games, purchasing products, and every emotion that comes with being a fan, each reveal important information regarding the mental makeup of sport audiences (Jacobson, 2003; Shank & Beasley, 1998; Wann, 2006; Zillmann, Bryant, & Sapolsky, 1989). Global icon Nelson Mandela stated the following during a lifetime achievement award at the first World Laureus Sports Awards:

Sport has the power to change the world. It has the power to inspire, it has the power to unite people in a way that little else does. It speaks to youth in a language they understand. Sport can create hope, where once there was only despair. It is more powerful than governments in breaking down racial barriers. It laughs in the face of all types of discrimination (Mandela, 2000).

The influence sport has on communities worldwide can only be achieved by the conscious participation of those who consider themselves to be consumers. Therefore understanding the social and organizational psychology of consumers is essential in recognizing the identity and behaviors of those affiliated to sport. The sport ecosystem has matured into a multidimensional entity deep enough to meet whatever personal or social requirements a fan holds. Much of this sport experience evolution is driven from my own personal observations. Take for example my early involvements with sport in various settings.

**Background**

Some of the earliest memories I have are experiences surrounding sport. I vividly remember watching the National Basketball Association’s (NBA) “Showtime” Los Angeles



Lakers. It was about 1989, I was six years old and my family assumed our ritual positions: my mother laid on the couch in Lakers pajama pants, older brother glued to the television, and I sat on dad's lap, concentrating on both his opinion of the players, the fresh popcorn I was eating, and the punch I was drinking from a limited edition Lakers mug issued by Mobile Gas station (one of their many sponsors at that time with the years 1980, 1982, 1985, 1987, 1988 etched in the glass representing their five championships in ten years). This shared family experience would become a customary tradition for every Laker game.

I even recall the social groups in later years where my parents invited their friends over to watch Mike Tyson fights on pay-per-view and how hyped they were despite each fight only lasting a few moments. To add to the house party experience, I decided to contribute to the group experience by extending the show with one of my own; I pulled my brother's tube socks over my hands to make gloves, grabbed a pillow, wrapped a shoestring around it and hung it from a closet rod, turning it into a punching bag. In hindsight, it is clear that I wanted to behave in a way that would lead to the grownups considering me "in" and one of the cool kids.

Then there's the live-event experience. I remember my first was a World Wrestling Federation<sup>1</sup> house show<sup>2</sup> in 1991. I dressed head to toe in my favorite performer "The Heartbreak Kid" Shawn Michaels' swag, toted posters under my arm proclaiming my 8-year old love for him. From the pyrotechnics to the complete strangers who picked me up and put me on their shoulders so I could get the perfect view – everything was larger than life. I made new friends that day after being adopted into a close circle, all just because they loved Shawn Michaels too. I

---

<sup>1</sup> The corporate name changed from World Wrestling Federation, Inc. in 1998, to World Wrestling Federation Entertainment, Inc. in 1999, and finally World Wrestling Entertainment, Inc. in 2002 (United States Securities and Exchange Commission, 2012).

<sup>2</sup> House show is an event not televised and exclusive to just that venue and attendees of that show. There was always extra appeal and incentive to attend these events because performers would do things out of the ordinary, go out of character, and interact with fans more closely to make the event experience more memorable and valuable.

remember the more people chanted “HBK! HBK!,” our group felt stronger because we had strength in numbers. The feeling was electric and the goosebumps return every time I think about it.

As I got older, I began to wonder if other people have similar experiences with sport, particularly in all the different environment it offers. It could not be just me whose identity is patched with sport team colors, brand logos, and a daily itinerary that hinged on what time a game was on that night...right? To attend a live event, excuse to have social gatherings, or as a family pastime – people have always used sport to feel good about themselves and be connected to something bigger and greater than themselves. Sport is a conduit to having multidimensional experiences. From fan-to-fan, fan-to-athlete, or fan-to-brand, consumers of sport are enabled more connection possibilities, all aided by the inclusion of digital media technology. what we are all afforded now is the revolution of technology where our interactions with new mediums can involve our emotions, values, ideals, intentions, and sentiments (McCarthy & Wright, 2004). Feelings about a referee’s call are posted on Facebook. Live play-by play reactions are live-tweeted<sup>3</sup>. Brand purchases are made based on player and team loyalty. Games are consumed on second screen devices and streamed with real time ads (Flomenbaum, 2016). These new behaviors reflect a new digitally-mediated sense of experience and team-identification. And so begins my inquiry into the mediation of sport affiliation and the components of experience.

### **Experience Psychology**

Experience is a term used quite often in marketing strategies. It is important however to have an understanding of what the concept actually means in the context of advanced technology and consumer identification. Experience is a sensation; the state of being emotionally and aesthetically moved by something either observed or actively engaged in. Experiences do not

---

<sup>3</sup> Live-tweet is a tweet that is posted about an event while the event is taking place (Oxford Dictionary, n.d.)

come ready made (McCarthy & Wright, 2004), but rather they are constructed from our perceptions, feelings and memories that make up our identities. McCarthy and Wright (2004) note that as meaning-making, creative creatures, humans have an innate characteristic to interpret and understand all of our experiences (Bruner, 1990, 1991, 1996).

There are four threads that comprise an experience - sensual, emotional, compositional, and spatio-temporal (McCarthy & Wright, 2004). Sensory engagement relates to the immediate feeling one has to a particular situation, such as feeling a momentum shift in a basketball game or a mechanic's strong feel for engines (McCarthy & Wright, 2004). Emotions are qualities of a particular experience (Dewey, 1938) acting as a color palette that holds all aspects of a situation together, also making each experience different and independent from each other (McCarthy & Wright, 2004). Looking at the relationship between parts and the experience as a whole is reflected in the compositional thread. While an experience might be looked at as an ordinary flow of events (McCarthy & Wright, 2004), the way a person and an event are related make up the overall sentiment and satisfaction of the experience as a whole. For example, a fan's experience to a pre-season basketball game would feel different than if it was a finals championship game. Parts or variables of this experience could be age, level of affiliation, game location, teams playing, cost, etc., each of which contribute to the composition of the overall experience. Lastly the spatio-temporal thread concerns the space and time qualities of an experience (McCarthy & Wright, 2004; (Bakhtin, 1984, 1990, 1993), that is the sense of time speeding up or slowing down, or space closing in or feeling vast. These four threads illustrate the multidimensionality of experiences and the roots of psychology founded in each variable.

In looking to evaluate a contemporary sport experience, there are two perspectives that need to be considered: the emotional context and a digital context. Team-identification is

emotionally rooted in feelings of belonging, connection, values, and community (Sanderson, 2012; Thorne & Bruner, 2006; Wann, 2006). While fandom is not a new concept, the influences presented by the digital context are relatively fresh, showing a consistent push in human activity of wanting to be more fully immersed and engaged with media.

In the root of fanaticism (Thorne & Bruner, 2006) lie the seeds of personal investment and an overwhelming likeness one has to a person, group, or idea. The idea of enhancing one's self-esteem by basking in the reflected glory (BIRG) (Cialdini et al., 1976) of others, like an athlete or sports team (Hoeghele, Schmidt, & Torgler, 2014) is not a new concept either. That has never changed. What has changed are the routes people take to retain their esteem and gather group membership. Coincidentally, the means people go through to consume sports content has drastically altered as well, changing how quickly a fan can get what they need and how the content is valued.

### **Evolution of Sport Media**

Consider this condensed synopsis of sports broadcasting and media consumption: 1,000 people in 1911 gathered in a public auditorium to “watch” a mechanical reproduction of a Kansas vs. Missouri college football game via Western Union play-by-play telegrams (McSorley, 2014; St. John, 2011); the first sport radio broadcast in 1921 of a heavyweight boxing fight between Johnny Dundee and Johnny Ray (KDKA, 2010); the world's first live television sports broadcast in the 1936 Summer Olympics in Berlin with 72 hours of content transmitted (Rader, 2004); to now virtual reality, online streaming and the merged experience of producing and consuming content on social media with National Football League (NFL) games streamed on Twitter<sup>4</sup>.

---

<sup>4</sup> NFL games globally streamed on Twitter is announced to take place during the 2016-2017 season for every Thursday night game (Chew, 2016; Rovell, 2016)

This abridged version of sport media's evolution shows a consistent push to incorporate the latest technological advancements to meet the trends of consumer behavior. Consumers have grown accustomed to having accessible, personalized, and immersive experiences with content. They will get either exactly what they anticipated from the provider or opt out and walk away (Pine & Gilmore, 2011). With these matured consumer behaviors, a problem arises in that new information is needed to account for how fans construct their sport experience in complex digital and social environments.

### **Fan Identification**

Current studies note that sport fandom symbolizes more than fanaticism (Hugenberg, Haridakis, & Earnhardt, 2008) and largely relates to the innate desire for belonging and group membership (Sanderson, 2012; Wann, 2006). This makes it evident that psychology is at the crux of understanding the evolution of fandom and human behavior. Regardless of the media space or despite a trendy new filter in a social media application, rooting for a team, jeering the other, and getting lost in an event's narrative is historically engraved in human lifestyle. Team-identification facilitates well-being by increasing social connections for the fan (Wann, 2006). The experiences surrounding team-identification largely centers on a sense of community (Heere & James, 2007) with an established shared meaning amongst members.

Group identity is emphasized to account for this community and one's personal stake in an organization (Heere & James, 2007). This notion of personal claim has conceptualized sport fans as external stakeholders (Hoeghele et al., 2014) incorporating theories of organizational psychology into current team-identification research. Identity utility (Hoeghele et al., 2014) represents a fulfillment of Self through a series of supportive behaviors and activities meant to satisfy the attitudinal and behavioral commitment fans have to a team, player, or organization

(Hoegel et al., 2014; Meyer & Allen, 1991). This inventory of components include product utilization, customer recruitment, company or product promotion (Ahearne, Bhattacharya, & Gruen, 2005; Hoegel et al., 2014), willingness to invest in the company's shares (Aspara & Tikkanen, 2011; Hoegel et al., 2014) stronger loyalty (Hoegel et al., 2014) and greater resilience to negative information (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003; Hoegel et al., 2014).

Research on fan identification has thus far been conceptualized in three prominent models – Sport Spectator Identification Scale (SSIS) (Wann & Branscombe, 1993), the Psychological Commitment to Team Scale (PCT) (Mahony, Madrigal, & Howard, 2000), and Team Identification Scale (TIS) (Dimmock, Grove, & Eklund, 2005). SSIS (Wann & Branscombe, 1993) was designed to measure a person's allegiance to a team. Similarly, the PCT measurement from Mahony et al. (2000) was designed as a single-factor instrument (Wann & Pierce, 2003) scaling the strength of such a commitment. While TIS (Dimmock et al., 2005) was constructed to reveal predictors of intergroup bias, each of these constructs are commonly cited and recognized within fandom and sport sociology research. However, each author has encouraged further investigation to incorporate organizational theory to account for the complexity in sport identification and the changing technological landscape of the sport experience.

### **Components of Commitment**

In classic organizational psychology, Bhattacharya and Sen, (2003) developed a conceptual framework of customer-company identification (Ahearne et al., 2005). The authors believe that “customers may have their self-definitional needs partly met by the companies they patronize, and thus customers can identify with a company (Ahearne et al., 2005; Pratt, 1998; Scott & Lane, 2000). The emotional and belonging basis within this link is fundamental in

exploring the multidimensional nature of fan identification (Wann & Pierce, 2003). Researchers have continually suggested that sport consumers are regarded as organization members (Dimmock et al., 2005; Hoeghele et al., 2014; Wann, 2006) rather than simple spectators (Heere & James, 2007; Jacobson, 2003). Yet, no investigation has made the connection between a commitment to sport and a commitment to an organization.

Natalie J. Allen and John P. Meyer (1990) developed a three-component model of identification and commitment to conceptualize the sense of belonging one might have to a business. The three dimensions are comprised of a) *affective attachment* (emotionally based), b) *continuance* (consistent behavior in light of the perceived cost), and c) *normative* (obligation to the organization) (Allen & Meyer, 1990). In sum, behaviors are performed because they either want to, need to, or ought to respectfully.

Research reveals a series of external group identities to illustrate the convergence of sports and society (Heere & James, 2007) adding to the complex nature of team identification. This list of external identities includes: geography, ethnicity, vocation, and gender (Heere & James, 2007) – all of which depict sport as a symbol representative of much larger, social, and cultural sub-communities rooted in sport (Heere & James, 2007; Hugenberg et al., 2008). The combination of internal investment and external claim paint a new age fan base that is not only involved in multiple communities (Heere & James, 2007), but one that is also hyperaware of issues happening in the game, off the field, business decisions, and branding matters related to their team and community. This can be correlated to the fluidity of information made accessible in digital media (Witkemper, Lim, & Waldburger, 2012) presenting another gap as it pertains to fan psychology and the convenience of digital information. A series of questions remain unanswered: How do you support a more than one membership at one time? What are the

contemporary components in creating a valuable relationship with sport? How are sport experiences constructed within digital culture?

### **Call for Multidimensional Experience and Identity Research**

To date, there is no empirical analysis to explore how sport identification has evolved to provide optimal, multidimensional experiences with technology. Wann and Pierce (2003) state that results from both SSIS and PCT scales are equally lacking because of their unidimensional nature. In his 2006 article titled “Understanding the positive social psychological benefits of sport team identification: The team identification-social psychological health model,” sport fandom researcher Daniel L. Wann (2006) echoes this problem in stating, “it is likely that team identification is a multidimensional construct” (p.287). Dimmock et al. (2005) suggest that researchers ought to investigate the relationship between team identification and the components of commitment. This dissertation intends to fulfill these calls and produce a framework to explore the components of sport identification as an experiential ecosystem fueled by the momentum of technology.

### **Significance of Experiential Ecosystem Model**

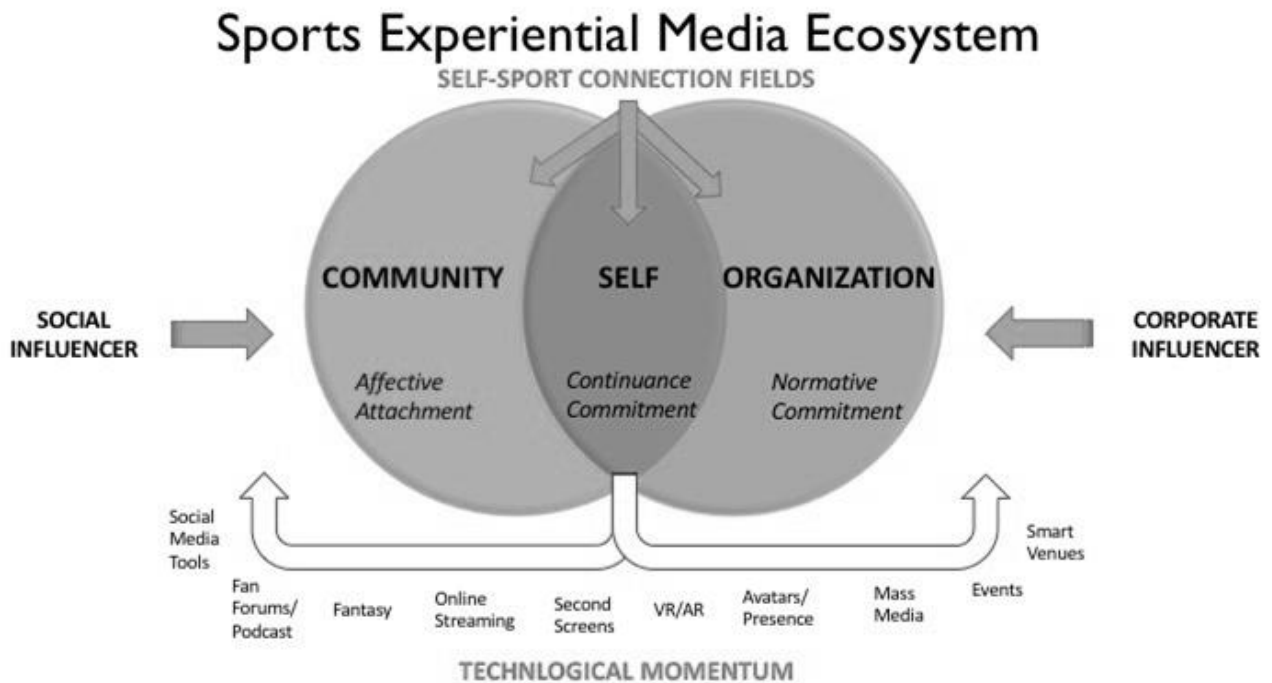
Research on the intersection of sports and technology is a blossoming area of discussion. Patterns of media consumption can offer predictive information on consumer beliefs and affiliations (Dimmock, Grove, & Eklund, 2005), making it crucial for researchers and developers to understand how experiences with media and technology are built. Fandom today is considered “active, participatory, and empowering with the passion and pleasure it generates” (Fiske, 1992; Grossberg, 1992; Witkemper et al., 2012). This is particularly important because as a global industry embedded in human culture, sport continues to be at the forefront of media innovation by incorporating immersive fan engagement strategies. This comprises the purpose of this



dissertation, investigating how sport has evolved into a digitally mediated experience and has shaped multidimensional identities as a result.

Bringing attention to the use of technology and fan experience, this dissertation will present an Experiential Ecosystem Model (see Figure 1) to a) theoretically position sport fans as organization members rather than simple spectators, b) bring attention to the multidimensional nature of fan identity, and c) measure how much technology has impacted both fan affiliation and behavior.

*Figure 1: Experiential Ecosystem Model*



Addressing this topic will extend the field by providing an answer to the multiple invitations to present a contemporary framework in fan psychology and technology use. New insight will reveal the nurturing, driving factors behind maintaining affiliation and creating experiences in all sport environments. Experiences are valued in today’s media saturated age more than simple goods and services (Pine & Gilmore, 2011). Therefore, it behooves identity

researchers, marketers, team and league executives alike to take interest in the construction of experiences, in both physical and digital spaces. The implications of a positive or negative experience can impact the economic vitality of the business (Pine & Gilmore, 2011), public perception, and the overall emotional well-being of fans (Branscombe & Wann, 1991). Such a detriment could act as an assailant with the potential to revert a fan into a simple spectator, which economically translates into dollars, connections, and emotions lost. Additionally, analyzing the vertical of fan engagements and media technology could provide lessons and principles for navigating the daily lives of those impacted by sport (Wertheim & Sommers, 2016) - including parents, partners, managers, businessmen and researchers alike.

### **Reasoning and Methodology Approach**

This dissertation produced a quantitative analysis consisting of a 29 question survey using seven point Likert scales and multiple choice questions. Questions were categorized to reflect the emotional and digital contexts of the sport experience.

Starting with the three-component model of identification and commitment (Allen & Meyer, 1990), I have dispersed the six activities and behaviors of identity utility (Hoegle et al., 2014) within the categories they support (See Figure 1).

*Table 1: Components of Commitment with Supporting Behaviors of Identity Utility*

Components of Commitment	Supporting Behaviors of Identity Utility
<b>Affective</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Customer recruitment</li> <li>- Stronger loyalty</li> </ul>

<b>Continuance</b>	- Product Utilization - Resilience to Negative Information
<b>Normative</b>	- Company/Product Promotion - Willingness to Invest in Company Shares

Drawing on work by Dimmock et al. (2005), I assume that team affiliation today is stimulated by the digital patterns of sports media consumption. For that reason, all activities of identity utility are updated to include contemporary uses of consuming sports with media technology.

Additionally, scale items from the original Allen and Meyer (1990) study are modified to account for the current state of social media participation.

For example, current research shows that “male massive fans spend 2.5 hours on social media a day, with 72% of that time on sports content” (Synergy, 2015) and females 1.5 hours a day and 53% of that time on sports content as well (Synergy, 2015). Therefore, the activity of product utilization (Ahearne et al., 2005; Hoegle et al., 2014), which I categorized under the continuance domain, is updated to include participation in social media while watching a sport event. An original scale item of continuance used by Allen and Meyer (1990) is, “Too much in my life would be disrupted if I decided I wanted to leave my organization now” (p. 7). To modernize this in relation to digitally mediated sports, this item has been updated to, “Too much of my sport experience would be disrupted if I were unable to access social media before, during, or after a sporting event.” Similar revisions are made to the remaining identity utility activities and components of commitment.

The literature reviewed in chapter two will provide a theoretical foundation in the dominant theories and themes necessary in understanding sport fandom from a psychological and digitally-inspired perspective. These concepts include construction of life’s narrative (Bruner, 1991, 2004), intertextuality (Kennedy & Hills, 2009), connectivity (Van Dijck & Poell, 2013),

social media and fanaticism (Jacobson, 2003; Kennedy & Hills, 2009; Spinrad, Lüschen, Sage, & Sfeir, 1981; Wann, 2006), motivation theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000, 2006), social identity (Tajfel, 1982) and group membership (Ortiz, Reynolds, & Franke, 2013; Sherif, 1966). Once this basis of literature is noted, detail will be spent on the emotionally versatile commitment to sport by exploring each component of commitment and their accommodating activities of utility. Doing so will provide an illustration of the Self-Sport connection and Experiential Ecosystem Model, exploring how complex experiences are played out as different fields of Self. These fields are organization, self, and community (*See Table 2*).

*Table 2: Experiential Fields with Components of Commitment and Utility Behaviors*

<b>Experiential Fields</b>	<b>Components of Commitment</b>	<b>Identity Utility Supporting Behavior</b>
<i>Community</i>	Affective Attachment	- Customer recruitment - Stronger loyalty
<i>Self</i>	Continuance Commitment	- Product Utilization - Resilience to Negative Information
<i>Organization</i>	Normative Commitment	- Company/Product Promotion - Willingness to Invest in Company Shares

The literary groundwork behind this model will fill the present gaps in research and extend the disciplines of sport communication, organizational psychology, and media psychology with information relating to sport phenomenology, experience, and technology.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter aims to explore the experiential mediums in sport, that through media consumption and technology, elicit emotion, engagement, and meaning. The customer-company conceptual model in organizational psychology is vital to the foundation of sport fan psychology. This refers to customers achieving social identity fulfillment from being psychologically associated to a company (Ahearne et al., 2005). The implications of identifying to sport mimic that of consumers who are personally invested to an organization or product (Gwinner & Swanson, 2003; Hoeghele et al., 2014; Wann, 2006). Therefore, a link associating sport fandom to organizational commitment is necessary to reveal the attitudinal and behavioral aspects of the entire experience. In the sections to follow, a current state of literature in the subjects of connectivity, organizational psychology, fanaticism, and social identity will be reviewed in order to establish a foundation for the Experiential Ecosystem Model I have arranged. It is however first necessary to explore how meaning works in the discourse of sport.

### **Systems of Meaning in Sport and Fan Psychology**

To understand how modern systems of meaning are built in sports, reviewing the discourse will reveal the patterns and texts people place value on. Using Foucault (1972, 1977, 1978) as a theoretical basis, Eileen Kennedy and Laura Hills (2009) believe that the importance of discourse lies not in the signs that construct a text, but in the “practices, institutions and spaces through which regulatory power operates to enable what can be said, what (social, moral, political) positions can be adopted, and what meanings can be ascribed to events, texts and objects” (p.19). As a way of knowing (Kennedy & Hills, 2009), discourses can be recognized through an individual’s repeated behavior and beliefs as a result of a particular event. as a form of narrative, sport is a space where consumers can use a variety of mediums to become absorbed with the story world presented in front of them. Played out through teams or individual

competition, wins and losses are determined in a physical story with a beginning, middle, and end. Similar to other forms of storytelling, athletes are the dominant characters, bringing their individual sub-plots to the overall narrative, giving fans more information to absorb.

### **Sport's Connectivity and Narrative Form**

It is important that sport as a narrative form be understood in order to grasp how consumers can be cognitively transported into a world where their identity, behaviors, and experiences are activated. Jeremy Bruner (2004) notes that stories are built around human intention where the structure is outlined with an agent, goal, setting, instrument, and conflict (Burke, 1945). For sports – the agent is the athlete, goal is to win, setting is the stage (e.g. home game, away game, playoffs, etc.), instrument is determined by the sport (e.g. tennis racket, football, baseball, bat, glove, sheer power, overall athleticism, etc.), and trouble is the possibility of defeat and the oppositional opponent(s). Furthermore, as a globally recognized discourse, sport has the transcending ability to structure experiences for consumers in a new breadth of ways on account of its multidimensional nature.

The current forms of consuming sport media are provided by a mediated sport experience that is embedded into a globally visual culture and society (Kennedy & Hills, 2009; Sanderson, 2012). The means in which fans can absorb sport is plentiful and intertextual by nature, which is defined as the accumulation of meaning spread across a number of different texts or images (Kennedy & Hills, 2009). From telegrams and AM radio to television and online streaming (sometimes simultaneously), intertextuality shows the multiple ways that sport is embedded into visual culture and society. This includes traditional media displays (televised broadcasts), live event attendance, game operations, new media communication (live streaming), web content, brandscaping (Kennedy & Hills, 2009; Riewoldt, 2002) immersive media (virtual reality,

augmented reality), and the incorporation of social media. As the industry becomes more fan-centric, each of these mediums provides a new space for consuming and participating with sport's narrative. Author of *It's a Whole New Ballgame* Jimmy Sanderson (2012) refers to digital visualization and engagement as computer-mediated communication (CMC). The most crucial component to CMC and the discourse of sport as a whole, is the notion of connectivity.

The ability to make a connection to anything (an object, a medium, an event, another person) matters just as much, if not more, than the actual content (Kennedy & Hills, 2009). Van Dijck and Poell (2013) define connectivity as “the socio-technical affordance of networked platforms to connect content to user activities and advertisers” (p. 8). Moreover, a connective ecosystem uses social media to mediate a user's activity (Van Dijck & Poell, 2013), therein establishing a setting for how connections with content and other users are forged. Literature from this perspective is very important, as the sports industry has adopted it as a tool to tap into the identity of consumers and create something far beyond simple spectatorship. One of the ways sport has enabled a relationship with the Self is through the adoption and acceleration of social media.

### **Social Media Sports**

Social media refers to the technology platforms that expedite connections (Van Dijck & Poell, 2013) This can be between people, data, or content. Social media has grown so much that every major professional league has an official Twitter account (Witkemper et al., 2012). Twitter is a service platform where users can interact in 140 characters or less (Witkemper et al., 2012). As Witkemper et al. (2012) elaborate, each league and team that utilizes Twitter does so in an attempt to “take advantage of its capabilities by keeping consumers aware and connected to its brand” (p.171). This platform for example has become the official go-to for connection and

engagement for the National Basketball Association (NBA), as shown by the league's twitter handle (@NBA) being engraved on the official game ball (NBA.com, 2014). Additionally, the NBA launched a series of Twitter jerseys where the player's Twitter handle<sup>5</sup> replaced their last name (NBA.com, 2012). As a referential tool in constructing narrative (Bruner, 1991) the consumer in this instance is allowed to recall a sense of the NBA story, transported from a social media space to the physical game environment.

By changing the rules and conditions of social interaction, social media has “penetrated deeply into the mechanics of everyday life” (Van Dijck & Powell, 2013, p. 2). My assertion that social media is fuel for the experiential ecosystem is supported by the fact that participation is a building block to social connection and a narrative consumer experience (Witkemper et al., 2012). These connections are not one-sided or exclusive to just fans. Athletes themselves take to social media looking for the same engagement and boost of esteem just like their consumers (Wertheim & Sommers, 2016). As a result, fans will digitally gravitate towards athletes and team representatives. It is therefore important to note what motivations fans and athletes have in using the same devices. This information is notable because marketing strategies can be made to ignite engagement between the two – athlete and fan.

The appeal and motivation for athletes to use Twitter does not predominately come from a desire to promote themselves and earn money (Wertheim & Sommers, 2016). In a study conducted by Hambrick, Simmons, Greenhalgh, and Greenwell (2010) at the University of Louisville on athlete Twitter use, it is reported that only 5% of tweets fell in the promotional category. Rather, the most common reason for using Twitter at a majority 34% was interactivity and direct connection with fans (Wertheim & Sommers, 2016). The traditional work space for

---

<sup>5</sup> A Twitter handle is the username a User creates for him or herself to be identified by that follows the @ sign (Support.twitter.com, 2016).



most professional athletes comes with a stadium full of tens of thousands of cheering fans. While this is an ego boost and source of adrenaline (Wertheim & Sommers, 2016), there is still an innate willingness for athletes to partake in social media activity with fans because of the universal benefits in social connection. Wertheim and Sommers (2016) elaborate in stating, “we humans thrive on [social connection], particularly when it makes us feel good about ourselves. We like spending time with those who like spending time with us; we’re attracted to those who find us attractive. There’s a reciprocity to liking that keeps us coming back for more” (p.189). This two-sided social media experience (Wertheim & Sommers, 2016) hinges on the concepts of likemindedness and narrative.

The progressing, storytelling nature within social media is made up of four steps as pointed out by Holmlund (1997): invitation to follow, interaction turned episode, episode turned series, and series turned full-blown relationship (Witkemper et al., 2012). For consumers of sport, relationships reflect feeling like not just an ordinary fan, but as an (un)official member of something much greater.

### **Fanaticism**

A large distinction exists between sport fans and spectators, a difference that has significant relevance towards how and why sport media is consumed. Beth Jacobson (2003, p. 6) suggests, “spectators will observe a sport and then forget about it, while fans will have more intensity and will devote parts of every day to the team or the sport itself.” Spinrad et al. (1981) dives deeper into the emotional behavior of fans by defining a fan as “the person who thinks, talks about and is oriented towards sports even when [the fan] is not actually observing, or reading, or listening to an account of a specific sports event”. Sport spectator researchers Funk and James (2001) comment on the wide range of affiliation starting from “occasionally watching

a televised game or attending a live event, to owning season tickets and attending or watching as many games as possible” (p.119). These distinctions between low and high affiliations are noteworthy because they dictate a set of consumption patterns and general beliefs for those who qualify themselves at any level (Jacobson, 2003; Kennedy & Hills, 2009; Wann, 2006). Each level has an expected behavioral set that the industry’s marketing managers, team and league officials, and greater society are all cognizant of. For example, a low-affiliation fan is likely not going to be the target audience for courtside season tickets. Similarly, asking a super fan to miss a playoff game of his or her favorite team to attend something else of low personal value is highly unlikely or expected to be met with high levels of annoyance, anger, or depression.

Consumer fanaticism is key in recognizing the power commitment has on meaning and behavior. Sport fandom has also become an expressive aspect of consumer behavior (Thorne & Bruner, 2006). Because interfacing with others can build esteem (Festinger, 1954) social media enhances the ability to foster a personal and social identity (Sanderson, 2012) and therefore spark new behaviors. Scholarly marketing journals have taken a great interest in this area because of the economic fertility that exists by tapping into the emotional connections between consumer and athlete. LeBron James of the NBA for example is reported to have generated over \$100 million of revenue in just one year through ticket and apparel sales alone (Rovell, 2004; Thorne & Bruner, 2006). More contemporarily, international soccer superstar Cristiano Ronaldo generated over \$176 million dollars for his sponsors via social media (Badenhausen, 2016). To understand how a person can mentally go from spectator to fanatic with a series of values, including a willingness to invest, theories of comparative processes, social identity, and group membership must be recognized.

### **Progression from Social Comparison to Social Identity and Intergroup Relations**

The natural drive people have in measuring their opinion and abilities lead to determining if those beliefs and values are correct (Festinger, 1954). There are many instances where opinion cannot be definitively categorized as right or wrong, such as the case in politics and religion. In these instances where a tangible gauge cannot be set, “subjectively accurate assessments of one’s ability depend upon how one compares with other persons” (Festinger, 1954, p.119). The other people that we tend to compare ourselves to however, are meticulously selected with the intent to “protect one’s superiority” (Festinger, 1954, p.126) and maintain a level of esteem and identity. For example, someone who just picked up a racket is not going to put much weight behind comparing his or her skills to a tennis professional. This deliberate selection within the comparative evaluation process is described by Festinger (1954) in two methods: 1) self-evaluation by comparing to those who carry similar beliefs and skills, and 2) comparing to others whose values and abilities are drastically different from their own, the latter scenario having a more consequential impact on one’s self-esteem.

### **Social Comparative Processes**

In the first process of comparing to those equal or similar to our own, Festinger (1954) finds the result to have a positive impact on self-evaluation. “When the reported performance of others is about equal to his own score, the stability of his evaluation of his ability is increased, and thus, his level of aspiration shows very little variability” (Festinger, 1954, p.122). Because of our inborn necessity to evaluate ourselves next to others (Festinger, 1954), this mentality preserves a steady sense of Self through looking at others on our own level. A novice weighed against another novice presents a much more even, comparative field than say, a novice against an expert. As an example of this subjective comparison, fans of losing teams (i.e. teams who have below winning records) are likely to support each other and as a result, maintain stability in

their esteem by seeing themselves in one other. This could not be done if the fan were to compare themselves to a fan of a winning franchise.

The second method of social comparison Festinger (1954) lists is through a psychological measurement against those whose values and skill set is different than their own. The consequences of this mindset produce “tendencies to change one’s evaluation of the opinion or ability in question” (Festinger, 1954, p.122). In this scenario, people will either change their view to join others or will attempt to change the view of others to join them. This theory shows a growth in philosophy by recognizing the power of social influence and significance in one’s positioning within a society and specifically, group membership. The behaviors of those that act in this shifting, comparative mindset are contingent upon the standards of their affiliated group and measures set by their comparative sample (Festinger, 1954; Tajfel, 1982) As Festinger (1954) states:

...a person who runs more slowly than others with whom he compares himself, and for whom this ability is important, many spend considerable time practicing running. In a similar situation where the ability in question is intelligence, the person may study harder (p.126).

For sport consumers, this form of comparative process is notable in fans of opposing teams competing with one other. Because anyone can buy a ticket to a live event, games are often full of fans of both the home and away team, in addition to other teams not directly involved. If a fan of the away team feels threatened by the cheering of a home team fan, he or she might cheer louder or behave in a more outrageous manner to boast their team affiliation as a comparative act. This example of modifying one’s actions and performance is highly initiated by our natural need to evaluate ourselves against others.

The social comparative process Festinger (1954) outlines ultimately depicts how behaviors can be modified by the esteem derived from the positioning of others. When a person

has their opinions and/or abilities validated by others, they become highly confident and thereby has support in continuing to act in whatever manner helped produce those beliefs and skills. This concept is noted within the classic theory social identity and intergroup relations, theorized by Henri Tajfel.

### **Social Identity**

Tajfel (1982) understands that identity is a very multifaceted concept, and because of this, he limits his definition of it to concern only its relation to a social environment in order to eliminate the endless variations in meaning. Social identity is specifically understood by Tajfel (1982) as, “that part of the individuals’ self-concept which derives from their knowledge of their membership of a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership” (p.2). Social identity allows for individual esteem to be extracted from a conscious affiliation with a group. This theory therein describes how self-value and worth can come from an affiliation to a group – such as team or individual player (Wann, 2006).

As an extension of Festinger’s (1954) theory of social comparison, this philosophy of social identity creates a base for the psychology behind the identity and behaviors of sport consumers. People tend to have multiple identities due to several social group affiliations and public and private versions of themselves (Sedlovskaya et al., 2013). Social-identity can be further understood as the collected self-concept that individuals create from memberships that are more salient than others (Tajfel, 1982), and are recognizable by the manners in which people behave in groups.

### **Group Membership**

Because the hierarchy of identities can vary in different social situations, so do the behaviors attributed to those identities. As Sherif (1966) first proposed, “whenever individuals

belonging to one group interact, collectively or individually, with another group or its members in terms of their group identifications, we have an instance of intergroup behavior” (p.12, italics in the original). The attributes of each individual group inspire their members to consciously behave in a certain manner, acting to create separation from others. Once those attributes and behaviors are recognized, then the individuals that fill that group are socially identifiable. With consideration to the integration of social and digital media in sport today, these identifiable group behaviors can take place in both physical and digital settings. This concept is elaborated further in the sections ahead concerning the activities of identity utility.

Groups establish a set of norms that determine who is in and who is out. The norms within group membership are equally applied to the organizational commitments of employees, manifesting as an attitudinal and behavioral perspective (Allen & Meyer, 1990; Mowday, Porter, & Steers, 1982). According to Mowday et al. (1982), an attitudinal commitment reflects how people “think about their relationship with the organization...as a mindset in which individuals consider the extent to which their own values and goals are congruent with those of the organization” (p.26). The behavioral commitment relates to repeated behaviors that are performed to keep them emotionally connected to an organization (Allen & Meyer, 1990; Mowday et al., 1982). In today’s sports experience, the breadth of content is customizable enough to provide grouped fans a means to uniquely express themselves, find likeminded others, and maintain these mental and activity norms in multiple environments.

Intergroup relations are a pillar within any sport experience - physical, digital, or a combination of the two. Sloan and Van Camp (2008, p.138) state, “being a fan is a way to achieve group membership and a collective social identity that can feed into our individual identity.” Live sports provide a continuous, visual excuse to gather large groups of people

together, an act to reinforce one's collective identity. For example, on February 1, 2015 Super Bowl 49 generated the largest television audience in history with 114.4 million viewers (Pallotta, 2015). While over 1.3 million watched online via NBC streaming, some other 28.4 million tweets were made about the event (Pallotta, 2015) – making it the largest streamed and tweeted about Super Bowl at the time. While many of these viewers may not be super fans, the low to casual fans will still participate because of basic values for belonging, inclusion, and a society-wide ritual. Sports programming such as Thursday night's NBA on TNT or the annual Super Bowl, begin to take on ritualistic meaning (Xygalatas et al., 2013). The routine in consuming sports ongoing content illustrates a series of prosocial behaviors (Xygalatas et al., 2013) positioning sports as an innately social and multidimensional entity. Additional influences of affiliation, particularly those not concerning game statistics or winning records, are known as socialization agents (Hoegele et al., 2014). These take shape when the local community, a spouse, partner, friend, or family member passes on their affiliation onto others (Hoegele et al., 2014).

### **Collective Action**

As an expansion of Tajfel's (1982) social identity theory, Stephen Reicher (2001) highlights the transition from collective identity to collective action. Reicher (2001) considers crowd psychology to be an underappreciated facet of psychology as a whole, and to emphasize its vitality, he presents two important models that construct collective action. The first principle classifies crowd action as a reflection of the existing cultures and societies (Reicher, 2001). As traced earlier in theories of social comparison and identity, people have many identities and use saliency in determining which to employ during different social occasions (Festinger, 1954; Sedlovskaya et al., 2013; Tajfel, 1982). Sport consumers perform in a similar manner, especially

considering the structure of popular sports. Most major sports are broken up into seasons, delegated amounts of time that occur at the same time every year. For example, the National Football League (NFL) has sixteen weeks of a regular season always beginning in the fall. Avid spectators and fans generally participate in more than one sport, identifying with multiple teams and organizations simultaneously (Wann, 2006). However when the NFL season begins, American football fans will typically render all other sport identities dormant by placing their NFL affiliation ahead of others during the season.

The second model of crowd psychology that Reicher (2001) describes is how collective action works to influence and shape society itself, bringing about social change (Reicher, 2001). This theory positions group members as more than just spectators, but now they are considered “social actors” (Reicher, 2001, p.3). As explained by political sports writer Dave Zirin (2013):

There is a reason we associate people like Jackie Robinson with the civil rights movement; Muhammad Ali with the 1960s; Billie Jean King with the women’s movement; or 1968 Olympian Tom Waddell, the founder of the Gay Games, with LGBT rights. This history indicates that sport is never just a spectacle –that it has the potential to tap into sentiments for social change (p.10).

The social and considerably global force that is sport is understood within this second model of Reicher’s (2001) crowd psychology theory.

Collective action can also force groups to create space for individual expression. Reicher (2001) elaborates by stating, “crowds give rise to a sense of power which allows members to express their identity even in the face of out group opposition. Indeed it suggests that crowds may be unique in allowing people to give full expression to their identities” (p.17). From this statement, it can be derived that when group members are comfortable with each other and they are in their established environment, individual guards are let down, allowing people to positively express themselves.



### **Team Identification**

As an extension of social identity and group membership theories, sport communication and fandom researcher Daniel Wann has looked closely at team identification. He defines team identification as an individual having a psychological connection to a team or athlete (Wann et. al., 2004) and is a central component to one's overall social identity (Theodorakis, Wann, & Weaver, 2012; Wann, Melnick, Russell, & Pease, 2001). Wann and colleagues have demonstrated that affiliation is indicative of several fan behaviors, including pre-game anxiety (Wann, Schrader, & Adamson, 1998), aggression (Wann, Carlson, & Schrader, 1999) post-competition affect (Branscombe & Wann, 1992; Wann, Dolan, McGeorge, & Allison, 1994), and evaluation of other fans (Wann & Branscombe, 1995; Wann & Dolan, 1994; Wann et. al., 2004).

Wann (2006) created a Team Identification-Social Psychological Health Model as a theoretical guide to account for the positive relationship between local sport team affiliation and high self-esteem. This methodology “predicts that team identification facilitates well-being by increasing social connections for the fan” (Wann, 2006, p.272). Wann (2006) acknowledges the intrinsic desires people have to relate themselves to others, similar to the origins of social comparison discussed earlier by Festinger (1954). Through this “inherent need to identify and associate with others” (Wann, 2006, p.272), people are more likely to do so with those in the same group in order to uphold a high level of well-being. Generally this model for overall satisfaction can be attributed to the value people place on social organizations and groups (Wann, 2006). A result of these values is a social network “that provides psychological support and, consequently, result in a more mentally healthy individual (e.g., lower rates of depression, anxiety, loneliness, and the like)” (Wann, 2006, p.272).

To further this illustration of values and affiliation, Wann (2006) presents two types of social connections that sport fans can have: enduring and temporary. Wann (2006) defines an enduring social connection as a network produced from residing in an environment where fans of a team are easily identifiable. This is more simply understood as the hometown fans that support the hometown team. In cases where consumers are fans of more than one team, all other team identities become subordinate and less important with respect to the hometown team (Wann, 2006). The esteem of geographically defined fans shows a growth from Festinger's (1954) social comparison theory. Likeminded individuals with similar opinions of the home team, are easier to compare themselves to merely because that group will be the majority in a town with limited teams. People will be more likely to cheer for the home team because doing the opposite will disrupt the mental state of one's well-being (Wann, 2006).

As Festinger (1954) highlights, "a person will be less attracted to situations where others are very divergent from him than to situations where others are close to him for both abilities and opinions" (Festinger, 1954, p.123). Although Wann's (2006) social-health model leads to a positive sense of well-being, it is not automatic. It requires an active contribution from the consumer to participate in activities and behaviors that benefit the group and adds in social connection (Wann, 2006).

The second type of social connection that fans identify with is a temporary connection (Wann, 2006). Wann (2006) describes the temporary social connection as involving situations where "the fan is not residing in an enduring environment, such as when the individual is a displaced fan supporting a team from a distance (i.e. a Boston Red Sox fan who happens to live in Los Angeles). It is easy to assume difficulty in sustaining a positive identity because of a lack of hometown support. However, Wann (2006) illustrates many instances in which a person can

gain psychological benefits when connected with others whose identifications are also rendered salient. Using the Red Sox fan living in Los Angeles example, once he or she found an environment meant for other displaced fans (such as Boston themed bar) or encounters other displaced Red Sox fans, the fan will suddenly have strong feelings of camaraderie and connectedness (Wann, 2006). As Wann (2006) elaborates, “this individual should exhibit increased social psychological health (e.g., less loneliness and alienation)” (p.277). The benefits of team identification for sport consumers can be traced back to the origins of social comparison and the construction of social identity, finding positive esteem and self-worth through group membership and a selective comparative sample

Wann and Branscombe (1993) created the first well-known and widely used scale for assessing sport affiliation in the Sport Spectator Identification Scale (SSIS) (Wann & Pierce, 2003). The SSIS (Wann & Branscombe, 1993) was designed to measure the “individual allegiance or identification with a sport team” (p. 3). While SSIS and the social psychological health model are still highly cited concepts and scales, it is difficult to use exclusively in today’s sports climate because it is a single factor instrument (Wann & Pierce, 2003). The upsurge of social activity is an undervalued component of a multidimensional experience, lending to sports’ transformative nature into digitally mediated and experiential entity.

### **External Group Identities and Human Autonomy**

While group identity theory and fandom suggests that sport fans are emotional members of their team’s organization (Heere & James, 2007; Jacobson, 2003) Bob Heere and Jeffrey D. James (2007) compiled a list of the external group identities that are related to, promoted by, and symbolized within the sport. These identities are broken into two main categories: demographic (geographical, ethnic/racial, gender-based, sexuality-based, social class-based) and membership

organizations (vocational, university, corporate, religious, political) (Heere & James, 2007). Each of these sub-categories of external group identities are symbolically powerful (Heere & James, 2007) because sport can use them as a persuasive tool to create new fans, strengthen the loyalty of existing fans (Heere & James, 2007), and provide marketing managers an opportunity to generate revenue. This is important because understanding team identification and their embedded group affiliations can reveal consumption decisions (Matsuoka, Chelladurai, & Harada, 2003; Theodorakis et al., 2012; Wakefield & Sloan, 1995). From this standpoint, researchers can infer that the associations and endorsements from sport's personnel can motivate a highly affiliated fan behave a particular way and make purchases specific to their team identification.

### **Human Autonomy**

Understanding human autonomy and motivation are crucial when analyzing consumer behavior in sports. Underlined within it are the origins of inspiration that detail the how and why behind a person's action. Autonomy is the self-regulating mental process one undergoes when controlling themselves and their decisions (Ryan & Deci, 2006). Once behaviors are performed, experiences of social interaction become stored as mental schemas. As the cognitive structure built from patterned experiences, schemas allow researchers to learn the inner-workings of particular environments based on the person's previous experiences (Baldwin, 1992). The inspiration behind individual action and the reasons to behave any particular way are the core basis of motivation theory. As Ryan and Deci (2000) state, "to be motivated means *to be moved* to do something" (p.54) (italics in original). Relatedly as the rule of Self (Ryan & Deci, 2006) self-determination theory takes into consideration every variable (e.g. biological, social conditions, etc.) that can influence the desire to commit an act. This internal drive however has

different levels (i.e. how strong is the motivation) but also different orientations (i.e. the type of motivation) (Ryan & Deci, 2000). The actions sparked from any motive can vary depending on the particular level of commitment and affiliation.

For example, a woman who considers herself to be a fan of the National Football League (NFL) will likely spend her Sunday morning watching a game. Fandom has motivated her and is the reason she is in front of a television watching the game. But her behaviors in watching, that is, where she watches (e.g. in the social atmosphere of a bar or at home), the social context in which she watches (e.g. with other fans, family, or in solitude), and with what supplemental devices (e.g. a second screen to access social media, other content, check a fantasy team, etc.); all of these are examples of conscious decisions based on a motivating level of fandom.

### **Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation**

Ryan and Deci (2000) describe two important facets of motivation theory that are used to distinguish the type of goals and orientation for pursuing a particular action. Ryan and Deci (2000) state, “the most basic distinction is between *intrinsic motivation*, which refers to doing something because it is inherently interesting or enjoyable and *extrinsic motivation*, which refers to doing something because it leads to a separable outcome” (p.55) (italics in original). An action that results from an intrinsic motivator includes solving a puzzle (Cherry, 2016) or attending live baseball games because one finds it enjoyable. Contrastingly, extrinsic actions can be studying only to get a good grade or watching a hockey game with a spouse only because it makes the spouse happy.

Intrinsic acts hold autonomy because they are fully “endorsed by the self and thus are in accord with the abiding values and interests” (p. 1560). Opposite the autonomous, self-endorsement of behaviors is heteronomy, or extrinsic acts, that puts more weight on the external

forces and contingencies of pressure (Ryan & Deci, 2006). An example of this could be seen in a Steph Curry fan purchasing the latest release of his new Under Armor shoes not out of comfort or because he or she actually likes the style, but either out of the pressures of affiliation that makes one feel like they are *supposed* to buy everything related to Curry, or because they need these shoes to feel “cool” and stand out amongst a group of other Curry fans. The principle of self-governance in human autonomy can inform researchers what variables certain demographics consider to be important. Style. Status. Location. Connection. Etc. Being authentic, as in, being true to one’s core self (Ryan & Deci, 2006), is important to psychological and market research because performed acts reflect one’s core values and beliefs. Authentic and autonomous acts illustrate ownership and an endorsement of ego (Ryan & Deci, 2006). And the emotional rationale behind what one possesses paints a picture for how an identity is constructed.

Kumar and Herger (2013) provide an originating list for each motivator to demonstrate the differences: intrinsic equals belonging, love, learning, meaning, curiosity and mastery; extrinsic equals badges, competition, money, fear of failure/punishment, and gold stars. While it is possible that one’s action can fulfill both intrinsic and extrinsic needs, the origin of inspiration can weigh more heavily on one side than the other. For example, a super fan might engage in NFL fantasy football<sup>6</sup> for the perks of winning a competition, bragging rights, and prizes. But the natural enjoyment and narrative transportation of watching football, learning the ins and outs of each player, and the original love of the game that brought them to play fantasy sports to begin with might be the driving force behind them doing everything associated with their passion.

By sharing in a team’s success and professing their association (Hoeghele et al., 2014) one basks in the glory of others and claims a piece of the success for themselves (Cialdini et al.,

---

<sup>6</sup> Fantasy sports are defined as a league made up of participants who compete against each other based on the statistical information provided from real-world competition (Farquhar & Meeds, 2007).

1976). Mael and Ashforth (2001) note that this type of vicarious achievement (Sloan, 1979) is born from the innate joy people have in feeling a part of something greater than themselves. In a highly affiliated fan's mind, a team's win or a player's multimillion dollar contract extension is emotionally experienced as "*my win*" and "*my contract*", thereby extending the ego in time and space (Katz & Kahn, 1978; Mael & Ashforth, 2001).

### **Applying Components of Commitment and Identity Utility**

Current literature implies that sport fandom is its own identification object (Mael & Ashforth, 2001) and is largely rooted in organizational psychology (Funk & James, 2001; Heere & James, 2007; Hoegele et al., 2014; Theodorakis et al., 2012; Wann, 2006). Allen and Meyer (1990) conceptualized a three-component model for understanding how one identifies and becomes psychologically committed to an organization (Meyer & Allen, 1991). These three components are affective attachment, continuance, and normative (Allen & Meyer, 1990; Meyer & Allen, 1991). While there is a lack of consensus in what industry the construct specifically applies (Meyer & Allen, 1991), I find that this organization commitment model (Allen & Meyer, 1990) is relevant to sport identification based on the similar behaviors and values between sport consumers and organization members.

In standard business markets and research, external stakeholders are considered to be those within a company that uphold their affiliation through a series of supporting behaviors (Hoegele et al., 2014; Mael & Ashforth, 1992). These activities are known to coincide with the organization's core story and identity (Hoegele et al., 2014). These actions are known as identity utility (Hoegele et al., 2014) and are derived from recognizing oneself as part of a business, brand, or team (Akerlof & Kranton, 2010; Hoegele et al., 2014).

The next section outlines each field within the Self-Sport link and model of the experiential ecosystem. These tables combine the two above theories in organization psychology – components of commitment (Allen & Meyer, 1990; Meyer & Allen, 1991) and identity utility (Hoegele et al., 2014). This theoretical tandem demonstrates how modern-day sport experiences are not unidimensional as previous research has shown, but rather multidimensional and overlapping. The complexity of sport identification involves the emotional theories previously noted, in addition more concepts more directly related to behavior and activity. The purpose of the following Self-Sport tables and descriptions is to demonstrate how digital media participation works to fuel and enhance team-identification by providing new, alternative means of self-expression.

**Field of Community and Affective Attachment**

*Table 3: Field of Community Linked to Components of Commitment and Supporting Behaviors*

Experiential Field	Component of Commitment	Identity Utility Supporting Behavior
Community	Affective Attachment	Customer recruitment
		Stronger Loyalty

The first field within the Experiential Ecosystem is the that of *community*. This corresponds with Allen and Meyer’s (1990) first component of commitment – *affective attachment*, which purely translates to wanting and desire. As Allen and Meyer (1990) state, this affective element relates to “the emotional attachment to the organization such that the strongly committed individual identifies with, is involved in, and enjoys membership in, the organization” (p.2). For example “I *want* to associate myself with Company X.” Psychologically this stems from having the internal desire to be emotionally affiliated with an organization. This is due to a customer-company relationship (Ahearne et al., 2005) which indicates that the goals and values



between the consumer and brand are in sync (Buchanan, 1974; Hoeghele et al., 2014). The following sections will explore the supporting elements I have categorized as a subset of affective attachment – customer recruitment and stronger loyalty.

### **Customer Recruitment and Relationships**

As dictated in Table 3, the first supportive behavior of this construct is customer recruitment. This is understood as making an effort to positively engage with others about the organization (Hoeghele et al., 2014). Once a consumer tries to persuade others to emotionally (and financially) buy into a company and their product, they become an external representative acting on behalf of the company (Ahearne et al., 2005). Similarly as remarked in theories of team identification, engagement and personal relationships are key to the sense of community and affective attachment.

### **Schemas and Interpersonal Scripts in Sport**

Schemas are mental maps helping people navigate in the social world. Routed by patterns from perception and memory, an interpersonal script is a mental turn-by-turn list of all the expected behaviors of the Self and others (Baldwin, 1992). Schemas can also be considered a descriptive convenience (Taylor & Winkler, 1980) that allows people to make interpretations based on everything presented before them. These interpretations come from what Padesky (1994) summarized as a cognitive coding structure to evaluate stimuli (Beck, 1967). There are two important facets of schema theory that are central to understanding consumer motivation and behavior – self-schema and relational schema.

Self-schema is the sense of Self one has based on experiences with others, while relational schemas focus on the representations of social interaction, as opposed to concentrating exclusively on the Self (Baldwin, 1992). As Baldwin (1992) explains, “relationship schemas

focus on how past social experiences affect current ones” (p.462). The interpersonal script within either of these schematic forms are built to include the “expectations about the thoughts, feelings, and goals of both [the] Self and Other” (Baldwin, 1992 p.468). Notably, the mental content of these scripts come from the observed and coded repeated behaviors of similar interactions that are stored in memory (Baldwin, 1992; Harvey, Hunt, & Schroder, 1961). For example, a low to super affiliated fan will have an interpersonal script for attending a live Major League Baseball game. The baseball narrative has nine regular innings. Beyond that, the script includes a “7th inning stretch” in middle of the seventh inning. The expected behaviors of Self and Others in this instance is to stand up, stretch, and sing the customary “Take Me Out to the Ballgame” song<sup>7</sup>. These are behavioral expectations that reflect not only personal motives of enjoyment and meaning, but also social and extrinsic motives of fitting in as well – i.e. participating to feel a part of a larger community, or to participate out of obligation because everyone else is.

Schemas and interpersonal relationships are significant within the affective attachment because cognitive experiences are not limited to just other people. Products and services are produced for people to consume and engage with as well. Therefore, understanding how meaning is placed on products is equally vital.

By placing value on the possessions (Ferraro, Escalas, & Bettman, 2011; Jansson-Boyd, 2010) places, and platforms, analysis reveals that these objects relate to the affective desires of a consumer. Research of Sheldon Stryker and Richard T. Serpe (2000) assert that interpersonal relationships are the most important variable in preserving identity, as they represent the commitment one has (Curry & Weaner, 1987) to their passions. Experiences today give fans

---

<sup>7</sup> Take Me Out to the Ball Game” is a song composed in 1908 by Albert Von Tilzer and Jack Norworth and is widely considered the national anthem of baseball (Performing Arts Encyclopedia, 2008).

many channels, online and offline, to build relationships with, shaping their sense of self. With the growth in social media popularity, establishing oneself through connectivity is even easier.

### **Social Media Accelerating Recruitment and Relationships**

Social media allows for users, platforms, and organizations to mutually shape each other in the online environment (Van Dijck & Poell, 2013) through interaction and establishing relationships. Any sport audience will have a wide range of affiliation levels, including those that are not fans nor have an emotional tie to the game. However, because of the large numbers in rating and live event attendance that occur regularly, it is likely that those with a low game investment still make up the part of the sport audience. So what is the motive for a non-sports fan consume sports? The answer is found in what sport supplies their identity and the agents of socialization (Hoeghele et al., 2014). To those with a low-game investment, sport becomes a site for interpersonal requirements, a social environment enhancer, and a means to gain group status (Hugenberg et al., 2008; Sanderson, 2012; Wann, 2006). People needing people to satisfy each other's needs is known as interdependence (Mael & Ashforth, 2001; Sampson, 1977), an important point within the concepts of connectivity and field of community. These notions have become easier with social media and the ability to cultivate relationships through marketing.

Relationship marketing has become a priority in the sports industry (Harris & Ogbonna, 2008; Lapio & Speter, 2000; Stavros, Pope, & Winzar, 2008; Witkemper et al., 2012). This paradigm shift (Grönroos, 2004; Witkemper et al., 2012) is a reflection of the fact that consumers expect businesses to engage with them and foster connections (Pine & Gilmore, 2011; Tapscott, 2009; Witkemper et al., 2012). As it relates to the fan psychology, the expectations are no different. The interactions between consumer-to-organization and consumer-to-consumer (Witkemper et al., 2012) become crucial parts of the consumer's digital experience. While the

purpose is to build and sustain a cooperative relationship (Witkemper et al., 2012), fans of any level can use Twitter to find likeminded others, consume the information needed, or become an agent of socialization (Hoegele et al., 2014).

### **Stronger Loyalty**

The second supporting behavior of I/U within the Affective component and field of community is maintaining loyalty. Hoegele et al. (2014) state that having a commitment to an organization is about maintaining a sense of faithfulness by upholding well-being. For external stakeholders like sport consumers, this is crucial in fan psychology because a lapse in affiliation could reverse the benefits of team identification (e.g. create higher levels of depression and anxiety) (Wann, 2006). Loyalty and affective attachment are correlated because as a voluntary psychological attachment (Dimmock et al., 2005), “it is likely that cognitive and affective dimensions of team identification will be strongly related” (p. 77). And with the utilization of social and digital media channels like Twitter (Witkemper et al., 2012) upholding one’s loyalty has become mobile and more accessible through participating in digital communities and building efficacy with creating content.

### **Participatory Culture**

Social media repositions consumers as producers in what Henry Jenkins (2006) describes as participatory culture. The phrase participatory culture is used to show that the importance of media does not rest in the technology that produces it. Rather, it is in the empowerment bestowed on consumers through their participation and connectivity (Jenkins, 2006). By giving consumers the license to become creators, this two-way exchange of information affords users the opportunity to repurpose material through sharing or creating their own content in digital spaces. For example, a fan can watch a game via traditional media (e.g. on television) and then use social

media to add their live reactions, generate memes<sup>8</sup>, or Retweet highlights. New media provides fans a chance to have a new experience each and every time they engage with the platforms. As Kennedy and Hills (2009) state, “with traditional media, while you can interpret them in many ways, what you see is what you get. With new media, each user can see a different thing, depending on the route he or she navigates through a Web site or the multimedia components he or she chooses to play” (p.173).

Groups are an important facet of sustaining loyalty because it draws from a collective, social identity. Since fandom is a voluntary psychological commitment to a larger group (e.g. a sports team) (Dimmock et al., 2005) it is easier to have group solidarity because the membership was not made out of force (Turner, Hogg, Turner, & Smith, 1984). Mael and Ashforth (2001) state, “identification has its most direct emotional and behavioral expression in loyalty” (p.198). It is within the groups and organizations that one identifies with, where beliefs and behavioral norms are established to determine who is in and out, even in digital environments.

Today’s sports experience is intertextual enough to provide grouped fans a means to uniquely express themselves, find likeminded others, and increase their sense of Self and loyalty through participation. For example, many fans use hashtags associated with a narrative, team, or player as a way to speak directly to other group members and filter out others. For example, the hashtag #BeRelenteless was used by fans of the Los Angeles Clippers after owner Steve Ballmer used it at a team pep rally (Kavner, 2014). Only members of this Clippers fan group would be aware of the meaning, encouraging them to adopt the phrase and use it to connect with others in digital spaces. When #BeRelenetless was searched for in social media during this campaign, a clear line is drawn indicating who is a real Clippers fan (e.g. members of the “in”

---

<sup>8</sup> A meme is a piece of media built from a catchphrase, activity, or concept that is spread on the internet, predominately in social media platforms (Schubert, 2003).

group). Those unfamiliar with the phrase or use it in a different context is considered “out” to Clipper fans. Recognizing these groups and other likeminded members provides a sense of strength in numbers. This reinforces the shared beliefs, goals and values fixed within the social comparative process (Festinger, 1954) and experiential field of community.

The subset of loyalty is also recognized in Sanderson’s (2012) fan psychology research which suggests that individuals identify with celebrities once they discover personal similarities. An example of personal parallel in fan psychology can be discovering that a hometown or birthplace is shared with an athlete, or more simply supporting a local team because they play in the town one lives or was born (Sanderson, 2012). This becomes a thread linking a newly affiliated fan to the athlete, and possibly to the entire franchise. Once a small seed like this is rooted in identity, a stronger sense of loyalty is established.

**Field of Self and Continuance Component**

*Table 4: Field of Self Linked to Components of Commitment and Supporting Behaviors*

Experiential Field	Component of Commitment	Identity Utility Supporting Behavior
Self	Continuance	Product Utilization
		Resilience to Negative Information

The perceived costs (Allen & Meyer, 1990) of losing affiliation motivates one to continue believing things and behaving in a particular way. “Consistent lines of activity” (Becker, 1960 p.33) reflect another view of commitment and the second component of identification – *continuance* (Allen & Meyer, 1990(Meyer & Allen, 1991)). This is understood by Hoegele et al. (2014) as a psychological utility to uphold one’s identity. The simple translation relates to a *need*, as in, “I need to do X or I will lose Y.” Because this subset of commitment is an individual-based requirement, this component of continuance is marked as the field of *Self* within

the Self-Sport link and Experiential Ecosystem (*See Table 4*). The following section will explore the supporting behaviors I have categorized within this table, citing along the way how each are boosted in today's modern-era of sport by being facilitated through digital media.

### **Product Utilization**

While fans are psychologically considered external stakeholders, Hoegele et al. (2014) note that there is a positive correlation between identity requirements and consumption. As Hoegele et al. (2014) state, "there is empirical evidence that external stakeholders' identification positively influences their product utilization" (p.739). The content consumed speaks to motivational anecdotes, or stories one has to tell themselves, to uphold their sense of Self.

Jenkins (2006) concept of migratory behavior reflects this type of fanatic activity where consumers will seek out any and everything that their identity calls for. As stated by Jenkins (2006), migratory behavior for consumers show that they "will go almost anywhere in search of the kinds of entertainment experiences they want" (p.2). In the context of mediated sport, these experiences are not limited to watching the game on television or reading about it in the sports page (Kennedy & Hills, 2009). The discourse largely incorporates new media (Kennedy & Hills, 2009; Moragas Spà, 1999), traditional media, game and player related information, platforms for consumption and groups, and anything largely considered a sport possession.

Self-fulfilling prophecy notes that what and how a person consumes something reinforces who they are (Jansson-Boyd, 2010). This is because we cognitively assign attributes to our belongings in order to appear a certain way to others (Jansson-Boyd, 2010). This is a conscious effort to maintain a sense of well-being by adhering to expectations set by groups and/or identity requirements. "I *need* to watch the game." Or "I *have to* have my phone near me so I can Tweet and check my fantasy team during the game too." These sample statements show the types of

modern necessities, and subsequent behaviors, that are involved within the component of continuance. Sport consumers will go to extreme lengths to get the content they seek (Hugenberg et al., 2008; Jenkins, 2006; Sanderson, 2012; Wann, 2006), for without the game to consume, it is difficult to achieve the extended benefits sport provides (i.e. social connection, personal distraction, belonging, self-esteem, etc.). As a result, product utilization becomes an integral component within team-identification theory because it speaks to the multidimensionality of not just the consumer, but also the devices used by the consumer.

The efforts to invest in technology help support the needs of team identification and commitment. The incorporation of social and digital media content is available predominately because of second screen platforms. The interface of second screens “reflect a user’s needs and desires” Cruickshank et al., p. 44), positioning this mobile ability as an important facet of the modern sport viewing experience.

Cruickshank, Tseklevs, Whitham, Hill, and Kondo (2007) believe that second screen experiences are complimentary pieces to the primary screen’s (e.g. television) content by offering the opportunity to extend the primary model’s programming through a rich form of interaction. Forms of second screen content fall under the category of shoulder programming (i.e. social media channels, feature packages, pre-game and post-game footage, etc.), which works to instill and recharge the emotional experiences of fans (Deninger, 2012). For these consumer-centered reasons, there is a rising focus on shoulder and second screen programming because the purpose of this content is to support the head of programming (i.e. the actual live-event, the game) (Deninger, 2012).

The thread of information in social media and secondary content within digital media creates a fluid stream of material to be utilized for commitment purposes. All content however



must meet the standards set by the goals and needs of each fan individually, for if the material is not deemed authentic to the sport experience, the consumer is emotionally turned off. Inauthentic material negatively impacts the overall experience (Gilmore & Pine, 2007; Pine & Gilmore, 2011) which as a result can have adverse effects to the consumer's wellbeing.

### **Authenticity**

Pine and Gilmore (2011) emphasize the importance of staging authentic experiences in their book called Experience Economy. In it, they remark that consumers have no qualms about consuming or utilizing products, so long as the content and experience provided has emotional value and fosters an enduring memory. As Pine and Gilmore (2011) state:

“...companies should realize that they must make memories (and not goods) and create the stage for generating greater economic value (and not deliver services). It is time to get your act together, for goods and services are no longer enough. Customers now want experiences, and they're willing to pay admission for them. There's new work to do, and only those who perform that work so as to truly engage their guests will succeed in this new economy” (p.152).

Sport has encapsulated this idea through the many organizational components it uses to extend its emotional connection with fans, such as social media participation and second screen usage.

### **Second Screens and FoMO**

One of the reasons that social media platforms such as Twitter and Snapchat have become so popular in professional and collegiate sports is because highly affiliated fans likely hold a fear of missing out (FoMO). Przybylski, Murayama, DeHaan, and Gladwell (2013) define the FoMO phenomenon as a “pervasive apprehension that others might be having rewarding experiences from which one is absent...FoMO is characterized by the desire to stay continually connected with what others are doing” (p. 1841). If a high novelty game is on such as the SuperBowl, a self-identified fan will make effort to watch the game because he or she likely will undergo FoMO, knowing that they will hear about it from others, including those that are not

even self-reported fans. If for some reason they cannot, second screens and social media usage then becomes of practical use because FoMO "...could serve as a mediator linking deficits in psychological needs to social media engagement" (Alt, 2015 p. 111).

### **Resilience to Negative Information**

Within this subset of continuance supporting behaviors, I have categorized resilience to negative information as a psychological element closely associated with product utilization. Bhattacharya and Sen (2003) note that one of the positive consequences of their customer-company link is the emotional ability to disregard information deemed damaging towards their organization. As Bhattacharya and Sen (2003) state, "we expect identified consumers to overlook and downplay any negative information they may receive about a company (or its products) they identify with, particularly when the magnitude of such information is relatively minor" (p. 84)". This reflects the multidimensionality of sport and the experiential ecosystem it shapes by providing a distraction, an alternative, and more positive information. This comes from the series of relationships and supportive activities available to maintain a positive outlook and strong sense of Self.

A general example of resilience in sport consumption is revealed in the research of Branscombe and Wann's (1991) study on psychological wellbeing and fandom. In a test surveying college students and their affiliation with the university's basketball team, Branscombe and Wann (1991) reveal a positive correlation between self-esteem and negative associations with depression (Wann et. al., 2004). While this study looks specifically at one university, if we take into consideration the entire experience of sport, consumers have even more opportunities to gain esteem through content and become resilient towards negativity. The utility of having resilience becomes easier to grasp when one understands digital efficacy.

Relatedly, the idea of an information surplus is discussed in the research of Burkitt (2008) who focuses on the concept of a saturated self.

### **Reflexivity and Content Saturation**

Burkitt (2008) believes that we are able to emerge from an overabundance of content with an unbroken identity because we were made to filter everything we take in. Like a hunter, we *sort* through information, groups, and media, and *gather* what we deem necessary. In essence, consumers sift through the information, take what they need which benefits them, and leaves the rest behind. This makes up the essence of having a resilience to negative information. According to Burkitt (2008), this involves a “heightened sense of reflexivity” (p.165), where personal identities are made on the spot by using the small bit of information out of the mass. Reflexivity “takes to mean self-reflection – for we have to remake ourselves in the moment, according to what is required by the situation...each one of us must sort and assess the mass of information to which we are exposed everyday, and even if we can’t make sense of most of it, we must decide what to discard and how to carry on, if only by default” (Burkitt, 2008, p.165-166). With this approach, collective intelligence is positioned as a useful mindset in finding meaning and making connections.

In a digitally mediated sport experience, this hunter-gather concept is necessary because of the overflow of content. The function of sifting through content has become easier in platforms such as Twitter by functions such as hashtags, muting, lists, and blocking. For example, a Twitter timeline is the stream of information where the 140 character tweets, media, and images are displayed (Ong, 2014). When there appears to be negative trolling behavior<sup>9</sup>, a

---

<sup>9</sup> Trolling behavior within social media platforms is internet slang for “extraneous, or off topic messages in an online community (such as a newsgroup, forum, chatroom, or blog) with the deliberate intent of provoking readers into an emotional response” (PCMAG.com, 2009). A ‘troll’ therefore is “a person who submits deliberately inflammatory articles to an internet discussion” (Collins English Dictionary, retrieved 2016).

user is able to block that person, restricting them from having access to the account and never having their content displayed on their timeline ever again (until the user decides, if ever, to unblock them). These added social media functions increase the ability for a fan to have greater strength in resisting negative information.

### **Transportation Theory**

One psychological explanation of how a fan saturated in content and technology is able to feel a sense of empowerment and a resilience to negativity is because of transportation theory. Like a reader who gets lost in a book (Nell, 1988), fans forget about the real world around them and are transported into the sport narrative. This cognitive experience is referred to as a Transportation-Imagery Model of Narrative Persuasion (Green & Brock, 2002). Transportation-Imagery is limited to texts that evoke images that can be recognized, recalled, and responded to at will (Green & Brock, 2002). For example, a New York Giants fan might instantly remember and be cognitively transported back to where they were the moment the Giants beat the New England Patriots in Super Bowl 42. So many storylines were at play during this game (underdogs, undefeated records, one hand catches, etc.) that this game is highly referenced by the football fans alike.

Although not confined to just written material, transportation occurs for any consumer who is the recipient of narrative information (Green & Brock, 2002). Therein lies the power of social and digital technology - augmenting traditional media consumption with the ability to replay, relive, and comment on content in real time. Digital media removes the global barriers, inviting users to interact with anyone, likeminded or oppositional, in order to achieve what they need at that time.

In *This is Your Brain on Sports*, authors Wertheim and Sommers (2016) rationalize the

sometimes outlandish behavior and emotions of fans because of transportation theory. As Wertheim and Sommers (2016) state, fan activity “reinforce(s) the organizing principles of sports: It is diversion, escapism, almost an altered state. In the Universe of Sports, the usual rules of behavior and social convention don’t apply” (p.3). Social scientists have become more increasingly interested in team identification (Dimmock et al., 2005) because research is revealing the multidimensional nature of the sport experience and all it entails.

### Field of Organization and Normative Component

Table 5: Field of Organization Linked to Components of Commitment and Supporting Behaviors

Experiential Field	Component of Commitment	Identity Utility Supporting Behavior
Organization	Normative	Company/Product Promotion
		Willingness to Invest in Company Shares

The final component of commitment is classified by Allen and Meyer (1990) as *normative*. This form of commitment refers to the feelings of obligations that an employee or member has to an organization (Allen & Meyer, 1990). Elevated senses of responsibility are shown within this form of affiliation, where a simple translation could be summarized as *should*. As in, “I *should* do X because Y is important to me and a part of who I am.” Allen & Meyer (1990) further this explanation by quoting Wiener (1982) who first described normative commitment as “individuals [who] exhibit behaviors solely because they believe it is the ‘right’ and moral thing to do’ (p. 421).” Due to the emotional relationship between consumer and company, or in this case fan and sport/team, normative commitment is categorized as field of *organization* within the experiential ecosystem (*see table 5*). As a subset within this table, the supporting elements and behaviors are company/product promotion (Ahearne et al., 2005; Hoegle et al., 2014) and willingness to invest in company shares (Aspara & Tikkanen, 2011;

Hoeghele et al., 2014).

### **Product Promotion through Possession-Self Link**

Consumer identities are built from the possessions owned and content consumed (Ferraro et al., 2011; Jansson-Boyd, 2010). The highly visible nature of sport creates a means to have several items linked to the environment. From physical objects like signature shoes or jerseys to digital possessions like avatars and fantasy teams – each item is a possession rooted in the sport’s narrative experience. When a person gives an object meaning, possessions become a symbol of the content and values essential to one’s identity (Ferraro et al., 2011; Kennedy & Hills, 2009). An athlete’s autograph on a child’s poster or a ticket stub to a championship game both serve as symbolic reminders of what is important. This forms what Ferraro et al. (2011) call a possession-self-link, showing a positive connection between belongings and self-worth. And as a psychological link between organization and Self, identity is reinforced and strengthened by extension of the company.

Promoting a company or product is essentially endorsing oneself (Ferraro et al., 2011; Hoeghele et al., 2014; Jansson-Boyd, 2010). Known as symbolic interactionism, the reverse is also accurate (i.e. a brand or product advertising a specific person, persona, or group) because brands have symbolic meaning threaded within their core story as well (Fog, Budtz, & Yakaboylu, 2003; Jansson-Boyd, 2010). As Jansson-Boyd (2010) state, “brands and products can be transformed into symbols and in turn become ways of communicating with others” (p.59). This form of social communication also emphasizes the importance of external group identities (Heere & James, 2007) and social identity within sport (Dimmock et al., 2005; Wann, 2006) (Dimmock, Grove, & Eklund, 2005; Wann, 2006).

Technology has provided many digital avenues to promote their relationships and experiences. Digital media has specifically amplified the ability to promote products and companies by providing a stream of continuous content that fans can consume, therein endorsing themselves and affiliations. By extension, these affiliates share attributes with the consumer (Ahearne et al., 2005), making them one in the same. Ultimately, because people consume products and promote organizations to reinforce who they are (Jansson-Boyd, 2010). The same goes for the platforms consumers used to get the information and experiences their identity needs (Hugenberg et al., 2008; Wertheim & Sommers, 2016). This utility of company promotion is no exception. As a contemporary form of digital promotion and boosted sense of Self, selfies are a prime example of visual activity that centers on personal need.

### **Sport-Identifying Selfies**

A selfie is a picture of a single person or group of people taken by them, primarily with a mobile device (Miltner & Baym, 2015) and the intent of sharing the photo in social media. People are social creatures by nature and have an innate desire to express themselves and interact with others, classifying them as digital citizens (Ohler, 2010). Through the act of taking selfies, consumers become producers (Jenkins, 2006), thereby adding to the field of community.

Selfies are powerful visible diaries (Rutledge, 2013) that turn significant moments into a shareable message. The self-empowerment drawn from taking selfies extends to the fandom world of sports as well. Sport identifying selfies refer to fans who take pictures of themselves, either solo or with group members, in a sport related manner (i.e. in sports clothing, live at a sporting event or environment, performing athletic poses, etc.). What results is a visual projection of their identity, and more importantly, a visible certification to boast their sport affiliation to others, often times out of a normative responsibility. Whether sharing a photo

wearing their favorite jersey, a pre-game tailgate in a parking lot arena, or sitting in seats from inside the venue – users utilize sport selfies as shareable items of affiliation, authenticated by the behaviors, setting, and intent of the photo. Fans use visible signifiers as a way to literally wear their team (i.e. face paint, jerseys, avatars, etc.). Rabid fans have always existed throughout sports history. However, it is important to note that the steady integration of digital media has given fans a larger network to express themselves, including the medium of photography. It is through these digital expressions that fans find new ways to enrich their identity and promote their allegiances.

As a form of consumer created content, sport selfies can be understood as a newly added behavior within the fan schema. Once shared in the digital spaces they have extended themselves to, fans reveal socially identifiable attributes of their products, brands, and organizations through pictures. For example, previously (as close as 15 years ago), a picture of a New Orleans Saints fan in a team jersey was likely stored in a photo album or stuck on a fridge with a “Who Dat<sup>10</sup>” magnet. Contrastingly today, a picture of a Saints fan in a Drew Brees jersey is likely shared this time online with a “WhoDat” hashtag for everyone they want to see. This is to a) promote their affiliation, b) boast their own identity and c) provide recognizable signs (i.e. the jersey, team colors, and WhoDat intergroup phrase as a hashtag) so likeminded strangers can recognize one another as fellow group members.

Sport identifying selfies also function as a way to make a displaced fan feel a part of a community even when not physically living there. For example, Ohler (2010) notes that a digital community, while existing in technology based settings, “might not be local, but they feel local”

---

<sup>10</sup> The term “Who Dat” originated in New Orleans, Louisiana and refers to “Who Dat Nation,” a phrase adopted by the New Orleans Saints football team and used throughout their fan community. The chant is used predominately to show team support (The Star, 2010).



(p.42). The sharing of live-attended, social experiences, and personal connections to sport through pictures is a way to reminisce and invite others to feel a part of the experience.

### **Willingness to Invest in Company Shares**

Because an interface with others can work to boost self-esteem (Festinger, 1954), social media enhances the ability to foster a personal and social identity (Sanderson, 2011; Wann, 2006), and therefore spawn new behaviors. This includes the transitional process of fandom to financial. Fans will search for more things to purchase and consume to promote their commitment, boosting their sense of Self as a result. Hoegel et al. (2014) and Aspara and Tikkanen (2011) consider this as a psychological willingness to invest in company shares.

By doing what they need to do to utilize the content they continuously need (e.g. purchasing a cable subscription to watch games, buying season tickets, etc.), fans subconsciously make internal *and* external investments where their affiliated organization is ultimately the recipient of additional revenue (Hoegel et al., 2014). Hoegel et al. (2014) elaborate on the investments of fan psychology in stating, “the more they identify with their favorite club, the more merchandise they purchase, the more games they attend, and the more supportive behavior they engage in during games (e.g. wearing team apparel, cheering for the team)” (p. 739) (Fisher & Wakefield, 1998; Gau, James, & Kim, 2009; Koo & Hardin, 2008; Sutton, McDonald, Milne, & Cimperman, 1997). The emotional connection in social media between fan and league, fan and team, or fan and athlete is enhanced when the fan is recognized through any form of engagement such as a retweet or direct mention (Sanderson, 2012). These acknowledgements and forms of digital engagement also increases the likelihood that a fan would become aware of their team’s business affiliates, seeding a potential for turning awareness into financial action.

### **Purpose of Study**

This study is an attempt to directly address team-identification as a multidimensional experience. This is structured as an experiential ecosystem where the Self-Sport link is represented. Within this ecosystem are three different fields that are serviced through sport and the use of digital media. Rooting itself in organizational psychology, this ecosystem is meant to reveal the subsets of commitment and supporting activities of identity. Doing so will reflect the attitudinal and behavioral commitment to sport and its varying components. By exploring the dimensions of fan psychology, this research extends previous team-identification research by noting that sport fans are not just simple spectators, but rather can be understood as organization members. The ultimate aim of this study is to reveal and explore how sport experiences and fandom are facilitated and boosted with the aid of technology. In order to understand the sometimes atypical behavior of highly affiliated fans, researchers must know the cognitive and psychological origins of organizational commitment. This study will be one of the earliest investigations into providing empirical evidence of the multidimensional assumptions of the field's researchers. Original research produced from this dissertation will therefore provide the first primary data into the dynamic components of experience and identity of sport. In this study, special attention will be spent on the impact digital media has on amplifying a sport experience in today's modern social media driven era.

### **Research Question**

At the center of this dissertation is the experiential construct and an exploration of how technology impacts the relationship between Self and sport. The research question asks – What impact does social media participation have on sport identification? And what are the components of a multidimensional sport experience, that when mediated in social and digital media spaces, result in a nurtured team affiliation and sense of Self?

### Hypotheses

A multidimensional sport experience is built of three main components – 1) an experiential field 2) a component of commitment, and 3) supporting behaviors (*See table 2*). Together these components build an experiential ecosystem that illustrates how the self-sport connection is represented and fulfilled in today's modern era.

It is presumed that when supporting behaviors of affiliation are mediated through social and digital media channels, both the Self and team-identification are boosted. Technology has amplified the overall sport experience by providing the tools to stage authentic experiences per the fan's specific needs, thereby turning the event into an enduring phenomenon.

#### **Main Claim:**

The value and significance ascribed to the overall experience is considered greater than the value of any individual game.

#### **Constituents Claims**

- a) *Affective Claim*: Group membership and player/team loyalty are strengthened by social media participation before, during, or after a sporting event.
- b) *Continuance Claim*: Sport experience and overall well-being are both enhanced by consuming and sharing social/digital media content.
- c) *Normative Claim*: Fans feel obligated to promote their favorite team, player, and their brand extensions (e.g. sponsors, affiliates, endorsements, charities) in both physical and digital spaces.

Valuable insight on recent patterns of behavior, expectancy, and investment become available through this research. Additionally, practitioners working in business development will be gratified in learning the importance of staging authentic lifelong experiences, both home and

away, where a shared meaning between brand and consumer, or fan and sport, can be connected indefinitely.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

**Research Design**

This research is structured as a qualitative six-part questionnaire with 29 questions in total (*See Appendix A*). Using the online survey platform Qualtrics, questions will use a combination of a Likert seven-point scale, multiple-choice questions, and one open-ended response. All data from quantitative and multiple-choice questions will be analyzed and coded with SPSS. To begin this study, questions are designed to a) establish consumers on a level beyond simple fanship and more closely defined organizational members and b) determine the impact technology has on sport affiliation, consumption, and the overall experience. Estimated response time to complete this survey is five minutes.

### **Instrumentation**

The core of this questionnaire is comprised of the supporting behaviors inventory and emotional elements described in Chapter Two. These are categorized in Sections Two, Three, and Four of the questionnaire. Section One has five questions pertaining to general demographic information. Section Two contains nine questions pertaining to level of affiliation. Definable parameters of fandom are determined through the literature review and include games consumed, live attendance, emotional attachment, and social media participation. Section Three has eight questions dedicated to affective attachment (Allen & Meyer, 1990) with questions reflecting the elements of customer recruitment and stronger loyalty. Section Four pertains to the component of continuance (Allen & Meyer, 1990) with a series of seven questions regarding product utilization and resilience to negative information. Section Five lists seven questions regarding the normative component of commitment (Allen & Meyer, 1990), asking specifics of company/product promotion and willingness to invest in company shares. Lastly section Six holds three questions about the overall sport experience, including one open ended response.

The questionnaire is designed to cover the necessary elements in organizational research relevant to sport fan psychology. While the core of the survey (Sections Two, Three, and Four) pertain to the classic components of commitment, questions are also designed to integrate technological competency and consumer behavior. This is to account for the present state of digital media consumption and creation. Additionally in Section One, participants are asked to self-evaluate their efficacy with technology, specifically their competency with computers and mobile devices.

### **Procedures**

This questionnaire has 29 questions in total. The survey will be electronically administered and stored securely on Qualtrics. Data will be converted from Qualtrics to an excel spreadsheet prior to use in SPSS. Databases will be password protected, IP addresses will be deleted, and there are no other researchers involved. The data downloaded from the survey website will be done so with a unique login and password only I, as the primary and sole investigator, will know.

A mean will be generated for questions in Section One order to make correlations with data pertaining to age and gender. Once means are determined of every other scale items, correlations will be made evaluating the relationship between technology, consumption, and beliefs within each component of commitment. These findings analyzed with SPSS will provide empirical data for the hypotheses.

Section Two contains a series of questions detailing the factors of modern day fandom. These parameters include viewing habits, social media participation, loyalty, personal meaning, and games/events attended. Once the average for each question is produced, a true scale for fan affiliation can be determined.

The following tables consolidates the series of hypotheses and lists the relevant survey scale items to be used for data analysis.

*Table 6: Hypothesis A with Corresponding Questionnaire Scale Items*

Hypothesis	Claim	Survey Questionnaire Scale Items
<b>Affective Claim (Hypothesis A)</b>	Group membership and player/team loyalty are strengthened by social media participation before, during, or after a sporting event.	14. <i>Social media has increased my ability to find other fans that share my favorite team or player.</i>
		15. <i>Too much of my fan experience would be disrupted if I were unable to interact with others via social media.</i>
		16. <i>I am loyal to my favorite team or player and use social media to promote my allegiance.</i>
		17. <i>Social media participation has made it easier to uphold my team and player affiliation.</i>

Hypothesis A for Section Three (*affective*) pertains to group membership and the psychological element of stronger loyalty, claiming that each are strengthened by social media participation before, during, or after an event. Four statements within section three of the survey are analyzed to determine if this hypothesis is accurate (See Table 6). This grouping of questions must produce a Community Score between a four (neutral) and seven (strongly agree). The community score will be generated by adding the means for each question in this group together, and dividing it by the number of participants. For example, Question 14 states, “Social media has increased my ability to find other fans that share my favorite team of player.” Using the Likert seven-point scale from a one (strongly disagree) to a seven (strongly agree), strengthened group membership will equal a score of four (neutral) or higher. As another example, Question 17 states, “Social media participation has made it easier to uphold my team and player affiliation.” Using the same Likert seven-point scale from one to seven, strengthened loyalty for this question will equal an average of four (neutral) or higher. Additional questions for affective analysis are

Questions 15 and 16 with the same requirements of averaging a four (neutral) or higher (See Table 6).

*Table 7: Hypothesis B with Corresponding Questionnaire Scale Items*

Hypothesis	Claim	Survey Questionnaire Scale Items
<b>Continuance Claim (Hypothesis B)</b>	Sport experience and overall well-being are both enhanced by consuming and sharing social/digital media content	18. <i>Using social and digital media to watch game-related content boosts my fan identity, well-being, and overall sport experience.</i>
		20. <i>If I know I have to miss watching a game live, I use social/digital media to see what happened, read fan commentary, and look at replays.</i>
		21. <i>Too much of my sport experience would be disrupted if I was unable to access social media before, during, or after a game.</i>
		22. <i>I feel like I need to consume, share, or create content on social media to ward off negative comments about my favorite team or player (e.g. retweeting a highlight, watching a replay, posting positive comments, etc.)</i>

Hypothesis B specifies that the sport experience and general sense of well-being are both enhanced by consuming and sharing digital/social media content. Using the seven-point Likert scale, four questions within Section Four: *Continuance* will need to produce a Self Score between four and seven to prove enhancement. The Self score will be generated by adding up all of the means in the questions of this group, and dividing it by the number of participants. For example, Question 18 – “Using social and digital media to watch game-related content boosts my fan identity, well-being, and overall sport experience” (See Table 7), will show a preference for using digital media as a complimentary tool by having an average between four (neutral) and seven (strongly agree). The same scoring will need to result in Question 20 which states – “If I know I have to miss watching a game live, I use social/digital media to see what happened, read fan commentary, and look at replays.” Additional questions for analysis specific to this continuance component are Questions 21 and 22 (See Table 7).

*Table 8: Hypothesis C with Corresponding Questionnaire Scale Items*



Hypothesis	Claim	Survey Questionnaire Scale Items
<b>Normative Claim (Hypothesis C)</b>	Fans feel obligated to promote their favorite team, player, and their brand extensions (e.g. sponsors, affiliates, endorsements, charities) in both physical and digital spaces.	24. <i>I make an effort to support and promote my favorite team or player (e.g. wearing team apparel, telling others about team/player events, going to games, etc.)</i>
		25. <i>I make an effort to support and promote my favorite team or player in social media spaces (e.g. post team/player related content on social networks, take sport related selfies, chat with others regarding team/player).</i>
		26. <i>I have considered purchasing a product or donating to a charity that is affiliated with my favorite team or player.</i>

Hypothesis C stems from the normative component of commitment and claims that fans have a natural obligation to promote their favorite team and player in both physical and digital spaces. Within Section Five of this questionnaire, correlations between level of affiliation and obligations towards the brand extensions of sport will be measured. Correlations will come from three specific questions pertaining to fan obligation towards team/player promotion and their willingness to contribute in team/player brand extensions. For example, Question 26 states – “I have considered purchasing a product or donating to a charity that is affiliated with my favorite team or player” (See Table 8). Additionally, Questions 24 and 25 comment on the physical and digital promotion of affiliation in stating respectively, “I make an effort to support and promote my favorite team or player (e.g. wearing team apparel, telling others about team/player events, going to games, etc.)” and “I make an effort to support and promote my favorite team or player in social media spaces (e.g. post team/player related content on social networks, take sport related selfies, use sport related Snapchat filters, etc.)” All questions pertaining to the normative component are analyzed using the seven point Likert scale, and will need to produce an Organization Score an average between four (neutral) and seven (strongly agree) in order for this Hypothesis C to be considered true. (See Table 8). The Organization Score will be generated by

adding all the means for this grouping of questions together, and dividing it by the number of participants.

*Table 9: Main Hypothesis with Corresponding Questionnaire Scale Items*

Hypothesis	Claim	Survey Questionnaire Scale Items
<p><b>Main Claim</b></p>	<p>The value and significance ascribed to the overall experience is considered greater than the value of any individual game.</p>	<p>27. <i>Creating and consuming social media content adds to the sport experience and extends the life of the game.</i></p>
		<p>28. <i>“Considering all of the reasons why I watch sports, I feel that the entire experience surrounding sport outweighs the value of any individual game.”</i></p>

In the final Section Six there are three questions in total. Included within the main hypothesis is the general main claim that the value of a sport experience is greater than any individual game. The first two questions in this section are statements related to this claim, specifically asking about the lifespan of the overall sport experience and the impact social media has in fueling it. For example, Question 27 states, “Creating and consuming social media content adds to the sport experience and extends the life of the game.” Additionally, Question 28 states – “Considering all of the reasons why I watch sports, I feel that the entire experience surrounding sport outweighs the value of any individual game” (See Table 9). These statements will need to produce an Experience Score between four (neutral) and seven (strongly agree) to prove this hypothesis to be accurate. The Experience Score will be generated by adding the questions in this group together and dividing it by the number of participants.

**Participants**

Qualitative and quantitative data will be collected from a sample of sport fans and general media consumers. A minimum of 100 participants is required for this study and will be recruited via email, word of mouth, social media platforms Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn.

Participants will complete the survey via the Internet by logging onto <http://bit.ly/sportexperience>. The study will remain open for 30 days. Inclusion criteria includes being over 18 years of age. The only exclusionary criteria is being under the age of 18. Full study disclosure and consent form will be on the landing page of the survey. A right to refuse and reject a participant is in the full disclosure on the survey's main page as well. Participants will confirm that they are over 18 and give consent to participate prior to starting the survey. If they do not confirm on either point, they will not be able to access the survey. Participants will spend approximately 20 minutes to complete the entire questionnaire.

Data will have no identifying information. Participants will be coded with ID numbers. Any responses written in the dissertation will be used with ID numbers (i.e. P01, P02, etc.). All files will be stored with password protection and only accessible to me. Data will be converted from Qualtrics and stored electronically during the duration of the research and writing the dissertation.

In completing this survey, participants will benefit by gaining a greater psychological awareness of their own motivations, identification, and participation with sports content and digital media participation. The self-sport construct produced from this study will add original and contemporary knowledge to the disciplines of media psychology, organizational psychology, and identity research.

A summary of results will be provided to participants by request only.

## CHAPTER FOUR

## RESULTS

The purpose of this study is to explore the perceived impact digital and social media has on team-identification and the overall sport experience for self-reported sport consumers. Four measurement groupings were generated to correspond with each hypothesis claim. The following tables illustrate basic demographic information for the respondents.

**Quantitative Results***Table 10: Description of Participants*

Question 1: What is your age?

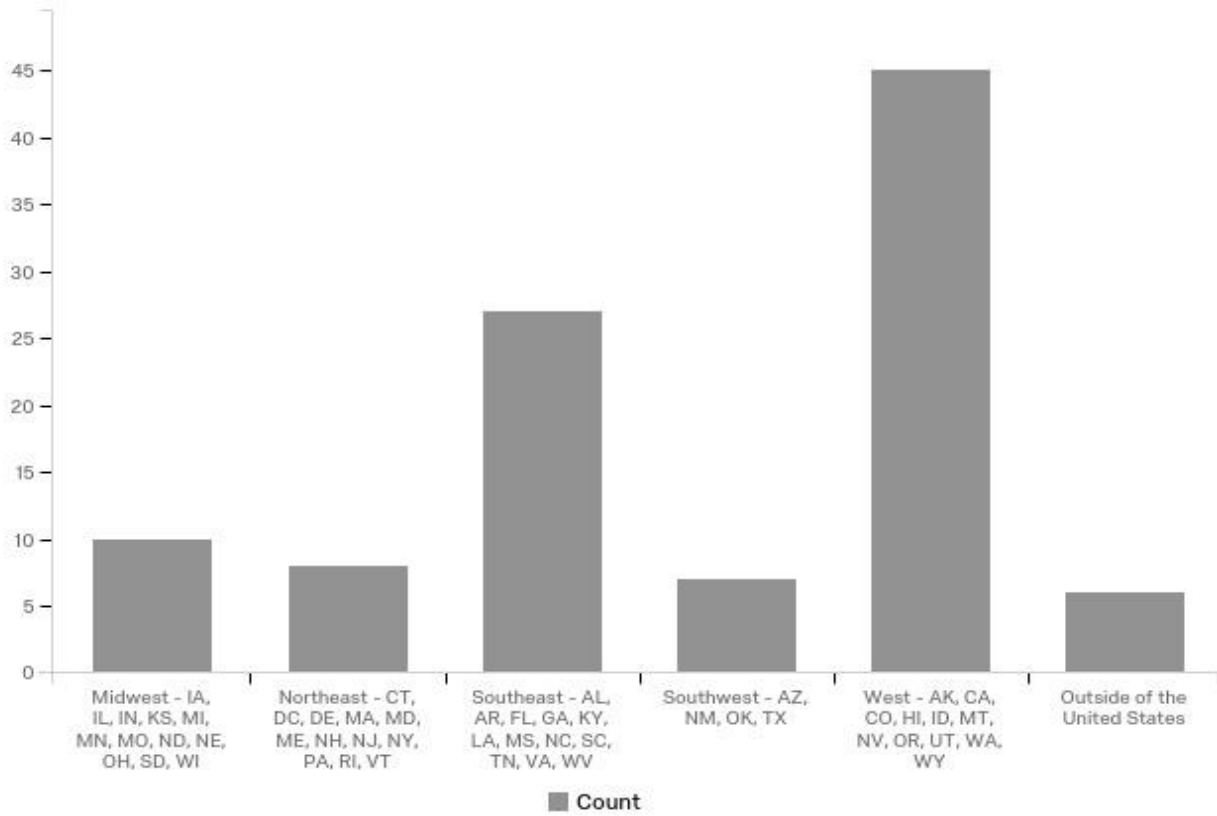
Answer	%	Count
18-24	9.71%	10
25-34	30.10%	31
35-44	43.69%	45
45-55	13.59%	14
55+	2.91%	3
Total	100%	103

Question 2: What is your gender?

#	Answer	%	Count
1	Male	48.54%	50
2	Female	51.46%	53
	Total	100%	103

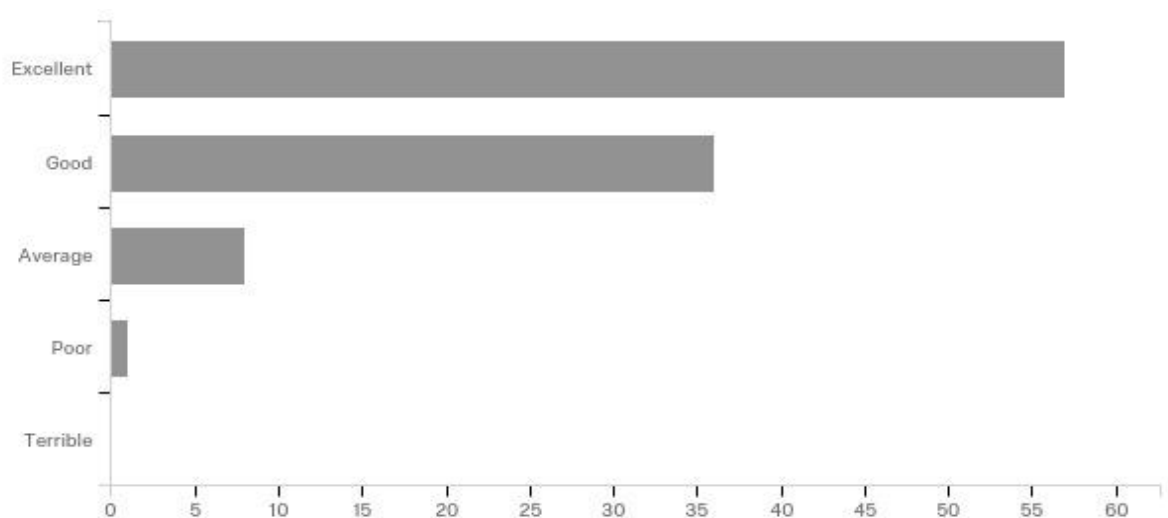
Question 3: What region of the country do you live in?

Answer	%	Count
Midwest - IA, IL, IN, KS, MI, MN, MO, ND, NE, OH, SD, WI	9.71%	10
Northeast - CT, DC, DE, MA, MD, ME, NH, NJ, NY, PA, RI, VT	7.77%	8
Southeast - AL, AR, FL, GA, KY, LA, MS, NC, SC, TN, VA, WV	26.21%	27
Southwest - AZ, NM, OK, TX	6.80%	7
West - AK, CA, CO, HI, ID, MT, NV, OR, UT, WA, WY	43.69%	45
Outside of the United States	5.83%	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>103</b>



Question 5: How would you rate your overall proficiency with computers?

Answer	%	Count
Excellent	55.88%	57
Good	35.29%	36
Average	7.84%	8
Poor	0.98%	1
Terrible	0.00%	0
Total	100%	102



A total of 108 individuals logged on to the Internet-based survey site of Qualtrics. Incomplete responses were coded as -99 while completely blank reports were eliminated. Participants had a mean age of 2.70 (SD=0.92). Ages of this sample ranged from 18 years to 55 and over. The gender of participants slightly favored more women than men, with a percentage of 51.46% compared to 48.54%. Regional demographic information indicates that majority of participants came from the West with 43.69%, reflecting the following states: Arkansas,

California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Oregon, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming. In regards to the technological competency of participants, a strong majority of 55.88% self-reported having an excellent understanding of computers and general technology.

**Group One**

Group One corresponds with the main hypothesis claim. Two questions comprise this group (Questions 27 and 28). The mean of Question 27 = 5.11, SD=1.54. The mean of Question 28 = 5.10, SD=1.57 (See Table 11).

*Table 11: Group One Mean and Standard Deviation*

Question	Mean	SD
27	5.11	1.54
28	5.10	1.57

To obtain a score of this group (Experience Score), the means have been combined and divided by the number of participants (n=88). Culmination of this data generates an Experience Score of 4.1818. Data and descriptive analysis for this grouping of questions is illustrated in Table 12.

*Table 12: Group One Main Claim Data and Descriptive Analysis*

Question 27: Creating and consuming social media content adds to the sport experience and extends the life of the game.

Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
Creating and consuming social media content adds to the sport experience and extends the life of the game.	1.00	7.00	5.11	1.54	2.37	88

Answer	%	Count
Strongly agree	21.59%	19

Agree	21.59%	19
Somewhat agree	28.41%	25
Neither agree nor disagree	14.77%	13
Somewhat disagree	4.55%	4
Disagree	6.82%	6
Strongly disagree	2.27%	2
Total	100%	88

Question 28: Considering all of the reasons why I watch sports, I feel that the entire experience surrounding sport outweighs the value of any individual game.

Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
Considering all of the reasons why I watch sports, I feel that the entire experience surrounding sport outweighs the value of any individual game.	1.00	7.00	5.10	1.57	2.48	88

Answer	%	Count
Strongly agree	22.73%	20
Agree	22.73%	20
Somewhat agree	21.59%	19
Neither agree nor disagree	19.32%	17
Somewhat disagree	4.55%	4
Disagree	6.82%	6
Strongly disagree	2.27%	2
Total	100%	88

Using the Cross Tabulation function in Qualtrics, I have correlated the self-reported amount of games consumed (rows) with the experience value of (columns) (See Table 13).



Table 13: Cross Tabulation Correlating Games Consumed and Experience Value

		Considering all of the reasons why I watch sports, I feel that the entire experience surrounding...							
		Strongly agree	Agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Total
0-2		3	5	9	8	1	2	1	29
3-5		9	11	7	6	2	2	0	37
6-8		2	4	0	2	1	0	1	10
8+		6	0	3	1	0	2	0	12
Total		20	20	19	17	4	6	2	88

		Considering all of the reasons why I watch sports, I feel that the entire experience surrounding...
Considering all of your sport viewing habits (i.e. television at home, sports bar, online streami...	Chi Square	24.44*
	Degrees of Freedom	18
	p-value	0.14

**Group Two**

Group Two corresponds with Hypothesis A, the Affective Claim. Four questions comprise this group (Questions 14, 15, 16, 17). The means for each question in this grouping are as follows: Q14 mean= 5.10, SD = 1.83, Q15 mean = 4.00, SD = 1.84, Q16 mean = 5.11, SD = 1.88 and Q17 mean = 4.90, SD = 1.85 (See Table 14).

Table 14: Group One Means and Standard Deviation

Question	Mean	SD
14	5.10	1.83
15	4.00	1.84
16	5.11	1.88
17	4.90	1.85

To obtain a score of this group (Community Score), the means have been combined and divided by the number of participants (n=90). This generated a Community Score of 4.0104.

Data and descriptive analysis is reflected in Table 15.

*Table 15: Group Two, Affective Claim Data and Descriptive Analysis*

Question 15: Social media has increased my ability to find other fans, share my passion, and recruit others into watching my favorite team or player.

Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
Social media has increased my ability to find other fans, share my passion, and recruit others into watching my favorite team or player.	1.00	7.00	5.10	1.83	3.33	90
Answer				%		Count
Strongly agree				33.33%		30
Agree				14.44%		13
Somewhat agree				14.44%		13
Neither agree nor disagree				23.33%		21
Somewhat disagree				1.11%		1
Disagree				7.78%		7
Strongly disagree				5.56%		5
Total				100%		90

Question 15: Too much of my sport experience would be disrupted if I were unable to interact with others via social media.

Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
Too much of my sport experience would be disrupted if I were unable to interact with others via social media.	1.00	7.00	4.00	1.84	3.40	90

Answer	%	Count
Strongly agree	11.11%	10
Agree	12.22%	11
Somewhat agree	18.89%	17
Neither agree nor disagree	18.89%	17
Somewhat disagree	11.11%	10
Disagree	17.78%	16
Strongly disagree	10.00%	9
Total	100%	90

Question 16: I am loyal to my favorite team or player and use social media to promote my allegiance.

Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
I am loyal to my favorite team or player and use social media to promote my allegiance.	1.00	7.00	5.11	1.88	3.53	91

Answer	%	Count
Strongly agree	30.77%	28
Agree	19.78%	18
Somewhat agree	20.88%	19
Neither agree nor disagree	8.79%	8
Somewhat disagree	4.40%	4
Disagree	8.79%	8
Strongly disagree	6.59%	6
Total	100%	91

Question 17: Social media participation has made it easier to uphold my team/player affiliation.

Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
Social media participation has made it easier to uphold my team/player affiliation.	1.00	7.00	4.90	1.85	3.42	90

Answer	%	Count
Strongly agree	20.00%	18
Agree	28.89%	26
Somewhat agree	16.67%	15
Neither agree nor disagree	15.56%	14
Somewhat disagree	1.11%	1
Disagree	10.00%	9
Strongly disagree	7.78%	7
Total	100%	90

Using the cross tabulation features built into the statistical tool of Qualtrics, correlations are made between the variables of age (column) and social media interaction (rows) (see Table 16).

*Table 16: Cross Tabulation Correlating Age and the Need for Social Media Interaction*

	What is your age?					Total
	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-55	55+	
Strongly agree	0	2	7	1	0	10
Agree	1	2	6	2	0	11
Somewhat agree	4	3	6	3	1	17
Neither agree nor disagree	1	7	6	2	1	17
Somewhat disagree	1	4	4	1	0	10
Disagree	1	6	6	2	1	16
Strongly disagree	1	4	4	0	0	9
Total	9	28	39	11	3	90

		What is your age?
Too much of my sport experience would be disrupted if I were unable to interact with others via s...	Chi Square	15.09*
	Degrees of Freedom	24
	p-value	0.92

### Group Three

Group Three corresponds with the Hypothesis B, the Continuance Claim. Four questions comprise this group (Questions 18, 20, 21, 22). The means and standard deviation for each

question are as follows: Q18 = 5.03, SD = 1.67, Q20 = 5.87, SD = 1.38, Q21 = 4.20, SD = 1.81, and Q22 = 3.37, SD = 2.02 (See Table 17).

*Table 17: Group Two Means and Standard Deviation*

Question	Mean	SD
18	5.03	1.67
20	5.87	1.38
21	4.20	1.81
22	3.37	2.02

To obtain a score of this group (Self Score), the means have been combined and divided by the number of participants (n=89). This generated a Self Score of 3.9801. Data and descriptive analysis from this grouping of questions is illustrated in Table 18.

*Table 18: Group Three, Continuance Claim Data and Descriptive Analysis*

Question 18: Using social and digital media to watch game-related content boosts my fan identity, well-being, and overall sport experience.

Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
Using social and digital media to watch game-related content boosts my fan identity, well-being, and overall sport experience.	1.00	7.00	5.03	1.67	2.77	89

Answer	%	Count
Strongly agree	20.22%	18
Agree	26.97%	24
Somewhat agree	20.22%	18
Neither agree nor disagree	17.98%	16
Somewhat disagree	2.25%	2
Disagree	7.87%	7
Strongly disagree	4.49%	4
Total	100%	89

Question 20: If I know I have to miss watching a game live, I use social/digital media to see what happened, read fan commentary, and look at replays.

Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
If I know I have to miss watching a game live, I use social/digital media to see what happened, read fan commentary, and look at replays.	1.00	7.00	5.87	1.38	1.89	89
Answer				%		Count
Strongly agree				41.57%		37
Agree				29.21%		26
Somewhat agree				16.85%		15
Neither agree nor disagree				5.62%		5
Somewhat disagree				1.12%		1
Disagree				4.49%		4
Strongly disagree				1.12%		1
Total				100%		89

Question 21: Too much of my sport experience would be disrupted if I was unable to access social media before, during, or after a game.

Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
Too much of my sport experience would be disrupted if I was unable to access social media before, during, or after a game.	1.00	7.00	4.20	1.81	3.28	89
Answer				%		Count
Strongly agree				11.24%		10
Agree				16.85%		15
Somewhat agree				17.98%		16
Neither agree nor disagree				21.35%		19
Somewhat disagree				7.87%		7
Disagree				16.85%		15

Strongly disagree	7.87%	7
Total	100%	89

Question 22: I feel like I need to consume, share, or create content on social media to ward off negative comments about my favorite team or player (e.g. retweeting a highlight, watching a replay, posting positive comments, etc.).

Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
I feel like I need to consume, share, or create content on social media to ward off negative comments about my favorite team or player (e.g. retweeting a highlight, watching a replay, posting positive comments, etc.).	1.00	7.00	3.37	2.02	4.10	89

Answer	%	Count
Strongly agree	8.99%	8
Agree	10.11%	9
Somewhat agree	11.24%	10
Neither agree nor disagree	20.22%	18
Somewhat disagree	3.37%	3
Disagree	20.22%	18
Strongly disagree	25.84%	23
Total	100%	89

Cross tabulation was made in this grouping of questions, correlating sentiments of affiliation with Question 8 and Question 18 pertaining to use of social media in boosting well-being. Question 8 states “My favorite team or player has a great deal of personal meaning to me” and Question 18 states “Using social and digital media to watch game related content boosts my fan identity, well-being, and overall sport experience.” Table 19 below illustrates the correlated data.

*Table 19: Cross Tabulation Correlating Affiliation and Use of Social Media for Well-Being*



		My favorite team or player has a great deal of personal meaning for me.							
		Strongly agree	Agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Total
Strongly agree		11	5	0	0	0	1	1	18
Agree		11	9	2	2	0	0	0	24
Somewhat agree		8	5	3	2	0	0	0	18
Neither agree nor disagree		4	5	3	3	0	0	1	16
Somewhat disagree		1	0	0	1	0	0	0	2
Disagree		3	4	0	0	0	0	0	7
Strongly disagree		2	0	1	0	0	0	1	4
Total		40	28	9	8	0	1	3	89

		My favorite team or player has a great deal of personal meaning for me.
Using social and digital media to watch game-related content boosts my fan identity, well-being,...	Chi Square	31.94*
	Degrees of Freedom	36
	p-value	0.66

**Group Four**

Group Four corresponds with the Hypothesis C, the Normative Claim. Three questions comprise this group (Questions 24, 25, 26). The mean and standard deviation for each question is as follows: Q24 = 5.57, SD = 1.40, Q25 = 3.18, SD = 1.83, and Q26 = 3.13, SD=1.83 (See Table 20).

*Table 20: Group Four Mean and Standard Deviation*

Question	Mean	SD
24	5.57	1.40
25	3.18	1.83
26	3.13	1.83

To obtain a score of this group (Organization Score), the means will be combined and divided by the number of participants (n=89). This generated an Organization Score of 4.1796.

Data and descriptive analysis from this grouping of questions is illustrated in Table 21.

*Table 21: Group Four, Normative Claim Data and Descriptive Analysis*

Question 24: I make an effort to support and promote my favorite team or player (e.g. wearing team apparel, telling others about team/player events, going to games, etc.)

Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
I make an effort to support and promote my favorite team or player (e.g. wearing team apparel, telling others about team/player events, going to games, etc.).	1.00	7.00	5.57	1.40	1.95	89

Answer	%	Count
Strongly agree	29.21%	26
Agree	32.58%	29
Somewhat agree	19.10%	17
Neither agree nor disagree	11.24%	10
Somewhat disagree	2.25%	2
Disagree	4.49%	4
Strongly disagree	1.12%	1
Total	100%	89

Question 25: I make an effort to support and promote my favorite team or player in social media spaces (e.g. post team/player related content, take sport related selfies, use sport related snapchat filters, etc.).

Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
I make an effort to support and promote my favorite team or player in social media spaces (e.g. post	1.00	7.00	3.16	1.83	3.35	89

team/player related content, take sport related selfies, use sport related snapchat filters, etc.)

Answer	%	Count
Strongly agree	20.22%	18
Agree	26.97%	24
Somewhat agree	14.61%	13
Neither agree nor disagree	15.73%	14
Somewhat disagree	5.62%	5
Disagree	11.24%	10
Strongly disagree	5.62%	5
Total	100%	89

Question 26: I have considered purchasing a product or donating to a charity that is affiliated with my favorite team or player.

Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
I have considered purchasing a product or donating to a charity that is affiliated with my favorite team or player.	1.00	7.00	3.13	1.83	3.34	90

Answer	%	Count
Strongly agree	22.22%	20
Agree	25.56%	23
Somewhat agree	13.33%	12
Neither agree nor disagree	15.56%	14
Somewhat disagree	5.56%	5
Disagree	14.44%	13
Strongly disagree	3.33%	3
Total	100%	90

Using the cross tabulation features, correlations were made analyzing the variable of loyalty (row) with promotional efforts in social media (column). Table 22 below illustrated the correlated data.

*Table 22: Cross Tabulations Correlating Loyalty with Social Media Promotion*

	I make an effort to support and promote my favorite team or player in social media spaces (e.g. p...							Total
	Strongly agree	Agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	
Strongly agree	7	7	0	0	0	0	1	15
Agree	5	4	0	5	0	0	1	15
Somewhat agree	6	7	3	0	1	1	1	19
Neither agree nor disagree	0	2	4	3	1	4	0	14
Somewhat disagree	0	1	1	1	1	0	0	4
Disagree	0	2	4	4	0	5	0	15
Strongly disagree	0	1	1	1	2	0	2	7
Total	18	24	13	14	5	10	5	89

		I make an effort to support and promote my favorite team or player in social media spaces (e.g. p...
I love my favorite team or player so much, I consider myself to be a member of their organization.	Chi Square	74.70*
	Degrees of Freedom	36
	p-value	0.00

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

**Analysis of Research Questions**

This chapter presents a discussion of the results from this study by analyzing data in the context of the research question and hypothesis constituent. The research question driving this dissertation asked what are the components of a multidimensional sport experience and what influence does social media participation have on this experience and sport identification at large. Based on the curation and analysis of literature in Chapter Two, an experiential ecosystem is developed to illustrate the three dominant fields that make up a multidimensional sport experience. These fields are Community, Self, and Organization.

This quantitative survey is designed to reveal the emotional and behavioral aspects of team identification, with the inclusion of social and digital media immersion. The following sections will state the empirical findings for each hypothesis and grouping of survey questions.

### **Group One Findings**

The main hypothesis states that the overall sport experience is valued greater than any individual game. This claim is proven to be accurate with an Experience Score of 4.1818, landing between the required four (neutral) and seven (strongly agree). This score is comprised of two questions, including Question 27 which makes the statement that creating and consuming social media content extends the life of the game. Majority of respondents (25) answered a five (somewhat agree) registering a 28.41%, while an overwhelming 71.59% answered between a five (somewhat agree) and a seven (strongly agree) combined.

The life of the game is lived out through the multidimensional identities of fans. What sport represents is not dormant to just the playing field. More accurately, contemporary sport experiences are constructed from a set of emotions and behaviors played out in both the physical and digital spaces. This includes social media platforms where identities are furnished through

the efficacy of creating content and the interaction from connecting with likeminded others and athletes/team representatives directly.

Relatedly, Question 28 of this grouping speaks to the value attributed to the overall experience, where more emotional weight is placed on it than any independent event. A strong 67.05% of respondents answered between a five (somewhat agree) and seven (strongly agree) to this statement. This emphasizes that fans place value on the emotional commitment behind the *experience* of consuming sport, and does not place all of their external stake on the game itself. Rather the variables of group membership, team/player/community loyalty, interaction, and content creation are equally if not more important the final outcome of an event.

In Table 13, cross tabulations are shown correlating the number of games consumed with Question 28 pertaining to the value of the overall experience. Data in this table shows that 17 respondents watch 0-2 games per week and also selected between somewhat agree and strongly agree in terms of the experience being greater than the game. Interestingly, only 9 respondents watch 8+ games and selected between the same margin of somewhat agree and strongly agree. This data suggests that affiliation and experience are not contingent upon games consumed. Rather fandom remains to be an emotional connection and intrinsic commitment where the variables not related to sports statistics drives identification.

Since data shows that the experience is greater than the game, it can be inferred that the sport media ecosystem has positively benefited by the acceleration of social media. The adoption and inclusion of digital media not only extends the life of the game, but it also provides fans a digital gridiron to extend their network of community, allegiance and channels to produce and consume content.

### **Group Two Findings**

Hypothesis A, the Affective Claim, corresponds with the measurements provided in Group Two. This claim states that group membership and player/team loyalty are strengthened by social media participation before, during, or after a sporting event. The Community Score generated is 4.0104, landing just slightly between the required four (neutral) and seven (strongly agree) scale. It should be noted that Question 14, the statement referring to social media increasing the ability to find and recruit other fans, a majority of 62.21% answered between a five (somewhat agree) and seven (strongly agree), the majority selecting strongly agree with 33.33%.

Using the affective component of commitment (Allen & Meyer, 1990) from organizational psychology as a foundation for this Community Score, strong sentiments of interaction and loyalty are revealed. Fans *want* to feel a part of something larger than themselves. Fans *want* boast their pride by reliving the experiences and telling others. And both of these values are now enhanced by social media participation. This data speaks to the importance of upholding customer recruitment as a form of identity utility and the significance of interacting with likeminded others. Relatedly, the concept of loyalty was measured quite high as reflected in Question 17. In response to whether or not social media increases the ability to remain loyal and promote allegiances, over 50% responded either agree or strongly agree. This suggests that social media can act as an emotional benefactor to consumers, strengthening the ability to sustain team fidelity and intergroup relations. We can declare from this data and literary research that when these two supporting behaviors of identity utility are combined with the service of digital media technology, an optimal experience occurs. A model sport experience must be comprised of authentic opportunities to extend group membership and produce content, just as one consumes it, before, during, and after an event.

Table 16 illustrated cross tabulations for this grouping, correlating age with the need for social media interaction in Question 15. This statement says, “Too much of my sport experience would disrupted if I were unable to interact with others via social media.” Data presented from this table reveals that majority of the respondents who selected between somewhat agree and strongly agree fall into the 35-44 age demographic (19 respondents). This strongly outnumbers the 18-24 demographic (5) and the 25-34 demographic (7). Also of note, only 1 respondent in the 55+ demographic selected somewhat agree. This data suggests that millennials between the 18-34 range should not be the only primary group of focus. Brand and marketing strategies, content development, and user interfaces for social media platforms must incorporate the needs of the 35-44 range as well. The presence of social media in sport is a necessity as much as it is a convenience. Therefore, careful consideration to the human-centered needs of the more than one audience of sport consumers will likely present the best solution for marketers and developers.

### **Group Three Findings**

Constituent Hypothesis B refers to the Continuance claim referenced in Group Three. This claim states that the sport experience and overall well-being are both enhanced by consuming and sharing social/digital media content. Data from this grouping produced a Self Score of 3.9801, falling short of the required four (neutral) to seven (strongly agree) range. While this claim is disproven, telling information still resides from this study. For example, the statement in Question 18 asks if consuming game related digital media content increases fan identity and well-being. A strong 67.41% answered between five (agree) and seven (strongly agree), suggesting that digital and social media participation does has a positive correlation to general well-being and sport affiliation.



We can infer from the continuance form of commitment, that fans feel a *need* to consume sports content, in both the traditional and digital senses. The fluidity of content provided from social and digital media platforms supplies consumers additive content that supports their identity needs. Additionally, in Question 20 a solid 41.57% majority answered seven (strongly agree) to consuming social and digital media content when looking for game related commentary, replays, and highlights. This information indicates that sport consumers use digital media as a default medium and passage to fill the void of missed information such as missing a game, not knowing the outcome of an event, or missing out on breaking news.

In the cross tabulations correlating affiliation (Question 8) with the use of social media for well-being (Question 18), there is a significant overlap between those that feel that their favorite team or player has a great deal of personal meaning to them *and* strongly agree with the social media's power to boost their identity and well-being. 11 respondents answered strongly agree to both statements. Moreover, 30 respondents answered between somewhat agree and strongly agree. This suggests that for moderately to highly affiliated fans, social media is an instrument of necessity; a means to express their multidimensional identities to others, make contributions to the greater sport experience and as a result, boost their sense of well-being.

The two supporting behaviors of identity utility within this grouping are product utilization and resilience to negative information. Questions 18 and 20 imply that the use of social and digital media does serve a higher purpose for sport consumers in regards to these two functional forms of identity. However when it comes to resilience to negativity, social media does not play nearly as important of a tool. For example, 25.84% answered one (strongly disagree) to Question 22, a statement reflecting the need to use social media to ward off negative comments about a favorite team or player. This shows a drastic contrast between variables of

supporting behavior. Fans *require* social and digital media to fulfill the needs of preserving loyalty, consuming content and upholding intergroup relations; yet, social and digital media is *not needed* when it comes to the reception of negative information. One can infer that deflecting negativity resides in the emotional, mental space rather than a digital one. Observing negative or trolling content in social media is likely ignored, overlooked, and unjustified because the positive strength of one's team-identification is stronger than the negative information.

### **Group Four Findings**

Hypothesis C, the Normative Claim resides in the data generated from Group Four. This claim states that fans feel obligated to promote their favorite team, player, and their brand extensions (e.g. sponsors, affiliates, endorsements, charities) in both physical and digital spaces. This generated an Organization Score of 4.1796, landing positively in the required range of four (neutral) to seven (strongly agree). There are two supporting behaviors of identity utility within this grouping of questions that produced this positive score – company/product promotion and a willingness to invest in company shares (i.e. team or player sponsors and endorsements). As the literature in Chapter Two stated, promoting brands, products, and companies can take place in a variety of ways in the physical space through the possession-self link (Ferraro et al., 2011). Question 24 asks participants to state how strongly they make an effort to promote their allegiances in the physical space by wearing team or player affiliated clothing or talking about their team to friends and family. A combined 61.79% answered either six (agree) or seven (strongly agree). To illustrate the impact social media has on these acts of promotion, Question 25 asked participants to state how strongly they felt about using social media as an additional means to digitally extend their endorsements. This question generated a 47.19% of respondents that either agree or strongly agree.

As shown in the cross tabulation of Table 22, the correlations between player/team loyalty and social media as a promotional tool also support this claim. In addition to the data of Question 25 described above, Question 11 is used as well where respondents express their affiliation. This statement says “I love my favorite team or player so much I consider myself to be a member of their organization.” Data from this correlation shows that 18 respondents answered between somewhat agree and strongly agree for both statements. What is also telling information from these correlations is that zero respondents selected between strongly disagree (1) and neither agree nor disagree (4) for *both* questions. This suggests that fans are conscious of their self-reported allegiances to their favorite team or players. Furthermore, in being aware of one’s self-identified affiliation, a fan will feel an obligation of promote their team or player because it essentially is the same as promoting themselves.

The combination of these questions suggests that sport consumers want to use the merged, combined force of physical and digital spaces to boast their allegiances. For fans in the modern era of sport consumption, wearing one’s favorite jersey is no longer enough to suffice. Rather the opportunity to authenticate one’s affiliation in a digital space is also welcomed. This includes the behavior of reposting team/player related information, sharing sport related selfies, using official hashtags and filters, and chatting with others in social forums about game related material. The normative form of commitment in this Organization Score shows that fans feel like they *ought* to endorse their team’s corporate affiliates, and *should* invest or make their purchases based on these partnerships, in both physical and digital spaces.

As a digital extension of personal affiliations, data also supports the claim that fans feel obligated to emotionally back the brand extensions of their favorite teams and players. A strong 61.11% of respondents answered between somewhat agree (five) and strongly agree (seven) to

having considered donating to a team/player related charity or purchasing an associated product. It is likely that because of the high numbers of social media consumption from the overlapping scores of experience, community, and Self, sport consumers are prone to using social media for promoting these affiliated brands and corporate extensions.

If a fan can retweet a post from their favorite team or player, they likely can retweet a post from a brand that is connected to their favorite team or player as well. From what we've gleaned in Chapter Two regarding fans consuming content and brands because of an emotional connection and intersecting core values (Ferraro et al., 2011; Jansson-Boyd, 2010), forms of social communication can also take place in digital spaces. This is because that within the continuance form of commitment (Allen & Meyer, 1990), fans will perform actions out of an emotional responsibility. These actions can turn fandom into a financial investment (Hoegel et al., 2014), making it possible for social media to become a conduit to brand exposure. Therefore, data from this grouping illustrates a desire for fans to find more ways to identify with their favorite team or player in both multiple spaces. Doing so will positively intensify the overall experience, a concept this research has proven to matter and be of significant importance to sport consumers.

## CHAPTER SIX

## CONSLUSION

Being a highly affiliated fan is not a requisite to understand the influential power of sport. The experience is a relationship of passion made up of emotion and connection. Considering the evolution of media consumption and the transition from traditional into digital media, therein lies a consistent push in sports media history to create additive content that will allow consumers to feel more fully immersed and engaged with the media. Tracing the patterns of human activity in the sports ecosystem reveals a tribal sensation within fan communities where sport is representative of much more than just box scores or stat lines. There is an experiential phenomenon that encapsulates sport as a whole, revealing that the overall experience of sport is greater than the game itself.

As a transmedia property and brand entity, consumers are able to participate with the sport's linear narrative and add their own "choose their own adventure" story by extending the experience through multiple online and offline channels. Under this guise, sport represents empowerment from the multidimensional experiences consumers are afforded through the numerous pathways of participation. From face paint and tailgating to sport selfies and fantasy sports, consumers are now able to view the game not as just storytelling, but rather story living. With the benefits of emerging media and technology, consumers of any affiliation level can get as close to the game as they want and fulfill their identity needs.

Previous research on team-identification has acknowledged a lack of research in recognizing sport as a multidimensional construct. It has been long assumed by researchers that sport fans should be theoretically understood as organization members (Funk & James, 2001; Heere & James, 2007; Theodorakis et al., 2012; Wann, 2006). As a means to answer these calls, I have presented the Experiential Ecosystem Model to account for the multipurpose, social nature between the Self-Sport link. Sport's experiential ecosystem depicts three overlapping fields -

community, self, and organization. Community refers to the fan-to-group connection where social identity and group membership play integral parts in fan identity. As noted by Heere and James (2007), sport affiliation includes a list of external group identities that are related to, promoted by, or symbolized within sport. This list includes demographic elements (regional, ethnic, gender, sexuality-based and social class-based) and membership elements (vocational, occupation, university, corporate, religious, and politically-based) (Heere & James, 2007). The Self domain embodies the fan-to-self relationship, where media consumed and behaviors performed are a result of necessity and other individual-based requirements. This is represented within the continuance component of commitment where needs are established by the perceived emotional costs if a behavior is discontinued. Reflected by a fan-to-team construct, the field of organization is made up of the normative component of commitment. Due to sports highly visible culture in both traditional and digital media, there is a digest of brand extensions and affiliates where players, teams, franchises and leagues have sponsorships and endorsement deals. These partnerships allow fans to consume products not just because there is a mutual value system or a shared core story. Rather the pure alignment with a fan's favorite team or player is reason enough to invest in company shares, adding additional revenue to the sport affiliated organization (Hoeghele et al., 2014).

The acceleration of technology and digital media flows within each of these domains, working to boost and amplify the experiences consumers have with the event. Research on the vertical of sports technology and experience is significant because patterns of media consumption can offer useful and predictive information pertaining to consumer beliefs. We live in an age now where experiences are valued greater than goods and services (Pine & Gilmore,

2011), behooving sport executives, community leaders, and marketing professionals alike to investigate how experiences can be optimized today using media technology.

There are two perspectives that need to be understood to recognize the multidimensional aspects of sport affiliation - the emotional context and a digital context. Emotionally, research reveals concepts of belonging, connection, values, purchase patterns, motivation and narrative transportation. From this perspective, sport can be seen as a site of interpersonal requirements and a means to gain group status (Hugenberg et al., 2008; Wann, 2006). Intergroup relations become a pillar to the sport experience, making live events a continuous, visual excuse to feel a part of something greater than themselves. Sport emotionally becomes a conduit to well-being from becoming an active participant. Intrinsically, one can be motivated to participate in fantasy sports because one loves learning the ins and outs of players, or purchasing season tickets because they value competition and the irreplaceable live event experience. Contrastingly, an extrinsic act can be seen in the duty of needing to purchase products as a badge or symbol of affiliation as opposed to a love of the product itself. Or tailgating for social pressures and out of fear of feeling like not a true fan because everyone else is.

Sport affiliation is stimulated by active participation, and now with the acceleration and adoption of media technology, consumers are able to extend the experience and spread their behaviors into the digital arena. The digital context of the sport experience pertains to the devices and technology used as a utility to fulfill the varying identity requirements. This includes traditional media displays, second screens, avatars, fantasy, e-sports, game operations, online streaming, social media, immersive technology and digital imagery.

A digitally-mediated sport experience is one where a consumer is able to augment their physical space and/or sport affiliation by having their needs satisfied, undergoing a lasting

sensation, and actively participating with a digital medium. By being embedded in a globally visual culture, the discourse of sport can be referred to as an intertextual entity where meaning is spread across multiple digital and physical channels (Kennedy & Hills, 2009). When one is so engrossed with an event, they become cognitively transported by the event's narrative (Green & Brock, 2002; Nell, 1988), forgetting about the real world around them. Being mesmerized by a competitive basketball game like a reader who gets lost in the pages of a book (Nell, 1988), the consumer experience in sport can have direct implications on the mental makeup of their identity. The personal meaning from basking in the reflected glory of others for example can come from cognitively seeing themselves as a member of the sport organization.

The Experiential Ecosystem Model is built from the foundations organizational psychology, noting that sport consumers are not mere simple spectators. Rather, sport fans are active members of an organization and are producers of content just as they are consumers of content. The three-component model of commitment from Allen and Meyer (1990) is used to illustrate the motivation behind sport affiliation. These three components are affective (wanting), continuance (needing), and normative (duty/responsibility). In order to develop a tangible literature review and valid methodology test, I categorized within these components a set of supporting behaviors known as identity utility (Hoeghele et al., 2014). Specific behaviors are performed because fans, or external stakeholders (Hoeghele et al., 2014; Mael & Ashforth, 1992), use them as expressive acts to show uphold and express their affiliation. The subset of commitment components and supportive activities are as follows: Affective - customer recruitment and stronger loyalty; Continuance - product utilization and resilience to negative information; Normative - company/product promotion and willingness to invest in company shares.



**Limitations**

This study had a minimal number of limitations, both of which concern the organizational structure of the survey using Qualtrics. There is a varying number of participants because the survey was structured in a way where participants were allowed to skip a question. In a scenario where this test can be replicated, a setting should be set to force the participant to respond and provide an answer to each questions, making a consistent number of participants across the board. This study rectified the situation by using -99 in spaces where an answer was not provided by a respondent, acting as a statistical placeholder in order to complete the analysis.

The other area of limitation is in regards to the level of affiliation. While this study used the supporting behaviors of identity utility as a foundation for contemporary fan behavior, more time and analysis needs to take place in order to produce a consistent list of variables of fan identification. Doing so will provide more analysis that speaks to what level of affiliation the respondents are (i.e. how big of a fan are you).

**Further Research**

Investigating the mental market of sports and how experiences are constructed with technology offers many rich opportunities to explore. Deeper correlations between gender and technological proficiency with social media consumption and participation is one example of an area that can reveal pertinent data.

Using this research as a foundation, additional correlations could be made focusing on the regional aspects of sports fandom and behavior with digital media as well. For example certain regions of the United States weigh more heavily in football or basketball for historical reasons or because their state or city has a dominate collegiate or professional team. The state of Texas for instance views football as religion (Townsend, 2010) with heavy attendance in the thousands for

even a high school football game. Correlating this type of information with their patterns of media consumption is significant for market researchers, team executives and brand affiliates because it can reveal opportunities for community involvement, brand promotion, and what type of additive content can be inserted to optimize the experience.

This study was completed entirely by participants living in the United States. It is likely that data will be varying when inserting an international population for a number of reasons including the difference in sports popularity, demographic, and choices in application. Future research should be done extending this experiential model to a specific global demographic in order to investigate how sport consumers internationally view and use social media.

Addressing these topics and others will continue to extend the field of fan psychology and technology use, offering rich insight into the nurturing, dynamic aspects of sport affiliation in the gridiron of digital and social media.

### **Summary**

Gone are the days where sport fans have to rely on the sports section of a newspaper to get their fix for information. No longer are consumers strictly limited to live events to fulfill watch a game. Today's fan is equipped with digital channels to extend not only sports' content, but also the emotional connections produced from it. As an engagement-based network, sport continues to influence the media ecosystem and stand as a platform of influence on communities worldwide. The modern-day fan is hyperaware of information far beyond just simple game statistics thanks to the phenomenon that is social media sports. The sport experience has its own pulse now, thriving as its own multidimensional entity with no sign of slowing down in sight. While we now know that experiences are greater than the games, we can add that experience is also undefeated.

APPENDIX A

SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

Scale Items and Survey Questionnaire

**Section 1: General Information**

1. What is your age?
  - a. 18-24
  - b. 25-34
  - c. 35-44
  - d. 45-55
  - e. 55+
  
2. What is your gender
  - a. Male
  - b. Female
  
3. Which region of the country do you live in?
  - a. Midwest - IA, IL, IN, KS, MI, MN, MO, ND, NE, OH, SD, WI
  - b. Northeast - CT, DC, DE, MA, MD, ME, NH, NJ, NY, PA, RI, VT
  - c. Southeast - AL, AR, FL, GA, KY, LA, MS, NC, SC, TN, VA, WV
  - d. Southwest - AZ, NM, OK, TX
  - e. West - AK, CA, CO, HI, ID, MT, NV, OR, UT, WA, WY
  - f. Outside of the United States
  
4. Which region of the country are you originally from?
  - a. Midwest - IA, IL, IN, KS, MI, MN, MO, ND, NE, OH, SD, WI
  - b. Northeast - CT, DC, DE, MA, MD, ME, NH, NJ, NY, PA, RI, VT
  - c. Southeast - AL, AR, FL, GA, KY, LA, MS, NC, SC, TN, VA, WV
  - d. Southwest - AZ, NM, OK, TX
  - e. West - AK, CA, CO, HI, ID, MT, NV, OR, UT, WA, WY
  - f. Outside of the United States
  
5. How would you rate your overall proficiency with computers and mobile devices?
 

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all	Low	Slightly	Somewhat	Moderately	Very	Extremely
proficient	proficient	proficient	proficient	proficient	proficient	proficient

**Section 2: Determining Affiliation**

6. Considering all of your sport viewing habits (i.e. television at home, sports bar, online streaming), how many games do you watch in a week?
  - a. 0-2
  - b. 3-5
  - c. 5-7
  - d. 7+

7. How frequent would you say you participate in social and digital media before, during, or after a sporting event? (i.e. Tweeting, sharing memes, checking for scores, watching replays, etc.)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Never	Rarely, 10%	Occasionally, 30%	Sometimes, 50%	Frequently, 70%	Usually, 90%	Every time. 100%

8. My favorite team or player has a great deal of personal meaning for me.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree or disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree

9. I would be very happy to spend the rest of my life as fan of my favorite team or player.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree or disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree

10. It would be very hard for me to stop being a fan of my favorite team or player right now.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree or disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree

11. I love my favorite team or player so much, I consider myself to be a member of their organization.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Very untrue of what I believe	Untrue of what I believe	Somewhat untrue of what I believe	Neutral	Somewhat true of what I believe	True of what I believe	Very true of what I believe

12. Given the opportunity, how many games of any sport would you attend live per year?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
None	Rarely would attend, 10%	Occasionally would attend, 30%	Sometimes attend, 50%	Frequently attend, 70%	Mostly attend, 90%	Every game. I'm locked in. 100%

13. Given the opportunity, how many games would you watch live on television?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
None	Rarely would watch, 10%	Occasionally would watch, 30%	Sometimes watch, 50%	Frequently watch, 70%	Mostly watch, 90%	Every game. I'm locked in. 100%

**Section 3: Affective Attachment**

14. Social media has increased my ability to find other fans, share my passion, and recruit others into watching my favorite team or player.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree or disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree

15. Too much of my sport experience would be disrupted if I were unable to interact with others via social media.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree or disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree

16. I am loyal to my favorite team or player and use social media to promote my allegiance.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree or disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree

17. Social media participation has made it easier to uphold my team/player affiliation.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree or disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree

**Section 4: Continuance Commitment**

18. Using social and digital media to watch game-related content boosts my fan identity, well-being, and overall sport experience.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Very untrue of what I believe	Untrue of what I believe	Somewhat untrue of what I believe	Neutral	Somewhat true of what I believe	True of what I believe	Very true of what I believe

19. It would be too costly for me to not watch my favorite team or player play.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree or disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree

20. If I know I have to miss watching a game live, I use social/digital media to see what happened, read fan commentary, and look at replays.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree or disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree

21. Too much of my sport experience would be disrupted if I was unable to access social media before, during, or after a game.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree or disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree

22. I feel like I need to consume, share, or create content on social media to ward off negative comments about my favorite team or player (e.g. retweeting a highlight, watching a replay, posting positive comments, etc.)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree or disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree

**Section 5: Normative Commitment**

23. I feel like it is easier to remain loyal to my favorite team or player by participating in social media (e.g. interacting with other fans, directly addressing the team, players, media members etc.)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree or disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree

24. I make an effort to support and promote my favorite team or player (e.g. wearing team apparel, telling others about team/player events, going to games, etc.)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree or disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree

25. I make an effort to support and promote my favorite team or player in social media spaces (e.g. post team/player related content on social networks, take sport related selfies, use sport related Snapchat filters, etc.).

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree or disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree

26. I have considered purchasing a product or donating to a charity that is affiliated with my favorite team or player.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree or disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree

**Section 6: Overall Sport Experience**

27. Creating and consuming social media content adds to the sport experience and extends the life of the game.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree or disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree

28. Considering all of the reasons why I watch sports, I feel that the entire experience surrounding sport outweighs the value of any individual game.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree or disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree

29. Use the space below to expand on any question. State what is most important to you about your sport experience, team/player affiliation, and the impact (if any) social media has on your allegiances. Use as much space as you need.

#### References

- Ahearne, M., Bhattacharya, C. B., & Gruen, T. (2005). Antecedents and consequences of customer-company identification: expanding the role of relationship marketing. *J Appl Psychol, 90*(3), 574-585. doi:10.1037/0021-9010.90.3.574



- Akerlof, G. A., & Kranton, R. E. (2010). *Identity Economics: How Identities Shape Our Work, Wages, and Well# Being*: Princeton, Princeton University Press.
- Allen, N. J., & Meyer, J. P. (1990). The measurement and antecedents of affective, continuance and normative commitment to the organization. *Journal of occupational psychology*, 63(1), 1-18.
- Aspara, J., & Tikkanen, H. (2011). Corporate marketing in the stock market: The impact of company identification on individuals' investment behaviour. *European Journal of Marketing*, 45(9/10), 1446-1469.
- Badenhausen, K. (2016). Ronaldo generates \$176million in value for his sponsors on social media. Retrieved from <http://www.forbes.com/sites/kurtbadenhausen/2016/06/08/ronaldo-generates-176-million-in-value-for-his-sponsors-on-social-media/ - 1ae30a29774a>
- Bakhtin, M. (1984). *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*: University of Minnesota Press.
- Bakhtin, M. (1990). *Art and Answerability: Early Philosophical Essays*: University of Texas Press.
- Bakhtin, M. (1993). *Toward a Philosophy of the Act*: University of Texas Press.
- Baldwin, M. W. (1992). Relational schemas and the processing of social information. *Psychological bulletin*, 112(3), 461.
- Beck, A. T. (1967). *Depression: Clinical, experimental, and theoretical aspects*: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Bhattacharya, C. B., & Sen, S. (2003). Consumer-company identification: A framework for understanding consumers' relationships with companies. *Journal of marketing*, 67(2), 76-88.
- Branscombe, N. R., & Wann, D. L. (1991). The positive social and self concept consequences of sports team identification. *Journal of Sport & Social Issues*, 15(2), 115-127.
- Branscombe, N. R., & Wann, D. L. (1992). Role of identification with a group, arousal, categorization processes, and self-esteem in sports spectator aggression. *Human relations*, 45(10), 1013-1033.
- Bruner, J. (1990). *Acts of Meaning*: Harvard University Press.
- Bruner, J. (1991). The narrative construction of reality. *Critical inquiry*, 18(1), 1-21.
- Bruner, J. (1996). *Cultures of Education*: Harvard University Press
- Bruner, J. (2004). Life as narrative. *Social research*, 71(3), 691-710.
- Buchanan, B. (1974). Building organizational commitment: The socialization of managers in work organizations. *Administrative science quarterly*, 533-546.
- Burke, K. (1945). *A grammar of motives*. New York: Prentice-Hall.
- Burkitt, I. (2008). *Social selves: Theories of self and society*: Sage.
- Cherry, K. (2016). Differences between extrinsic and intrinsic motivation. Retrieved from <https://www.verywell.com/differences-between-extrinsic-and-intrinsic-motivation-2795384>
- Cialdini, R. B., Borden, R. J., Thorne, A., Walker, M. R., Freeman, S., & Sloan, L. R. (1976). Basking in reflected glory: Three (football) field studies. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 34(3), 366.
- Cruickshank, L., Tseklevs, E., Whitham, R., Hill, A., & Kondo, K. (2007). Making interactive TV easier to use: Interface design for a second screen approach. *The Design Journal*, 10(3), 41-53.

- Curry, T. J., & Weaner, J. S. (1987). Sport identity salience, commitment, and the involvement of self in role: Measurement issues. *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 4(3), 280-288.
- Deninger, D. (2012). *Sports on Television: The How and Why Behind What You See*: Taylor & Francis.
- Dewey, J. (1938). Experience and education (First Touchstone edition 1997 ed.). *New York, NY: Touchstone*.
- Dictionary, O. live-tweet - definition of live-tweet in English | Oxford Dictionaries. Retrieved from <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/us/live-tweet>
- Dimmock, J. A., Grove, J. R., & Eklund, R. C. (2005). Reconceptualizing Team Identification: New Dimensions and Their Relationship to Intergroup Bias. *Group Dynamics: Theory, Research, and Practice*, 9(2), 75.
- Ferraro, R., Escalas, J. E., & Bettman, J. R. (2011). Our possessions, our selves: Domains of self-worth and the possession–self link. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 21(2), 169-177.
- Festinger, L. (1954). A theory of social comparison processes. *Human relations*, 7(2), 117-140.
- Fisher, R., & Wakefield, K. (1998). Factors leading to group identification: A field study of winners and losers. *Psychology & Marketing*, 15(1), 23-40.
- Fiske, J. (1992). Cultural studies and the culture of everyday life. In C. Nelson, P. A. Treichler, & L. Grossberg (Eds.), *Cultural studies: An introduction* (pp. 154-173). New York, NY: Rutledge.
- Flomenbaum, A. (2016). Project Instant: Turner Sports partners with Google to create real-time video ads for 2016 NBA Tip Off. Retrieved from <http://www.thedrum.com/news/2016/10/25/project-instant-turner-sports-partners-with-google-create-real-time-video-ads-2016>
- Fog, K., Budtz, C., & Yakaboylu, B. (2003). *Storytelling: Branding in Practice*. New York: Springer.
- Foucault, M. (1972). The Archeology of Knowledge, trans. A. Sheridan. *London: Tavistock*.
- Foucault, M. (1977). *Discipline and punish: The birth of the prison*: Vintage.
- Foucault, M. (1978). The history of sexuality (R. Hurley, Trans.). *New York: Pantheon*.
- Funk, D. C., & James, J. (2001). The psychological continuum model: A conceptual framework for understanding an individual's psychological connection to sport. *Sport Management Review*, 4(2), 119-150.
- Gau, L.-S., James, J. D., & Kim, J.-C. (2009). Effects of team identification on motives, behavior outcomes, and perceived service quality. *Asian Journal of Management and Humanity Sciences*, 4(2-3), 76-90.
- Gilmore, J. H., & Pine, B. J. (2007). *Authenticity: What consumers really want*: Harvard Business Press.
- Green, M. C., & Brock, T. C. (2002). In the mind's eye: Transportation-imagery model of narrative persuasion. In M. C. G. the mind's eye: Transportation-imagery model of narrative persuasion, J. J. Strange, & T. C. Brock (Eds.), *Narrative impact: Social and cognitive foundations* (pp. 315-341). Mahwah, NJ, US: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Publishers.
- Grönroos, C. (2004). The relationship marketing process: communication, interaction, dialogue, value. *Journal of business & industrial marketing*, 19(2), 99-113.
- Grossberg, L. (1992). *We gotta get out of this place: Popular conservatism and postmodern culture*. New York, NY: Rutledge.

- Gwinner, K., & Swanson, S. R. (2003). A model of fan identification: Antecedents and sponsorship outcomes. *Journal of services marketing*, 17(3), 275-294.
- Hambrick, M. E., Simmons, J. M., Greenhalgh, G. P., & Greenwell, T. C. (2010). Understanding Professional Athletes' Use of Twitter: A Content Analysis of Athlete Tweets. *International Journal of Sport Communication*, 3(4), 454-471. doi:doi:10.1123/ijsc.3.4.454
- Harris, L. C., & Ogbonna, E. (2008). The dynamics underlying service firm–customer relationships: Insights from a study of English Premier League soccer fans. *Journal of Service Research*.
- Harvey, O. J., Hunt, D. E., & Schroder, H. M. (1961). Conceptual systems and personality organization.
- Heere, B., & James, J. D. (2007). Sports teams and their communities: Examining the influence of external group identities on team identity. *Journal of Sport Management*, 21(3), 319.
- Hoeghele, D., Schmidt, S. L., & Torgler, B. (2014). Superstars as Drivers of Organizational Identification: Empirical Findings from Professional Soccer. *Psychology & Marketing*, 31(9), 736-757. doi:10.1002/mar.20731
- Holmlund, M. (1997). *Perceived quality in business relationships* (Vol. 66): Swedish School of Economics and Business Administration Helsinki.
- Hugenberg, L. W., Haridakis, P. M., & Earnhardt, A. C. (2008). *Sports mania: Essays on fandom and the media in the 21st century*: McFarland.
- Jacobson, B. (2003). The social psychology of the creation of a sports fan identity: A theoretical review of the literature. *Athletic Insight: The Online Journal of Sport Psychology*, 5(2), 1-14.
- Jansson-Boyd, C. V. (2010). *Consumer psychology*: Open University Press Milton Keynes.
- Jenkins, H. (2006). *Convergence culture: Where old and new media collide*: NYU press.
- Katz, D., & Kahn, R. L. (1978). The social psychology of organizations.
- Kavner, R. (2014). Clippers launch "Be Relentless" 2014-2015 advertising campaign. Retrieved from <http://www.nba.com/clippers/clippers-launch-be-relentless-2014-15-advertising-campaign/>
- KDKA. (2010). KDKA Firsts. Retrieved from <http://pittsburgh.cbslocal.com/2010/04/01/kdka-firsts/>
- Kennedy, E., & Hills, L. (2009). *Sport, Media and Society*. Berg: Oxford et al.
- Koo, G.-Y., & Hardin, R. (2008). Difference in interrelationship between spectators' motives and behavioral intentions based on emotional attachment. *Sport Marketing Quarterly*, 17(1), 30.
- Krzyzewski, M. (2016, July 9, 2016). Mike and MIke, ESPN Radio.
- Kumar, J., & Herger, M. (2013). *Gamification at Work: Designing Engaging Business Software*, Aarhus, Denmark, The Interaction Design Foundation.
- Lapio, R., & Speter, K. M. (2000). NASCAR: A lesson in integrated and relationship marketing. *Sport Marketing Quarterly*, 9(2), 85-95.
- Mael, F., & Ashforth, B. E. (1992). Alumni and their alma mater: A partial test of the reformulated model of organizational identification. *Journal of organizational Behavior*, 13(2), 103-123.
- Mael, F., & Ashforth, B. E. (2001). Identification in work, war, sports, and religion: Contrasting the benefits and risks. *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour*, 31(2), 197-222.

- Mahony, D. F., Madrigal, R., & Howard, D. A. (2000). Using the psychological commitment to team (PCT) scale to segment sport consumers based on loyalty. *Sport Marketing Quarterly*, 9(1), 15-25.
- Mandela, N. (2000). Speech by Nelson Mandela at the Inaugural Laureus Lifetime Achievement Award, Monaco 2000. Retrieved from [http://db.nelsonmandela.org/speeches/pub\\_view.asp?pg=item&ItemID=NMS1148](http://db.nelsonmandela.org/speeches/pub_view.asp?pg=item&ItemID=NMS1148)
- Matsuoka, H., Chelladurai, P., & Harada, M. (2003). Direct and Interaction Effects of Team Identification and Satisfaction on Intention to Attend Games. *Sport Marketing Quarterly*, 12(4).
- McCarthy, J., & Wright, P. (2004). Technology as experience. *interactions*, 11(5), 42-43.
- McSorley, B. (2014, April 9, 2014). Sports Broadcasting: Sports in the Media. Retrieved from <https://blog.udemy.com/sports-broadcasting/>
- Meyer, J. P., & Allen, N. J. (1991). A three-component conceptualization of organizational commitment. *Human resource management review*, 1(1), 61-89.
- Miltner, K. M., & Baym, N. K. (2015). The selfie of the year of the selfie: Reflections on a media scandal. *International Journal of Communication*, 9, 1701-1715.
- Moragas Spà, M. d. (1999). The Olympic Movement and Information Society.
- Mowday, R. T., Porter, L. W., & Steers, R. M. (1982). *Employee—organization linkages: The psychology of commitment, absenteeism, and turnover*. New York: Academic press.
- NBA.com. (2012). NBA unveils shirts with player Twitter handles. Retrieved from <http://www.nba.com/2012/news/03/27/nba-twitter-shirts.ap/>
- NBA.com. (2014). NBA adds @NBA to spalding game ball for 2014-2015 season. Retrieved from <http://www.nba.com/2014/news/07/31/nba-adds-twitter-handle-to-official-spalding-game-ball/>
- Nell, V. (1988). *Lost in a book: The psychology of reading for pleasure*: Yale University Press.
- Ohler, J. B. (2010). *Digital community, digital citizen*: Corwin Press.
- Ong, J. (2014). Get used to tweets from people you don't follow in your twitter timeline. it's an official feature. Retrieved from <http://thenextweb.com/twitter/2014/08/20/get-used-tweets-people-dont-follow-twitter-timeline-now-official-feature/-gref>
- Ortiz, M. H., Reynolds, K. E., & Franke, G. R. (2013). Measuring consumer devotion: antecedents and consequences of passionate consumer behavior. *Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice*, 21(1), 7-30.
- Padesky, C. A. (1994). Schema change processes in cognitive therapy. *Clinical Psychology & Psychotherapy*, 1(5), 267-278.
- Pallotta, F. (2015). Super Bowl XLIX posts the largest audience in TV history. Retrieved from <http://money.cnn.com/2015/02/02/media/super-bowl-ratings/>
- Pine, B. J., & Gilmore, J. H. (2011). *The experience economy*: Harvard Business Press.
- Pratt, M. G. (1998). Central questions in organizational identification. *Identity in organizations*, 171-207.
- Przybylski, A. K., Murayama, K., DeHaan, C. R., & Gladwell, V. (2013). Motivational, emotional, and behavioral correlates of fear of missing out. *Computers in Human behavior*, 29(4), 1841-1848.
- Rader, B. G. (2004). American sports : from the age of folk games to the age of televised sports.
- Reicher, S. (2001). The psychology of crowd dynamics. *Blackwell handbook of social psychology: Group processes*, 182-208.

- Riewoldt, O. (2002). *Brandscaping: Worlds of Experience in Retail Design/Erlebnisdesign für Einkaufswelten*: Springer Science & Business Media.
- Rovell, D. (2004). Matching the hype 16(April). Retrieved from ESPN.com website:
- Rutledge, P. (2013). Making sense of selfies. Retrieved from <https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/positively-media/201307/making-sense-selfies>
- Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2000). Intrinsic and extrinsic motivations: Classic definitions and new directions. *Contemporary educational psychology*, 25(1), 54-67.
- Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2006). Self-regulation and the problem of human autonomy: does psychology need choice, self-determination, and will? *J Pers*, 74(6), 1557-1585. doi:10.1111/j.1467-6494.2006.00420.x
- Sampson, E. E. (1977). Psychology and the American ideal. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 35(11), 767.
- Sanderson, J. (2012). *Navigating the digital playing field case studies in social media and sports communication*. Arizona State University.
- Scott, S. G., & Lane, V. R. (2000). A stakeholder approach to organizational identity. *Academy of Management review*, 25(1), 43-62.
- Sedlovskaya, A., Purdie-Vaughns, V., Eibach, R. P., LaFrance, M., Romero-Canyas, R., & Camp, N. P. (2013). Internalizing the closet: Concealment heightens the cognitive distinction between public and private selves. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 104(4), 695.
- Shank, M., & Beasley, F. (1998). Fan or fanatic: Refining a measure of sport involvement. *Journal of sport behavior*, 21(4), 435.
- Sherif, M. (1966). *In common predicament: Social psychology of intergroup conflict and cooperation*: Houghton Mifflin comp.
- Sloan, L. R. (1979). The function and impact of sports for fans: A review of theory and contemporary research. *Sports, games, and play: Social and psychological viewpoints*, 219-262.
- Spinrad, W., Lüschen, G., Sage, G., & Sfeir, L. (1981). The function of spectator sports. *Handbook of social science of sport.*, 355-365.
- St. John, S. (2011). 100 years ago: football fans enjoy mechanized reproduction of KU-MU game". Retrieved from <http://www2.ljworld.com/news/2011/nov/27/100-years-ago-football-fans-enjoy-mechanized-repro/>
- Stavros, C., Pope, N. K. L., & Winzar, H. (2008). Relationship marketing in Australian professional sport: An extension of the Shani framework. *Sport Marketing Quarterly*, 17(3), 135.
- Sutton, W. A., McDonald, M. A., Milne, G. R., & Cimperman, J. (1997). Creating and fostering fan identification in professional sports. *Sport Marketing Quarterly*, 6, 15-22.
- Synergy. (2015). *Sport Fans, Social Media and the Millennial Myth*. Retrieved from [http://www.synergy-sponsorship.com/blog/wp-content/uploads/99SYN14528\\_SocialSportsFanDoc-V2.pdf](http://www.synergy-sponsorship.com/blog/wp-content/uploads/99SYN14528_SocialSportsFanDoc-V2.pdf)
- Tajfel, H. (1982). Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 33(1), 1-39. doi:doi:10.1146/annurev.ps.33.020182.000245
- Tapscott, D. (2009). *Grown up digital* (Vol. 361): New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Taylor, S. E., & Winkler, J. D. (1980). The Development of Schemas.
- Theodorakis, N. D., Wann, D. L., & Weaver, S. (2012). An antecedent model of team identification in the context of professional soccer. *Sport Marketing Quarterly*, 21(2), 80.

- Thorne, S., & Bruner, G. C. (2006). An exploratory investigation of the characteristics of consumer fanaticism. *Qualitative Market Research: An International Journal*, 9(1), 51-72.
- Townsend, B. (2010). A new religion: Football caught on early and became Texas' passion. Retrieved from <http://sportsday.dallasnews.com/other-sports/superbowlgame/2010/12/06/a-new-religion-football-caught-on-early-and-became-texas-passion>
- Turner, J. C., Hogg, M. A., Turner, P. J., & Smith, P. (1984). Failure and defeat as determinants of group cohesiveness. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 23(2), 97-111.
- Van Dijck, J., & Poell, T. (2013). Understanding social media logic. *Media and Communication*, 1(1), 2-14.
- Wakefield, K. L., & Sloan, H. J. (1995). The Effects of Team Loyalty and Selected Staa Factors on Spectator Attendance. *Journal of Sport Management*, 153, 172.
- Wann, D. L. (2006). Understanding the positive social psychological benefits of sport team identification: The team identification-social psychological health model. *Group Dynamics: Theory, Research, and Practice*, 10(4), 272.
- Wann, D. L., & Branscombe, N. R. (1993). Sports fans: Measuring degree of identification with their team. *International Journal of Sport Psychology*.
- Wann, D. L., Carlson, J. D., & Schrader, M. P. (1999). The impact of team identification on the hostile and instrumental verbal aggression of sport spectators. *Journal of Social Behavior and Personality*, 14(2), 279.
- Wann, D. L., Dolan, T. J., McGeorge, K. K., & Allison, J. A. (1994). Relationships between spectator identification and spectators' perceptions of influence, spectators' emotions, and competition outcome. *Journal of sport & exercise psychology*, 16, 347-364.
- Wann, D. L., Melnick, M. J., Russell, G. W., & Pease, D. G. (2001). *Sport fans: The psychology and social impact of spectators*: Routledge.
- Wann, D. L., & Pierce, S. (2003). Measuring Sport Team Identification and Commitment: An Empirical Comparison of the Sport Spectator Identification Scale and the Psychological Commitment to Team Scale. *North American Journal of Psychology*, 5(3).
- Wann, D. L., Schrader, M., & Adamson, D. (1998). The cognitive and somatic anxiety of sport spectators. *Journal of sport behavior*, 21(3), 322.
- Wertheim, L. J., & Sommers, S. (2016). *This Is Your Brain on Sports: The Science of Underdogs, the Value of Rivalry, and What We Can Learn from the T-Shirt Cannon*. New York, NY: Crown.
- Wiener, Y. (1982). Commitment in organizations: A normative view. *Academy of Management review*, 7(3), 418-428.
- Witkemper, C., Lim, C. H., & Waldburger, A. (2012). Social media and sports marketing: Examining the motivations and constraints of Twitter users. *Sport Marketing Quarterly*, 21(3), 170.
- Xygalatas, D., Mitkidis, P., Fischer, R., Reddish, P., Skewes, J., Geertz, A. W., . . . Bulbulia, J. (2013). Extreme rituals promote prosociality. *Psychological science*, 0956797612472910.
- Zillmann, D., Bryant, J., & Sapolsky, B. S. (1989). Enjoyment from sports spectatorship. *Sports, games, and play: Social and psychological viewpoints*, 2, 241-278.
- Zirin, D. (2013). *Game over: How politics has turned the sports world upside down*: The New Press.