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The University of Southern Mississippi

I Love My Team! Factors leading to relationship formation with a sports team

by

Carly L. Odom

A Thesis

Submitted to the Honors College of  
The University of Southern Mississippi  
in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirement for the Degree of  
Bachelor of Science in Business Administration  
in the Department of Marketing and Merchandising

May 2017



Approved by

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## **Abstract**

The sports industry is highly profitable, with a large and diverse fan base. Many people claim to be loyal to different teams, but what moves a more ‘casual fan’ to the team ‘fanatic’ status? Prior research in sports marketing focuses on elements such as geography and family history, while general marketing research considers the impact of behavioral and emotional loyalty (Chaudhuri and Holbrook, 2001). This focus on strict loyalty can, however, be limiting. Examining the factors within the larger relationship context gives us more insight into extreme fans (Pimentel & Reynolds, 2004), as well as the more casual fan. Prior research has argued that relationships are built on repeated interactions (Fournier, 1998; Foster 2010); therefore, a key distinction between a fan who is merely loyal, and one who is in a true relationship with the brand is the presence of interaction. The current study considers socialization, proximity, attitude toward the team brand, self-image congruence, and brand loyalty (emotional connection and behavioral intentions) to determine which leads to actual interaction with the sports team brand. Regression analysis is used to test the hypotheses, and results provide both theoretical and managerial implications.

Key words: Sports marketing, team loyalty, consumer relationships

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## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

In the United States, it is not uncommon to see football fans paint their faces and bodies in team colors, decorate their cars with team flags and stickers, or blast their team support on social media. What makes people connect with a particular sports team? Sports marketing research typically focuses on the sport specific elements of loyalty such as geography, family history, and the impact of social interactions that revolve around the sport. General marketing research looks at not only the behavioral aspects of brand loyalty but also the emotional component (Chaudhuri and Holbrook, 2001). This means examining the factors within the larger relationship context could improve our understanding of why people connect with certain sports teams.

Therefore, the purpose of the current study is to analyze the impact of socialization, proximity, attitude toward the team, and self-image congruence to determine which are most impactful in initiating an interaction with a team, which is a precursor to a relationship with said team. By analyzing the impact of factors on leading to active interaction with sports teams, not only does this research expand the literature on sports team fan relationships but also give sports marketers information on how to increase fan interaction with the team.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

The focus of this study is the motivation regarding active interaction with a sports team. Much of the research in sports marketing has focused on loyalty behaviors, so the brand loyalty literature will be discussed first. Since loyalty is often viewed as being a part of the larger relationship, a discussion of the consumer-brand relationship and the role of self-image congruence will follow.

## Understanding Sports Team Loyalty

In the marketing literature, brand loyalty has been defined as “a deeply held commitment to rebuy or repatronize a preferred product/service consistently in the future thereby causing repetitive same-brand or same-set purchasing, *despite* situational influences and marketing efforts having the potential to cause switching behavior” (Oliver, 1999, 34). This well accepted conceptualization stresses commitment, and alludes to a relational context where both affective and behavioral loyalty are important (Chaudhuri and Holbrook, 2001; Foster, 2010). In fact, loyalty is often described as a component of an underlying process of developing a trust-based relationship (Chaudhuri and Holbrook, 2001). In the context of this research, the sports team becomes the focal *brand* of interest.

Obviously, sports marketers are reliant on the loyalty of fans and developing and building on fan involvement is a major factor in the success of the team brand (Watkins, 2014). Research in the area has taken a cue from marketing literature, and considers both a behavioral and attitudinal component (Chaudhuri and Holbrook, 2001; Foster, 2010; Bauer, Stokburger-Sauer, and Exler, 2008). Loyalty is not defined by simply watching or attending a game, it also includes the feelings towards the team and the sport. Therefore, the relationship that sports fans have with their teams and the players leads to strong emotional connections (Sun and Wu, 2012). Successful sports brands go beyond on-field involvement as they seek to create meaningful associations with their fans in order to keep the fan involved (Watkins, 2014). However, sports marketing studies have measured these factors by analyzing game attendance and merchandise purchases (Ortiz, Reynolds,

and Franke, 2013). This approach could be problematic, as the emotional and behavioral component of loyalty lead to different outcomes (Chaudhuri and Holbrook, 2001).

Consistent with the brand loyalty research, fans consistently patronize their teams and are not generally influenced by situational aspects. For example, fans remain loyal to their teams even after personnel changes or losing seasons (Ortiz, Reynolds, Franke, 2013). Oliver (1999) also notes that once a consumer takes themselves away from competition, removing persuasion to change brands, they enter a stage that is akin to love. This is consistent with marketing research that found consumers in a positive relationship with a brand are likely to forgive the brand for transgressions (Fournier, 1998, Foster, 2010). Research has further suggested that there is often such a fervor for the team on the part of the fan and that the fan views the team as “sacred” (Pimentel and Reynolds, 2004). We can see anecdotal evidence of this with just about any fan of a sports team.

#### Factors Influencing Sports Team Loyalty

In Oliver’s (1999) seminal work on brand loyalty, he argues that the ultimate level of loyalty is when personal identity becomes entwined with the culture surrounding the product. This, he notes, is clearly evident in sports team fanatics. Therefore, the importance of community is apparent within the sports industry as sporting events typically involve large groups and gatherings (Xing, Chalip, Green, 2014). This presence of strong brand associations evokes superiority that are critical to the success of a brand (Keller, 1993), and highly relevant to the sports industry where devoted fans often show blind support for their favorite teams. This behavior is consistent with existing research that shows consumer behavior grounded in devotion is marked by group influence,

socialization, and ritual; as well as self-definition, increased knowledge, and travel (Ortiz, Reynolds, and Franke, 2013).

### The Consumer-Brand Relationship

As discussed above, brand loyalty goes beyond repeat purchase behavior and includes an emotional component (Chaudhuri and Holbrook, 2001) which typically forms over time through numerous interactions with the brand (Fournier, 1998; Foster, 2010). Therefore, loyalty is often viewed as being couched within a relationship. This, along with the current shift toward relationship marketing strategies, highlights the need to consider how fan-team relationships are formed. Fournier (1998) defines a consumer-brand relationship as multiple exchanges between two parties which evolve with the environment.

### Relationship Stages

Relationships form over time, and may go through several stages. This process is illustrated by Dwyer, Schurr, and Oh (1987), who describe the relationship process as beginning with awareness and then moving into exploration, expansion, commitment, and possibly dissolution. Awareness is the consumer's recognition of the existence of a potential exchange partner. Exploration is the examination by both sides of the benefits and costs of the potential relationship. This stage includes the initial communication. Based on the existence of positive interactions, the relationship will move into the expansion stage; expansion includes increased dependence and benefits from both parties as well as continued communication and the establishment of normal relationship components. With both partners accepting the relationship, commitment is established, which is marked by continuity, loyalty, and increased intimacy, if there is a negative

experience within the relationship, then dissolution may occur. This is characterized by detachment and exiting the relationship in order to find a new partner. For this study, the focus will be on the stages of awareness and exploration, where their dyadic relationship is initiated. Previous studies on consumer relationships have focused on the entire relationship process, with emphasis often on change in relationship quality or strength as a consumer progresses through the stages (Palmatier, Dant, Grewal, and Evans, 2006).

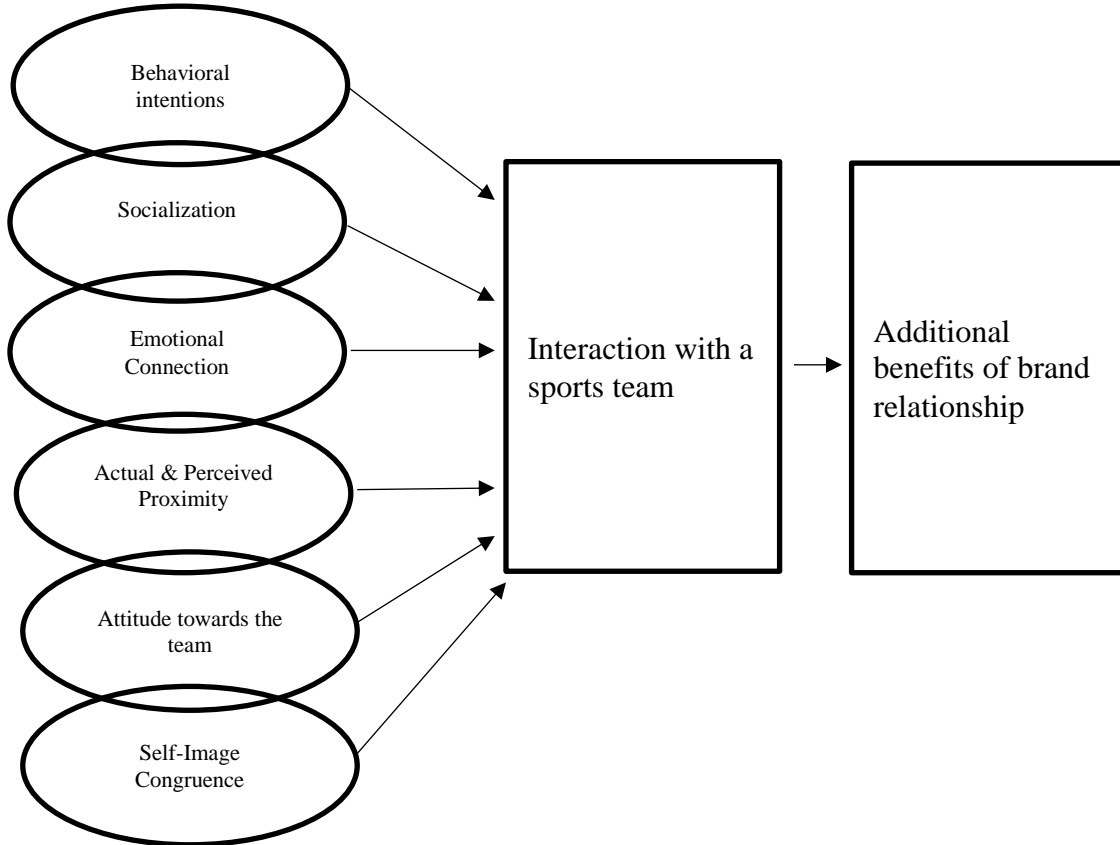
### The Role of Self-Image Congruence

Self-congruity theory (Sirgy, 1981) indicates that consumers attempt to preserve or enhance their self-image by consuming goods, services, and ideas they believe are congruent with their own self-concept and avoid those that are not (Johar and Sirgy, 1991; Wright, Clariborne and Sirgy 1992). The theory indicates that people use consumption as a means of self-expression, by choosing a team with particular image associations individuals can communicate to others the type of person they are (or want to be). Pimentel and Reynolds (2004) define a state of loyalty to a sports team so transcendent that it is very closely aligned to a person's center of self. As noted by Fournier (1998), there are themes that exist within a life that are tied to personal history and are at the core of a person's self-concept. With this being said, the personal history of a person includes the socialization that they experienced as a child. This socialization may possibly be a component of one's self-concept.

### **Chapter 3: Conceptual Framework**

The purpose of this research is to examine specific factors and their impact on active interaction with a sports team. As illustrated in Figure 1, this research proposes that each individual factor will have a significant impact on interaction with a sports team. As stressed in the literature review, a relationship is built on multiple interactions. Therefore, a relationship with a brand includes the development of an emotional connection along with actual interactions, which can shift a consumer from passive loyalty to an active relationship with the sports team brand. For the purposes of this study, sports brand interaction includes two-way communication between the brand and the consumer, such as interaction on social media or participation in a team sponsored event.

*Figure 1: Factors Impacting the Initiation of an Interaction with a Sports Team*



### Brand Loyalty

As discussed previously, brand loyalty has two components, attitudinal and behavioral (Chaudhuri and Holbrook, 2001; Bauer, Stokburger-Sauer, & Exler, 2008). The attitudinal component reflects consumers' personal emotional connection with the brand, while the behavioral component reflects intentions to purchase and engage with the brand. Based on the literature, the importance of establishing an emotional connection is paramount in the formation of a relationship. As noted by Pimentel and Reynolds, as a consumer moves through the process of becoming committed to a team, the team gains greater emotional importance to the fan. Based on this, it is expected that an emotional connection with a sports team would lead to actual interaction. Emotional connection was measured using three 5-point Likert items derived from Malär, Krohmer, Hoyer & Nyffenegger (2011).

H1a: Emotional connection will be significant in initiating an interaction with a sports team.

With sports teams, the behavioral side of loyalty can be more clearly seen than with more traditional brands. While traditional sports marketing research has analyzed behavioral loyalty, it has typically focused on game attendance and merchandise purchase (Ortiz, Reynolds, and Franke, 2013). While these items are important indicators, they alone may not provide the complete picture of the fan's loyalty. This study analyzed the impact of behavioral intentions and its influence interaction with a sports team and measured behavioral loyalty intentions by using a three item, six-point semantic differential scale, derived from Ajzen & Fishbein (1980), et. al.

H1b: Behavioral Intentions will be significant in initiating an interaction with a sports team.

### Socialization & Proximity

As discussed previously, social institutions are key within the sports marketing industry (Grove, Dorsch, Hopkins, 2012). Kunkel, Hill, and Funk (2013), reference research that highlighted the importance of the connection of fans to sports teams. Grove, Dorsch, and Hopkins (2012) also note that sports are a social institution themselves in that they maintain their own social structure. They also describe five functions that sports provide from a sociological standpoint: psychophysical well-being, self-expression, pride-in-place, social integration, and clarification of gender roles. They note that sports contribute to well-being by improving ones' emotional state and that a person can make a personal statement with their support of a particular team. Pride-in-place refers to the geographic connections to a particular team. Therefore, the first two factors considered are socialization and proximity.

#### *Socialization*

Socialization is considered to be the process by which young people develop consumer-related skills, knowledge, and attitudes (Moschis, 1978). This definition can be adapted for this study to reference socialization as the process by which various family, social, and geographic influences impact the formation of the relationship between the individual and the team. Seminal research on brand loyalty emphasizes the role of socialization (Oliver, 1999), and more recent research asserts that consumer behavior grounded in devotion is marked by group influence, socialization, and ritual (Ortiz, Reynolds, and Franke, 2013). In fact, it has been shown that preferences for sports teams may form early in life as a result of socialization from family and friends, especially



through the influence of the father (James, 2001). This idea is observed in everyday life as it is very common to see parents dressing their children in attire representative of the parents' favorite sports teams. The importance of socialization is further supported in fan loyalty research, where Pimentel and Reynolds (2004) describe a model that includes antecedents such as family and a need for belonging. This supports the inclusion of socialization as a possible factor that could be the catalyst for interaction with a team. Therefore, it is expected that socialization will have a significant impact on the initiation of sports team relationship. Socialization is measured using a seven item Likert scale derived from Lueg & Finney (2007).

H2: Socialization will be significant in initiating an interaction with a sports team.

*Proximity: Actual & Perceived*

Proximity is referring to geographic distance between the fan and the team. Pimentel and Reynolds (2004) note that there are certain fans who are simply fans of a team due to their proximity, but that there are fans who do not have a geographic boundary to their loyalty to the team. This supports the inclusion of proximity as it has been observed that there is a connection between geographic location and relationships with a team.

This research analyzed both actual proximity to the respondents selected team as well as distance as perceived by the fan. Actual distance was measured by having the respondent give their zip code and then during data analysis the distance from the zip code to the team's home city was measured. Perceived distance was measured with one six-point item ranging from "very close" to "very far".

H3: Both perceived and actual proximity will be significant in initiating an interaction with a sports team.

#### Attitude Toward the Team

As previously discussed, the emotional connection between a fan and their preferred team is important. Therefore, it is expected that a positive attitude would be necessary in order for a fan to interact with a sports team. The fans attitude toward the team is related to the fan's opinions of the team, the players, and the sport which is developed through the fan's perception of brand image established by the team. Brand image is the cumulative product of brand associations in the mind of consumer (Bauer, Stokburger-Sauer, & Exler, 2008). The image of a team can be formed by the behavior of players, logos, as well as other aspects of the team presented in public. As with traditional brands, sports teams present an image to consumers, and if the consumer perceives this image in a positive light, then it is expected that they will be encouraged to initiate a relationship with the team. Attitude towards the team was measured using a semantic differential derived from Hagtvedt (2011), Hagtvedt & Patrick (2008), and Homer (1995).

H4: Attitude toward the brand will be significant in initiating an interaction with a sports team.

#### Self-image congruence

In the previous section, **B**rand image was defined as the totality of brand associations in the mind of the consumer and that a positive brand image is hypothesized to encourage the formation of a relationship with a team. A consumer may not only view the team in a positive light, but also may view the image of the team as aligning with their own personal values or self-concept. In fact, the attachment to a team is very close

to the center of self (Pimentel and Reynolds). As previously noted, self-concept is defined as the totality of the individual's thoughts and feelings of themselves (Sirgy, 1982). Given that consumers attempt to preserve or enhance their self-concept through consumption, in order for one to seek a relationship with a team, the perceived image of the team must align with the self-image of the individual. Therefore, it is expected that self-image congruence will have a significant impact on the initiation of the sports team relationship. Self-image congruence was measured using 2 different scales. One scale was a four-item scale derived from Park and John (2010). The second scale used was a five item Likert scale from Park, MacInnis, Priester, Eisingerich, & Iacobucci (2010).

H5: Self-image congruence will be significant in initiating an interaction with a sports team.

## **Chapter 4: Methodology**

### Sample Description

The total number of responses collected was 137, but the survey included a filter question to ensure that respondents had a prior interest in a sports team and the combination of this filter question and incomplete responses resulted in a final sample size of 79. Female respondents made up approximately 69% of the sample, and the average age of the respondents was 45 years old (range of 22 to 78). The sample was predominately Caucasian (approximately 95%).

### Procedures

The survey was created using Qualtrics, and responses were collected from a convenience sample recruited through social media. After passing the screen question (Do you have a sports team (i.e. football, baseball, basketball, soccer, etc.) that you are

interested in?), respondents were asked to identify the sports team they are interested in. Items measuring the dependent variable, interaction with a sports team were included. These items asked respondents how often they: purchased team merchandise, attended games, listened to games on radio/TV, attended team sponsored events, engaged with the team on social media, or had personally met team members. In addition, established scales are used to measure each of the factor variables. Multiple regression analysis was used to test the hypotheses. This allowed the significance of each factor on the outcome variable to be measured.

**Main Results**

**Table 1: Coefficients Analysis**

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients	Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics			
					B	Std. Error	Beta	Tolerance
1	(Constant)	3.000	.565		5.314	.000		
	From your perspective, how close or far do you live from the home of this sports team?	.030	.037	.087	.811	.420	.530	1.887
	Actual_dist	.000	.000	.172	1.623	.109	.540	1.852
	S_Involvement	.120	.063	.250	1.909	.061	.351	2.845
	S_Attitude	-.012	.065	-.021	-.180	.858	.431	2.321
	S_intentions	-.203	.070	-.366	-2.892	.005	.377	2.652
	S_brandconnect	.068	.055	.163	1.255	.214	.356	2.806
	S_signaling	-.016	.051	-.033	-.312	.756	.536	1.864

**Table 2: ANOVA Results**

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	14.620	7	2.089	14.085	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	9.935	67	.148		
	Total	24.556	74			

**Table 3: Relationship Strength**

Mode	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.772 <sup>a</sup>	.595	.553	.38508

First, a reliability analysis was conducted on each individual scale and every scale passed the required 0.7. The data was then analyzed using a multiple regression analysis that included a summated scale for the dependent variable of team interaction and the independent variables consisted of perceived distance, actual distance, a summated scale for measuring emotional connection, behavioral intentions, socialization, attitude towards the team, and self-image congruence. The purpose of this is to determine which factors affect interaction with the team. Next, the data was analyzed to determine if there were any issues with multicollinearity. No multicollinearity issues were found as the VIF value for each of the independent variables was well below the maximum acceptable value of 5.

After analyzing the ANOVA test, it was determined that the overall model is significant as the F-value was 14.085 and the p-value of 0.00 is less than the established significance level of 0.01. Given this, the conclusion is that the F-test is significant and

that there is a relationship between brand interaction (dependent) and the independent factors (actual distance, perceived distance, emotional connection, behavioral intentions, socialization, attitude towards the team, and self-image congruence. The analysis also provided the R<sup>2</sup> value for the model. This value showed that 59.5% of the variance in interaction with the team was explained by the independent variables.

The next step was determining which of the independent variables have a significant relationship to interaction with a team. Given that only one of the independent variables had a p-value below the significance level of .05, this determined that this variable is significant in influencing interaction with a sports team. The significant factor was behavioral intentions and it had a t-value of -2.892 and a p-value of .005. Based on the results, the regression equation would be  $Y = 3.0 - .203(x1)$ . With the given results, only hypothesis H1b was supported.

#### Additional Results

While analysis of the data using a summated scale of the dependent variable showed only one significant factor, analyzing the data with each specified type of active interaction did deliver additional significant results.

**Table 4: Additional analysis results**

Dependent Variable	Independent Variable	T-value	P-value
Merchandise purchase	Self-image congruence	3.896	0.00
	Emotional connection	-2.541	0.013
Social media engagement	Behavioral intentions	-2.345	0.022
Met a team player	Behavioral intentions	-2.664	0.010

## **Chapter 5: Discussion**

Upon analyzing the data, the results were surprising. As previously mentioned, only the hypothesis stating that behavioral intentions would have a significant impact on actual interactions with a team was supported. This finding falls in line with previous literature in that prior research has primarily focused on the behavioral component of team loyalty. While the significant impact of behavioral intentions on active interaction was not surprising, it was not expected that this would be the only significant factor. Even when looking at emotions, family and friend influence, and distance from the team's home, none of these factors significantly impacted active interaction with the team.

This result means that emotional connection, socialization, attitude towards the team, self-image congruence, and proximity had no significant bearing on a fan's interaction with the team. While the data did not support the hypotheses that these factors were not significant in inspiring active interaction with a team, it does not mean that they have no importance at all. The impact of these nonsignificant factors could be much less impactful or could simply be in raising the fan's awareness of the team. Although emotional connection and self-image congruence were not significant to the model as a whole, they were significant when analyzed against specific active interaction types.

When analyzed with merchandise purchase as the dependent variable, both self-image congruence and emotional connection were significant. This result reveals that merchandise purchase is much more connected to self and that buying team gear is more emotionally driven than watching or listening to the game on television or radio. While

there may be an emotional component to game attendance or attending a team event that was not revealed in this study, the data supports the idea that purchasing merchandise is more emotionally driven than the other factors examined.

### Theoretical and Managerial Implications

Based on the results, the theoretical implications of this research serve to expand the current sports marketing literature's idea of team loyalty by considering the drivers of actual interaction in a relationship context. This research also focused on active interaction and the different motivations behind different forms. An example of this is that the motivation to purchase merchandise comes from a different motivation than that to interact with a team on social media. This example is supported by the data given that self-image congruence was significant when measured alongside merchandise purchase.

A basic managerial implication of these findings is that it will allow sports teams to better understand and target fans to inspire active interaction, which in turn brings the fan closer to establishing long-term fandom. The benefit to the team of increasing the number of fans who have established relationships with a team means potential for increased profitability for the team. Given that the analysis showed that emotional connections influenced merchandise purchase, this could allow team marketers to develop specific techniques to appeal to fans on an emotional level to drive merchandise purchase. This merchandise purchase would be an interaction that would serve to move the fan further towards a relationship with the team.

The data analysis also showed that self-image congruence was significant in influencing merchandise purchase. The result of this significance is that fan's merchandise purchase is driven by the fan's perceived connection to the team; if sports



marketers can leverage this connection, they can develop a more personal connection with the fan and strengthen the relationship and increase long term customer profitability.

### Limitations and Future Directions

While this study was successful in producing useful results, there were some limitations that were a factor. These included a small sample size and a limited survey distribution channel. One result of the limited distribution channel was the fact that a large percentage of the respondents were female, and the sample was heavily weighted with Caucasian respondents. All of these factors could have resulted in a skewed sample. A larger budget could have allowed for a wider range of distribution for the survey.

In addition, the selection of independent variables could have created a confound with the dependent variable. The use of behavioral intentions as a precursor to actual intentions may have absorbed much of the variance in the model. Future research should consider alternative measures for behavioral loyalty that tap more into the loyalty aspect.

This research offers many avenues for continued study. One of these is expanding the study to include a larger number of active interaction measures as well as offering the survey to a larger, more diverse audience. In addition to adding more active interaction measures, analyzing other potential motivating factors could also provide useful data. Given the findings of the current study, analyzing geographic, gender, and ethnic influences may also prove significant.

## **Chapter 6: Conclusion**

If relationships are built on a series of interactions (Fournier, 1998; Foster, 2010), then an interaction is required for a relationship to form. The results provide the sports marketing industry with a more comprehensive picture of the factors that lead fans to

interact with a sports team. It extends the literature by considering the interaction between fan and sports team in a more relational context. The results can be used to guide sports marketers in developing appropriate methods of inspiring individuals to interact with the team, thus increasing the likelihood of the fan establishing a relationship with the team. Having these fan relationships could help drive ticket and merchandise sales, and increase positive word of mouth behavior. In addition, it would create a more stable fan base that makes it easier for sports franchises to maintain profitability through losing seasons.

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## **Appendices**

### **Appendix A: Survey**

**SURVEY OVERVIEW:** I am an undergraduate Honors College student in the Department of Marketing and Fashion Merchandising at the University of Southern Mississippi. The following research study is designed to better understand fan relationships with sports teams. You must be a U.S. resident at least 18 years old to participate, but your participation is purely voluntary. You may choose not to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time without any penalty or prejudice. Your participation in this survey should take less than 10 minutes. Your responses will remain confidential and only aggregated results of the research will be published with individual participants unidentified. Your answers will be kept strictly confidential by being combined with others, and used only for research purposes. This questionnaire will be kept confidential and you may exit at any time. This project has been reviewed by the Institutional Review Board, which ensures that research projects involving human subjects follow federal regulations. Any questions or concerns about rights as a research participant should be directed to the chair of the Institutional Review Board, The University of Southern Mississippi, 118 College Drive #5147, Hattiesburg, MS 39406-0001, 601.266.6820. Completion of this survey indicates your consent to participate. If you have any questions about this survey, please contact Carly Odom at [carly.odom@usm.edu](mailto:carly.odom@usm.edu). Thanks in advance for your participation!

Do you have a sports team (i.e. football, baseball, basketball, soccer, etc.) that you are interested in?

Yes (1)

No (2)

**VERY IMPORTANT:** Please keep this one specific team in mind as you work through the Questionnaire



*Sports Team Loyalty*

From your perspective, how close or far do you live from the home of this sports team?

- Very close (1)
- Close (2)
- Fairly close (3)
- Fairly far (4)
- Far (5)
- Very far (6)

Keeping the team you named in mind, how often do you do any of the following:

	Often (1)	Occasionally (2)	Rarely (3)	Never (4)
Purchase branded merchandise (t-shirts, hats, stickers, etc.). (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Attend a live game. (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Watch/listen to a game online or on the TV/Radio. (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Engage on an official team social media page/account (like a post, share a tweet, comment, etc.) (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Attended a team brand sponsored event (5K, charity ball, etc.). (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Met a team player. (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Somewhat disagree (3)	Somewhat agree (4)	Agree (5)	Strongly agree (6)
I feel passionate about this team. (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am delighted by this team. (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am captivated by this team. (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please indicate your responses to the questions using the scale provided.

	Strongly agree (1)	Agree (2)	Somewhat agree (3)	Somewhat disagree (4)	Disagree (5)	Strongly Disagree (6)
I spend a lot of time talking with my peers/relatives about this team. (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My peers/relatives encourage me to support this particular team. (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My peers/relatives and I tell each other information regarding this team. (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I ask my peers/relatives for information about this sports team. (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My peers/relatives support this specific sports team. (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My peers/relatives and I watch this sports team together. (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

*Sports Team Loyalty*

Please express how you feel about this particular sports team

	1 (1)	2 (2)	3 (3)	4 (4)	5 (5)	6 (6)
Negative:Positive (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Unpleasant:Pleasant (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Bad:Good (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Unfavorable:Favorable (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Dislike a lot:Like a lot (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

What is the likeliness/probability that you will do the following:

	Very low (1)	Low (2)	Somewhat low (3)	Somewhat high (4)	High (5)	Very high (6)
The likelihood that I would recommend this team to a friend is: (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The probability that I will interact (attend a game, engage on social media, etc.) with this sports team brand again is: (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
If given the chance, the likeliness that I would continue to support this team is: (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

*Sports Team Loyalty*

My relationship with this team (is) \_\_\_\_\_ to me:

	1 (1)	2 (2)	3 (3)	4 (4)	5 (5)	6 (6)
Important:Unimportant (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Of no concern to me:Of concern to me (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Irrelevant:Relevant (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Means a lot to me:Means nothing to me (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Useless:Useful (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Valuable:Worthless (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Beneficial:Not beneficial (7)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Essential:Nonessential (8)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Not needed:Needed (9)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please use the scale provided to answer the following questions.

	Strongly agree (1)	Agree (2)	Somewhat agree (3)	Somewhat disagree (4)	Disagree (5)	Strongly disagree (6)
This team is part of me and who I am. (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel personally connected to this team. (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel emotionally bonded to this team. (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This team is part of me. (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This team says something to other people about who I am. (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements.

	Strongly agree (1)	Agree (2)	Somewhat agree (3)	Somewhat disagree (4)	Disagree (5)	Strongly disagree (6)
I interact with this team brand to reflect on who I am. (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I interact with this sports team brand to communicate who I am to other people. (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I interact with this sports team brand to feel more positive about myself. (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I interact with this sports team brand to make a better impression on other people. (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please answer these last few questions as honestly as possible.

In what year were you born?



*Sports Team Loyalty*

In what city/town and state were you born?

What is the zip code for your current residence?

Think about where you have lived the longest and for the longest three places indicate the City/Town, State and approximate age range you were when you lived there.

	City/Town (1)	State (2)	Approx age range (3)
Longest city/town lived (1)			
2nd longest city/town lived (2)			
3rd longest city/town lived (3)			

Please indicate your gender:

- Male (1)
- Female (2)

To which racial or ethnic group do you MOST identify?

- White or Caucasian (non-hispanic) (1)
- Black or African American (non-hispanic) (2)
- American Indian or Alaska Native (3)
- Asian (4)
- Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander (5)
- Latino or Hispanic (6)
- Other (7) \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix 2: IRB approval letter



### **INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD**

118 College Drive #5147 | Hattiesburg, MS 39406-0001

Phone: 601.266.5997 | Fax: 601.266.4377 | [www.usm.edu/research/institutional.review.board](http://www.usm.edu/research/institutional.review.board)

## **NOTICE OF COMMITTEE ACTION**

The project has been reviewed by The University of Southern Mississippi Institutional Review Board in accordance with Federal Drug Administration regulations (21 CFR 26, 111), Department of Health and Human Services (45 CFR Part 46), and university guidelines to ensure adherence to the following criteria:

- The risks to subjects are minimized.
- The risks to subjects are reasonable in relation to the anticipated benefits.
- The selection of subjects is equitable.
- Informed consent is adequate and appropriately documented.
- Where appropriate, the research plan makes adequate provisions for monitoring the data collected to ensure the safety of the subjects.
- Where appropriate, there are adequate provisions to protect the privacy of subjects and to maintain the confidentiality of all data.
- Appropriate additional safeguards have been included to protect vulnerable subjects.
- Any unanticipated, serious, or continuing problems encountered regarding risks to subjects must be reported immediately, but not later than 10 days following the event. This should be reported to the IRB Office via the "Adverse Effect Report Form".
- If approved, the maximum period of approval is limited to twelve months.  
Projects that exceed this period must submit an application for renewal or continuation.

PROTOCOL NUMBER: 17020201

PROJECT TITLE: I Love My Team! Factors leading to relationship formation with a sports team

PROJECT TYPE: New Project

RESEARCHER(S): Carly Odom

*Sports Team Loyalty*

COLLEGE/DIVISION: College of Business

DEPARTMENT: Marketing

FUNDING AGENCY/SPONSOR: N/A

IRB COMMITTEE ACTION: Expedited Review Approval

PERIOD OF APPROVAL: 02/06/2017 to 02/05/2018

**Lawrence A. Hosman, Ph.D.**  
**Institutional Review Board**