

Factors Affecting Fan Attendance: The Influence of Identity Salience and Satisfaction*

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The study combines disparate streams of research in order to develop a model of devoted fan behavior. The theoretical foundations for this study are based on literature examining social identity theory, involvement, attachment and satisfaction. A model of the factors that influence fan identity salience and attendance is developed and tested. First, the factors that influence fan identity salience and sporting event attendance are discussed and an integrated model is developed. Second, the proposed model is tested using a sample of college students. Third, the implications of the findings are discussed. The findings suggest that identity salience is an important factor in explaining fan-related behavior.

KEYWORDS: *Social identity theory, identity salience, satisfaction, situation involvement, enduring involvement, attachment, attendance*

Introduction

The avid sports fan is a persuasive part of our culture (Lieberman, 1991). Worldwide, millions of people view regularly sporting events, either in-person or on television. In addition, sports fans follow their favorite teams via radio, newspapers, magazines, and the internet. Evidence suggests that more and more people are becoming sports fans. For example, attendance at sporting events is increasing steadily and greater amounts of media time is being devoted to sports (U.S. Census Bureau, 1993). In particular, intercollegiate athletics are enjoying large increases in fan attendance. According to U.S. Census Bureau (1993) data, attendance at collegiate football and basketball games increased over 30% in the period from 1983 to 1993. Moreover, National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) figures indicate the revenue generated from Division I intercollegiate athletics increased nearly

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15% from 1993 to 1995 (Fulks, 1996). Not surprisingly, men's football and basketball are the primary sources of revenue for many Division I institutions. However, the growth in the popularity of athletic events is not specific to men's sports. A growing interest in women's athletics, particularly basketball, is fueling a growth in revenues for women's intercollegiate athletics as well. For example, there was a 20% increase in revenues from 1993 to 1995 alone (Fulks, 1996).

The growth in the popularity of sports is creating a windfall for sporting event promoters, sporting event venues, and manufacturers of sports-related products. For example, consumer spending on sports apparel rose 13% between 1994 and 1996, going from \$27.5 to \$31.1 billion (Stankevich, 1998). Yet, despite the prominent role of sports spectatorship in American consumption culture few studies have focused on the factors that influence people to become avid fans and how they impact fan-related consumption (Madrigal, 1995).

Researchers have examined a number of factors that influence a variety of fan behaviors. For example, Kerstetter and Kovich's (1997) study of women's basketball fans explores the relationship among fan involvement, sociodemographics, and behavioral variables. They adopt Laurent and Kapferer's (1985) conceptualization and operationalization of involvement. Using this perspective they demonstrate that involvement, an unobservable state of interest, motivation or arousal, is a useful concept for understanding fan behavior. Their results suggest the number of years one attends sporting events is positively associated with the pleasure and value linked to the experience. Furthermore, they find that college boosters (i.e., those people who support regularly a particular sports team) place more value on being a fan than do university faculty/staff, and that involvement does not vary based on gender.

Cialdini et al. (1976) examines the strength of identification with a sports team after a loss and after a victory. Their results suggest students are more likely to wear university-related apparel after a victory. They conclude that students attempt to associate themselves with a successful group in order to bolster their self-esteem. This process is referred to as "basking-in reflected-glory" (BIRGing). In contrast, people may also try to maintain their self-esteem by disassociating themselves from an unsuccessful group. This is referred to as "cutting-off-reflected failure" (CORFing). Wann and Branscombe (1990) demonstrate that higher fan identification can lead to an increase in the likelihood of BIRGing and a decrease in the likelihood to CORF. They conclude that die-hard fans believe that being a "fan" is an important part of who they are and, as a result, they persevere, even when their team is unsuccessful (Wann & Branscombe, 1990).

Madrigal (1995) develops and tests a model of sports fan satisfaction based on the idea that affect influences satisfaction. He finds that fan identification with a team has a strong influence on affect and enjoyment and, in turn, affect and enjoyment lead to satisfaction. The findings are consistent with previous research that suggests the unique nature of sporting events is

the primary appeal for many fans (Kerstetter & Kovich, 1997; Koppett, 1981). Furthermore, research suggests fans may become loyal to a particular team because of the enjoyment associated with spectating (Zillman, Bryant, & Sapolsky, 1989) or because of the sense of identity felt by associating themselves with a particular group (Wann & Branscombe, 1990).

Thus, a great deal of research has explored fan behaviors. The purpose of this paper is to bring the aforementioned streams of research together to explore the factors that influence "fan" identity salience. Past research suggests that involvement, identification and satisfaction are all related to fan behavior. This research explores these constructs concomitantly by adopting social identity theory to explore the fan identity. Specifically, the relationships amongst involvement, satisfaction and fan identity salience are explored. In addition, the relationship between attachment to a team and fan identity salience is considered. Understanding the forces that influence fan identity salience is useful, as identity salience has been demonstrated to positively influence participation in identity related activities (Kleine et al., 1993; Laverie, 1998).

This study sets out to achieve a more comprehensive understanding of avid fan behavior by including a number of constructs that are posited to influence "fan" identity. Thus, this paper combines disparate streams of research in order to develop a model of devoted fan behavior. The theoretical foundations for this study are based on literature examining social identity theory, involvement, attachment and satisfaction. A model of the factors that influence fan identity salience and attendance is developed and tested. First, the factors that influence fan identity salience and sporting event attendance are discussed and an integrated model is developed. Second, the proposed model is tested using a sample of college students. Third, the implications of the findings are discussed.

Social Identity Theory

Social-identity theory, rooted in the symbolic interaction tradition, focuses on the connection between self, role, and society (Stryker, 1980). In this conceptualization, the self is composed of "multiple selves," some of which are more important than others. This notion can be traced back to James (1890). The view of multiplicity of selves is consistent across a variety of conceptualizations in the social sciences literature (cf., Goffman, 1959; Schlenker, 1980). This view of the self recognizes the social units that people live in are relatively small networks of social relationships that impact individuals' identities.

Social-identity theory can be contrasted with the traditional social psychological view of the global self. In the social psychological view, the self is a single entity. This conceptualization has been the dominant view in consumer behavior research (Sirgy, 1982) and leisure research (Ingham, 1987). However, evidence suggests that it may be more fruitful to work with multiple conceptions of the self. For example, Shamir (1992) uses social identity the-

ory to reveal important psychological dimensions of leisure that have not been considered in streams of research that have focused on 'state of mind' dimensions such as pleasure and freedom. In addition, Kleine et al. (1993) find that a social identity perspective is a useful way to study the many different types of consumption people routinely partake in. A single, global conception of the self can be misleading since people tend to describe themselves in highly differentiated ways (Gergen, 1991).

Another important characteristic of the social identity perspective is that individuals enter into only a subset of the many social networks that exist in society (Callero, 1985). The theory suggests that society is important to the self because the individual is part of social networks that are formed on the basis of common identities. Because of these specialized networks it follows that the self can best be conceptualized as independent, yet partially overlapping selves. Thus, an important factor in how people relate to the social world is the organization of their identities. Identities are organized hierarchically by the likelihood of invoking them across a variety of social situations (Stryker, 1968).

Stryker (1980) suggests that we have a relatively distinct social self for each role that we play. When we personalize these roles, they become identities. Thus, the self consists of many different identities. The goal of identity theory is to understand how and why individuals select certain identity related activities, given all of the possible alternatives (Serpe, 1987). For example, why does one person chose to play tennis and another chose to attend a sporting event? Identity theory suggests that these types of choices can be explained by identity salience. Identity salience is concerned with the importance of a given identity, relative to other identities.

Salient identities are those that are an important part of who we are and ones we display routinely. Hoelter (1983) finds that identity salience is influenced positively by positive feelings related to the identity. Identities are socially derived and require self-expression and positive feelings affirming the identity (McCall & Simmons, 1966). Stryker (1968) suggests that positive evaluations by others will be interpreted as appropriate identity performances and will generate positive affect. On the other hand, negative evaluations would lead to negative affect and suggest inappropriate identity performances. In this instance individuals would likely attempt to takes steps to improve their performance or abandon the identity.

In addition, identity salience is likely to be influenced by social ties and the use of identity related products. There is a great deal of evidence supporting the relationship between social connections and identity salience (Callero, 1985; Hoelter, 1983; Kleine et al., 1993; Shamir, 1992; Stryker and Serpe, 1982). Identity related products are often used in situations where others can easily examine these products, for instance a fan wearing team-related paraphernalia. Because the use of these products is visible to others, it is likely to provide opportunities to enhance identity salience.

Identities insinuate action by definition, and "it is through action that role identities are realized and validated" (Callero, 1985, p. 205). Thus, it is expected that differing levels of identity salience affect identity related be-

havior (Callero, 1985). For example, as fan identity becomes more salient, specific fan activities should be acted out more frequently (e.g., attending games, watching games on television, following scores in the newspaper).

The importance of the self-behavior relationship is a central feature of identity theory as proposed by Stryker (1968). Therefore, it is not surprising that this relationship has received a great deal of attention. For instance, Santee and Jackson (1979) demonstrate that identity salience is a meaningful predictor of activities such as athletic participation and church attendance. Likewise, Stryker and Serpe (1982) find that the salience of a religious identity is related to time spent in a religious role. In addition, Callero (1985) and Charng et al. (1988) demonstrate that identity theory is useful in predicating repeated behavior in the context of blood donation.

Nuttbrock and Freudiger (1991) offer further support for the relationship between identity salience and behavior. They show that identity salience predicts two facets of role performance in the context of motherhood: making sacrifices for the child and accepting the burden of motherhood. Shamir (1992) finds identity salience is related to commitment to participation in a leisure activity and to the time invested in the activity. Additional support, in the context of leisure is offered by Laverie (1998) who demonstrates that identity salience is an effective predictor of motivation for participation in a specific leisure activity.

The focus of social identity theory research has been on the relationship between identity salience and behavior. This relationship seems to be strong. However, little research has been conducted that focuses on the factors that influence identity salience. Thus, this research will explore factors that influence identity salience in the context of a fan identity.

The wisdom of applying identity theory to devoted fan behavior is based on the assumptions that the theory applies to the context in question and that the theory has merit. Social identity theory is applicable because fan behavior is socially visible, involves relationships with others, can lead to the formation of a fan role and one can experience satisfaction associated with that role. Identity theory has been subjected to empirical examination in leisure, sociology, and consumer research (cf., Stryker and Serpe, 1982; Serpe, 1987; Hoelter, 1983; Kleine et al., 1993; Laverie, 1998; Shamir, 1992). Those people with high identity salience are more likely to participate in identity related activities (Kleine et al., 1993; Laverie, 1998). Therefore, it is posited that those who have high identity salience for being a fan of a sporting team will attend games more often than those low in identity salience. However, it is also clear that identity theory needs further development to understand the forces that influence identity salience. Next, three factors (attachment, situational involvement, and enduring involvement) are discussed and their relationships to the salience of a "fan" identity are explored.

Attachment

Attachment is defined in the consumer behavior literature as the "extent to which an object which is owned, expected to be owned, or previously

owned by an individual, is used by the individual to maintain his or her self-concept" (Ball & Tasaki, 1992, p. 158). Possessions with emotional significance are likely to be objects of attachment and reflect who we are (Kleine, et al., 1995). The focus of consumer attachment research has been on how meaningful possessions are used to support the concept of self. Possessions are symbolic in nature and are unspoken self-expressive statements (Laurent & Kapferer, 1985). Researchers have empirically demonstrated that consumers relate brands and product to their self-concepts (Dolich, 1969). Consumers become attached to products that help them to express their self-concepts. Thus, individuals are attached to products that are self-expressive. Individuals possess sets of products organized around their various identities.

The emotions associated with attachment are likely to reinforce identity salience. The relationship between positive emotional feelings and identity salience has long been posited in social identity theory (Hoelter, 1983). However, the relationship between emotions and identity salience has not been elaborated on in social identity theory. One way to capture the emotions associated with identity salience is through the attachment construct. Attachment to a team could be an important part of one's sense of self.

In the leisure literature, it is well documented that self-expression is an important part of leisure as leisure allows for the presentation of different identities. Participation in leisure activities is symbolic and leisure theory acknowledges that participation in leisure can be self-expressive (Dimanche & Samdahl, 1994). Thus, it appears there is a parallel between the symbolic component of leisure participation and the symbolic component of consumption. Kelly (1983) suggests identities assumed in leisure may reflect different images of the self. The symbolic component of leisure allows participants in leisure to express different portions of their self (Dimanche & Samdahl, 1994). Thus, because of the self-expressive and social nature of most leisure participation it seems likely that individuals become attached to leisure activities that help them to express their self-concepts. Based on the relationship between attachment and self, it is likely that attachment to a leisure activity will be positively related to identity salience.

This study extends research in this area by exploring attachment to a sports team. Leisure researchers have suggested attachment may be a useful construct in understanding loyal leisure behavior (e.g., Kim et al., 1997). People can use a sports team for the purpose of self-concept maintenance (Dimanche & Samdahl, 1994). Thus, it seems that attachment to a team may be related to fan identity salience. Attachment to a team will likely lead one to make statements such as "I am a Raider fan." These types of statements imply an attachment to the sports team and may be evidence that the team is linked to the self-structure. Thus, the act of being a "fan" can be a personalized role, a part of the self, and, therefore, a vehicle by which people can maintain their self-concept. As discussed earlier, fans that form an identity related to a team may experience strong feelings associated with "their" team and may feel a sense of attachment to the team, which, in turn, tends to increase the salience of their "fan identity." It is posited that high levels

of attachment enhance identity salience. Thus, the more attachment a person feels to a team, the more important that identity becomes to their sense of self.

Involvement

Involvement has been defined as a state of motivation, arousal, or interest toward a recreational activity or associated product (Rothschild, 1984). Involvement research delineates situational involvement (SI) from enduring involvement (EI) (Houston & Rothschild, 1978; Richins & Bloch, 1986; Richins, Bloch & McQuarrie, 1992). EI is conceptualized as the ongoing baseline level of concern with an activity or product. In the case of this research it would be the individual's ongoing concern with a team. SI is a passing increase in concern for the activity or product due to temporary circumstances (Richins & Bloch, 1991). For example, a fan that is preparing to attend a game may have high situational involvement on that evening. Thus, enduring involvement represents an individual's ongoing level of interest in an activity or product class (Houston & Rothschild, 1978). EI is independent of situations. High levels of EI are likely to occur when the individuals perceives an activity or product offers hedonic benefits or is closely linked with the self (Laurent & Kapferer, 1985).

Leisure research has examined the role of involvement in leisure activities (e.g., Bryan, 1977; Havitz & Dimanche, 1997). These experiences are often viewed as highly involving and affectively charged. If we are to understand leisure activities, we must understand the personal meaning of recreation participation (Bryan, 1977; Buchanan, 1985; Wellman et al., 1982). Participation in leisure activities is often an ongoing state. Leisure researchers view EI as ongoing enthusiasm and interest in an activity (Green & Chalip, 1997; Havitz & Howard, 1995; McIntyre, 1989). Therefore, EI may be more useful than SI for explaining ongoing participation (McIntyre, 1989). EI suggests a degree of specialization that implies an identity related to the activity and self-expression (Bryan, 1977; Buchanan, 1985; McIntyre, 1989).

Leisure research tends to focus on either SI or EI—but not both. It is maintained that fan behavior is likely to involve both SI and EI. During the course of a season, SI may be high as fans follow the results of games, watch games on television, listen to games on the radio, and attend games. However, for many fans their association with a team is a long-term relationship (i.e., they experience enduring involvement). These devoted fans are often referred to as “die-hard” fans (Wann & Branscombe, 1990).

Following the suggestion of Havitz and Dimanche (1997), both SI and EI are included in this study. This study examines these concepts under the umbrella of social identity theory. Positive affect and the importance of an activity influence the foundation and maintenance of the identity associated with the activity (Hoelter, 1983). EI, an ongoing interest in a team, is likely to lead a person to establish an identity related to the team (e.g., “I am a

Fighting Irish fan"). As a result, an increase in one's EI tends to lead to a situation where the identity becomes a part of the person's self-structure.

Fans often experience an increase in SI as well. For example, fans will be more involved with "their" team during the season than during the off-season. A person's involvement with their team's performance and standing will likely influence positively identity salience. As mentioned earlier, fans bask-in-the-reflected glory of "their" team's performance, if the team is doing well. SI represents an increase in arousal, which will influence positively identity salience. Therefore, it is posited that both EI and SI will serve as antecedents of a "fan" identity. That is, as EI and/or SI increase for a particular sports team, so will the salience of the "fan" identity.

Although research (e.g., McIntyre, 1989) has suggested that self-expression is simply a facet of involvement, it is important to note that self-expression not be included as a component of involvement. Attachment captures the emotional and self-expressive feelings that people have for an object or activity, while involvement does not. In consumer research, involvement deals with the product category while attachment deals with a specific product (Ball & Tasaki, 1992). Thus, one may be involved in basketball and attached to a particular team. Or, an individual may be involved in watching a basketball game, but not be emotionally attached to any particular team. Furthermore, due to the importance of self-expression in leisure activities Shamir (1992) suggests that attachment should not be included in other psychological constructs. Instead, he suggests that it should occupy a more prominent role in explaining leisure activity. Therefore, for the purpose of this research, attachment is not included as a component of involvement.

Satisfaction

Marketers of consumer products and services tend to focus on customer satisfaction. Satisfied customers are seen as a key to profitability because maintaining current customers is often less expensive than gaining new ones (Hawkins et al., 1997; O'Boyle, 1983). The objective of retaining satisfied customers is paramount in the leisure industry as well, where retention rates are historically low (Howard, 1992).

Research demonstrates that positive affect can predict satisfaction (Oliver, 1993). People react to product or service consumption with either positive or negative affect. In turn, these affective states influence satisfaction (Madrigal, 1995; Oliver, 1993; Westbrook & Oliver, 1991). That is, positive affect tends to lead to an increase in satisfaction. When people experience high SI, they are more likely to experience high levels of satisfaction with products and services associated with the situation (Richins & Bloch, 1991). Thus, it is posited that SI is positively related to satisfaction and that satisfied fans are more likely to attend games on a regular basis.

The Model

Based on the previous discussion, the relations amongst the constructs are depicted in Figure 1 and represent the hypothesized model. The model

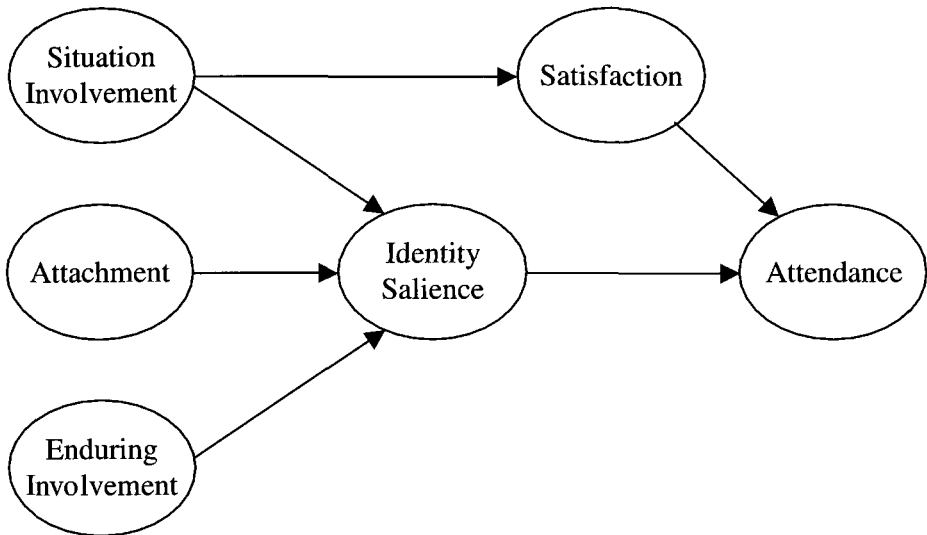


Figure 1. A Model of the Factors that Influence Sporting Event Attendance.

begins with direct effects from, situational involvement, attachment, and enduring involvement to identity salience. In addition, there is a direct relationship between situational involvement and satisfaction hypothesized. Satisfaction and identity salience are then directly related to attendance at the sporting event.

A Rival Model

A stronger test of a proposed model is to compare it with a rival model (Bollen & Long, 1992). Our proposed model posits that situational involvement, attachment, and enduring involvement influence fan attendance only through the mediating variables of satisfaction and identity salience. Therefore, satisfaction and identity salience are both viewed as having central nomological status. A possible rival view could be one that posits only direct paths from each of the precursors to fan attendance (see Figure 2). This rival model, therefore, allows no indirect effects. That is, satisfaction and identity salience are not allowed to mediate any of the relationships. As a result, satisfaction and identity salience are viewed as nomologically similar to the other precursors of fan attendance. Although this rival model has not been hypothesized specifically in the literature, it is implied by numerous studies that consider situational involvement, attachment, and enduring involvement to be independent variables directly influencing outcomes. Examples include situation involvement influencing future intentions (Kim et al., 1997), situational and enduring involvement and their relationship to product related behaviors (Richins and Bloch, 1986), the effect enduring and situational involvement have on consumer responses (Richins et al., 1992),

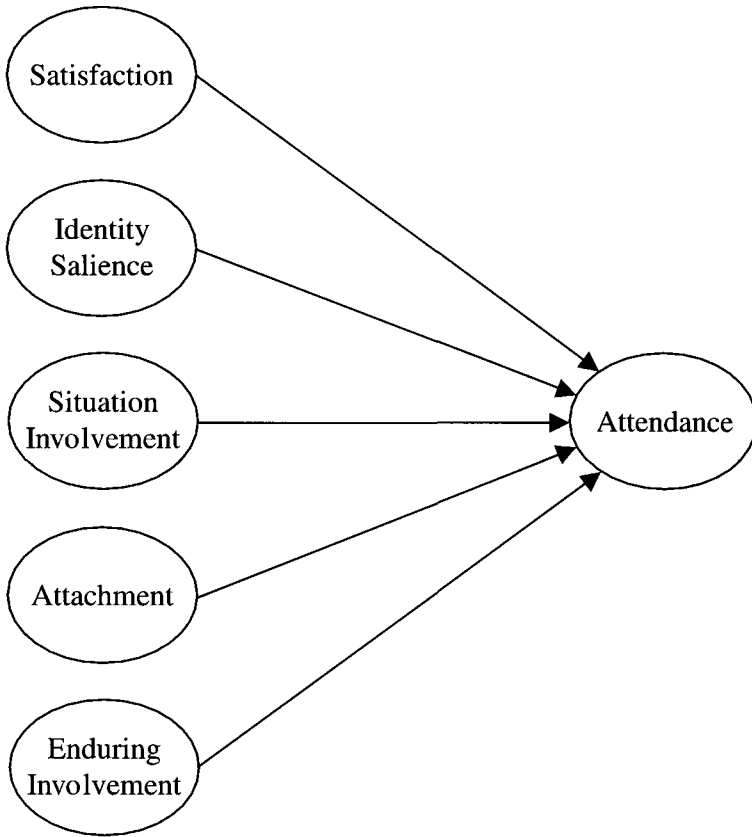


Figure 2. A Rival Model.

and the influence of attachment on conflict resolution strategies (Styron and Janoff-Bulman, 1997).

Method

This study examines the factors that influence fan identity salience. Specifically, this study focuses on women's basketball fans at a large southwestern university. Multiple item, self-report measures are used, when applicable, for the constructs in this study. All of the measures have been employed in previous research. Some of the measures have been adapted to fit the context of the study. The mean, standard deviation, and reliability for each scale are shown in Table 1.

Measures

Respondents' situational involvement is measured using the Personal Involvement Inventory (Zaichkowsky, 1985). The scale consists of 16 seman-

TABLE 1
Scale Means, Standard Deviations, and Reliabilities

Scale	Mean	Std Dev	Coefficient- α
Attendance	2.52	2.34	—*
Satisfaction	5.62	1.52	0.75
Salience	3.43	1.41	0.76
Attachment	3.49	1.28	0.87
Situational Involvement	4.51	1.19	0.96
Enduring Involvement	4.60	1.27	0.90

*Attendance is a single-indicant item.

tic differential items (7-point scales; see Appendix A). Enduring involvement is measured using the Enduring Involvement Scale (Higie & Feick, 1988). The scale items consist of 9 semantic differential items (7-point scales; see Appendix A). These scales were selected because research has shown that they are unidimensional (Higie & Feick, 1988; Kim et al., 1997; McIntyre, 1989). Because this research is exploratory in nature and predominantly interested in relationships among the constructs unidimensional scales were chosen. Clearly, leisure and consumer research have demonstrated that involvement is a multi-dimensional construct (Havitz & Dimanche, 1997; Richins et al., 1992). However, there have been consistent problems with the dimensions of involvement cross-loading with each other. Therefore, both the situational and enduring components of involvement are explored separately using scales that have historically represented these constructs well. As a result, the relationships between the two facets of involvement and the other constructs in the model can be more fully explored.

Attachment is measured using an adaptation of Ball and Tasaki's (1992) nine-item scale. Identity salience is measured using a scale adapted from Callero (1985) and Kleine et al. (1993). The scale consists of 4 items each measured on a 7-point Likert scale (*strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*). A scale developed by Oliver (1980) measures satisfaction. The scale consists of 3 items each measured on a 7-point Likert scale (*strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*). Finally, attendance is measured by asking the respondents to indicate how often they had attended women's basketball games during the past season. This item was measured on a 7-point scale. This frequency measure is a simple scale that has been effective in past research (Kleine et al., 1993). These scales are included in Appendix A.

Data Collection

The questionnaires were distributed using a campus-intercept technique at the end of the 1997/1998 NCAA women's basketball season. Students from a market research class were trained on the proper method of administering the questionnaire and received course credit for their role in the

project. The students were assigned to various locations on campus (e.g., the bookstore, the university center, etc.). A variety of days and times were used to facilitate access to all students. Potential respondents were approached and asked if they would be willing to participate in a research project. A total of 190 people participated in the study. All of the questionnaires were used in the analysis. The sample consists of 31 freshmen, 35 sophomores, 35 juniors, and 89 seniors. The average age of the respondents is 21.1 years old. In general the respondents were highly involved in the sport (see Table 1). In addition, the respondents reported high levels of identity salience and attachment.

Testing the Proposed Model

The data are analyzed using path analysis (Loehlin, 1987). The use of path analysis offers certain advantages over regression. It allows the researcher to: (1) simultaneously test a system of theoretical relationships involving multiple dependent variables, (2) restrict the relationships among variables to those that have been hypothesized *a priori*, and (3) more thoroughly investigate how well the model fits the data (e.g., through the use of residuals and goodness-of-fit indexes). The covariance matrix is used as input for the path analysis (see Table 2). The path coefficients are standardized in order to see the relative importance of each construct in the sample (Schumacker & Lomax, 1996). Single, composite indicators are used for all variables and the reliability of each composite measure is used to set the error terms and the exogenous variables are allowed to correlate.

The overall fit of the proposed model is good ($\chi^2 = 8.78$, $df = 6$, $p = .19$; GFI = .99; and RMSEA = .05). Furthermore, all of the hypothesized paths are significant and in the hypothesized direction. In addition, the model accounts for 65% of the variance in identity salience, 26% of the variance in satisfaction, and 22% of the variance in attendance.

Situational involvement, attachment, and enduring involvement were hypothesized to be related positively to identity salience. These hypotheses

Table 2
*Correlations of Constructs**

Constructs	Attendance	Satisfaction	Identity Salience	Attachment	Situational Involvement	Enduring Involvement
Attendance	1.00					
Satisfaction	0.30	1.00				
Ident Sal	0.45	0.38	1.00			
Attachment	0.33	0.35	0.71	1.00		
SI	0.36	0.51	0.73	0.68	1.00	
EI	0.34	0.41	0.72	0.66	0.79	1.00

*All correlations are significant at $p < .01$.

are supported: situational involvement \rightarrow identity salience ($\gamma = .28, t = 2.98, p < .01$); attachment \rightarrow identity salience ($\gamma = .33, t = 4.19, p < .01$); and enduring involvement \rightarrow identity salience ($\gamma = .29, t = 2.98, p < .01$).

Situational involvement was hypothesized to have a positive influence on satisfaction. The hypothesis is supported ($\gamma = .51, t = 7.56, p < .01$). Identity salience and satisfaction were posited to have a positive influence on frequency of attendance. These hypotheses are supported: identity salience \rightarrow frequency of attendance ($\beta = .39, t = 5.15, p < .01$) and satisfaction \rightarrow frequency of attendance ($\beta = .15, t = 2.01, p < .01$).

Testing the Rival Model

We compare the proposed model with its rival on the following criteria: ability to explain the variance in the outcome variable, fan attendance, and percentage of hypothesized parameters that are statistically significant.¹ Although the amount of variance explained in fan attendance is identical in both models ($R^2 = .22$), only 2 out of the 5 (40%) hypothesized relationships are significant in the rival model: identity salience \rightarrow frequency of attendance ($\beta = .43, t = 2.98, p < .01$) and satisfaction \rightarrow frequency of attendance ($\beta = .17, t = 21.97, p < .01$). In contrast, all of the hypothesized paths (100%) are significant in the hypothesized model. In the rival model, the three paths leading from situational involvement, attachment, and enduring involvement are not significant. Indicating that these variables have no direct effect on fan attendance. As a result, we suggest that the proposed model more accurately reflects the relationships found in the data.

Discussion

A model of the factors that influence fan attendance is developed and tested. The model examines variables from disparate streams of research (identity salience, involvement, attachment, and satisfaction) and demonstrates that they are useful for explaining fan behavior. The results have implications for researchers examining activity-related behavior and for marketing practitioners.

Although it has been suggested that involvement, attachment, and identity salience are related (Kleine et al., 1992; Ball & Tasaki, 1992), the relationship between these constructs has never been tested empirically. This study is the first to explore concomitantly these constructs. More importantly, the results suggest that examining them in the context of activity-related behavior is beneficial. All of these factors are related strongly (all 3 path coefficients are $\sim .30$) and significantly to identity salience and explain a significant amount of the variance in this construct (65%). If a person is

¹ Researchers often compare the differences in model fit when comparing models. However, the rival model has 0 degrees of freedom (i.e., it is fully saturated) and, therefore, fits the data perfectly. Therefore, model fit is not an appropriate point of comparison in this study.

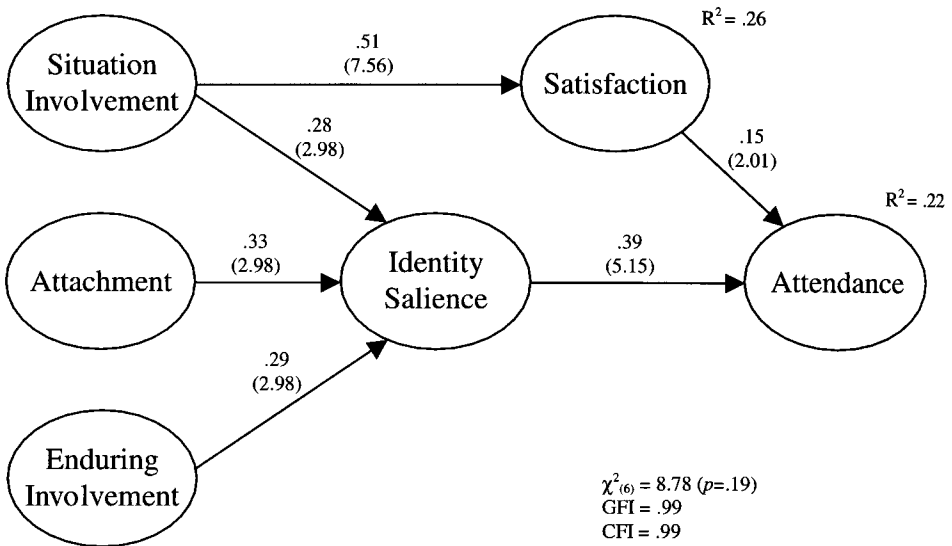


Figure 3. Results Proposed Model.

involved with and/or attached to a sports team, he/she is more likely to rate their "fan" identity as more important than other identities. Therefore, it is important for sports marketers to take actions that enhance fans' situational involvement, enduring involvement, and attachment. For example, by encouraging additional media coverage of their team and its players managers could enhance involvement. In addition, promotions such as contests could be doubly beneficial. The contest would both encourage fans to be more involved and facilitate interaction between groups of fans and players, which could enhance attachment. For example, a contest could be conducted to select the most avid fan who would then win a dinner with the team. This type of activity would also generate word-of-mouth communication about the team and its activities.

Interestingly, the paths from SI and EI to identity salience are almost identical (.28 and .29, respectively). The questionnaire was distributed approximately one month after the end of the season, which might lead one to expect that SI would not influence identity salience as much as EI. That is, since SI is influenced by activities related to the sports activity (e.g., attending games) and those activities had not been experienced recently, one might expect that SI would have decreased—making it a weaker predictor of identity salience than EI. However, this does not seem to be the case. Two explanations seem plausible: (1) the time period between the end of the season and when the questionnaires were distributed may not have been long enough to allow the fan's SI to dissipate or (2) it may be the case that the fan's SI was even stronger during the season, which means the path between SI and identity salience is actually stronger during the season. Regardless, the results demonstrate that SI is an important explanatory variable.

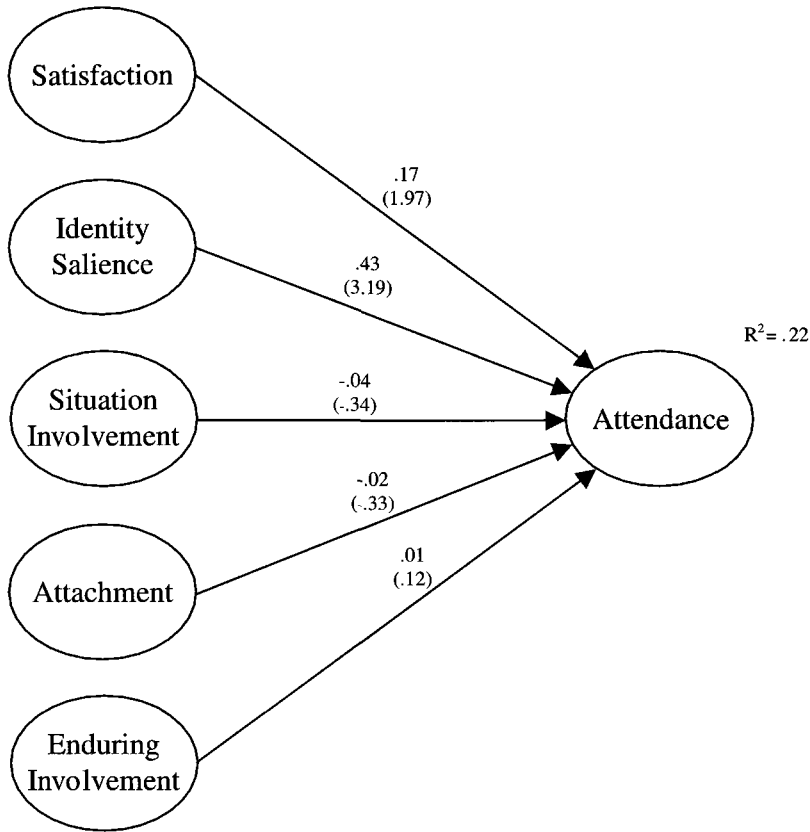


Figure 4. Results Rival Model.

In addition to SI and EI, attachment is also related significantly to identity salience. The results suggest that as a person becomes more attached to a team his/her "fan" identity becomes a more important part of his/her self-concept. Attachment has been a useful explanatory variable in product research. The results indicate it is also a useful concept in understanding behaviors related to sports teams. Therefore, by combining SI, EI, and attachment, in the same study a deeper understanding of the forces that influence a "fan" identity is obtained. If an individual is higher in situational involvement, enduring involvement, and/or attachment, then he/she is more likely to rate his/her "fan" identity as being an important part of his/her self-concept.

When making marketing mix adjustments, sports marketers often use satisfaction to predict fan attendance. The results suggest that satisfaction is indeed an important variable. However, as the results (and the leisure literature) suggest, fan behavior is a complex phenomenon. Therefore, researchers need to employ multiple constructs in their explanatory models to yield

a deeper understanding of fan behavior. The analysis indicates that identity salience explains more variance in fan attendance than does satisfaction (The path coefficients are .39 and .15, respectively.) Therefore, in order to understand more fully what motivates fans to attend games, researchers must assess the importance of the team to the fans (i.e., their identity salience). People for whom a "fan" identity is salient will be more likely to attend games, regardless of their level of satisfaction. Therefore, identity salience may be a useful segmentation variable for sports marketers. People whose "fan" identity is salient to them may provide a steady stream of revenue. That is, they will attend games and support their team regardless of the success of the team. As a result, it may be beneficial for marketers to provide special promotions for these fans; promotions that provide fans with a means of maintaining their "fan-identities."

The results suggest that there are complex dynamics associated with being a fan. Although this study represents an important first step toward understanding fan-related behavior, further research needs to be conducted. For example, researchers could investigate the role that social connections play in forming and maintaining a "fan" identity. Avid fans are more likely to discuss aspects of their team frequently with others and seek out social settings in which discussion of their team is of interest to others. As Hoelter (1983) maintains, identity salience is effected positively by the number of social connections tied to a role. As a result, interpersonal relationships contingent upon a "fan" identity for identity related social connections that may enhance the salience of the identity. An exploration of the impact that social connections have on fan-related behavior may be useful in understanding these complex phenomena. Do social connections act as antecedents to involvement, attachment, and identity salience or do they play some other role?

Future research could also explore identity-related products. A "fan identity" may be related to large set of products (i.e., shirts, flags, cups, license plate frames, etc.) Since they are often highly visible, the use of identity related products provide cues that may enhance identity salience (Belk, 1988; Wicklund & Gollwitzer, 1982). Research suggests that products are often most important to novices as these products send signals to others regarding identity related behaviors. Take for instance the novice fan that has all of the fan paraphernalia to assure that he/she "looks the part." Wicklund and Gollwitzer (1982) refer to these phenomena as symbolic self-completion. It may be interesting to explore the role that identity related products play in fan identity formation and maintenance. An exploration of avid fans' team related product sets would be interesting to explore.

Consumer research has suggested that media information influences identity salience (Kleine et al., 1993). The sheer abundance of information available and money spent in the media regarding leisure pursuits makes this an important factor to study. Research can examine how media information influences fan identity salience? For example, does positive and frequent information in the media enhance one's fan identity? And, does neg-

ative information (e.g., scandals and rules violations) decrease fan identity salience?

In addition, fan identity salience could drive fans to be overzealous. For instance, avid fans in their zest to support their teams may act in a manner that violates regulations. For instance, there have been numerous instances at the collegiate level where boosters have lavished star players with illegal gifts. In addition, avid fan behavior could influence institutions to focus on the athlete portion of the student-athlete equation.

Finally, future research could consider the concept of place attachment. Leisure research has focused on the strength of attachment to a "place" (e.g., Kaltenbon, 1997, Williams et al., 1992). It is possible that place attachment could be related to attachment to a team. For instance, many people are Green Bay packer fans due to their roots in Wisconsin or neighboring states. Likewise, many fans of athletic teams may be drawn to the teams because of their geographic location (e.g., a particular city or on a University campus). This may be an important variable in distinguishing between avid collegiate sports fans and professional fans.

As with any research, a number of limitations should be acknowledged. First, this study was conducted at the end of the season. Fan attachment, satisfaction, involvement and identity salience are likely to change over the course of a season as well. Therefore, future research should examine whether the constructs identified in this study change over the course of a season. Studies could measure the levels of these variables before, during, and after the season. This would allow researchers to assess differences in fan behavior and provide a more stringent test of the theory presented here. Second, the sample was limited to college students. Fans of college athletics need not be college students. In the context of some collegiate sports, such as women's basketball, the most avid fans may not necessarily be the student body. Other populations, who are also avid fans, should be studied to better understand the complex dynamics of fan behavior.

A third limitation was that as this study was exploratory in nature the research did not focus on the importance of the fan identity relative to other identities. In the tradition of social-identity theory this question should be explored in future research. A comparison of leisure identities to other identities such as mother, father or, professor might provide an understanding of leisure's role in individuals' self schemas.

With the exception of Laverie (1998) and Shamir (1992), leisure researchers have not explored the usefulness of identity salience for explaining leisure-related behaviors. The findings suggest that identity salience is an important factor in explaining fan-related behavior. In order to examine whether the results are context specific, the model should be tested in other populations (e.g., fans of professional football, basketball, and hockey). In addition, the model may be a useful in exploring other leisure behaviors, such as ongoing participation in tennis or golf.

Appendix A

Measurement Scales

I. Situational Involvement (Zaichowsky, 1985).
(Semantic differential scale scored from 1 to 7)

Please indicate your feelings in regard to <team name> basketball.

important	: _ : _ : _ : _ : _ : _ :	unimportant
of no concern	: _ : _ : _ : _ : _ : _ :	of concern to me
irrelevant	: _ : _ : _ : _ : _ : _ :	relevant
means a lot to me	: _ : _ : _ : _ : _ : _ :	means nothing to me
useless	: _ : _ : _ : _ : _ : _ :	useful
valuable	: _ : _ : _ : _ : _ : _ :	worthless
trivial	: _ : _ : _ : _ : _ : _ :	fundamental
beneficial	: _ : _ : _ : _ : _ : _ :	not beneficial
matters to me	: _ : _ : _ : _ : _ : _ :	doesn't matter to me
significant	: _ : _ : _ : _ : _ : _ :	insignificant
vital	: _ : _ : _ : _ : _ : _ :	superfluous
mundane	: _ : _ : _ : _ : _ : _ :	fascinating
essential	: _ : _ : _ : _ : _ : _ :	nonessential
undesirable	: _ : _ : _ : _ : _ : _ :	desirable
wanted	: _ : _ : _ : _ : _ : _ :	unwanted
not needed	: _ : _ : _ : _ : _ : _ :	needed

II. Enduring Involvement (Adapted from Higie and Feick 1988).
(Semantic differential scale scored from 1 to 7)

Please indicate your feelings in regard to attending <team name> basketball games.

Fun	: _ : _ : _ : _ : _ : _ :	not fun
unappealing	: _ : _ : _ : _ : _ : _ :	appealing
boring	: _ : _ : _ : _ : _ : _ :	interesting
unexciting	: _ : _ : _ : _ : _ : _ :	exciting
dull	: _ : _ : _ : _ : _ : _ :	fascinating
not part of my self image	: _ : _ : _ : _ : _ : _ :	part of my self image

If you were to see someone at a <team name> basketball game, it would:

show me nothing	: _ : _ : _ : _ : _ : _ :	tell me about the person
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If other people were to see me at a <team name> basketball game, it would:

be used to judge me	: _ : _ : _ : _ : _ : _ :	not used to judge me
not tell others about me	: _ : _ : _ : _ : _ : _ :	tell others about me

- ☐ not at all last season
- ☐ at least once last season
- ☐ at least 5 times last season
- ☐ at least 10 times last season
- ☐ at least 15 times last season
- ☐ almost every game last season
- ☐ every game last season

VI. Satisfaction (Adapted from Oliver 1980).

(Likert scale, 1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree)

1. I am satisfied with my decision(s) to attend this (these) games.
2. I think that I did the right thing by deciding to attend this (these) games.
3. I am *not* happy that I attended this (these) games

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