The Psychology and Motivations of Sports Fans

Phillip Bang[1] and Paul O'Connor[#]

[1]Don Bosco Prep, Ramsey, NJ, USA
[#]Advisor

ABSTRACT

With the number of fans growing each year, the world's fascination with sports is nothing new—for example, FIFA (International Federation of Association Football) estimates that there are five billion soccer fans around the world. However, even with the worldwide obsession with sports, little is understood about the origins of a fan's enticement, or even the psychology of a fan. The standing research done on this subject confronts this question with complexity when in reality, it should be faced with simplicity. This study attempts to add to the knowledge of the psychology and motivation of a sports fan by simplifying the approach. A survey was designed to reveal a participant's background involving sports and motivations for becoming a sports fan. In the study, there were 41 participants, each self-categorized to a priority level—first, high, medium, and low—that indicated the extent that sports were to their daily lives. Each answer was compared both within and outside the group, with each trend and outlier being noted. It was found that the first and high-priority participants demonstrated strong support and pride for their team, while the medium and low-priority participants did not carry the same passion. The results of the study revealed that there were three dominant motivations for someone becoming a sports fan: desire for a sense of community, excitement/entertainment, and being influenced by a player from their country and the more someone becomes a devoted fan the more emotional involvement they will have with their object of support.

Introduction

Fans exist everywhere, and the objects of their support can be anything, ranging from music groups to politicians to TV shows. Despite the massive number of fans and fandoms that exist, particularly in sports, information on the psychology and motivation of a sports fan is minimal. Furthermore, the majority of studies done on the psychology of sports fans are about "the violence and aggression, which may result from being a fan" (Jacobson, 2003). When put in the academic spotlight, sports fans tend to be stereotyped into one of two extremes: the fair-weather fan or the die-hard fan, making the psychology of all the fans, in between, an unappealing topic of research.

The definition of a fan is a zealous supporter with a strong emotional connection to the object of their support. According to literature, fan support exists on a spectrum from the spectator, to fairweather fans, to moderate fans, and then to the fanatics. The key differences between these levels are the level of enthusiasm and activeness in their support. A fanatic's level of support will be largely incomparable to that of an average fan, in that they will eat, sleep, and breathe sports, making sports and the team of their obsession one of the highest priorities of their lives (Holbrook 1987). Studies on the emotional involvement of fans have shed light on the emotional attachment and engrossment fans can have with the object of their obsession. Fanatics become more emotionally involved with the team, they begin to enjoy each win and suffer each defeat. It is as if they feel that they are a part of the team, which is not too far off—all professional players and teams consider fans a crucial, unexchangeable part of their success. (Boire, 1980) To add to the feeling of being a part of the club, being a fan means more than just excessively staying up to the latest matches or knowing each player's jersey number—it is also about being a part of the fandom. Supporting the same team is a good enough reason to feel connected to another, especially currently, when fans are becoming more involved in the club. This step forward is evident with Liverpool FC, where being a fan is beginning to mean more than owning

merchandise or singing chants for 90 minutes. They have recently signed a contract that allowed the club "to structure strategic engagement with supporters, strengthen dialogue and increase fan involvement in decision-making processes." On the other hand, regular sports spectators will feel no emotional attachment or pride when consuming sports. Another paper defines a fan's support not by how much time they spend watching games, how many jerseys and pieces of merchandise they own, or even which teams they follow on social media; rather, it is the ardor that they carry even when they are not watching, the nerves before each match, and the passion after each tremendous play is what truly makes them fans. (Anderson, 1979)

Fans on the more extreme side of the support levels show support in situations where sports are not naturally present. Fans are not only fans when they are actively enjoying a game or reading about their favorite team's new signing—they embody pride wherever they go. They will think and talk about sports often, even when they may not be in a sports-oriented environment (Spinrad, 1981). A common way of becoming a fan would be being influenced by a sense of community. Studies have shown that most men were sports fans because they played it, but most women's fandoms arose because of shared experiences with family or friends (Dietz-Uhler, Harrick, End, and Jacquemotte, 2000). This study showed that the growth of fan mania is brought upon by environmental influences instead of direct involvement.

Other literature that focused on the psychology of sports fans has cited factors such as the unique nature of sporting events and the consequences that come with results. Researchers Madrigal and Dalakas state that sports consumers are intrigued by the unique nature of sporting events, which can include the tension that rises amid a close match, the uncertainty of each game, and the competitive nature of sports. "It is the experience of suspense arising from the possibility of alternative outcomes to a competitive sporting event that makes this form of entertainment so compelling to spectators." (Madrigal and Dalakas, 2008) The consequences that come with results refer to the significance of each result regarding the standings in their respective league. It not only affects the team who got the result— it indirectly propels teams forward and holds teams back. "A desirable outcome is one in which either a liked competitor wins or a disliked competitor loses, and an undesirable outcome is one in which either a liked competitor loses or a disliked competitor wins." (Madrigal and Dalakas, 2008) Even more complex than the aforementioned factors is Sloan's (1989) theory, shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Sloan's Theory

Sloan's Theory	Definition
Entertainment Theory	Sports fans are drawn to sports as it gives them happiness.
Achievement-Seeking Theory	Sports fans are drawn to sports looking to socially gain on another's success
Catharsis Theory	Sports fans are drawn to sports, especially ones with heavy contact, as a means of catharsis
Salubrious-Effects Theory	Sports fans are drawn to sports as a source of pleasure, using it to escape from daily life

However, the factors could be even simpler than that when looking at the very basic foundations of the reason why someone would want to become a fan of a certain sport, team, or player—this was the ultimate goal of the study: to simplify the understanding of the psychology and motivations of sports fans.

Methods

In this study, a survey was conducted via Google Forms to determine the different behaviors and motivations behind different levels of sports fans, where levels were divided by the priority sports were in their lives. Questions asked in the survey are shown in Table 9 in the Appendix Section. In the survey, the 41 participants were asked to self-evaluate what priority following sports was on a scale of four priorities: first-priority (i.e. allot time in your schedule to keep up with sports, it is part of a routine), high-priority (i.e. keep up on every game but there are times you miss), medium-priority (i.e. watch leisurely but do not keep up on every game), and low-priority (i.e. watch because you have nothing to do). Grouping the participants allowed the answers to be fairly compared to each other, both within and outside each priority group. It also reveals trends and patterns between the priority groups. The survey itself was created with the goal of finding out a correlation between a fan's creation and the level of support in mind.

Results

Participant Demographics and Self Evaluation

Out of the 41 participants, 36 were male and 5 were female. The average age was 17.88 years, with the minimum age being 14 years and the maximum age being 46 years. There were 5 participants who identified sports as first priority, 19 participants who identified sports as a high priority, 11 participants who identified sports as medium priority, and 6 participants who identified sports as low priority.

Table 2. Table of Self-Evaluation of Fandom

Priority Level	You consider yourself a fan of sports. (Total Count)	You consider yourself a fan of a specific team/player. (Total Count)
First	-Strongly Agree (4; 80%) -Agree (1; 20%)	-Strongly Agree (5; 100%)
High	-Strongly Agree (13; 68%) -Agree (6; 32%)	-Strongly Agree (13; 68%) -Agree (6; 32%)
Medium	-Strongly Agree (3; 27%) -Agree (6; 55%) -Neutral (2; 18%)	-Strongly Agree (5; 45%) -Agree (4; 36%) -Neutral (1; 9%) -Strongly Disagree (1; 9%)
Low	-Agree (3: 50%) -Neutral (2; 33.3%) -Disagree (1; 16.6%)	-Strongly Agree (1; 16.6%) -Agree (1; 16.6%) -Neutral (2; 33.3%) -Disagree (2; 33.3%)

Table 2 shows the self-evaluation of the fandom of each of the participants. There is seen to be a positive correlation and the data for whether or not the participant considered themselves a fan of sports was highly skewed towards the Strongly agree category as the priorities got higher. Similarly, the same trends were viewed by the fan of

a specific team or player. We can see that there are more "Strongly Agree" responses in all categories, which can suggest that instead of sports in general, it is required that fans have a specific team or player to support.

Recurrence Consumption of Sports

The next set of questions, shown in Tables 3 and 4, observe the quantitative values (both average and frequencies) of how much sports content and regularity each participant consumes of their team, player, or sports activity in general.

Table 3. Table of Averages Based on Daily Consumption of Sports

Priority Level	Do you play any sports? If so, which sport and how long have you been playing? (Average)	Which sport(s) do you follow? (Average number of sports following)	How many sports teams do you follow? (Average number of teams following)	How many hours per week do you spend on average watching/following sports? (Average)
First	11.6 years	2.8 sports	3 teams	13.2 hours
High	11.3 years	2.9 sports	2.95 teams	9.4 hours
Medium	10.4 years	2.5 sports	2.8 teams	4 hours
Low	7 years	1.8 sports	1.7 teams	1 hour

Observing the first question of Table 3, there was a positive correlation between the number of years playing sports and the priority levels. First and high priority participants had an average of 11.6 and 11.3 years of playing sports while medium and low priority participants saw a lower average of 10.4 years and 7 years, with 33% of participants who played no sports at all in the low priority group. The second question of Table 3 follows the same positive correlation trend as in the first question, in which the average number of sports followed by each priority group decreases as the priority levels decrease. In fact, this correlation pattern between the question objectives and priority levels stays true for the remainder of the questions in the table; however, the last question introduces a more dramatic and steeper trend. The amount of sports watched per week by each priority group shows a bigger and more distinct difference per group. The first priority group watches sports for an average of 13.4 hours a week and this average steeply drops as low priority group participants watch sports on average for 1 hour a week.

Table 4. Table of Frequencies of Sports Consumption.

Priority Level	How often do you watch sports content? (Total Count)	You make an effort to watch every game that involves your favorite team/player. (Total Count)	You keep up with a variety of news surrounding your team regularly. (Total Count)
First	-Every day (4; 80%) -Twice a week (1; 20%)	-Strongly Agree (5; 100%)	-Strongly Agree (5; 100%)
High	-Every day (12; 63%) -Every other day (4; 21%) -Twice a week (3; 16%)	-Strongly Agree (7; 37%) -Agree (10; 53%) -Neutral (1; 5%)	-Strongly Agree (8; 42%) -Agree (9; 47%) -Neutral (2; 11%)

		-Disagree (1; 5%)	
Medium	-Every day (3; 27.3%) -Every other day (3; 27.3%) -Twice a week (3; 27.3%) -Once a week (1; 9%) -Once or twice a month (1; 9%)	-Agree (4; 36%) -Neutral (5; 45%) -Disagree (1; 9%) -Strongly Disagree (1; 9%)	-Strongly Agree (2; 18%) -Agree (4; 36%) -Neutral (2; 18%) -Disagree (2; 18%) -Strongly Disagree (1; 9%)
Low	-Every other day (1; 16.6%) -Once a week (1; 16.6%) -Twice a week (2; 33.3%) -Once or twice a month (2; 33.3%)	-Agree (1; 16.6) -Neutral (1; 16.6%) -Disagree (3; 50%) -Strongly Disagree (1; 16.6%)	-Neutral (5; 83.3%) -Strongly Disagree (1; 16.6%)

Table 4 shows the number and percentages of participants of each category that have chosen each choice per question. Trends, similar to that in Table 3, can be observed between the priority level of the participant and regularity of sports consumption. The first question of Table 4 did not reveal a strong correlation between the earliest age of watching sports and priority levels, as the majority of participants in the first, high, and medium-priority groups all began to watch sports before the age of 10, with 80%, 95%, and 90% respectively. However, for those three groups, the range of ages was smaller than that of the low-priority group, which had 16.6% of participants beginning to watch sports after the age of 15—an age range that none of the previous three groups had. The second question of Table 4 did show a positive correlation between frequency of sports consumption and priority levels, as 80% of first-priority participants watched sports every day while 63% of high-priority participants watched sports every day. As expected with the medium and low-priority participants, fewer people watched sports regularly, with 2 people watching sports as little as once or twice a month. Continuing this positive correlation trend, the first and high-priorities respectively had 100% and 37% of participants who strongly agreed that they made an effort to watch every game that involved their favorite team/player. In addition, the high-priority had 53% of participants agreed with the statement. Meanwhile, the medium and low-priorities respectively had 18% and 66.6% of participants who either disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement. Additionally, neither of them had any participants strongly agree. Similarly, the same positive correlation is observed.

Initial Interest and Motivation in Sports

The next set of questions, shown in Table 5, reveals the reasons for becoming fans and the first exposure of each participant. When asked how their interest in their favorite team formed, there were not many discrete patterns or responses that were different between groups. Overall, it was observed that initial interest in the team came from either family or friends, interest because of geographical connection or because of special players, managers, and teams. 24 participants answered that they found sports as a way to feel connected with the ones around them, including friends, family, and peers, 6 participants answered that they were initially intrigued by watching an exciting player and/or team, and 8 participants answered that they were first drawn into sports because of a certain player that was from their country. From the second question, 22 participants answered that they found sports as a way to feel connected with the ones around them, 14 participants answered that they were initially intrigued by watching an exciting player and/or team, and 4 participants answered that they were first drawn into sports because of a certain player that was from their country. When asked at what age the participants started watching sports, most started this activity before the age of 10 and 40/41 participants started watching sports before the age of 15.

Table 5. Table of Initial Interests

Priority Level	How did your interest in your favorite team form? (Total Count)	How did you get to know the teams you are following? What drew your interest in this particular team/athlete? (Total Count)	At what age would you say you involved yourself in watching sports? (Total Count)
First	-Family/Friends (2; 40%) - Interest in the manager (2; 40%) - Interest in the color of the team (1; 20%)	-Attracted to the player/team's ability (4; 80%) -Family (1; 20%)	-Before 7 (1; 20%) -7-10 (3; 60%) -11-15 (1; 20%)
High	-Player from my country played for the team (6; 32%) -Family member(s)/friends are fans (8; 42%) -They play in my/nearest city (2; 11%) -Favorite player played for the team (1; 5%) -Got to see the team play in person (1; 5%) -Random (1; 5%)	-Attracted to the player/team's ability (5; 26%) -Family (9; 47%) -Player from home country played for them (4; 21%) -Team location (4; 21%)	-Before 7 (10; 53%) -7-10 (8; 42%) -11-15 (1; 5%)
Medium	-Family member(s)/friends are fans (8; 73%) -They are very successful trophy-wise (1; 9%) -Favorite player played for the team (1; 9%)	-Attracted to the player/team's ability (3; 27%) -Family (7; 64%) -Social media (1; 9%)	-Before 7 (6; 55%) -7-10 (4; 36%) -11-15 (1, 9%)
Low	-Family member(s)/friends are fans (4; 66.6%) -Player from my country played for the team (2; 33.3)	-Attracted to the player/team's ability (2; 33.3%) -Family (1; 16.6%)	-Before 7 (2; 33.3%) -7-10 (1; 16.6%) -11-15 (2; 33.3%) -After 15 (1; 16.6%)

Measures of Devotion

Table 6.1 Table of Devotion to Sports

Priority Level	Have you ever done any of the following, select all that applies. (Total Count)	How devoted are you to your favorite teams/athletes? How have you shown this devotion? (Total Count)
First	-Attended a sports game with very good seats (5; 100%) -Attended a signing/meet and greet (4; 80%) -Gotten into an altercation with the opposing fan base (1; 20%)	-Buying merchandise (4; 80%) -Watching/attending games (5; 100%) -Social media (2; 40%)

	-Gone to an airport or hotel hosting your favorite team (0; 0%) -Hosted or attended a party in celebration of a team (2; 40%)	
High	-Attended a sports game with very good seats (16; 84%) -Attended a signing/meet and greet (6; 32%) -Gotten into an altercation with the opposing fan base (4; 21%) m (3; 16%) -Hosted or attended a party in celebration of a team (12; 63%)	-Buying merchandise (10; 53%) -Watching/attending games (10; 53%) -Social media (3; 16%) -Talking about team (1; 5%)
Medium	-Attended a sports game with very good seats (8; 73%) -Attended a signing/meet and greet (3; 27%) -Gotten into an altercation with the opposing fan base (1; 9%) -Gone to an airport or hotel hosting your favorite team (0; 0%) -Hosted or attended a party in celebration of a team (5; 45%)	-Buying merchandise (4; 36%) -Watching/attending games (4; 36%) -Not devoted (5; 45%)
Low	-Attended a sports game with very good seats (3; 50%) -Attended a signing/meet and greet (1; 16.6%%) -Gotten into an altercation with the opposing fan base (1; 16.6%) -Gone to an airport or hotel hosting your favorite team (0; 0%) -Hosted or attended a party in celebration of a team (4; 66.6%)	-Buying merchandise (1; 16.6%) -Social media (1; 16.6%) -Not devoted (3; 50%)

In Table 6.1 we can observe different categorical ways that the participants show devotion to their teams, outside of just watching the sports games themselves. Within the first-priority group, 100% have attended a sports game with very good seats, 80% have attended a signing/meet and greet, 20% have gotten into an altercation with the opposing fan base, 0% have gone to an airport or hotel hosting your favorite team, and 40% have hosted or attended a party in celebration of a team. Within the high-priority group, 84% have attended a sports game with very good seats, 32% have attended a signing/meet and greet, 21% have gotten into an altercation with the opposing fan base, 16% have gone to an airport or hotel hosting your favorite team, and 63% have hosted or attended a party in celebration of a team. Within the medium-priority group, 73% have attended a sports game with very good seats, 27% have attended a signing/meet and greet, 9% have gotten into an altercation with the opposing fan base, 0% have gone to an airport or hotel hosting your favorite team, and 45% have hosted or attended a party in celebration of a team. Within the low-priority group, 50% have attended a sports game with very good seats, 16.6% have attended a signing/meet and greet, 16.6% have gotten into an altercation with the opposing fan base, 0% have gone to an airport or hotel hosting your favorite team, and 66.6% have hosted or attended a party in celebration of a team.

First-priority participants have shown devotion in three various ways: 80% answered that they bought merchandise, 100% answered that they watched or attended games, and 40% answered that they showed their devotion through social media. High-priority participants have shown devotion in four various ways: 53% answered that they bought merchandise, 53% answered that they watched or attended games, 16% answered that they showed their devotion through social media, and 5% answered that they talked about the team. Medium-priority participants have shown devotion in two various ways: 36% answered that they bought merchandise, 36% answered that they watched or attended games, and 45% answered that they were not devoted. Low-priority participants have shown devotion in two various ways: 16.6% answered that they bought merchandise, 16.6% answered that they showed their devotion through social media, and 50% answered that they showed their devotion through social media.

Table 6.2 Table of Devotion to Sports

Priority Level	*You can name ___ players on your favorite team. (Total Count)*	*How much merchandise do you own from your favorite team? (ex: jerseys, figurines) (Total Count)*	*You follow sports figures on social media. (Total Count)*	*How much are you willing to spend to go to a sports game of your favorite team? (Total Count)*
First	-Most if not all players (5; 100%)	-1-3 (2; 40%) -3-10 (1; 20%) -More than 10 (2; 40%)	-Yes (5; 100%)	-$51 - $100 (1; 20%) -$101-$200 (1; 20%) -$201-$350 (2; 40%) -$600+ (1; 20%)
High	-Most if not all players (18; 95%) -At least 10 players (1; 5%)	-1-3 (10; 53%) -3-10 (6; 32%) -More than 10 (3; 16%)	-Yes (18; 95%) -No (1; 5%)	-$51 - $100 (4; 21%) -$101 - $200 (4; 21%) -$201 - $350 (5; 26%) -$351 - $600 (3; 16%) -$600+ (3; 16%)
Medium	-Most if not all players (7; 63%) -At least 10 players (2; 18%) -Less than 5 players (2; 18%)	-None (2; 18%) -1-3 (6; 55%) -3-10 (3; 27%)	-Yes (10; 91%) -No (1; 9%)	-$10 - $50 (2; 18%) -$51 - $100 (1; 9%) -$101 - $200 (3; 27%) -$201 - $350 (4; 36%) -$351 - $600 (1; 9%)
Low	-Most if not all players (2; 33.3%) -At least 5 players (3; 50%) -Less than 5 players (1; 16.6%)	-None (2; 33.3%) -1-3 (3; 50%) -3-10 (1; 16.6%)	-Yes (4; 66.6%) -No (2; 33.3%)	-Would not pay (1; 16.6%) -$51 - $100 (2; 33.3%) -$101 - $200 (3; 50%)

All three questions in Table 6.2 showed a positive correlation between each question and the priority levels. Within the first-priority group, 100% are able to name most, if not all, players; 40% owned between one and three merchandise, 20% owned between three and 10, and 40% owned more than 10; 100% followed sports figures on social media. Within the high-priority group, 95% are able to name most, if not all, players, and 5% are able to name at least 10 players; 53% owned between one and three merchandise, 32% owned between three and 10, and 16% owned more than 10; 95% followed sports figures on social media. Within the medium-priority group, 63% are able to name most, if not all, players, 18% are able to name at least 10 players, and 18% are able to name less than 5 players; 18% owned no merchandise, 55% owned between one and three merchandise, and 27% owned between three and 10; 91% followed sports figures on social media. Within the low-priority group, 33.3% are able to name most, if not all, players, 50% are able to name at least 5 players, and 16.6% are able to name less than 5 players; 33.3% owned no merchandise, 50% owned between one and three merchandise, and 16.6% owned between three and 10; 66.6% followed sports figures on social media. When asked about how much money they are willing to spend on a sports event, there were not any significant differences between categories except the extreme values observed in each priority group. The first and high priority groups show that respectively 20% and 16.6% of participants were willing to spend more than $600 on a single sporting event whilst in the lowest priority category we can observe that the highest anyone would spend is $200 and 16.6% of the participants said that they would never pay for a sports event.

Psychological Investment into Sports

Table 7.1. Table of Emotional Attachment

Priority Level	*On a scale of 1-5, how do you feel when your team has lost a big game? (The higher the number, the more emotional involvement in the team)* *(Average)*	*On a scale of 1-5, how do you feel when your team has won a big game? (The higher the number, the more emotional involvement in the team)* *(Average)*
First	3.6	3.6
High	3.05	3.47
Medium	2.6	3.1
Low	1.83	1.83

Table 7 shows one of the strongest pieces of evidence of a relationship between priority levels and emotional attachment toward the team. On a scale of 1-5, when the participant's team had lost a big game, the averages of how the participants were feeling were 3.6, 3.05, 2.6, and 1.83, in order of first, high, medium, and low-priorities. On a scale of 1-5, when the participant's team had won a big game, the averages of how the participants were feeling were 3.6, 3.47, 3.1, and 1.83, in order of first, high, medium, and low-priorities.

Table 7.2. Table of 1-5 Scale Values for Questions in 7.1

	1	2	3	4	5
When Team has Lost	Do not Care	Sad at the moment, but forget later	Upset but hopeful	Bothered for the rest of the day/week	Depressed
When Team has Won	Do not Care	Happy in the moment, but forget later	Joyful for the rest of the day	Ecstatic for the rest of the week	You feel like your life could not get any better

Table 8. Table of Effect of Sports

Priority level	*Why do you find watching sports enjoyable? What role does it play in your mental and social health?*
First	-Entertaining/exciting (4; 80%) -Relaxing (1; 20%)
High	-Entertaining/exciting (14; 74%) -Relaxing (1; 5%) -Escape from life (5; 26%) -Topic of conversation (3; 16%)

Medium	-Entertaining/exciting (6; 55%) -Relaxing (2; 18%) -Escape from life (2; 18%) -Topic of conversation (3; 27%)
Low	-Entertaining/exciting (1; 16.6%) -Motivating (1; 16.6%)

Table 8 showed a number of reasons for enjoying sports consumption, and they were very similar for all groups. Within the first-priority group, 80% said that they found watching sports entertaining or exciting, and 20% said that it was relaxing. Within the high-priority group, 74% said that watching sports was entertaining or exciting, 5% said that it was relaxing, 26% said that it was a way to take their minds off everything else in life, and 16% said that it was a way to connect with others. Within the medium-priority group, 55% said that watching sports was entertaining or exciting, 18% said that it was relaxing, 18% said that it was a way to take their minds off everything else in life, and 27% said that it was a way to connect with others. Finally, within the low-priority group, 16.6% said that they found watching sports entertaining or exciting, and 16.6% said that it was motivating.

Conclusion

The purpose of this research was to simplify the standing studies on the psychology and motivation of sports fans. When given these straightforward questions with a couple of set answers, the participants were easily able to figure out why they became interested in becoming sports fans. What other in-depth studies have failed to consider is that sports and fans are not complex at all, especially when the mind—often a child's, as sports fans tend to start at a young age— is impressionable and simple. Humans do not need a harmonious set of reasons to decide if they want to become a fan or not—they just need one. The information that was gathered was narrowed down into three possible motivations: the sense of community, excitement/entertainment, and the influence of a player from one's country.

There were two questions that revealed a participant's reason for taking interest in a certain team. One was "*How did your interest in your favorite team form?*" and the other was "*How did you get to know the teams you are following? What drew your interest in this particular team/athlete?*" as shown in Table 5 of the results section. For both questions, the study reveals that the top reason for a participant becoming involved in watching sports and supporting a team involved feeling connected with others. For many, sports is a shared game that they could experience with their family and friends, which explains why so many participants recalled a time in which they enjoyed sports with their family or friends when asked to describe their first, notable experience with sports. In addition, many people find supporting the local team(s) to make sense. Surrounding them are other ardent supporters of the team, which contributes to them feeling like a part of a greater community. Next, it is natural to admire the top players/teams, and for many—as proved in the survey—the excitement was the reason why they became fans in the first place. Humans are innately drawn toward entertainment, which the best teams and players are able to provide. This reason is why the top teams and athletes in every sport are more popular than on the other end of the spectrum. Finally, the influence of a player from one's country was evident here. When unsure of which team to support, participants often turned to the player that they related to in a nationality sense.

For the analysis of the results, the participants were split by their priority levels. This was because it was the best indication of how much watching sports affected their lives. Throughout the survey, first and high-priority groups displayed exuberant behaviors, as if they were answering the questions with great pride and zeal. More often than not, those two groups showed the most involvement in their answers, with the other two groups, medium, and low-priority, sometimes omitting an answer. A fan is someone who carries a significant amount of emotional attachment toward an association, (Madrigal, 1995) and this definition is clearly represented in Table 4, in which participants were able to

score their emotional state in two scenarios. As expected, the participants in the higher priority levels contained stronger emotional attachments to the team. Those participants will be more heavily affected by each result, especially important ones, than participants in the lower priority levels, who will have shallow reactions to each result, even significant ones. In this study, participants who identified in the higher priority groups contributed and devote more time, energy, and money to their teams and players. Fans who take sports as a higher priority in their life are more likely to spend more time and money on events, merchandise, and activities, shown in tables 6.1 and 6.2 Additionally, it was found that the more involved a participant was in playing a sport, the more involved they were in consuming sports. This is backed up by the literature review, where studies showed fans are regularly thinking about sports and consuming sports content because that is their character. (Spinrad, 1981) This was apparent in Table 1, where the general trend was the longer a participant spent playing sports, the more sports they followed, the more sports teams they followed, and the more time they spent watching sports.

The effect that sports have on the psychology and emotions of the fans were observed in this study as well. In the Table 7.1, first and high-priority participants were noticeably affected by match results, both wins, and losses, while the medium and low-priority participants quickly forgot about the results. Because fans represent their teams with true passion and love, they are very emotionally attached (Madrigal, 1995). The results in this table solidified the claim that fans, specifically the participants in the first and high-priority groups, were emotionally attached to their teams of support and were affected by each result for a longer period of time compared to the medium and low-priority participants. In Table 8, it was found that most participants found common reasons why they enjoyed sports. Three of those reasons, entertainment/exciting, relaxing, and escape from life, were in line with some of the background research, specifically the entertainment theory and the salubrious-effects theory. Participants consumed sports because they found it entertaining, exciting, relaxing, or distracting.

A limitation of this study included the fact that the participants were grouped according to their self-evaluation of what level of priority sports were in their lives. Self-evaluation can often be misleading due to the bias of the person filling out the survey. Another limitation was the bias in the sampling survey: most participants were sports fans to a certain extent. It can be seen that the data shows that the participants overall had more interest in sports than the regular spectator or fans. This was expected because the survey was about the experiences of being a sports fan; therefore, non-fans or spectators would be less inclined or interested in participating, whereas a sports fan would be inquisitive and even excited to partake.

All in all, appreciating the psychology behind a sports fan is crucial for a number of reasons: firstly, the more teams and athletes understand what creates a fan, the more efficient their approach to it will be. In addition, the information found on sports mania fans could be used to also research obsession disorders. Finally—on the other end of the spectrum—the knowledge gained on fair-weather fans—casual fans who only follow their team when it benefits them socially–could help with understanding people who want to feel included. The results of this study will also be vastly helpful for anyone or an organization looking to devise ways to engage more fans, especially sports teams. Attracting fans is not a difficult task, as long as the organization spends effort in the process of gaining them. Studies have shown that creating a new customer was more expensive than satisfying and retaining an existing customer (Fornell and Wenerfelt, 1987). This is insightful in that it proves that organizations should approach their marketing in a more relationship-based manner, rather than a service manner.

Acknowledgments

References

Anderson, D.F.. (1979). Sport Spectatorship: Appropriation of an Identity or Appraisal of Self. Review of Sport and Leisure. 4. 115-127. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/313405927_Sport_Spectatorship_Appropriation_of_an_Identity_or_Appraisal_of_Self.

Boire, J. (1980). Collective Behavior in Sport. Review of Sport and Leisure, 25, 2- 45. http://pascal-francis.inist.fr/vibad/index.php?action=getRecordDetail&idt=12478106.

Dietz-Uhler, B., Harrick, E., End, C. & Jacquemotte, L. (2000). Sex Differences in Sport Fan Behavior and Reasons for Being a Sports Fan. Journal of Sport Behavior, 23, 219-231. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/284062545_Sex_differences_in_sport_fan_behavior_and_reasons_for_being_a_sport_fan.

Evans, M., Jamal, A., & Foxall, G. R. (2009). Consumer behaviour (2nd ed.). London, UK: Wiley.
James, J. D. (1997). *Becoming a sports fan: Understanding Cognitive Development and socialization in the development of Fan Loyalty*. Ohio State University. https://www.proquest.com/openview/a80ce0d149e9bcf0c72de14a42e81f77/1?pq-origsite=gscholar&cbl=18750&diss=y.

Jacobson, B. (2003, June). The social psychology of the creation of a sports fan identity: A ... The Social Psychology of the Creation of a Sports Fan Identity: A Theoretical Review of the Literature. http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.607.5474&rep=rep1&type=pdf.

Jones, I. (1997a). The Origin and Maintenance of Sports Fan Identification: A Response to Wann, et al. (1996). Perceptual and Motor Skills, 85, 257-258.

Madrigal, R. (1995). Cognitive and affective determinants of fan satisfaction with sporting event attendance. *Journal of Leisure Research, 27*, 205-227. https://doi.org/10.1080/00222216.1995.11949745.

Madrigal, Robert & Dalakas, Vassilis. (2008). Consumer psychology of sport: More than just a game. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/271014250_Consumer_psychology_of_sport_More_than_just_a_game.

Maxton, B. (2019). *Understanding sports fan motivation: A study into fan involvement, satisfaction and Loyalty*. https://repository.up.ac.za/bitstream/handle/2263/71722/Maxton_Understanding_2019.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y.

Pooley, J. (1978). The Sport Fan: A Social Psychology of Misbehavior. Sociology of Sport Monograph Series, Calgary: CAPHER

Sloan, L. 1989. The Motives of Sports Fans. In J. Goldstein (Ed.) Sport, Games and Play: Social and Psychological Viewpoints, (pp. 175-226) Hillsdale, NJ: Laurence Earlbaum. https://www.taylorfrancis.com/chapters/edit/10.4324/9780203728376-13/motives-sports-fans-lloyd-reynolds-sloan.

Spinrad, W. The Function of Spectator Sports. In G. Luschen and G. Sage (Eds) Handbook of Social Science of Sport. Champagne , IL: Stipes. 1981. https://www.cabdirect.org/cabdirect/abstract/19841806253.

Stever, Gayle S. 2019. "Fan Studies in Psychology: A Road Less Traveled." *Transformative Works and Cultures,*

no. 30. https://doi.org/10.3983/twc.2019.1641.

Vale, L., & Fernandes, T. (2017). *Social Media and sports: Driving fan engagement with football clubs on ...* Social media and sports: driving fan engagement with football clubs on Facebook. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/320838844_Social_media_and_sports_driving_fan_engagement_with_football_clubs_on_Facebook.

Wann, D. L. (1994). The "Noble" Sports Fan: The Relationships between Team Identification, Self-Esteem, and Aggression. Perceptual and Motor Skills, 78(3), 864–866. https://doi.org/10.1177/003151259407800337.

Wann, D., Melnick, M., Russell, G., & Page, D. (2001). Sports Fans: The Psychology and Social Impact of Spectators. New York, NY: Routeledge. https://www.cabdirect.org/cabdirect/abstract/20013133287