THE EMPIRICAL VALIDATION OF THE SPORT BRAND LOVE MODEL IN

PROFESSIONAL SPORTS

by

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(Under the Direction of Kevin K. Byon)

ABSTRACT

Love is the highest form of attachment (Bowlby, 1979; Sternberg, 1987; Thompson, MacInnis, & Park, 2005) that consumers have towards brands, and it is integral to the success of organizations today. Sports boast of millions of raving consumers and may be one of the industries in which brand love is most evident; however, the multiple general marketing studies that were conducted on the brand love of traditional products (Albert, Merunka, & Valette-Florence, 2008; Batra, Ahuvia, & Bagozzi, 2012; Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006) were not directly applicable to sport. Therefore, the purpose of the study was to empirically validate the sport brand love model to allow sport managers a better understanding of sport brand love. Using consumers from the major professional sport teams in a large metropolitan area of the U.S., participants (N = 635) were surveyed using the sport brand love questionnaire developed in this study. The sample was split into two independent samples so the results could be cross-validated. The measurement model of the calibration sample and holdout sample had reasonably good fit, reliability, and validity considering the complexity of the model, and the structural model of both samples also had reasonably good fit. While the path coefficients for the samples were different, the subsequent multi-sample path analysis of the three teams provided an explanation for these

differences. In the NBA and NFL group, "Team Nostalgia" was the only statistically significant ($p < .05$) antecedent, and "Perceived High Quality," "Team Uniqueness," and "Team Nostalgia" were statistically significant ($p < .05$) antecedents for the MLB group. The six consequences of sport brand love were statistically significant ($p < .05$) for all teams. Furthermore, the multi-group path analysis on gender indicated that "Team Nostalgia" was the only antecedent that was statistically significant ($p < .05$) for the female group, and "Perceived High Quality," "Team Uniqueness," and "Team Nostalgia" were statistically significant ($p < .05$) for the male group. However, gender was not a significant moderating variable when the individual teams were examined. These results indicate that sport marketers must understand sport brand love and create strategic marketing plans according to the type of sport.

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DEDICATION

To my sweet and loving husband Brian for his unconditional love, support, and endurance throughout this process. I also dedicate this work to my loving parents whose hard work and support has enabled me to get where I am today.

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"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." –Phil 4:13

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In the industry, the use and importance of the concept of love can be seen through marketing campaigns such as McDonald's "I'm Lovin' It" trademarked slogan, Nike's most recent "Love the game, Live the life" campaign, and through the global advertising agency Saatchi and Saatchi's development of the 'Lovemarks' concept which they define as "a product, service, or entity that inspires loyalty beyond reason" (Saatchi & Saatchi Worldwide, 2012). Previous research in consumer behavior suggests that consumers ascribe human characteristics to brands (Aaker, 1997; Fournier, 1998) and love can indeed characterize consumers' feelings towards the brand they are consuming (Albert, Merunka, & Valette-Florence, 2008; Batra, Ahuvia, & Bagozzi, 2012; Bergkvist & Bech-Larsen, 2008; Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006; Thomson, MacInnis, & Park, 2005). In fact, love is the highest form of brand attachment (Bowlby, 1979; Sternberg, 1987; Thompson et al., 2005) and is integral to the success of organizations today. Therefore, researchers and practitioners in the traditional consumer product industry have begun to realize the importance of this notion of love, and this concept has been coined brand love.

Over the past two decades, several studies have been conducted to better understand the phenomenon of brand love, and it has been defined as "the degree of passionate emotional attachment a satisfied customer has for a particular trade name" (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006, p. 81). The degree of the consumer's passionate emotional attachment is important to marketers because the higher the degree of attachment, the greater the degree of repurchase intentions, positive word-of-mouth, and other desired post-consumption behaviors (Batra et al., 2012; Bergkvist &

Bech-Larsen, 2010; Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006). Therefore, brand love can explain and predict the variations in desirable post-consumption behaviors among satisfied customers (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006). These outcomes are especially important today during the current economic downturn and cluttered marketplace because organizations have to fight for the consumer's dollar. However, if an organization can earn or retain the love of consumers, they are guaranteed a greater chance of success and longevity.

Moreover, it is essential to understand brand love because it can help marketers better understand what causes the formation of consumers' love toward brands (Batra et al., 2012; Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006) and can assist marketers in moving consumers from being merely attached to the brand to being completely in love with the brand. If practitioners can gain a richer understanding about the formation of brand love, then they can implement strategic marketing plans to foster this brand love. Lastly, recognizing the dimensions of brand love allows researchers and practitioners to assess according to the situation which dimensions might have the strongest impact on the overall strength of the brand love felt by the consumers (Batra et al., 2012). This is especially important for budget constrained sport organizations to understand because they can focus their marketing efforts on the dimensions that have the strongest impact to avoid wasting valuable time and money. In addition, the brand love dimensions mediate all the effects the antecedent (i.e., high quality) has on the consequences for high levels of love but not for low levels of love (Batra et al., 2012) which displays the significance of brand love and why sport marketers need to position their brands in a way that encourages high levels of brand love. This can reduce the detrimental effects of poor team performance because high love consumers' behaviors are not directly affected by the product quality.

General marketing researchers have identified several brand love models (Albert et al., 2008; Batra et al., 2012; Bergkvist & Bech-Larsen, 2010; Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006) but with minimal agreement about the dimensions of brand love. However, Batra et al.'s (2012) recently developed a higher-order model is a more comprehensive and integrative model of how consumers actually experience brand love compared to the other models. The model includes multiple cognitions, emotions, and behaviors which consumers organize into a mental prototype, and this is consistent with research on interpersonal love (Fehr, 2006). The brand love model developed by the researchers included a total of 14 dimensions that consumers viewed as the dimensions of brand love: current self-identity, desire self-identity, life meaning and intrinsic rewards, willingness to invest resources, passionate desire to use, past involvement, intuitive fit, emotional attachment, positive affect, long-term relationship, anticipated separation distress, attitude valence, attitude strength 1 (frequent thoughts), and attitude strength 2 (certainty and confidence).

Problem Statement

This model is a great advancement for the general marketing researchers and practitioners, but this construct has never been applied to the sport industry where brand love is likely most evident. For example, on any given college football Saturday, sport fans can be seen on television displaying high levels of emotional love (i.e., crying) as a result of a loss, or sometimes a win, for their beloved sport team. However, these types of extreme displays of emotions are not seen when a loved brand like Toyota or Samsung succeeds or fails with a particular product which indicates that brand love is more evident in sports. Therefore, while love is not a new concept, the brand love concept needed to be applied to the sport context to

help sport marketers better understand sport brands in the same way the concept has helped general marketers.

Sport teams are brands that are comprised of people, and sport consumers feel love emotions towards both the brand and the individuals (i.e., players) that make up the brand which cannot be said of other types of traditional consumer product. There is a certain charm about the athletes that attract consumers towards a specific team. Furthermore, the athletes display such attractive and desirable characteristics that they often serve as role models to sport consumers. In addition, the attachment of the consumer can be so strong that the consumer is willing to forgive the brand when there is some sort of brand failure such as a steroid scandal (Bauer, Heinrich, & Albrecht, 2009; Pimentel & Reynolds, 2004). However, this consumer attraction cannot be fully understood through any type of interpersonal love theory such as romantic love. While there may be some overlapping characteristics with romantic love (e.g., attraction, passion), brand love does not have the same exact dimensions of romantic love. For example, there is no desire of physical affection (e.g., holding hands, hugging) between a sport consumer and a team. Therefore, it is not appropriate to classify a consumer's attachment to a team as romantic love, and this is why sport brand love needs further examination.

Moreover, the needs and wants of sport consumers (e.g., affiliation, entertainment, self-expression, and sociability) are intangible unlike traditional products, and a major attraction to sport products is its unpredictability which is a function of the inconsistent nature of sports, making it unique (Mullin, Hardy, & Sutton, 2007). Therefore, it is critical that sport marketers understand brand love, and how it can be created and maintained to avoid the negative effects of an intangible and unpredictable product. In addition, the consumers' satisfaction of the core products such as team's performance cannot be controlled by the marketer (Mullin et al., 2007),

but marketers can influence other aspects of the brand, such as brand love which is a further reason why brand love model needed to be developed according to the sport context to better understand sport consumers.

More specifically, this study applied brand love to the spectator sport context. Spectator sports are the fastest growing segment of the sport industry in terms of yearly business transactions (Street & Smith's Sport Group, 2007). Furthermore, spectator sports have increasingly become a popular leisure activity for many consumers in America (Ross & James, 2006; Trail, Anderson, & Fink, 2005). This increased interest in spectator sports is highly correlated with the rapid and significant growth in professional sports (Byon, Zhang, & Connaughton, 2010). As of today, there are nearly 100 franchise teams that belong solely to the three major professional sport leagues: National Football League (NFL), Major League Baseball (MLB), and National Basketball Association (NBA). In addition to these, there are dozens of team franchises in professional major and minor league hockey, soccer, minor league baseball, and women's professional basketball. The development of all these professional sport teams has created a greater competition among leagues, not to mention the stiff competition of intercollegiate sports.

The technologically advanced multimedia outlets (e.g., ESPN3, Apple TV, and mobile apps) have also augmented the competition among league and teams (Byon et al., 2010) because consumers can gain access to teams much easier than ever before. Additionally, there are many other leisure and entertainment avenues outside of sport that are competing for consumers' dollars (Zhang, Smith, Pease, & Jambor, 1997). This has created a cluttered marketplace where consumers have so many choices on how they spend their discretionary money, and sport organizations are facing greater challenges in their effort to gain market share (Byon et al.,

2010). Sport organizations are also facing greater internal challenges because there is a resistance from their consumers due to the increase in prices (Howard & Crompton, 2004). Furthermore, high-definition (HD) television has lead to consumers choosing to watch games in the comfort of their own homes instead of buying a ticket and attending the games at the stadiums and arenas. This not only affects ticket sales, but it affects concessions, parking, merchandise, and sponsorships (Howard & Crompton, 2004). With all of these stated challenges and the struggling economy, it is evident to sport practitioners and researchers that turning consumers into lovers has never been more important than it is now to avoid any detrimental effects to the organizations.

Significance of the Study

With sport brand love being so evident in the sport industry and all of the financial challenges facing sport marketers today, it is imperative that sport researchers and practitioners understand the dimensions of consumers' sport brand love, how consumers form and maintain it, and the effects it has on sport consumers behaviors. With this said, it is also important to understand that the brand love construct is theoretically distinct from other constructs such as team identification within the existing sport marketing literature. Team identification is a construct that has been previously identified and examined extensively (e.g., Byon et al., 2011; Fink et al., 2002; Lee et al., 2010; Heere & James, 2007; Trail & James, 2001; Wann & Branscombe, 1993; Wann, Melnick, Russell, & Pease, 2001) to understand sport consumers, and it is defined as the psychological attachment or connection that a consumer has specifically towards a sports team (Wann et al., 2001). The previous studies indicated that there are many affective, cognitive, and behavioral differences among sport consumers based on their team identification which is similar to brand love. However, there is a considerable difference between

the team identification and brand love dimensions that measure a consumer's psychological attachment to sport brands.

Brand love measures much more than a consumer's identification with a team; it measures the intense love attachment that a consumer feels towards a brand (i.e., team) (Ahuvia, 1993). Brand love consists of a significant number of dimensions, and team identification is only one of the fifteen dimensions that have been identified as part of sport brand love. Team identification does not take into consideration many of the sport brand love dimensions (e.g., desired self-identity, passionate desire to use, intuitive fit, length of the relationship, anticipated separation distress, and attitude strength). Hence, brand love is much more inclusive and integrates many of the constructs that affect a sport consumer's psychological attachment to a sport brand, including team identification. The sport brand love construct offers sport marketers a comprehensive understanding of consumers' ultimate psychological attachment to sport brands: love.

Purposes

There is limited research on brand love in the sport marketing literature even though brand love may be most evident in the sport industry. Grounded in Sternberg's (1986) triangular theory of interpersonal love, as well as Albert et al. (2008), Batra et al (2012), Bergkvist and Bech-Larsen (2010), and Carroll and Ahuvia's (2006) brand love theories, the purpose of the study was to consider the uniqueness (Gladden & Funk, 2002; Madrigal, 1995) of sport and previous research in sport marketing to develop a conceptual model of sport brand love. To do this, the applicability of the brand dimensions to the sport context was first investigated by reviewing the sport marketing literature. Through the review of literature, it was found that the previously determined dimensions of brand love were relative to sport brands; however, it was

necessary to supplement the model with dimensions that were sport specific. Then, the uniqueness of the sport product was considered and the antecedents that may exist for the consumers' brand love to be created and maintained were identified. These factors are imperative to sport marketers understanding how sport brand love is formed. Thirdly, in order to understand how sport brand love impacts consumer behavior, the consequences of the construct from the sport related literature were identified. Following the identification of the theoretical model, the first empirical study to validate the sport brand love model was conducted. This was followed by a second empirical study to examine the modifying effects that gender has on sport brand love.

Delimitations

The study was completed within the following delimitations:

- Research participants involved men and women over the age of 18.

- Research participants were those who had attended a game in the past for one of three professional sport teams in a major metropolitan area in the southeastern region of the United States.

- The study was conducted via both a paper-and-pencil questionnaire and online questionnaire.

- Research participation in the study was voluntary.

- Participants were recruited from tailgate areas outside sporting events, sport blogs, social media sites, listservs, and collegiate sport management (graduate and undergraduate) and physical activity courses.

- Data were collected in the spring of 2013.

Limitations

The following limitations were recognized by the researcher which may have impacted the internal and external validity of the study:

- This study was limited to a convenience sample with volunteer participants, instead of random selection, which may have impacted the generalizability of the study findings.

- This study was a cross-sectional study.

- Although the research participants were asked to respond to the questionnaire with integrity, their level of cooperation could not be controlled by the researcher.

- The online survey was limited to those participants who have Internet access.

- The paper survey was limited to those participants who attended a game on the particular days data was collected.

- The generalizability of the study findings might be limited to only three professional teams in a major metropolitan area in the southeastern region of the United States.

- This study focused on the initial testing of a model; therefore, the findings are limited to the present sample.

- Depending on when the research participants completed the survey, their responses could have been affected by their immediate emotions after a win or loss which may have affected the generalizability of the findings.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW[1]

Brand love is the passionate attachment that a satisfied consumer feels towards a particular brand (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006). While a sport team is considered a brand itself, sport products are distinct from traditional brands because of their intangibility and unpredictability (Gladden & Funk, 2002; Mullin et al., 2007). Therefore, a more specific construct needed to be established while taking these differences in consideration. Sport brand love is a higher-order construct that includes the multiple cognitions, emotions, and behaviors of sport consumers. The exact dimensions of sport brand love, as well as the antecedents and consequences, remained undeveloped even though understanding sport brand love is critical to sport marketers and sport organizations. This review of literature will describe the evolution of brand love in the general marketing literature and discuss the gaps in the literature. This will be followed by the development of the sport brand love model by utilizing both the previous general marketing brand love studies and the sport marketing research. The discussion will include the identification and description of the dimensions associated with sport brand love. It will also include the factors that are antecedents to and consequences of sport brand love.

Brand Love in General Marketing Literature

Shimp and Madden (1988) were the first to conceptualize the consumer love relationship with brands through their model of "consumer-object love." This model and a majority of the subsequent models have been based on Sternberg's (1986) triangular theory of interpersonal love.

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[1] Tavormina, A. L., Byon, K. K., Baker, T. A., & Zhang, J. J. Portions of text submitted to *International Journal of Sport Management,* 11/15/12.

Shimp and Madden (1988) applied and adapted the theory according to a consumer's relationship with an object and purported that it is based on three dimensions: liking, yearning, and decision/commitment. They stated that when these three dimensions exist, they significantly contribute to the consumer's loyalty toward the object. When Shimp and Madden (1988) measured the combination of the presence and absence of the three dimensions, they identified eight possible consumer-object relationships; however, they did not empirically test the consumer-object relationship construct.

Ahuvia (1993) initiated the first major empirical study on this concept in order to explore consumers' ability to love brands and their consumption behaviors. The research found that many consumers do have intense emotional attachments to "love objects," which were defined as anything other than people. Ahuvia (2005) examined this same concept again by comparing consumers' mental prototype of interpersonal love with their descriptions of object love and found acceptable fit with the exception of a few noted differences. This work suggested that there were more fundamental similarities than differences between interpersonal love and consumers' love for a brand (Ahuvia, 2005). Based on this previous research and the notion that satisfaction, the core marketing concept, was no longer sufficient for continuing success in today's competitive marketplace, Carroll and Ahuvia (2006) introduced a new marketing concept that may help give organizations greater success creating customer satisfaction: brand love.

While they were not the first to discuss the idea of brand love, Carroll and Ahuvia (2006) were the first to name the construct brand love and define it as "the degree of passionate emotional attachment a satisfied customer has for a particular trade name" (p. 81). This is consistent with the previous research on the love prototype that included passion for the brand, attachment to the brand, positive evaluation of the brand, positive emotions in response to the

brand, and declarations of love for the brand (Ahuvia, 2005). Carroll and Ahuvia (2006) conceptualized brand love as a mode of satisfaction, meaning some satisfied consumers will experience it but not all. Likewise, based on the research on interpersonal love, love is not simply an intense form of interpersonal liking; love is a conceptually and empirically distinct construct (Sternberg, 1987). However, while there may be similarities between interpersonal theories and brand love, Batra et al. (2012) uncovered some critical issues when research uses interpersonal love as the foundation of brand love.

Gaps in Identifying Brand Love Dimensions

The most obvious issue is that past research on brand love is the significant variation in the number of dimensions that make up brand love from 1 (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006) to 11 (Albert et al., 2008) to 14 dimensions (Batra et al., 2012). Batra et al. (2012) argued much of this disagreement is due to the fact that most of the prior research used psychological literature on interpersonal love (e.g., Sternberg, 1986, 1997) and attachment (e.g., Bowlby, 1979) to develop brand love instead of conducting exploratory research to discover its true dimensions (Batra et al., 2012). For example, Whang, Allen, Sahoury, and Zhang (2004) were the first to capture a consumer's love towards an object, and based on their findings and interpersonal love theories, the researchers concluded that the participants (i.e., bikers) relationship with the object (i.e., bike) was that of romantic love. However, the concept of brand love may be a more appropriate construct to help describe the relationship rather than romantic love which seems unrealistic.

It was this type of research that Albert et al. (2008) realized brand love needed to be developed based on the consumers' definition of love towards a brand. Then, the appropriate interpersonal love concepts could be connected to the construct instead of fitting brand love to interpersonal love theories (Batra et al., 2012). On the other hand, while brand love is different

from interpersonal love, this does not mean it is not a "real" type of love (Batra et al., 2012). For example, romantic love and parental love are both "real" types of love; however, theories about romantic love cannot be directly applied to parental love. Therefore, researchers suggested that more research needed to be conducted on brand love that was not based on already existing interpersonal love theories (Albert et al., 2008).

Albert et al. (2008) were the first to implement a mixed method approach and avoided using existing theories of interpersonal love as the foundation of their research into brand love. In addition, they contended that the use of the word "love" itself introduces a bias because the participants may respond in reference to their loving feelings toward a person and exclude the dimensions of love specific to a brand; therefore, the researchers used imagery. However, the research failed to find dimensions of attachment and commitment that have been consistently found in previous research (Albert et al., 2008). Furthermore, the images used to indicate love for a brand may not have been representative because they were images of passionate love for a person, and this may have been suggesting indirectly that passionate love is analogous with brand love (Batra et al., 2012). Hence, more research was still needed to completely understand the brand love.

To fulfill this need, a comprehensive study on brand love was conducted by Batra et al. (2012) to understand the implied definition of love that consumers use when they say they love a specific brand. The results of Batra et al.'s study indicated that brand love is best represented as a higher-order construct including multiple cognitions, emotions, and behaviors which consumers organize into a mental prototype, and this is consistent with research on interpersonal love (Fehr, 2006). The quantitative study of the higher-order model indicated that it offers a greater understanding of the consumer experience of brand love over the one-dimensional models that

had been previously developed. It also explains more of the variance in repeat purchase intention, positive WOM, and resistance to negative information about the brand than a single overall measure of a consumer's brand love. Furthermore, the model is structured in a way that it allows researchers and practitioners to assess according to the situation which dimensions might have the strongest impact on the overall strength of the brand love felt by the consumers, and it gives marketers the ability to target the dimensions through service design and communications to influence a consumer's love for a brand (Batra et al., 2012). In regards to interpersonal love, while the participants in the study often reported that they truly loved certain brands, they stated that it was a different form of love than interpersonal love (Batra et al., 2012).

This model significantly extended prior research by utilizing constructs (e.g., brand attachment, brand self-connection, brand communities) that had been previously studied independently and providing evidence that brand love can function as an integrated framework that examines how all the constructs work collectively (Batra et al., 2012). Additionally, the researchers identified numerous dimensions of brand love that were not discovered in the prior interpersonal love research (i.e., current self-identity, desired self-identity, and intrinsic rewards). These brand love dimensions were identified through a multiple-step process. Using previously established psychological questions about love, in-depth interviews were conducted with the participants based on the "things that they love" with the exclusion of love for other people. This was followed by a second group of participants that were interviewed based on their love towards brands specifically (Batra et al., 2012). The researchers utilized a grounded theory approach (Strauss & Corbin, 1994) combined with methods originated by McCracken (1988) to analyze the data and establish 10 major themes of the participants' love felt towards brands and branded products. To support these findings, Batra et al. (2012) provided the previously

established psychological research on each of these 10 love themes (e.g., Belk, 1988; Park, MacInnis, Priester, Eisinerich, & Iacobucci, 2010; Richins, 1994; Thomson et al., 2005). Then, a scale of items was developed to include all of the themes to determine what specific factors represent the antecedents, consequences, and dimensions of brand love itself. Batra et al. found that 14 dimensions represent brand love itself, one dimension represents the antecedent of brand love, and one dimension presents the consequences of brand love. The researchers also empirically tested the model and found there was good model fit, as well as validity and reliability, for both high and low brand love meaning it significantly expands the understanding of the consumer experience of brand love.

While this brand love model was deemed to be the most appropriate to utilize as a basis in the sport context, it was recognized that sport products are unique (Gladden & Funk, 2002; Madrigal, 1995; Mullin et al., 2007) compared to other products as discussed earlier. Therefore, it was necessary to utilize the previous literature on brand love and in sport to identify the antecedents, dimensions, consequences and moderators of brand love to account for the uniqueness of the sport brand. For sport brands, it was concluded that the perceived high quality of the team was only one of the antecedents that were necessary for a consumer to form brand love. Based on research from Pimentel and Reynolds (2004), family and/or community norms play a role in the extreme attachment process of sport consumers. Moreover, each sport team has their own distinguishable characteristics and previous brand love research (e.g., Ahuvia, 1993; Albert et al., 2008) consistently found the uniqueness of a brand contributes to the formation of brand love.

Several brand love dimensions are also lacking in Batra et al.'s (2012) model that support the sport brand love phenomena. While Batra et al. included self-identity theories into the model,

they did not include social identity theories in the model as Bergkvist and Bech-Larsen (2010) suggested. Furthermore, the sport marketing literature has indicated that social identity plays a large role in consumers' psychological attachment to sport teams. Therefore, it was necessary to include team identification in the sport brand love model to account for the social identity aspect of sports. Also included was team nostalgia, which was identified as a component of sport consumers' attachments to teams (Funk & James, 2006; Gladden & Funk, 2002) and a previous brand love dimension (Albert et al., 2008). In addition, potential moderators needed to be identified to help sport marketers better understand the effects of variables (e.g, gender) may have on the formation of sport brand love. Therefore, it was necessary to modify the brand love model (Batra et al., 2012) according to the sport context to better understand sport brand love.

Sport Brand Love Dimensions

The dimensions of sport brand love include different cognitions (e.g., about self-identity), emotions (e.g., feelings and sense of connectedness and natural fit), and behaviors such as frequent interaction and resource investment as similar studies have found (e.g., Batra et al., 2012). These dimensions represent a hierarchical, higher-order structural model where sport brand love is a second-order factor that is represented by a total of thirteen first-order dimensions: team identification, team nostalgia, current self-identity, desired self-identity, life meaning and intrinsic rewards, brand prominence, past involvement, intuitive fit, emotional attachment, long-term relationship, anticipated separation distress, attitude valence, and attitude strength.

Sport unique dimensions. The following dimensions represent the sport unique dimensions that were included in the sport brand love model.

Team identification. Team identification is the psychological attachment or connection that a consumer has specifically towards a sports team (Wann et al., 2001). In the sport marketing literature, team identification has frequently been used to study sport-spectating and various consumer behaviors because it is one of the basic psychological orientations that determine human behavior (Kwon & Armstrong, 2002). Wann and Branscombe (1993) were the first to construct a valid and reliable scale to measure team identification followed by Trail and James' (2001) Team Identification Index (TII). Wann and Branscombe (1993) found that an individual that strongly identified with a sport team, compared to those with moderate to low identity, reported more involvement with the team, had more positive expectations of the teams future performance, exhibited more ego-enhancing attributes for the team's success, displayed a greater willingness to invest significant amounts of time and money into watching the team play, and were more likely to believe fans of the same team they are identified with posses special qualities that bonded them (i.e., in-group). Ross and James (2007) concluded highly identified consumers have more frequent thoughts about a sport team than those with low levels of team identification. Other research has found that team identification directly explains a portion of variance in purchase intention (Kwon & Armstrong, 2002; Kwon & Trail, 2003).

In addition, Heere and James (2007) developed a multi-dimensional scale to replace Wann and Branscombe's (1993) scale. The TEAM*ID scale was developed to measure the degree to which an individual identifies with a sports team, and it includes six dimensions: public evaluation, private evaluation, interconnection of self, sense of interdependence, behavioral involvement, and cognitive awareness (Heere & James, 2007). These studies indicated that there are many affective, cognitive, and behavioral differences among sport consumers based on their team identification. Furthermore, Tajfel (1982) believes that individuals are not able to form self-

identities without a social identity derived from a group affiliation. Therefore, it is necessary to include team identification as a dimension of brand love.

Team nostalgia. Team nostalgia refers to a longing for the past or an affection for possessions and activities associated with the days of yesteryear (Holbrook, 1993), specifically a sport team. Albert et al. (2008) identified a similar dimension of brand love and named it "memories." The researchers found that a brand may remind consumers of certain significant and positive memories (Albert et al., 2008). These memories were linked to feelings of nostalgia based on the participants' experiences with the brand (e.g., historical, childhood, firsts), and consumers long for brands and the connections or memories they share with them (Albert et al., 2008). Gladden and Funk (2002) identified nostalgia as a benefit that consumers associate with their favorite sport team, and this association helps create brand equity. Mullin et al. (2007) believe that consumers have nothing to take away from a sporting event other than perceptions and memories which displays the significance of nostalgia. Furthermore, Funk and James (2006) found that nostalgia was one of three constructs that was necessary for a consumer to form an allegiance to a sports team, and this allegiance may serve as an indication to a consumer's brand love.

General marketing brand love dimensions. The following dimensions are the brand love dimensions from the general marketing studies that were included in the newly developed sport brand love model.

Current/Desired self-identity. Self-identity is the aspects of an individual's self that are composed of the meanings that the person attaches to the multiple roles they play in highly differentiated societies (Stryker & Burke, 2000). Previous studies suggest that consumers use brand to express and validate the identity of their self (Aaker, 1997; Escalas & Bettman, 2005),

and this is derived from the general idea that individual behavior is motivated by the need to reaffirm their self-image (Dunning, 2007). Consumers are connected to a brand because it reflects who they are or because it is meaningful to their personal goals or concerns (Mittal, 2006), and the consumer's self-identity needs are satisfied when he purchases or consumes a product that contains an attribute that describes or portrays an individual as he or she wants (Kwon & Armstrong, 2002). In addition, when a consumer categorizes a brand as part of one's self-identity, he or she develops a sense of oneness with the brand which creates cognitive links that connect the brand with the consumer's self (Park et al., 2010), and these links are inherently emotional (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007). Moreover, consumers seek not only to reaffirm their current self-identity, but they can also seek a desired self-identity. Ahuvia (2005) found that loved brands were connected to a consumer's self by expressing the self and by transforming the new self into the desired self.

Identification is the process of defining oneself, and it is about who a person is and what others think about the person (Tajfel & Turner, 1985). In sport, this identification occurs because of the psychological and emotional benefits that motivate it (Fisher & Wakefield, 1998), and it has been found to be responsible for certain sport consumer behavior phenomena such as basking in reflected glory (BIRG) (Cialdini et al., 1976). Such behaviors can be seen by consumers who highly identify with a sport team and this may indicate brand love for their favorite team. Moreover, Kahle and Riley (2004) concluded that sport fans integrate the sport brand into self so strongly that they feel as though they are a team member and their psychological and emotional responses during and after a game are reflective of what an actual athlete would feel. Furthermore, Kwon and Armstrong (2002) suggested that purchase and consumption behavior may create and reinforce the sense of belongingness of an individual with the respective sport

team he wants to be associated with because it is prominent to his identity. According to DeGroot and Robinson (2008), sense belongingness is the greatest benefit to a sport consumer's experience. It has been found that many sport consumers include the team within their self-concepts, hence, making the team an integral part of self (Kolbe & James, 2003). When a consumer's favorite team loses, he feels like he himself lost; and when the team wins, he feels he won. In other words, consumers feel as though they give up their personal identity to become members of the team (Ross & James, 2007). Moreover, this bond can be formed because of the image or desired image the consumer shares with the sport brand (Armstrong, 2002; Armstrong & Stratta, 2004).

Life meaning and intrinsic rewards. An extrinsic reward is sought when an individual performs an act to get something, but an intrinsic reward is sought when an individual does something because he or she loves it (Babin, Darden, & Griffin, 1994). A loved brand provides both intrinsic and extrinsic rewards, but extrinsic rewards alone often will not result in the consumer loving the brand (Batra et al., 2012). When consuming the brand creates psychological states such as happiness, the consumer receives an intrinsic reward and brand love is more likely (Batra et al., 2012). In the sport marketing literature, researchers have found that consumers are motivated to consume sports because of their deeper benefits and are more likely to invest more value in their relationship with the team because of these benefits (Funk & Pastore, 2000; Funk, Haugtvedt, & Howard, 2000; Milne & McDonald, 1999; Trail & James, 2001; Wann, 1995; Wann, Schrader, & Wilson, 1999).

Wann (1995) conducted a study to determine individual's motivation to be a sport fan. The researcher identified a total of eight motivations, and some of these motivations were extrinsic but a majority of the motivations are intrinsic. For example, eustress is a positive form

of stress that arouses the consumer who enjoys the excitement and anxiety that is typically

characteristic of sport consumption (Wann et al., 1999). Other consumers are motivated to

consume sport teams for self-esteem enhancement because when the team is successful, some

consumers feel a sense of accomplishment as well (Wann et al., 1999). Escape is another form of

intrinsic reward that a consumer may seek through sport consumption. Individuals consume

sports to add meaning to their life when they feel bored or dissatisfied (Wann et al., 1999).

Similarly, researchers found that the desire for achievement and knowledge of the sport team

were other intrinsic rewards consumers seek through sport teams (Trail & James, 2001; Zhang et

al., 2001). As these previous studies indicate, a significant portion of the sport consumption

motivations are intrinsic, and it was purported that these intrinsic rewards are a dimension of

brand love for sport consumers.

  Brand prominence. Brand prominence is the degree to which positive feelings and

memories about an attachment object are first to come to a consumer's mind when he or she

thinks about a particular product category (e.g., sports), and this serves as an indicator of the

consumer's attachment (Park et al., 2010). For example, positive memories of an object are more

likely for consumers who are highly attached to the object (e.g., brand) than those consumers

who display weak attachment (Collins, 1996; Mikulincer, 1998). Brand prominence is the notion

that brand-related thoughts and emotions become a part of a consumer's memory and vary in the

ease to which they are brought to mind (Park et al., 2010). This prominence reflects the relative

importance of the cognitive and emotional bond that connects the brand to the consumer's self,

and the relative importance is represented by the perceived ease and frequency with which the

brand-related thoughts and feelings are brought to the consumer's mind (Park et al., 2010). In

addition, previous psychology research has found that there is a direct link between loving and

thinking of others (Ahuvia, 1993). Hence, brand prominence enables one to precisely measure the strength of the bond between the brand and the consumer (Park et al., 2010).

In the sport marketing literature, Funk and Pastore (2000) identified eight attitudinal components. Intensity, which refers to the strength of feeling that a consumer has towards a specific sport team, is one of the attitudinal components (Funk & Pastore, 2000). Attitude intensity is measured by asking consumers how strong or intense their feelings are towards a brand (Krosnick, 1988). Moreover, Ross and James (2007) conducted research on team identification and concluded highly identified consumers have more frequent thoughts about a sport team than those with low levels of team identification. The attitude intensity and frequency of thoughts a consumer has towards a sports brand can be conceptualized as brand prominence, and this construct can be an indication of a consumer's sport brand love.

Past involvement. A consumer having a history of involvement with a brand is an indicator of his or her passion or desire for the brand (Richins & Bloch, 1986). Furthermore, previous research has shown that the more involved a consumer is with a brand, the more likely he or she will positively evaluate and commit to the brand (Mano & Oliver, 1993; Oliver & Bearden, 1983). According to Havitz and Dimanche (1997), involvement is an unobservable state of motivation, arousal, or interest towards a recreational activity which is evoked by a particular stimulus and drives behavior. Involvement is a continuum that ranges from high involvement or engagement to low involvement or disengagement (Celsi & Olson, 1988). Larent and Kapferer (1985) originally identified four involvement dimensions (i.e., perceived importance of the product, perceived risk, symbolic value, and hedonic value) and when they were applied to the sport context, two of involvement dimensions were present: pleasure/importance and symbolic value (Kersetter & Kovich, 1997). These characteristics

determine the level of the consumer's psychological involvement with a specific brand which is important for sport marketers to understand because it can lead to loyalty (Iwasaki & Havtiz, 2004).

However, research has reported that behavioral variables are significantly related to the psychological involvement dimensions. For example, the more frequently consumers attend sporting events for a particular team, the more likely they are going to agree that their experiences are pleasurable and important (Kersetter & Kovich, 1997). Similarly, Kersetter and Kovich (1997) found that as the number of years that individuals attend games increases, the more likely their experiences become more pleasurable and important. Furthermore, Park (1996) found that highly involved fitness program participants were more likely to continue participation due to their emotional attachment. This makes is clear that sport marketers must first measure consumers' behavioral involvement to understand how they attach to sport teams. Wann (1993) measured consumer behavior involvement with sport teams and found that the more committed a consumer is to a team the more involved he or she will be with the team. Furthermore, according to previous research on traditional consumer products, past involvement is a brand love dimension (Batra et al., 2012). Therefore, it was purported that past involvement is a sport brand love dimension.

Intuitive fit. Intuitive fit is a sense of natural fit and harmony between consumers and brands that exist when a consumer's needs are met (Batra et al., 2012). Sport brands can meet the needs of consumers whether the needs are for entertainment, escape, aesthetics, socialization, or spending time with loved ones (Trail & James, 2001). In addition, research has found that consumers are motivated to consume sports because to develop and share the same values with the team (Milne & McDonlad, 1999). Similar to this concept is the self-congruence construct that

is defined as the fit between the consumer's self and the brand's image (Aaker, 1999). Consumers are driven to consume the right product from the right organization in order to maintain a consistent self-image (Onkvisit & Shaw, 1987), and love may be driven by self-consistency motives (Albert et al., 2008) which explain why intuitive fit is important.

The sport marketing literature has minimal research on this phenomenon, but a few studies have examined congruency. For example, Cunningham and Woods (2012) conducted a study on the fitness industry and found that individual's perception of an organization, specifically perceived fit, was based on the external communications with the club. This displays evidence that the intuitive fit between a consumer and brand has a paramount influence on the consumer. In addition, it signals to the sport managers how critical it is to market brands effectively. Moreover, studies have been conducted on the racial congruency between consumers and sport teams. The research indicated that Blacks were more sensitive to team composition when considering attending a game (Armstrong, 2002; Armstrong & Stratta, 2004) and when measuring their enjoyment of the game (Sapolsky, 1980). A more recent study found that consumers of color consider factors such as racial and ethnic identity of the team's players before deciding if they want to invest resources into attending a game (Armstrong, 2008). Lastly, Nadeau, Jones, Pegoraro, O'Reilly, and Carvalho's (2011) research suggested that a team's racial and ethnic congruency to the home market can help explain why some teams maintain consistent attendance levels, regardless of performance. While this is only one dimension of fit, it is evident that a sense of natural fit is important when consumers love a brand.

Emotional attachment. Emotional attachment refers to the emotional bond and feelings that people have towards an object (Bowlby, 1979), and the current marketing research suggests that consumers can become emotionally attached to objects they consume, including brands

(Thomson et al., 2005). Emotional attachment refers to the bond and emotional connection that consumers feel toward a brand (Fournier, 1998; Thomson et al., 2005). Consumers are exposed to thousands of products and brands, but they develop an intense emotional attachment to only a small number of these (Koo & Hardin, 2008; Thomson et al., 2005), and previous research in psychology has found that an intense emotional attachment like love is linked with positive emotions (Fehr & Russell, 1991). Furthermore, research has found that consumers feel positive affect and warm-feelings towards the brands they are attached (Thomson, et al., 2005). Based on this information, it was purported that the emotional attachment and positive affect brand love dimensions from Batra et al.'s (2012) are overlapping; therefore, the two dimensions have been combined into one.

While sports produce an emotional response greater than any other industry (Couvelaere & Richeliau, 2005), researchers agree that consumers develop a strong emotional connection to only a small number of sport-related objects as well (Koo & Hardin, 2008). Moreover, attachment theory (Bowlby, 1979) suggests that the nature of a person's interaction with an object is predicted by the degree of emotional attachment they have towards that object (Thomson et al., 2005). In other words, the strength of consumers' emotional attachment to a brand predicts a portion of their commitment to the brand (Thomson et al., 2005). Sport marketers believe it is necessary to use these emotional attachments to classify consumers to develop strategic marketing plans (Koo & Hardin, 2008). Therefore, these emotional attachments are integral to understanding sport consumers' attachments to sport, specifically brand love.

In sport marketing, emotional attachment has been examined through the development of the identification construct which has been defined as how one's self orients to other object, including a person or group, that result in close feelings of attachment (Trail, Anderson, & Fink,

2000). After the attachment to a specific team, university, coach or player occurs, the attachment may positively affect the consumers' behavioral intentions towards the brand (Koo & Hardin, 2008). The sport marketing researchers have recognized this essential concept and various studies have implemented it (e.g., Funk & James, 2001; Koo, Andrew, Hardin & Greenwell, 2008; Kwon & Armstrong, 2004; Trail et al., 2003) to better understand emotional attachment. Based on the connection between emotional attachment and identification in sport, it was purported that emotional attachment is a dimension of sport brand love as well.

Long-term relationship. Long-term relationship is defined as the longevity of a relationship that can be linked to intimacy, which is the in-depth knowledge about others that is typically a result of the amount of previous time spent together (Ahuvia, 2005; Sternberg, 1986). The shared history a consumer has with a brand can place the loved brand into the history of a consumer's self-identity (Batra et al., 2012) and can be a good predictor of the continued consumption of the brand in the future (Guadagni & Little, 1983). This notion of long-term relationships has been explored in the sport marketing literature through the relationship quality construct (Kim & Trail, 2011; Kim, Trail, & Ko, 2011; Kim, Trail, Woo, & Zhang, 2011). Long-term relationships with consumers are known to produce desirable outcomes for organizations (e.g., Sirdeshmukh, Singh & Sabol, 2002; Stokburger-Sauer, 2010); therefore, the interest in relationship marketing has increased recently for both sport researchers and practitioners (Kim et al., 2011) making length of use a valuable dimension of brand love in sport.

Anticipated separation distress. The anticipated separation distress is referred to as the anguish that an individual feels at the thought of losing proximity with an object (Park et al., 2010). The more attached a consumer is to an entity, the more distress he or she feels at the thought of losing the relationship with the entity (Park et al., 2010). This is known as separation

distress which is an emotional indicator of attachment (Bowlby, 1980; Thomson et al., 2005). A consumer's emotional distress such as depression and anxiety (Park et al., 2010) can be caused by a separation from the loved brand. Consumers anticipate separation distress if they were to lose a loved brand (Hazan & Shaver, 1994). As a result, consumers are less likely to be price sensitive towards the loved brand (Thomson et al., 2005) because they were willing to sacrifice for the sake of maintaining the relationship. This anticipated separation distress can be seen in sports by the fact that consumers live and die with the loved teams (Branscombe & Wann, 1992; Couvelaere & Richeliau, 2005). Therefore, it was purported that anticipated separation distress is a dimension of the sport brand love model.

Attitude valence. Attitude valence is the degree of positivity or negativity with which a brand is evaluated (Park et al., 2010). As purported by Park et al. (2010), attitude valence is a separate construct from attitude strength; therefore, both dimensions have been included in the sport brand love model. Previous studies in sport marketing have examined this concept of attitude valence in the sport context (e.g., Funk, Haugtvedt, & Howard, 2000; Funk & James, 2004, 2006; Funk & Pastore, 2000). One of the consumers' attitudinal properties that Funk and Pastore (2000) identified was "extremity" which refers to the degree of favorableness or unfavorableness of a sport consumer's evaluations of a sports brand. In Funk and James' (2004) Fan Attitude Network (FAN) Model, attitude importance is one of the dimensions which reflect the degree and valence of consumer's attitude formation. This attitude importance influences four potential outcomes, and the greater the consumer's attitude importance the more likely the attitude will persist over time, resist negative information and preferences for alternative teams, bias the thoughts about the team, and be more consistent with past behaviors and behavioral intent (Funk & James, 2004). Understanding the degree of a sport consumer's attitude positivity

and negativity towards is important; however, love is a positive emotion. Therefore, sport brand love attempts to uncover the sport consumer's attitude positivity towards a brand which may assist a sport marketer to uncover brand love felt.

   Attitude strength. Attitude strength is "the positivity or negativity of an attitude that is weighted by the certainty or confidence with which it is held" (Park et al., 2010, p. 1). This certainty and confidence with which the brand is held directs a consumer's behaviors (Park et al., 2010); therefore, researchers and practitioners are concerned with attitude strength. There is evidence of this concern in the sport marketing literature as well which has examined the consumers' attitude strength towards sport brands (Funk et al., 2000; Funk & James, 2004, 2006; Funk & Pastore, 2000). Another one of the sport consumer attitudinal properties Funk and Pastore (2000) identified was "certainty" which was defined this as the confidence or conviction that consumers have in their attitudes about a specific team.

   Furthermore, Funk et al. (2000) examined the social psychological literature to develop a framework for the study of attitudes in sports and purported that this attitude strength framework could allow sport managers to better understand the consumers' attitude formation towards teams. Funk and James (2004) utilized this framework to develop the FAN Model which captures the attitude formation process of sport consumers. Based on this previous sport marketing research and the findings, consumers' attitude significantly impact their attachments to sport brand making it evident that attitude strength is an important dimension to help sport marketers to better understand consumers. Hence, this attitude strength dimension may assist sport managers to better understand how consumers' ultimate attachment of love is formed.

Antecedent to Sport Brand Love

To completely understand sport consumers' brand love, it is crucial to understand the antecedents to the phenomenon itself. There has been no consistency of the brand love antecedents according to the previous research. Bergkvist and Bech-Larsen (2010) identified additional antecedents to Carroll and Ahuvia's (2006) original two and deemed one as being an ineffective measure (i.e., hedonic) because it cannot be controlled by marketers. Yet, Batra et al.'s (2012) research found there was only one brand love antecedent (i.e., high quality), and the other previously identified antecedents were actually dimensions of the core phenomenon itself. However, it is purported that there are other antecedents that exist for sport brand love because of the unique nature of sport. The following are antecedents to sport brand love.

General marketing brand love antecedents. The following is the general marketing brand love antecedent that was included in the newly developed sport brand love model.

Perceived high quality. Perceived quality is the consumer's judgment of the overall excellence, esteem, and superiority of a brand compared to the available alternative brands (Netemeyer et al., 2004), and sport managers' ability to offer high quality events and services has become of the utmost importance for sport organizations (Ko et al., 2011). Previous research found that an antecedent to the love emotion is "the judgment that the loved one provides something the person wants, needs, or likes" (Shaver, Schwartz, Kirson, & O'Connor, 1987, p. 1087). Batra et al. (2012) concluded that the characteristics of the brand that are deemed as great qualities are considered to be antecedents to brand love because these qualities provides something the consumer wants, needs or likes. Moreover, the researchers' finding was supported by Murstein's (1988) conclusion that people are attracted to things that offer a needed benefit.

Attraction was identified by Ahuvia's (1993) pioneer study as one of the dimensions of object love. Attraction is a dimension of interpersonal love and is defined as "an orientation toward or away from a person that may be described as having a value (positive, negative, or neutral). The orientation consists of a cognitive structure of beliefs and knowledge about the person, affect felt and expressed toward him or her, and behavior tendencies to approach or avoid that person" (Hendrick & Hendrick, 1992, p. 23). In the sport context, consumers may be attracted to a sport brand through a star athlete's own high qualities (e.g., aesthetic, personality, athletic skill, or belief). For example, the Denver Broncos fan base increased in 2011 when Tim Tebow, who is one of the most marketable athletes, was drafted by the team. It is believed that some sort of attraction to the player's qualities (e.g., aesthetic, personality, athletic skill, or belief) resulted in consumers having a newfound love for a team in which they had no interest prior to his arrival. All of these studies on interpersonal love and brand love are consistent which provides supporting evidence that attractive qualities are an antecedent to love.

However, Batra et al. (2012) did not conclude that the consumers' love for a brand was unconditional like interpersonal love relationships. Their results indicated that the loved brands were admired for being the best available and if consumers knew a better brand existed, it was reason enough not to love a specific brand (Batra, et al., 2012). However, in the sport context brand love may be unconditional for consumers, like interpersonal love. This was evident in Pimentel and Reynolds (2004) findings on consumer devotion (i.e., extreme loyalty) within college football. Based on the results of their study, it seems as though consumers that are extremely devoted to the brand have a resistance to negative information (a consequence of brand love). In addition, great quality in sport it not necessarily only defined as winning performance. For example, there are numerous sport brands that are fortunate to have the

commitment of consumer's love despite poor performance (e.g., MLB Chicago Cubs have not won a championship since 1908 yet boast of millions of avid fans). In addition, Byon and Baker (2011) conducted a study on college baseball and found that the quality of the venue and game amenities accounted for approximately 40% of the variance in future attendance making it evident that consumers are not affected solely by the quality of the game played.

Moreover, Fisher and Wakefield (1998) found that consumers of unsuccessful teams identify on the basis of their involvement with the domain (e.g., team) in which the group operates and the attractiveness of the group members. Additionally, the perceived group performance is not an important factor for these consumers; whereas, it is the most important factor for members of a successful team (Fisher & Wakefield, 1998). In addition, while consumers have complained about the high price of some higher-end brands, it does not affect their love for the brand because they feel the high price was justified based on its perceived quality (Batra et al., 2012). These results were similar to what was expected for consumers' love towards sports brands.

Sport unique antecedents. The following antecedents represent the sport unique antecedents that were included in the sport brand love model.

Fan reference. Social references are stimuli which occur within an individual during his or her associations with others (i.e., fans) and then become a part of one's own mental being (Sherif, 1936). When individuals observe activities for the first time on their own, then they create their own frame of reference (e.g., customs, values) for that activity. However, when first observing a social activity in a group, the group frame of reference determines the subsequent interactions the individual has with the activity on his or her own (Sherif, 1936). Sports are often consumed as a social activity (Mullin et al., 2007; Wann, 1995; Wann, Grieve, Zapalac, & Pease,

2008), and peers' (e.g., family and friends) approval to consume a particular team is important

for an individual's positive sport team consumption (Wakefield & Sloan, 1995). Therefore, a

consumer's fan reference may have a significant impact on their attachment, specifically love,

towards a team. The values and traditions that are established through fan references are related

to subjective norms which are the social expectations an individual has from significant others to

engage in or not engage in a specific activity (Cunningham & Kwon, 2003). Furthermore,

Pimentel and Reynolds (2004) conducted a study to identify the dimensions of consumer

devotion. Similar to brand love, consumer devotion is the consumers' connections to brands that

have reached a level of loyalty so extreme that the loyalty survives poor product performance,

scandal, bad publicity, high prices, and absence of promotional effects. In this study, Pimentel

and Reynolds (2004) identified several antecedents to consumer devotion, and one of those

identified was norms.

Pimentel and Reynolds (2004) identified that family norms and community norms may

influence a consumer's commitment to a brand. When a family has a tradition of supporting a

specific sport team, it may become a family norm (Fields, 1984). Individuals who value their

membership in the family will participate in the family norm and become fans of the sport team

as well (Pimentel & Reynolds, 2004). Similarly, community norms is when the local community

has a tradition of supporting a specific sport team, and individuals who value their membership

in the community will support that same sport team. The community could be defined as the

region in which an individual resides, the group of friends one is affiliated with, or the school an

individual attends or has attended. The individual is responding to a norm to support "our" team

when they participate in the community norms. While sport marketers cannot directly control the

fan reference antecedents, it can provide a better understanding of how they can market and promote the sport brands according to the fan reference that precede brand love.

  Team uniqueness. Uniqueness is the degree to which consumers feel the brand is distinct from alternative brands (Netemeyer et al., 2004), and in sport, the degree to which consumers feel a sport team is distinct is known as team uniqueness. It was one of the 11 brand love dimensions identified by Albert et al.'s (2008) study in which reported that their preferred brand was different or unique. Albert et al. suggested that this feeling of uniqueness may be related to the feeling of idealization that is frequently noted in interpersonal love theories (Murray, Holmes, & Griffin, 1996; Sternberg & Barnes, 1985). More specifically, lovers commonly consider their significant other to be unique or different (Albert et al., 2008). Additionally, Ahuvia's (1993) study on the concept of object love provides supporting evidence that uniqueness is a dimension. In the sport context, there is no doubt that sport teams are unique or different from each other. Every single team has different mascots, team colors, players, traditions, fight songs, cheers, stadiums/arenas, rivalries, histories, and city and state locations.

  Similar to interpersonal love relationships (Murray et al., 1996; Sternberg & Barnes, 1985), it is these differences and uniqueness that attract consumers to love a brand in the sport context. In the marketing research, Keller (1993) found that one of the main dimensions that affect a consumer's response to a brand is the uniqueness of the brand association in the consumer's memory. Moreover, the love and passion a consumer has for a brand is more than a strong preference for the brand; it is the feeling that the brand is unique and irreplaceable (Fournier, 1998). Based on this research, it was purported that a consumer would not love a brand if it did not possess some sort of uniqueness or difference from other sport brands. In fact, Madrigal (1995) suggested that the unique nature of athletic competition may be the greatest

appeal for sport consumers. Furthermore, according to Bauer, Stokburger-Sauer, and Exler (2008), a promising strategy for sport marketers to drive consumers' loyalty is to build strong, positive, and unique consumer beliefs about the team. Therefore, while Albert et al. (2008) only identified the dimensions of brand love and did not differentiate between the antecedents, dimensions, and consequences, their results provide supporting evidence that uniqueness indeed may be a dimension of brand love for consumers. Hence, their research has been taken a step further and concluded that uniqueness, similar to quality, may be an antecedent to brand love in the sport context.

Consequences of Sport Brand Love

According to Barsalou (1991), the purpose of mental prototypes is to identify information in one's memory that provides useful inferences; therefore, Batra et al. (2012) concluded that the brand love prototype helps consumers recognize the useful consequences of their relationship with brands. Previous research on interpersonal love has concluded that relationship stability is an outcome typical of relationships with prototypical love (Fehr, 2006). Therefore, Batra et al. concluded that greater brand repurchase intentions, willingness to pay a higher price, engagement in positive WOM, and resistance to negative information were useful purposes for the consumer's relationship with the brand and consistent with prior research on interpersonal love outcomes. When tested empirically, all of these consequences, except willingness to pay a higher price, had good reliability; therefore, they were included in Batra et al.'s brand love model. However, it was contended that willingness to pay a higher price and switching intention from previous research needed to be included to the sport-related brand love model. Furthermore, it was purported that the willingness to invest resources and passionate desire to consume are useful outcomes of consumers' relationship with sport brands; therefore, those

behaviors have been included as consequences of sport brand love. In addition, resistance to negative information as an element of the loyalty consequence based on previous research.

General marketing brand love consequences. The following are the general marketing brand love consequences that were included in the newly developed sport brand love model.

Positive WOM. Word-of-mouth is considered to be all the informal communication between a consumer and potential consumers concerning the experience, evaluation, and recommendation of goods and services (Westbrook, 1980; Anderson, 1998). A significant amount of research has found that satisfied consumers engage in WOM that is favorable to the organization (Anderson, 1998; Batra et al., 2012; Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006; Hunt, 1977; Oliver, 1980) which is called positive word-of-mouth. For example, marketing research has found that word-of-mouth is highly influential in consumers' purchase decisions (e.g., Hennig-Thurau, Gwinner, & Gremler, 2002; Richins, 1983; Richins & Root-Shaffer, 1988; Swanson, Gwinner, Larson, & Janda, 2003) and frequently more powerful than other marketing tactics mostly because personally communicated information is perceived as more trustworthy and dependable than nonpersonal communication (Brooks, 1957; Hennig-Thurau, Gwinner, & Gremler, 2002).

Likewise, WOM has a significant impact because the potential consumer perceives the information as unbiased based on the fact that typically the current consumer does not have anything to gain by sharing the information (Bansal & Voyer, 2000). In fact, in many instances WOM is more effective in influencing the actual purchase decisions compared to mass media (Bayus, 1985). The more accessible the information, the more likely a consumer will use the information when making purchase decisions (Biehal & Dipankar, 1986) which is promising to marketers especially due to the significant rise in social media and other online media in the past

few years. This type of word-of-mouth has recently been named electronic word-of-mouth, or eWOM (Hennig-Thurau, Gwinner, Gremler, 2004).

Sport marketing research has found that a sport consumer's higher identification and commitment, both dimensions of brand love, encourage positive WOM (Madrigal & Chen, 2008). This is crucial because sports are intangible services and therefore difficult to evaluate prior to a purchase, so consumers often rely on personal sources of information to make a purchase decision (Lessig & Park, 1978; Murray, 1991). Additionally, marketing literature has concluded that engagement in positive WOM is higher for extremely satisfied consumers than lower satisfied consumers (Anderson, 1998). This means that consumers who feel high levels of brand love (i.e., extremely satisfied consumers) engage in high levels of positive word-of-mouth (Batra et al., 2012; Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006) compared to consumers who feel low levels of brand love (Batra et al., 2012). Based on this previous sport marketing research and the fact that WOM was found to be a consequence of brand love in previous studies (Batra et al., 2012; Bergkvist & Bech-Larsen, 2010; Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006), it was contended that word-of-mouth is a sport brand love dimension.

Team loyalty. Brand loyalty is a commitment deeply held by consumers that results in them repurchasing a brand regardless of any situational influences or marketing attempts of other brands to switch consumers an opposing brand (Oliver, 1999). More simply, loyalty refers to the consumer's devotion or attachment to a brand, and it gives managers the ability to attract and retain customers to their product (Aaker, 1991). In sport management literature, loyalty has been studied in the sport context as well. Team loyalty is defined as "an allegiance or devotion to a particular team that is based on the spectator's interest in the team that has been developed over time" (Wakefield & Sloan, 1995, p. 159). The sport management literature has concluded that

the loyalty of consumers to their teams predicts affective, cognitive, conative, and behavioral dimensions (e.g., intentions to repurchase) of sport consumption (e.g., Kwon, Trail, & Anderson, 2005; Madrigal, 1995; Matsuoka, Chelladurai, & Harada, 2003; Trail et al., 2005; Trail, Fink, & Anderson, 2003; Wann & Branscombe, 1993) which provides evidence that loyalty is an integral aspect and outcome of sport products.

Moreover, Pimentel and Reynolds' (2004) study on consumer devotion (i.e., extreme loyalty) found that the level of loyalty for devoted sport consumers is so extreme that the loyalty survives negative information such as poor product performance (e.g., losing), scandals, bad publicity, and high prices (Pimentel & Reynolds, 2004). They concluded that the commitment to a brand is basically permanent for the devoted consumer. Consistent with Branscombe and Wann's (1991) research, they found that even though sport consumers live and die by the success and failure of their team, they reported that they always support their team, even in the losing years (Pimentel & Reynolds, 2004). Additionally, their research supports Fournier's (1998) "love and passion" component of brand relationship quality which suggests that consumers possess more than a strong preference for a brand; consumers feel that the brand is irreplaceable and unique. This type of strong relationship between the consumer and the brand can lead to biased perceptions of the brand (Fournier, 1998) in which a consumer may ignore or resist any negative information about the brand.

While loyalty is imperative to the success of any brand, a sport manager's role to retain consumers is difficult because the sport product is intangible, heterogeneous in nature, and the organization depends on the team's performance (Gladden et al., 1998; Funk & Pastore, 2000; Mahony, Madrigal, & Howard, 2000) making it difficult for sport organizations to generate consistent customer satisfaction. Therefore, Gladden et al. (1998) stated that when establishing

brand loyalty, the emphasis on customer satisfaction is the most important tool sport managers can use to achieve repeat purchasing by the consumers. Brand loyalty guarantees a more consistent following by the consumers even when the team performs poorly, and it allows the sport organization the opportunity to move beyond the core product and create product extensions (Gladden & Funk, 2001). This is essential because the success of a sport organization has been linked to consumers' repurchase intentions (Chelladurai, 1999), as well as, consumers' perceived quality and positive attitudes towards a sport team is a reliable predictor of their decisions to re-attend a game (Byon et al., 2010; Zhang, Lam, & Connaughton, 2003; Zhang et al., 1995). Moreover, loyalty has consistently been identified as a consequence of brand love (Batra et al., 2012; Bergkvist & Bech-Larsen, 2010; Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006). Thus, it was purported that loyalty is a central consequence of sport brand love.

Newly identified consequences. The following constructs are the newly identified consequences of the sport brand love model.

Switching intention. Switching intention is the consumer's likelihood that they will switch from one brand to another. Understanding the consumers' switching behavior is important to managers because retaining current consumers is imperative for the success of the brand (Wan-Ling & Hwang, 2006). Moreover, the sport marketing literature has found it is easier for marketers to maintain current consumers over acquiring new consumers (Fornell & Wenerfelt, 1987), especially in a highly saturated and competitive marketplace (Kim & Trail, 2011). Therefore, marketers need to understand the relationship between the consumer and the brand. According to Sahay and Sharma (2010), the various dimensions of the brand relationship construct defines how long the relationship will last. These dimensions include love and passion, self-connection, and commitment (Sahay & Sharma, 2010) which are all dimensions of brand

love, indicating that brand love is indeed a brand relationship. More importantly, the greater the strength of these dimensions of brand relationship, the more likely the consumer's switching intention would decrease (Sahay & Sharma, 2010).

While factors such as quality and social influences can have an impact on switching intentions (Bansal & Taylor, 2005), Fernandes and Santos (2007) found that satisfaction is the factor that most commonly infringes on consumers' switching intentions. The higher the consumer satisfaction, the less likely the consumer intends to switch to an opposing brand (Burnham, Frels, & Mahajan, 2003). While switching intention has not previously been identified as a consequence of brand love, it was contended that it is appropriate based on the previous research on brand relationship and satisfaction, and the relationship of brand love to these constructs.

Willingness to pay higher prices. The consumers' willingness to pay a price premium (i.e., pay more for it) to obtain a product can be an outcome of their emotional attachment to the brand (Thomson et al., 2005). Bauer et al. (2009) reported that brand love has a strong positive effect on consumers' willingness to pay price premiums. Similarly, the interpersonal love literature has concluded that an individual who is strongly attached to a person or object are usually committed to preserving his or her relationship with that person or item (Johnson & Rusbult, 1989; Miller, 1997). In other words, the object of attachment is considered to be irreplaceable to the individual (Fournier, 1998; Thomson et al., 2005); therefore, the consumer will make additional sacrifices to obtain it.

Steenkamp, Van Heerde, and Geyskens (2010) found that the more involvement (e.g., interest) consumers have with the brand, the more they are willing to pay more for the brand. Likewise, their study indicated that consumers believe paying more for a brand will bring them

greater quality in return (Steenkamp et al., 2010). On the other hand, Batra et al.'s (2012) research excluded "willingness to pay higher prices" from the brand love model due to poor reliability. The researchers suggested that a better measure (i.e., more reliable) was needed to make a conclusion about consumers' willingness to pay higher prices as an outcome of their love for a brand. It was contended that the "willingness to pay higher prices" is a consequence of brand love; therefore, it was included in the sport-related brand love model.

Willingness to invest resources. The construct refers to the consumers' willingness to spend high levels of time, energy, and money into a sport brand (Wann & Branscombe, 1993). The investments into the loved brand indicate the importance of the brand and cause the brand to be more integrated into the self-identity of the consumer (Batra et al., 2012). In sport marketing, Wann and Branscombe (1993) concluded that an individual who strongly identifies with a sports team displays a greater willingness to invest significant amounts of time and money into watching the team play. Furthermore, Theysohn (2008) found that high averages of sport consumers are even willing to pay to consume sport teams via the internet.

Gau and Korzenny (2009) conducted a study on consumption and non-consumption groups in sport and their willingness to pay (or sacrifice financially). The non-consumption group included participants who did not spend any money to view or attend sporting events in an average month, and the consumption group were those who did spend money (Gau & Korzenny, 2009). The researchers found that when a betrayal such as an athlete steroid scandal occurred, the non-consumption group was more affected than the consumption group by a value such as honesty which influenced their willingness to pay (Gau & Korzenny, 2009). This could be evidence that because the consumption group had a higher level of commitment they found it

easier to forgive the betrayal (Finkel, Rusbult, Kumashiro, & Hannon, 2002) which is why it is imperative that sport brands earn the love of consumers.

  Passionate desire to consume. Passion refers to the intense and aroused positive feelings that a consumer has towards a brand (Thomson et al., 2005), and desire is the longing for and fantasizing about a particular brand (Belk, Ger, & Askegaard, 2003) which, indicates an intention to consume a brand. A strong desire for a brand, reflecting a high level of arousal, is frequently referred to as passion (Belk et al., 2003). Fournier (1998) found that love and passion was one of the major categories of relationships between consumers and brands. She defined this type of relationship as a richer, deeper, longer-lasting feeling than simple preference (Fournier, 1998). Passionate love has been defined as "a state of intense longing for union with another" (Hatfield & Walster, 1978, p. 9) which can be applied to this concept of a consumer's passionate desire to use a loved brand. Belk et al. (2003) found that passionate potential consumers can be overtaken by their desire, and desire is the driving force behind much of the consumption today. Consumer thoughts of and cravings for brands can captivate and seem to promise to add meaning to the life of the consumers (Belk et al., 2003).

  Albert et al. (2008) found that passion is the one of the dimension of brand love, and Bauer, Heinrich, and Albrecht (2009) believe that this passion is the dimension most valuable to managers. In sport, studies such as Kim, Trail, and Ko's (2011) have concluded that an increase in the quality of the relationship (e.g., brand love) between a consumer and a sport brand results in an increase in consumption behaviors (i.e., attendance, sport media consumption, licensed merchandise consumption). Furthermore, sport consumers can become so attached to a team that it becomes a "career like" involvement for them because they are so active and passionate about

their fandom (DeGroot & Robinson, 2008). Therefore, it can be concluded that a dimension of brand love in sport is a passionate desire to consume it.

Summary

Consumer's attachments to sport brand are a fundamental interest in sport marketing, and the highest form of attached is love (Bowlby, 1979; Sternberg, 1987; Thomson et al., 2005). Therefore, general marketing researchers and practitioners have begun to take notice of brand love. However, brand love may be most evident in the sport industry, but the construct has never been applied to sport. It was not appropriate to directly apply any of the previously developed brand love models (e.g., Albert et al., 2008; Batra et al., 2012; Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006) because they were based on traditional consumer products, and the sport product is intangible and unpredictable making it unique from most other products (Mullin et al., 2007). Therefore, a conceptual model of sport brand love was developed based on the previous brand love research and the sport related constructs that have been examined in the sport marketing literature. This model includes 13 dimensions, three antecedents, and six consequences of the sport brand love (See Figure 2.1) enabling to tap into the unique aspects of sport consumers' formation of brand love, and potential contextual differences were also taken into consideration in the conceptual model via the inclusion of the moderators. In summary, this sport brand love theoretical model offers a richer understanding of sport consumer behavior to marketing researchers and practitioners.

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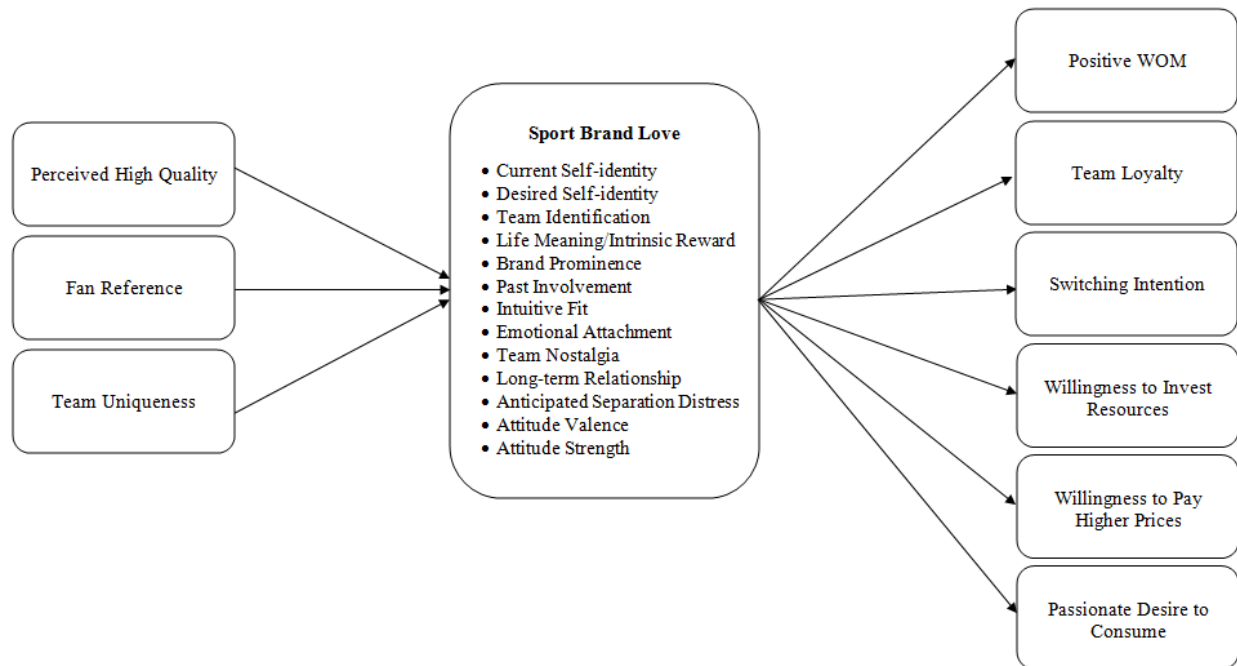
Figure 2.1. Conceptual framework of the sport brand love model.

CHAPTER 3

EMPIRICAL EXAMINATION OF THE SPORT BRAND LOVE MODEL IN

PROFESSIONAL SPORTS[2]

Abstract

The phenomenon of brand love appears to be most evident in the sport industry, but the concept had not been applied to the sport context until recently when Tavormina et al. (2012) utilized previous brand love research to develop a multi-dimensional, higher-order sport brand love model that reflects the uniqueness of sport. However, the model was not empirically tested, therefore, the sport brand love questionnaire was developed to test the model by utilizing CFA and SEM. Using consumers from the major professional sport teams (i.e., MLB, NBA, and NFL) in a large metropolitan area of the U.S., participants were recruited and surveyed using the sport brand love questionnaire. The participants were screened and only those who had attended a sporting event for one of the teams in the past were included in the study (N=635). The sample was split into two independent samples so that the results could be cross-validated. The measurement model of the calibration sample (χ^2 = 4361.865, p < .001; χ^2/df = 2.39; RMSEA = .066, 90% CI = .064-.069; SRMR = .066; TLI = .89; CFI = .89; RNI = .89) and holdout sample (χ^2 = 4195.893, p = < .001; χ^2/df = 2.30; RMSEA = .064, 90% CI = .062-.067; SRMR = .063; TLI = .89; CFI = .90; RNI = .90) had reasonably good fit, reliability (CR = .74 to .98), convergent validity (AVE = .58 to .90), considering the model complexity, and the two sample cross-validated successfully based on the invariance tests. The structural model of the calibration sample (χ^2 = 4593.523, p <.001; χ^2/df = 2.49; RMSEA = .068, 90% CI = .066-.071; SRMR = .078; TLI = .88; CFI = .89; RNI = .89) and holdout sample (χ^2 = 4408.851, p <.001; χ^2/df = 2.39; RMSEA = .068, 90% CI = .066-.071; SRMR = .078; TLI = .88; CFI = .89; RNI = .89) also had reasonably good fit. While the path coefficients for the samples were different, the subsequent multi-sample path analysis of the three teams provided an explanation for these differences.

Keywords: marketing, sport brand love, dimensions, antecedents, consequences

Introduction

While they were not the first to introduce the concept of brand love, Carroll and Ahuvia (2006) were the first to coin the term and define it as "the degree of passionate emotional attachment a satisfied customer has for a particular trade name" (p. 81). Their development and many previous researchers' (e.g., Ahuvia, 2005; Albert et al., 2008; Shimp & Madden, 1998) development of brand love was based on the concept on interpersonal love theories. Until recently, the concepts of brand love in the marketing literature had been based on interpersonal love theories. However, while there may be similarities between interpersonal theories and brand love, Batra et al. (2012) uncovered some critical issues when research uses interpersonal love as the foundation of brand love and concluded that the implied definition of love that consumers use when they say they love a specific brand must first be understood. The results of Batra et al.'s study indicated that brand love is best represented as a higher-order construct including multiple cognitions, emotions, and behaviors which consumers organize into a mental prototype which is consistent with research on interpersonal love (Fehr, 2006). The researchers noted that while the participants in the study often reported that they truly loved certain brands, they stated that it was a different form of love than interpersonal love. Furthermore, their research extended prior marketing research by utilizing constructs (e.g., brand attachment, brand self-connection, brand communities) that were previously studied independently and provided evidence that brand love functions as an integrated framework which includes these constructs.

Utilizing these general marketing studies, Tavormina et al. (2012) developed the sport brand love model by taking into consideration the uniqueness of sport and previous sport marketing literature (Gladden & Funk, 2002; Madrigal, 1995; Mullin et al., 2007). Through the examination of the sport marketing literature, the researchers concluded that Batra et al.'s (2012)

brand love dimensions for traditional products were theoretically related to sport products (e.g., team), but Tavormina et al. (2012) purported that six additional dimensions needed to be included in the sport brand love model: team identification (Heere & James, 2007; Trail & James, 2001; Wann & Branscomb, 1993) team nostalgia (Gladden & Funk, 2002), fan reference (Cunningham & Kwon, 2003; Mullin et al., 2007; Pimentel & Reynolds, 2004), team uniqueness (Bauer, Stokburger-Sauer, and Exler 2008; Madrigal, 1995), switching intention (Burnham, Frels, & Mahajan, 2003; Sahay & Sharma, 2010; Wan-Ling & Hwang, 2006), and willingness to pay higher prices (Bauer, Heinrich, & Albrecht, 2009; Steenkamp, Van Heerde, & Geyskens, 2010). While this model was based on theoretically sound research, it is necessary to empirically test the model to determine its validity for both sport researchers and practitioners. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to create a sport brand love scale and empirically test the sport brand love model developed by Tavormina et al.

Sport Brand Love Model

The sport brand love model is a multi-dimensional, higher order model that consists of various factors that reflect the uniqueness of sport products (Gladden & Funk, 2002; Mullin et al., 2007), specifically teams. These factors have been identified by conducting an extensive literature review of the general marketing and sport marketing literature related to consumers' attachments to sport brands. Together these factors make up the dimensions of sport brand love itself, the antecedents of sport brand love, and the consequences of sport brand love.

Sport brand love dimensions. These sport brand love dimensions include various cognitions, emotions, and behaviors that were determined to be characteristics of consumers' love towards sport teams. A total of 13 first-order factors have been identified that represent sport brand love, a second-order factor: team identification, team nostalgia, current self-identity,

desired self-identity, life meaning and intrinsic reward, brand prominence, past involvement, intuitive fit, emotional attachment, long-term relationship, anticipated separation distress, attitude valence, and attitude strength. The first two dimensions are sport unique dimension that were added to the sport brand love model, and the remaining 11 dimensions were initially identified in the general marketing literature but were also found to be sport brand love dimensions through the review of sport marketing literature.

Team identification. Team identification studies in sport marketing have concluded there are many affective, cognitive, and behavioral differences among sport consumers based on their team identification (Heere & James, 2007; Kwon & Armstrong, 2002; Kwon & Trail, 2003; Ross & James, 2007; Trail & James, 2001; Wann & Branscombe, 1993). Moreover, psychology literature has found that individuals are not able to form their own identities without a social identity derived from a group affiliation. This previous research makes it evident that team identification is an integral dimension of sport brand love.

Team nostalgia. Albert et al. (2008) found that a brand may remind consumers of certain significant and positive memories which create a sense of nostalgia (Albert et al., 2008). In the sport marketing literature, nostalgia has been identified as a benefit that consumers associate with their favorite sport team (Gladden & Funk, 2002). It is believed that consumers have nothing to take away from a sporting event other than perceptions and memories (Mullin et al., 2007) which displays the significance of nostalgia. Furthermore, nostalgia is one of three constructs that are necessary for a consumer to form an allegiance to a sports team (Funk & James, 2006), indicating that team nostalgia is a key ingredient to sport brand love.

Current and desired self-identity. Current and desired self-identity are two similar dimensions, but current self-identity refers to how an individual presently self-identifies with a

brand and desired self-identity reflects how an individual prefers to be self-identified with a brand (Batra et al., 2012). Fisher and Wakefield (1998) have found that this identification occurs in sport because of the psychological and emotional benefits that motivate it, and the sense of belongingness is the greatest benefit to a sport consumer (DeGroot & Robinson, 2008). To become members of the team, sport consumers feel as though they give up their personal identity (Ross & James, 2007), and this bond is formed because of the image or desired image consumers feel they share with the team (Armstrong, 2002; Armstrong & Stratta, 2004). This type of bond may be an indication that a consumer feels love towards a team.

Life meaning and intrinsic rewards. Life meaning and intrinsic rewards is a characteristic of sport brand love based on the fact that an intrinsic reward is sought when a consumer does something because he or she loves it, not to gain an external reward (Babin et al. 1994). In Wann's (1995) study on consumer motivation, he found that while consumers were motivated by some extrinsic rewards, the majority of the motivations were intrinsic. Furthermore, multiple sport marketing researchers have found that individuals consume sports because of the deep benefits offered, and they are more likely to invest more into the relationship with the team because of the benefits (Funk & Pastore, 2000; Funk et al., 2000; Milne & McDonald, 1999; Wann, Schrader, & Wilson, 1999). For example, consumers' desire for achievement and knowledge of a sport team were found to be intrinsic rewards (Trail & James, 2001; Zhang et al., 2001).

Brand prominence. Brand prominence is the degree to which positive feelings and memories about a brand comes first to a consumer's mind when he or she thinks about a specific product category (e.g., sports) (Park et al, 2010). These positive memories of a brand are more likely for consumers who feel love towards a brand (e.g., sport team) than those consumers who

display weak attachment (Collins, 1996; Mikulincer, 1998). In sport marketing, "intensity" is one of eight attitudinal components have been identified (Funk & Pastore, 2000), and it is measured by receiving feedback from consumers about how strong and intense their feelings are towards a specific brand (Krosnick, 1988). Furthermore, Ross and James (2007) found that highly identified consumers frequently think more about a sports team than those consumers with lower levels of team identification which provides evidence that the same is true for sport brand love.

Past involvement. Previous research has shown that the more involved a consumer is with a brand, the more likely he or she will positively evaluate and commit to the brand (Mano & Oliver, 1993; Oliver & Bearden, 1983). In addition, Kersetter and Kovich (1997) found the more frequently consumers attend sporting events for a particular team; the more likely they are going to agree that their experiences are pleasurable and important (Kersetter & Kovich, 1997). They also found that as the number of years that individuals attend games increases, the more likely their experiences become more pleasurable and important. In fitness, Park (1996) found that highly involved participants were more likely to continue participation due to their emotional attachment.

Long-term relationship. Certainly, in order for a consumer to love a brand he or she must have had some sort of past involvement with the brand, and the level of involvement is typically positively correlated with a consumer's love towards a brand (Batra et al., 2012). Moreover, the involvement over a long period of time is considered to be a long-term relationship which is defined as a connection between entities that can be linked to intimacy over a long period of time, and intimacy is defined as the in-depth knowledge about others that is usually a result of the amount of time spent together in the past (Ahuvia, 2005; Sternberg, 1986). In sport marketing, relationship marketing is a construct that has been explored to better understand the

long-term relationships sport consumers have with teams (Kim & Trail, 2011; Kim, Trail, & Ko, 2011; Kim, Trail, Woo, & Zhang, 2011), and these findings are a good indicator that the notion of a long-term relationships is a dimension of sport brand love.

Intuitive fit. Additionally, in respect to the relationship between the consumer and the brand, a sense of intuitive fit and harmony between the two is more likely to exist when a consumer feels love towards a brand (Batra et al, 2012). Sport marketing researchers have found that consumers are motivated to consume sports teams in order to develop and share the same values with them (Milne & McDonald, 1999). Intuitive fit is similar to the self-congruency construct that Aaker (1999) defined as the fit between the consumer's self and brand image. Research has found that sport consumers do seek sport teams that are congruent to their own self-image (Armstrong, 2002, 2008; Armstrong & Stratta, 2004; Nadeau, Jones, Pegoraro, O'Reilly, & Carvalho, 2011; Sapolsky, 1980).

Emotional attachment. Similarly, consumers can form emotional bonds and feelings towards these brands (Bowlby, 1979; Thomson et al., 2005), and when these bonds transform into intense emotional attachments like love, they are linked with positive emotions towards the brand (Fehr & Russell, 1991). Sports create a greater emotional response than any other industry (Couvelaere & Richeliau, 2005), but consumers form a strong emotional connection to only a small number of sport brands (Koo & Hardin, 2008). However, sport marketers deem it is imperative to understand and use these emotional attachments to classify consumers to develop strategic marketing plans (Koo & Hardin, 2008).

Anticipated separation distress. When these intense emotional connections are developed, consumers may experience anticipated separation distress. This occurs when a consumer feels anguish towards the thought of losing the relationship or emotional attachment

towards a loved brand (Hazan & Shaver, 1994; Park et al., 2010). This is typically an immediate indicator of an attachment towards the brand (Bowlby, 1980; Hazan & Shaver, 1994; Thomson et al., 2005) which is often seen in sports when many consumers feel they live and die with their beloved teams (Branscombe & Wann, 1992; Couvelaere & Richeliau, 2005). Therefore, it is purported that anticipated separation distress is a dimension of sport brand love.

Attitude valence. In addition, consumers evaluate brands and the degree to which they positively or negatively evaluate them is known as attitude valence (Park et al., 2010). Sport marketing researchers have reported that sport consumer are no exception (e.g., Funk, Haugtvedt, & Howard, 2000; Funk & James, 2004, 2006; Funk & Pastore, 2000;), especially considering sports create an emotional response great than any other industry (Couvelaere & Richeliau, 2005). "Extremity" was another one of the attitudinal components that Funk and Pastore (2000) identified, and it refers to the degree to which a sport consumer evaluates a sport brand as favorable or unfavorable. In addition, Funk and James (2004) developed the Fan Attitude Network (FAN) Model, and "attitude importance" is the dimension in the model which reflects the degree and valence of consumer's attitude formation. Love is a positive emotion consumers have towards brands; therefore, the sport brand love model attempts to understand the degree of a sport consumer's attitude positivity towards a brand.

Attitude strength. The certainty and confidence with which a consumer holds the attitude is known as the attitude strength (Park et al., 2010). Attitude strength has been found to significantly influence consumers' behaviors (Park et al., 2010); therefore, many sport marketing researchers have examined consumers' attitude strength towards sport brands (e.g., Funk et al., 2000; Funk & James, 2004, 2006; Funk & Pastore, 2000). For example, a third attitudinal component Funk and Pastore (2000) identified was "certainty," and they defined this as the

attitude confidence or conviction that consumers have in their attitudes towards a sport team. Furthermore, the development of the FAN Model revealed that a sport consumer's attitude significantly impacts their attachment to sport brand (Funk & James, 2004) providing evidence that the same is true for a consumer's sport brand love.

Hypothesis Development

Sport brand love antecedents. While sport marketers need to understand the dimensions of the sport brand love model, it is critical for them to understand what causes the brand love to form. Based on previous general marketing brand love studies (Batra et al., 2012; Bergkvist & Bech-Larsen, 2010; Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006) and the sport marketing literature, several antecedents to sport brand love were identified: perceived high quality, fan reference, and team uniqueness. These antecedents can help sport marketers gain a better understanding of how sport consumers form and maintain sport brand love. Understanding these antecedents and how they interact with sport brand love can assist sport practitioners in creating more strategic marketing plans that produce more love-filled consumers.

Perceived high quality. Sport managers ability to offer high quality products has become their top priority (Ko et al., 2011), but quality is ultimately based on the perception of the consumer. Therefore, perceived quality is the consumer's judgment of the overall excellence, esteem, and superiority of the brand compared to all other brands (Netemeyer et al. 2004). In sports, team success is an obvious indicator of perceived quality, but the brand extends significantly beyond the core product which is the event or game itself. The sport brand includes aspects such as the athletes, coaches, sport facilities, logos, history, and traditions; therefore, the perceived quality of a sport brand encompasses all of these aspects and is important to the success of any sport team. For example, Byon and Baker (2011) found that the quality of the

game venue and game amenities at college baseball games account for 40% of the variance in future attendance. Furthermore, Fisher and Wakefield (1998) found that consumers of non-winning teams identify with their involvement with the team, instead of with the success of the team. Therefore, the perceived team performance is not an important factor for these consumers; whereas, it is the most important factor for consumers of a successful team (Fisher & Wakefield, 1998). Regardless, it was purported that the perceived high quality of the sport team as a whole was an antecedent to sport brand love, especially considering perception and memories is about all that consumers can take away from a sporting event (Mullin et al., 2007). Therefore, it was hypothesized that:

H1: Sport Consumers' high perceived quality is positively related to sport brand love.

Fan reference. Fan reference is a form of social reference which is a stimulus which occurs within an individual when he or she associates with others, and then the reference becomes engrained into one's own mental self (Sherif, 1936). When individuals observe activities for the first time by themselves, they create their own frame of reference (e.g., traditions, values) about that activity (Sherif, 1936). However, when individuals observe an activity in a group setting for the first time, the group's frame of reference determines the future interactions the individual has with that activity (Sherif, 1936). Sports are a social activity (Mullin et al., 2007), and they are typically consumed based on consumers' desire to socialize with others fans (Wann, 1995; Wann et al., 2008). Therefore, in sports, the references that individuals establish when consuming a team with other fans are considered to be fan references. Wakefield and Sloan (1995) reported that peer group (e.g., family and friends) acceptance is important for an individual's positive sport team consumption. Moreover, these fan frames of reference can significantly impact how one attaches to the sport brand and help form a

consumer's sport brand love. The traditions and values that consumers develop through their fan references lead to subjective norms which are the social assumptions that significant others have about an individual as to whether he or she will engage in or will not engage in a certain activity (Cunningham & Kwon, 2003).

Furthermore, Pimentel and Reynolds (2004) explored the antecedents of the the sport consumer devotion construct which is a form of attachment that is so extreme that it could survive any sort of product failure (e.g., poor team performance, scandal, high ticket prices), a similar characteristic related to sport brand love. Family norms and community norms were identified as two of the antecedents to consumer devotion (Pimentel & Reynolds, 2004). Family and community norms exist when there is a tradition of supporting a specific team, and an individual who values their membership within the family or community will support the same team (Fields, 1984). Fan references are established within these types of norms and are an antecedent to sport brand love. Therefore, it was posited that:

H2: Sport consumers' fan reference is positively related to sport brand love.

Team uniqueness. Consumers often feel their preferred brand is distinct from all alternative brands (Netemeyer et al., 2004), and in the sport context, this is known as team uniqueness. There are no two sport teams that have the same attributes such as their location, name, logo, mascot, team colors, players, coaches, rivalries, traditions, or history. Much like other types of love relationships (Murray et al., 1996; Sternberg & Barnes, 1985), it is these types of distinctive characteristics of a sports team that attracts consumers and can lead to sport brand love. Furthermore, previous research has found the consumers' love does not only give them a strong preference for a brand, but it gives them the feeling that the brand is unique and irreplaceable (Fournier, 1998), and the uniqueness of sport may be the greatest appeal for sport

consumers (Madrigal, 1995). Sport marketers must build strong, positive, and unique consumer beliefs about the team in order to create highly attached consumers (Bauer et al., 2008), and this suggests that team uniqueness is a antecedent to sport brand love. Therefore, it was hypothesized that:

H3: Sport consumers' perceived team uniqueness is positively related to sport brand love.

Sport brand love consequences. While it is crucial for sport marketers to understand what creates and maintains sport brand love, it is also advantageous for sport marketers to understand how sport brand love impacts consumers' behaviors. Based on the general marketing brand love literature (Batra et al., 2012; Bergkvist & Bech-Larsen, 2010; Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006) and sport marketing literature, six consequences of sport brand love were identified: positive word-of-mouth, loyalty, switching intention, willingness to invest resources, willingness to pay higher prices, and passionate desire to consume. A better understanding of the sport brand love outcomes can help explain and predict the variations in desirable post-consumption behaviors of consumers (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006), and this knowledge can assist sport marketers in creating a strategic marketing plan that can optimize these desirable sport consumer behaviors.

Positive WOM. Word-of-mouth is all of the informal communication that a consumer uses to engage with potential consumers concerning the experience, evaluation, and recommendations of products (Anderson, 1998; Westbrook, 1980). More importantly, satisfied consumers engage in WOM that is favorable to the organization which is known as positive word-of-mouth (Anderson, 1998; Batra et al., 2012; Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006; Hunt, 1977; Oliver, 1980). Furthermore, WOM is highly influential in consumers' purchase decisions (Swanson et al., 2003) and frequently the most powerful marketing tactics because personally communicated

information is perceived as more trustworthy than nonpersonal communication about the brand

(Brooks, 1957; Hennig-Thurau et al., 2002).

Consumers who are more identified and committed to sport brands are more likely to

engage in positive WOM (Madrigal & Chen, 2008). Positive WOM is imperative to sport brands

they are mostly intangible services, making it difficult for consumers to evaluate the product

prior to purchase. Therefore, consumers often depend heavily on personal sources of information

when they make a purchase decision (Lessig & Park, 1978; Murray, 1991). Furthermore,

consumers who experience high levels of satisfaction engage in more positive WOM than the

consumers who experience lower levels of satisfaction (Anderson, 1998). Considering brand

love is the degree of passionate emotional attachment a satisfied consumer experiences towards a

brand (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006), it was posited that:

H4: A sport consumer's positive WOM increases when his or her sport brand love

increases.

Team loyalty. Team loyalty is a consumer's devotion to a specific team that is based on

his or her interest in the team that has been developed over time (Wakefield & Sloan, 1995). This

loyalty that consumers feel towards a particular team can help predict their affective, cognitive,

conative, and behavioral dimensions of sport consumption (e.g., Kwon et al., 2005; Matsuoka et

al., 2003; Trail et al., 2005; Trail, Fink, & Anderson, 2003). It is essential for sport organizations

to be able to predict these because the success of sport organizations has been linked to

repurchase intention which is a behavioral dimension (Chelladurai, 1999). Furthermore, loyalty

guarantees the consumers will have a more consistent following of the team, therefore, allowing

the sport organization the opportunity to move beyond the core product and create product

extensions (Gladden & Funk, 2001). In fact, the loyalty can be so strong that sport consumers

often remain devoted to their team regardless of the situation, including a losing season (Branscombe & Wann, 1991; Pimentel & Reynolds, 2004). Loyalty can lead to biased perceptions of the brand (Fournier, 1998) in which a consumer may ignore or resist any negative information about the sport team. Moreover, loyalty has consistently been identified as a consequence of brand love (Batra et al., 2012; Bergkvist & Bech-Larsen, 2010; Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006); therefore, it was hypothesized that:

H5: A sport consumer's team loyalty increases when his or her sport brand love increases.

Switching intention. Switching intention is the degree of likelihood that a consumer may switch from the fan of one team to another. Switching behaviors can be detrimental to the success of any sport organizations, and it is easier for marketers to maintain their current consumers over acquiring new ones (Fornell & Wenerfelt, 1987). Furthermore, as the relationship between the consumer and the brand increases in strength, the more likely the consumer's switching intention will decrease (Sahay & Sharma, 2010). Therefore, understanding consumers' switching intentions is imperative (Wan-Ling & Hwang, 2006), especially currently in the highly saturated and competitive marketplace (Kim & Trail, 2011). While many factors (e.g., brand quality, social influence) may influence consumers' switching intentions (Bansal & Taylor, 2005), consumer satisfaction was found to be the most frequent factor that influences it (Fernandes & Santos (2007). In other words, as consumer satisfaction with the brand increase, the consumer's intention to switch to an opposing brand decreases (Burnham et al., 2003). Therefore, it was purported that there was an inverse relationship between switching intention and sport brand love, and it was posited that:

H6: A sport consumer's switching intention is negatively related to his or her sport brand love.

Willingness to invest resources. A consumer's willingness to expend high levels of time, money, and energy to consume a sport brand is known as the willingness to invest resources (Wann & Branscombe, 1993). The investments into the brand indicate how important the brand is to the consumer and causes the brand to be more integrated into the consumer's self-identity (Batra et al., 2012), and individuals who identify strongly with a sports team are more willing to invest significant amounts of time and money into consuming the team (Wann & Branscombe, 1993). This was further validated in Gau and Korzenny's (2009) study on consumption (individuals who spend money to view sporting events) and non-consumption (individuals who do not spend money to view sporting events) groups. They found that brand failure such as an athlete steroid scandal affected the non-consumption group's willingness to invest more than the consumption group's. This is evidence that consumers who are willing to invest in a brand have higher levels of commitment (Finkel et al., 2002). Therefore, it was hypothesized that:

H7: A sport consumer's willingness to invest resources increases when his or her sport brand love increases.

Willingness to pay higher prices. Commitments to a brand can also lead to consumers being willing to pay a higher price (price premiums) to obtain it (Thomson et al., 2005). The more intense the demand is to consume a sport team, the higher the price consumers are willing to invest (Rishe & Mondello, 2003). When individuals become attached to a brand that is considered to be irreplaceable (Fournier, 1998; Thomson et al., 2005), they are usually committed to preserving his or her relationship with that object (Johnson & Rusbult, 1989; Miller, 1997) even if that means making additional sacrifices to obtain it. In addition, the consumer's willingness to pay more for a brand increases as their involvement with the brand increases, and they believe paying more for a brand will result in a higher quality brand

(Steenkamp et al., 2010). Brand love has a strong positive effect on consumers' willingness to pay price premiums (Bauer et al., 2009); therefore, it was hypothesized that:

H8: A sport consumer's willingness to pay higher prices increases when his or her sport brand love increases.

Passionate desire to consume. Passionate desire to consume refers to the intense and aroused positive feelings that a consumer has (Thomson et al., 2005) when they desire or long to consume a particular brand (Belk et al., 2003). This intense desire is an indicator of an individual's intention to consume the brand and is the driving force behind the large majority of consumption (Belk et al., 2003). As a result, this factor of brand love (Albert et al., 2008) is one of the most valuable to marketers (Bauer et al., 2009). Some sport consumers become so passionate about their fandom for a particular team that their involvement becomes like a "career" for them (DeGroot & Robinson, 2008) which is what sport marketers are seeking. Furthermore, when the quality of the relationship (e.g., brand love) between an individual and a sport brand increases, the consumption behaviors of the consumer typically increase (Kim et al., 2011). Therefore, it was posited that (See Figure 3.1):

H9: A sport consumer's passionate desire to consume increases when his or her sport brand love increases.

Methodology

Pilot Study

Participants and data collection procedures. Prior to the main study, a pilot study was conducted to verify the internal consistency and construct validity of the instrument. This study was conducted on three professional sports teams in a large metropolitan area in the southeast region of the United States. Using convenience sampling, a total of 300 participants from the

general public that were associated with a large university located near the metropolitan area were surveyed, and they voluntarily participated in the study. From the sample, 47.7% were male and 52.3% were female. Nearly 52% of the participants were between 18 and 27 years old. The sample included White/Caucasian (57.7%), followed by Asian (26%), and Black/African American (10.7%). Additionally, approximately 91% of the participants were individual ticket holders. The survey included a screening question, "For which sport team have you attended a game?" with the option to select one of three local professional teams. The participants who selected one of the professional sport teams were invited to participate in the survey, and those who did not select one of the teams because they never attended a professional sport event for that particular metropolitan area were excluded from the study. The data were collected using online self-administered surveys, and the participants were recruited via an email invitation that included a link to the online survey site. The participants were given the purpose of the study and were asked to respond to all of the survey items based on their thoughts and feelings towards the local professional team (MLB, NBA, NFL) for which they have attended a game. This method allows for more generalizability of sport brand love across different types of professional sports. The participation in this study was voluntary, the respondents were required to be 18 years or older, and there was no compensation for participation in the study.

Instrument. A preliminary questionnaire was generated which included a total of 107 items and represented the 22 constructs that measure the dimensions, antecedents, and consequences of sport brand love. The item response format for the first 13 constructs used a 7-point scale with 1 = *not at all* and 7 = *very much* and were adapted from Albert et al. (2008), Batra et al. (2012), and Carroll and Ahuvia's (2006) studies: Current Self-Identity (8 items), Desired Self-Identity (3 items), Life Meaning and Intrinsic Rewards (5 items), Brand

Prominence (7 items), Past Involvement (3 items), Intuitive Fit (7 items), Emotional Attachment (9 items), Long-term Relationship (3 items), Anticipated Separation Distress (4 items), Attitude Valence (8 items), Attitude Strength (5 items), Passionate Desire to Use (6 items), and Willingness to Invest Resources (4 items). The next 8 items used a 7-point Likert-type scale with 1 = *strongly disagree* and 7 = *strongly agree* and were adopted and modified from various existing scales: Team Identification (6 items) from Kwon and Armstrong (2004), Team Nostalgia (3 items) from Gladden and Funk (2002), Perceived Quality (4 items), Team Uniqueness (4 items), and Willingness to Pay Higher Prices (4 items) from Netemeyer et al. (2004), Fan Reference (4 items) from Cunningham and Kwon (2003), Positive Word-of-Mouth (3 items) from Alexandris et al. (2007) and Swanson et al., (2003), and Loyalty (5 items) from Heere and Dickson (2008) and Trail et al. (2005). Lastly, Switching Intention (2 items) used a 5-point Likert-type scale item (1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*) and a 5-point percentage response item (1 = *0% chance* to 5 = *100% chance*) from Burnham et al. (2003). The content validity of the instrument was verified by forming a panel of experts that included three sport management researchers and two practitioners from the professional sports teams.

Data analyses. The data were checked by examining the descriptive statistics, including mean and standard deviation of the sport brand love variables, as well as of the socio-demographic variables, using procedures available in SPSS 20.0. Bivariate correlations were also calculated to examine the interrelationship between the sport brand love dimensions. Following this data check, three assumption tests of the data were conducted before the confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was performed: normality, linearity, and outliers. The normality of the data was first checked by means of normal probability plot (Hair et al., 2006). Then, the skewness and kurtosis of the items were examined to formally test normality of the data using Kline's (2011)

criteria (skewness < 3.0 and kurtosis < 5.0). The multivariate outliers were identified based on

box plot analyses (Hair et al., 2006). Lastly, linearity was examined by inspecting a scatterplot to

show the linear nature of the data (Hair et al., 2006). The sample was split randomly into two

groups, and conducted a CFA on the calibration sample (n = 145) and the holdout sample (n =

144) to cross-validate the findings.

First, a CFA was conducted on the calibration sample, and the correlation residuals of

each set of latent variable items and standardized factor loadings were examined. Then, items

were removed based on empirical and theoretical evidence, and the CFA was conducted on each

latent variable again to verify the correlations residuals were >.10 (Kline, 2011) and factor

loadings were adequate ($\geq$ .50) according to Fornell and Larcker (1981). Next, following the

suggestions of Kline (2011) and Hu and Bentler (1999), several fit indices were examined to

measure the fit of the model: χ^2, χ^2/df, Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI), Comparative Fit Index (CFI),

Relative Non-centrality Index (RNI), Root Mean Square Error of approximation (RMSEA), and

Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR). After good model fit was determined, the

convergent validity of the constructs was assessed by examining the factor loadings with a value

$\geq$ .50 being acceptable and indicative of validity (Hair et al., 2006). In addition, convergent

validity was checked by calculating the average variance extracted (AVE) scores based on Hair

et al.'s (2006) formula, and the score was deemed adequate when it was $\geq$ .50 (Fornell &

Larcker, 1981). Discriminant validity was examined by comparing the AVE of a given construct

with the squared correlations between one construct and all other latent variables (Fornell &

Larcker, 1981). Next, the construct reliability of the constructs in the calibration sample was

evaluated using the Hair et al.'s formula with acceptable levels being .70 or higher based on

criteria. Construct reliability was used instead of the commonly used Cronbach's α that has been

shown to over- or underestimate scale reliability (Raykov, 1997). Following moderately good model fit of the calibration sample, a CFA was conducted on the holdout sample and examined it the same as with the calibration sample. Lastly, the samples were cross-validated via a loose cross-validation in which the calibration sample was imposed on the holdout sample (Hair et al., 2006).

 Results. The three CFA assumption tests were passed according to the stated criteria for the complete data set. The normal probability plots appeared to be acceptable, and univariate normality of the data was statistically tested by examining the skewness and kurtosis. For all of the items, the skewness (≤ 1.318) and kurtosis (≤ 1.869) values were within Kline's (2011) recommended criteria < 3 and < 5, respectively, indicating normality of the data. However, the outlier data check resulted in the removal of 11 cases that were deemed to be outliers based on the box plot analyses (Hair et al., 2006). Lastly, the linearity of the data appeared to be acceptable according to the scatterplots. Through the CFA of the calibration sample, the correlations residuals $>.10$ were examined because Kline (2011) suggests anything over that value means that the model does not explain the corresponding sample correlation well. The items with the large error variance were removed based on both empirical and theoretical evidence which resulted in a total of 35 items being removed. Three of these items represented the "Desired Self-Identity" construct; however, this construct was removed based on theoretical and statistical evidence ($\lambda = .420$). Additionally, "Team Nostalgia" was initially theorized as a dimension of brand love by Albert et al., (2008); however, the empirical analysis of the construct provided statistical evidence that it is not a first-order factor of sport brand love ($\lambda = .383$). Therefore, the "Team Nostalgia" construct was theoretically reexamined and was re-hypothesized as an antecedent of sport brand love in the main study. However, all of the other

first-order latent factors loaded adequately (range = .751 to .998) onto the second-order latent factor "Sport Brand Love" according to the ≥ .50 criteria recommended by Hair et al., (2006). Furthermore, emotional attachment and positive affect were originally two separate constructs in Batra et al.'s (2012) brand love model, but they were combined as one construct in this study. However, there was statistical evidence that the two constructs should remain separate; therefore, the main study will measure the two constructs separately based on statistical and theoretical evidence.

Then, a CFA was conducted on the calibration sample, and we retained a model with reasonable model fit by examining the standardized factor loadings (range = .451 to .964) and model fit indices (χ^2 = 5403.324, p < .001; χ^2/df = 1.90; RMSEA = .080, 90% CI = .076-.083; SRMR = .08; TLI = .79; CFI = .81; and RNI = .81). A few of the standardized factor loadings only moderately met the criteria, but this is expected based on the large number of factors (22) included in the model. As a whole, the standardized factor loadings of each item were adequate according to the ≥ .50 criteria recommended by Hair et al. (2006). The χ^2 was statistically significant, but it is well known that the χ^2 test is sensitive to large sample size and a large number of indicator variables; therefore, other fit indices should be examined to determine model fit (Hair et al., 2006). The model's χ^2/df ratio was deemed acceptable based on Kline's (2011) recommendation that the value should be ≤ 5. The TLI, CFI, and RNI indices were moderately acceptable according to the cutoff minimum .90 as recommended by Hu and Bentler (1999). The RMSEA was adequate according to the recommended ≤.06 cutoff point and the SRMR was adequate according to the recommended ≤ .08 cutoff point (Hu & Bentler, 1999). Overall, the fit indices indicated that the model had reasonable good fit based because the fit indices of complex models often do not meet the standard cutoff criteria (Kline, 2011).

In addition to the fit indices, the AVE scores (range = .527 to .905) for each of the 22

latent variables exceeded the ≥ .50 criteria set forth by Fornell and Larcker (1981) which

indicated convergent validity. Moreover, as a whole, the AVE values were greater than the

square correlation, except for a few, between each of the latent variables which provided

evidence of discriminant validity meaning that each construct is distinct from the other

constructs in the model (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). Lastly, the construct reliability (range =

.800 to .977) of the latent variables in the model exceeded the ≥.70 criteria recommended by

Fornell and Larcker (1981).

When CFA was conducted on the holdout sample, a similar reasonable model fit was the

result. The standardized factor loadings as a whole met the criteria Fornell and Larcker (1981)

criteria and ranged from .475 to .974. The fit indices indicated reasonable model fit (χ^2 =

5801.349, p < .001; χ^2/df = 2.04; RMSEA = .085, 90% CI = .082-.088; SRMR = .075; TLI = .79;

CFI = .81; and RNI = .81) with similar but expected poor results of the χ^2 test based on the large

sample size (Hair et al., 2006). The AVE scores (range = .537 to .875) exceeded the criteria

(Fornell & Larcker, 1981) for the holdout sample which displays evidence of convergent validity

with the 22 latent variables. The discriminant validity was also evident based on the AVE values

being greater than the squared correlations between all the latent variables (Fornell & Larcker,

1981). Lastly, construct reliability values (range = .780 to .972) exceeded the recommended

criteria (Fornell & Larcker, 1981) which indicated the model was reliable as well for the holdout

sample. Based on the analyses of these two samples, the model has been cross-validated, pending

further validation with more diverse samples. In addition, this cross-validation method is a loose

cross-validation (Hair et al., 2006), hence, it is suggested that a multi-group invariance test be

conducted for a more rigorous cross-validation (Hair et al., 2006).

Participants (Main Study 1)

This study was conducted on professional sport events (i.e., MLB, NBA, and NFL) in a large metropolitan city in the southeast region of the United States. A convenience sample was used, and the target population for the study included past consumers of professional sporting events. From the sample, 56.2% were male and 43.8% were female. Nearly 71.1% of the participants were between 18 and 27 years old, followed by 15.6% were between 28 and 37. The sample included White/Caucasians (75.8%), followed by Black/African American (12.2%), Asian (5.2%), and Spanish/Latino/Hispanic (3.1%). Additionally, 93.8% of the participants were individual ticket holders and 6.2% were season ticket holders. The survey included a screening question, "For which sport team have you attended a game?" and the prospective participants had the option to select one of three local professional teams listed. The participants who had attended one of the professional sport teams' games were invited to participate in the survey, and those who had never attended a professional sport event for one of those particular teams in the metropolitan area were excluded from the study. Participants were recruited in tailgating areas immediately outside the sport facility before games, on social media pages, and on sport team blogs. In addition, the local university students, faculty, and staff were invited to participate in the study. The university students are often sampled in marketing research because they are significant consumers of intercollegiate sports and a critical market segment (Masteralexis et al., 2011). The participants were required to be 18 years of age or older as discussed in the informational letter and their participation in the study was voluntary.

Data Collection Procedures

After receiving approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB), the data were collected using face-to-face self-administered surveys and online self-administered surveys. This

mixed-mode has been shown to decrease the effects and biases of each particular mode used, as well as reducing the resources used (Groves et al., 2009). The face-to-face participants were recruited by attending tailgates outside of professional sporting events (i.e., MLB, NBA, and NFL) in a large metropolitan city within the southeast region of the United States, as well as in sport management and physical activity classes at the university near the metropolitan area. The respondents were given the purpose of the study and an informational letter to read. Once they agreed to the informational letter, they were given the survey to complete. The online survey participants (i.e., consumers of the professional sport team) were recruited via email invitations, social media postings, and sport team blogs that included a link to the online survey site. The emails were sent via listservs available through the local university. Before completing the online survey, the participants were given the purpose of the study and an informational letter. They agreed to participate by clicking on the link to enter the online questionnaire. The participation in this study was voluntary, and there was no compensation for participation in the study.

The survey included a screening question, "For which sport team have you attended a game?" with the option to select one of three local professional teams. The participants who had attended a game for one of the professional sport teams were invited to participate in the survey, and those who had not attended a game for any of teams in that particular metropolitan area were excluded from the study. The participants recruited were asked to respond to all of the survey items based on their thoughts and feelings towards the professional sport team (i.e., baseball, basketball, football) for which they have attended. This method allowed for more generalizability of brand love across different types of professional sports.

Instrument

The modified version of the questionnaire that was produced through the pilot study was used. In this questionnaire, 12 constructs were used to measure the dimensions of sport brand love, four constructs were employed to measure the antecedents of sport brand love, and six constructs were used to measure the consequences of sport brand love. All the measures have been adapted from the existing scales (Batra et al., 2012; Burnham et al., 2003; Cunningham & Kwon, 2003; Heere & Dickson, 2008; Kwon & Armstrong, 2004; Netemeyer et al., 2004; Swanson et al., 2003).

Sport brand love dimensions. Items used to measure brand love in Albert et al. (2008), Batra et al. (2012), and Carroll and Ahuvia's (2006) studies were adapted to measure 11 of the dimensions of sport brand love: Current Self-Identity (5 items), Life Meaning and Intrinsic Rewards (2 items), Brand Prominence (4 items), Past Involvement (2 items), Intuitive Fit (5 items), Emotional Attachment (2 items), Positive Affect (2 items), Long-term Relationship (3 items), Anticipated Separation Distress (4 items), Attitude Valence (3 items), and Attitude Strength (4 items). Batra et al.'s (2012) dimensions were deemed to have acceptable psychometric properties: > .60 average variance extracted (AVE) levels which are considered adequate and > .70 composite construct reliability levels are considered acceptable according to the standards set forth by Fornell and Larcker (1981). The item response format for all of the above measures used a 7-point scale with 1 = *not at all* and 7 = *very much*. In addition, the one added sport specific dimensions was measured using four Team Identification items from Kwon and Armstrong's (2004) which displayed acceptable reliability (Cronbach's α >.84) (Nunnally & Berstein, 1994). The item response format for this measures used a 7-point Likert-type scale with 1 = *strongly disagree* and 7 = *strongly agree* (See Appendix A for complete list of items).

Antecedents. Additional antecedents were included in the sport brand love model because previous studies (e.g., Batra et al., 2012) were conducted on traditional products, and those models did not take into account the unique aspects of the sport product. Additionally, the pilot study and further theoretical reexaminations provided evidence that Team Nostalgia was an antecedent to sport brand love instead of a dimension. Items were adopted from various sources to measure these antecedents. To measure the participants' perceptions of the brand's high quality, a modified version of Netemeyer et al.'s (2004) four Perceived Quality items that were developed as part of the core facets of customer-based brand equity (CBBE) were used. For these items, evidence of reliability (Cronbach's α >.90) and validity (AVE >.64) was found. Fan reference was measured by utilizing Cunningham and Kwon's (2003) three subjective norms items that are part of their theory of planned behavior. These items were found to have acceptable reliability (Cronbach's α >.78 and bivariate correlations ranging from .63 to .82. Three reliable (Cronbach's α > .90) and valid (AVE > .68) items were taken from Netemeyer et al. and modified to measure the Team Uniqueness. To measure Team Nostalgia, three items from Gladden and Funk (2002) were adopted, and those items were also deemed to have acceptable psychometric properties: (Cronbach's α >.84) and AVE was above the acceptable standard (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). The item response format for all of the above measures used a 7-point Likert-type scale with 1 = *strongly disagree* and 7 = *strongly agree* (See Appendix A for complete list of items).

Consequences. A combination of measures from several sources was used to measure the consequences of sport brand love. The Switching Intention measure included Burnham et al.'s (2003) 5-point Likert-type scale item (1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*) and a 5-point percentage response item (1 = *0% chance* to 5 = *100% chance*). These two items were

deemed valid and reliable (Burnham et al., 2003), and the items were modified according to the sport context. Positive WOM was measured using one modified item from Alexandris et al. (2007) and two items from Swanson et al. (2003). The researchers reported acceptable reliability and validity for the three items. To measure Loyalty, four items from Heere and Dickson's (2008) attitudinal loyalty scale and one item from Trail et al.'s (2005) conative loyalty scale were used. These four items had good psychometric properties and were deemed to have appropriate reliability (Cronbach's $\alpha > .84$) and validity (AVE = .59). The item response format for Positive WOM and Loyalty used a 7-point Likert-type scale with 1 = strongly disagree and 7 = strongly agree. Willingness to Pay Higher Prices was measured using three modified items from Netemeyer et al. (2004) who reported evidence of reliability (Cronbach's $\alpha > .84$) and validity (AVE > .61) for these measures. Three of the items used a 7-point Liker-type scale with 1 = strongly disagree and 7 = strongly agree and one item with 1 = 0% to 7= 30% more. To measure Willingness to Invest Resources (4 items) and Passionate Desire to Use (3 items), Batra et al.'s (2012) brand love items were utilized. The dimensions were deemed to have acceptable psychometric properties: > .60 average variance extracted (AVE) levels which are considered adequately high according to the standards set forth by Fornell and Larcker (1981) and composite construct reliability levels > .70 (Hair et al., 2006). The item response format for all of the above measures used a 7-point scale with 1 = *not at all* and 7 = *very much* (See Appendix A for complete list of items).

Socio-demographics. Lastly, demographic information of the participants was also included in the questionnaire, including gender, age, ethnicity, ticket holder type, and gender to examine any consumption patterns according to demographics. The consumer's gender was measured using two nominal variables: male and female. Age was measured using five nominal

age variables, and ethnicity was measured using seven nominal race/ethnicity variables. The ticket holder type was measured with two nominal variables: season ticket holder and individual ticket holder. These socio-demographics were used to examine if there is any generalizability based on the different variables.

Data Analyses

Descriptive statistics specifically mean, standard deviation, and bivariate correlations of the sport brand love variables were calculated, as well as the socio-demographic variables were examined, using procedures available in SPSS 20.0. Then, the randomness of the missing data was examined using Little's MCAR test (Little & Rubin, 2002) and the correlation matrix of the missing values, and the mean-imputation method (Hair et al., 2006) was used to handle the missing values. Following this data check, three assumption tests of the data were conducted before the confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was performed: normality, linearity, and outliers. Graphical plots should always be used first to test for data normality; therefore, the normal probability plots were examined (Hair et al., 2006) because CFA assumes that the data are normally distributed. Then, the skewness and kurtosis of the items were examined to formally test normality of the data, and the threshold utilized were <3 for skewness (Kline, 2011) and <5 for kurtosis which was a conservative values of Kline's (2011) <10 recommendation. A normal probability plot was also the initial test used to determine the outliers in the data. Next, a box plot was performed to test for any existing outlier. Lastly, a CFA assumes that the relationship between the dependent and independent variables is linear; therefore, this was the third assumption test conducted. Linearity was examined by inspecting the scatterplots to show the linear nature of the data. In addition, the plots of standardized residuals against standardized estimates of the dependent variable were examined. If the plots display a random pattern of the

residuals that are relatively equally dispersed around zero, then linearity of the data is assumed (Hair et al., 2006). After the whole data set passed these test, the data were randomly split into a calibration sample and holdout sample. After all three of these assumption tests are passed, Anderson and Gerbing's (1988) recommended two-step structural equation modeling (SEM) approach to test the models was utilized.

In the first step, a CFA on the calibration sample was conducted using Mplus 6.11, and the correlation residuals of each set of latent variable items and standardized factor loadings was reviewed. Then, items were removed based on empirical and theoretical evidence, and the CFA was conducted on each latent variable again to verify the correlations residuals were >.10 (Kline, 2011) and factor loadings were adequate (≥ .50) according to Fornell and Larcker (1981). Then, the measurement model of the sport brand love model for the calibration and holdout samples were assessed. First, the factor loadings were examined and were deemed adequate if they were ≥ .50 (Hair et al., 2006), and then the goodness of model fit was examined using seven different indices: chi-square test, chi-square/*df*, Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI), Comparative Fit Index (CFI), Relative Non-centrality Index (RNI), Root Mean Square Error of approximation (RMSEA), and Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR). The chi-square fit index was examined first, and if the chi-square test is not significant, then the null hypothesis that the model fits the data is not rejected, indicating adequate fit. Then, the chi-square/*df* ratio was examined, and Kline's (2011) recommendation that any ratio larger than five indicates an inadequate fit was used. The TLI, CFI, and RNI indices were used to further examine adequate fit, and the cutoff was .90 as a minimum and .95 for ideal fit as recommended by Hu and Bentler (1999). RMSEA was used with a cutoff point ≤.06 and SRMR with a cutoff point ≤ .08 (Hu & Bentler, 1999).

After the model fit was determine, the reliability of the constructs were evaluated using composite reliability (Joreskog, 1971) with acceptable levels being .70 or higher based on criteria set forth by Hair et al. (2006), instead of the commonly used Cronbach's α that has been shown to over- or underestimate scale reliability (Raykov, 1997). The convergent validity of the constructs were assessed by examining the factor loadings with a minimum of ≥ .50 being acceptable and indicative of validity (Hair et al., 2006), and using the average variance extracted (AVE) which is adequate when it is ≥ .50 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Discriminant validity was examined by comparing the AVE of a given construct with the squared correlations between that construct and all other latent variables (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). If the AVE values are greater, then there is an indication of discriminant validity which means that each construct is distinct from the other constructs in the model. Before analyzing the structural model of the two samples, a multi-sample CFA was conducted on the calibration and hold-out sample to cross-validate the measurement models by conducting two measurement invariance tests: configural invariance and construct-level metric invariance (Kline, 2011). In the configural invariance test, or equal form invariance, if there is good model fit according to the standards set by Kline (2011) and Hu and Bentler (1980), then it means that the same constructs are manifested in similar ways within the two groups. For the construct-level metric invariance test, or equal factor loadings test, if there is favorable fit indices and if the chi-square difference test is not statistically significant ($p > .05$), then it means the unstandardized factor loadings of each indicator are equal across groups (Hair et al., 2006).In the second step of Anderson and Gerbing's (1988) approach, a path analysis for both the calibration and holdout samples was conducted to assess the structural model and test the hypotheses. Before examining the direct effect path coefficients between the antecedents and sport brand love, as well as between sport brand love and the consequences, the p-values for each

path in the model was examined for statistical significance. If the path coefficient is statistically significant, then there is a direct effect and the path coefficient must then be examined to determine the magnitude and direction of the effect. Then, the total effects of the antecedents on the consequences were calculated. The p-value for the path coefficient was first examined, and the statistically significant values were used to determine the magnitude and direction of the total direct effect. The predictive validity of the model was suggested through this direct effect path analysis because it predicts whether or not sport brand love can predict the consequences.

Then, the indirect effect the antecedents have on the consequences through sport brand love was examined. Again, the p-value of the path coefficients for the direct effect between the antecedent and sport brand love, as well as between sport brand love and the consequence must be examined. If both of the path coefficients are statistically significant, then that means there is an indirect effect of the antecedent on the consequence through sport brand love (Baron & Kenny, 1986). To calculate the indirect effect, the product of the path coefficients for the two direct effects was calculated (Baron & Kenny, 1986). These direct effect path coefficients were examined individually for all the indirect effects between each antecedent and consequences through sport brand love. Next, the remaining direct effect the antecedents have the consequences was calculated by subtracting the indirect effect from the total effect calculated above. If the value is zero, then that means sport brand love has a full mediation between the antecedents and consequences (Hair et al., 2006). Otherwise, it may mean that sport brand love only has a partial mediation between the antecedents and consequences (Hair et al, 2006). However, to statistically test the mediation, the statistical significance of the indirect effect must be examined.

The bootstrapping method was utilized to test the statistical significance of the mediating effect because the Sobel test makes unrealistic assumptions about the normality of the sampling distribution of the indirect effect, and bootstrapping has higher power while maintaining reasonable control over the Type I error (Preacher & Hayes, 2008). Bootstrapping method involves a large number of repeated sampling (i.e., 1,000+) from the data set and estimating the indirect effect for each of the resampled data sets. This allows for an empirical approximation of the product of the two indirect effects for each resampling which is used to construct confidence intervals for the indirect effect (Preacher & Hayes, 2008). If zero is not inside of the 95% confidence interval, it was concluded that the indirect effect is significantly different from zero at $p < .05$. This means the product of the indirect effects is statistically significant and represents the magnitude and direction of the mediating effect of sport brand love.

Following the determination of the mediation effect of sport brand love on the calibration and holdout sample, a multi-group SEM was conducted on the pooled sample ($N = 635$) to determine if any differences exist for the three different teams (i.e., MLB, NBA, and NFL) based on the antecedents, dimensions, and consequences of sport brand love. Prior to conducting the multi-group SEM, the measurement model fit of the pooled sample was examined with a CFA, and reliability and validity were determined. The model fit of the measurement model was evaluated based on the factor loadings being $\geq .50$ (Hair et al., 2006) and the seven fit indices meeting the χ^2 criteria recommended by Kline (2011) and the RMSEA, SRMR, TLI, CFI, and RNI cutoff criteria set forth by Hu and Bentler (1999). The convergent validity of the model was determined based on the AVE values being $\geq .50$, and discriminant validity was determined when the AVE values exceeded the squared correlations of the latent variables (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). The construct reliability of the model was determined when the CR values exceeded the

≥.70 criteria recommended by Fornell and Larcker (1981. Then, the structural model fit was determined by conducting a path analysis. Finally, the path coefficients of the three teams were estimated, the team differences were determined based on the path coefficients of the structural model and the statistical significance of each coefficient ($p < .05$) for each of the professional teams.

Results

The data were check by examining the descriptive statistics specifically mean, standard deviation, and bivariate correlations of the sport brand love variables, as well as the socio-demographic variables. Descriptive statistics for the perceived high quality variables revealed that 4 out of 4 items had a mean score greater than 4.0 (i.e., the midpoint on the 7-point scale), indicating that overall, the consumers perceived the team for which they had attended a game was high quality. Descriptive statistics for the fan reference variables revealed that 3 out of 3 items had a mean score greater than 4.0 (i.e., the midpoint on the 7-point scale), indicating that overall, the consumers agreed that a fan reference existed when it came to consuming the team. Descriptive statistics for the team uniqueness variables revealed that 3 out of 3 items had a mean score greater than 4.0 (i.e., the midpoint on the 7-point scale), indicating that overall, the consumers agreed the team was unique. Descriptive statistics for the team nostalgia variables revealed that 3 out of 3 items had a mean score greater than 4.0 (i.e., the midpoint on the 7-point scale), indicating that overall, the consumers agreed that they felt nostalgia towards the team. Descriptive statistics for the sport brand love dimensions revealed that half the items had a mean score greater than 4.0 (i.e., the midpoint on the 7-point scale), indicating that overall, the consumers did not agreed they felt sport brand love towards the team.

Descriptive statistics for the positive WOM variables revealed that 3 out of 3 items had a mean score greater than 4.0 (i.e., the midpoint on the 7-point scale), indicating that overall, the consumers agreed that they share positive WOM about the team in the past. Descriptive statistics for the team loyalty variables revealed that 3 out of 3 items had a mean score greater than 4.0 (i.e., the midpoint on the 7-point scale), indicating that overall, the consumers agreed that they felt loyalty towards the team. Descriptive statistics for the switching intention variables revealed that 2 out of 2 items had a mean score less than 3.0 (i.e., the midpoint on the 5-point scale), indicating that overall, the consumers agreed that they did not intend to switch their fandom to another team. Descriptive statistics for the willingness to invest variables revealed that 0 out of 4 items had a mean score greater than 4.0 (i.e., the midpoint on the 7-point scale), indicating that overall, the consumers did not agree that they were willing to invest resources (i.e., time, money, and energy) into the team. Descriptive statistics for the willingness to pay higher prices variables revealed that 2 out of 3 items had a mean score greater than 4.0 (i.e., the midpoint on the 7-point scale), indicating that overall, the consumers agreed that they were willingness to pay higher prices to consume the team. Descriptive statistics for the passionate desire to consume revealed that 0 out of 3 items had a mean score greater than 4.0 (i.e., the midpoint on the 7-point scale), indicating that overall, the consumers did not agree that they had the passionate desire to consume the team.

There were missing values, and the Little's MCAR test (Kline, 2011) was statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 1635.79$; $p > .05$) providing evidence that the values were missing completely at random. Nearly all of the items that had missing data consisted of information related to the monetary investments of the participants which can often be deemed as sensitive information (Hair et al., 2006). Additionally, according to Kline (2011), a few missing values (< 5%) on a

single variable in a large sample is not of minimal concern. The percentage of variables with missing data for each case was < 5% and the number of cases with missing data for each variable was no more than four. To impute the missing values, the mean substitution method was utilized because this method is best used when there are relatively low levels of missing data and a relatively strong relationship exists among the variables (Hair et al., 2006).

After the missing data was imputed, the three CFA assumption tests for the complete data set were conducted to check the normality and linearity of the data, as well as, identify and remove any outliers necessary. To examine that data normality, graphical plots should always be used first; therefore, the data appeared to be normally distributed based on the normal probability plots (Hair et al., 2006). For all of the items, except one, the skewness and kurtosis values were within the conservative skewness (±2) and kurtosis (±5) thresholds, indicating normality of the data. While one of the "Fan Reference" variable's kurtosis (6.330) was not within the ±5 conservative threshold of kurtosis, it was still within the frequently accepted ±10 threshold recommended by Kline (2011). To identify the multivariate outliers, the box plots of the variables were first examined (Hair et al., 2006) and then Mahalanobis D^2 values were calculated for each case. As recommended by Kline (2011), the D^2 values that were statistically significant ($p < .001$) were removed from the data which resulted in 85 cases being removed. The third assumption test was passed when the data was determined to be linear based on the scatterplots of the all variables and the plots of standardized residuals against standardized estimates of the dependent variable were examined. The plots displayed a random pattern of the residuals meaning the data are relatively equally dispersed around zero, and linearity of the data was assumed (Hair et al., 2006). After the whole data set passed these assumption tests, the data were randomly split into a calibration sample ($n = 318$) and holdout sample ($n = 317$) and Anderson

and Gerbing's (1988) recommended two-step structural equation modeling (SEM) approach was used to test the models.

Through the first step of the CFA on the calibration sample, the correlations residuals >.10 for each latent variable were examined because Kline (2011) suggests anything over that value means that the model does not explain the corresponding sample correlation well. The items with the large error variance were removed based on both empirical and theoretical evidence which resulted in a total of 9 items being removed. Then, the fit of the whole model was examined and there was evidence of factor loadings and fit indices that indicated good model fit based on the complexity of the model. The standardized factor loadings for the 13 first-order latent factors onto the second-order "Sport Brand Love" latent factor ranged from .709 to .991 and were adequate ($\geq$ .50) according to Hair et al. (2006). The factor loadings for the sport brand love antecedents (range = .714 to .956) and consequences (range = .613 to .971) were also adequate ($\geq$ .50) according to Hair et al., (2006). The χ^2 was statistically significant (χ^2 = 4361.865, p = < .001), but it is well known that the χ^2 test is sensitive to sample size and a large number of indicator variables; therefore, other fit indices must be examined to better determine model fit (Hair et al., 2006). The model's χ^2/df ratio (2.39) was deemed acceptable based on Kline's (2011) recommendation that the value should be $\leq$ 5. The TLI (.89), CFI (.89), and RNI (.89) indices were reasonably acceptable according to the cutoff minimum .90 as recommended by Hu and Bentler (1999). The RMSEA (.066, 90% CI = .064-.069) was adequate according to the recommended $\leq$ .06 cutoff point and the SRMR (.066) was adequate according to the recommended $\leq$ .08 cutoff point (Hu & Bentler, 1999). It is well know that complex models do not always meet the standard cutoff values (Kline, 2011), but based on the values reported by these fit indices, the model has good fit. In addition to the fit indices, the construct reliability

(range = .74 to .98) of the latent variables in the model exceeded the ≥.70 criteria recommended by Fornell and Larcker (1981) as well. Moreover, the AVE scores (range = .58 to .90) for each of the 23 latent variables exceeded the ≥ .50 criteria set forth by Fornell and Larcker (1981) which indicated convergent validity (See Table 3.1). For discriminant validity, the AVE values were greater than the squared correlation between each of the latent variables, except for a few. Therefore, any set of latent variables that did not meet the standard recommended by (Fornell & Larcker, 1981) and had an intercorrelation above .85 were examined which resulted in two alternative models. The fit of the first alternative model (χ^2 = 4411.876, p < .001; χ^2/df = 2.39; RMSEA = .066, 90% CI = .064-.069; SRMR = .067; TLI = .89; CFI = .89; and RNI = .89) and second alternative model (χ^2 = 5403.324, p < .001; χ^2/df = 2.43; RMSEA = .067, 90% CI = .065-.070; SRMR = .069; TLI = .88; CFI = .89; and RNI = .89) were reasonably acceptable as well. Therefore, a chi-square difference test was conducted to determine which model had the better fit (Kline, 2011). The chi-square difference tests were statistically significant (< .05) for both alternative models, so the original model was retained based on Kline's (2011) recommendation that the smaller chi-square and additional paths of that model indicate better fit (see Table 3.1).

The CFA conducted on the holdout sample also reported acceptable standardized factor loadings (range = .707 to .965) for the 13 first-order latent factors on the second-order "Sport Brand Love" latent factor, the sport brand love antecedents (range = .733 to .940), and the consequences (range = .687 to .979) according to the ≥ .50 criteria set forth by Hair et al. (2006). Additionally, the seven fit indices that were obtained indicated good model fit. The χ^2 was statistically significant (χ^2 = 4195.893, p < .001) for the holdout sample as well, but the χ^2 test is sensitive to large sample sizes and when a large number of indicator variables exist in a model;

therefore, the other fit indices were used to determine model fit (Hair et al., 2006). The holdout

model's χ^2/df ratio (2.30) was within Kline's (2011) recommendation that the value should be $\leq$

5. The TLI (.89), CFI (.90), and RNI (.90) indices were reasonably acceptable according to the

cutoff minimum .90 as recommended by Hu and Bentler (1999), and the RMSEA (.064, 90% CI

= .062-.067) and SRMR (.063) were adequate according to the recommended cutoff criteria

setforth by Hu and Bentler (1999), $\leq$.06 and $\leq$ .08, respectively. Complex models do not always

meet the standard cutoff values, but these values indicate good model fit taking into

consideration the complexity of the model (Kline, 2011). Furthermore, the holdout model had

convergent validity based on the AVE scores (range = .59 to .91) for each of the 23 latent

variables exceeding the $\geq$ .50 criteria set forth by Fornell and Larcker (1981). There was also

evidence of discriminant validity because the AVE values were greater than the squared

correlation, except for one, between each of the latent variables (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). As

for construct reliability (range = .74 to .98) of the latent variables in the model, they exceeded the

$\geq$.70 criteria recommended by Fornell and Larcker (1981) (see Table 3.2). The multi-sample

CFA conducted on the calibration and hold-out sample successfully cross-validated the two

samples. More specifically, the configural invariance test reported evidence of reasonably good

model fit on all the fit indices, except χ^2 (χ^2 = 8573.247, p = < .001; χ^2/df = 2.33; RMSEA = .065,

90% CI = .063-.066; SRMR = .065; TLI = .89; CFI = .90; and RNI = .90), meaning that there is

evidence that the same constructs are manifested in similar ways within the two groups (Kline,

2011). The metric invariance test also provided evidence of reasonable fit indices (χ^2 =

9067.686, p <.001; χ^2/df = 2.41; RMSEA = .067, 90% CI = .065-.068; SRMR = .072; TLI = .88;

CFI = .89; and RNI = .89), and the chi-square difference test of the configural invariance and

metric invariance was not statistically significant ($\Delta\chi^2 = 494.439$, $df = 74$; $p > .05$) providing

evidence that the two groups were not different (Hair et al., 2006).

Following the cross-validation of the two samples, the path analysis of the calibration

model was conducted. The structural model's goodness of fit was evaluated prior to estimating

the coefficients. The overall model fit was reasonably good ($\chi^2 = 4593.523$, $p < .001$; $\chi^2/df = 2.49$;

RMSEA = .068, 90% CI = .066-.071; SRMR = .078; TLI = .88; CFI = .89; and RNI = .89).

Based on the results of the sport brand love antecedents, there is evidence that "Perceived High

Quality" ($p < .001$), "Team Uniqueness" ($p < .001$), and "Nostalgia" ($p < .001$) are all

antecedents to "Sport Brand Love" because the path coefficients were statistically significant (p

$< .05$), and this provides evidence that H1 and H3 are supported, as well as the re-hypothesis of

the "Nostalgia" construct in the pilot study. However, there was no evidence that "Fan

Reference" ($p > .05$) was an antecedent to "Sport Brand Love" because the path coefficient was

not statistically significant; therefore, there is no evidence that H2 is supported. For the

consequences, there is evidence that all six of the hypothesized factors are consequences of sport

brand love based on the statistical significance of the path coefficients ($p < .05$). These results

provide evidence that H4-H9 are supported, and this includes support for the hypothesized

negative relationship between "Sport Brand Love" and "Switching Intention." For the holdout

sample, the overall model fit was reasonably good ($\chi^2 = 4408.851$, $p < .001$; $\chi^2/df = 2.39$; RMSEA

= .068, 90% CI = .066-.071; SRMR = .078; TLI = .88; CFI = .89; and RNI = .89) as well (See

Table 1.3). Based on the results of the sport brand love antecedents, there is evidence that "Team

Uniqueness" ($p < .001$) and "Nostalgia" ($p < .001$) are antecedents to "Sport Brand Love"

because the path coefficients were statistically significant ($p < .05$), and this provides evidence

that H3 is supported, as well as the re-hypothesis of the "Nostalgia" construct in the pilot study.

However, there was no evidence that "Perceived High Quality" ($p > .05$) and "Fan Reference" ($p > .05$) were antecedents to "Sport Brand Love" because the path coefficient were not statistically significant. Therefore, in the holdout sample, there is no evidence that H1 and H2 is supported. Overall, the hypothesized structural models explained a total of approximately 62% of the variance of sport brand love. For the consequences, there is evidence that all six of the hypothesized factors are consequences of sport brand love based on the statistical significance of the path coefficients ($p < .05$). These results provide evidence that H4-H9 are supported in the holdout sample, and this includes support for the hypothesized negative relationship between "Sport Brand Love" and "Switching Intention" (see Table 3.4). Overall, the hypothesized structural models explained a total of approximately 40% of the variance in positive WOM, 51% of team loyalty, 43% of consumer's switching intentions, 90% of the variance in willingness to invest resources, 50% of the variance in the willingness to pay higher prices, and 85% of the consumer's passionate desire to consume.

To test the mediation effect sport brand love has between the antecedents and consequences, the total effects and indirect effects were calculated for each pairing of antecedents and consequences. In the calibration sample, the total effects for all the relationships between the antecedents and consequences were statistically significant ($p < .05$), except for the total effect of "Fan Reference" on all the consequences. The direct effects between the antecedents and sport brand love, as well as, between sport brand love and the consequences were statistically significant ($p < .05$) for all pairings, except the direct effect of "Fan Reference" on "Sport Brand Love." The indirect effects of all the statistically significant direct effects were calculated by multiplying the path coefficients for each antecedent and consequence set of variables. When the indirect effect was subtracted from the total effect for each pairing, the result

was zero which suggests that sport brand love fully mediates the relationship between each statistically significant antecedent and consequence in the calibration sample. Furthermore, when the mediation was statistically tested using the bootstrapping method, there was evidence that mediation of "Sport Brand Love" was statistically significant because zero did not fall inside the 95% confidence interval for any of the antecedent and consequence relationships which indicates that the indirect effect was statistically different from zero at p < .05.

For the holdout sample, the total effects for two of the relationships between the antecedents and consequences were statistically significant ($p < .05$): "Team Uniqueness" and "Team Nostalgia". The direct effects between the antecedents and sport brand love, as well as, between sport brand love and the consequences were statistically significant ($p < .05$) for all pairings, except the direct effect of "Perceived High Quality" and "Fan Reference" on "Sport Brand Love." The indirect effects of all the statistically significant direct effects were calculated by multiplying the path coefficients for each antecedent and consequence set of variables (see Table 3.5). When the indirect effect was subtracted from the total effect for each pairing, the result was zero which suggests that sport brand love fully mediates the relationship between each statistically significant antecedent and consequence in the holdout sample. Furthermore, when the mediation was statistically tested using the bootstrapping method, there was evidence that the mediation of "Sport Brand Love" was statistically significant for "Team Nostalgia" because zero did not fall inside the 95% confidence interval for any of the consequence which indicates that the indirect effect was statistically different from zero at $p < .05$. However, zero did fall inside the 95% confidence interval for indirect effect of "Team Uniqueness" and all of the consequences which means that the mediation effect of "Sport Brand Love" was not statistically significant (see Table 3.6).

Following the determination of the sport brand love mediation effects, a multi-group SEM was conducted using the pooled data to determine if differences exist between the three teams: MLB ($N = 385$), NBA ($N = 68$), and NFL ($N = 179$). First, the fit of the measurement model of the pooled sample was determined to have reasonably good fit based on the factor loadings (range = .687-.979) being ≥.50 (Hair et al., 2006) and the fit indices ($\chi^2 = 6461.045$, $p <$ .001; $\chi^2/df = 3.54$; RMSEA = .063, 90% CI = .062-.065; SRMR = .063; TLI = .89; CFI = .90; and RNI = .90). Prior to estimating the path coefficients, the fit of the structural model for the pooled sample was determined, as well as convergent validity (AVE = .600 to .907), discriminant validity, and construct reliability (range = .756 to .965), before the path coefficients of the three teams were estimated. The model fit was reasonable based on the factor loadings of the 13 first-order factors on the "Sport Brand Love" second-order factor (CR = .826 to .979), the sport brand love antecedents (range = .730 to .928), and the consequences (range = .698 to .967) according to the ≥ .50 criteria set forth by Hair et al. (2006). In addition, the fit indices reported that there was a reasonably good model fit for the structural model of the pooled sample ($\chi^2 = 6890.078$, $p < .001$; $\chi^2/df = 2.73$; RMSEA = .066, 90% CI = .064-.067; SRMR = .073; TLI = .89; CFI = .89; and RNI = .89). Then, the statistical significance ($p < .05$) of each path coefficients for the three teams (i.e., MLB, NBA, and NFL) was determined to examine if differences of the path analyses exist between sport teams. The results indicated that there is a difference for the antecedents to sport brand love. In the NBA and NFL group, "Team Nostalgia" was the only antecedent that was statistically significant ($p < .05$). For the MLB group, "Perceived High Quality," "Team Uniqueness," and "Team Nostalgia" were all statistically significant ($p < .05$) antecedents. "Fan Reference" was not statistically significant (> .05) for any of the three team

teams. For the consequences, the six consequences of sport brand love were statistically significant ($p < .05$) for all three team (see Table 3.7).

Discussion

Within the past decade general marketing researchers have begun to realize the importance of understanding the love consumer's feel towards brands (Albert et al., 2008; Batra et al., 2012; Caroll & Ahuvia, 2006), and more recently sport marketers have recognized the importance of understand this brand love in the sport context considering the uniqueness of sport products and consumers (Tavormina et al. 2012). Based on previous research, Tavormina et al. (2012) developed the sport brand love model that takes into account the distinct nature of sport and its consumers compared to traditional products; however, the researchers did not empirically test the model ensure sound psychometric properties. The current study was designed to fill the current void by empirically examining the sport brand model, including its dimensions, antecedents, and consequences.

Following Anderson and Gerbing's (1988) recommended two-step approach, this study tested the measurement model and then the structural model of both a calibration and holdout sample, and the results indicated that all the models had reasonably good fit and were shown to possess good psychometric properties overall. Furthermore, the CFA of the calibration and holdout sample successfully cross-validated based on metric invariance results. The proposed structural model was based on various brand love models (Albert et al., 2008; Batra et al., 2012; Bergkvist & Bech-Laresen, 2010; Caroll & Ahuvia, 2006), general marketing studies on consumer behavior (Netemeyer et al., 2004), and previous sport marketing research that has examined the attachments and behaviors of sport consumers (Alexandris et al., 2007; Cunningham & Kwon, 2003; Gladden & Funk, 2002; Heere & Dickson, 2008; Kwon &

Armstrong, 2004; Swanson et al., 2007; Trail et al., 2005). The results suggest that the proposed

sport brand love model could be considered a good approach to assess some of the antecedents

that help form consumers' sport brand love which in turn can predict the post-consumption

behaviors of sport consumers. To test the proposed measurements between the first-order factors

and the second-order sport factor of sport brand love, a CFA was conducted. The results

provided evidence most of the sport brand love first-order factors did successfully make up the

sport brand love second-order factor, and the antecedent and consequence items successfully

represented the respective constructs; however, the results indicated that a few of the first-order

factors posed some concerns that needed to be addressed. It was important to address these

concerns because Hair et al. (2006) have strongly suggested that a researcher cannot understand

the true meaning of a construct without good measurement, and a valid measurement model is

crucial. Therefore, three of the first-order factors were further examined which was not

unexpected based on the complexity of the sport brand love model.

First, based on both statistical results and further theoretical examination, there was

evidence that current self-identity and desired self-identity were not considered two distinct

constructs. Therefore, the desired self-identity construct was removed from the sport brand love

dimensions. Secondly, originally, Batra et al. (2012) statistically found that emotional attachment

and positive affect were two distinct constructs, but these two constructs were combined into one

construct in this study based on findings that emotional attachments are related to positive

emotions (Fehr & Russell, 1991). However, there was statistical evidence that the two constructs

were indeed different in relation to brand love as found by Batra et al. (2012); therefore,

emotional attachment and positive affect were separate into two constructs. Thirdly, team

nostalgia was theorized as a dimension of brand love according to Albert et al. (2008); therefore,

it was first theorized as a dimension of sport brand love. However, it did not represent sport brand love as a dimension based on statistical evidence and further theoretical investigation that nostalgia is instead an antecedent to sport brand love, much like it is an antecedent to brand allegiance (Funk & James, 2006). After these three constructs were reanalyzed, the statistical results indicated the sport brand love first-order factors did successfully make up the sport brand love second-order factor, and it was a valid measurement model.

Based on this, it can be concluded that this higher-order, multi-dimensional approach in the current study can help researchers explain sport consumers' attachments to sports better than previously established constructs (i.e., team identification and emotional attachment). More specifically, the model is more comprehensive than previous constructs because it is inclusive of the sport attachment related constructs as well as numerous other constructs. The higher-order, multi-dimensional approach would also increase the practical implications because the findings have provided practitioners with information that will enable them to gain a better understanding of what dimensions make up sport brand love, what factors contribute to the formation of sport brand love, and the outcomes of sport brand love. This would allow sport marketers to develop a more strategic marketing plan according to the dimensions, antecedents, and consequences of sport brand love.

The path relationships of the sport brand love model were analyzed by testing multiple hypotheses through conducting an SEM. However, even though the measurement models of the calibration and holdout sample were cross-validated, the results of the path analyses for the two samples were the same for the sport brand love consequences but different for the antecedents. For the consequences, positive WOM, team loyalty, willingness to invest resources, willingness to pay higher prices, and passionate desire to consume were found to be positively influenced by

the consumers' sport brand love as hypothesized, and this was consistent with previous related studies (Alexandris et al., 2007; Batra et al., 2012; Gladden & Funk, 2002; Heere & Dickson, 2008; Kwon & Armstrong, 2004; Swanson et al., 2007; Trail et al., 2005), and the consumers' switching intentions decreased as their sport brand love increased as hypothesized which was also consistent with previous research (Burnham et al., 2003). Furthermore, there was evidence that sport brand love predicted a favorable amount of the variance for these six dependent variables. More specifically, sport brand love explained a considerable amount of the variance of consumers' willingness to invest resources (91%) and passionate desire to use (85%),which shows that sport brand love can have a significant impact on consumption behaviors. Moreover, sport brand love explained a fair amount of the variance in sport consumers' positive WOM (40%) and team loyalty (51%), meaning that sport brand love can have a fairly significant impact on the desirable post-consumption behaviors. Lastly, sport brand love explained 42% of the variance in consumers' switching intentions which means that securing a consumer's brand love would fairly decrease their intentions to become a fan of an opposing team.

However, the results of the antecedents are most crucial for sport marketers because these are the factors that explain how or why this sport brand love is formed. For the antecedents, team uniqueness was a statistically significant antecedent for both samples as this study hypothesized which supported previous research (Albert, 2008; Keller, 1993; Netemeyer et al., 2004). In addition, team nostalgia was a statistically significant antecedent for both samples as re-hypothesized and provides support for the previous studies on nostalgia (Funk & James, 2006). On the other hand, fan reference was not statistically significant for either sample which means that hypothesis was not supported and that the previous research is not supported (Cunningham & Kwon, 2003; Pimentel & Reynolds, 2004). However, the fan reference was adopted from

Cunningham and Kwon's (2003) social norm scale which may not have accurately measured the consumers' fan reference; therefore, future studies need to include new items that better represent the fan reference construct. Furthermore, perceived high quality was a statistically significant antecedent for the calibration sample but not the holdout sample which was not consistent with previous research (Batra et al., 2012; Byon & Baker, 2011).

However, the subsequent path analysis of the individual teams (i.e., MLB, NBA, and NFL) offers an explanation for these differences. Based on the multi-group SEM of the pooled sample, there were differences between the teams. More specifically, perceived high quality, team uniqueness, and team nostalgia were all antecedents of sport brand love for the MLB consumers. For the NBA and NFL consumers, team nostalgia was the only antecedent for the consumers of those two teams. These results are reasonable based on the fact that these two teams have not historically been successful on the field, unlike the MLB team; therefore, consumers would not perceive the team was high quality based on team performance. However, Fisher and Wakefield (1998) found that consumers of unsuccessful teams attach to the teams based on their involvement with the domain (e.g., team) in which the group operates. Therefore, it may have been more appropriate to include item within the perceived high quality scale that referred to the quality of the team based on other attributes such as the players, coaches, stadium, and traditions instead of items that only referred to the quality of the team based on wins and losses only. In addition, the historical success of the team may impact the consumer's perception of the team, including the uniqueness of the team. Otherwise, NFL and NBA consumers may not consider team uniqueness to be an important factor when they become highly attached to the team. Therefore, further research needs to be conducted to better understand these specific results.

These differences between teams may also explain why the mediation effects of sport brand love differed for the calibration and holdout sample as well. For the calibration sample, there was a statistically significant mediation effect of sport brand love between perceived high quality and the six consequences, between team uniqueness and the six consequences, and between nostalgia and the team consequences. However, for the holdout sample, sport brand love only mediated the relationship between team nostalgia and the six consequences. Again, considering the differences that were found between the MLB, NBA, and NFL, it was not unexpected to find the differing results of the mediation effects of sport brand love between the calibration sample and the holdout sample.

The measurement model and structural model of the calibration sample and holdout sample provided evidence that the sport brand love model had overall sound psychometric properties. This was an indication that the first-order factors of sport brand love (i.e., current self-identity, team identification, life meaning/intrinsic rewards, brand prominence, past involvement, intuitive fit, emotional attachment, positive affect, long-term relationship, anticipated separation distress, attitude valence, and attitude strength) do appropriately represent the dimensions of the sport brand love second-order factor. However, in the current study, there was evidence that the sport brand love model is not generalizable across teams. While the consequences for all three teams were found to be consequences of sport brand love, the results indicated that the consumers of the MLB, NBA, and NFL form their sport brand love differently. Regardless of these results, it is evident that sport brand love does exist, and it is a construct more comprehensive than previously established constructs that allows sport researchers to better understand consumers and give sport practitioners the knowledge needed to create more strategic marketing plans for their sport organizations.

Limitations and Future Studies

In this study, a number of limitations have been recognized by the researchers. First, the overall sport brand love for the consumers in this study was low; therefore, this suggests that the participants studies may not have been highly attached to the team for which they completed the survey. Therefore, it may be more appropriate in future studies to allow consumers to identify their favorite team to better understand the formation of sport brand love. It cannot be assumed that attending an event in the past for the team creates any form of attachment for the consumer. Second, this study was conducted in a metropolitan area where sport consumers are significantly more interested in college sports compared to professional sports (Bragg, 2012). Furthermore, two out of the three professional teams used in this study do not have a history of winning so this certainly could have impacted the results. The three teams combined have only won one championship since the mid-1960s when professional sports arrived in the city. Therefore, future studies should include other cities and teams where sport brand love may be prevalent.

Third, this study was only generalizable to the three different major professional leagues (i.e., MLB, NBA, and NFL); therefore, future studies should include measuring participants sport brand love towards other levels of sport such as collegiate sports, minor league sports, and individual sports. Considering the nature of each sport varies, it is important for sport marketers to understand each type of sport within its own context. For example, it cannot be assumed that the sport brand love of football consumers forms the same as for fanatic tennis fan. Fourth, approximately 92% of the participants surveyed were individual game ticket holders; therefore, further research needs to be conducted on more season ticket holders of the team to better understand those consumers' sport brand love. It may be possible that the antecedents and consequences of sport brand love differ for season ticket holders compared to individual game

ticket holders. This knowledge would allow sport marketers to create strategic marketing plans that cater to each group separately.

Fifth, the sport brand love antecedents of the MLB consumers differed from the NBA and NFL consumers; however, additional studies must be conducted on these three teams to validate the current findings. Sixth, this study did not examine any moderating effects that variables such as gender or race may have on antecedents and consequences of sport brand love. Future studies needs to be conducted that examine specific moderating effects on sport brand love so that sport marketers have a better understanding of different market segments. Lastly, some of the items used to represent the antecedents were not inclusive enough of the characteristics associated with the constructs. For example, the items that represented the perceived high quality constructs need to be modified to better represent the perceived quality of other aspects of the team such as the players, coaches, and sport facility based on previous findings (Fisher & Wakefield, 1998). In addition, the fan reference antecedent was not statistically significant but the construct is theoretically significant; therefore, the fan reference scale needs to be reconsidered in future studies. Moreover, it is possible that other antecedents that may be important to the formation of sport brand love were not included; thus, future studies should consider other antecedents that may be applicable to the sport context.

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Table 3.1

Summary of Fit Indices for Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Model	χ^2	df	χ^2/df	RMSEA	SRMR	TLI	CFI	RNI
Calibration Model	4361.865	1823	2.39	.066	.066	.886	.894	.894
Alternative Model 1	4411.876	1843	2.39	.066	.067	.886	.894	.894
Alternative Model 2	4488.784	1845	2.43	.067	.069	.883	.889	.889
Holdout Model	4195.893	1823	2.30	.064	.063	.889	.897	.894

Table 3.2

Summary of Indicator Loadings (λ), Construct Reliability (CR), Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for the Hypothesized Measurement Model

Factors and variables	Calibration Sample			Holdout Sample		
	λ	CR	AVE	λ	CR	AVE
Perceived High Quality		0.89	0.66		0.86	0.60
Compared to other teams, the team is of very high quality	0.85			0.78		
The team is the best team in the league	0.80			0.80		
The team consistently performs better than all other opposing teams	0.81			0.78		
I can always count on the team for consistent high quality	0.81			0.74		
Fan Reference		0.82	0.60		0.82	0.60
Most people that are important to me would approve of my going to a game	0.73			0.73		
My friends are likely to attend a game this season	0.79			0.78		
People close to me (e.g., friends/family) are likely to attend a game	0.80			0.81		
Team Uniqueness		0.89	0.73		0.87	0.68
The team really "stands out" from other teams	0.71			0.83		
The team is very different from other opposing teams	0.88			0.80		
The team is unique from other teams	0.96			0.85		
Team Nostalgia		0.92	0.80		0.92	0.79
Thinking of the team bring back good memories	0.88			0.86		
I have fond memories of following the team	0.92			0.94		
I have fond memories of following the team with friends and/or family	0.90			0.86		
Team Identification		0.91	0.72		0.92	0.73
The team's successes are my successes	0.85			0.88		
When someone praises the team it feels like a personal compliment	0.90			0.91		
I am very interested in what others think about the team	0.77			0.75		
I feel a sense of "ownership" for the team rather than being just a fan	0.87			0.89		
Attitude Valence		0.89	0.74		0.88	0.72
The team gives me satisfaction	0.92			0.93		
I like the team	0.80			0.78		
The team is favorable	0.86			0.83		
Separation Distress		0.92	0.80		0.91	0.77
The thought of the team moving cities gives me anxiety	0.90			0.88		
The thought of the team moving cities makes me worry	0.91			0.88		
I fear the thought of the team moving cities	0.88			0.88		
Emotional Attachment		0.91	0.84		0.92	0.85
I am emotionally connected to the team	0.91			0.92		
I feel a bond to the team	0.92			0.93		

Table 3.2 *(Continued)*

Factors and variables	Calibration Sample			Holdout Sample		
	λ	CR	AVE	λ	CR	AVE
Positive Affect		0.77	0.63		0.74	0.59
The team makes me content	0.88			0.83		
The team makes me relaxed	0.69			0.71		
Life Meaning and Intrinsic Reward		0.90	0.83		0.86	0.76
The team makes like meaningful	0.96			0.92		
The team makes life worth living	0.86			0.82		
Attitude Strength		0.92	0.80		0.93	0.82
I strongly hold my feelings towards the team	0.88			0.92		
My feelings towards the team com quickly to my mind	0.88			0.88		
I have intense feelings toward the team	0.92			0.92		
Intuitive Fit		0.91	0.77		0.91	0.76
The team is a natural fit	0.90			0.89		
The team fits my taste perfectly	0.90			0.91		
The team felt right when I first encountered it	0.83			0.82		
Past Involvement		0.91	0.84		0.91	0.82
I have done a lot of things with the team in the past	0.93			0.94		
I have interacted a lot with the team	0.90			0.87		
Long-term Relationship		0.95	0.90		0.95	0.91
I will be consuming the team for a long time	0.93			0.94		
I feel a sense of long-term commitment to the team	0.97			0.96		
Brand Prominence		0.96	0.90		0.97	0.91
I very often have thoughts about the team	0.92			0.94		
I frequently find myself thinking about being a consumer of the team	0.97			0.97		
I find that the team keeps popping in my head	0.96			0.95		
Current Self-Identification		0.91	0.78		0.91	0.76
Others who see me as a consumer of the team get a sense of who I am	0.87			0.85		
There is a degree of image overlap between the team and myself	0.88			0.86		
The team is an important part of my self-identity	0.90			0.91		
Willingness to Invest Resources		0.94	0.81		0.94	0.81
I have spent a lot of time making the team fit my needs	0.80			0.84		
I am willing to spend a lot of money on the team	0.91			0.90		
I am willing to spend a lot of time on the team	0.94			0.93		
I have invested a lot of time, energy, and money on the team	0.93			0.92		
Passionate Desire to Consume		0.95	0.85		0.93	0.83
I feel a sense of longing toward the team	0.90			0.85		
I have a feeling of wanting toward the team	0.95			0.93		
I have a feeling of desire toward the team	0.78			0.95		

Table 3.2 *(Continued)*

Factors and variables	Calibration Sample			Holdout Sample		
	λ	CR	AVE	λ	CR	AVE
Willingness to Pay Higher Prices		0.94	0.83		0.93	0.81
I am willing to pay a higher price for the team than for other teams	0.97			0.97		
I am willing to pay a lot more for the team than for other teams	0.97			0.94		
I am willing to pay __% more for the team over other teams	0.78			0.77		
Team Loyalty		0.87	0.70		0.89	0.74
I would still be committed to the team regardless of the lack of any star players	0.92			0.94		
I would still be committed to the team regardless of the lack of physical skill among the players	0.92			0.90		
I am more likely to attend future games	0.78			0.72		
Switching Intention		0.74	0.58		0.83	0.72
How likely are you to switch to an opposing team during the next year?	0.70			0.76		
What is the chance that you will stay a fan of the team for the next year?	0.82			0.93		
Positive Word-of-Mouth		0.91	0.76		0.90	0.75
I am likely to say good things about the team	0.81			0.75		
I have recommended going to the games to my friends	0.92			0.93		
I have suggested to others that we go to a game	0.89			0.90		
Sport Brand Love (second-order factor)		0.98	0.81		0.98	0.81
Current Self-Identification	0.93			0.91		
Team Identification	0.86			0.86		
Life Meaning and Intrinsic Reward	0.82			0.83		
Brand Prominence	0.93			0.93		
Past Involvement	0.85			0.86		
Intuitive Fit	0.92			0.92		
Emotional Attachment	0.98			0.98		
Positive Affect	0.92			0.97		
Long-term Relationship	0.92			0.91		
Anticipated Separation Distress	0.71			0.69		
Attitude Valence	0.94			0.92		
Attitude Strength	0.99			0.99		

Table 3.3

Summary of Fit Indices for Path Analysis

Model	χ^2	*df*	χ^2/df	RMSEA	SRMR	TLI	CFI	RNI
Calibration Model	4593.523	1847	2.49	.068	.078	.88	.89	.89
Holdout Model	4408.851	1847	2.39	.066	.071	.88	.89	.89

Table 3.4

Summary of Standardized Loadings and Standard Errors for the Hypothesized Structural Model

Path coefficients between factors	Calibration Sample		Holdout Sample	
	β	*SE*	*β*	*SE*
Sport Brand Love ← Perceived High Quality	0.229**	0.082	0.164	0.114
Sport Brand Love ← Fan Reference	-0.100	0.057	0.037	0.054
Sport Brand Love ← Team Uniqueness	0.183**	0.063	0.230*	0.108
Sport Brand Love ← Team Nostalgia	0.553**	0.049	0.518**	0.046
Positive WOM ← Sport Brand Love	0.739**	0.037	0.617**	0.038
Loyalty ← Sport Brand Love	0.727**	0.030	0.718**	0.031
Switching Intention ← Sport Brand Love	-0.661**	0.044	-0.660**	0.037
Willingness to Invest Resources ← Sport Brand Love	0.962**	0.007	0.617**	0.008
Willingness to Pay Higher Prices ← Sport Brand Love	0.739**	0.027	0.690**	0.031
Passionate Desire to Consume ← Sport Brand Love	0.932**	0.011	0.924**	0.011

Note: * $p < 0.05$.
** $p < 0.01$.

Table 3.5

Summary of Standardized Loadings and Standard Errors for the Total Effects and Indirect Effects

Path coefficients between factors	Calibration Sample		Holdout Sample	
	β	SE	β	SE
Total effect				
Positive WOM ← Perceived High Quality	0.152**	0.055	0.101	0.071
Positive WOM ← Fan Reference	-0.067	0.038	0.023	0.033
Positive WOM ← Team Uniqueness	0.122**	0.042	0.142*	0.067
Positive WOM ← Team Nostalgia	0.369**	0.040	0.320**	0.036
Loyalty ← Perceived High Quality	0.166**	0.060	0.118	0.028
Loyalty ← Fan Reference	-0.073	0.042	0.027	0.039
Loyalty ← Team Uniqueness	0.133**	0.046	0.165*	0.078
Loyalty ← Team Nostalgia	0.402**	0.041	0.372**	0.038
Switching Intention ← Perceived High Quality	-0.151**	0.055	-0.108	0.076
Switching Intention ← Fan Reference	0.066	0.038	-0.025	0.035
Switching Intention ← Team Uniqueness	-0.121**	0.042	-0.152*	0.072
Switching Intention ← Team Nostalgia	-0.366**	0.042	-0.342**	0.037
Willingness to Invest Resources ← Perceived High Quality	0.331**	0.120	0.155	0.108
Willingness to Invest Resources ← Fan Reference	-.0225	0.130	0.035	0.051
Willingness to Invest Resources ← Team Uniqueness	0.271**	0.095	0.218*	0.102
Willingness to Invest Resources ← Team Nostalgia	0.577**	0.064	0.491**	0.044
Willingness to Pay Higher Prices ← Perceived High Quality	0.169**	0.061	0.113	0.079
Willingness to Pay Higher Prices ← Fan Reference	-0.074	0.042	0.026	0.037
Willingness to Pay Higher Prices ← Team Uniqueness	0.135**	0.047	0.159*	0.075
Willingness to Pay Higher Prices ← Team Nostalgia	0.409**	0.040	0.358**	0.037
Passionate Desire to Consume ← Perceived High Quality	0.211**	0.075	0.151	0.106
Passionate Desire to Consume ← Fan Reference	-0.093	0.053	0.035	0.050
Passionate Desire to Consume ← Team Uniqueness	0.168**	0.058	0.212*	0.100
Passionate Desire to Consume ← Team Nostalgia	0.511**	0.046	0.479**	0.043

Path coefficients between factors	Calibration Sample		Holdout Sample	
	β	SE	β	SE
Indirect effect				
Positive WOM ← Sport Brand Love ← Perceived High Quality	0.152**	0.055		
Positive WOM ← Sport Brand Love ← Team Uniqueness	0.122**	0.042	0.142*	0.067
Positive WOM ← Sport Brand Love ← Team Nostalgia	0.369**	0.040	0.320**	0.036

Table 3.5 *(Continued)*

Path coefficients between factors	Calibration Sample		Holdout Sample	
	β	*SE*	β	*SE*
Loyalty ← Sport Brand Love ← Perceived High Quality	0.166**	0.060		
Loyalty ← Sport Brand Love ← Team Uniqueness	0.133**	0.046	0.165*	0.078
Loyalty ← Sport Brand Love ← Team Nostalgia	0.402**	0.041	0.372**	0.038
Switching Intention ← Sport Brand Love ← Perceived High Quality	-0.151**	0.055		
Switching Intention ← Sport Brand Love ← Team Uniqueness	-0.121**	0.042	-0.152*	0.072
Switching Intention ← Sport Brand Love ← Team Nostalgia	-0.366**	0.042	-0.342**	0.037
Willingness to Invest Resources ← Sport Brand Love ← Perceived High Quality	0.220**	0.079		
Willingness to Invest Resources ← Sport Brand Love ← Team Uniqueness	0.176**	0.060	0.218*	0.102
Willingness to Invest Resources ← Sport Brand Love ← Team Nostalgia	0.533**	0.048	0.491**	0.044
Willingness to Pay Higher Prices ← Sport Brand Love ← Perceived High Quality	0.169**	0.061		
Willingness to Pay Higher Prices ← Sport Brand Love ← Team Uniqueness	0.135**	0.047	0.159*	0.075
Willingness to Pay Higher Prices ← Sport Brand Love ← Team Nostalgia	0.409**	0.040	0.358**	0.037
Passionate Desire to Consume ← Sport Brand Love ← Perceived High Quality	0.211**	0.075		
Passionate Desire to Consume ← Sport Brand Love ← Team Uniqueness	0.168**	0.058	0.212*	0.100
Passionate Desire to Consume ← Sport Brand Love ← Team Nostalgia	0.511**	0.046	0.479**	0.043

Note: * $p < 0.05$.
** $p < 0.01$.

Table 3.6

Summary of 95% Confidence Intervals of the Bootstrap Method

Mediating effect	Calibration Sample		Holdout Sample	
	Lower	Upper	Lower	Upper
Positive WOM ← Sport Brand Love ← Perceived High Quality	0.042	0.328		
Positive WOM ← Sport Brand Love ← Team Uniqueness	0.029	0.273	-0.048*	0.302*
Positive WOM ← Sport Brand Love ← Team Nostalgia	0.201	0.445	0.157	0.334
Loyalty ← Sport Brand Love ← Perceived High Quality	0.079	0.464		
Loyalty ← Sport Brand Love ← Team Uniqueness	0.055	0.388	-0.094	0.578
Loyalty ← Sport Brand Love ← Team Nostalgia	0.343	0.603	0.340	0.596
Switching Intention ← Sport Brand Love ← Perceived High Quality	-0.174	-0.025		
Switching Intention ← Sport Brand Love ← Team Uniqueness	-0.143	-0.021	-0.258*	0.040*
Switching Intention ← Sport Brand Love ← Team Nostalgia	-0.232	-0.116	0.157	0.334
Willingness to Invest Resources ← Sport Brand Love ← Perceived High Quality	0.094	0.559		
Willingness to Invest Resources ← Sport Brand Love ← Team Uniqueness	0.061	0.480	-0.120*	0.696*
Willingness to Invest Resources ← Sport Brand Love ← Team Nostalgia	0.433	0.721	0.466	0.787
Willingness to Pay Higher Prices ← Sport Brand Love ← Perceived High Quality	0.095	0.570		
Willingness to Pay Higher Prices ← Sport Brand Love ← Team Uniqueness	0.065	0.479	-0.103*	0.589*
Willingness to Pay Higher Prices ← Sport Brand Love ← Team Nostalgia	0.432	0.727	0.385	0.673
Passionate Desire to Consume ← Sport Brand Love ← Perceived High Quality	0.113	0.666		
Passionate Desire to Consume ← Sport Brand Love ← Team Uniqueness	0.076	0.561	-0.123*	0.179*
Passionate Desire to Consume ← Sport Brand Love ← Team Nostalgia	0.520	0.838	0.482	0.719

Note: * mediation effect not statistically significant at $p < 0.05$.

Table 3.7

Summary of Standardized Loadings and Standard Errors for the Structural Model of Each Team

| Path coefficients between factors	MLB (*N*= 385)		NBA (*N* = 63)		NFL (*N* = 179)	
	β	*SE*	*β*	*SE*	*β*	*SE*
Sport Brand Love ← Perceived High Quality	0.278**	0.071	-0.095	0.243	0.146	0.170
Sport Brand Love ← Fan Reference	-0.079	0.051	0.173	0.110	-0.051	0.090
Sport Brand Love ← Team Uniqueness	0.192**	0.059	0.314	0.249	0.108	0.188
Sport Brand Love ← Team Nostalgia	0.533**	0.042	0.510**	0.103	0.658**	0.066
Positive WOM ← Sport Brand Love	0.576**	0.037	0.528**	0.095	0.760**	0.040
Loyalty ← Sport Brand Love	0.716**	0.029	0.741**	0.063	0.675**	0.045
Switching Intention ← Sport Brand Love	-0.652**	0.039	-0.611**	0.095	-0.600**	0.065
Willingness to Invest Resources ← Sport Brand Love	0.958**	0.006	0.956**	0.015	0.947**	0.012
Willingness to Pay Higher Prices ← Sport Brand Love	0.715**	0.027	0.767**	0.053	0.599**	0.050
Passionate Desire to Consume ← Sport Brand Love	0.930**	0.009	0.933**	0.020	0.902**	0.019

Note: * $p < 0.05$.
** $p < 0.01$.
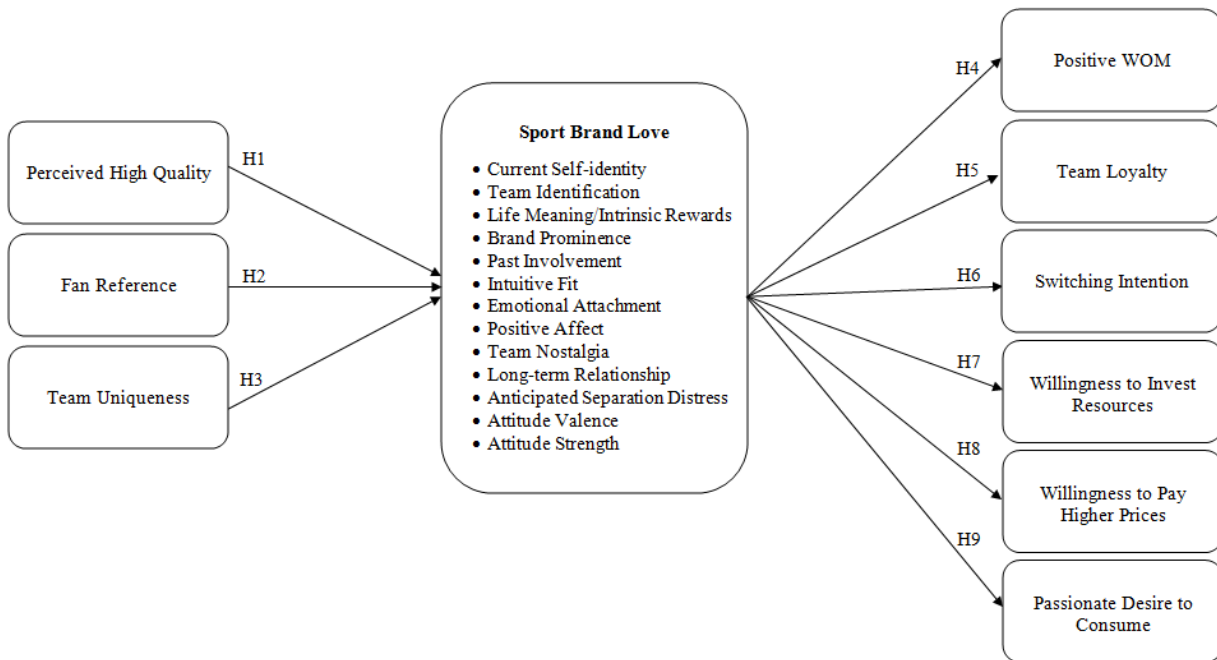
Figure 3.1. Hypothesized sport brand love model.

CHAPTER 4

EXAMINATION OF THE SPORT BRAND LOVE GENDER DIFFERENCES

IN PROFESSIONAL SPORTS[3]

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[3] Tavormina, A. L., Byon, K. K., Baker, T. A., & Zhang, J. J. To be submitted to *Sport Management Review.*

Abstract

Sport brand love refers to the degree of passionate emotional attachment consumers feel towards a sport team (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006; Tavormina et al., 2012), and it is a higher-order construct, including other sport-related attachment constructs that were previously developed (Tavormina et al., 2012). Various studies have concluded that marketing plans should be developed based on the moderating effects of gender (e.g., Byon, Carroll, Cottingham, Grady, & Allen, 2011; Swanson et al., 2003), but sport brand love gender difference has not been examined. Using male and female consumers of three professional sports teams (i.e., MLB, NBA, and NFL) in a large metropolitan area of the U.S., participants (N = 635) were surveyed using the sport brand love questionnaire (Tavormina, Byon, Baker, & Zhang, 2013). The participants were screened and only those who had attended a sporting event for one of the teams in the past were included in the study. Overall, the model of the pooled sample had reasonably good fit, reliability, construct validity, and discriminant considering the complexity of the model. The multi-group path analysis indicated that "Team Nostalgia" was on the only antecedent that was statistically significant ($p < .05$) for the female group, but "Perceived High Quality," "Team Uniqueness," and "Team Nostalgia" were statistically significant ($p < .05$) antecedents for the male group. For the consequences, the six consequences of sport brand love were statistically significant (p < .05) for both genders. There was evidence of a moderating effect of gender between "Team Nostalgia" and "Sport Brand Love" because of the statistically significant interaction ($p < .05$). More specifically, "Team Nostalgia" has less of an effect on "Sport Brand Love" for female consumers.

Keywords: marketing, sport brand love, moderator, gender, professional sports

Introduction

Since the ancient Greek times, men have been the major consumers of sport. In fact, women were forbidden to spectate ancient Greek sporting events such as the Olympic Games (Welch, 2004). However, the sport consumption landscape has drastically changed over time and females now make up a large portion of sport consumers. According to the three major leagues (i.e., NFL, MLB, NBA), women make up 44 percent of football fans, 45 percent of baseball fans, and 36 percent of professional basketball fans (Thomas, 2010). This is an indication that sport organizations cannot market primarily to male consumers as they have done in previous decades. Sport leagues such as the NFL has realized this fact and two years ago began to make a concerted effort to market the game and apparel to women (Dosh, 2012). According to the increase in merchandise sales, television sport consumption (ages 18-34), and fantasy sport participation for women over the past two years, it seems as though the NFL's new marketing tactics are paying off (Dosh, 2012).

Sport marketing research has found that males and females equally consider themselves to be sports fans (Dietz-Uhler, Harrick, End, & Jacquemotte, 2000). This provides support for what the sport industry practitioners have found and helps explain why the NFL has been so successful with its new marketing tactics. It also provides evidence that males and females may need to be marketed to differently. Therefore, sport management researchers and practitioners must uncover the difference between male and female consumers. While several studies have examined the gender differences in relation to sport consumers' motives (e.g., Allen, Drane, & Byon, 2010, Byon, Carroll, Cottingham, Grady, & Allen, 2011; Ridinger & Funk, 2006; Robinson & Trail, 2005), no previous research was conducted on the moderating effects that gender has on sport brand love. Furthermore, none of the previous general marketing studies on

brand love included moderators; therefore, this was the first time that moderators have been explored in respect to brand love in general.

Examining gender differences within this construct is important because sport brand love is a higher-order construct that includes the multiple cognitions, emotions, and behaviors of sport consumers (Batra et al., 2012; Tavormina et al., 2012). It is more inclusive than other sport consumer behavior constructs and actually integrates many of the constructs that affect a sport consumer's psychological attachment to a sport brand (Tavormina et al., 2012). Examining gender differences within sport brand love offers sport marketers a greater understanding of how consumers form love and its outcomes according to gender, and it helps sport practitioners develop better marketing tactics that meet the needs and desires of males and females. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to examine the gender differences within sport brand love.

In the past decade, sport marketing researchers have begun to examine the moderating effects that gender has on various marketing concepts. While some research has provided evidence that there is a difference in the motivation of males and females to consume sports (e.g., Byon et al., 2011; Ridinger & Funk, 2006; Swanson et al., 2003; Zhang et al., 2001), others have suggested that gender does not significantly influence sport consumer motivations (Allen, Drane, & Byon, 2010; Armstrong, 2002; James & Ridinger, 2002; Robinson & Trail, 2005). These contradicting results made it challenging to conclude how gender affects sport brand love antecedents: perceived high quality, fan reference, and team uniqueness. However, Byon et al. (2011) utilized consumers at wheelchair basketball events to examine gender differences in the relationship between consumer motives and several sport consumption behaviors (e.g., re-attendance intentions). The important motive factors that impacted both males' and females' re-attendance intentions were escape and knowledge. While Robinson and Trail (2005) found that

physical skill factors motivated both genders to re-attend an event, Byon et al. found that only male spectators were motivated by physical skill. The latter finding suggests that males are more impacted by the perceived quality (i.e., physical skill) of the sport brand than females when making a decision to re-attend an event. On the other hand, females are typically more motivated to consume sports to share these experiences with significant others in their life more than males (Allen, Drane, & Byon, 2010; Ridinger & Funk, 2006); therefore, the fan reference antecedent may have a greater impact the consumers' formation of brand love based on gender.

While some research has provided evidence that there is a significant difference in the motivation of males and females to attend sporting events (e.g., Byon et al., 2011; Ridinger & Funk, 2006; Swanson et al., 2003; Zhang et al., 2001), some research has found males and females spend an equal amount of time attending games (Dietz-Uhler et al., 2000), indicating the importance of male and female consumers to sport researchers and practitioners. Other research has found that males rate themselves more highly as sports fans than females (James & Ridinger, 2006; Tobar, 2006). In addition, males identify with being a sport fan significantly more than females, spend more time watching sports and discussing sports with others, possess more sports knowledge, and have a significantly more interest in sports than females (Dietz-Uhler et al., 2000). However, Greenwell, Fink, and Pastore's (2002) research found that females evaluate the quality of a team at a higher level than males even when the team has a losing record which may indicate that perceived high quality is different between genders. Hence, this previous research suggests that gender may moderate the antecedents of brand love. Therefore, it is posited that:

H10: Gender will moderate the relationship between perceived high quality and dimensions of sport brand love.

H11: Gender will moderate the relationship between fan reference and dimensions of

sport brand love.

H12: Gender will moderate the relationship between team uniqueness and dimensions of

sport brand love.

H13: Gender will moderate the relationship between team nostalgia and dimensions of

sport brand love.

Previous research has also been conducted to determine if consumer behavior differs

according to gender, and these were used to make hypotheses about the influence gender has on

the sport brand love consequences: positive word-of-mouth (WOM), loyalty, switching intention,

willingness to invest resources, willingness to pay higher prices, and passionate desire to

consume. For example, Dabholkar and Wells' (1999) general marketing study found that males

and females switching intentions differed according various factors such as price and

satisfaction, so no overall conclusion was made on the gender effect on switching intentions.

Fink, Trail, and Anderson's (2002) study on intercollegiate basketball concluded that the cost to

attend a sporting event does not affect males and females' motivation to attend an event

differently; however, females are more likely to exhibit loyalty over male consumers. In

addition, Swanson et al. (2003) investigated and found gender has moderating effects on college

students' motivation to attend sporting events and word-of-mouth behavior. While team

identification and group affiliation motivate both male and females' game attendance and WOM

behaviors, there were some gender differences for a few of the motivations. More specifically,

the results indicated that eustress only motivates males to attend sporting events, and self-esteem

enhancement only motivates males' word-of-mouth behaviors (Swanson et al., 2003).

Additionally, females are more likely to engage in word-of-mouth more than male sport

consumers (Swanson et al., 2003). These previous studies indicate that gender does moderate the consequences of sport brand love; hence, it is hypothesized that:

H14: The effect brand love has on a consumer's positive WOM does differ between genders.

H15: The effect brand love has on a consumer's team loyalty does differ between genders.

H16: The effect brand love has on a consumer's switching intention does differ between genders.

H17: The effect brand love has on a consumer's willingness to pay higher prices does differ between genders.

H18: The effect brand love has on a consumer's willingness to invest resources does differ between genders.

H19: The effect brand love has on a consumer's passionate desire to consume does differ between genders.

Methodology

Participants (Main Study 2)

The focus of this study was on the professional sports teams (i.e., MLB, NBA, NFL) in a large metropolitan city in the southeast region of the United States. The target population for the study included both males and females who were past consumers of professional sporting events. A convenience sample was used to collect data, and to ensure the appropriate target market was selected, the survey included a screening question, "For which sport team have you attended a game?" and the prospective participants had the option to select one of three local professional teams listed. If the participants had attended one of the professional sport teams' games in the

past, they were invited to participate in the study. Otherwise, those who had never attended a professional sport event for one of those particular teams in the metropolitan area were excluded from the study. From the sample, 56.2% were male and 43.8% were female. Nearly 71.1% of the participants were between 18 and 27 years old, followed by 15.6% were between 28 and 37. The sample included White/Caucasians (75.8%), followed by Black/African American (12.2%), Asian (5.2%), and Spanish/Latino/Hispanic (3.1%). Additionally, 93.8% of the participants were individual ticket holders and 6.2% were season ticket holders. The male and female participants were recruited in tailgating areas immediately outside the sport facility before games, on social media pages, and on sport team blogs. The local university students, faculty, and staff were also invited to participate in the study. The university students are often sampled in marketing research because they are significant consumers of intercollegiate sports and a critical market segment (Masteralexis et al., 2011), and the faculty and staff helped diversify the demographics of the participants. All of the male and female participants were required to be 18 years of age or older and voluntarily participated in the study.

Data Collection Procedures

Once the approval of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) was received, the data were collected using online self-administered surveys and face-to-face self-administered surveys. This mixed-mode was utilized because it has been shown to decrease the effects and biases of each particular mode used, as well as reducing the resources used (Groves et al., 2009). The online survey participants were recruited via email invitations, social media postings, and sport team blogs that included a link to the online survey site. The emails were sent via listservs available through the local university. The male and female participants were given the purpose of the study and an informational letter before they were able to proceed to the survey. They agreed to

the informational letter by clicking on the link to enter the online questionnaire. The face-to-face

participants were recruited by attending tailgates outside of professional sporting events (i.e.,

MLB, NBA, NFL) in a large metropolitan city, as well as in sport management and physical

activity classes at the university located near the metropolitan area. The male and female

respondents were given the purpose of the study and an informational letter to read. They were

given the survey to complete once they agreed to participate in the study. The participation in

this study was voluntary, and there was no compensation for participation in the study.

The male and female participants were first asked a screening question, "For which sport

team have you attended a game?" with the option to select one of three local professional teams.

The participants who had attended a game for one of the professional sport teams were invited to

participate in the survey, and those who had not attended a game were excluded from

participating in the study. The participants who completed the survey were asked to respond to

all of the survey items based on their thoughts and feelings towards the professional sport team

(i.e., baseball, basketball, football) for which they have attended. Using sports teams from

different leagues allowed any sport brand love gender differences to be more generalizability

across different types of professional sports.

Instrument

The sport brand love questionnaire (63 items) that was modified with the pilot data in

Study 1 was utilized in this study to examine any moderating effects gender may have on sport

brand love. This questionnaire included 12 constructs to measure the dimensions of sport brand

love, four constructs to measure the antecedents of sport brand love, and six constructs to

measure the consequences of sport brand love. These 22 construct measurements have been

adapted from the existing scales in both the general marketing and sport marketing literature

(Batra et al., 2012; Burnham et al., 2003; Cunningham & Kwon, 2003; Heere & Dickson, 2008; Kwon & Armstrong, 2004; Netemeyer et al., 2004; Swanson et al., 2003).

Sport brand love dimensions. Items from Albert et al. (2008), Batra et al. (2012), and Carroll and Ahuvia's (2006) brand love studies were adapted to measure 11 of the sport brand love dimensions: Current Self-Identity (5 items), Life Meaning and Intrinsic Rewards (2 items), Brand Prominence (4 items), Past Involvement (2 items), Intuitive Fit (5 items), Emotional Attachment (2 items), Positive Affect (2 items), Long-term Relationship (3 items), Anticipated Separation Distress (4 items), Attitude Valence (2 items), and Attitude Strength (4 items). Batra et al.'s (2012) dimensions were deemed to have acceptable psychometric properties: > .60 average variance extracted (AVE) levels which are considered adequate and > .70 composite construct reliability levels are considered acceptable according to the standards set forth by Fornell and Larcker (1981). The item response format for all of the above measures used a 7-point scale with 1 = *not at all* and 7 = *very much*. The other one sport brand love dimension was measured using a scale from the sport marketing literature that had been previously established by Kwon and Armstrong (2004). Four Team Identification items from Kwon and Armstrong's (2004) study were utilized displayed acceptable reliability (Cronbach's α >.84) (Nunnally & Berstein, 1994) and predictive validity. The item response format for these two measures used a 7-point Likert-type scale with 1 = *strongly disagree* and 7 = *strongly agree*.

Antecedents. Scales developed by Cunningham and Kwon (2003), Netemeyer et al. (2004), and Gladden and Funk (2002) to measure the four sport brand love antecedents were adopted. To measure the participants' perceptions of the brand's high quality, a modified version of Netemeyer et al.'s (2004) four Perceived Quality items that were developed as part of the core facets of customer-based brand equity (CBBE) were used. For these items, evidence of reliability

(Cronbach's α >.90) and validity (AVE >.64) was found. Fan reference was measured by utilizing Cunningham and Kwon's (2003) three subjective norms items that are part of their theory of planned behavior. These items were found to have acceptable reliability (Cronbach's α >.78 and bivariate correlations ranging from .63 to .82. Three reliable (Cronbach's α > .90) and valid (AVE > .68) items were taken from Netemeyer et al. and modified to measure the Team Uniqueness. Three Team Nostalgia items from Gladden and Funk's (2002) were utilized and deemed to have acceptable psychometric properties: (Cronbach's α >.84) and AVE was above the acceptable standard (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). The item response format for all of the above measures used a 7-point Likert-type scale with 1 = *strongly disagree* and 7 = *strongly agree*.

    Consequences. A combination of measures from several sources was also utilized to measure the six consequences of sport brand love. The Switching Intention measure included Burnham et al.'s (2003) 5-point Likert-type scale item (1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*) and a 5-point percentage response item (1 = *0% chance* to 5 = *100% chance*). These two items were deemed valid and reliable (Burnham et al., 2003) and were modified according to the sport context. Positive WOM was measured using one modified item from Alexandris et al. (2007) and one item from Swanson et al. (2003). The researchers in both studies reported acceptable reliability and validity for the three items. To measure Loyalty, four items from Heere and Dickson's (2008) attitudinal loyalty scale and one item from Trail et al.'s (2005) conative loyalty scale were used. The items had good psychometric properties and were deemed to have acceptable reliability (Cronbach's α > .84) and validity (AVE = .59). The item response format for Positive WOM and Loyalty used a 7-point Likert-type scale with 1 = strongly disagree and 7 = strongly agree. Willingness to Pay Higher Prices was measured using three modified items from Netemeyer et al. (2004) who reported evidence of reliability (Cronbach's α > .84) and

validity (AVE > .61) for these measures. Three of the items used a 7-point Liker-type scale with 1 = strongly disagree and 7 = strongly agree and one item with 1 = 0% to 7= 30% more. To measure Willingness to Invest Resources (4 items) and Passionate Desire to Use (3 items), Batra et al.'s (2012) brand love items were utilized which were deemed to have acceptable psychometric properties: > .60 AVE values which are considered adequately high according to the standards set forth by Fornell and Larcker (1981) and composite construct reliability levels > .70 (Hair et al., 2006). These two constructs used the 7-point scale item response format with 1 = *not at all* and 7 = *very much*.

Socio-demographics. The questionnaire also included demographic information of the male and female participants, including age, ethnicity, ticket holder type, and gender to examine any consumption patterns according to demographics. Age was measured using five nominal age variables, and ethnicity was measured using seven nominal race/ethnicity variables. Lastly, the ticket holder type was measured with two nominal variables: season ticket holder and individual ticket holder. These socio-demographics were used to examine if there is any generalizability based on the different variables.

Moderator. The gender moderator in this study was measured using categorical variables. The consumer's gender was measured using two nominal variables: male and female. The moderator was used to examine if sport brand love differs according to gender within the realm of professional sports.

Data Analyses

Various descriptive statistics, specifically mean, standard deviation, and bivariate correlations of the sport brand love variables were calculated, as well as socio-demographic variables were examined, using procedures available in SPSS 20.0. Then, before conducting the

confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), three assumption tests of the data were conducted:

normality, linearity, and outliers. CFA assumes that the data are normally distributed; therefore,

a normal probability plot was the initial test used to determine the normality and outliers in the

data. Then, the skewness and kurtosis of the items were examined to formally test normality of

the data. To test for outliers, a box plot was performed and to determine if outliers were present.

A CFA also assumes that the relationship between the dependent and independent variables is

linear; therefore, this was the third assumption test conducted. Linearity was examined by

inspecting the scatterplots to show the linear nature of the data. In addition, the plots of

standardized residuals against standardized estimates of the dependent variable were examined.

When the plot display a random pattern of the residuals that are relatively equally dispersed

around zero, then linearity of the data is assumed (Hair et al., 2006). Once all three of these

assumption tests are passed, Anderson and Gerbing's (1988) recommended two-step structural

equation modeling (SEM) approach to test the models was utilized.

The first step is to conduct a CFA, and this was performed by using AMOS to assess the

measurement model of sport brand love. The goodness of model fit was examined using seven

different indices: chi-square test, chi-square/*df*, Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI), Comparative Fit

Index (CFI), Relative Non-centrality Index (RNI), Root Mean Square Error of approximation

(RMSEA), and Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR). First, the chi-square fit index

was examined and a non-significant chi-square test meant that the null hypothesis was not

rejected, indicating adequate fit. Next, the chi-square/*df* ratio was examined, and Kline's (2011)

recommendation that any ratio larger than five indicates an inadequate fit was utilized. The TLI,

CFI, and RNI indices were used to further examine model fit, and the cutoff was .90 as a

minimum and .95 for ideal fit as recommended by Hu and Bentler (1999). The cutoff for

RMSEA and SRMR used were ≤.06 and ≤ .08, respectively (Hu & Bentler, 1999). Once the model fit was determined, the reliability of the constructs were evaluated using composite reliability (Joreskog, 1971) with acceptable levels being .70 or higher based on criteria set forth by Hair et al. (2006). Composite reliability was calculated instead of the commonly used Cronbach's α which has been shown to over- or underestimate scale reliability (Raykov, 1997). Next, the construct validity of the sport brand love model was determined by examining the convergent validity and discriminant validity of the constructs. The convergent validity of the constructs was assessed by first examining the factor loadings, and those with a minimum of ≥ .50 were deemed acceptable and indicative of validity (Hair et al., 2006). Then, the average variance extracted (AVE) values were examined and deemed adequate when ≥ .50 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). The discriminant validity was examined by comparing the AVE values of a given construct with the squared correlations between that construct and all other latent variables (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). If the AVE values are greater, then there is an indication of discriminant validity which means that each construct is distinct from the other constructs in the model.

A path analysis is the second step of Anderson and Gerbing's (1988) two step approach, and it assesses the structural model and tests the hypotheses. Before examining the direct effect path coefficients between the antecedents and sport brand love, as well as between sport brand love and the consequences, the p-values for each path in the model was examined for statistical significance. If the path coefficient was statistically significant, then there was a direct effect and the path coefficient was examined to determine the magnitude and direction of the effect. The predictive validity of the model was suggested through this direct effect path analysis because it predicts whether or not sport brand love can predict the consequences.

Next, the gender moderator was analyzed to determine if there were any sport brand love gender differences. A path analysis was performed to examine if there were any interaction effects of gender between the antecedents and sport brand love, as well as between sport brand love and the consequences. First, the interaction term for each of the antecedents and gender was created, and then a path analysis was performed to test if the interaction effect was significant. If the interaction is statistically significant ($p < .05$), then that means the gender moderates the relationship between the individual antecedents and sport brand love Hair et al. (2006). If not, then gender does not moderate the relationship between the antecedents and sport brand love. Additionally, the interaction term between gender and sport brand love was created, and another path analyses was performed to determine if an interaction effect exists. Once again, if there is a statistically significant ($p < .05$) interaction term, then there is statistical evidence that gender moderates the relationship between sport brand love and the individual consequences (Hair et al., 2006). Otherwise, gender does not moderate the consequences of sport brand love. For each of the variables on which gender had a statistically significant interaction effect, a latent means difference test was conducted to determine the difference that exists between males and females (Kline, 2011).

Following the determination of any moderating effects of gender, multi-group path analyses were conducted on the male and female group to determine if differences exist. Prior to examining the path coefficients of each gender group, the Wald test was examined to determine if group differences existed (Byrne, 2012) for the relationships between the antecedents and sport brand love, as well as, the relationships between sport brand love and the consequences. If the Wald test is statistically significant, then the groups differ. Then, the path coefficients and statistical significant ($p < .05$) of the male and female group will be examined to determine if the

sport brand love is similar for males and females. Lastly, to determine if there was a gender difference between the three professional teams (i.e., MLB, NBA, and NFL), we dichotomized the sample into males ($n = 355$) and females ($n = 277$) and conducted a multi-group SEM on the two genders.

Results

The pooled data were check by examining the descriptive statistics specifically mean, standard deviation, and bivariate correlations of the sport brand love variables, as well as the socio-demographic variables, and the results appeared to be satisfactory. Descriptive statistics for the perceived high quality variables revealed that 4 out of 4 items had a mean score greater than 4.0 (i.e., the midpoint on the 7-point scale), indicating that overall, the consumers perceived the team for which they had attended a game was high quality. Descriptive statistics for the fan reference variables revealed that 3 out of 3 items had a mean score greater than 4.0 (i.e., the midpoint on the 7-point scale), indicating that overall, the consumers agreed that a fan reference existed when it came to consuming the team. Descriptive statistics for the team uniqueness variables revealed that 3 out of 3 items had a mean score greater than 4.0 (i.e., the midpoint on the 7-point scale), indicating that overall, the consumers agreed the team was unique. Descriptive statistics for the team nostalgia variables revealed that 3 out of 3 items had a mean score greater than 4.0 (i.e., the midpoint on the 7-point scale), indicating that overall, the consumers agreed that they felt nostalgia towards the team. Descriptive statistics for the sport brand love dimensions revealed that half the items had a mean score greater than 4.0 (i.e., the midpoint on the 7-point scale), indicating that overall, the consumers did not agreed they felt sport brand love towards the team.

Descriptive statistics for the positive WOM variables revealed that 3 out of 3 items had a mean score greater than 4.0 (i.e., the midpoint on the 7-point scale), indicating that overall, the consumers agreed that they share positive WOM about the team in the past. Descriptive statistics for the team loyalty variables revealed that 3 out of 3 items had a mean score greater than 4.0 (i.e., the midpoint on the 7-point scale), indicating that overall, the consumers agreed that they felt loyalty towards the team. Descriptive statistics for the switching intention variables revealed that 2 out of 2 items had a mean score less than 4.0 (i.e., the midpoint on the 7-point scale), indicating that overall, the consumers agreed that they did not intend to switch their fandom to another team. Descriptive statistics for the willingness to invest variables revealed that 0 out of 4 items had a mean score greater than 4.0 (i.e., the midpoint on the 7-point scale), indicating that overall, the consumers did not agree that they were willing to invest resources (i.e., time, money, and energy) into the team. Descriptive statistics for the willingness to pay higher prices variables revealed that 2 out of 3 items had a mean score greater than 4.0 (i.e., the midpoint on the 7-point scale), indicating that overall, the consumers agreed that they were willingness to pay higher prices to consume the team. Descriptive statistics for the passionate desire to consume revealed that 0 out of 3 items had a mean score greater than 4.0 (i.e., the midpoint on the 7-point scale), indicating that overall, the consumers did not agree that they had the passionate desire to consume the team.

However, there was missing data, so the Little's MCAR test (Kline, 2011) was conducted on the missingness of the data. The test was statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 1635.79$; $p < .001$) providing evidence that the values were missing completely at random. Nearly all of the items that had missing data pertained to information related to the monetary investments of the participants which can often be deemed as sensitive information (Hair et al., 2006). Additionally,

according to Kline (2011), a few missing values (< 5%) on a single variable in a large sample is not of minimal concern. The percentage of variables with missing data for each case was < 5% and the number of cases with missing data for each variable was no more than four. The mean substitution method was utilized to impute the missing values because this method is best used when there are relatively low levels of missing data and a relatively strong relationship exists among the variables (Hair et al., 2006).

Then, the three CFA assumption tests were conducted by examining the normality, outliers, and linearity of the data. First, graphical plots should always be used initially to test for data normality; therefore, the normal probability plots were examined and the data appeared to be normally distributed (Hair et al., 2006). For all of the items, except one, the skewness and kurtosis values were within the conservative skewness (±2) and kurtosis (±5) thresholds, providing further evidence of a normal data distribution. For the one exception, the "Fan Reference" variable's kurtosis (6.330) was not within the conservative ±5 threshold of kurtosis, it was still within the frequently accepted ±10 threshold established by Kline (2011). For the second assumption test, the box plots of the variables were first examined to determine if any outliers existed (Hair et al., 2006) and then Mahalanobis D^2 values were calculated for each case to formally test for the outliers. The D^2 values that were statistically significant ($p < .001$) were removed from the data (Kline, 2011) which resulted in 85 cases being removed. The third assumption test was passed when the data was determined to be linear based on the scatterplots of all the variables (Hair et al., 2006). After these assumption tests were passed, Anderson and Gerbing's (1988) recommended two-step structural equation modeling (SEM) approach was utilized to test the model.

In the first step, the CFA reported acceptable factor loadings and fit indices which suggested the model had good fit while taking into consideration the complexity of the model. According to Hair et al., (2006) adequate factor loadings are $\geq$ .50 and the 13 first-order latent factors had standardized factor loadings ranging .826 to .979 on the second-order "Sport Brand Love" latent factor, the sport brand love antecedents ranged from .733 to .940, and the consequences ranged .687 to .979; therefore, the factor loadings were adequate for all variables. The fit indices also indicated that there the model had reasonably good fit. While the χ^2 was statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 6461.045$, $p < .001$), it is commonly understood that the χ^2 test is sensitive to sample size and a large number of indicator variables which means other fit indices must be examined to better determine model fit (Hair et al., 2006). The χ^2/df ratio (3.54) was deemed acceptable based on Kline's (2011) ≤ 5 recommendation. Three of the other fit indices, TLI (.89), CFI (.90), and RNI (.90), were moderately acceptable according to the cutoff minimum .90 as recommended by Hu and Bentler (1999), and the RMSEA (.063, 90% CI = .062-.065) and SRMR (.063) were adequate according to the recommended $\leq$.06 and $\leq$ .08, respectively, cutoff points as recommended by Hu and Bentler, 1999. According to Kline (2011), complex models do not always meet the standard cutoff values because of factors such as their number of parameters; therefore, the model has good fit based on the values reported by these fit indices and the complexity of the model. In addition to the fit indices, the AVE scores (range = .600 to .907) for each of the 23 latent variables exceeded the $\geq$ .50 criteria set forth by Fornell and Larcker (1981) which indicated convergent validity. Moreover, as a whole, the AVE values were greater than the square correlation, except for a few, between each of the latent variables which provided evidence of discriminant validity meaning that each construct is distinct from the other constructs in the model (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). As for the reliability of the mode, the

construct reliability (range = .756 to .965) of the latent variables in the model exceeded the $\geq$.70 criteria recommended by Fornell and Larcker (1981) as well (see Table 4.1).

After testing the measurement model, the path analysis of the model was conducted to test the structural model of sport brand love. The structural model's goodness of fit was evaluated prior to estimating the coefficients. The overall model fit was reasonably good (χ^2 = 6890.078, p <.001; χ^2/df = 2.73; RMSEA = .066, 90% CI = .064-.067; SRMR = .073; TLI = .89; CFI = .89; and RNI = .89). Based on the results of the path coefficients of the antecedents, there is evidence that "Perceived High Quality" (p < .001), "Team Uniqueness" (p < .001), and "Team Nostalgia" (p < .001) are all antecedents to "Sport Brand Love" because the path coefficients were statistically significant ($p \leq$ .05). For the consequences, there is evidence that all six of the consequences are outcomes of sport brand love based on the statistical significance of the path coefficients (p < .001) in the pooled sample (see Table 4.2). Overall, the hypothesized structural model explained a total of 40% of the positive WOM, 51% of team loyalty, 42% of switching intention, 91% of the willingness to invest resources, 51% of the willingness to pay higher prices, and 85% of the passionate desire to use.

Next, a multi-group path analysis was conducted on each group to determine if the relationship between the antecedents, dimensions and consequences for sport brand love were the same across both males and females. Prior to estimating the path coefficients for the male and female group, the results of the Wald test were examined to determine if there is a statistically significant difference between the two groups (Byrne, 2012). For the antecedents, the Wald test was statistically significant (p < .05) which means that there is a difference between the male and female group. The test for the consequences was not statistically significant (p > .05) which means that there is no evidence of a difference between the male and female groups.

Next, the path coefficients for the male and female group were examined to determine what differences exist. The results indicated that there is a difference between males and females for the antecedents. For the female group, "Team Nostalgia" was on the only antecedent that was statistically significant ($p < .05$). For the male group, "Perceived High Quality," "Team Uniqueness," and "Team Nostalgia" were all statistically significant ($p < .05$) antecedents. "Fan Reference" was not statistically significant ($p > .05$) for the male or female group. For the consequences, the six consequences of sport brand love were statistically significant ($p < .05$) for both males and females, which confirm the results of the Wald test (see Table 4.3).

To determine if gender has any moderating effects on the sport brand love model, the interaction effects between each of the antecedents and sport brand love that were statistically significant in both groups, as well as, between sport brand love and each of the consequences that were statistically significant in both groups were examined. There was evidence of a moderating effect of gender between "Team Nostalgia" and "Sport Brand Love" because of the statistically significant interaction ($p < .05$). The latent means difference tests were statistically significant ($p < .05$) and indicated that "Team Nostalgia" has less of an effect on "Sport Brand Love" for female consumers. These results provide evidence that there is support for H13; however, there is no evidence of support for H10-H12. As for the consequences, there was no evidence of any moderating effect of gender between "Sport Brand Love" and the six consequences based on the statistically non-significant interactions ($p > .05$). These results provide evidence that H14-H19 were not supported (see Table 4.4).

When the SEM were conducted on the two separate gender groups to determine if there were differences according to the team, there was evidence that differences did exist. More specifically, the male group, "Perceived High Quality," "Team Uniqueness," and "Team

Nostalgia" were all statistically significant ($p < .05$) antecedents for the MLB team; however, "Team Nostalgia" was the only statistically significant antecedent for the NBA and NFL teams. Moreover, the six consequences were statistically significant ($p < .05$) for all three teams as well. For the female group, "Team Uniqueness" and "Team Nostalgia" were statistically significant ($p < .05$) antecedents for the MLB team, "Team Nostalgia" was the only statistically significant ($p < .05$) antecedent for the NFL team, and "Fan Reference" was the only statistically significant antecedent for the NBA team. Additionally, the six consequences were statistically significant ($p < .05$) for the MLB and NFL team; however, "Positive WOM" and "Switching Intention" was not statistically significant ($p > .05$) for the NBA team.

Discussion

Recently, sport marketers have begun to recognize the importance of understand brand love in the sport context because sport products and consumers are unique (Tavormina et al. 2012) compared to the sport brand love of traditional products (Batra et al., 2012; Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006). Tavormina et al., (2012) developed the sport brand love model that takes into account the distinct nature of sport and its consumers. While the previous study empirically tested the model ensure sound psychometric properties and discovered that consumers of the MLB form their sport brand love differently than the consumers of the NBA and NFL, the study did not examine any factors that may have a moderating effect on the sport brand love model. In sport marketing, various studies have been conducted on gender and found there are differences in the motivation of males and females to consume sports (e.g., Byon et al., 2011; Ridinger & Funk, 2006; Swanson et al., 2003; Zhang et al., 2001) indicating that their attachment towards sports teams may differ as well. Therefore, the current study was designed to fill the current void by empirically examining the moderating effects that gender has on the sport brand model.

The path relationships of the sport brand love model were analyzed by conducting an SEM. Positive WOM, team loyalty, willingness to invest resources, willingness to pay higher prices, and passionate desire to consume were all found to be consequences that were positively influenced by the consumers' sport brand love which was consistent with previous related studies (Alexandris et al., 2007; Batra et al., 2012; Gladden & Funk, 2002; Heere & Dickson, 2008; Kwon & Armstrong, 2004; Swanson et al., 2007; Trail et al., 2005). Furthermore, the consumers' switching intentions had an inverse relationship with their sport brand love which was also consistent with previous research (Burnham et al., 2003). However, the factors that explain how or why this sport brand love is formed are the antecedents which are most crucial for sport marketers because these are. For the antecedents, perceived high quality, team uniqueness, and team nostalgia were all statistically significant antecedents which supported previous research (Albert, 2008; Batra et al., 2012; Byon & Baker, 2011; Funk & James, 2007; Keller, 1993; Netemeyer et al., 2004). On the other hand, fan reference was not statistically significant which means that previous research is not supported (Cunningham & Kwon, 2003; Pimentel & Reynolds, 2004). However, as in the first study, the fan reference was adopted from Cunningham and Kwon's (2003) social norm scale which may not have accurately measured the consumers' fan reference.

However, when the path analyses of the multi-group SEM were examined, there was evidence that the sport brand love of male and female consumers differ in some areas. There was statistical evidence that all of the consequences (i.e., positive WOM, team loyalty, switching intention, willingness to invest resources, willingness to pay higher prices, and passionate desire to consume) were found to be outcomes of sport brand love for both male and female consumers; however, there was no moderating effect of gender on these consequences which does not

support previous research (Dabholkar & Wells, 1999; Fink et al., 2002; Swanson et al., 2003). For the antecedents, similar to the previous findings in this study, fan reference was not an antecedent to sport brand love for males or females which means it had no moderating effect on fan reference which does not support previous research (Allen et al., 2010; Ridinger & Funk, 2006). However, male and female consumers differed for two of the antecedents because perceived high quality and team uniqueness were antecedents for male consumers but not for female consumers which did not support previous research (Byon et al., 2011). In this study, team nostalgia was an antecedent for both the male and female consumers; therefore, the moderating effect of gender was examined for this antecedent. There was evidence that team nostalgia had less of an effect on sport brand love for female consumers compared to male consumers which indicates that gender had a moderating effect on the relationship between team nostalgia and sport brand love. This supported one of the moderating effect hypotheses for the antecedents; however, the other three were not supported because fan reference, perceived high quality, and team uniqueness were not antecedents for females. Moreover, the six consequences were indeed outcomes of sport brand love for both male and female genders, but gender did not moderate the relationship between sport brand love and the consequences.

To make more sense of these gender differences, we looked at the results of data when it was split into a male and female group to determine if the gender differences were according to the professional team (i.e., MLB, NBA, and NFL), and there were some interesting differences that existed. Specifically, perceived high quality, team uniqueness, and team nostalgia was an antecedent to sport brand love for the MLB male consumers. However, for the MLB female consumers, "Team Uniqueness" and "Team Nostalgia" were antecedents but "Perceived High Quality" was not. This makes sense because Greenwell et al. (2012) found that females evaluate

the quality of a team at a higher level than males even when the team has a losing record. Therefore, this may mean that the perception of high quality has no significant effect on female consumers' sport brand love because they view the team as high quality regardless of the team's success. However, this had no impact on the consequences because all six were considered outcomes of sport brand love for both males and females.

For the NFL team, "Team Nostalgia" was the only antecedent to sport brand love for both male and female consumers. This makes sense for the NFL team studied in this particular city because it does not have a history of winning and has never won a championship and has only played in a championship once. Without the history of success, consumers are likely going to attach to a team based on something more than the quality of the team's performance. Additionally, the lack of success on the field may also impact consumers' perceptions of team uniqueness because without winning, the team may not really stand out from any other team in the league. Therefore, the consumer's sport brand love is formed by the nostalgic memories he or she shares with the team, regardless of the success of the team. The consumer attaches to the team based on the positive memories associated with consuming the team. Again, this had no impact on the six consequences that were all considered outcomes of sport brand love for both genders (Tavormina et al., 2012).

For the NBA team, "Team Nostalgia" was the only antecedent for sport brand love for the male consumers and this makes sense because this team is similar to the NFL team. The NBA team studied in this particular city also does not have a history of winning and has never won a championship. Therefore, like the NFL, it is likely that the consumers of the team attached to the team based on their positive memories of consuming the team (Funk & James, 2006). However, for the female consumers of the NBA team, "Fan Reference" was the only antecedent

to sport brand love. This means that female NBA consumers form their sport brand love based on the influence of the significant others around them (Wakefield & Sloan, 2005). In other words, they form their sport brand love based on the values and traditions of those people around them, not because of the positive memories associated with the team (Pimentel & Reynolds, 2004). This indicates that female NBA consumers attach to the team differently from male consumers. These differences may have been due to the fact that approximately 50% of the female NBA consumers were African-American and race may moderate sport brand love; therefore, further studies need to be conducted to determine the moderating effects of variables such as race, socio-economic status, and ticket type. In addition, the NBA team had a fairly smaller sample size compared to the MLB and NFL groups; therefore, further studies need to be conducted to validate these findings with a larger sample size.

In summary, this was the first time that any moderating effects on brand love in general had been examined. More specifically, this study examined the moderating effects of gender on sport brand love. The results indicated that sport brand love is not generalizable across male and female consumers. While there was evidence that the consequences were indeed outcomes of both male and female consumers' sport brand love, this was not true for the antecedents. Perceived high quality, team uniqueness, and team nostalgia were antecedents to sport brand love for the male sport consumers, but only team nostalgia was an antecedent for the female consumers. However, gender did have a moderating effect on the relationship between team nostalgia and sport brand love; team nostalgia had less of an effect on sport brand love for female consumers compared to male consumers.

The results of this study display why it is so important for sport marketers to understand consumers in the context of their own sport. It was clear that sport brand love was not formed the

same across the three professional sports (i.e., MLB, NBA, and NFL) nor was it formed the same

for males and females across the three professional sports. This means that sport marketers of all

different types of sport must conduct research to better understand their consumers. Furthermore,

pending further investigation, it may be true that the consumers form their sport brand love

differently depending on the area that the team is based which makes it even more evident that

sport marketers need to research the consumers within their own market. Practitioners cannot

assume that the all the consumers of one league form their sport brand love the same. This does

make a sport marketer's job more challenging, but the time consuming consumer research may

be worth it for sport organizations, especially during a slow economy.

Based on the results of the team differences, we believe it is important for sport marketers

to research their consumers according to their own sport and market which supports previous

research findings (Wann et al., 2008). However, as for the moderating effects examined in this

study, gender only moderated one antecedent out of the four and did not have a moderation

effect on any of the six consequences of sport brand love. Based on the fact that gender only

moderated one portion of this complex sport brand love model, we do not believe this is

significant enough for sport marketers to create strategic marketing plan specific to male and

female genders as previous research has found (Allen et al., 2010; Armstrong, 2002; James &

Ridinger, 2002). However, the same may not be true for other moderators such a race. The

results of the female NBA consumers in this study hinted that race may significantly moderator

sport brand love, and previous research has found that race does moderate sport consumption

(Armstrong, 2002). This means further studies need to be conducted to determine if sport

marketers should market differently based on race. Therefore, while this study did not find that

gender had a significant amount of moderating effects on sport brand love, it may have uncovered some other potential moderating factors.

Limitations and Future Studies

As with all studies, there are a number of limitations that have been recognized by the researchers in the current study. First, this study was only generalizable to professional sports; therefore, future studies should include measuring participants sport brand love towards other levels of sport such as collegiate sports, minor league sports, and individual sports. The nature of each sport varies, so it is crucial for sport marketers to understand sport brand love within the context of different sports. For example, it cannot be assumed that the sport brand love of basketball consumers forms the same as for fanatic golf consumers. In addition, future studies need to examine the moderating effects of gender on the three professional teams (i.e., MLB, NBA, and NFL) used on this study. Second, only 8% of the participants surveyed in this study were season ticket holders; therefore, further research needs to be conducted on more season ticket holders to better understand those more highly committed consumers' sport brand love. It is possible that sport brand love differs for season ticket holders compared to individual game ticket holders based on their levels of commitment, and this knowledge would be important for sport managements to be able to develop strategic marketing plans that cater to each group separately.

Third, this study was conducted in a metropolitan area where sport consumers are significantly more interested in college sports compared to professional sports (Bragg, 2012) which could have significantly impacted the teams used in this study. In addition, two out of the three professional teams used in this study do not have a history of winning or history of a strong fan base so this could have impacted the results. Future studies should include other cities and

teams to gain a better understanding of the sport brand love felt towards teams with more history. Furthermore, the timing of when the participants completed the survey may have impacted their feelings towards the team depending on whether their responses immediately following an exciting win or a disappointing loss. These feelings may have not represented their overall feelings towards the team; therefore, this could have impacted some of the results.

Fourth, this was a cross-sectional study; therefore, additional studies must be conducted on these three teams to validate the current findings. Fifth, this study only examined the moderating effects of gender; however, other variables may have moderating effect on the sport brand love model that could significant impact the marketing plans of sport managers. Thus, future research should be conducted to determine the moderating effects of other variables such as race and socio-economic status. Sixth, this study was conducted on male sport teams, so the results from this study may not be generalizable to female sports teams. Therefore, future studies need to be conducted on female sports teams before a conclusion can be about the sport brand love of consumers of female teams such as the WNBA or women's collegiate sports. It is possible that sport brand love forms differently for female sports teams because Ridinger and Funk (2006) have concluded in previous research there are significant differences between the motives to consume men's basketball versus female basketball. Lastly, the sport brand love questionnaire was reduced to 63 items, but this is still a large number of items to be used in the practical setting. Sport practitioners have demanded shorter scales to increase the efficacy of the measurement which has been recognized by some researchers (e.g., Funk, Filo, Beaton, & Pritchard, 2009). Funk et al. (2009) created a 10 item scale to measure five motives of sport attendance without compromising any sound psychometric properties. Therefore, it may be imperative to significantly reduce the number of items of the sport brand love scale to increase

its usefulness. Otherwise, the sport brand love scale may go ignored by the practitioners and this theoretical advancement will not serve its purpose.

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Table 4.1

Summary of Indicator Loadings (λ), Construct Reliability (CR), Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for the Hypothesized Measurement Model

Factors and variables	λ	CR	AVE
Perceived High Quality		0.873	0.63
Compared to other teams, the team is of very high quality	0.811		
The team is the best team in the league	0.800		
The team consistently performs better than all other opposing teams	0.790		
I can always count on the team for consistent high quality	0.778		
Fan Reference		0.818	0.600
Most people that are important to me would approve of my going to a game	0.730		
My friends are likely to attend a game this season	0.787		
People close to me (e.g., friends/family) are likely to attend a game	0.804		
Team Uniqueness		0.882	0.715
The team really "stands out" from other teams	0.753		
The team is very different from other opposing teams	0.856		
The team is unique from other teams	0.920		
Team Nostalgia		0.922	0.796
Thinking of the team bring back good memories	0.868		
I have fond memories of following the team	0.928		
I have fond memories of following the team with friends and/or family	0.880		
Team Identification		0.914	0.727
The team's successes are my successes	0.859		
When someone praises the team it feels like a personal compliment	0.902		
I am very interested in what others think about the team	0.762		
I feel a sense of "ownership" for the team rather than being just a fan	0.881		
Attitude Valence		0.890	0.730
The team gives me satisfaction	0.925		
I like the team	0.786		
The team is favorable	0.847		
Separation Distress		0.917	0.786
The thought of the team moving cities gives me anxiety	0.889		
The thought of the team moving cities makes me worry	0.894		
I fear the thought of the team moving cities	0.877		
Emotional Attachment		0.916	0.844
I am emotionally connected to the team	0.991		
I feel a bond to the team	0.926		
Positive Affect		0.756	0.610
The team makes me content	0.856		
The team makes me relaxed	0.698		

Table 4.1 *(Continued)*

Factors and variables	λ	CR	AVE
Life Meaning and Intrinsic Reward		0.885	0.795
The team makes like meaningful	0.940		
The team makes life worth living	0.840		
Attitude Strength			0.807
I strongly hold my feelings towards the team	0.895	0.926	
My feelings towards the team com quickly to my mind	0.879		
I have intense feelings toward the team	0.920		
Intuitive Fit		0.907	0.766
The team is a natural fit	0.892		
The team fits my taste perfectly	0.906		
The team felt right when I first encountered it	0.825		
Past Involvement		0.907	0.830
I have done a lot of things with the team in the past	0.938		
I have interacted a lot with the team	0.883		
Long-term Relationship		0.951	0.907
I will be consuming the team for a long time	0.936		
I feel a sense of long-term commitment to the team	0.968		
Brand Prominence		0.965	0.903
I very often have thoughts about the team	0.929		
I frequently find myself thinking about being a consumer of the team	0.967		
I find that the team keeps popping in my head	0.955		
Current Self-Identification		0.909	0.769
Others who see me as a consumer of the team get a sense of who I am	0.859		
There is a degree of image overlap between the team and myself	0.867		
The team is an important part of my self-identity	0.904		
Willingness to Invest Resources		0.943	0.807
I have spent a lot of time making the team fit my needs	0.820		
I am willing to spend a lot of money on the team	0.905		
I am willing to spend a lot of time on the team	0.940		
I have invested a lot of time, energy, and money on the team	0.923		
Passionate Desire to Consume		0.940	0.841
I feel a sense of longing toward the team	0.874		
I have a feeling of wanting toward the team	0.936		
I have a feeling of desire toward the team	0.939		
Willingness to Pay Higher Prices		0.932	0.822
I am willing to pay a higher price for the team than for other teams	0.971		
I am willing to pay a lot more for the team than for other teams	0.959		
I am willing to pay __% more for the team over other teams	0.776		

Table 4.1 *(Continued)*

Factors and variables	λ	CR	AVE
Team Loyalty		0.882	0.717
I would still be committed to the team regardless of the lack of any star players	0.931		
I would still be committed to the team regardless of the lack of physical skill among the players	0.909		
I am more likely to attend future games	0.676		
Switching Intention		0.785	0.648
How likely are you to switch to an opposing team during the next year?	0.733		
What is the chance that you will stay a fan of the team for the next year?	0.871		
Positive Word-of-Mouth		0.903	0.756
I am likely to say good things about the team	0.782		
I have recommended going to the games to my friends	0.922		
I have suggested to others that we go to a game	0.898		
Sport Brand Love (second-order factor)		0.981	0.810
Current Self-Identification	0.924		
Team Identification	0.858		
Life Meaning and Intrinsic Reward	0.826		
Brand Prominence	0.929		
Past Involvement	0.854		
Intuitive Fit	0.920		
Emotional Attachment	0.979		
Positive Affect	0.941		
Long-term Relationship	0.911		
Anticipated Separation Distress	0.699		
Attitude Valence	0.929		
Attitude Strength	0.989		

Table 4.2

Summary of Standardized Loadings and Standard Errors for the Hypothesized Structural Model

Path coefficients between factors	*β*	*SE*
Sport Brand Love ← Perceived High Quality	0.219**	0.061
Sport Brand Love ← Fan Reference	-0.042	0.039
Sport Brand Love ← Team Uniqueness	0.185**	0.051
Sport Brand Love ← Team Nostalgia	0.541**	0.034
Positive WOM ← Sport Brand Love	0.638**	0.026
Loyalty ← Sport Brand Love	0.721**	0.022
Switching Intention ← Sport Brand Love	-0.657**	0.029
Willingness to Invest Resources ← Sport Brand Love	0.956**	0.005
Willingness to Pay Higher Prices ← Sport Brand Love	0.716**	0.008
Passionate Desire to Consume ← Sport Brand Love	0.925**	0.021

Note: * $p < 0.05$.
** $p < 0.01$.

Table 4.3

Summary of Standardized Loadings and Standard Errors for the Hypothesized Effects of Gender

	Males		Females	
Path coefficients between factors	*β*	*SE*	*β*	*SE*
Sport Brand Love ← Perceived High Quality	0.164*	0.068	0.223	0.118
Sport Brand Love ← Fan Reference	-0.019	0.048	0.022	0.070
Sport Brand Love ← Team Uniqueness	0.217**	0.057	0.120	0.101
Sport Brand Love ← Team Nostalgia	0.595**	0.040	0.485*	0.057
Positive WOM ← Sport Brand Love	0.689**	0.034	0.602**	0.041
Loyalty ← Sport Brand Love	0.729**	0.028	0.713**	0.034
Switching Intention ← Sport Brand Love	-0.677**	0.039	-0.604**	0.045
Willingness to Invest Resources ← Sport Brand Love	0.955**	0.007	0.952**	0.008
Willingness to Pay Higher Prices ← Sport Brand Love	0.726**	0.027	0.683**	0.034
Passionate Desire to Consume ← Sport Brand Love	0.906**	0.012	0.936**	0.010

Note: * *p* < 0.05.
** *p* < 0.01.

Table 4.4

Summary of Standardized Loadings and Standard Errors for the Interaction Effects of Gender

Path coefficients of the interaction terms	β	SE
Sport Brand Love ← Team Nostalgia	-0.153**	0.056
Positive WOM ← Sport Brand Love	0.055	0.066
Loyalty ← Sport Brand Love	-0.006	0.073
Switching Intention ← Sport Brand Love	-0.038	0.054
Willingness to Invest Resources ← Sport Brand Love	-0.007	0.036
Willingness to Pay Higher Prices ← Sport Brand Love	-0.008	0.078
Passionate Desire to Consume ← Sport Brand Love	-0.043	0.043

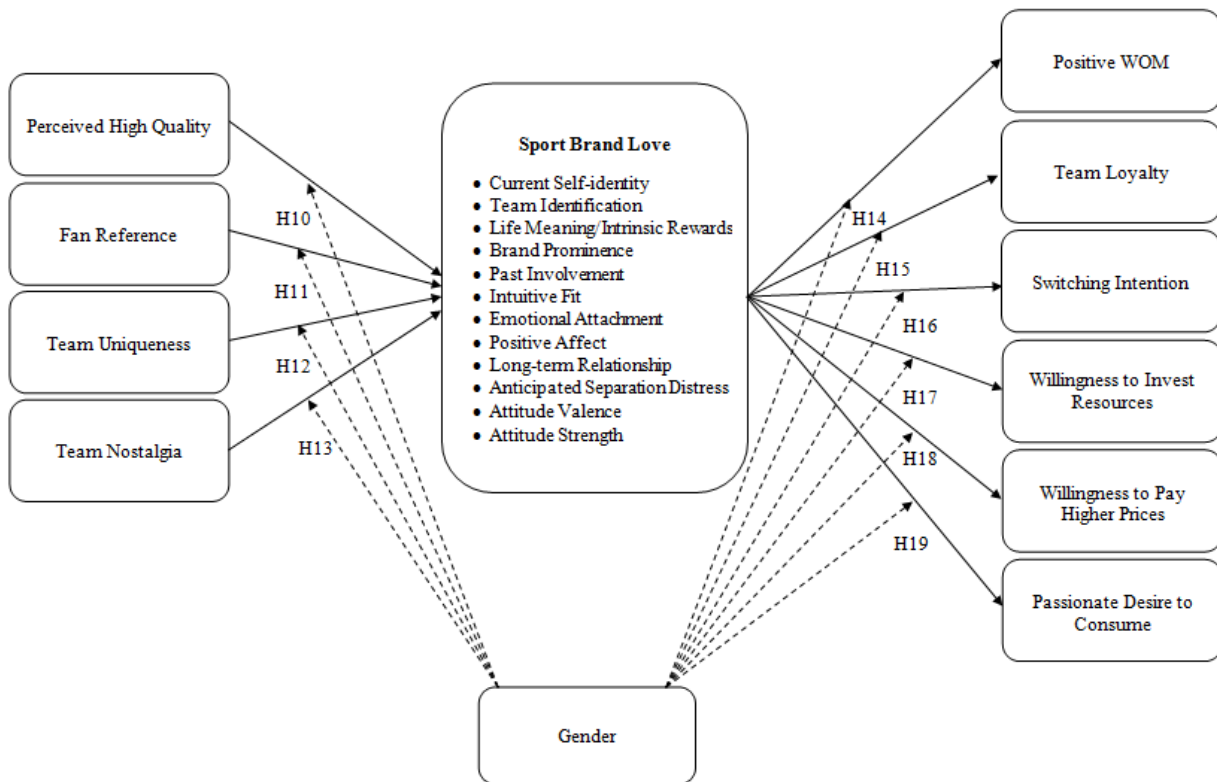Note: * $p < 0.05$.
** $p < 0.01$.

Figure 4.1. Moderating effects of gender on sport brand love.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The brand love model that has recently been developed in the general marketing context (Albert et al., 2008; Batra et al., 2012; Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006) has been a great advancement of understanding the dynamics of consumer's brand love, the highest form of attachment that consumers feel towards brands. Sports may be one of the industries in which this brand love is most evident, but the construct had never been applied to sport. However, sport products and consumers are unique (Gladden & Funk, 2002; Mullin et al., 2007) compared to traditional products; therefore, the sport brand love model need to be modified according to the sport context and empirically validated. Moreover, the moderating effects of variables (i.e., gender) on brand love had not been examined in the previous general marketing studies.

With sport brand love being so apparent in the sport industry and all of the financial challenges facing the sports today, it is crucial that sport researchers and practitioners gain knowledge about the dimensions of sport brand love, how it forms, and the effects it has on sport consumer behaviors. It is also important to understand that sport brand love is theoretically distinct from other attachment constructs that have been developed in the sport marketing literature. More specifically, sport brand love is more comprehensive because it is inclusive of other constructs such as team identification, emotional attachment, and attitude (e.g., Fink et al., 2002; Funk & James, 2004; Kwon & Armstrong, 2004; Trail & James, 2001; Wann & Branscombe, 1993). Therefore, the primary purposes of these investigations was to empirically validate the sport brand love model within the professional sport context and determine the

moderating effects gender has on the sport brand love model. The validation was conducted by analyzing the responses of consumers who had attended a sporting event in the past for one of the three professional teams (i.e., MLB, NBA, and NFL) used in this study.

After some minimal modifications to the proposed higher-order model as expected, the results of the study indicated that the sport brand love model was valid and reliable model that helps explain the highest level of consumer attachment to sports. Specifically, there were a total of 12 first- order factors (current self-identity, team identification, life meaning/intrinsic reward, brand prominence, past involvement, intuitive fit, emotional attachment, positive affect, long-term relationship, anticipated separation distress, attitude valence, and attitude strength) that empirically represented the sport brand love second-order factor. In addition, there was empirical evidence that a sequential relationship between the four antecedents (perceived high quality, fan reference, team uniqueness, and team nostalgia), sport brand love, and the six consequences (positive WOM, team loyalty, switching intention, willingness to invest resources, willingness to pay higher prices, and passionate desire to consume) existed. This means that the sport brand love model successfully allows sport researchers and practitioners to gain a better understanding of consumer's sport brand love.

However, there was empirical evidence that the sport brand love model is not generalizable across the three professional teams (i.e., MLB, NBA, and NFL). Therefore, subsequent studies need to be conducted to confirm these results and to determine the dynamics of sport brand love within other types of sports such as individual sports, collegiate sports, and female sports. Furthermore, there was empirical evidence that sport brand love does differ for male and female consumers. While there was empirical evidence that all six consequences were indeed outcomes of sport brand love for both genders, only one antecedent (i.e, team nostalgia)

in this study formed sport brand love for females, whereas, three antecedents (i.e., perceived high quality, team uniqueness, and team nostalgia) formed sport brand love for males. There was also empirical evidence in this study that the relationship between team nostalgia and sport brand love was moderated by gender; team nostalgia had less of an effect on female consumers. Again, subsequent studies should be conducted to validate these findings and to discover if gender differences exist according to the different sport teams used in this study and other different types of sports not examined in this study. In conclusion, despite some limitations, these studies provide valuable insight regarding the sport brand love model and the moderating effects of gender and the need for further research further research of sport brand love in different sporting contexts.

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APPENDIX A

SPORT BRAND LOVE QUESTTIONAIRE

For which sport team have you attended a game? ❑ MLB Team   ❑ NFL Team   ❑ NBA Team
(choose one)

To what extent do you agree with all of the following statements based on your thoughts/feelings towards the team selected above? (NOTE: Consumer =someone who watches the team, reads about the team, wears team merchandise, etc.)

I. STATEMENTS	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. Compared to other teams, the team is of very high quality.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. People close to me (e.g., friends/family) are likely to attend a game.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3. The team consistently performs better than all other teams.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4. The team really "stands out" from other teams.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5. The team is the best team in the league.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6. The team is "unique" from other teams.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7. The team is very different from other teams.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8. Most people that are important to me would approve of my going to a game.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9. My friends are likely to attend a game this season.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10. I can always count on the team for consistent high quality.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

	Not at all						Very much
11. I like the team.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
12. The team fits my taste perfectly.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
13. I frequently find myself thinking about being a consumer of the team.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
14. The thought of the team moving cities makes me worry.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
15. Others who see me as a consumer of the team get a sense of who I am.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
16. I have interacted a lot with the team.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
17. The team is a natural fit.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
18. The thought of the team moving cities gives me anxiety.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
19. The team felt right when I first encountered it.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
20. The team makes life worth living.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
21. I have intense feelings towards the team.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
22. I have done a lot of things with the team in the past.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
23. I very often have thoughts about the team.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

24. I am emotionally connected to the team.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
25. The team gives me satisfaction.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
26. The thought of the team moving cities fills me with apprehension.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
27. The team makes me content.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
28. I have confidence of my feelings towards the team.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
29. I will be a consumer of the team for a long time.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
30. I feel a sense of long-term commitment to the team.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
31. I find that thoughts of the team keep popping in my head.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
32. The team is an important part of my self-identity.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

	Not at all						Very much
33. I frequently find myself thinking about the team.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
34. The team makes me relaxed.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
35. The team is favorable.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
36. The team meets my need perfectly.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
37. My feelings towards the team come quickly to my mind.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
38. The team is an important part of self.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
39. The team will be a part of my life for a long time to come.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
40. I fear the thought of the team moving cities.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
41. The team makes life meaningful.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
42. I feel a bond to the team.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
43. I strongly hold my feelings towards the team.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
44. The team is what I have been looking for.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
45. The team is a rewarding part of my self-identity.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
46. There is a degree of image overlap between the team and myself.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
47. Thinking of the team brings back good memories.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
48. I have fond memories of following the team.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
49. When someone praises the team it feels like a personal compliment.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
50. I am very interested in what others think about the team.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
51. I feel a sense of "ownership" for the team rather than being just a fan.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
52. I have fond memories of following the team with friends/ family.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
53. When someone criticizes the team it feels like a personal insult.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
54. The team's successes are my successes.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
55. I would still be committed to the team regardless of the lack of physical skill among the players.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
56. I have suggested to others that we go to a game.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

	Very unlikely	Unlikely	Neutral	Likely	Very likely		
57. How likely are you to switch to an opposing team during the next year?							

	0% chance	25%	50%	75%	100% chance		
58. What is the chance that you will stay a fan of the team for the next year?							

	0%	5%	10%	15%	20%	25%	30%/ more
59. I am willing to pay ___% more for the team over other teams.							

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
60. I have recommended going to the games to my friends.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
61. I am likely to say good things about the team.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
62. I am willing to pay a lot more for the team than for other teams.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
63. I am willing to pay a higher price for the team than for other teams.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
64. I am more likely to attend future games.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
65. I would still be committed to the team regardless of the lack of any star players.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

	Not at all						Very much
66. I have invested a lot of time, energy, and money on the team.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
67. I am willing to spend a lot of money on the team.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
68. I have a feeling of desire toward the team.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
69. I have spent a lot of time making the team fit my needs.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
70. I am willing to spend a lot of time on the team.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
71. I have a feeling of wanting toward the team.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
72. I have a feeling of longing toward the team.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7