

## The measurement of sport fan curiosity

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Abstract 406**

A number of prior studies have investigated the social, individual, and psychological factors influencing sport fan attitudes and behaviors towards certain sports, sport teams and players (e.g., Funk & James, 2001; Funk, Mahony, & Ridinger, 2002; Kahle, Kambara, & Rose, 1996; Mahony, Madrigal, & Howard, 1999; Milne & McDonald, 1999; Sutton, McDonald, Milne, & Cimperman, 1997; Trail & James, 2001; Wann, 1995). While a number of studies have examined the factors influencing sport fan behavior, most of those studies focused on highly identified sport fans (Park, Andrew, & Mahony, 2006). In contrast, there is surprisingly little literature on factors influencing the initial interest in a sport or sport team (Funk, Haugtvedt, & Howard, 2000; James, 2000; Kolbe & James, 2000; Wann, Tucker, & Schrader, 1996). In other words, research about what initially causes individuals to watch sports and sport teams still remains under examined. Examining the initial factors that lead to an individual's interest in a sport is important because this will help sports and sport teams expand their fan base in the highly competitive sport spectator market place (Mahony & Howard, 2001).

Park et al. (2006) suggested one individual personality factor that may initially attract one to a sport or sport team would be curiosity. Curiosity can be broadly defined as a "desire for acquiring new knowledge and new sensory experience that motivates exploratory behavior" (Litman & Spielberg, 2003, p. 75). This concept of curiosity is considered important in a sport context as it could directly and indirectly influence various sport fan behaviors. For example, the uncertainty of sport (i.e. the results of sport games) would generate curiosity and keep people curious until games are over. Different strategies and rules for each sport also provoke sport fans' curiosity to spend more time seeking information about the sport and to watch more games. In addition, a sport advertisement that contains a moderate level of information about the sport may increase curiosity and influence sport fans to watch the sport (Park, Mahony, & Greenwell, 2007). Therefore, a better understanding of sport fan curiosity and its impact on fan behaviors would provide sport marketers with insight into how sport fans are initially attracted to sports and sport teams and how best to attract them.

Even though there have been a number of studies on curiosity in psychology, there are a number of reasons to believe that a new measure is needed to extend the line of curiosity into a sport context. First, sport fans appear to be different than consumers of other products (Park et al., 2007). Second, consumption in a sport context is likely influenced by the unique situational influences of sport because sport situations are different from psychology settings (Park et al., 2007). In addition, Churchill (1979) argued that a critical procedure in developing essential body of knowledge is to develop better measures. No attempt has been made to understand sport fan behaviors based on the concept of curiosity except the Park et al. (2006; 2007) studies.

Therefore, the purpose of this study is to develop a reliable and valid measurement scale to assess sport fan curiosity (SFC) in order to better apply the concept of curiosity in a sport setting. To fulfill this purpose, the authors followed the Churchill's (1979) suggestions on scale development procedures as follows: First, the multi-dimensional construct of SFC, sport fan specific curiosity and sport fan exploratory curiosity, was identified based on the review of literature. Sport fan specific curiosity was defined as curiosity that seeks specific novel and cognitive information about sports, players, or sport teams that make people involve in various sport fan behaviors. Sport fan exploratory curiosity was also defined as curiosity that seeks sensational and novel stimulation of sports, players, or sport teams that makes people engage in sport fan exploratory behaviors. Second, the items were generated and modified by the researcher for both sport fan specific curiosity (24 items) and sport fan exploratory curiosity (18 items). Third, two groups of participants (samples 1 and 2) were recruited and the items were purified in a pilot test through exploratory factor analysis (EFA). Fourth, a second group of participants (sample 3) were recruited in order to examine reliability and validity of the SFC scale through confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). Fifth, the use of the current study in norm development of the SFC was evaluated.

A total of 667 students taking sport management, marketing, activity classes, or similar classes, were recruited for this study during the fall 2007 semester at three universities. Ferber (1977) said a student sample is reasonable when the study is exploratory in nature. The data for this study has been collected and is currently being analyzed. The results of the analysis and implications of this study will be presented and ideas for future research will be discussed.