

**A Study of Female Sport Fans with Respect to Fantasy Sport Participation**

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**Marketing**

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**20-minute oral presentation  
(including questions)**

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In the past decade the academic study of fantasy sports has taken many distinct paths, some of which include, marketing, competitive fandom, loyalty, and motivation to compete (Drayer, Shapiro, Dwyer, Morse, & White, 2010; Dwyer, 2011; Halverson & Halverson, 2008; Farquhar & Meeds, 2007). While the literature on fantasy sport traverses a diverse area of topics, almost all of the literature has focused on the dominant male consumer. According to the Fantasy Sport Trade Association (FSTA), 87% of all fantasy sport players in North America are male (FSTA, 2012). This has led to a scarcity of academic studies involving females and fantasy sport.

Since females make up 13% of all fantasy sport participants (FSTA, 2012), intuitively one may presume that the gender breakdown of fantasy sport participants would be similar to the fan gender breakdown of the sport from which the fantasy league is derived from. However, this is not the case as North American big league sports typically have a fan base which is composed of 36% to 41% female fans (King, 2010). Therefore, the ratio of male to female fantasy sport participants does not reflect the fan demographics of the professional sport from which the fantasy sport is derived (Levy, 2005). As fantasy sports is highly profitable, generating over \$800 million annually in North America alone (FSTA, 2011), developing a more thorough understanding of the female fantasy sport consumer will help companies better market fantasy sports to the untapped female sport fan demographic. With this knowledge in mind, the purpose of this study is to examine the motivational factors involved in female big league (MLB, NBA, NFL, NHL) sports fans' fantasy sport participation and non-participation.

For the purpose of this study, semi-structured focus groups will be used as the source of data. Focus groups have been utilized as the sole data collection method in many studies involving sport including, Johnson, Tillgren, & Hagstromer (2009), Oliver, Hardy, & Markland (2010), and Smith & Ingham (2003). According to Bloor, Frankland, Thomas, & Robson (2001), focus groups can throw light on the normative understandings that groups draw upon to reach their collective judgments. It is this normative understanding that the researcher wishes to utilize in order to understand the motivational factors that lead to participation and non-participation in fantasy sport. Female big league sport fans will be purposefully recruited through multiple mediums including posters, emails, websites, and personal solicitation. In order to participate in this study the female participants must self-identify as a sports fan (Wann, Shrader, & Wilson, 1999). To be included in the data analysis participants will be required to display behavioral and attitudinal signs of sport fandom while participating in the focus group (Funk & James, 2001; Mahony, Madrigal, Howard, 1999; Sutton, McDonald, Milne, & Cimperman, 1997).

This study will consist of between five and eight focus groups consisting of five-eight participants, in congruence with Krueger & Casey (2009), for a total of 25 to 64 participants. Through having a range of 25 to 64 participants, this study aims to satisfy the suggestions of Krueger & Casey (2009) while also following the precedent set by multiple sport related studies that utilize focus groups (Johnson, Tillgren, & Hagstromer, 2009; Oliver, Hardy, & Markland, 2010; Smith & Ingham, 2003). Within this study there will be two distinct sets of focus groups: female big league sport fans who do not participate in fantasy sports, and female big league sport fans who do participate in fantasy sports. We believe we can best understand female big league sport fans' motivation to participate or not participate in fantasy sport through researching the perspective of both female fantasy sport non-consumers and consumers. Therefore, focus groups for both the non-consumer and consumer will continue until the point of theoretical saturation is reached, or eight focus groups are completed. It is expected that data gathering will take place in the winter of 2012-2013, with data analysis finished by the spring of 2013.

Data analysis will involve transcribing the completed focus groups and analyzing the data with the help of Roy and Goss's (2007) "Influences on Fantasy Sport Consumption" framework. The "Influences on Fantasy Sport Consumption" framework states that fantasy sport consumption is motivated by three main factors: psychological influences, social influences, and marketer-controlled influences. Through analyzing the transcribed focus group

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data in conjunction with the framework presented by Roy and Goss (2007), we wish to create a more transparent understanding of the female big league sport fan in regards to fantasy sport. We hope that our findings will provide insights that will help those marketing fantasy sports reach a market segment that continues to be elusive.