The Effect of Fan Passion on Sport Consumer Behavior in the Minor League Context

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Fan passion is a new concept that is being used in the sporting industry today (Wakefield, 2016). According to Vallerand et al (2003), passion can be defined as “a strong inclination toward an activity that people like or even love that they find important, and in which they invest time and energy”. A recent work (e.g., Wakefield, 2016) found that compared to traditional concepts such as Sport Spectator Identification Scale (Wann & Branscombe, 1993) and Sport Consumer-Team Relationship (Kim, Trail, & Ko, 2011), the concept of fan passion is more useful and powerful to predict sport-related consumption behavior (e.g., attendance, spectatorship, social media usage). Thus, this new concept would help scholars and practitioners identify who our consumers are and understand how they consume sport-related products. Despite of its benefits, not much research has been conducted in this line of research. Therefore, the current study aims to extend the previous work (Wakefield, 2016) by examining the newly developed concept in the minor league setting (e.g., baseball, ice hockey).

There are mainly two reasons why we examine fan passion in the minor league settings. According to Greenwell, Lee, & Naeger (2007), sport practitioners in the minor leagues often confront challenges of less identified fans. Thus, they need to develop an effective way to attract fans with investigation of fan passion in minor league setting. They will be able to develop a segmentation of marketing strategies for the minor league fan base. This study will further examine different patterns of consumption behaviors between American Hockey League and Minor League Baseball.

It is expected that fan passion will account for considerable variances in minor league’s fan consumption such as attendance (H1), media usages (H2), and merchandised product consumption (H3).

A survey via email will be distributed to minor league fans from four different minor league teams located in the Northeast of the United States in the beginning of February 2019 to March 2019. Online survey instrument will adopt the measurement scales used by Wakefield (2016), including fan passion, attendance, media usage, and merchandise product consumption. CFA and SEM analysis will be utilized to validate the scale and examine the relationship between fan passion and consumption behavior respectively.

It is anticipated that fan passion would give evidence for substantial variances in minor leagues’ fan consumption such as attendance, media usages, and merchandised product consumption. These results will imply that fan passion is the main factor of consumption behaviors such as attendance, media usages, and mechanized product consumption in the minor league. The current study will contribute to the field of sport management scholarship academy and the minor league target segments in several manners. Since Wakefield introduced the concept of fan passion with lucrative benefits to the sport management literature, the current study may be known as the first successive study. Thus, the current study will add knowledge to the specific line of research. Understanding consumption behaviors through fan passion scale in the minor league setting will help generate more loyal fan base.