

DOES BETTER EVENT QUALITY MEANS MORE FANS? MODERATING EFFECT OF  
PERCEIVED VALUE, TRUST, AND COMMITMENT ON THE LINK BETWEEN EVENT  
QUALITY FACTORS AND BEHAVIORAL INTENTION.

By

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To my wife and daughter

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Abstract of Thesis Presented to the Graduate School  
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Event quality (EQ) is one of the most popular research areas to increase sport consumer behavior. However, the limited research has shown that how the relationship between EQ and behavioral intention is influenced by other factors (e.g. perceived value, trust, commitment). Therefore, the purpose of this study is to empirically test the potential moderating effect of perceived value, trust, and commitment on the relationship between EQ and behavioral intention in the spectator sport context. Data were collected from a large Southeastern university at home women's intercollegiate basketball games. The results of the structural equation modeling (SEM) with AMOS 18.0 revealed that in collegiate women's basketball, among the event quality factors, game performance ( $\beta=.45$ ), entertainment ( $\beta=.34$ ), and interaction with staff ( $\beta=.17$ ) positively influenced sport consumption behavior. On the other hand, physical surrounding was not found to influence sport consumer behavior. Furthermore, to formally test if there was a significant structural difference between the high level of perceived value, trust, and commitment group and general level of perceived value, trust, and commitment group samples, multi-group SEM was conducted using AMOS. Unfortunately, current study could not attempt to analyze the moderating effect of perceived value and trust. However commitment has a chance to examine

the moderating effect. For the highly committed group, only the performance-attendance path ( $\beta=.46$ ) turned out to be significant. Otherwise, for the general group, three among four paths: game performance ( $\beta=.52$ ), in-game entertainment ( $\beta=.46$ ), and interaction with the staff ( $\beta=.27$ ), turned out to be significant. This study indicated that to attract the general commitment customers, sport managers need to focus on those three factors. This study will benefit the spectator sport industry by contributing to the development of a knowledge base regarding event quality and commitment of sport spectators. The findings of this study can be used as valuable information for market segmentation within the spectator sport industry and for developing targeted event quality marketing strategies.

## CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

The spectator sport is one of the largest and fastest growing industries in the United States. In 1999, the sport industry was valued at \$213 billion—well over twice the size of the U.S. auto industry (Broughton, Lee, & Netheny, 1999). It has grown sharply in recent years to \$410 billion in 2007 (Plunkett Research, 2007). Furthermore, sports are the most popular leisure activity in North America (Higgs & McKinley, 2005). In the respective 2006–2007 seasons, approximately 150 million spectators attended games of the four major professional sport leagues, which include Major League Baseball (MLB), National Football League (NFL), National Basketball League (NBA), National Hockey League (NHL) (Sport Business Research Network, 2008). These figures indicate the great importance of sports in United States.

### **Statement of Problems**

Although sport industries have received substantial benefits from the success of the spectator sport segment, sports organizations are recently experiencing a number of significant challenges in the business environment (Howard & Crompton, 2005). Howard and Crompton (2005) emphasized that both professional and collegiate sport organizations should manage serious problems such as spiraling operating costs, a saturated marketplace, economic disconnect, and the emergence of new technology. First, the cost of operating sports teams has escalated much faster than revenue in the last few years. For example, during the 2007-2008 seasons, NBA average salary was \$5.36 million per year and the new Yankee Stadium cost \$1.3 billion. At the same time, competition for spectators' discretionary dollars is becoming even more severe. Over 600 professional sports teams and 1,000 collegiate athletic programs compete to attract spectators in North America. Furthermore, working-class and middle-class spectators cannot afford the quickly increasing cost of stadium events. For example, during 2003-2009

seasons, MLB average fan cost index was increased 32.4 %. Finally, the emergence and development of new technology could be both threats and opportunities. The competition created by video games, movies, and TV shows has become more severe. On the other hand, these technologies allow spectators to enjoy the game more comfortably and frequently. Also, the fan can get information about sports in more places.

Facing these serious challenges, sport marketers have attempted a variety of ways to overcome these problems. Many scholars tried to find the solution in service quality (Ko & Pastore, 2004; Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1985; Reichheld & Sasser, 1990; Zeithaml, Berry, & Parasuraman, 1996). In a saturated marketplace, increasing customer satisfaction with service quality is key factor for success in sport organization. A considerable amount of research has found that high-quality service is a significant factor to increase customer satisfaction (Anderson, Fornell, & Lehmann, 1994; Dagger & Sweeney, 2007). Satisfied customers are more likely to purchase, become more associated with the organization, and do not defect when prices increase (Anderson et al., 1994; Cronin, Brady, & Hult, 2000).

Theoretically, service quality should be linked to repurchase behavior. However, several studies found that service quality was not applicable to all contexts (Dagger & Sweeney, 2007; Greenwell, Fink, & Pastore, 2002; Mittal & Kamakura, 2000; McDonald, Milne, & Cimperman, 1997). The service experience could be affected by the third variable such as customer character (Grove, Fisk, & Dorsch, 1998; Mittal & Kamakura, 2001), team identification (Greenwell et al., 2002; McDonald et al., 1997), length of relationship (Dagger & Sweeney, 2007), and demographics (Greenwell et al., 2002). Based on these studies, the researcher believes that service quality is influenced by the third variable. To better understand how sport consumers develop quality perceptions, in-depth analysis using these moderating variables is necessary.

One potential factor that influences the relationship between service quality and consumer behavior is perceived value. Prior research indicated that perceived value was the most important factor in customers' decisions to make a purchase (Buzzell & Gale, 1987; Cronin et al., 2000; Lee et al., 2007; Oh, 2000) and has both direct and indirect effects on consumer behavior (Cronin et al., 2000; Oh, 2000; Zeithaml, 1998). Trust and commitment were also found to have an effect on consumer behavior (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). Trust could decrease perceived risk and increase behavior intention (Berry, 1995; Luo, 2002). Additionally, commitment helps to prevent customer detachment (Crosby & Taylor, 1984; Prichard, Havtitz, & Howard, 1999), and positively affects customer loyalty (Prichard et al., 1999; Palmatier et al., 2006).

As previous literature suggested, perceived value, trust, and commitment positively influence consumer behavior. However, limited research was conducted regarding how perceived value, trust, and commitment effect the relationship between service quality and consumer behavior. Specifically, this issue has not been investigated in the sports context. It is the intention of this research to find how perceived value, trust, and commitment influences the relationship between service quality and consumer behavior in spectator sports.

### **Purpose of Study**

The general aim of this study is to expand our understanding of consumer behavior in the sports industry by examining several salient consumer variables: event quality, perceived value, trust, and commitment. Specifically, the purposes of this study were (a) to identify which specific factors of event quality positively influence on spectators' behavioral intention and (b) to empirically test the potential moderating effect of perceived value, trust, and commitment on the relationship between event quality and behavioral intention in the spectator sports context.

### **Contribution of the Study**

This research examine the effective event quality factors among game performance, in-game entertainment, interaction with staff, and facility design to increase sport consumer behavioral intention. This study helps sport managers to develop more effective service marketing strategy. Based on these results, sport managers could focus on more affective event quality factors.

Moreover, this study examined the moderating effect between event quality and behavioral intention. Although prior research examined the various moderating effects, limited studies have been identified the moderating effect of perceived value, trust, and commitment on the relationship between event quality and behavioral intention, especially in the sport context. This results could be the theoretical background of future research that trying to find the moderating effect of the relationship between event quality and behavioral intention not only sport context but also business context. Practically, the sport marketer can use the results in developing effective segmentation based on the level of perceived value, trust and commitment. Based on this segmentation, sport marketer could establish more effective event marketing strategies.

### **Limitations of the Study**

This study has some limitations that should be considered for future research. First limitation is event quality factors. Previous studies found the various event quality factors (e.g. parking, concession, information, cleanness) that positively influence increasing behavioral intention. However, this research only focused on four factors (game performance, in-game entertainment, interaction with staff, and facility design). This limited factors caused the limitation of event quality research findings. Therefore, future research may need to incorporate different event quality factors to develop a better understanding of the relationship between event quality and behavioral intention.

Second limitation is behavioral intention factors. Similar with event quality factors' limitation, current study only focused on attendance behavioral intention. Although increasing attendance intention is one of the most important behavioral intentions in the spectator sport industry, previous research revealed the importance of other behavioral intentions such as word-of-mouth, merchandised products consumption, and media consumption. Thus, future study may need to include different consumer behavior to increase a better understanding of the spectators' behavioral intention.

Third limitation is participants of this research. The majority of the participants were college students. The sample of college students might limit the generalizability of the research findings. In addition, the context of this study, a women's collegiate basketball game, might also limit the generalizability of the findings. Therefore, future research need to broad sample and context such as the customers who visit the men's basketball or professional sport games.

### **Definitions of Terms**

1. Event Quality - comparison of a consumer's evaluation of the service performance to their pre-expectation of the service (Zeithaml, Berry, & Parasuraman, 1988)
  - a. Game performance - spectators' perceptions regarding the quality of athletic performance through which spectators experience aesthetics, excitement, and drama in sport events (Ko, Zhang, & Pastore, in review, p. 4)
  - b. In-Game Entertainment - variety of entertainment offered during the event to keep fans entertained and to maximize their interests (e.g. cheerleader performance, half-court shots for prizes, and half-time events) (Ko et al., in review)
  - c. Interaction with Staff - the customers' subjective perception of how the service is delivered during the service encounter in which the attitude, behavior, and expertise of service personnel are highlighted (Ko & Pastore, 2004, p. 164)
  - d. Facility Design - Functional and aesthetic facility's layout or architecture (Bitner, 1992)
2. Perceived Value - consumer's overall assessment of the utility of a product (or service) based on perceptions of what is received and what is given (Zeithaml, 1988, p. 14)

3. Trust - the perception of confidence in the exchange partner's reliability and integrity (Morgan & Hunt, 1994, p. 23)
4. Commitment - an enduring desire to maintain a valued relationship (Moorman, Zaltman & Deshpande, 1992, p. 316)
5. Spectator Sport Behavioral Intention - a predict actual attend in the stadium (Grewal, Krishnan, Baker, & Robin, 1998).

## CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

### **Service Quality**

Service quality constructs stem from manufacturing research conducted in 1920 (Kandampully, 2002). Service quality has received great attention from service marketing researchers over the past two decades. Because service quality has been researched for a long time, various definitions have been created. Zeithaml et al., (1988) defined service quality as the comparison of a consumer's evaluation of the service performance to their pre-expectation of the service. Bitner and Hubbert (1994) defined service quality as "the consumer's overall impression of the relative inferiority/superiority of the organization and its services" (p. 77).

Since service quality became a focus of research, its importance has been identified as it applies to a variety of industries, such as telecommunication (Bolton & Drew, 1991), aircraft (Anderson, Pearo & Widener, 2008), insurance (Crosby & Stephens, 1987), tourism (Petrick & Backman, 2001; Shonk & Chelladurai, 2008), banking (Schneider, White, & Paul, 1998), health care (Dagger & Sweeney, 2007; Mittal, Ross, & Baldasare 1998), restaurant (Steven, Knutson, & Patton, 1995; Bojanic & Rosen, 1994), hotel (Mei, Dean, & White, 1999), online consumption (Cai & Jun, 2003; Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Malhotra, 2005). Relative to sports, numerous studies exist, such as fitness programs (Alexandris, Zahariadis, Tsorbatzoudis, & Grouios, 2004; Kim & Kim 1995), golf courses (Crilley, Murray, Howat, March, & Adamson, 2002), recreation and leisure (Crompton, MacKay, & Fesenmaier 1991; MacKay & Crompton 1988; Howat, Absher, Crilley, & Milne, 1996; Ko & Pastore 2004, 2005; ), sport tourism (Shonk & Chelladurai, 2008; Solberg & Preuss, 2007), sport events (Ko et al., in press; Solberg & Preuss, 2007; Tsuji, Bennett, & Zhang, 2007).

## **Spectator Sport Event Quality**

The study about service have been researched various industry (Parasuraman et al., 1985; Reichheld & Sasser, 1990; Zeithaml et al., 1996). However, service perception about business and spectator sport is different (Ko et al., in review). In the spectator sport context, customer establish their perception of overall event such as game performance (Hansen & Gauthier, 1989; Shofield, 1983), service delivery system (Getz, 2005), amenities and additional services (Hansen & Gauthier, 1989). Therefore, this study used the terms of event quality instead of service quality.

Previous research has examined the effect of event quality, which is an important factor in improving consumer behavior. Wakefield and Blodgett (1994) identified the importance of servicescape by videotape simulation method in a major league baseball stadium. Although videotape simulation method could not examine the ambient features such as music, aromas, temperature, or weather, it could produce valid consumer responses and control over other factors such as win/lose record, teams playing, time of the baseball season, and manipulation of involvement levels. They found that the satisfaction levels and future intentions are strongly influenced by perceptions of the servicescape. When customers perceived a high quality of servicescape, they were more satisfied and had more repatronage intention.

Wakefield and Sloan (1995) examined the importance of the stadium service experience in college spectator sports. They found that spectators' desires to stay, and therefore, to attend games were directly influenced by comfortable parking, stadium cleanliness (especially restroom and concession area), variety and high quality of food service specially comparing with price quality, and providing safety from abusive or offensive fans. Perceived crowding and uncomfortable seats had a negative impact. Hill and Green (2000) examined the effects of

sportscape in rugby leagues. They found that the sportscape enhanced future game attendance behavior of home-team supporters.

Kelly and Turley (2002) researched nine service attributes that sport fans used in evaluating their service experience: employees, price, facility access, concessions, fan comfort, game experience, show time, convenience, and smoking. They found that every factor except for concessions significantly influenced fan service evaluating behavior. The most important factor was game experience. However, sport marketers cannot control the game experience. Therefore, it is suggested, sport marketers must focus on the variables that they can control. When game quality is poor, controllable factors can help to provide a better experience to customers. Leeuwen, Quick, and Daniel (2002) support this conclusion. Although the core service is not a controllable factor, it is still important to understand how both core and peripheral service quality positively influence spectator sport satisfaction.

Greenwell et al. (2002) suggested that all service experience variables such as core product, physical facility, and service personnel significantly influences customer satisfaction. Customer satisfaction was moderately influenced by customers' perceptions of the physical facility as a whole rather than specific factor. Also they found that, although both core product and service personnel are important, the perception of service personnel is slightly more important to customer satisfaction than core product. This result contrasts with Kelly and Turley (2002). In Kelly and Turley, study participants were the spectators of intercollegiate athletics, whereas Greenwell et al. study participants were spectators of a minor league ice hockey team. The finding that spectators are more concerned with components of the service personnel than the core product is consistent with other research on minor league hockey spectators (Zhang, Pease, Smith, Lee, Lam, & Jambor, 1997). Furthermore, this research highlights the

effectiveness of evaluating the entire service experience rather than separating one or two attributes. They suggested that to satisfy customers and increase consumption behavior, managers should focus on all three interrelated variables.

Tsuji et al. (2007) examined the relationships among core and peripheral service quality, satisfaction, and future intention in action sport events. They found both core and peripheral service quality significantly influences satisfaction, and peripheral service quality positively affects future intention. Although core service quality did not significantly impact future intention directly, it had an indirect effect on future intentions.

### **The Third Factors Influencing Perception of Service Quality**

Since service quality was first introduced and researched, its agenda has changed. During the 1980s, scholars focused on finding what service quality meant to customers and developing strategies to meet customer expectations (Parasuraman et al., 1988). In the 1990s, researchers focused on how service quality generates profit and other financial outcomes for the organization (Rust, Zahorik, & Keiningham 1995). Today, some scholars are researching the third factors that influence the relationship between service quality and consumption behavior.

Greenwell et al. (2002) investigated how demographic and psychographic factors influence customer perception of service quality. They found in psychographics that the customers who more identified with team were less critical about the core product and physical facility than less identified customers. This result is consistent with the finding of Sutton, McDonald, Milne, and Cimperman (1997) who found that the highly identified fan has less sensitivity about team performance levels. Furthermore, the study revealed several interesting findings about demographic characteristics. First, there was no difference, depending on gender, in evaluations of the physical facility or service personnel. However, women were less critical about the core product than men. This result indicated that women evaluate service based on the physical

facility or service personnel rather than the core product. Trail et al. (2002) found similar results: aspects of the physical facility—such as cleanliness, restroom, audio experience, and service personnel—are more important to women than men. Second, although perception of core product was not different depending on age, younger customers were more critical about the physical facility or service personnel than older customers. Third, income level was not correlated with perception of core product or physical facility, however perception of service personnel was significantly different. Lower income customers were more critical about service personnel than higher income customers.

Dagger and Sweeney (2007) clarified in studies of health care services that the perception of service quality depends on how long the consumer has been with the organization. They found that tangible and operation service quality perception was significantly more salient to novice customers, while expertise, outcome, and atmosphere were significantly important to longer-term customers. Interaction and timeline were equally significant to both groups. These findings suggest that service firms should treat newly acquired customers and loyal customers differently.

Although numerous scholars researched and proved the effectiveness of service quality to improve consumer behavior, research about factors that influence the relationship between service quality and consumer behavior in the sports industry is still limited. In particular, the spectator sport industry needs more study. To better understand spectator sport consumer behavior and make more effective service marketing strategies, factors that influence the relationship between service quality and consumer behavior were conducted in this study.

## **Moderators**

### **Perceived Value**

A significant amount of research has emphasized the importance of perceived value as a critical variable in predicting consumption behavior (Cronin, Brady, & Hult, 2000; Murray &

Howat, 2002; Zeithaml, 1988). Zeithaml defined perceived value as the “consumer’s overall assessment of the utility of a product (or service) based on perceptions of what is received and what is given” (p. 14). Similarly, McDougall and Levesque (2000) defined perceived value as “the results or benefits customers receive in relation to total costs which include the price paid plus other costs associated with the purchase” (p. 394). Bojanic (1996) indicated that perceived value results in three possible values: 1) offering comparable quality at a comparable price, 2) offering superior quality at a premium price, and 3) offering inferior quality at a discounted price. Thus, perceived value changes depending on the service providers’ pricing strategy, the pricing strategy of their competitors, or consumers’ needs and/or preferences (Petrick, 2004).

Research has revealed the effectiveness of perceived value that increases consumer behavior. Oh (1999) indicated that when customers choose a hotel, perceived value is directly related to repurchase intentions. Cronin et al. (2000) revealed that, across six industries (spectator sports, participation sports, entertainment, health care, long-distance carriers, and fast food), perceived value was not only a direct predictor of behavioral intentions, but also played a mediating role between service quality and behavioral intention. Baker, Parasuraman, Grewal, and Voss (2002) studied merchandise products and patronage intention; they found that high levels of perceived value result in both future purchase intentions and actual behavior. Lee et al. (2007) investigated festival attendees’ future behavioral intentions and determined that perceived value was the best predictor of behavioral intentions. In sports industries, Murray and Howat (2002) identified that perceived service positively affects satisfaction, which affects consumption intention within a sports and leisure context. Furthermore, perceived value significantly played a mediating role in the formation of satisfaction. Kwon, Trail, and James (2007) found a mediating role of perceived value between team identification and licensed products purchasing behavior.

In their study, team identification alone did not effectively drive purchasing behavior, but that perceived value did.

Although various scholars have identified the important role of perceived value in consumption behavior, perceived value has received far less attention than service quality and satisfaction (Tam, 2000). In addition, perceived value has not been studied in the field of sports management. Furthermore, prior studies have focused on the mediating role of perceived value; however, this study attempts to find its moderating effect and to create a better understanding of consumption behavior for sports managers.

### **Trust**

Many researchers have revealed that trust is the key to establishing successful relationships between customers and organizations (Morgan & Hunt, 1994; Berry, 1995; Farrelly & Quester, 2005; Palmatier et al., 2006). Morgan and Hunt (1994, p. 23) defined trust as “the perception of confidence in the exchange partner’s reliability and integrity.” Anderson and Weitz (1989) defined it as “one party’s belief that its needs will be fulfilled by actions undertaken by the other party” (p. 312). When people evaluate trust, emphasis is placed on confidence and reliability. Morgan and Hunt (1994) stated that trust could reduce opportunistic behavior, and Berry (1995) identified trust as a critical factor in service marketing because of the intangible nature of service. Most services are difficult to evaluate before customers purchase or experience them, and some services even remain difficult to evaluate after they have been experienced. However, customers who have built trust in a service based on their experience reduce their uncertainty and vulnerability. Therefore, trust creates good relationships between service providers and customers.

Berry (1995) suggested three ways of building trust: 1) opening lines of communication, 2) guaranteeing the service, and 3) providing a higher standard of conduct. First, opening lines of

communication could reduce customers' mistrust and provide more opportunities to build a relationship with the company. Second, guaranteeing the service could represent the organization's commitment to fair play with customers and facilitate competitive discrimination. And finally, a higher standard of conduct means that if organizations operate with such a high standard, rather than simply a standard of legality, they can build trust with their customers.

Gwinner, Gremler, and Bitner (1998) identified that the psychological advantage generated from trust is more critical than special treatment or social advantage from consumer relationships with a service firm. Garbino and Johnson (1999) found that customers were influenced by different factors depending on the level of relationship with a New York off-Broadway repertory theater. In their study, highly related customers were more influenced by trust than overall satisfaction. This result implies that marketing programs that focus on maintaining and building trust will be more effective for high relational customers' consumption behavior.

Luo (2002) indicated that trust plays a key role in online markets where uncertainty and the lack of legal protection prevail. Therefore, by increasing trust, customers' privacy concerns decrease and purchasing behaviors increase. Based on these research findings, trust is important to study in order to identify effective ways to increase customers' consumption behavior.

### **Commitment**

Commitment has been identified as a key component of successful consumer relationships (Gundlach, Achrol, & Mentzer, 1995; Morgan & Hunt, 1994; Garbarino & Johnson, 1999; Palmatier, Dant, Grewal & Evans, 2006). Commitment is not only a good indicator of long-term relationships (Morgan, & Hunt, 1994; Shamdasani, & Sheth, 1995), but is also thought to represent the peak in relational bonding (Dwyer, Schurr, & Oh, 1987). Dwyer et al. (1987, p. 19) defined commitment as "an implicit or explicit pledge of relational continuity between exchange partners." Moorman et al (1992, p. 316) defined commitment as "an enduring desire to maintain

a valued relationship.” Commitment indicates a sacrifice of short-term advantages for long-term benefits (Dwyer et al., 1987). Gundlach, Achrol, and Mentzer (1995) identified three elements of commitment: instrumental, attitudinal, and temporal elements. The instrumental element refers to a positive action that develops self-interest related to the relationship. The attitudinal element indicates a lasting intention through a psychologically stable relationship. And the temporal element represents a consistent relationship with an organization over time.

Various scholars have suggested there are two kinds of commitment: affective and calculative (Fullerton, 2003; Hansen, Sandvik, & Selnes, 2003; Johnson et al., 2001). Calculative commitment is more reasonable than affective commitment and an economic-based relationship. This relationship could develop through product benefits such as lack of choice or switching costs (Anderson & Weitz, 1992; Dwyer et al., 1987). On the other hand, affective commitment is a more emotional and psychological relationship; it could develop based on the degree of reciprocity or involvement with a company (Garbarino & Johnson, 1999; Morgan & Hunt, 1994). This study focused on the affective component of commitment that the psychological attachment.

A number of studies have determined the importance of commitment. Moorman, Deshpande, and Zaltman (1993) suggested that customers who are committed to a relationship might have a greater propensity to act because of their need to remain consistent with their commitment. Kelly and Davis (1994) revealed that customer organizational commitment has a direct impact on customer service recovery expectations. Pritchard, Havitz, and Howard (1999) suggested that loyalty could be regarded as a latent outcome of resistance to change within the commitment process. Similar to those results, Garbino and Johnson (1999) identified that highly related customers are more influenced by commitment than overall satisfaction. Harrison-Walker

(2001) examined the relationship between commitment and word-of-mouth activity in veterinarian and hair salon service. Their study found that affective commitment positively affects word-of-mouth activity for both industries. Moreover, Verhoef (2003) found that both customer retention and customer share development were positively influenced by affective commitment. Palmatier et al. (2006) revealed that commitment significantly affects customer loyalty to an organization.

Today, there exist a variety of choices in sports teams and entertainment, which means that consumers can easily switch firms. Based on the conclusions of the research in this section, commitment is important to study in order to identify effective ways to increase consumption behavior.

### **Sport Consumption Behavior**

A better understanding of the consumption behavior of sports spectators has been the most important goal for sports marketers (Stewart, Smith, & Nicholson, 2003). In the past few decades, interest in sports has increased and competition within the sports industry has become more intense than ever. As this study revealed, the sports industry was valued at \$410 billion in 2007—more than twice the size of the U.S. auto industry (Plunkett Research, 2007). In the 2006–2007 seasons, approximately 150 million spectators attended games of the four major professional leagues (Sports Business Research Network, 2008).

### **Behavior Intention**

Behavior intention has been used generally to predict actual consumption behavior (Grewal et al., 1998). Various researchers have found the effectiveness of behavior intentions that predict actual consumption behavior. Morwitz, Steckel, and Gupta, (2007) revealed that future actual intentions typically could be predicted by behavior intentions. In addition, Chandon, Morwitz, and Reinartz (2005) found that practitioners generally make predictions

about consumers' initial purchase of new products or the repeat purchase of existing products based on behavior intention data. In the sports field, companies also examine behavior intentions. Trail et al. (2005) suggested that behavioral intention is a preferable predictor of actual sport consumption behavior.

Numerous researchers have studied how to improve behavior intentions. Although there are various ways to do so, this particular research focused on the service quality context. According to Cronin, Brady, Brand, Hightower, and Shemwell (1997) and Oh (1999), service quality was the most critical predictor of perceived value. Perception of the service quality significantly influences the customer's satisfaction (Bolton & Drew, 1991; Cronin & Taylor, 1992; Wakefield & Blodgett, 1994) and customer satisfaction has been revealed to influence positively purchase intentions (Anderson & Sullivan, 1993; Cronin & Taylor, 1992).

Dodds, Monroe, and Grewal (1991) indicated that perceived service quality positively affects perceived value, which in turn positively influences purchase intention. In addition, Sivadas and Baker-Pruitt (2000) found that consumer satisfaction (or dissatisfaction) with core service influences future purchasing behavior across business contexts. Also, Cronin, Brady, and Hult (2000) supported the finding that the perceived service value directly influences satisfaction and behavioral intentions.

### **Attendance**

In spectator sports, increasing attendance is the principal purpose of sports marketers. Professional and collegiate sports teams' game expenses (player and coach salaries, equipment, maintenance, new stadiums) have continually escalated. The revenue from increasing attendance is not only from ticket sales, but other stadium purchases, including parking, concessions, and merchandising. The four major professional leagues' ticket sales explained approximately 20 to 50 percent of total revenues (Badenhausen et al., 2007). Collegiate-level sports teams and

various minor leagues rely more on ticket sales revenue (Howard & Crompton, 2005). Moreover, revenue from other stadium purchases, such as concessions, merchandising, and parking, was \$8.84 billion a year in the U.S. (Broughton et al., 1999).

Prior studies have investigated how to increase attendance and have found that service quality positively influences attendance. Wakefield, Blodgett, and Sloan (1996) revealed that perception of service quality increases satisfaction, and this satisfaction positively influences motivation to attend games and athletic events (Hill & Green, 2000; Tsuji et al., 2007).

Cronin et al. (2000) indicated that core service quality perception increases attendees' intention to revisit, a finding that supports prior studies' results (Wakefield et al., 1996; Wakefield & Sloan, 1995). Other studies revealed that peripheral service quality and consumer satisfaction influence behavioral intentions of consumers (McDougall & Levesque, 2000; Murray & Howat, 2002; Tsuji et al., 2007). Moreover, minor league teams focused more on peripheral service quality to compensate for poor team performances (Lienert, 1998). Tsuji et al. (2007) also found that peripheral service quality and satisfaction were more significantly related to future intentions than core services in action sports.

### **Hypothesis Development**

Ko et al. (in review) indicated that MEQSS consists of five primary dimensions, including quality of game, augment service quality, interaction quality, outcome quality, and physical environment quality, in addition to twelve sub-dimensions, including skill performance, game schedule, information, in-game entertainment, concession, interaction with staff, interaction among spectators, sociability, valence, ambiance, design, and signage/scoreboard (Ko et al.). However, the current research is focused on four salient factors of event quality, which include game performance, in-game entertainment, interaction with staff, and physical surroundings, and examines the influence of each factor on behavioral intention.

## **Game Performance**

First, game performance refers to spectators' perceptions of the quality of game performance through which they experience aesthetics, excitement, and drama in sporting events (Ko, 2005). Numerous studies indicate that game performance positively influences fan satisfaction and attendance (Trail & James, 2001). For example, Trail, Anderson, and Fink (2002) identified that better team performances attract larger crowds. Matsuoka, Chelladurai, and Harada (2003) found that the performance of a favorite team is more critical than the actual result of the game (win or loss). Therefore, it is hypothesized that:

- H1: Game performance would have a direct and positive influence on the sport consumption behavioral intention.

## **In-game Entertainment**

Second, in-game entertainment is one of the important augment services. Ko (2005) defined augment service quality as "sport consumers' perceptions of the quality of secondary products offered in conjunction with events" (p. 10). A variety of entertainment options or shows need to be offered during the event to keep fans entertained and to maximize their interest (Ko, 2005). In the case of the NBA, many teams offer a variety of in-game entertainment, for example, half court shots for prizes, on-court activities during timeouts, cheerleading, and answering trivia questions, to keep fans entertained throughout an event to maximize their interest. The appropriate music at sporting events can also help to enhance fans' recall memories (Zhang, Piatt, Ostroff, & Wright, 2005). Thus, this study hypothesizes that:

- H2: Entertainment would have a direct and positive influence on the sport consumption behavioral intention.

### **Interaction with Staff**

Third, interaction quality refers to how the service is delivered to customers (Brady & Cronin, 2001; Gronroos, 1984). The quality of interaction between employees and clients can be defined by the customers' perceptions about the employees' attitude, behavior, and expertise of service personnel (Ko & Pastore, 2004). Services differ from manufactured goods in that services are intangible, heterogeneous, and are produced and consumed simultaneously. These attributes underscore the idea that the interactions between the customer and employee are critical to the production and consumption of a service. Therefore, the current study hypothesizes that:

- H3: Interaction with staff would have a direct and positive influence on the sport consumption behavioral intention.

### **Facility Design**

Fourth, facility design represents the service facility's layout or architecture, which includes functional and aesthetic components of the environment (Brady & Cronin, 2001; Ko & Pastore, 2004). Numerous studies posit that the physical surrounding is one of the important factors positively associated with sport consumption behavior (Wakefield & Blodgett, 1994; Wakefield & Sloan, 1995; Wakefield et al., 1996). Perceptions of the facility significantly influence excitement and satisfaction with the encounter (Wakefield & Blodgett), spectators' desire to stay in the environment (Wakefield & Sloan; Wakefield et al), and their likelihood of re-patronizing games at the servicescape (Wakefield et al.). Sporting facilities are of great importance because each experience that a sport consumer has occurs in the facility. Greenwell et al. (2002) indicated that facility design was more influential than game performance in minor league ice hockey. Based on these research findings, this study hypothesizes that:

- H4: Facility Design would have a direct and positive influence on the sport consumption behavioral intention.

## **Perceived Value**

Perceived value is an important topic in predicting consumer behavior (Cronin, Brady, & Hult, 2000; Netemeyer et al., 2004; Oh, 1999; Petrick & Backman, 2002). Prior studies found that perceived value is an antecedent of purchase intention (Al-Sabbahy, Ekinici, & Riley, 2004; Netemeyer et al., 2004; Petrick & Backman, 2002) and directly affects behavior intention (Cronin et al., 2000; Lee et al., 2007; Oh, 1999). Several studies identified that high levels of perceived value increase customer satisfaction and satisfied customers have a greater chance of becoming loyal customers (Baker, Parasuraman, Grewal, & Voss, 2002; Murray & Howat, 2002; Oh, 1999). Furthermore, the mediating role of perceived value between service quality and behavior intention are revealed (Cronin et al., 2000). Thus, sports marketers need to make every effort to increase consumers' perception of product value through improved service quality.

Thus, this study hypothesizes that:

- H5: Perceived value would have moderating effect on the relationship between event quality factors and behavioral (attendance) intention

## **Trust**

Trust reduces opportunistic behavior (Morgan & Hunt, 1994), increases willingness to maintain relationships (Berry, 1995), and increases purchase intentions (Luo, 2002).

Trust is the key to establishing successful relationships between customers and organizations (Morgan & Hunt, 1994; Berry, 1995; Palmatier et al., 2006). Trust reduces opportunistic behavior (Morgan & Hunt, 1994), increases willingness to maintain relationships (Berry, 1995), and increases purchase intentions (Luo, 2002). Berry (1995) identified trust as a critical factor in service marketing because of the intangible nature of service. However, customers who have built trust in a service based on their experience reduce their uncertainty and vulnerability. For these reasons, H6 was formulated:

- H6: Trust would have moderating effect on the relationship between event quality factors and behavioral (attendance) intention

### **Commitment**

Commitment has been identified as a key component of successful consumer relationships (Gundlach et al., 1995; Morgan & Hunt, 1994; Hansen et al., 2001; Palmatier et al., 2006). Commitment is not only a good indicator of long-term relationships (Morgan, & Hunt, 1994; Shamdasani, & Sheth, 1995), but is also thought to represent the peak in relational bonding (Dwyer, Schurr, & Oh, 1987). Previous research indicated that commitment increases customer loyalty (Palmatier, Dant, Grewal, & Evan, 2006), positive word-of-mouth, repeat purchasing (Zeithaml, Berry, & Parasuraman 1996) and decreases the likelihood of changing products because of conflicting information (Crosby & Taylor, 1983). Therefore, the current study hypothesizes that:

- H7: Trust would have moderating effect on the relationship between event quality factors and behavioral (attendance) intention

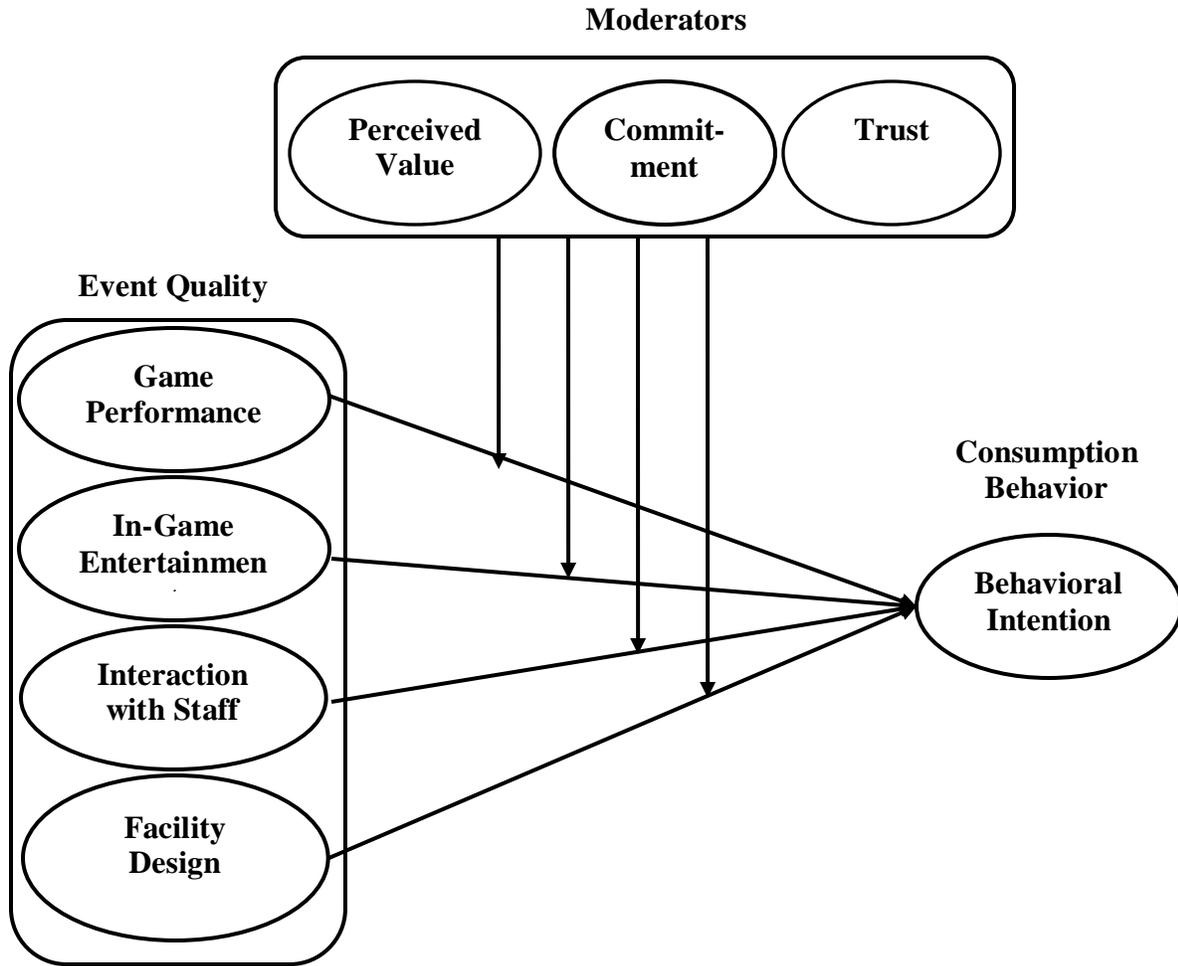


Figure 2-1. A proposed research model

## CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY

Both online and face-to-face surveys were conducted to obtain empirical data on event quality, perceived value, trust, commitment, behavioral intention, and demographics. Data analysis was performed using various statistical techniques; descriptive statistics, Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA), Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) test, and Multi-Group SEM analysis. This methodology chapter of this study presents in the following order: 1) Participants and Procedures, 2) Instrumentation, and 3) Data Analysis.

### **Participants and Procedures**

The target population of the study was adults who are 18 years of age or older, are literate, have agreed to participate in the survey, and live in the Southeastern United States. According to Mittal and Kamakura (2001), consumer characteristics (e.g., demographic or situational) greatly influence the level of consumer behavior. In the current study, participants were spectators who recently visited a stadium or have experienced visiting a stadium in the past one year at a large Southeastern university for intercollegiate women's basketball home games. The data were collected combining two major survey modes: face-to-face self-administered and online self-administered.

Participants in face-to-face surveys were recruited via visiting one women's basketball game, and undergraduate and graduate classes. The researcher asked the participants to take part in this survey. After obtaining agreement to participate in the survey, the researcher gave a brief explanation of the purpose of this research and how to fill out this survey. To comply with Institutional Review Board's (IRB) protocol, the informed consent process was ensured. This process involved providing information on planned procedure in language appropriate to the level of understanding of the participants and then requesting voluntary participation in

accordance with the Code of Federal Regulation. Total number of face-to-face self-administrated surveys was 176, of which 18 were unusable, resulting in 158 useable responses.

Online survey participants were collected by sending an email containing an invitation to participate in the online survey and a link to an Internet website on which the survey questionnaire was posted. Email lists were obtained through various major undergraduate and graduate classes (e.g., sport management, journalism, chemistry, and statistics). In the first part of the questionnaire, the survey requested voluntary participation in accordance with the Code of Federal Regulation, and outlined brief instructions for completion of the survey. Total data from online surveys were 135, of which nine were unusable, resulting in 124 useable responses. Therefore, a total of 282 were useable across both face-to-face and Web surveys.

### **Instrumentation**

The questionnaire consisted of the following three parts: 1) Event Quality, 2) Moderators, 3) Behavioral Intention, and 4) Demographics.

### **Scale Development in Service Quality Research.**

Since its introduction in 1920s, service quality has received tremendous attention by researchers. Various research scales have been developed and modified to evaluate for more suitable service quality. For example, Gronroos (1984) developed a two-dimensional model which consists of technical quality and functional quality. Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1985) developed the SERVQUAL model. Following the development of SERVQUAL, various researchers and various industries used and modified this scale (Browne et al., 1993; Carman, 1990; MacKay & Crompton, 1988; McDonald et al., 1995; Wright, Duray, & Goodale, 1992). In addition, some scholars modified SERVQUAL to evaluate their own industries. For instance, to evaluate the recreational industry, Crompton, MacKay, and Fesenmaier (1991) developed RECQUAL. McDonald, Sutton, and Milne (1995) developed TEAMQUAL to investigate

professional sports. Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Malhotra (2005) developed E-S-QUAL to investigate online consumer service quality.

Although SERVQUAL enjoyed popularity in the last two decades, limitations associated with the validity of the scale were pointed out by several scholars. For instance, Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1991) found that the expectation factors could not be practically used. Ko et al. (in review) mentioned that this scale was more appropriate for measuring satisfaction than service quality.

In an effort to overcome SERVQUAL's limitations, a number of scales were developed by scholars. Kim and Kim (1995) developed the Quality Excellence of Sport Centers (QUESC) to measure fitness center service quality in South Korea. Ko and Pastore (2004, 2005) developed Scale of Service Quality in Recreational Sport (SSQRS) to examine recreational sport service quality. And Ko et al., (in review) developed the scale of scale of event quality for spectator sport (SEQSS) to evaluate the perception of spectator sport service quality.

### **Event Quality**

The first part measuring event quality consisted of four subscales (game performance, in-game entertainment, interaction with staff, and physical surrounding) represented by a total of 15 items. To measure the sport consumer's perceived level of event quality, this study adopted and modified the SEQSS developed by Ko et al. (in review). Example items included: game performance: "My perceptions of the players' skills make me excited;" in-game entertainment: "Pre- and post-game show is entertaining;" interaction with staff: "You can count on the employees at this event to be friendly;" and facility design: "I am impressed with the design of the facility." The Cronbach's coefficient alpha ( $\alpha$ ) of the SEQSS ranged from .76 (game performance) to .90 (interaction with staff) and AVE values ranged from .53 (game performance) to .65 (interaction with staff). Both Cronbach's coefficient alpha ( $\alpha$ ) and AVE

values were greater than standard suggested thresholds (Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2009). Results indicated that this scale has good internal consistency and construct reliability. The SEQSS consists of four constructs (game performance, in-game entertainment, interaction with staff, and facility design) represented by a total of 15 items with a 7-point Likert-type scale.

### **Moderators**

The second section measuring mediator and moderator variables included three subscales (perceived value, trust, and commitment) with 12 items. These construct scales utilized in the current study were formed through a comprehensive literature review. However, items used to measure the constructs varied considerably across studies. Therefore, the items that were considered to be most appropriate for the purpose of this study were selected and modified.

Spectators' perceived economic value of a sporting event was measured by four items developed by Grewal, Monroe, and Krishnan (1998) that have been used in the golf travelers' perceived value (e.g., Petrick & Backman, 2002). Example items included: "I feel that I got my money's worth for the money spent on my game attendance" and "I feel I received good quality for the price paid for my game attendance." Grewal et al. found that the reliability coefficient for this scale exceeded .90, and thus deemed it acceptable.

To measure the level of consumers' trust in a sports team, the author selected and modified items of Crosby, Evans, and Cowles's (1990) scale and Palmatier, Dant, and Grewal's (2007) scale. Example items included: "Gators football team is trustworthy" and "I trust Gators football team." Crosby et al. (1990) found that the reliability coefficient exceeded .80, and Palmatier et al. (2007) found that the reliability coefficient exceeded .67, and thus deemed it acceptable. Palmatier et al. (2007) used this scale to examine the level of trust between sellers and customers. Therefore, the scales were modified to examine the level of trust between spectator and team.

The author adopted the Psychological Commitment to Team (PCT) scale developed by Mahony, Madrigal, and Howard (2000) to measure spectators' level of commitment toward a team. The original PCT consisted of 14 items. However, Kwon and Trail (2003) found that the factor loading of seven items was below .707, making those items inadequate to represent the "psychological commitment to the team" because more error and unique variance than common variance were found. Among the seven finalized items, this study used four items to measure commitment. Example items included: "I am a committed fan of the Gators football team" and "It would be difficult to change my beliefs about the team."

### **Behavioral Intention**

To measure the impact of the various relationships on attendance, this study selected one item from Fink et al. (2002) and three items from Kim (2008). Example items included: "I am more likely to attend future Gators football game(s)" and "I intend to attend the Gators football game(s)." Prior literature identified that the reliability coefficient for these items exceeded 0.95 and were thus deemed acceptable. The scale of consumer behavior is represented by a total of four items and uses a 7-point Likert-type scale.

### **Demographics**

The questionnaire included demographic characteristics of participants. These questions consisted of gender, age, and ethnicity.

### **Data Analysis**

The data was analyzed using SPSS 18.0 and Analysis of Moment Structure (AMOS) 18.0. Data analysis was conducted using descriptive statistics, measurement models for all constructs, SEM and multi-group SEM. To evaluate the measurement models for event quality constructs and behavioral intention, confirmatory factor analysis was conducted using AMOS 18.0.

## **Descriptive Statistics**

To explain the basic characteristics of the data in this study, various descriptive statistics were conducted using SPSS 18.0, such as central tendency (e.g., mean, mode, median, etc.) and measures of variability (e.g., range, variance, standard deviation, etc.).

## **Measurement Model**

A confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted using AMOS 18.0 (Arbuckle, 2006) to clarify the data and estimate how well the items represented the proposed latent constructs. According to Hair et al. (2009) and Tabachnick and Fidell (2007), executing a CFA must follow five steps: 1) model specification, 2) identification, 3) model estimation, 4) testing model fit, and 5) model re-specification.

To examine the goodness of fit indices, Hu and Bentler (1999) suggested chi-square statistics, as well as a comparative fit index (CFI) in conjunction with standard root-mean-squared residual (SRMR). Additionally, Brown and Cudeck (1992) suggested the root-mean-square error of approximation (RMSEA) to reduce problems with incremental fit indices (e.g., CFI). When the CFI value is close to .95 or higher in combination with an SRMR value less than .08, Hu and Bentler (1999) recommend a cutoff value. In addition, less than .06 of RMSEA value suggests a good fit (Hu & Bentler, 1999), between .06 and .08 indicates an acceptable fit, and higher than .10 implies an unacceptable fit (Brown & Cudeck, 1992).

To measure the internal consistency and construct reliability respectively, Cronbach's alpha value and average variance extracted (AVE) were examined. Cronbach's alpha coefficients were examined for internal consistency and construct reliability, and to see how well the items measuring a specific subscale were correlated with each other (Fornell & Lorcker, 1981). When Cronbach's alpha value is greater than .70, the reliability is indicated as adequate (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). In addition, AVE examined how well the items on a specific subscale

collectively explained the underlying construct's variance. When AVE value is greater than .50, the composite reliability of the construct is indicated as adequate (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

To establish convergent and discriminant validity, this study employed three methods: 1) tested item loading, 2) examination of each factor correlation and 3) comparison of squared correlation of any two latent constructs with AVE value (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Nunnally and Bernstein (1994) indicated that convergent validity is established when item loading is equal to or greater than .40. Kline (2005) suggested that if correlations among constructs are less than .85, discriminant validity can be established. Fornell and Larcker (1981) also stated that a squared correlation between two constructs should be lower than the AVE for each construct.

### **Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) Test**

A SEM test was conducted using the AMOS program to examine the structural relationships among the game performance, in-game entertainment, interaction with staff, facility design, and behavioral intentions factors. The same fit index criteria were employed to examine the structural model as with the measurement model. Path coefficients were used to determine the direct relationships among the sets of factors. The SEM analysis provides the basis for accepting or rejecting the hypothesized relationships among the constructs (Kline, 2005).

### **Multi-group Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) Analysis**

The Multi-Group SEM was tested to examine whether the proposed model was moderated by the level of perceived value, trust, and commitment. Before the Multi-Group SEM analyses, measurement invariance test was conducted. This test measured the chi-squared difference test as well as the change or difference in the named alternative fit indices (CFI and RMSEA). The object of measurement invariance test is to ensure that measurement models conducted under different conditions yield equivalent representations of the same construct (Hair et al., 2009). Evaluation of model fit was completed using standard fit criteria that included the chi-square fit

statistic and the CFI (Bentler & Dudgeon, 1996), as well as RMSEA (Browne & Cudeck, 1992; Loehlin, 1992). Combine with evaluation of model fit test, this research tested a model that examined change scores to determine whether findings remained robust.

## CHAPTER 4 RESULTS

The results of the study are presented in the following order: 1) Descriptive Statistics, 2) Measurement Models, 3) Structural Models, and 4) Multi-Group Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) Analysis.

### **Descriptive Statistics**

#### **Demographics**

Demographic characteristics of total participants ( $N = 282$ ) are depicted in Table 1. Total sample consisted of 156 (55.3%) males and 126 (44.7%) females. The majority of the participants were 18 to 23 years old (74.1%) and Caucasian (White: 55.5%).

#### **Event Quality**

The means of the event quality items ranged from 4.62 to 5.67. Standard deviations ranged from 1.09 to 1.56. The items for physical surrounding factor had the highest means on the 7-point Likert-type scale ( $M = 5.55$ ;  $SD = 1.127$ ). The items for in-game entertainment had the lowest means ( $M = 4.82$ ;  $SD = 1.42$ ).

#### **Moderators**

The means of the perceived value items ranged from 5.29 to 5.40. Standard deviations ranged from 1.41 to 1.48 ( $M = 5.35$ ;  $SD = 1.34$ ). The means of the trust items ranged from 5.25 to 5.31. Standard deviations ranged from 1.27 to 1.38 ( $M = 5.29$ ;  $SD = 1.23$ ). The means of the commitment items ranged from 4.33 to 5.47. Standard deviations ranged from 1.44 to 1.77 ( $M = 4.87$ ;  $SD = 1.35$ ).

#### **Behavioral Intention**

The means of the consumer behavior items ranged from 4.95 to 5.10. Standard deviations ranged from 1.89 to 1.81 ( $M = 5.05$ ;  $SD = 1.76$ ).

### **Measurement model**

Cronbach's alpha estimates ranged from .85 (commitment) to .98 (behavioral intention). The average variance extracted (AVE) values ranged from .65 (commitment) to .92 (behavioral intention; see Table 4-2). A confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted to examine the psychometric properties of the measures. The measurement model yielded an acceptable model fit ( $\chi^2 = 950.11$ ,  $df = 406$ ;  $RMSEA = .069$ ;  $CFI = .947$ ). Convergent validity was established by high factor loadings in the present study. Each measurement scale item's loading was greater than the suggested value of .70 and critical ratios of indicators of the constructs ranged from 5.76 to 9.66, which were greater than the significant value of 1.96 at  $p < .05$  (Hair et al., 2009, see Table 4-2). To examine discriminant validity, an analysis of correlation between measured constructs was conducted. Correlations between constructs ranged from .39 (facility design and behavioral intention) to .83 (game performance and in-game entertainment). Although the correlation between game performance and in-game entertainment was high (.83), it was acceptably high (e.g.,  $< .85$ ; Kline, 2005, see Table 4-3). In addition, each squared correlation should be smaller than the average variance extracted (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). All AVE estimates were found to be greater than the squared correlations (see Table 4-3). Therefore, it was concluded that the research constructs were sufficiently distinct from each other.

### **Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) Test**

Structural equation analysis was conducted to test the relationships between event quality factors and behavioral intention. Figure 2 includes the direct effect of event quality (game performance, in-game entertainment, interaction with staff, and facility design) on sport consumption behavior. The result suggested that the model has a good fit to the data ( $\chi^2 = 363.90$  ( $df = 142$ ),  $\chi^2/df = 2.56$ ;  $SRMR = 0.04$ ;  $RMSEA = 0.07$ ;  $NFI = 0.96$ ;  $CFI = 0.97$ ). Furthermore, all of the hypothesized paths except physical surrounding were significant in the

hypothesized direction. Table 4 shows the path coefficients and statistical significance using Structural Equation Modeling. From the path coefficients, we could ascertain that the following hypotheses were supported: Game performance – Behavioral Intention ( $\beta = .45, p < .000$ ); Entertainment - Consumption behavior ( $\beta = .34, p < .000$ ); and Interaction with staff - Consumption behavior ( $\beta = .17, p < .011$ ; see Table 4-4).

### **Multi-Group Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) Analysis**

To test if there was a significant structural difference between the high level of perceived value, trust, and commitment groups and general spectator samples, Multi-Group SEM was conducted using AMOS 18.0. To separate the high level group and general group, this study used mean scores of perceived value, trust, and commitment items. The high level groups' mean scores of perceived value trust and commitment items were between 5.5 and 7.0 in 7-point Likert-type scale. The general group's mean scores of perceived value, trust, and commitment items were between 1.0 and 4.5. The authors discarded the cases with 4.5 to 5.5 mean scores in order to differentiate the two groups (see Table 4-5).

A preliminary stage involved testing for an invariant factor structure. All moderators' factor loadings were constrained to be equal for both groups. However, the difference in the chi-square statistic was different. The difference between the chi-square statistics of perceived value and trust were significant (perceived value:  $X^2[14] = 30.66$ ; trust:  $X^2[14] = 24.43$ , see Table 4-6, 4-7); therefore, the factor structure between the customers who had high levels of both perceived value and trust groups, and generally perceived value and trust groups sample can not be assumed to be invariant. This means that both perceived value and trust could not evaluate the moderating effect. On the other hand, the difference in the chi-square statistic of commitment was insignificant ( $X^2[14] = 18.448$ , see Table 4-8); therefore, the factor structure between the highly committed group and general group sample can be assumed to be invariant. To test for

structural invariance, we first allowed a free estimation of the structural coefficients in both the highly committed group and general group samples. Relaxing all equality on the structural coefficients resulted in a chi-square statistic of 544.317 ( $df = 284$ ). To test whether the structural coefficients between the constructs in the highly committed group were similar to those in the general group sample, constraints on structure weights were added. The more we added constraints, the worse the fit became and the greater the chi-square statistic grew. This time, the difference in the chi-square statistic was significant ( $X^2[18] = 47.883, p = .000$ ), showing that the causal links in the structural model differed significantly between the two samples (see Table 4-8).

Finally, the structural invariance for each individual structural path was tested to identify which of the links caused the structural difference. Significant differences in the chi-square statistics were found for four of the four individual paths: performance/attendance ( $p = .000$ ), entertainment/attendance ( $p = .001$ ), interaction/attendance ( $p = .000$ ), and physical surrounding/attendance ( $p = .000$ ). The multi-group analysis confirmed that there were structural differences in the model, in particular in the way the highly committed group and the general group samples perceived the links between all of the sub-dimensions of event quality and attendance. Table 6, 7, 8 summarizes the results of the Multi-Group SEM analysis.

Table 4-1. Description of Participants (N = 282)

Variables	Description	Frequency	Percent
Gender	Men	152	55.3
	Women	126	44.7
Age	18 – 19	107	37.9
	20 – 23	102	36.1
	> 23	73	24.9
	Missing	0	0.0
Ethnicity	Caucasian (White)	156	55.3
	Hispanic	69	24.4

Table 4-1. Continued

Variables	Description	Frequency	Percent
Attended this season	African-American	35	12.4
	Asian-American	12	4.3
	Others	10	3.6
	Missing	0	0
	0	63	22.3
	1	75	26.6
	2	52	18.4
	3	24	8.5
	4 – 5	29	10.3
	> 5	39	14.0

Table 4-2. Summary result for measurement model test

Factor	Item	$\lambda$	$\alpha$	AVE
Game Performance	My perceptions of the Gator Women's Basketball players' skills make me excited.	.90	.95	.86
	The Gator Women's Basketball team provides high quality performance to me.	.96		
	Skill performance of Gator Women's Basketball team's players is excellent.	.91		
In-game Entertainment	The show combined with the game is entertaining.	.96	.87	.67
	The show was just as exciting as the game.	.80		
	Pre and post game show is entertaining.	.68		
Interaction with Staff	The employees seem very knowledgeable about their jobs.	.82	.94	.76
	You can count on the employees at this event to be friendly.	.88		
	The employees handle problems promptly and satisfactorily.	.89		
	Employees in the event deal effectively with the special needs of each customer.	.90		
	The demeanor of the staff is pleasant.	.87		
Facility Design	I am impressed with the design of the facility.	.81	.93	.78
	The facility is safe.	.88		
Facility Design	I can move freely in this facility (layout accessibility).	.95		
	It is easy to get in and out of the facility (facility accessibility).	.90		

Table 4-2. Continued

Perceived Value	I feel that I got my money's worth for the money spent on my game attendance.	.87	.95	.81
	I feel I received good quality for the price paid for my game attendance.	.93		
	After evaluating my game attendance, I am confident that I received quality for the price paid on my game attendance.	.93		
	I feel that the purchase of my game attendance met both my high-quality and low-price requirements.	.88		
Trust	Gators football team is trustworthy.	.87	.95	.80
	I trust Gators football team.	.93		
	I have trust in the Gators football team.	.93		
	The organization is known to be trustworthy.	.89		
Commitment	Being a fan of the Gator Women's Basketball team is important to me.	.84	.85	.65
	I am a committed fan of the Gator Women's Basketball team.	.86		
	It would be unlikely for me to change my allegiance from the Gator Women's Basketball team to another team.	.62		
	It would be difficult to change my beliefs about the Gator Women's Basketball team.	.72		
Behavioral Intention	I am more likely to attend future Gator Women's Basketball game(s).	.95	.98	.92
	I intend to attend the Gator Women's Basketball game(s).	.97		
	The likelihood that I will attend the Gator Women's Basketball game(s) in the future is high.	.97		
	I will attend the Gator Women's Basketball game(s) in the future.	.95		

Table 4-3. Means, SD, Correlations and Squared Correlations Matrix

	Mean	SD	GP	ENT	IWS	FD	PV	TRU	COM	BI
Game Performance	4.93	1.46	.85 <sup>a</sup>	.69	.37	.22	.59	.52	.62	.61
In-game Entertainment	4.89	1.29	.83*	.67 <sup>a</sup>	.36	.24	.49	.45	.55	.56
Interaction with Staff	5.43	1.06	.62	.60	.76 <sup>a</sup>	.52	.49	.49	.36	.32

Table 4-3. Continued

	Mean	SD	GP	ENT	IWS	FD	PV	TRU	COM	BI
Facility Design	5.35	1.34	.47	.49	.72	.78 <sup>a</sup>	.28	.27	.21	.15
Perceived Value	5.29	1.23	.77	.70	.70	.53	.82 <sup>a</sup>	.56	.53	.53
Trust	5.35	1.34	.72	.67	.70	.52	.75	.82 <sup>a</sup>	.52	.36
Commitment	4.87	1.35	.79	.74	.60	.46	.73	.72	.65 <sup>a</sup>	.82*
Behavioral Intention	5.11	1.70	.78	.75	.57	.39	.73	.60	.82*	.92 <sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup> = Average Variance Extracted

\* High correlation between factors

Figures below the AVE line are the correlations between the constructs

Figures above the AVE line represent squared correlations between the constructs

Table 4-4. Path coefficient and statistical significance

Path	Unstandardized estimates (B)	Standardized Estimates ( $\beta$ )	Standard Error	Critical Ratio	Significance Probability
Performance → Behavioral intention	.56**	.45**	.10	5.56	.000
Entertainment → Behavioral intention	.63**	.34**	.15	4.10	.000
Interaction → Behavioral intention	.28**	.17**	.11	2.56	.001
Surrounding → Behavioral intention	-.16	-.11	.09	-1.906	.057

\*\* Significant at 0.05

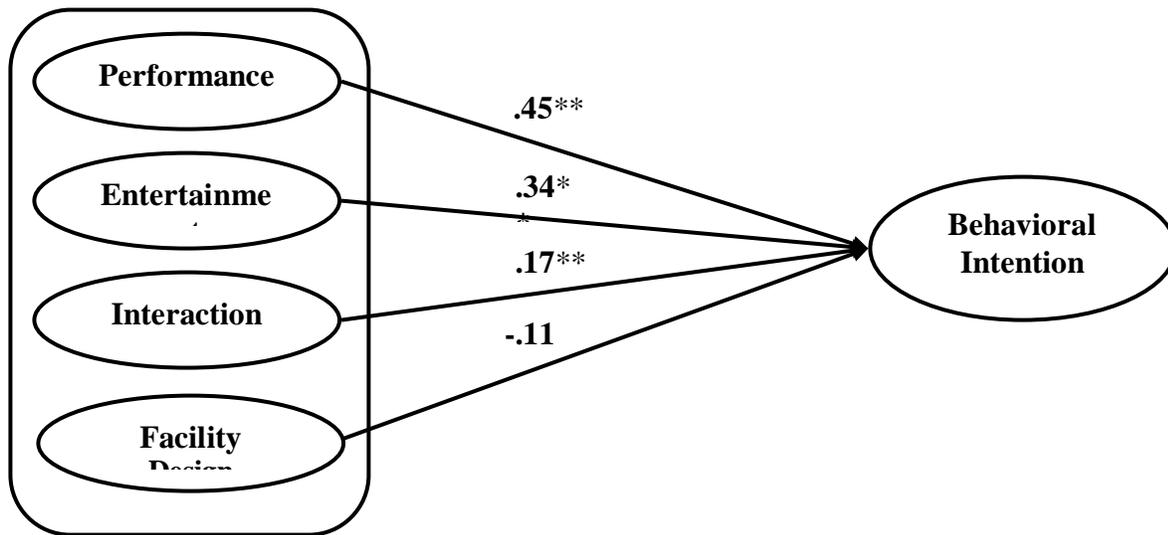


Figure 4-1. Result of hypothesis test (H1 ~ H4)

\*\* Significant at 0.05

Table 4-5. Description of Participants for moderating effect (N = 228)

Variables	Description	Frequency	Percent
Perceived value	High	85	30.1
	Average	97	34.4
	Eliminated	100	35.5
Trust	High	92	32.6
	Average	102	36.2
	Eliminated	88	31.2
Commitment	High	115	40.8
	Average	112	39.2
	Eliminated	55	19.5

Table 4-6. Structural invariance analysis - Perceived Value for each individual structural path

Model	Model fit indices	Invariance test
M0 Unconstrained model	$X^2(284)=488.98, p=.00$ RMSEA=.063, CFI=.94	-

Table 4-6. Continued

Model	Model fit indices	Invariance test
M1 Measurement weight	$X^2(298)=519.64$ , $p=.00$ RMSEA=.064, CFI=.93	M1-M0: $\chi^2_{\Delta}(14)=30.66$ , $p=.000$
M2 Structural Weights	$X^2(302)=592.19$ , $p=.00$ RMSEA=.066, CFI=.93	M2-M1: $\chi^2_{\Delta}(28)=72.55$ , $p=.000$
$df(14) = 23.69$ ( $p = .05$ )		

Table 4-7. Structural invariance analysis - Trust for each individual structural path

Model	Model fit indices	Invariance test
M0 Unconstrained model	$X^2(284)=581.63$ , $p=.00$ RMSEA=.074, CFI=.92	-
M1 Measurement weight	$X^2(298)=606.06$ , $p=.00$ RMSEA=.073, CFI=.92	M1-M0: $\chi^2_{\Delta}(14)=24.43$ , $p=.000$
M2 Structural Weights	$X^2(302)=611.20$ , $p=.00$ RMSEA=.073, CFI=.92	M2-M1: $\chi^2_{\Delta}(28)=5.14$ , $p=.000$
$df(14) = 23.69$ ( $p = .05$ )		

Table 4-8. Structural invariance analysis - Commitment for each individual structural path

Model		Model fit indices	Invariance test
M0	Unconstrained model	$X^2(284)=544.31, p=.00$ RMSEA=.65, CFI=.93	-
M1	Measurement weight	$X^2(298)=562.76, p=.00$ RMSEA=.65, CFI=.93	M1-M0: $\chi^2_{\Delta}(14)=18.44, p=.187$
M2	Structural Weights	$X^2(302)=592.19, p=.00$ RMSEA=.65, CFI=.92	M2-M1: $\chi^2_{\Delta}(28)=47.88, p=.000$
M3	Performance → Behavioral intention	$X^2(307)=611.81, p=.00$ RMSEA=.65, CFI=.91	M3-M1: $\chi^2_{\Delta}(23)=67.49, p=.000$
M4	Entertainment → Behavioral intention	$X^2(307)=596.17, p=.00$ RMSEA=.65, CFI=.92	M4-M1: $\chi^2_{\Delta}(23)=51.86, p=.001$
M5	Interaction → Behavioral intention	$X^2(307)=606.54, p=.00$ RMSEA=.65, CFI=.92	M5-M1: $\chi^2_{\Delta}(23)=62.23, p=.000$
M6	Facility design → Behavioral intention	$X^2(307)=615.14, p=.00$ RMSEA=.65, CFI=.91	M6-M1: $\chi^2_{\Delta}(23)=70.83, p=.000$

Standardized total effect

Group	Outcome	Performance	Entertainment	Interaction	Surrounding
Highly Committed fans	Attendance	.46**	.05	-.08	-.17
General spectators		.52**	.42**	.27**	.00

\*\* Significant at 0.05

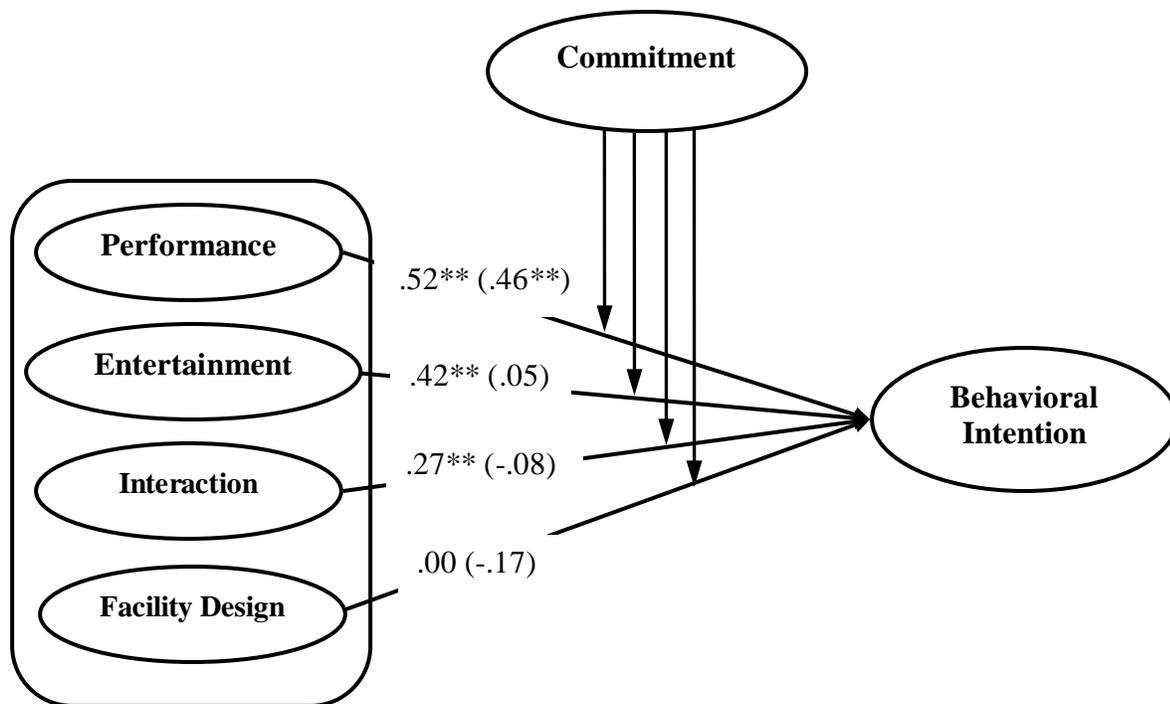


Figure 4-2. Moderating effect of Commitment (H7).

\*\* Significant at 0.05

General committed customers (Numbers in the parenthesis represent highly committed customers)

## CHAPTER 5 DISCUSSION

### **Direct Effect of Event Quality Factors to Behavioral Intention**

The results of this research provide meaningful implications that further our knowledge of service evaluations in the context of non-major spectator sporting events (i.e., collegiate women's basketball). Our findings suggest that game performance ( $\beta = .45, p = .000$ ), entertainment ( $\beta = .34, p = .000$ ), and interaction with staff ( $\beta = .17, p = .001$ ) positively influence sport consumption behavior. These findings support the previous research that the core product (e.g., game performance) and peripheral products (e.g., entertainment and staff) positively influence sport consumer behavior (Getz, O'Neill, & Carlsen, 2001; King, 2006; Madrigal, 1995; Trail, et al., 2002).

### **Game Performance and Behavioral Intention**

The result ( $\beta = .45, p = .000$ ) indicates that game performance has a stronger effect on behavioral intention than the other factors (i.e., in-game entertainment and interaction with staff). This result is consistent with the findings of McDougall and Levesque's (2000) study in which the core service is the most important predictor of behavioral intention. Since game performance is not under the control of marketers at the collegiate sports level (Mullin, Hardy, & Sutton, 2000; Trail et al., 2002), it is much more difficult for sports marketers to ensure that customers have a positive service encounter. Additionally, sports marketers should probably be even more vigilant in managing the variables they can control in order to ensure that fans have positive experiences when games are not exciting and/or when the home team does not win.

### **In-game Entertainment and Behavioral Intention**

In game entertainment was hypothesized to have a positive influence on behavioral intention. The result ( $\beta = .34, p = .000$ ) confirmed this hypothesis. The in-game entertainment is

one of the readily controllable factors for sports marketers. Our results suggest that entertainment plays a significant role in attracting sports consumers to the sporting events. DeSchrive and Jensen (2002) found that entertainment value has significance and is positively related to attendance. When there were special events (e.g., home coming events), attendance would increase to as much as twice that of a normal sporting event. It is suggested that in-game entertainment is one of the most important event products that can maximize a fan's game experience. The Turnkey Sports Poll (King, 2006), a survey of more than 600 senior-level sports industry executives in professional and collegiate sports, revealed that 49 percent chose event presentation (e.g., music and video) as the most important element in enhancing guest experiences beyond the game itself. As sporting events have evolved into entertainment events, many NBA franchises now offer in-game entertainment to keep fans excited and energized throughout an event to maximize their interest, particularly when the actual game itself may not be interesting. Examples may include incorporating appropriate music, half-court shots for prizes, on-court activities during timeouts, and asking the audience trivia questions. Of the various in-game activities, music is most often used to entertain the audience and enhance the game experience. Thus, sports marketers should understand the importance and value of promotional and entertainment features.

### **Interaction with Staff and Behavioral Intention**

Interaction with staff had a significant effect on behavioral intention ( $\beta = .17, p = .001$ ). Staff and volunteers are a key component in shaping the customer experience at any event (Getz et al., 2001). They represent an important factor that is focused on how service is delivered (Brady & Cronin, 2001; Gronroos, 1984). The reason for the relatively small  $R^2$  value is that the target game was a collegiate women's basketball event and the expected service quality based on interaction with staff was low. Because the spectators typically do not pay for tickets for these

non-major sporting events, the expected service outcome could also be low. Additionally, in collegiate women's basketball games, there are few chances to interact with the staff. Several reasons for this lack of interaction include a lack of open concession stands on site, few staff members on site (based on traditionally low attendance figures), and few questions to ask (the venue is not crowded or complex). However, marketers should understand that interaction with the staff does have a significant effect on sport consumption behavior (Brady & Cronin, 2001; Getz et al., 2001).

### **Facility Design and Behavioral Intention**

Numerous studies posit that the physical surrounding is one of the most important factors that are positively associated with behavioral intention (Mullin et al., 2007; Wakefield & Blodgett, 1994; Wakefield & Sloan, 1995). Perceptions of the facility significantly influence excitement and satisfaction with the encounter, spectators' desire to stay in the environment, and their likelihood of re-patronizing games at the servicescape (Wakefield & Sloan, 1995). In the sporting context, sport facilities have great importance because spectators experience sporting events in the facility.

In the current study, however, the facility design did not have a significant influence on sport consumption behavior ( $\beta = -.11$ ,  $p = .06$ ). This might be related to the expected value of the sports event. Because spectators do not pay or very low attending cost for admission, their expectation levels for physical surroundings may be low. Future research can compare the role of physical surroundings in professional sports game experiences with those of collegiate sporting events. This could shed more light on the role of physical surroundings in predicting behavioral intention.

### **The Moderating Effect of Perceived Value, Trust, and Commitment**

In order to examine the group difference between the high level group and general group, a multi-group analysis was conducted. Unfortunately, this study could not attempt to analyze the moderating effect of perceived value and trust. Because the current study could not find the measurement invariance both perceived value and trust. This means the factor structure between the customers who had a high level of perceived value and trust group and general group can not be assumed to be invariant. Therefore, the current study has no chance to test the H5 and H6 hypotheses. The main reason could be the sample. Matthew et al. (2003) found that perceived value is a more important consideration for minor league than collegiate fans. Minor league fans were more influenced by ticket price and the overall cost of attending a game, while those fans who generally attended collegiate games did not consider this factor when deciding to attend a game. Collegiate sports, especially non-major sports (e.g., women's basketball and women's soccer) have no entrance fee and very low attending cost. Thus, perceived value could not explain the difference in this study. However, trust was an unexpected result. This also may be caused by the sample. Women's basketball fans have a commitment to the team but have no trust with the team. Although the current study could not find the measurement invariance in trust, the difference in the chi-square statistic value was very close (trust: 24.43; required less than 23.69). Therefore, if the sample were changed, both perceived value and trust could attempt to examine the moderating effect.

#### **Commitment**

This study only could measure the moderating effect of commitment on the relationship between event quality and behavioral intention. The results suggested that among the four paths (game performance, in-game entertainment, interaction with the staff, and physical surrounding) of event quality, three paths (game performance, in-game entertainment, and interaction with the

staff) showed significant differences between the two groups. For the highly committed group, only the performance/attendance path was found to be significant. For the general spectator group, all three paths (game performance, in-game entertainment, and interaction with the staff) were found to be significant. These findings were supported by prior research (Greenwell et al., 2002; Hill & Green, 2000; Theodorakis et al., 2009). Hill and Green (2000) indicated that highly involved fans were very little affected by service attributes, while low level of involvement fans were more influenced by service attributes. In a similar vein, Greenwell et al. (2002) found that the customers who had a low level of identification were more critical of core products and the facility. Also, Theodorakis et al. (2009) found that highly identified customers were not influenced by higher levels of service quality.

### **Game Performance**

In terms of game performance, the general spectator group ( $\beta = .52$ ) was slightly more influenced by game performance than the highly committed group of spectators ( $\beta = .46$ ) to engage in sport consumption behavior. This is consistent with prior research that found that customers with lower levels of identification were more critical of core products than highly identified fans (Greenwell et al., 2002). However, the difference between the highly committed group and the general committed group was slight and game performance was important to both groups. This result implies that to attract the general spectator group and retain highly committed fans as loyal customers, sports managers need to provide them with the highest level of game performance.

### **In-game Entertainment**

Entertainment used to prompt sport consumption behavior was found to be important only for the general spectator ( $\beta = .46$ ). This result illustrates that highly committed fans were not influenced by entertainment; however, general spectators were influenced by entertainment.

Thus, if the manager of a women's basketball team provides fans with a high level of entertainment, women's basketball games will be more likely to attract the general spectator. Low attendance is a problem not only in collegiate women's basketball events, but also in many other non-major sports. Therefore, it cannot be overemphasized that sports marketers should focus more on various and effective entertainment options.

### **Interaction with Staff**

Similar to in-game entertainment, interaction with staff was found to be important only for the general spectator group ( $\beta = .27$ ). This finding shows that highly committed fans were not influenced by interactions with the staff, but general fans were slightly influenced by such interactions. This result may be interpreted to mean that whether the interaction level with the staff was high or low, highly committed fans will keep visiting the stadium. On the other hand, if the interaction level with staff is high, general committed fans will have a slightly greater chance of revisiting the stadium. This finding is similar to that of Theodorakis et al. (2009), who found that low and medium identified fans were influenced by the "human element (e.g., reliability and responsiveness)" on behavioral intention. Although the effect of interaction with staff was not very significant, this is a controllable factor. Thus, sports marketers need to increase and improve the interactions that attendees have with the staff.

### **Facility Design**

Facility design has been considered one of the most important event quality factors to spectators (Mullin et al., 2007; Wakefield & Blodgett, 1994; Wakefield & Sloan, 1995). However, in this study, both highly committed fans and general spectators were not influenced by the facility design in collegiate women's basketball. There are some expected reasons. As we already mentioned, the collegiate sports fans' expectation about the facility design is not very high because ticket prices are low and the stadium is not very large and/or complex. Although

this study could not determine the effectiveness of the facility design, if stadiums can provide better facility design services (e.g., clean restrooms and convenient parking), they could have a greater chance of attracting more fans to the stadium.

### **Limitation and Future Research**

This study has some limitations that should be considered for future research. First, the samples used in this study were spectators of only one collegiate women's basketball team and the majority of the participants were college students. This might limit the generalizability of the research findings. In addition, the context of this study, a collegiate women's basketball game, might also limit the generalizability of the findings. Moreover, this sample could not provide a chance to examine the moderating effect of perceived value and trust. Therefore, to increase the generalizability of the findings, future research needs to use broader and wider samples (e.g., men's basketball and professional teams). Although a number of different event quality factors may exist, a second limitation, this research focused on four salient factors. Therefore, future research may need to incorporate different event quality factors to develop a better understanding of the relationship between event quality and behavioral intention.

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## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Tae Ho Kim earned his Master of Science degree in the College of Health and Human Performance (sport management) from the University of Florida in May 2010. He received his Bachelor of Science in sport and leisure studies from Yonsei University in February 2003. The goal of her research is to investigate both spectator sport event quality and sport consumer behavior and to reduce the gap between academia and sport industry. His accomplishments in the research areas above include 5 research presentations. The presentations have been presented at conferences for the North American Society for Sport Management (NASSM), Sport Marketing Association (SMA), Sport Entertainment & Venues Tomorrow (SEVT), Annual Scholarly Colloquium on Intercollegiate Athletics in Conjunction with the NCAA, American Marketing Association (AMA). He has taught various undergraduate courses such as Swimming and Judo as teaching assistance at the Yonsei University. Beginning fall 2010, he will continuously study as doctoral student of Sport Management at the University of Florida.