

A MIXED-METHODS EXAMINATION OF FACTORS INFLUENCING IDEAL FANTASY
ATHLETE IMAGE ON PSYCHOLOGICAL ATTACHMENT TO AN ATHLETE AMONG
FANTASY SPORT CONSUMERS: MODERATING EFFECTS OF INVOLVEMENT,
COMPETITIVENESS, VALUE ORIENTATION, AND SOCIAL ANXIETY

By

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To Team Cattani (Mom, Dad and Brian). You have been my rock from day one.

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Attachment has been recognized as having important implications on consumer behavior. This research examined potential antecedents to a fantasy sport consumer's psychological attachment to athletes on their fantasy roster. Drawing data collected from fantasy sport consumers across the country, the researchers investigated 1) the potential antecedents of psychological attachment through qualitative focus groups 2) the effects of these antecedents on psychological attachment creation through measurement and structural model testing and 3) the moderating effects of competitiveness, social anxiety, involvement and value orientation on the link between psychological attachment formation and draft intention. 363 individuals participated in the study. Structural equation modeling (i.e., AMOS 18) was employed to test the relationships among the hypothesized links between variables. The sample was representative of the fantasy sport participant population at large. Results from the study showed that in this particular sample of fantasy sport consumers, psychological attachment affected a fantasy sport consumer's intention to draft a particular athlete to his/her team. Surprisingly, the antecedents to psychological attachment had no direct

link to intention to draft. With regard to the moderating variables, (a) competitiveness affected highly competitive consumers who consulted their preexisting attachments when making drafting decisions, (b) hedonic value orientation affected highly hedonic consumers who recruited athletes they were attached to so they could engage in the fun of fantasy sport and (c) social anxiety affected the generally socially anxious consumers who considered previous attachments due to a low fear of league scrutiny in drafting decisions. Involvement and utilitarian value orientation did not moderate the link between psychological attachment to the athlete and draft intention. Ultimately, this study responded to two calls by past researchers: 1) to conduct additional theory-based and empirical studies on fantasy sport consumers and 2) to explore antecedents to attachment in other fields of study. The findings of this study may also suggest some important implications for academicians and sport practitioners, alike.

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

The Internet is quickly becoming one of the most widely adapted tools for sport managers, academicians and fans, alike. As a result, scholarly work has tried to examine sport consumers and their adoption of electronic and online media as an additional outlet to consume the sports they love. Hur, Ko and Valacich (2007) and Hur, Ko and Claussen (2007) conducted studies on consumer acceptance of sport websites and two studies by Kim and Ross (2006) and Kim, Ko and Ross (2007) examined sport video game consumption motivations for both online and offline game play through the creation of the Sport Video Game Motivation Scale (SVGMS). More recently, Kwak, McDaniel and Kim (2011) explored consumer loyalty to sport video games through the lens of consumer expertise.

Based on the customizability and broad applicability the Internet provides, it was only a matter of time before its applications mirrored such growth. One such application is called fantasy sport. Fantasy sport is a platform where users accumulate points based on real-time statistics achieved by members on their “fantasy” roster. While evidence of rudimentary fantasy sports has been seen as early World War II, fantasy sport business as it is known today got its start in the early 1980’s. Fantasy sport’s extreme popularity (to the tune of 32 million people and over 4 billion dollars spent in 2011, FSTA 2011) warrants that research be done in an attempt to understand the reasons why fantasy sports have attracted so many people and how it can be utilized as a potential marketing tool in the future.

As the sporting industry as a whole moves towards more high-tech and efficient equipment, inclusive ticket and travel packages and destination experiences, cost is no

doubt the major hurdle to consumption. Fantasy sports derive some of their appeal from this very trend. Because most of the fantasy sport experience is done online, with little to no membership costs, it seems logical that in lieu of a sports road trip, fantasy sport consumers can immerse themselves in the sport of their choice from the comfort of their home or office. Thanks, in part, to the growth of digital video recorders (DVRs), consumers can watch sports on their own schedule to a maximum level of flexibility. This individualization of today's sport consumption could be a clue as to fantasy sport's growth in recent years. Furthermore, with much of the focus of fantasy sports resting on the performance of individual athletes, consumers are slowly shifting their viewing priorities from a game featuring their favorite team to 'channel-flipping' between several games in order to follow specific athletes. This pattern of behavior has been a catalyst for technology sector growth. Such products as smart-phone applications and fantasy publications and services such as NFL Red Zone and DirecTV's ability to showcase several sports contests on one screen are catering to fantasy-minded fans that largely care about stat-producing game events pertaining to the fantasy rosters versus the drama and allure of an actual game. This new shift provides an excellent starting point to explore just what about these athletes is drawing fans to include them on their fantasy rosters from season to season.

Although consumer behavior has been studied in the sport context for some time with extensive studies completed by researchers, newer still is the research of consumer behavior variables in the online context. For example, issues concerning fantasy sport, social identification (Cunningham, 2007), team identification (James, Kolbe & Trail, 2002), points of attachment (Kwon, Trail & Anderson, 2005) and

involvement (Shank and Beasley, 1998; Zaichkowsky, 1985) have long been studied in the psychology, sociology, sport and marketing literature, but have not been extensively examined in the context of online sport consumption.

While little contemporary theory-based research has been done on the realm of fantasy sport consumer behavior (Bernhard & Eade, 2006; Davis & Duncan, 2006), recent work has been conducted in areas of fantasy sport that have helped to understand these consumers with respect to: understanding consumer identification (Cattani & Ko, 2010), applying the Regulatory Focus Theory (Higgins, 1997) to fantasy sport consumption (Cattani & Ko, in review) and testing self-efficacy and attitudes and their influence on fantasy behavioral intentions (Cattani & Ko, 2011). Several studies have recently been done to examine consumers' motivation to participate in fantasy sport (e.g., Ballouli, Hutchinson, Reese & Cattani, in review; Dwyer & Kim, 2011; Farquhar & Meeds, 2007). Dwyer and Kim (2011), for example, carried out research on the creation and validation of a fantasy sport motivational scale. Furthermore, Dwyer and Drayer (2010) conducted a study that proposed differing consumption modes in fantasy football participants. There are several other studies in fantasy sports that have examined various topics such as the relationship between fantasy football participation and consumption of National Football League products (Drayer, Shapiro, Dwyer, Morse & White, 2010), antecedents and consequences of winning expectancy (Kwak, Lim, Lee and Mahan, 2010) and service quality perceptions of fantasy sport websites (Suh and Pedersen, 2010). These past studies focus on motivation, winning expectancy and consumption of fantasy sport, but none have examined significant precursors to playing fantasy sport in the first place. Attachment to current sport athletes has received

attention in the literature as one of several consumer points of attachment (Robinson & Trail, 2003), but nothing has been done to address potential antecedents to athlete attachment and understanding these antecedents is necessary to beginning the fantasy experience. Examining this concept may well redefine much of the work that has been done to this date.

From their inception, fantasy sports were created as a means for fans to be more involved with the sports they loved. The reason why research on attachment to athletes is so crucial to understanding the fantasy sport consumer better is because the fantasy experience is unique to each player. Those users who enjoy statistics and numerical evaluation play fantasy sports for a deeper and richer look at the actual game, while those users who enjoy following their favorite athletes or interacting with friends play for more social reasons. This variability provides a fertile ground for attachment research because the factors that attract fantasy sport consumers to the different athletes may not be as black and white as previously thought. Additionally, because fantasy sports are a unique blend of spectating, participation, and human interaction, traditional applications of attachment theory may react differently to this consumer base, thus necessitating the need for new research. The problem with the current state of attachment in the fantasy sport context is that there are no studies that examine antecedents to athlete attachment and this void could be serving as a barrier to additional in-depth research on this growing consumer segment. Understanding that a lack of studies has created a void in the literature, a study by Park et al. (2006) implored future researchers to conduct studies on antecedents to attachment.

In response to the call for systematic studies in the fantasy sport context (Bernhard & Eade, 2005; Davis & Duncan, 2006), this study is conducted with a threefold purpose in mind: (1) to gain a clear understanding of antecedents to athlete attachment, (2) to develop and validate a scale that adequately incorporates the uncovered antecedents to athlete attachment and (3) to examine the moderating effects of Involvement, Competitiveness, Value Orientation and Social Anxiety on the relationship between the antecedent dimensions and Attachment. This study is driven by the problem that the composition of fantasy sport consumer attachment to an athlete has not been explored in any of the contemporary fantasy sport literature. This gap in the literature has caused some strain, both in the advancement and robustness of the fantasy sport literature and in understanding a key pre-consumption concept (where most of the focus has been on post-consumption outcomes), that to date, has received little attention. This model and accompanying scale will help create a more complete picture of the overall fantasy sport participation phenomenon and experience. Furthermore, once specific factors of athlete attachment are uncovered, the moderating effects of Sport Involvement (SI), Competitiveness, Value Orientation (VO) and Social Anxiety (SA) on fantasy-related athlete attachment will be examined. A couple of research questions guiding this study are: (1) What are the antecedents of fantasy sport consumers' athlete attachment?; and (2) Do consumers' SI, Competitiveness, VO and SA moderate the relationship between psychological attachment to an athlete and draft intention?

This study will contribute to the literature by extending attachment theory into the online fantasy sport context and by expanding our understanding of athlete attachment

in the fantasy sport consumption context. In particular, this study derives its merit from gaining an understanding of the complex segment of fantasy sport consumers coupled with the fact that up until now, the literature has examined more consequence-related and social interaction issues. Furthermore, while attachment has received attention in the literature from a relational context (Park et al., 2006; Thomson et al., 2005; Vlachos et al., 2008), an attempt to explore and generate list of independent variables that contribute to the formation of fantasy sport consumers' attachment to actual athletes has yet to be undertaken. Moreover, the creation and validation of the scale could have great spillover effects and create new research leads for other segments of the sports marketing and consumer behavior communities in product endorsement, athlete representation, athlete image creation and maintenance, among others. Additionally, examining Involvement, Competitiveness, VO and SA as moderators to these independent variables will garner a more complete understanding of these constructs and their interplay in the fantasy sport arena. Furthermore, the inclusion of Competitiveness and Social Anxiety as moderating variables will capitalize on the trend in the business marketing literature to examine established and emerging personality constructs and their effects on consumer behavior.

CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

The proceeding text is arranged in the following manner: first, a brief introduction and review of two consumer segments akin to fantasy sports (sport wagering and sport video games) will be discussed to illustrate the lineage and development of fantasy sport and second, an in-depth literature review of the present study will introduce and synthesize theoretical issues pertinent to fantasy sport consumers in an effort to discover and understand antecedents to athlete attachment.

The Sport Gaming Industry

Prior to delving into the theoretical underpinnings of this study, an introduction to the sport gaming industry should help to provide a foundation for where the industry came from, is today and where it may be going in the future. The sports gaming industry has many facets, from in-person events (i.e. participation and spectating sports) to more hands-off events (sports wagering, sport video games and fantasy sport). While significant work has been done in the participation and spectator sport arenas, the area of sport gaming is relatively new and provides considerable room for impactful research. The three main areas of sport gaming are sports wagering, sport video games and fantasy sports. Sports wagering and sport video games will be discussed in the proceeding text, along with some theoretical backgrounds that helped to guide the research in each of these fields. Following that breakdown, a comprehensive literature review on the present study will commence.

Sports Wagering

Wagering on sporting events has been around since the emergence of sport, itself. Everything from horse racing and boxing outcomes to the result of specific football plays

has been wagered on and in the early times, wagers were usually low in value and technology and between friends or associates. But just as industry and innovation has followed human migration and development, so too has the spread and breadth of less-scrupulous activities like wagering. As towns emerged and grew, saloons, bars and gambling halls (the predecessor to modern casinos) began popping up with improved technology, new ways to wager and faster access to information, taking wagering from living rooms and salons to centralized locations of town commerce. From this outcropping, neighborhood bookmakers and small and large scale casinos emerged and wagering was now a part of the social fabric. While the legality of sport wagering is different in different countries, individuals continue to engage in these activities as both a means to stay more involved in sports contests and as an outlet for risk-taking and potential financial gain. Furthermore, with the development of online wagering, more people have greater access and no longer have to travel to place their bets. Work by Claussen and Miller (2001) highlight just how inundated the public has become with sports and wagering. In their work, they point to significant increases in broadcasting of sporting events, the public ability to monitor and watch programs on current betting lines, the emergence of both national and regional sports networks, and the proliferation of sports bars and Internet wagering sites as sources of providing tremendous access to relevant information and wagering possibilities.

This increasing interest has also drawn the attention of gaming industry and their trade journals, as work by Doocey (1996) and Udovicic (1998) have investigated the phenomenon of the mesh between sports and wagering. To put some perspective to this booming trend, between 1976 and 1999 revenues from legal gambling grew

1,600% (NGISC, 1999). To further illustrate this growth, in 1976, only 13 states hosted some kind of lottery, there were only two states that allowed off-track wagering and the only state with casinos was Nevada. At the turn of the current century, 37 states (in addition to the District of Columbia) hosted lotteries, 43 states allowed off-track wagering, 28 states had either on-land or riverboat casinos and the state of Nevada had 142 legal bookmaking operations (NGISC, 1999). While these legal outlets have provided significant revenue to the states and tribes that host them, illegal wagering might just be growing at a more alarming rate. With the passing of the Professional and Amateur Sports Protection Act of 1992 (also known as the Bradley Bill), most all legal means of wagering on sporting contests became restricted to the state of Nevada, which forced much of the sports wagering conducted on both professional and collegiate sports underground. Depending on the compiling source, turn-of-the-century estimates of illegal sports wagering (most of which was conducted through the 110 on-line sports wagering sites on the Internet) ranged from \$80 to \$380 billion annually (NGISC, 1999).

Sport Video Games

Sport video games are an emerging sector of the sports landscape that creates a unique nexus between sports, technology and social interaction. According to the Entertainment Software Association (ESA, 2008), the video game industry grossed \$11.7 billion in 2009, with sport video games making up 15.3% of those game sales. Research conducted by Wolf (2006) found that the video game industry made more money than the established film industry. Research on sport video games has been through a similar life cycle to the emerging research on fantasy sport. As sport video games encompass several of the unique aspects that fantasy sports do, studies on this

context have looked to explore where sport video game consumption is similar and different to general sport consumption. Much of the academic work on sport video games has centered on motivations for playing (Cianfrone, Zhang, Trail & Lutz, 2008; Kim & Ross, 2006; Kim, Ko & Ross, 2007; Sherry, Lucas, Greenberg & Lachlan, 2006) and creating customer satisfaction and loyalty (Brakus, Schmitt & Zarantonello, 2009; Holbrook, Chestnut, Olivia & Greenleaf, 1984; Kwak, McDaniel & Kim, 2011).

Some of the theories used to better understand sport video game consumers in contemporary research are: the Uses and Gratification Theory (UGT), the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), Means-End Chain Theory (MECT) and Hedonic Consumption. The Uses and Gratification Theory (Katz, Blumler & Gurevitch, 1974) is a Mass Communications theory that was one of the first to focus on the consumer instead of the media message. The theory posits that consumers utilize media to gratify specific needs. While sport video games are more interactive than watching television (and are perhaps more complex than can be handled by this theory alone), this UGT is a strong first step at understanding why consumers choose sport video games instead of other media options to fulfill their needs. Because fantasy sport is a derivation of sport video games, complete with its own level of interactivity and immersion, the UGT is a solid macro-level theory that helps clarify the reasons for fantasy sport consumption.

The Means-End Chain Theory (MECT) has been popular in both consumer behavior and media consumption research (Kahle, Beatty & Homer, 1986; Kamakura & Novak, 1992; Richins, 1994). The theory posits that individuals undergo a hierarchical process to achieve personal goals and that this process is highly dependent on the individual's values and the attributes of the product in question. Simply put, the theory

traces the means an individual takes to achieve a “desirable end-state” (Gutman, 1982, p. 60). In the sport video game context, the end-state is sport consumption and the video game is the means to that end. Furthermore, the attributes of the specific sport video game, along with any personal values held by the consumer, will dictate how completely the consumer’s end-state was achieved. As far as it links to fantasy sport consumption, the MECT serves a similar role to its application in sport video game research. Fantasy sport is the means to a consumer’s sport immersion end-state.

Through the application and manipulation of these consumer behavior theories, sport video game researchers have made great strides at recognizing the nuances and uniqueness of their consumers. While not used in this research, these theories serve as a strong foundation for future work on fantasy sport consumers and further illustrate that fantasy sport must experience similar trials and observation under the lenses of established scholarly work. The importance in discussing these theories comes from the notion that even a context such as video gaming, which is a still-developing research context, can utilize established theory to help analyze these consumers. Understanding both the parallels and differences of sports wagering and sport video game consumption, there is a strong need for research in this field. Using this macro-level research as a foundation, the current study will look to more fully explore and understand fantasy sport consumer attachment to actual athletes, in the fantasy sport setting. Once a more complete picture is developed, academicians and marketers will be able to use these new and established antecedents to attachment as starting points for further research on more macro-level ideas.

Theoretical Background of the Present Study

The connections between fans and athletes have provided an ample context for research in the fields of sport management, marketing and consumer behavior. Researchers have attempted to explain this phenomenon through the use of consumer fan identification (Trail et al., 2000; Mahony, Nakazawa, Funk, James & Gladden 2002; Kwon, Trail & Anderson 2005; Trail, Anderson & Fink, 2005), psychological commitment (Iwasaki & Havitz, 2004; Mahony et al., 2000) and some preliminary work with attachment (Robinson, Trail, & Kwon, 2004; Robinson, Trail, Dick, & Gillentine, 2005; Lee, Trail, & Anderson, 2009). On the surface, these constructs may seem similar in their approach to understanding the sport fan, but through the proceeding literature review, stark differences will show that an in-depth exploration of fantasy sport consumer attachment may provide the most suitable platform for understanding this segment of sport fans.

Fantasy sport has created a new niche of fan, which creates stronger bonds with the individual players of the fantasy roster more so than his/her favorite team. Consequently, there is great utility in understanding fantasy sport consumers beyond their socio-demographic factors (Bernhard & Eade, 2006). This shift in consumer attachment to an athlete has caused problems for academicians and marketers, alike. For academicians, this concept of athlete attachment has caused scholars to reexamine traditional applications of attachment theory (Bowlby, 1979). For marketers, this shift in attachment has led to different behavioral tendencies (i.e. purchasing licensed products of favorite fantasy players versus favorite teams and purchasing specific fantasy publications versus traditional sport periodicals like Sports Illustrated), varied

spectatorship patterns (i.e. viewing games of fantasy players versus viewing games of favorite teams) and overall alternate sport consumption attitudes.

Social Identity Theory and Fan Behavior

When looking for a starting point to understanding attachment and its link to sport consumer behavior, one should look to the theoretical underpinnings that explain why individuals tend to bond over elements within the greater environment. Social identity theory posits that individuals have both a personal identity and a social identity (Tajfel & Turner, 1989). Some of Turner's (1982) early work found that an individual's personal identity tends to encompass distinct and specific attributes (i.e. abilities and interests), while the social identity is made up of important group categories that can be based on many factors (i.e. demographic factors or various organizational membership of a religious, educational or social nature). Furthermore, the theory explains how and why an individual develops and maintains his/her own ego associated with groups to which she/he belongs (Turner, 1982). In the current study, social identity theory speaks to the nature of individuals and the sense of belongingness that is generated through sport (i.e. teams, coaches, athletes, etc.)

Mael and Ashforth (1992) witnessed that individuals identifying with an organization experienced a, "oneness with or belongingness to the organization, where the individual defines him or herself in terms of the organization of which he or she is a member (p. 104)." Specifically, social identity theory posits that for significant ego enhancement, individuals tend to positively view their social groups and distinguish themselves from members of other social groups by displaying the derogation and rejection of out-group members (Tajfel & Turner, 1989). That is to say that social identification enhances self-esteem when members work together for a desired goal

(Mael & Ashforth, 2001) and, as empirical evidence has shown, members internalize their group or team's success as their own as a result of this social identification (Hirt, Zillman, Brickson, & Kennedy, 1992). Ultimately, an individual forms an identity with an organization (or a team, athlete, or league) when an individual's personal identity and social identity have similar elements. With emphasis on the role and behavior of an individual guided by the behavioral norms accompanying such group membership, the social psychological view provides a theoretical background to explain social identification with a nation (Mummendey, Klink, & Brown, 2001) and a sports team (Wann & Branscomb, 1990).

This notion would certainly apply to fantasy sport consumers. Studies conducted by Branscombe and Wann (1994), Wann and Branscombe (1993) and Wann and Grieve (2005) continually demonstrated that fans with high social identity were more likely to rally around fans that also supported their favorite team while disparaging fans of other teams. Sport fans (and to a greater degree, fantasy sport consumers) see "their" favorite team/athlete/coach as an extension of themselves (Wann, Melnick, Russell & Pease, 2001). On a related note, when presented with negative information regarding a favored group, those with higher levels of identification tend to react quite differently than individuals with lower levels of identification (Cohen & Garcia, 2005; Ellemers, Spears, & Doosje, 2002). Cohen and Garcia (2005) discovered that individuals with a high social identity have a propensity for strengthening their bond to their group following a bout of negative information, while individuals with low social identity to a group are more apt to distancing themselves from that group following that same information. Wann and Branscombe (1990) found that high socially identified fans

were less likely to separate themselves from that team following a loss. Additionally, Wann and Dolan (1994) found that individuals with high social identification towards a team demonstrate 'biased attribution processing' favoring their team. Simply put, high socially identified fans attribute a win to internal factors such as team performance, training or coaching, while they attribute a loss to external factors such as predisposed fate, poor officiating or cheating.

As mentioned above, Social Identity Theory provides a strong foundation for identity formation and connections to referent objects, but in the fantasy sport setting, much of the social bonding inherent in traditional spectator sports exists in a different manner in a highly individual environment, like fantasy sport. Consequently, a more specific construct is necessary to more completely understand the affective connections created between fantasy sport consumers and their fantasy teams.

Fan Identification

In early work on identification, Trail et al. (2000) defined the concept as “an orientation of the self in regard to other objects including a person or group that results in feelings or sentiments of close attachment (p. 165-166).” Solidifying this point, work by Robinson and Trail (2003) looked to expand upon previous research that seemed to focus solely on team identification. In their work, they identified 7 different points of attachment: player, team, coach, university, community, sport and level. Furthermore, the strength and relevance of these points of attachment differed across sport type and between gender. Identification allows the individual to vicariously partake in accomplishments beyond his or her powers (Katz & Kahn, 1978). Issues unique to identification have been studied in the psychology and consumer behavior literature (Mahony, Nakazawa, Funk, James & Gladden 2002; Kwon, Trail & Anderson 2005;

Trail, Anderson & Fink, 2005), but have not been examined in any length in online settings and in more specific terms, with online sport consumers.

Consumer identification has been reported as an important predictor of numerous affective, cognitive, and behavioral reactions (Dutton et al. 1994; Homburg et al. 2009). Research specific to the consumer behavior paradigm (e.g., Fisher & Wakefield 1998; Gwinner & Swanson 2003; Madrigal 2000; Tapp & Clowes, 2002; Wann & Branscombe 1993) has demonstrated identity to be a significant precursor of various behavioral consumption patterns. Specifically, behavioral consequences such as consumer patronage and re-patronage intentions have garnered scholarly attention (e.g., Kwon & Armstrong 2002; Kwon & Trail 2003). One lesson that may be learned is that different levels of psychological connection are influenced by different factors (Funk & James, 2001), and that these factors may lead to different behavioral outcomes. The findings pertaining to those levels of identification may be consistent with the conclusions of James, Kolbe, and Trail (2002): that the stronger one's identification to a property, the greater the number of variables influencing the connection. Given the loyalty and enthusiasm displayed by many fans of college athletics (Mahony, Madrigal, & Howard 2000), along with the findings of the studies discussed above, it has been shown that an individual's identification with a professional athlete profoundly influences their consumption intentions, behaviors and attitudes towards these athletes.

While identification draws closer still, the full breadth of affective connection evident in the fantasy sport consumer's interaction with fantasy sport is not fully realized by this construct. It is conceivable that an individual can identify with an entity and still not fully envelope themselves in that entity.

Psychological Commitment

Commitment has been characterized as a yearning to remain in a relationship with a referent other. Contemporary research has shown evidence of commitment to brands, stores, or services (Evanschitzky, Iyer, Plassman, Niessing, & Meffert, 2006; Thomson, MacInnis, & Park, 2005), and is considered an essential antecedent to consumer loyalty (Beatty & Kahle, 1988; Dimitriades, 2006; Havitz & Mannell, 2005) and future behavioral intentions (Pritchard et al., 1999). Commitment is defined as “an enduring desire to maintain a valued relationship” (Moorman et al., 1992, p. 316) and “a tendency to resist change” (Pritchard et al., 1999). Resistance to change refers to “individuals’ unwillingness to change their: preferences toward, important associations with, and/or beliefs about a brand” (Iwasaki & Havitz, 2004, p. 50).

Pritchard et al. (1999) proposed three processes involved in commitment that lead to resistance to change – informational, identification, and volitional. Informational processes refer to a person’s cognitive management of information about a preference. Identification processes refer to a person’s linkage to a given preference. Volitional processes can be explained by “a freedom from constraints and a freedom to choose” (p. 336). The results of the study indicated that these processes were important antecedents of resistance to change, which in turn significantly influenced loyalty.

Based on the importance of resistance to change in the aforementioned literature, Mahony et al. (2000) developed the psychological commitment to team (PCT) scale to examine sport fans’ attitudinal commitment to sports teams. The study focused on sport fans’ continued allegiance to a certain team even when the team performed poorly, traded players or changed coaches. They highlighted affective commitment rather than behavioral commitment, since behavioral indicators such as increases in attendance,

ticket sales, or repeated attendance at sports events are not sufficient to explain sport fans' loyalty to a team. For example, fans from other cities and towns who cannot attend a game may still maintain strong loyalty to a team.

Iwasaki and Havitz (2004) examined the mediating effects of psychological commitment on the relationship between leisure involvement and behavioral loyalty to a recreation agency. Also, these researchers distinguished between involvement, psychological commitment, and behavioral loyalty in the leisure context. Leisure involvement reflects "people's beliefs about their leisure participation, whereas psychological commitment and attitudinal loyalty reflect their attitude toward a brand or service...behavioral loyalty represents people's behavior in their leisure (e.g., the use of a recreation service provider)" (Iwasaki & Havitz, 2004, p. 50).

Psychological commitment is another body of literature that provides background toward understanding fantasy sport consumers. While it is more specific and encompasses the affective component unique to fandom, much of the work on this topic has focused on more group-level enterprises, such as teams and organizations. There still is that prevailing notion that fantasy sport consumers internalize fantasy sport on an individual manner and thusly, a more specific consumer behavior construct is needed. Consequently, the idea of attachment blends the connections to an entity with the affective commitment that fantasy sport consumers seem to embody.

Psychological Attachment and Fantasy Sport Consumption

The concept of attachment comes from the developmental psychology literature. The original work on attachment was examined through relationships between parents and their children. Through this research, Bowlby (1988) concluded that attachment is, "an emotion-laden target-specific bond between a person and a specific object."

Researchers such as Collins and Read (1990; 1994) and Aron and Westbay (1996) have found that psychological attachments span a continuum of relative strength and that stronger attachments tend to lead to stronger connections to referent objects. Bowlby (1980), among others, found that forming psychological attachments to referent objects satisfies a basic human need. In that same study, Bowlby found that as psychological attachments grow in strength, individuals tend to maintain closeness to the object of their attachment. Oliver (1999) found that a chief consequence of deep psychological attachments is extreme loyalty to the referent object. Viewed with a fantasy sport consumer lens, it would then stand to reason that understanding antecedents to attachment would create far-reaching effects from a sport management point of view. A bulk of the work on this construct concentrated on an individual's attachment to another individual, but since that initial body of literature, marketers have taken up the mantle and extended attachment to other contexts. Various works in the field of marketing have shown attachment development to gifts (Mick & DeMoss, 1990), collectibles (Slater, 2000), and brands (Schouten & McAlexander, 1995). Moreover, researchers have found evidence of attachment to celebrities (O'Guinn, 1991) and sports teams (Babad, 1987). A study by Horton and Wohl (1956) found that when consumer attachments extend to 'human brands (those that are professionally managed and share additional ties to and features of a brand; Thomson, 2006),' they can be referred to as "secondary object" attachments which create an "intimacy from afar." This concept speaks very strongly to fantasy sport consumers and their attachments to athletes. In many cases, fantasy sport consumers have no personal relation to these

athletes, but can develop very strong connections that may replicate feelings similar to personal relationships.

Review of the psychological attachment literature unearths two significant byproducts that may speak to fantasy sport consumers and their consumption of the game: (1) the resistance of competing alternatives (Johnson & Rusbult, 1989) and (2) sacrificing resources to maintain the relationship (van Lange et al., 1997). From a fantasy perspective, point one may explain why strong attachments to a given athlete bar fantasy consumers from trading or removing these athletes for different and new athletes. The second point, while similar to the first, speaks to a fantasy consumer's sacrifice of such things as reputation, increased league stature or the procurement of a different athlete to the detriment of the attachment, especially when athlete performance is lacking.

In the field of sport marketing, Kwon and Armstrong (2004) said that points of attachment reflect a "psychological connection" toward a focal object. As the aforementioned definition implies, there can be multiple objects that serve as anchors for individual and group attachment. Furthermore, while the points of attachment have been studied in the spectator sport context (Robinson, Trail, & Kwon, 2004; Robinson, Trail, Dick, & Gillentine, 2005; Lee, Trail, & Anderson, 2009), the research on the points of attachment in an online context, particularly fantasy sport, is quite new. A few studies have been conducted in the domains of consumer psychology, personality and marketing to assess antecedents to attachment, but this research examined antecedents to non-sport entities such as consumer brands (Grisaffe & Nguyen, 2011) and celebrities (Thomson, 2006). The study by Grisaffe and Nguyen (2011) used a

qualitative elicitation task to unearth antecedents to consumer attachment to brands. Their study found five antecedents: sentimentality/emotional memory (i.e. people, places and situations); socialization (i.e. family and social groups); traditional consumer outcomes (i.e. value, satisfaction and differentiation); superior marketing characteristics (i.e. product, price, place, promotion and service) and; user-derived benefits (i.e. sensory pleasure, self-oriented goals and social-oriented goals). The study by Thomson (2006) found three antecedents to celebrity attachment: autonomy (the need for humans to feel that an their activities are self-chosen, self-governed and self-endorsed; Deci & Ryan, 2000); relatedness (the need for humans to feel a sense of closeness with others; Deci & Ryan, 2000) and; competence (an individual's innate and life-long tendency to seek feelings of effectiveness, achievement and challenge in his/her activities; Deci & Ryan, 2000). As such, while antecedents to attachment have received research attention in different relational contexts and academic disciplines, in-depth examinations into the antecedents of attachment have yet to be researched (Park et al., 2006). This call for research on antecedents to attachment seems to fall naturally into the context of sports and more specifically, fantasy sports, where no work has been done to understand this concept.

In the context of fantasy sport consumption, the focus of the consumer is to the individual athlete. As such, this study differentiates itself from conventional sport fan behavior research because up until now, researchers used group psychology theories, among others, to explain fan behavior. The fantasy sport consumer spends a great amount of resources in understanding individual athletes and as a consequence, forms attachment to these athletes. That said, the use of group psychology theories would be

imprudent, as the connection between the fantasy sport consumer and the athlete on his fantasy team occurs at an individual level, where attachment theory has its strongest foothold. As mentioned at the beginning of this section, many authors have examined relationships between consumers and referent objects through various lenses. While each has its merits and contributions to the body of knowledge, the aforementioned backgrounds appear to lack a totality in understanding the link between a fantasy sport consumer and the emotional connections he/she makes to individual athletes. As discussed in previous sections of this paper, however, the fantasy sport consumer is cut from a different mold and upon reviewing the literature and studying the conceptual makeup of the aforementioned constructs, it is clear that attachment is the most suitable concept to more fully encapsulate what it means to be a fantasy sport consumer. This, coupled with a call for research on antecedents to attachment (Park et al., 2006), makes this study unique and necessary in advancing the field of sport management and the marketing body of literature. Understanding that discovering the antecedents to fantasy sport consumer attachment is the chief concern of this research, the first step in the process is to conduct qualitative research to unearth what fantasy sport consumers point to as dimensions of attachment to athletes.

CHAPTER 3 METHODS

In order to properly attend to the purpose of this research, the macro-level project was sub-divided into three micro-level studies: Study 1 is a qualitative analysis designed to reveal the antecedents of athlete attachment from focus groups comprised of fantasy sport consumers; Study 2 is a quantitative analysis that empirically tests the antecedents to attachment (as discovered from the focus group research) against athlete attachment and draft intention and; Study 3 is an additional quantitative analysis that tests the moderating effects of selected moderating variables. As such, the methodological aspects consistent among the three studies are presented in the following text, while aspects unique to each micro-level study will be presented within that particular study.

Participants

Fantasy sport consumers come in every demographic combination and have very different levels of playing experience, sport knowledge and willingness to participate. In this study, fantasy sport consumers, spanning the range of participation possibilities, were selected as the population of interest for the study. Keeping the breadth of the study sample broad helped to ensure a true measure of fantasy sport consumer intentions and behaviors toward fantasy sport, as a whole.

The goal of this study is to obtain an understanding of the fantasy sport consumer's perceptions towards antecedents of athlete attachment. As per the protocol of the IRB, the sample for this study will be fantasy sport consumers who are at least 18 years of age. A purposive sampling protocol was used to collect the requisite data necessary for analysis. This method was chosen because the population of fantasy

sport consumers, while numerous in total, was difficult to locate in the given municipality. The purposive sampling protocol is deemed appropriate when a situation like this is presented. As mentioned above, this sample was obtained through local fantasy sport consumers in a mid-sized southeastern university city, through the email list of the FSTA and popular fantasy sport hosting websites.

Mixed Methods Approach

Because this study was aimed at uncovering the unique phenomenon of fantasy sport consumer athlete attachment, compiling an extensive list of potential antecedents to fantasy sport consumer athlete attachment was crucial. As such, both qualitative (Study 1) and quantitative (Study 2) research methods were deemed necessary to gain an in-depth understanding of this phenomenon. While there are multiple ways of collecting qualitative data, such as: focus group interviews (Lofland & Lofland, 1995; Merton et al., 1956; Rubin & Rubin, 1995), structured observation (Blatchford et al., 2003; Jenkins et al., 1975; Webb et al., 1966), and content analysis (Altheide, 1996; Hodson, 1996; Jagger, 1998), focus group interviews were employed. The mixed method approach was deemed reasonable since there are not many systematic studies available in the realm of fantasy sport consumers and their consumption behavior. According to Morgan (1998, p.17), “focus groups provide preliminary research on specific issues in a larger project.” Furthermore, in that same study, Morgan found that focus groups compliment other methods when used in the same study and are useful when creating scale items (which is the goal of the qualitative portion of this study).

Study 1 – Qualitative Focus Groups – Antecedents of PAA

Data Collection

Bryman (2008. p. 473) defines focus groups as, “a method of interviewing that involves more than one interviewee.” Focus groups and group interviews are often used synonymously in the literature, but proponents of focus groups cite three differences between the two methods that make the focus group unique: (1) focus groups tend to be specific in scope, where group interviews tend to explore many areas, (2) group interviews usually emerge because the researcher is trying to save resources by questioning several individuals at once, focus groups do not share that purpose, and (3) researchers who use focus groups are perpetually interested in the ways in which a topic is discussed by individuals acting as a group (the interaction of group members and how they respond to each other’s comments is of chief importance). Focus groups were ultimately deemed as prudent because: (1) this research was only concerned with uncovering antecedents to attachment in fantasy sport consumers, versus exploring several issues within fantasy sport participation, (2) because generating a list of antecedents to attachment was the goal, no restrictions were placed on resources due to the novelty of this undertaking and (3) comments made by individual participants generated secondary points and further discussion that may not have emerged if one-on-one interviews or observations had been used.

When selecting focus groups as a method of data collection, several issues must be appropriately attended to in order to obtain the best possible results. The issues are: (1) the number of focus groups to be used, (2) participant selection (3) the number of participants in each group, (4) the involvement level of the focus group moderator, (5) the questions to be asked, and (6) the best procedures for recording and transcribing

the results of the focus group (Bandy et al., 2008). These issues will be outlined in the following text.

Number of focus groups used. Upon reviewing studies that used focus groups for data collection, it became clear that there is no concrete rule for a specific number of groups. Calder (1977) suggested that once the focus group moderator could effectively and accurately anticipate how the next group was going to respond to the questions, the appropriate number of groups had been reached. The term for this phenomenon is called 'theoretical saturation.' According to Livingstone and Lunt (1994), "the number of focus groups was determined by continuing until comments and patterns began to repeat and little new material was generated" (p. 181).

Another issue to be mindful of when selecting the appropriate number of groups is how the range of views expressed may be dependent on socio-demographic factors. On the topic of using focus groups in social research, Kitzinger (1994) suggested a large number of groups in hopes of collecting as much diversity of perspective as possible. It is important to note that not all researchable topics are hindered by this issue, thus, a large number of groups is not always necessary. In conjunction with the aforementioned point, one additional issue to consider when choosing the number of focus groups to use is that an increased number of groups breeds greater complexity of analysis. Work done by Schlesinger et al. (1992) revealed that fourteen tape-recorded sessions produced over 1,400 pages of transcription.

Taking these issues into account, four groups were recruited for this part of data collection. While on the lower end in terms of number, as compared to other research studies conducted using focus groups, the researcher expected theoretical saturation to

occur sooner than in some of the more complex studies reviewed for this issue. As it turned out, theoretical saturation occurred after the third focus group and to further ensure that no new information was ignored, the researcher conducted the fourth focus-group as per the qualitative focus group protocol.

Participant selection. From a purely logical standpoint, anyone that has interest or personal relevance to the topic can participate in a focus group. Furthermore, there are many topics of interest that do not require a specific segment of the population, making restrictions few and far between. On the other hand, there are times when individuals of interest are necessary to the success of the focus group. For example, a study done by Morgan and Spanish (1985) examined an individual's organization of knowledge on heart attacks. Thusly, they attempted to recruit individuals between the ages of 35-50 because these people would be more likely to have more experience with the chosen topic.

When and if stratifying criteria are deemed necessary and groups are created, the issue at hand is to determine whether or not systematic variation exists in the ways in which the individuals of the group discuss a given topic (Bandy et al., 2008). To highlight this point, Morely (1980) found that when conducting a study on news program content, groups of managers interpreted the content of these programs in ways that were similar to the original ideas of the program producers, but that groups of trade union members derived completely opposite meanings from the same news program segments. From the same vein, Schlesinger et al. (1992) found that individuals' particular life experiences or specific background did affect interpretations based on that connection to the topic of interest.

One final issue to consider when planning group membership is whether to choose naturally occurring groups or to recruit individuals that do not know each other. While examples from the literature show researchers handling this issue both ways, the researcher agrees with the work of Kitzinger (1994) in which natural groups were selected based on the justification that maintaining a natural conversation was of utmost importance to the topic of interest. Furthermore, Holbrook and Jackson (1996) attempted to compile random groups of individuals for their study, but found that they were unable to recruit group members in this way. They then switched their strategy to that of natural group selection and were able to find individuals in a fairly steady manner. In adopting this strategy, Holbrook and Jackson pointed out that researchers looking to tackle this issue should tailor the decision to their topic and if it seems logical and reasonable to include natural groups, to do so.

For the current study, stratifying criteria were used on the following two parameters: gender and fantasy playing experience. The decision to do so rested on the differences in subjective antecedents to athlete attachment for males and females in participating in fantasy sport and how an individual's focus may change based on how long they have been playing fantasy sports. The four groups were mixed-gender to provide for a wide array of antecedents to athlete attachment on the topic of fantasy sport. Furthermore, care was taken to ensure that a range of fantasy sport playing experience was covered in each group. To account for a range of fantasy playing experience in each focus group, the researcher requested the number of years that each potential participant had in playing fantasy sports in the recruitment email and constructed the groups to account for the variability. Each group was comprised of two

to three participants with less than two years of playing experience, two to three participants with three to five years of experience and two to three members with over five years of experience. While the number of playing years was known to the researcher, said information was withheld from each group in fear of any bias that information may have created within the group. Additionally, understanding that fantasy sport participation is a highly social endeavor, natural groups were recruited for the purposes of ensuring natural conversations on a highly communal activity.

Number of participants used. Recruiting an appropriate number of participants is an issue when using focus groups. Morgan (1998) suggests six to ten individuals as an adequate number of participants for a focus group. In suggesting this number, Morgan advocates smaller groups when group members are likely to have much to say or are highly involved with the topic of interest. While this number tends to work well in terms of small-group dynamics and participant interaction, a major issue with focus groups is dealing with those individuals that agree to participate and then do not show. While it is difficult to manage participant absence, a commonly used practice when dealing with focus group recruitment is over-recruiting (e.g. Wilkenson, 1999). Fantasy sport means different things to different people. Based on this difference of participation, and the suggestions of Morgan, the four groups in this study consisted of six to seven individuals (in order to get a high-quality response from each participant). The researcher expected the group members to have a good deal of information to contribute to the conversation and was looking to control for the 'group-think' phenomenon inherent in large groups.

Involvement level of the moderator. Moderator involvement is always an issue when conducting focus groups. The issue at hand stems from the want of the moderator to allow for a freely evolving repartee, while at the same time, acting as a directing influence that both leads the discussion and refocuses a group that has gone off on a tangent. While proponents of focus groups recommend that the moderator stick to the pre-developed research questions, researchers argue that some level of flexibility must be built in to the process in the event that member responses become off-topic or lack sufficient informational value (Huberman & Miles, 1994). While this balance of intervention was challenging, a well-developed set of general research questions, along with a measure of flexibility in the event that elaboration was necessary provided for a poignant set of responses from each individual and each focus group. When an impasse is reached during the course of the focus group, Bryman (2008) suggests erring on the side minimal interaction, so as to obtain the most information possible from the group.

Questions asked to participants. Similar to moderator intervention, the type and number of questions to be asked in a focus group must be accounted for. The major issue in this topic is whether to use a small set of general and open-ended questions or to create a longer list of more directed and close-ended questions. Following the work of Nassar-McMillan et al. (2010), Miles and Huberman (1994) and Racher and Robinson (2002), this study adopted a phenomenological perspective as it relates to the questioning of the participants in an attempt to effectively uncover individual interpretation of why an individual attaches his/herself to a particular athlete in both the fantasy sport consumer setting. As such, a focus group outline was constructed around

open-ended questions so that additional information could be collected as needed. The questions created for the focus group interviews covered general topics pertaining to the fantasy athlete attachment context. Prior to asking the questions developed for focus group discussion, an informed consent document was distributed, read, signed and collected by the participants. This form detailed the benefits, risks and general purpose of the focus group so that each participant could decide if they wanted to continue with the process. Instructions pertaining to the protocol of the focus group were also given to the participants. These instructions covered items such as identification of the respondents for purposes of transcription, response format and procedures for post-focus group follow-up. Furthermore, special care was taken on the part of the moderator to operationally define the concept of attachment prior to the start of the process so that the focus group respondents were clear on what they should be reflecting on. As it related to identification, respondents were asked to provide a pseudonym (for ease of transcription), their age and gender. The response format was described to the respondents as being an open forum where comments could be stated as participants thought of them. Additionally, participants were instructed to remain seated once the focus group concluded so they could be de-briefed on post-participation procedures. These procedures consisted of sending the finished transcript to each respondent so that they could check for accurate transcription and potential misrepresentation within the transcript.

In order to generate the most comprehensive list of fantasy antecedents to attachment possible, the following questions were used in the focus groups:

When thinking of your ideal fantasy athlete, what are some factors that cause you to develop a psychological attachment to him/her?

When thinking of your ideal fantasy athlete, what are some factors that might inhibit or alter your development of a psychological attachment to him/her??

Recording and transcription procedures. Similar to most methods of qualitative research, it is prudent to record and transcribe the discussions of focus group interviews for the following reasons, as prescribed by Bryman (2008):

It can be extremely difficult to not only transcribe what is said during the focus group, but also which participant is responsible for the particular comment in question. This issue is not so prevalent in one-on-one interviews, where natural pauses provide time to write, but in the context of a group interview, constant pausing could lead to unnecessary interruption, agitated participants and a loss of flow.

Part of the experience of focus group research is garnered from witnessing the dynamics of the group. Observing group leaders and followers allows the moderator to provoke participation from those who have not contributed much. Writing each word of the discussion while it is being conducted will detract from this necessary observation time and could diminish the quality of the comments.

One of the advantages of the focus group is witnessing the process that leads to the construction of a collective group meaning through debate and interaction within the group. Constant note-taking would destroy this advantage because, in relation to the previous point, it is important to know *who* made each comment.

Lastly, another main advantage of focus group research is not just what is said in response to the questions posed by the moderator, but how it is said. Tone of voice,

semantics and non-verbal communication are all important distinctions that would be lost if the researcher had only his/her notes to go by. Taking the above points into consideration, it is clear that recording focus group discussions is to the advantage of the moderator, as doing so allowed for full engagement in the discussion and a better observation all of the nuances generated by the group communication.

Results

Using the questions detailed in the qualitative methods sections, four (4) focus groups were completed and following the guidelines proposed in the Methodology section, theoretical saturation was attained. Theoretical saturation occurs when responses from the next focus group provide no new information over and above that gained from previous focus groups. Once the four focus groups were transcribed, two independent coders were given one week to read each transcript and coded each of the statements with a theme that they concluded best encompassed the given statement. This freedom was used to ensure that moderator bias was left out of the coding process. Once the two coders returned their assessments of the transcripts, a discussion was held between the coders and the moderator to evaluate agreeability on terminology so that thematic distinctions could be generated. This discussion took place over two days so that adequate time was given to understand each of the coder's perspectives. When disagreements between codes occurred, the moderator and two coders discussed where the differences existed. In the cases where agreement was impossible, but the differences between coders were minimal, the moderator served as the deciding vote. In the cases where agreement was impossible, but the differences between coders was great, the statements in question were left as separate themes.

Following the comprehensive discussion, five distinct themes emerged. The five themes that came out in the data as being important to attachment creation were: athlete expertise, external team factors, credibility, popularity and physical fitness. These dimensions will serve as the variables for the foundation for the Ideal Fantasy Athlete Image Scale. During the quantitative analysis, these factors will be tested to evaluate their contribution to the ideal fantasy athlete image. As a second-order construct, Ideal Fantasy Athlete Image will be tested for its influence on fantasy sport consumer athlete attachment. While the main focus of this paper has been to unearth antecedents to athlete attachment, one of the major thoughts that continued to manifest itself in the focus group responses was the notion of draft intention. Hearing the concept over and over again led to a realization that draft intention was too prevalent to ignore. As such, a new dependent variable of the second study will be to examine the effects of each of these ideal fantasy athlete image factors on draft intention. Draft Intention was deemed as prudent because a fantasy sport consumer's psychological attachment to an athlete (or lack thereof) will ultimately lead to the recruitment of athletes to their fantasy rosters. As mentioned at the beginning of the methods section, the themes generated from this qualitative analysis led to the hypotheses generation that will be empirically tested in Study 2. Based on respondent answers and available literature, the five themes were defined as follows:

Athletic expertise. An athlete's athletic capability on the field of play

Athletics experience encompasses the individual athlete's on-field achievements and capability in their sport (i.e. skills and sport proficiency). From a fantasy sport perspective, athletic expertise is important in fulfilling the needs of the fantasy user. It is

logical to assume that an athlete who possesses superior skill in his/her sport would be an object of attachment and increase a fantasy sport consumer's draft intention.

Research by Erdem and Swait (2008) found that expertise 'implies that the brand is believed capable of delivering what it has promised (pg. 102).' A study conducted by Gladden, Milne and Sutton (1998) found that success is one of the most important creators of brand association over time. Work conducted by Trail et al. (2003) discovered that spectators are driven by athletic skill. As part of the fantasy experience is spectator-based, this dimension of athletic expertise may well speak to fantasy sport consumers' psychological attachment and draft intention. Based on the work of Ohanian (1990), which looked to examine celebrity endorser credibility, a study by Arai and Ko (2009) defined athlete expertise as "an athlete's athletic capability in his/her sport." The author has adopted this definition for the current study.

Selected quotations from the focus group responses speak to the dimension of Athletic Expertise:

'I would want someone who puts up good stats, statistics, those statistics based on the rules of the league that I am playing.'

'I want someone who is consistent as well, with that being said, someone who basically plays well throughout the entire season and someone I can depend on and someone who has experience in high pressure situations.'

'Statistical output is essential for me. They need to be able to produce on the field.'

External team factors. External factors influencing the given athlete including the number of players at his/her position, the style of offense/defense, the existence of new

coaches or coordinators and trades that might place the athlete in question on a new team

Researched extensively in the organizational behavior and social psychology literature, work on team factors focused on issues concerning cohesion (Fiedler, Hartman & Rudin, 1952; Martens & Peterson, 1971) and group closeness (Torrance, 1955; Martens & Peterson, 1971). This field of literature is set in organizational work teams and incorporates an assessment of both task and social dimensions inherent in group dynamics (Fiedler, 1967; Hersey & Blanchard, 1969). In many of the papers that speak to this topic, the issues that are discussed speak to group members and their internal abilities to function in a given group or team. The dimension discussed by the focus group respondents is different, however, because in the instances described by the respondents, they were discussing events outside of an athlete's control that would alter his/her connectivity/functionality to their team and ultimately, to a fantasy sport consumer. Based on extrapolation from the organizational behavior literature, it is likely that fantasy sport consumers' athlete attachment and draft intention could be very different based on the external team factors of the athlete in question.

The selected quotations from the focus group responses speak to this dimension of External Team Factors:

'If they are a second or third option on a team, from the quarterback looking to throw, that may deter me.'

'Players at crowded positions. If you are looking at football, running back by committee, if you are looking at baseball, who is a utility player, but he necessarily doesn't stack up at each individual position.'

'Coaches that are in their first year, players may not be used to their new system on offense or defense.'

'Similar to that, someone who has just recently joined a new team, they might now have that chemistry with that team and play well from the beginning'

Credibility. A consumer's perceived image of an athlete based on athletes' off-field behavior

Research by Ainsworth et al., 1978 and Bowlby, 1980 have summarized that the desire to make strong emotional attachments serves as a basic human need. Athletes, serving as role models or behavior exemplars, are natural objects of attachment. Ohanian (1990) defined trustworthiness in the communications context as 'a listener's degree of confidence in, and level of acceptance of, the speaker.' Ohanian's Source Credibility Model was created to assess celebrity credibility and to understand the effects that trusted celebrities have on consumers. As a pillar of source credibility theory, Ohanian (1990) said that an endorser's credible character has a significant effect on the persuasiveness of his/her message. Research by Erdem and Swait (2004) and Kim, Morris and Swait (2008) discovered that brand credibility is an important antecedent to brand loyalty (attachment) and brand choice (draft intention). In the 2008 study, Kim et al. found that trustworthiness means 'that it is believable that a brand will deliver what it has promised (pg. 102).' As recent sports stories have shown us (i.e. Tiger Woods, Penn State) athlete's off-field behavior can have a significant effect on attachment from consumers.

The selected quotations from the focus group responses speak to this dimension of Credibility:

'I think personal life too, and athletes who are good people outside their sport are definitely more likeable and you are more likely to follow them and develop some kind of following'

'To follow a player, to develop an attachment to them, I feel like their personal life definitely matters.'

'I don't like supporting people who make bad decisions.'

'Social acumen can be a big detractor. There have been guys who have skipped the playing of the National Anthem, spit on umpires, been goons off the field, that hurts your standing in my mind.'

'I think of players off the field, Chris Johnson has some off-field issues'

Popularity. The perceived notoriety of an athlete based on the attention an athlete receives (both positive and negative) in the conventional media

Much of the work on media exposure has largely examined the effects of increased exposure on body image (Aglia & Tantleff-Dunn, 2004; Posavac, Posavac & Posavac, 1998), violence towards women (Malamuth & Check, 1981) and politics (Bartels, 1993). Chang et al. (2012) proposed that consumers monitor well-known or popular brands to boost their self-esteem. In another example, work by Kim (1995) found that consumers highly regard leading brands even if those brands are not proven as the best brand in terms of quality. This finding is significant to fantasy sport consumers because there is a segment of athletes in each sport who may not be the best in terms of performance but that have a steady following based on their popularity. In a more recent study, Braunstein and Zhang (2005) evaluated the effectiveness of endorsers through the concept of 'star power.' In each of these cases, the authors show

that the media has a profound effect on consumers and while in many cases, athletes cannot dictate the amount or intensity of media exposure, their actions related to endorsements, spokesperson activity and other similar activities no doubt affect their status as objects for attachment.

The selected quotations from the focus group responses speak to this dimension of Popularity:

'I would say their exposure, the media, more attention, you are obviously going to be drawn to someone.'

'I guess their star power.'

'I think for football, if they are on the cover of Madden.'

'Players who are getting hyped from the season before.'

Physical fitness. A consumer's overall perception of an athlete's general physical fitness

Injuries and their effects on athletes are well documented in the literature and while the physiological aspects of injuries are readily known, the information from the focus groups illustrates just how significant this dimension is to Fantasy Sport Consumers. According to work by Arai and Ko (2009), Physical fitness can symbolize an athlete's level of self-control and dedication and can ultimately serve as a message to sport consumers.

The selected quotations from the focus group responses speak to this dimension of Physical Fitness:

'If they are injury prone, I am less likely to do that, which creates more of a headache for me. They are probably going to get injured again.'

'For me, it would be someone that I choose that doesn't have a history of getting injured as often.'

'Definitely an injury.' [in response to a factor that would inhibit attachment to an athlete]

'Injury propensity, if you've got the injury bug, I am weary of you. Nothing personal, of course.'

'I don't attach myself to older players; my connections to those guys are weak because they are more likely to break down.'

Discussion

What was interesting about these themes was that four of the themes were directly related to the individual athlete while one dealt with external team factors that influenced the athlete. While other studies in the fields of branding, brand image and brand leadership overlap with several of these dimensions, the contribution of this qualitative research is the addition of the dimension of External Team Factors to the current branding and brand leadership information. From focus group responses, this dimension appears to be salient to fantasy sport consumers and could serve to alter attachment levels from the fantasy sport consumer to their ideal fantasy athletes. Evaluating its influence, in conjunction with the other dimensions could potentially generate a more complete picture of fantasy sport consumers to this point in the literature. Having unearthed the significant themes of athlete attachment from the focus group responses, it is now imperative to examine which of these antecedents most strongly influences fantasy sport consumer athlete attachment. Because these dimensions manifested themselves through focus group questions, a second literature review was necessary to search for items that most completely measured the

antecedents. The following section provides information regarding extant scales that most effectively measured the aforementioned antecedents to attachment.

Study 2 – Scale Development of Ideal Fantasy Athlete Image

In searching for these dimensions in the literature, the closest field of study that encompassed the unearthed themes was branding and more specifically, brand equity and brand leadership. Looking to these academic fields for theoretical support makes sense because each of the five themes appears to not only be a characteristic of a brand, but also describe dimensions of ideal brands. There is a general sense of agreement among scholars that a brand necessitates a promise for future satisfaction (Berry, 2000; Clifton & Simmons, 2004; Raggio & Leone, 2007). Furthermore, one of the most commonly used theories to understand brand leadership is trait theory (Yukl, 1994). In that study, Yukl found that more often than not, individuals that make ideal leaders tend to embody a similar combination of traits (i.e. knowledge, creativity, determination). For an athlete to occupy a place of brand leadership or ideal status (which would entail some kind of attachment formation on the part of the consumer) in the mind of the fantasy sport consumer, it stands to reason then, that he/she would have a certain set of specific traits that would convey their abilities. The antecedents that were uncovered from the qualitative focus groups encompass a leadership quality to them that, while not ideal for a general business application, fit quite well in a sport context. Another theory that has shaped brand leadership is contingency leadership theory. In discussing this theory, Tannenbaum and Schmidt (1973) highlighted that while traits are necessary to having the capacity to lead, there are factors inherent to a given situation that may impact one's ability to be effective. This theory speaks to the External Team Factors factor from the qualitative focus groups. Sometimes, there are

factors (both internal and external in nature) outside the control of the athlete that hamper his/her ability to be an ideal brand leader.

Conceptualizing athletes as brands is not uncommon, but while studies examining individual athletes are sparse, marketing and sport management scholars have examined branding from a sport team perspective. Work by Gladden, Milne and Sutton (1998) found that unlike other tangible products, sport product consumption elicits some unique characteristics from its consumer base (i.e. entertainment, affiliation and self-expression). While these characteristics were applied to teams of interest, application to individual athletes makes conceptual sense. Few studies exist on this notion of human brands, but work by Thomson (2006) also used attachment theory to describe why consumers develop connections to them. His work discovered that when human brands attend to the autonomy and relatedness needs of the consumer, attachment to that individual is formed. Incorporating leadership into the fold, topics such as leadership within an organization (Olafson & Hastings, 1988; Reimer & Chelladurai, 1995) and leadership in sport organizations (Powell & Butterfield, 2003) have been conducted to test such traditional leadership theories as charismatic leadership and path-goal leadership. Furthermore, a recent study by Chang, Ko, Lee, Cho and Arai (2012) has attempted to synthesize current leadership and branding concepts to develop a model to measure brand leadership. In their study, Chang et al. completed an extensive literature review and developed a framework comprised of four dimensions: product quality, innovativeness, perceived value and brand popularity. In examining these factors, three of the four proposed by Chang and his colleagues have some spillover into the findings of the qualitative focus groups. One could argue that Athlete Expertise

and product quality share similarities. Ulrich and Smallwood (2007) argued that brand leaders must have the core elements of fundamentals and differentiators in order to establish themselves in the marketplace. In a fantasy sports setting, athletes must have a sufficient command of the sport they play, as well as some position-specific characteristics that differentiate them from the rest of the athletes at their position. Perceived value and Physical Fitness also have conceptual similarities. According to Kamins et al. (2003), understanding the comparative size of the market share of the brand leader and all other brands within the market is necessary in assessing perceived value. When viewed through the fantasy sport lens, a gifted athlete could have all the tools in the world, but if their physical fitness is subpar or they are often injured, their value in the mind of the fantasy sport consumer no doubt decreases. As a final parallel, Popularity has a similar meaning in both studies. Association with well-known brands has been shown to boost self-esteem within consumers (Hellofs & Jacobson, 1999). Athletes that tend to be most salient to the fantasy sport consumer tend to be more readily available when decision making becomes apparent.

Taking all of this into account, the author defined ideal fantasy athlete image as: the qualities of an athlete that position him/her at the forefront of a consumer's mind as being relevant, unique and compelling.

Sample Size

As robust an analysis technique as Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) is, a sufficient sample size is still necessary for proper analysis. Kline (2011) suggests that a minimum of 200 respondents is an appropriate sample size when using SEM. A large sample size is necessary because one of the pitfalls of a small sample size is the calculation of inflated goodness-of-fit (GoF) indices (Anderson and Gerbing, 1988).

Inflated GoF indices cause problems in analysis because the strength and efficacy of the model in question are overstated and may be incorrect in assessing model completeness. The researcher collected a total of 388 surveys. The purpose of this study was to understand the antecedents to athlete attachment, so responses that did not answer the main independent variable section of the survey were dropped from analysis, leaving the researcher with 363 useable surveys.

Data Collection

A self-administered questionnaire was distributed through an online survey service. The link to the questionnaire was emailed to potential participants through available email lists, as an attachment to the Fantasy Sport Trade Association (FSTA), and to popular fantasy sport hosting sites (i.e. ESPN.com, Yahoo.com and CBSsportsline.com). A follow-up email was sent five days after initial distribution to confirm receipt of the questionnaire and a third email was sent fifteen (15) days after initial distribution to remind those who did not complete the survey to do so. A cover letter providing directions as well as explaining the importance of the study was included with the online questionnaire, along with means for communication, in case questions arose on the part of the participants. While the website tracks and sorts each of the responses, identifying information was not stored.

Quantitative Measures

The selection of the measures utilized in this study followed a three-step process. The extant scales of the focal constructs were collected from the relevant literature or created from the results of the qualitative focus groups. Second, those items were reviewed by a panel of experts who have expertise in marketing and consumer behavior. After review by the panel, the items were field tested for relevance, clarity and

content. Items were revised or dropped based on feedback and the remaining items were used to measure the research constructs. Each variable was measured using multiple items and a 7-point Likert-type scale (i.e., 1 = strongly disagree and 7 = strongly agree) or 7 point semantic differential scale.

Athletic expertise. For this study, athletic expertise was defined as “an athlete’s individual achievement and athletic capability (Arai & Ko, 2009).” Athletic Expertise was measured by adapting three items from the work of Arai and Ko (2010) and measured a respondent’s perception of an individual athlete’s level athletic capability. The three items measuring Athletic Expertise used a 7 point Likert-type scale anchored from 1=strongly disagree to 7=strongly agree. In sum, combining the evidence from the literature and the responses from the focus groups, with respect to Athlete Experience, the author hypothesized that (Figures 3-4 and 3-5):

H1: Athlete Expertise will have a positive effect on Ideal Fantasy Athlete Image

Credibility. For this study, credibility was defined as “a consumer’s perceived image of an athlete based on the athlete’s off-field behavior.” Credibility was measured by adapting three items from the work of Arai and Ko (2010) along with the focus group responses and measured a respondent’s perception of the credibility of a given athlete. The items measuring Credibility used a 7 point Likert-type scale anchored from 1=strongly disagree to 7=strongly agree. In sum, combining the evidence from the literature and the responses from the focus groups, with respect to Credibility, the author hypothesized that (Figures 3-4 and 3-5):

H2: Credibility will have a positive effect on Ideal Fantasy Athlete Image

Popularity. For this study, popularity was defined as “the perceived notoriety of an athlete based on the attention he/she received in the conventional media.” Popularity was measured by adapting four items from the work of Chang and Ko (2012) along with the focus group responses and measured a respondent’s perception of the popularity of a given athlete. The items measuring Popularity used a 7 point Likert-type scale anchored from 1=strongly disagree to 7=strongly agree. In sum, combining the evidence from the literature and the responses from the focus groups, with respect to Popularity, the author hypothesized that (Figures 3-4 and 3-5):

H3: Popularity will have a positive effect on Ideal Fantasy Athlete Image

Physical fitness. For this study, physical fitness was defined as “a consumer’s overall perception of an athlete’s general physical fitness.” Physical fitness was measured by adapting three items from the work of Arai and Ko (2009) along with the focus group responses and measured a respondent’s perception of a given athlete’s physical fitness. The items measuring Physical Fitness used a 7 point Likert-type scale anchored from 1=strongly disagree to 7=strongly agree. In sum, combining the evidence from the literature and the responses from the focus groups, with respect to Physical Fitness, the author hypothesized that (Figures 3-4 and 3-5):

H4: Physical Fitness will have a positive effect on Ideal Fantasy Athlete Image

External team factors. For this study, team dynamics was defined as “external factors influencing the given athlete (i.e. number of players at the position, changes in styles of offense/defense, new coaches and new teams).” External Team Factors was measured by adapting three items from the focus group responses and measured a respondent’s perception of the team dynamics surrounding a given athlete. The items

measuring Team Dynamics used a 7 point Likert-type scale anchored from 1=strongly disagree to 7=strongly agree. While External Team Factors was the only revealed theme that was external to athletes, the researcher decided to test it as a first-order factor of Ideal Fantasy Athlete Image because of its emergence in the focus group responses (Figures 3-4 and 3-5).

H5: Team Dynamics will have a positive effect on Ideal Fantasy Athlete Image

Ideal fantasy athlete image. For this study, ideal fantasy athlete image was an empirically tested second-order construct. As mentioned previously, the five thematic constructs pertaining to the athlete were tested for significance on Ideal Fantasy Athlete Image. As such, the author hypothesized that (Figures 3-6 and 3-7):

H6a: Ideal Fantasy Athlete Image will have a positive direct effect on Attachment

H6b: Ideal Fantasy Athlete Image will have a positive direct effect on Draft Intention

Attachment. For this study, attachment was defined as “an emotion-laden, target specific bond between a person and a specific object (Bowlby, 1988).” Attachment was measured by adapting three items from the work of Trail et al. (2003) and measured an individual’s level of attachment to an athlete. The items measuring Attachment used a 7 point Likert-type scale anchored from 1=strongly disagree to 7=strongly agree.

Attachment was empirically tested for its mediating effect on the relationship between Ideal Fantasy Athlete Image and Draft Intention, as it made more sense for Attachment to serve as an intermediate step to behavior then as a final behavioral step. In the current study, the author hypothesized that (Figures 3-6 and 3-7):

H7: Attachment will have a positive direct effect on Draft Intention

Draft intention. For this study, Draft Intention was defined from the work of Cattani and Ko (in review) as “the intention to select a given athlete in a fantasy draft.” Draft Intention was measured by adopting the three items from Cattani and Ko’s (in review) study. Participants were asked to report their intention to draft a previously identified athlete on a 7 point Semantic Differential scale anchored from 1=strongly disagree to 7=strongly agree (Figures 3-6 and 3-7).

Data Analysis

The adequacy of the proposed model and psychometric properties of the measurement scale were analyzed using SPSS 18.0 and AMOS 18. The first step in assessing the research model and hypotheses was to test a measurement model through Confirmatory Factor Analysis. Second, a structural model was tested to empirically examine the psychometric properties of the research model and to test the research hypotheses.

Reliability and validity measures were used to examine the adequacy of items in the proposed measurement model. Construct reliability, Cronbach’s alpha and average variance extracted (AVE) by each construct were used to examine reliability. Construct reliability is calculated by the analysis software and is the degree to which the construct measures the same way each time it is used under the same condition with the same subjects. Cronbach’s alpha highlights the internal consistency of the indicators for a given factor (Hatcher, 1994). Cronbach’s alpha values above Nunnally’s (1978) recommended level of 0.70 are indicators of strong internal consistency. The AVE values show the amount of variance that is described by a factor. The recommended cutoff value for AVE is 0.50 (Bagozzi and Yi, 1988; Hair, Black, Babin, Anderson and Tatham, 2005).

Convergent validity is established when each scale item has a significant factor loading on each construct (Anderson and Gerbing, 1988). Discriminant validity was evaluated by estimating the correlations between all pairs of constructs and then conducting a chi-square difference test between the constrained and unconstrained models (Anderson and Gerbing, 1988). Discriminant validity is achieved if the chi-square value is lower in the unconstrained model. Additionally, the nomological validity of Athlete Brand Leadership was tested to examine the relationships of the athlete-specific independent variables in adequately representing the second-order construct.

The data was analyzed using SPSS 18.0 and AMOS 18. In order to determine the overall fit of the proposed model, the model-fit chi-square estimate was examined first with its associated p-value (Hair et al., 2005). The model-fit chi-square is affected by large sample sizes. In order to gain a more complete assessment of model fit, additional fit indices were utilized. The following GoF indices were used: the chi-square per degree of freedom, the comparative fit index (CFI) and the Tucker-Lewis index (TLI). The root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) and the standardized root mean square residual (SRMR), both badness-of-fit indices, were also reported to better understand if the proposed model was sufficiently bad. GoF indices found to exceed the 0.90 threshold and RMSEA values equal to or below .06 (combined with SRMR values below 0.09) indicate acceptable fit (Hu and Bentler, 1999). Furthermore, the path coefficients were examined in order to interpret the strength of each path and its overall contribution to the proposed model and its predictive power over the dependent variables. Demographic and descriptive analyses were also used to further dissect the data.

Results

Demographics

A total of 363 usable surveys were obtained. 75% of respondents were male and 25% were female. The participants ranged in age from 18 to 68 years ($M = 26.27$, $S.D. = 7.6$). Of note, over 30% of the sample fell into the 25-36 year old age bracket and strikingly, over 5% of the sample was over the age of 40. The average age of the sample was about ten years younger than the national average of 36.8 years old. Analyzing the age of the participants shows that a majority of fantasy sport participants are younger in age. In terms of education, over 32% of the sample had completed at least some college. Of note, over 22% of the sample had completed their baccalaureate degree and over 20% of the sample had completed their Master's Degree (or equivalent); additionally, over 5% of the sample had completed some kind of advanced professional degree (Ph.D., MD, JD, etc.). It is clear from the education item that fantasy sport participants tend to be highly educated (25% holding a Master's degree or higher versus 9.5% of the average United States population). In terms of ethnicity, 3.4% was Asian, 8% African-American, 14% Hispanic, and over 70% Caucasian. These ethnicity proportions very closely mirrored national averages (4.8% Asian, 12.6% African-American, 16.3% Hispanic and 72.4% Caucasian). That said, the sample appears to be representative of the nation in terms of ethnicity and demonstrates that fantasy sport participants come from all ethnicities. Additionally, the average household income of respondents was between \$40,000 and \$59,000, with about 60% of the sample reporting annual household incomes greater than \$40,000. This figure showcases that households of fantasy sport participants tend to make more money than the average American household (\$46,326).

Furthermore, as far as fantasy sport participation demographics are concerned, respondents averaged 5.7 years of fantasy playing experience, ranging from 0 years of experience on the low end to 25 years of experience on the high end. Over 60% of the sample had six or less years of experience. More strikingly, just under 40% of the sample had 7 or more years of playing experience. This large number suggests that once the fantasy bug bites, it is very hard to discontinue playing (10% of the sample had 12 or more years of participation). In terms of hours per week, respondents averaged 3.7 hours of fantasy exposure, ranging from less than an hour on the low end to over 35 hours per week on the high end. Over 20% of the sample spent between 4 and 10 hours per week engaging in fantasy sports. This figure suggests that fantasy sport participants show a sincere dedication to their craft and are willing to put in the time in an attempt to be successful in their leagues. The sample also reported the following information: they most often played in leagues with friends, participated in 1-5 leagues per year, have participated in over 6 leagues in their playing experience (with just under 40% of the sample having participated in more than 10 leagues), have spent approximately \$150 on league dues/registration fees during their fantasy playing experience (over 20% of the sample has spent more than \$150, with several respondents spending over \$1000) and have spent over \$60 on fantasy-related products and services during their fantasy experience (insider information, magazines, phone applications, etc.; approximately 15% of the population spent more than \$60 with several respondents spending over \$1000). In sum, these findings suggest that fantasy sport consumers are dedicated to fantasy sports (both in years of participation and number of leagues per year) and are willing to pay large sums of money to participate

(over \$200 in registration and product/service fees) in this endeavor. This type of information is telling for marketing and fantasy sport industry professionals because from this sample, it is clear that fantasy sport participants are a very exploitable consumer segment ready to jump headfirst into a game capable of maintaining their passion towards sports (Table 3-1).

Descriptives

In order to explore the respondents' perceptions with regards to what athlete attachment factors were important to establishing a psychological connection to their pre-selected ideal fantasy sport athlete, one sample t-tests were conducted with the critical value set at 4 (the mid-point on the 7 point measurement scale). The one sample t-tests showed that respondents scored significantly higher ($p < .01$) than the neutral point (4 was the mid-point of the 7 point measurement scale) for all of the athlete attachment factors suggesting their importance for fantasy sport participants in assessing their ideal fantasy sport athletes. Athletic Expertise ($M=6.7$, $S.D.=0.42$) ranked the highest of the five tested factors followed by Physical Fitness ($M=6.2$, $S.D.=1.0$), Popularity ($M=6.1$, $S.D.=1.0$) and External Team Factors ($M=5.8$, $S.D.=0.88$). Credibility had the lowest mean score, scoring a mean of 5.3 ($S.D.=1.5$) indicating that in the case of fantasy sport consumers and their attachment to athletes, off-field behavior takes a back seat to sustained on-field production.

Results from the one sample t-test for Athlete Attachment suggested that respondents' were less than likely to develop a deep psychological connection to their selected athlete ($M=3.6$, $S.D.=1.8$). As for Draft Intention, the results of the one-sample t-test indicate that fantasy sport consumers in this study moderately intend to draft their

pre-selected athlete (M=5.5, S.D=1.7). Tables 3-5 and 3-7 below present the respondents' means in more detail.

Measurement Model

Cronbach's alpha estimates ranged from .64 (External Team Factors) to .92 (Credibility). While one factor was a bit below the recommended cutoff value of 0.7 (External Team Factors; with a .64 alpha value), in sum, the resultant values of the Cronbach's alpha statistics demonstrate high internal consistency within the factors. The average variance extracted (AVE) values ranged from .39 (External Team Factors) to .85 (Draft Intention; Table 3-6). Similar to the Cronbach's Alpha values, External Team Factors had the lowest AVE value. Again, the remaining AVE values were all above the traditional 0.5 recommended cutoff value and demonstrate a solid overall representation of the variance explained by the factors of the study. As far as construct reliability (C.R.) is concerned, values ranged from .65 (External Team Factors) to .94 (Draft Intention). Following the trend established by the other reliability indices, External Team Factors had the lowest C.R. value, but all other values were well above .7, suggesting that the constructs will measure the same way each time they are used under the same condition with the same subjects. A confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted to examine the psychometric properties of the measures. The measurement model yielded an acceptable model fit ($\chi^2/df = 1603/753 = 2.1$; RMSEA = .056; CFI = .92; TLI = .91 and SRMR = .04).

Convergent validity was established by high factor loadings in the present study. Each measurement scale item's loading was greater than .60 (with the exception of on

item from External Team Factors, which registered a .48 value) with a significant number of factor loadings above .70.

Taken as a whole, the high factor loadings suggest that each factor's items measure the given factor well. Critical ratios of indicators of the constructs ranged from 8.4 to 45.2, which were greater than the significant value of 1.96 at $p < .05$ (Hair et al., 2005, Table 3-6). To examine discriminant validity, an analysis of correlation between measured constructs was conducted. Correlations between constructs ranged from .10 (Athletic Expertise and Credibility) to .67 (Physical Fitness and Popularity). All correlations between factors were well below the traditional cutoff of .85 (Kline, 2005, Table 3-2, 3-3 and 3-4). In addition, each squared correlation should be smaller than the average variance extracted (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). With the exception of one estimate (External Team Factors; .39), all AVE estimates were found to be greater than the squared correlations between the factors (Table 3-6). Therefore, it was concluded that the research constructs were sufficiently distinct from each other. As mentioned previously, a further test was conducted to assess nomological validity by examining the effectiveness of Athletic Expertise, Physical Fitness, External Team Factors, Credibility, and Popularity in explaining the second order construct of Ideal Fantasy Athlete Image. Each of the five athlete-related independent variables had a significant effect on the second-order factor ($\beta_{AE} = .54, p = .000$; $\beta_{PF} = .77, p = .000$; $\beta_{ETF} = .59, p = .000$; $\beta_C = .67, p = .000$; $\beta_P = .90, p = .000$). These results suggest that the second-order factor of Ideal Fantasy Athlete Image is a representative construct for the focus group-revealed factors from study part 1.

Structural Model

Structural equation analysis was conducted to test the relationships between the ideal fantasy athlete image factors and draft intention. Figures 3-6 and 3-7 illustrate the direct effect of Ideal Fantasy Athlete Image (comprised of Athletic Expertise, Physical Fitness, External Team Factors, Credibility and Popularity) on fantasy sport consumer draft intention, in addition to one indirect path (ideal fantasy athlete image – attachment – draft intention). The results suggested that the model had good fit to the data ($\chi^2/df = 578.4/200 = 2.56$; SRMR = 0.07; RMSEA = 0.07; TLI = 0.91; CFI = 0.92). Furthermore, the following results were found after completion of the structural model test: the direct effect from Ideal Fantasy Athlete Image to Attachment was positive and significant ($\beta = .23, p < .000$); the direct effect from Ideal Fantasy Athlete Image to Draft Intention was positive, but non-significant ($\beta = .03, p = .665$); and the direct effect from Attachment to Draft Intention was positive and significant ($\gamma = .17, p = .002$). Table 3-8 shows the path coefficients and statistical significance using Structural Equation Modeling.

Discussion

Examining the path coefficients for the higher order analysis on Ideal Fantasy Athlete Image, we could ascertain that the following hypotheses were supported: H1 - ABL→AE ($\beta = .54, p < .000$); H2 - ABL→PF ($\beta = .77, p < .000$); H3 - ABL→CRED ($\beta = .67, p < .000$); H4 - ABL→POP ($\beta = .90, p < .000$); H5 - ABL→ETF ($\beta = .59, p < .000$). The most important finding from this part of the study is that all five factors relating to the evaluated athlete were significant. This is exciting because in the mind of the fantasy sport consumer, these findings suggest that issues specific to both the athlete's on-field (Athlete Expertise, External Team Factors and Physical Fitness) and off-field (Popularity and Credibility) endeavors have great significance in generating an

evaluation of the status a given athlete has with the consumer. From a fantasy sport perspective, it was surprising that Athlete Expertise was the weakest of the five factors. Because the survey was framed around the perspective of fantasy sport participation, it is surprising that an athlete's on-field performance would be weak, as their output is the main source of point accrual within the fantasy game. A potential reason for this finding could be that fantasy sport consumers assume that athletes who are members of active rosters should all have a general level of athletic prowess as a by-product of being part of a professional league. By all demographic accounts, the sample of respondents was comprised of seasoned fantasy sport participants. That being the case, it is intriguing that they rated Popularity as the strongest contributing factor to Ideal Fantasy Athlete Image, when off-field publicity has little effect on on-field productivity and ultimately, point scoring. One notion that may explain this phenomenon is that fantasy sport consumers might subconsciously gravitate towards athletes that tend to be in the public eye more, either through endorsements, frequent interviews or social engagements. As the literature review on popularity explained, in the case of ideal brand leaders, those that appear most frequently to consumers are the brands that tend to be most salient.

Physical Fitness was rated as the second strongest contributor to Athlete Brand Leadership. As many of the focus group participants pointed out, injuries (or the ability to avoid said injuries) were a major factor in forming an attachment to a given athlete, but again, from a fantasy sport frame of mind, to think that Physical Fitness would outscore Athlete Expertise is a surprising result. Lastly, in a sport world where many athletes do what they want when they want to do it, it was refreshing to find that Credibility rated as strongly as it did. The fact that off-field social acumen resonated with

fantasy sport consumers shows that some consumers still value those athletes that are aware of their celebrity status and manifest those attributes for the betterment of their communities. In sum, while the individual results of the five factors revealed findings that may have been unexpected, the fact that they were all strong and significant lends credence to the existence of an Ideal Fantasy Athlete Image and suggests that this scale could have ramifications outside of the fantasy sport world.

Upon examining the path coefficients for the structural model analysis, the following hypotheses were supported: H6a: Ideal Fantasy Athlete Image → Attachment ($\beta = .23$, $p < .000$); and H7: Attachment → Draft Intention ($\gamma = .17$, $p = .002$). Further examination of the analysis disconfirmed the following hypothesis: H6b: Ideal Fantasy Athlete Image → Draft Intention ($\beta = .03$, $p = .665$).

With regard to the supported hypotheses, the confirmation of H6a suggests that fantasy sport consumers do form an attachment to those athletes that hold an ideal status in their minds (based off of the five supported factors that make up Ideal Fantasy Athlete Image: Athlete Expertise, Physical Fitness, External Team Factors, Credibility and Popularity). As it relates to this study, this finding is of chief importance, as the purpose of the paper was to determine if fantasy sport consumer attachment existed. The confirmation of H7 suggests that fantasy sport consumers are more likely to draft athletes that they have a preformed attachment to. In a similar vein to H6a, this is an important finding because not only do fantasy sport consumers develop emotional bonds to athletes, but this deep connection carries over into intended action when it comes time to include these athletes on their fantasy rosters.

With regard to the unsupported hypothesis, the disconfirmation of H6b is surprising, as one would think that athletes who exemplify ideal leader characteristics would be prime targets for inclusion onto a fantasy roster. From the very weak path coefficient pertaining to this hypothesis, the fantasy sport consumers comprising this sample suggest that at least in this case, simply being an ideal athlete is not enough to warrant inclusion on fantasy rosters. This finding runs somewhat contrary to one school of fantasy sport thought (that the best available athlete should be taken each round), but seeing that attachment and familiarity are important to fantasy sport consumers when creating their rosters, fantasy sport website administrators should consider providing applications designed at building or strengthening bonds between athletes and fantasy sport consumers.

With regard to the indirect effect of Attachment, the path from Ideal Fantasy Athlete Image to Attachment to Draft Intention was significant. As stated above, the direct effects from Ideal Fantasy Athlete Image to Attachment and from Attachment to Draft Intent were both significant at the 0.001 significance level. The total indirect effect was .066. While this indirect effect is small, its statistical significance highlights that attachment does influence the drafting of athletes onto fantasy rosters. One potential reason for this weak effect is the existence of additional factors that could more completely define Ideal Fantasy Athlete Image. More research would be necessary to unearth these factors and future studies will be conducted to gain a more complete understanding of fantasy sport consumer attachment. Another reason for this weak effect could be due to the existence of other unidentified factors that could affect a

fantasy sport consumer's intention to draft a given athlete. Again, additional research will be conducted to search for other factors that influence draft intention.

Study 3. Relationship Between IFAI and PAA: Moderation Effects of Involvement, Competitiveness, Value Orientation and Social Anxiety.

Studying moderating effects of variables aids researchers in understanding how certain relationships vary in strength based on the level of the moderator. When considering the context of fantasy sport and athlete attachment on the part of fantasy sport consumers, the following variables were researched and analyzed for their appropriateness to understanding athletes as ideal referent objects and their potential effects on the link between antecedents to attachment and draft intention. While many variables could have been tested in this section, each of the selected variables were chosen for their links to consumer behavior and general consumer attachment, their logical fit within the context of fantasy sport consumption and the call to test these variables in moderating contexts in future research. As the review of literature will show, these variables have strong presence in the literature but have yet to be explored in their relation to the antecedents of attachment.

Involvement. Involvement is defined as a person's perceived relevance of the object based on a person's inherent needs, values and interests (Zaichkowsky, 1985). An individual's level of involvement impacts the goals set and the desired outcomes from a particular decision. Furthermore, links in the literature have been made that suggest involvement influences both greater sport media consumption (fantasy sport websites and the various print publications associated with them; Shank & Beasley, 1998) and loyalty to an organization (in this case, the unique fantasy sport websites that offer fantasy contests; Iwasaki & Havitz, 2004). These two very important associations

between involvement and the online sport consumption context lend themselves to improving our understanding of this construct and its usefulness to accounting for this unique type of consumption behavior.

Generally, involvement is viewed as a spectrum of values from low to high and where an individual falls within that spectrum will dictate the decisions they make. According to Mano and Oliver (1993), involvement reflects several dimensions including need fulfillment, value expression or interest the consumer has in the product. They argue that involvement draws its relevance to goal orientation through the psychological consequences of a decision's heightened relevance to the consumer. That is to say that the stake an individual has in a particular outcome via a specific goal will dictate how much they exert themselves. Put into a fantasy context, the more involved a fantasy sport consumer is in the game, the more intently they will pursue their actions within the game. Understanding that fantasy sport consumers join leagues for various reasons should prompt fantasy website administrators to balance complexity with conciseness so that their interface will appeal to users with high levels of involvement (e.g., in-depth statistical breakdowns, intricate statistical filters, and advanced blog features) versus users with low levels of involvement (e.g., point-and-click roster updates and roster management tips).

As mentioned previously, involvement has been widely studied in the field of consumer behavior. Celsi & Olson discovered involvement to be one of the important moderators that determines a consumer's purchase decision (1988). Examining consumers' involvement has led to knowledge about how and why consumers build

particular attachments with certain products (Michaelidou & Dibb, 2006; Richins & Bloch, 1986; Zaichkowsky, 1985).

The concept of involvement has also been extended to research in both the leisure and sport fields. Additionally, involvement has shown significant predictive power of sport behaviors and other psychological constructs such as satisfaction, loyalty, and motivation (Funk, Ridinger, & Moorman, 2004; Iwasaki & Havitz, 1998, 2004; Lascu, Giese, Toolan, Guehring, & Mercer, 1995; Kerstetter & Kovich, 1997; Kyle, Absher, Hammitt, & Cavin, 2006; Park, 1996; Shank & Beasley, 1998). According to research by Laurent and Kapferer (1985), a consumer may utilize different evaluative processes and search behaviors depending on the level of involvement with a product. As such, identifying and understanding a fantasy sport consumer's level of involvement in fantasy sports could provide an explanation in understanding the ways in which fantasy sport consumers interact with their game and how much energy they put into knowing and attaching themselves to the athletes available for drafting. For example, Zaichkowsky developed the Personal Involvement Inventory (PII; 1985) to measure sport spectators' involvement in a PGA tournament. The PII was also utilized in another golf event by Lascu et al. (1995) to examine individual involvement with golf.

Shank and Beasley (1998) developed a sport involvement scale based on the studies of Lascu et al. (1995) and Zaichkowsky (1985) in order to explore the relationship between sport involvement and sport consumption behaviors (e.g., attendance at sports events, sport-related television viewing, and sport-related newspaper and magazine readership). Because the nature of involvement is primarily about the "perceived relevance of the object based on a person's inherent needs,

values and interests” (Zaichkowsky, 1985), Shank and Beasley utilized sport as the focal object, and defined the psychological concept of sports involvement as “the perceived interest in and personal importance of sports to an individual” (p. 436).

Involvement level in sport thus serves as a relevant factor that may influence other antecedents to attachment formation in fantasy sport consumers. Seeing how significant Involvement has proven to be in the literature, the researchers have elected to shift the placement of the Involvement construct from an antecedent of fantasy sport consumer attachment formation to a moderator of the relationship between the attachment and draft intention. Testing Involvement as a moderator should provide a more complete understanding of the construct and just how much (if at all) it can alter how a fantasy sport consumer bases his/her drafting decisions on a previously existing attachment to an ideal fantasy athlete. As such, the author proposed the following research question (Figure 3-9):

RQ1: Will fantasy sport involvement moderate the relationship between Athlete Attachment and Draft Intention?

Competitiveness. Competitiveness is defined as ‘the enjoyment of interpersonal competition and the desire to win and be better than others’ (Spence & Helmreich, 1983, p. 41). Spence and Helmreich developed a scale in their work that has permeated much of the research on competitiveness. Much of the work has been conducted outside the realm of consumer behavior, examining everything from a link between competitiveness and national wealth (Furnham, Kirkkealdy & Lynn, 1996) to ethical dilemmas surrounding insider trading (Terpstra, Rozell & Robinson, 1994). At about the same time, Helmreich and Spence’s scale was extended to the marketing literature. In

1994, Brown and Peterson, operating in a personal selling context, discovered that trait competitiveness was a significant predictor of job performance. A study by Brown, Cron, and Slocum (1998) examined the effects of competitiveness on work performance and found that individuals with higher levels of trait competitiveness set higher goals and performed at a greater level of efficiency. While work performance and the business environment have provided fertile contexts for competitiveness research, there has been a lack of empirical studies that fully explore this trait in the consumer behavior field. In an early attempt to empirically test competitiveness on consumers, Mowen (2000) discovered that competitiveness was a predictor of sport interest, attention to social comparison information, impulsive buying behavior and bargaining proneness.

Relating to the current study, Mowen (2004) examined competitiveness in two contexts that share strong similarity to the nuances of fantasy sport. The first of these contexts is derived from the work of Spence and Helmreich (1983), in which they proposed that individuals exhibiting higher levels of competitiveness tend to seek out activities that place winning and defeating others at the forefront of participation. The very essence of fantasy sport is constructed around competition between two users where winning brings bragging rights, monetary gain and/or social adulation. The second of these contexts deals with vicarious experience. As early as 1915, Carver found that individuals consume for competitive purposes and work by Veblen (1899) and Belk (1988) suggested that individuals consume by observing external behavior. While examining social learning theory, Bandura (1977) noted that competitive individuals might consume experiences vicariously. In his 2004 study, Mowen tested this context on fan viewership of sports and looked to explore the link between

competitiveness and spectator enjoyment. Half of the fantasy experience revolves around viewing the actual matches that lead to fantasy point scoring. Both of these contexts proposed by Mowen (2004) speak to two fundamental properties of fantasy sport consumption and in the above cited literature, competitiveness was treated as an independent variable. Testing this variable as a moderator will extend competitiveness, both in the call for empirical studies on the construct and to test competitiveness in a fantasy sport consumer setting. In this study, gaining an understanding of how competitiveness alters a fantasy sport consumer's drafting intentions based on existing attachments is an interesting notion which should either support or counter the fantasy-related notion that those higher in competitiveness want the best player available. As such, the author proposed the following research question (Figure 3-10):

RQ2: Will competitiveness moderate the relationship between Athlete Attachment and Draft Intention?

Value orientation. As mentioned above, the principles of utilitarianism and hedonism have been examined often in the social science literature and have only recently begun their application to the field of marketing. Chitturi, Raghunathan and Mahajan (2007) and Chernev (2004), have defined "utilitarian benefits" as those that refer to the functional, instrumental and practical benefits of consumption offerings and "hedonic benefits" as those that refer to their aesthetic, experiential and enjoyment-related benefits. Hirschman and Holbrook (1982) defined hedonic consumption as those facets of consumer behavior that relate to the multi-sensory, fantasy and emotive aspects of one's experience with products. In gaining further understanding of these two concepts, it has also been pointed out that utilitarian values affect the short term needs

of the consumer, while the hedonic values of a product affect the long term needs. Additionally, a hedonic dimension is one that results from a sensation of the experience while a utilitarian dimension is one that results from the functions of a product (Voss, Spangenberg, & Grohman, 2003).

According to Fischer and Arnold (1990), the goals that are set by the [fantasy sport consumer] largely vary depending on what attribute of the decision receives the most weighting. This theme of duality is a major highlight in much of the literature. Placing the theme into a fantasy sport context, more specifically the competition factor, sheds some new light on an often reviewed subject area. The conventional thought on competition is that participants engage in the activity to demonstrate one's proficiency in the requisite skills necessary to be successful and ultimately, to win. Applying the duality theme, participants engage in competition both for the extrinsic/utilitarian rewards (e.g., money, prizes and notoriety) and the intrinsic/hedonic rewards (e.g., emotional attachments, social gains and personal goal attainment; Babin, Darden, & Griffin, 1994). Hedonism and utilitarianism are not functioning on opposite sides of a continuum, but are acting simultaneously and sometimes in a manner similar to a hierarchy.

As a quick reference to this potentially hierarchical structure, Chitturi et al. (2007) proposed that once the utilitarian goals of the consumer are met, they then place higher priority towards the hedonic benefits that assist in the attainment of hedonic goals that elicit feelings of excitement and cheerfulness, which ultimately lead to feelings of delight. Based on the unique nature of fantasy sport and the ways in which it encompasses many attentional issues at once, it is possible that fantasy sport

consumers set both utilitarian and hedonic goals in their pursuit of fantasy glory. Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001) agree with this notion in saying that all products ripe for consumption have characteristics of both utilitarian and hedonic values. With this in mind, it appears as if the research is suggesting that fantasy sport websites should look to include the optimum levels of functionality and interaction in a way that could lead to maximum levels of customer satisfaction and emotional delight.

Understanding the fact that these two items are interrelated has only been a recent finding in the literature. The groundbreaking work of Batra and Ahtola (1990) attempted to develop a scale that could adequately measure both utilitarian and hedonic cues as separate functions, but it was discovered not too long after by Crowley, Spangenberg and Hughes (1992) that the scale of Batra and Ahtola did not fully encompass the factors that went into understanding the concepts. It was evident by their work that overlap and ambiguity might be chief reasons as to why utilitarian/hedonic scales have been reviewed and altered so often in the last two decades of literature and why this subject area seems to be a fruitful area for future research. As products and services get more complicated and experiential, the lines between utilitarian and hedonic goals will continue to be blurred based on the end goal. The population of fantasy sport consumers tends to either participate to fulfill utilitarian needs or to satiate hedonic needs, but in either case, such an orientation could alter draft intention based on preexisting attachments to specific athletes. As such, the author proposed the following research question (Figures 3-12 and 3-13):

RQ3: Will value orientation moderate the relationship between Athlete Attachment and Draft Intention?

Social anxiety. According to the American Psychiatric Association (2000), social anxiety is characterized as an intense fear of being evaluated by others. Fear of negative evaluation has been found by cognitive-behavioral theorists (Clark & Wells, 1995; Rapee & Heimberg, 1997) to be a component factor in social anxiety. In support of Gilbert's (2001) social anxiety model, Maner, Miller, Schmidt and Eckel (2008) found that social anxiety was related to submissiveness in competitive social situations. Fantasy sport websites have social functions within their interfaces such as chat applications, blog feature and message boards that serve as interaction tools for the members of the league. The notion of 'smack talk' – jeering or poking fun at another member of the league – is an element of the fantasy experience that can have significant effects on a user's behavior both internal and external to the game. Members of the league could be hesitant to make a trade, draft an athlete or start a player because they were fearful of the league reaction. Work by Weeks, Heimberg and Rodebaugh (2008) also found that social anxiety can be found in situations where public evaluation is possible and research by Bruch, Gorsky, Collins and Berger (1989) supported this claim in showing that social anxiety was positively associated with public self-consciousness. .

Weiser et al. (2010) surmised that social encounters in the virtual world tend to be avoided by individuals with high levels of social anxiety because of the fear produced by the potential evaluation of the other party. Previous studies have attempted to understand the role of the Internet in social interaction and communication (Carey, 1989; Civin, 2000), but results of these and other studies have garnered inconclusive results. For example, a study by Civin (2000) found that the Internet has fundamentally

altered the way individuals interact with one another, but a study by Robinson, Kestnbaum, Neustadtl and Alvarez (2000) found that not to be the case. While some individuals enjoy an environment ripe with jeers, excitable language and the like, there are others who would rather go without the stress that no doubt emerges when they confront the thought of facing the league. Capitalizing on the discrepancies in the literature, analyzing social anxiety in an online sporting context provides both the competitive environment and the social functions necessary to create socially anxious situations that could well define this construct in a more complete manner. Understanding if drafting decisions are altered based on preexisting attachments in the presence of increased or decreased levels of social anxiety has great utility in understanding fantasy sport consumers. As such, the author proposed the following research question (Figure 3-11):

RQ4: Will social anxiety moderate the relationship between Athlete Attachment and Draft Intention?

Method

Measurement Scale

Involvement. For this study, Fantasy Sport Involvement was defined as “the perceived interest and personal importance of fantasy sports to an individual (Shank and Beasley, 1998).” Involvement was measured using three items adapted from the work of Shank & Beasley (1998). Participants were asked to report their level of involvement with their aforementioned preferred fantasy sport game on a 7 point semantic differential scale anchored on the items of the items of the scale (i.e. To me, fantasy sports are: exciting – boring).

Competitiveness. For this study, Competitiveness was defined as “the desire to outperform others (Mowen et al., 2009).” Competitiveness was measured using three items adopted from the work of Mowen et al. (2009). Participants were asked to report their level of competitiveness in the fantasy sport game on a 7 point Likert-scale anchored from 1=strongly disagree to 7=strongly agree.

Value orientation. For this study, the author adopted the combined definitions of Chitturi, Raghunathan and Mahajan (2007) and Chernev (2004) and defined utilitarian benefits as those that “refer to the functional, instrumental and practical benefits of consumption offerings” and hedonic benefits as “those benefits that refer to the aesthetic, experiential and enjoyment-related benefits of consumption offerings.” Value Orientation was measured using six items (three for hedonic value orientation and three for utilitarian value orientation) adapted from the work of Chitturi et al (2007). Participants were asked to report their value orientation to their fantasy sport game on a 7 point Likert-scale anchored from 1=strongly disagree to 7=strongly agree.

Social anxiety. For this study, Social Anxiety was defined as “anxiety resulting from the prospect or presence of personal evaluation in real or imagined social situations (Schlenker & Leary, 1982).” Social Anxiety was measured using eight items based on the work of Norton et al. (2004). Participants were asked to report their perceived level of social anxiety on a 7 point Likert-type scale anchored from 1=strongly disagree to 7=strongly agree.

Data Analysis

In order to test the moderating effect of Involvement, Competitiveness, Value Orientation and Social Anxiety on the relationship between fantasy sport consumer Psychological Attachment to an Athlete and Draft Intention, a direct effect between the

constructs of Attachment and Draft Intention needed to be significant. In study part 2, the data analysis found that the direct effect between Attachment and Draft Intent was significant, so going forward, moderating effects were evaluated on that link. Multi-group SEM was then be used to examine whether the proposed relationships were significantly moderated by the selected variables. Prior to conducting the multi-group SEM, a measurement invariance test was conducted to ensure that the measurement models examined under different conditions capitulated similar measurements of the same construct (Hair et al., 2009). In order to determine whether Involvement, Competitiveness, Value Orientation and Social Anxiety had significant moderating effects on the hypothesized relationships, model-fit statistics were compared across groups. To do this, the researcher created two models: one (Model A) that has all factor loadings constrained across groups and another (Model B) that left one factor loading in the model unconstrained. Following this initial set-up, additional Model B's were created so that each relationship moderated by the four variables could remain unconstrained for comparison purposes. If Model A and Model B (one for each of the hypothesized relationships) were significantly different from each other, a significant moderating effect existed.

Results

Measurement Invariance Tests

To test if there was a significant structural difference between those fantasy sport consumers who registered high levels of Involvement, Social Anxiety, Competitiveness and Value Orientation (Hedonic v. Utilitarian) and fantasy sport consumers who registered lower values on those variables, multi-group SEM was conducted using AMOS 18.0. To separate the high level group and general group, this study used mean

scores of Involvement, Social Anxiety, Competitiveness and Value Orientation items. Those fantasy sport consumers who were designated as 'high' scoring in each of the selected moderator variables registered mean scores of 6 on 7-point Likert-type scale (Involvement = 6 and higher; Social Anxiety = 6 and higher; Competitiveness = 6 and higher; Utilitarian Value Orientation = 6 and higher; and Hedonic Value Orientation = 6 and higher). Those fantasy sport consumers who were designated as 'general' scoring in each of the selected moderator variables registered mean scores lower than 5. The authors discarded the cases with mean scores between 5 and 6 in order to differentiate the two groups (Tables 3-10, 3-11, 3-12, 3-13 and 3-14).

A preliminary stage involved testing for an invariant factor structure. All moderators' factor loadings were constrained to be equal for both groups. Once this step is carried out, the computer software conducts the analysis on the two groups. The evaluative statistic for assessing measurement invariance is the difference in the Chi-square statistic between the unconstrained model and the measurement model. Before evaluating the two models, one must locate the critical Chi-square value for the appropriate degrees of freedom between the two models. With regard to this series of measurement invariance tests, the difference in degrees of freedom was 11. The critical chi-square for $df(11)$ at the .05 significance level is $X^2 = 19.68$. The difference between the unconstrained and measurement model chi-square statistics for Competitiveness, Social Anxiety and Hedonic Value Orientation were non-significant (Competitiveness: $X^2(11) = 16.80$; Social Anxiety: $X^2(11) = 15.08$; Hedonic Value Orientation: $X^2(11) = 17.223$); therefore, the factor structure between the respondents from the high average scoring group and the general average scoring group can be assumed to be invariant.

This means that Competitiveness, Social Anxiety and Hedonic Value Orientation can be used to evaluate moderating effects. On the other hand, the difference in the chi-square statistics between the unconstrained and measurement models with regard to Utilitarian Value Orientation and Involvement were significant (Utilitarian Value Orientation: $X^2(11) = 23.878$; Involvement: $X^2(11) = 28.395$); therefore, the factor structure between the customers who had high levels of both Utilitarian Value Orientation and Involvement compared to those respondents who recorded general values cannot be assumed to be invariant. Therefore, Utilitarian Value Orientation and Involvement cannot be analyzed for moderating effects on the relationship between fantasy sport consumer psychological attachment to an athlete and draft intentions.

Moderating Effects

Following measurement invariance tests of the selected moderating variables, all variables that passed the tests were then evaluated for their moderating effects on the relationship between Attachment and Draft Intent. The first step in analyzing moderating effects was to assess the significance of the link between Attachment and Draft Intent for both the high rated and general rated groups on the selected moderator. In the case of Competitiveness, the link between Attachment and Draft Intent was significant for the highly competitive group ($\beta_{COMP} = .27$; $p = .004$), but not the generally competitive group ($p = .13$). This finding signified that level of competitiveness altered how fantasy sport consumers evaluated athletes with which they had preexisting attachments with in relation to drafting these athletes to their fantasy rosters. (Table 3-15).

In the case of Hedonic Value Orientation, the link between Attachment and Draft Intent was significant for the highly hedonic group ($p = .000$) and was non-significant for the generally hedonic group ($p = .50$). This finding signified that hedonic value

orientation altered how highly hedonic fantasy sport consumers evaluated athletes with whom they had preexisting attachments to in relation to drafting decisions, but had no effect on respondents with lower hedonic orientation. Preexisting attachments influenced the highly hedonic fantasy sport consumers based on the notion that these consumers are merely playing for enjoyment ($\beta_{HVO} = .36$) and rely on their knowledge of and connection to previously identified ideal fantasy athletes, where the generally hedonic fantasy sport consumers may well be evaluating for the best athlete available. (Table 3-16).

In the case of Social Anxiety, the link between Attachment and Draft Intent was highly non-significant for the highly socially anxious group ($p = .46$) and was significant for the generally socially anxious group ($p = .04$). This finding signified that social anxiety altered how generally social anxious fantasy sport consumers evaluated athletes with which they had preexisting attachments with in relation to drafting these athletes to their fantasy rosters, but had no effect on respondents with high social anxiety. Those fantasy sport consumers lower in social anxiety paid attention to the evaluations of ideal fantasy athletes whom they had attachments to when it came time to make drafting decisions ($\beta_{SA} = .20$). Being relatively unaffected by the criticisms of other members of their league, those respondents in this sample lower in social anxiety consulted preexisting attachments when making drafting decisions because those attachments served as benchmarks for inclusion. (Table 3-17).

Discussion

Competitiveness. These findings regarding highly competitive fantasy sport consumers run in line with traditional approaches to fantasy sport, where those who tend to win more often tend to be attracted to athletes who produce on the field and do

so in a consistent manner due to avoidance of injury. At first thought, this finding was puzzling, but upon further contemplation, it makes sense. Fantasy sport consumers lower in competitiveness tend to play because a friend asked, an office league was short a person, etc. In that case, such fantasy sport consumers may have little investment in their league performance and as such, might select the best athlete available to satisfy their roster requirements. On the other hand, those higher in competitiveness tend to have a more intimate knowledge of the athletes that participate in the given league they are a member of (e.g. NBA, NFL, MLB). That said, if a drafting decision came down to a player they were attached to and one they were unfamiliar with (statistics and intangibles relatively equal), this finding suggest that respondents of this survey who were more highly competitive would rely on their preexisting attachments to help make their decision for them. This finding also supports the focus group responses in relation to sticking with athletes who performed consistently for them in past seasons.

Hedonic value orientation. The findings from the moderation test of Hedonic Value Orientation are wholly not surprising on the second order relationship. Those high in hedonic orientation tend to engage in activities for the fun or enjoyment of it. Consequently, it stands to reason then, that highly hedonic respondents in this study placed importance on preexisting attachments guiding their drafting decisions because they consume fantasy sports for the social benefits they provide and tend to stick to athletes that they have familiarity with and attachment to. Respondents of this study who rated themselves lower in hedonic orientation would be those who perhaps took

the fantasy experience more seriously and thusly might rely more on available statistical information to make their drafting decisions.

Social anxiety. Generally socially anxious fantasy sport consumers fear scrutiny from other members of their fantasy leagues less and may be more willing to consult preexisting attachments when making their drafting decisions. Accordingly, it was clear from the moderating effects that sample respondents who rated themselves as lower in social anxiety tended to more closely evaluate athletes they were connected to when filling out their fantasy rosters. Those higher in social anxiety fear scrutiny to such a degree that at least from this sample, tend to base their recruitment decisions on 'safe' picks of athletes that are statistical power plants because they want to escape embarrassment from members of their league. This finding provides additional empirical evidence of social anxiety in a consumer behavior setting and while this particular result is decisive, further exploration of social anxiety is needed to better understand its effects on fantasy sport consumers. Further testing on fantasy sport consumers is appropriate because fantasy sport blends the social aspects of traditional participation sports with the online element popular in the social anxiety literature and should provide some very interesting results in future studies.

Involvement. It is puzzling that involvement did not pass the measurement invariance test. Involvement has consistently shown to be a strong moderator in the literature and similar results were expected in this study. One potential reason for this result may well be due to the notion that the most involved consumers tend to respond to surveys about activities or hobbies they are passionate about. Consequently, over 80% of the respondents in this study responded with a 5 or higher (on a 7-point Likert

type scale) on the Involvement items. This highly skewed factor may well speak to fantasy sport consumers being a highly involved segment of the sport consumer lexicon.

Utilitarian value orientation. Those with utilitarian value orientation, as per the literature review, tend to focus on informational, security and task-oriented needs inherent to a given task. While there are many elements of the fantasy game that fall into the aforementioned definition (i.e. statistical analysis, player trades, roster management), the failure of this factor to pass the measurement invariance test may be due to the realization that the core of fantasy sports is still primarily rooted in the game and not the task. This finding could shed some light on fantasy sport consumers in the big picture as a first piece of evidence that may allude to even the most die-hard fantasy sport participants engaging in fantasy sports because of the enjoyment and gamesmanship of the experience (over and above any task-related elements of the experience).

CHAPTER 4 GENERAL DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The discussion and conclusion section will present a summary of the findings from the three studies with connections back to the literature. Following this information, theoretical and practical implications, along with study limitations and directions for future research will follow.

Summary of findings. Park and colleagues (2006) established that further in-depth investigation into the antecedents of attachment has yet to receive attention in the literature. A number of works in the field of marketing have shown establishment of attachment to gifts (Mick & DeMoss, 1990), collectibles (Slater, 2000), and brands (Schouten & McAlexander, 1995). Researchers have also found evidence of attachment to celebrities (O'Guinn, 1991), sports teams (Babad, 1987) and athletes (Robinson and Trail, 2003). While these works are no doubt fundamental to identifying particular objects of attachment, through qualitative focus group research, this study has revealed several underlying antecedents to fantasy sport consumer athlete attachment (Athlete Expertise, Physical Fitness, External Team Factors, Credibility and Popularity). The need for studying antecedents to attachment will increase the likelihood of two events: (1) that this research will help to unearth additional antecedents to fantasy sport consumer attachment to athletes and (2) identifying and analyzing uncovered antecedents to attachment will aid key stakeholders in better promoting their athletes on the factors that are most important and salient to fantasy sport consumers. Fantasy sport has helped to create a specialized niche of fan, which tends to pay more attention to individual athletes on his/her fantasy roster than a general fan, who may be more concerned with his/her favorite team. Consequently, this study provided a preliminary

examination into fantasy sport consumers that exceeded mere profiling. Additionally, this study responded to work by Bernhard and Eade (2006), in which they challenged researchers to understand fantasy sport consumers beyond their socio-demographic factors.

In response to studies in brand leadership (Chang et al, 2012; Arai & Ko, 2009), the current study supported findings that both internal (Athlete Expertise, External Team Factors and Physical Fitness) and external factors (Popularity and Credibility) are both salient and important to consumers. This study helped to contribute to and further brand leadership literature by revealing a previously unfound factor in External Team Factors. This finding demonstrates that when evaluating athletes as ideal fantasy athletes for a fantasy roster, fantasy sport consumers examine a given athlete's role/situation on his/her current team. Additionally, because this construct was new, extant scales were unavailable and items had to be created from focus group responses. This organic item generation caused low evaluative values and additional refinement and exploration could strengthen this construct in future fantasy sport studies. Further research on External Team Factors could help to clarify its role in attachment creation for fantasy sport consumers.

With regard to the moderating variables, this study was not able to support previous findings of Involvement acting as a significant moderator (Celsi & Olson, 1988). There could be several reasons for this lack of support, but one major thought rests in the fact that over 80% of the sample rated themselves as being very involved in fantasy sport. With that much of the sample being that highly involved, it could be tough to statistically detect differences enough to witness a moderating effect. A broader

sample could help to witness effects of Involvement, but as has been found in other studies examining the construct, the most involved participants tend to be the individuals that respond to studies of interest to them. This study may suggest that Involvement have little to no moderating influence on fantasy sport consumers because they are a more highly involved segment of sport consumers. The positive moderating effect of Competitiveness extends the literature on the competitive consumer by illustrating that not only do fantasy sport consumers evaluate the drafting decisions they make based on preexisting attachments to athletes, but it also showcases that highly competitive fantasy sport consumers consult these attachments when an athlete must be chosen. Additionally, this result provides at least one instance that refutes the long-held fantasy notion that the most competitive fantasy sport consumers merely choose the best available athlete. The congruence of the qualitative and empirical results further strengthens the applicability of Competitiveness in the fantasy landscape and lends support to the notion that even the most competitive participants blend a bit of art (attachments to athletes) to the 'science' (pure statistical evaluations) that is fantasy sport. Furthermore, the descriptive findings of Competitiveness support the work of Mowen (2004) and Spence and Helmreich (1983) in showing that fantasy sport consumers participate in the game to test their knowledge and gamesmanship against other individuals.

The descriptive findings on Social Anxiety have shown that respondents in this study run the spectrum from high to low and while the average social anxiety score favored less social anxiety in fantasy sport consumers (2.1), analysis of this moderating effect suggested that those who rated themselves as generally socially anxious had a

very distinct relationship between preexisting attachment and drafting decisions, due to a lower fear of scrutiny. This finding stands to reason, as individuals who are less concerned with group harassment are more likely to consult preexisting attachments when making recruitment decisions for their rosters. Utilitarian Value Orientation, similar to Involvement, was unable to be analyzed for moderating influence. As stated in the discussion section for study part 3, the lack on influence in this study could be due in part to the fact that no matter how many aspects of the game fall under a utilitarian heading, at the end of the day, fantasy sport is still a game. As products and services such as fantasy sport grow more complicated and experiential in nature, the lines between utilitarian and hedonic orientation will continue to be blurred. This lack of support for a utilitarian moderating effect could speak to the findings of Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001) who said that all products ripe for consumption have both utilitarian and hedonic characteristic values. It appears as if the research is suggesting that fantasy sport websites may not segment the elements of their game in a manner that utilitarian (vs. hedonic) oriented consumers recall in their interaction with the game. Going forward, if these website administrators truly want to appeal to both orientation states, they should work harder to include the optimum levels of functionality and interaction in a fashion that could appeal to all consumers. On the other hand, the moderating effects of Hedonic Value Orientation resulted in interesting findings. Babin, Darden, and Griffin (1994) found that participants engage in competition both for the extrinsic/utilitarian rewards (e.g., money, prizes and notoriety) and the intrinsic/hedonic rewards (e.g., emotional attachments, social gains and personal goal attainment). The findings for Hedonic Value Orientation showed that those who rated themselves high in this factor

tended to rely on preexisting attachments to athletes, as intrinsic outcomes carried greater importance. Those who reported themselves as low in hedonic orientation had a non-significant link between Attachment and Draft Intent, suggesting that they may be more keen to statistical evaluations of athletes while neglecting attachments to athletes, as extrinsic rewards may well be their desired outcome.

Theoretical implications. Several theoretical implications are apparent following this study. First, this study attended to the call for theory-based, empirical research to be conducted in the context of fantasy sport (Bernhard & Eade, 2005; Davis & Duncan, 2006). Because this segment of sport consumers is relatively new to the sport literature, each study conducted on this population strengthens the knowledge base of fantasy sport consumer literature. Additional research on fantasy sport consumers is necessary because this segment of the population is growing at an alarming rate in both population and buying power. If these specialized consumers are neglected by researchers, valuable information could be lost that could unlock new and literature-shaping relationships between established constructs in this emerging segment.

Second, this is the first study, to the researcher's knowledge, to examine specific antecedents to attachment in a fantasy sport setting. This study has expanded on past studies that highlighted attachment as being salient to sport consumers (Kwon and Armstrong, 2004; Robinson, Trail, & Kwon, 2004; Robinson, Trail, Dick, & Gillentine, 2005; Lee, Trail, & Anderson, 2009). The foundation laid by these researchers paved the way for this study to take a 'step back' in the line of attachment research to obtain a deeper understanding of sport consumers. Moreover, applying this new research idea to fantasy sport consumers has advanced the literature in both the consumer behavior and

attachment fields. As mentioned earlier, several studies have been conducted in the parent disciplines of consumer psychology, personality and marketing to assess antecedents to attachment, but this research focused on antecedents to non-sport entities (consumer brands, Grisaffe & Nguyen, 2011; celebrities, Thomson, 2006). Consequently, while antecedents to attachment have received research attention in different academic fields, Park et al. (2006) established that additional in-depth examination into the antecedents of attachment has yet to be researched. This research study has provided a first step to fill the void in the literature on antecedents to attachment in fantasy sports, where little work has been done to understand this concept to this point. Additionally, the mixed-methods approach adopted by the researcher compiled both qualitative and quantitative findings that got to the core of fantasy sport consumer psychological attachment and provided great insight into the factors important to this segment of online consumers.

Third and most importantly, this study found that according to this sample of fantasy sport consumers, attachment exists in fantasy sport. In an activity that operates similarly to the hired guns of the old west, even a segment as discerning as fantasy sport consumers sees psychological connections to referent athletes as important to recruitment intentions. Furthermore, attachment to athletes is so salient to this sample of fantasy sport consumers that attachment served as the critical link between assessing the ideal fantasy athlete and drafting that athlete. This finding, while preliminary, is most exciting because in the minds of fantasy sport consumers in this sample, the athlete who will help earn a victory that day is not necessarily the first option in selection; there must be some deeper-level connection to this athlete before

they are added to a roster. Further study is necessary to examine the limits and strength of fantasy sport consumer athlete attachment, but as stated earlier, this is a significant first step.

Practical implications. Two very important practical implications come out of this study. First, results from both the qualitative and quantitative analysis suggest that both on-field and off-field behaviors are important to fantasy sport consumers. This should be revealing to sport leagues because even though fantasy sport consumers are sometimes viewed as specialized sport fans, they have their own attachments to favored athletes. As such, marketing professionals, player representatives and league officials should pay attention to and promote off-field accomplishments in addition to on-field success. This point is all the more substantiated by the fact that Popularity was the highest-rated antecedent by the sample of fantasy sport consumers. While superstar athletes have little problem producing results on-field, promoting themselves or obtaining endorsements, these findings are much more important to small-market teams that may not have the star power that large-market teams do. In order to bring more attention to their leagues, teams and athletes, these small-market stakeholders should promote the various charity events, fundraisers and special appearances their athletes engage in, as this exposure and publicized testament to their character could very well benefit each level of the organization. With so much negativity in the sports news (i.e. the antics of players like Metta World Peace (Ron Artest), bench clearing brawls and poor displays of sportsmanship), fantasy sport consumers are craving positive news about the societal elite. In addition to superior on-field production, recent news of athletes taking fans to prom and holding charity events for breast cancer research do

nothing but endear athletes to fans. Continued efforts to keep these kinds of stories in the popular and local news outlets have the potential to pay great dividends for stakeholders.

Second, the Ideal Fantasy Athlete Image Scale proved to be psychometrically sound, overall. As such, this scale could be used by marketing professionals, athlete representation and league officials to evaluate both current and potential athletes for their on and off-field strengths and weaknesses. Having a metric to understand the potential qualities of athletes that make them ideal to fantasy sport consumers can go a long way to promoting athletes for financial opportunities. Because the buying power of fantasy sport consumers is growing by the year, tailoring marketing approaches to this segment will benefit organizations, leagues and associations in the long run. Because ideal fantasy athletes tend to be among the better athletes in their respective sports, marketing professionals, league officers and private representation firms can potentially kill two birds with one stone in aggressively marketing these athletes. This scale can also help stakeholders assist athletes that may be lacking in one of the five areas of the scale. Improvements on the external factors (Credibility and Popularity) are presumably easier to attend to, but if a particular athlete rated poorly on the internal factors (Athlete Expertise, External Team Factors and Physical Fitness), that could provide a heads-up to a potential change of scenery or paradigm shift in approach to the game that may turn a career around. While many news outlets strive to create their own proprietary metrics to provide unique evaluation (i.e. ESPN's Quarter Back Rating (QBR), designed to completely assess the total effect of an NFL quarterback), there is great utility in

promoting a reliable and valid instrument created by an independent third party that garners similar results administration after administration.

As far as the moderating effects are concerned, a descriptive analysis of competitiveness, hedonic value orientation and social anxiety reveal some interesting findings. In relation to the competitiveness of the sample, their mean score of 5.48 suggests that these fantasy sport consumers seek out and enjoy the competitive atmosphere that fantasy sport provides. From a practical standpoint, fantasy league administrators, and national leagues/associations should look to highlight the competitive nature of fantasy sport. Getting consumers hooked on the competitive nature of fantasy sport will not only keep them more involved in the fantasy process, but could well lead to increased spending on exclusive site-specific insider information, special fantasy cable channels and fantasy publications designed at giving users a leg up on their league mates. This spill over into other media platforms could grow the overall sport experience and could mean large profits for many stakeholders. In relation to the hedonic orientation of the sample, their mean score of 5.34 suggests that they are engaging in fantasy sport because it is a fun and social outlet for their sport-related energies. This finding lends support to the unspoken notion that fantasy sports are still fun. A trend in the promotion of fantasy sports has shifted to the existence of insider information and exclusive access to experts. This finding should serve as a notification to fantasy website administrators that fun is still the foundation of fantasy sport and while the numbers of participants continues to grow each year, it is conceivable that fantasy sport website hosts could realize greater growth if they returned their promotional efforts to highlighting the enjoyable and social outlet that fantasy provides

as a means of reaching non-traditional audiences such as women, young people and the elderly. In relation to the social anxiety of this sample, their mean score of 2.14 suggests that they are low in social anxiety and do not showcase much fear when it comes to scrutiny from other members of the league. This finding runs in line with the previous finding relating to hedonic value orientation in that fun, sociability and connecting with others remains at the root of fantasy sport participation. As it relates to the promotion of fantasy sport, marketing managers and fantasy sport website administrators should continue to build up the fun and communal aspects of fantasy sport. In doing so, they will help to assuage the fears of those higher in social anxiety in billing the game as fun and not scrutinizing. In attending to the findings of the moderating variables, fantasy sport stakeholders should realize both financial and participatory growth for years to come.

Study limitations and future research directions. As with any completed research study, the need to assess limitations and potential future directions of study is always necessary. As far as limitations are concerned, several are apparent. The first limitation of the study deals with item generation and selection. The results of the qualitative focus groups revealed the concept of External Team Factors for the first time in this manner. As mentioned in the literature review, group dynamic-type issues have long been studied from the perspective of the group member involved in given situations (Fiedler, Hartman & Rudin, 1952; Martens & Peterson, 1971; Torrance, 1955). What was unique about this study was the fact that focus group participants continued to reiterate that issues outside the control of the athlete (i.e. player trades, coach changes, new styles of play) acted as influencers in attachment creation. As such, the items used

to measure this construct were developed from focus group responses, as items used to measure group cohesion or group closeness did not accurately represent this phenomenon. Going forward, special care must be taken to accurately develop this construct through both qualitative and quantitative research, as it was quite salient to the fantasy sport consumers of this study. The items used for this construct did not react as well as proposed and much of that weakness could be due in part to the lack of psychometric soundness. All the same, as previously mentioned, this factor is too salient to ignore and despite its psychometric shortcomings, it deserves to be included in the scale and with additional specification, could be a new hot topic in the fantasy sport consumer behavior literature.

Another limitation of the research was the sample. While the respondents of this study were representative of the fantasy sport participant population at large, it was a mostly American sample. This particular lack of international representation could hamper the generalizability of the results. While care was taken to distribute the survey to an international sample (surveys sent to the mailing lists of the Fantasy Sport Trade Association and worldwide sport powerhouses such as ESPN and CBSsports), ultimately, individuals who wish to respond will be those to do so. More deliberate action must be taken in future visits to this research to extend both the qualitative and quantitative samples to international audiences. Issues such as focus group and survey item translation, along with moderators and survey distributors fluent in the languages of the specified targeted nations will be necessary to clear any communication problems inherent in appealing to an international sample. Gaining a more international

perspective will go a long way in better understanding how other areas of the world respond to and interact with fantasy sports.

Another limitation of the study is related to the factors that comprised Ideal Fantasy Athlete Image. As mentioned previously in the study, research on antecedents to attachment has not been conducted to the author's knowledge. As such, the factors were generated from qualitative analysis of focus group responses. Results from the quantitative analysis demonstrated that additional factors exist, as the model Chi-square for Athlete Expertise, Physical Fitness, External Team Factors, Credibility and Popularity was significant. Unearthing these unknown factors is important to assessing the complete picture of athlete attachment. While theoretical saturation was attained, as per the recommendations of Calder (1977), who suggested that the appropriate number of groups is reached once the focus group moderator can effectively and accurately anticipate how the next group is going to respond to the questions, it is possible that further factors could be garnered from additional focus groups. Once refinements to this line of research are attended to, care must be taken to exhaust any qualitative means necessary to make sure that as many potential factors that exist have the possibility to manifest themselves.

As this research study was a first attempt to gain an understanding of fantasy sport consumer athlete attachment, future work is necessary to better understand if other antecedent factors exist and if attachment is salient in international populations. Eastern populations (India and Asia) tend to be more collectivistic in their approach to life, where western populations (Europe and the Americas) tend to be more individualistic. This fundamental difference in societal welfare may well alter the

perception of fantasy sports. Furthermore, several sports that are popular with the western populations are experiencing emergence and growth in eastern populations. This growth, along with the spread of applicable fantasy sport leagues could function quite differently with eastern populations. While much was learned from this study, the fun of research is the hunger that is created from the notion that there is still much to uncover. This was the first time that the researcher utilized qualitative methods to explore fantasy sport consumers. Consequently, additional refinements and practice are necessary to improving the qualitative research skills essential to most effectively answering similar research questions. As mentioned previously, Morgan (1998) said, “focus groups provide preliminary research on specific issues in a larger project” (p.17). This newfound methodological approach should empower the researcher to conduct better research in the future, as mixed method approaches suit themselves well to areas of research where little is known. Another future direction for this line of research would be to further the construct of Value Orientation through some experimental research to gain an understanding of what fantasy sport providers are doing overall and if they are attending to the needs of both utilitarian and hedonic-oriented consumers. Still another future direction in this line of research would be to explore if fantasy sport consumers carry stronger attachments for favored fantasy sports versus less favored fantasy sports.

In sum, this study was eye-opening on many levels and the findings and lessons learned will bare much fruit going forward. While a struggle at times, the researcher is thankful for the trials and opportunities this endeavor provided.

Table 3-1. Demographic results of participants (N = 363)

Variables	Description	Frequency	Percent
Gender	Men	273	75.2
	Women	88	24.2
	Other	2	0.6
Age	18 – 25	204	56.1
	26 – 35	124	34.2
	36 – 50	22	6.0
	50+	7	2.0
	Missing	6	1.7
Ethnicity	White/Non-Hispanic	260	71.7
	White/Hispanic	46	12.7
	Hispanic/Non-White	6	1.6
	African-American	28	7.7
	Asian-American	12	3.4
	Other	10	2.7
	Missing	1	0.2
Hours Per Week	< 1	24	6.6
	1 – 3.5	217	59.7
	3.6 – 10.5	104	28.6
	10.6 – 15	11	3.1
	> 15	6	1.7
	Missing	1	0.3
Education	High School Graduate	20	5.5
	Some College	118	32.5
	Baccalaureate Degree	85	23.4
	Some Graduate School	28	7.7
	Master's Degree (or equivalent)	79	21.8
	Some Advanced Professional School	9	2.5
	Advanced Professional Degree	21	5.8
	Missing	3	.8
Income	Below \$20,000	102	28.1
	\$20,000 - \$39,999	46	12.7
	\$40,000 - \$59,999	61	16.8
	\$60,000 - \$79,999	45	12.4
	\$80,000 - \$99,999	31	8.5
	> \$100,000	71	19.6
	Missing	7	1.9

Table 3-2. Correlations among first-order factors of ideal fantasy athlete image

	Athlete Expertise	Physical Fitness	External Team Factors	Credibility	Popularity
Athlete Expertise	-				
Physical Fitness	.52	-			
External Team Factors	.66	.45	-		
Credibility	.10	.53	.32	-	
Popularity	.49	.67	.48	.65	-

Model Fit: $X^2/df=2.1$; CFI=.92; TLI=.91; RMSEA=.05

Table 3-3. Correlations among main research variables

	IFAI	Athlete Attachment	Draft Intent
IFAI	-		
Athlete Attachment	.23	-	
Draft Intention	.12	.20	-

Model Fit: $X^2/df=2.9$; CFI=.92; TLI=.91; RMSEA=.07

Table 3-4. Correlations among moderating variables

	Involvement	Competitiveness	Hedonic Value Orientation	Utilitarian Value Orientation	Social Anxiety
Involvement	-				
Competitiveness	.42	-			
Hedonic Value Orientation	.86	.51	-		
Utilitarian Value Orientation	.68	.49	.94	-	
Social Anxiety	-.04	-.06	-.04	.09	-

Model Fit: $\chi^2/df=2.1$; CFI=.92; TLI=.91; RMSEA=.05

Table 3-5. Descriptive results of scale items

Factor	Item	M	SD	S	K
Athletic Expertise	The athlete has prominent athletic skill in his/her sport.	6.62	.68	-2.6	10.5
	This athlete is a dominating player in his/her sport.	6.52	.86	-2.3	7.1
	This athlete has a good performance record.	6.55	.73	-1.8	3.8
Physical Fitness	This athlete is in good shape.	5.89	1.3	-1.5	2.2
	This athlete is physically fit.	6.31	1.1	-2.5	7.5
	This athlete's physique is ideal for his/her sport.	6.34	1.0	-2.3	7.4
Credibility	This athlete makes socially acceptable decisions off the field of play.	5.39	1.6	-.93	.20
	This athlete is a good leader in the community.	5.29	1.6	-.79	.00
	This athlete is socially responsible.	5.32	1.6	-.85	-.06
Popularity	Characteristics of this athlete come to my mind quickly.	6.29	1.1	-2.1	5.7
	I can quickly recall a symbol or logo of this athlete.	5.63	1.7	-1.2	.48
	I can recognize this athlete among competing athletes.	6.08	1.2	-1.6	2.7
	I can easily picture this athlete in my mind.	6.29	1.2	-2.2	4.8
External Team Factors	This athlete's play is unaffected by coaching changes.	5.55	1.2	-.85	.67
	This athlete's play has remained constant despite changes in the team.	5.42	1.3	-.67	-.07
	This athlete is the only individual at his position that receives significant playing time.	6.08	1.0	-1.2	1.1
Attachment	I have an emotional bond with this athlete.	4.00	1.9	-.11	-1.1
	I have a psychological connection to this athlete.	3.45	1.8	.24	-1.0
Draft Intent	I consider myself emotionally connected to this athlete.	3.50	1.8	.20	-1.1
	Drafting of this athlete in future fantasy drafts is: Improbable – Probable.	5.85	1.6	-1.7	2.5
	Drafting of this athlete in future fantasy drafts is: Unlikely – Likely.	5.41	1.7	-1.1	.58
Involvement	Drafting of this athlete in future fantasy drafts is: Not Possible – Possible.	5.36	1.7	-1.0	.39
	To me, fantasy sports are: Important – Unimportant	5.60	1.3	-1.2	1.6
	To me, fantasy sports are: Exciting – Boring	5.77	1.3	-1.6	3.0
Competitiveness	To me, fantasy sports are Useful – Not Useful	5.56	1.3	-1.2	1.9
	I feel that it is important to outperform others.	5.58	1.3	-1.1	1.3
	I enjoy competition more than others.	5.50	1.3	-1.1	1.2
Hedonic Value Orientation	I feel that winning is extremely important.	5.38	1.4	-1.0	.62
	Playing fantasy sports gives me a feeling of excitement, fun and/or enjoyment.	5.79	1.0	-1.2	2.8
	I enjoy passing time by playing fantasy sports.	5.26	1.3	-.92	.90
	Compared to other things, playing fantasy sports is really enjoyable.	4.98	1.3	-.58	.12

Table 3-5. continued

Factor	Item	M	SD	S	K
Utilitarian Value Orientation	A productive fantasy sports session is finding the information I am looking for in preparation of my next fantasy sport contest.	5.31	1.1	-.79	1.4
	Winning prize money is an important aspect of playing fantasy sport.	4.70	1.2	-.50	.86
	I play fantasy sports to gain sport-specific knowledge.	4.38	1.7	-.39	-.84
Social Anxiety	I worry about what kind of impression I am making on someone while playing fantasy sport.	2.41	1.4	.86	-.24
	I am usually worried about what kind of impression I make while playing fantasy sport.	2.26	1.3	1.1	.47
	I am afraid that people will find fault with my performance while playing fantasy sport.	2.20	1.3	1.2	.97
	Sometimes, I think I am too concerned with what other people think about my performance while playing fantasy sport.	2.01	1.3	1.4	1.5
	I feel nervous if other people are watching me when I am playing fantasy sports.	1.99	1.3	1.5	1.7
	I usually get nervous when I play fantasy sports in front of even a few people who are watching.	2.23	1.3	1.1	.53
	I feel that I will humiliate myself when I play fantasy sports.	2.01	1.2	1.4	1.5
	Other people's opinions of how well I play fantasy sports bother me.	2.09	1.3	1.1	.65

Table 3-6. Summary result for measurement model test

Factor	Item	λ	α	AVE
Athletic Expertise	The athlete has prominent athletic skill in his/her sport.	.75	.77	.53
	This athlete is a dominating player in his/her sport.	.75		
Physical Fitness	This athlete has a good performance record.	.69	.81	.68
	This athlete is in good shape.	.85		
	This athlete is physically fit.	.92		
Credibility	This athlete's physique is ideal for his/her sport.	.67	.92	.81
	This athlete makes socially acceptable decisions off the field of play.	.88		
Popularity	This athlete is a good leader in the community.	.90	.84	.55
	This athlete is socially responsible.	.91		
	Characteristics of this athlete come to my mind quickly.	.73		
	I can quickly recall a symbol or logo of this athlete.	.65		
External Team Factors	I can recognize this athlete among competing athletes.	.72	.65	.39
	I can easily picture this athlete in my mind.	.86		
	This athlete's play is unaffected by coaching changes.	.71		
Attachment	This athlete's play has remained constant despite changes in the team.	.65	.93	.81
	This athlete is the only individual at his position that receives significant playing time.	.48		
	I have an emotional bond with this athlete.	.92		
	I have a psychological connection to this athlete.	.91		
	I consider myself emotionally connected to this athlete.	.88		
Draft Intent	Drafting of this athlete in future fantasy drafts is: Improbable – Probable.	.96	.94	.85
	Drafting of this athlete in future fantasy drafts is: Unlikely – Likely.	.97		
	Drafting of this athlete in future fantasy drafts is: Not Possible – Possible.	.82		
Involvement	To me, fantasy sports are: Important – Unimportant	.90	.93	.81
	To me, fantasy sports are: Exciting – Boring	.91		
	To me, fantasy sports are Useful – Not Useful	.88		

Table 3-6. continued

Factor	Item	λ	α	AVE
Competitiveness	I feel that it is important to outperform others.	.93	.89	.75
	I enjoy competition more than others.	.81		
	I feel that winning is extremely important.	.84		
Hedonic Value Orientation	Playing fantasy sports gives me a feeling of excitement, fun and/or enjoyment.	.80	.81	.60
	I enjoy passing time by playing fantasy sports.	.73		
	Compared to other things, playing fantasy sports is really enjoyable.	.79		
Utilitarian Value Orientation	A productive fantasy sports session is finding the information I am looking for in preparation of my next fantasy sport contest.	.62	.64	.38
	Winning prize money is an important aspect of playing fantasy sport.	.68		
	I play fantasy sports to gain sport-specific knowledge.	.54		
Social Anxiety	I worry about what kind of impression I am making on someone while playing fantasy sport.	.77	.96	.67
	I am usually worried about what kind of impression I make while playing fantasy sport.	.83		
	I am afraid that people will find fault with my performance while playing fantasy sport.	.87		
	Sometimes, I think I am too concerned with what other people think about my performance while playing fantasy sport.	.92		
	I feel nervous if other people are watching me when I am playing fantasy sports.	.92		
	I usually get nervous when I play fantasy sports in front of even a few people who are watching.	.85		
	I feel that I will humiliate myself when I play fantasy sports.	.88		
	Other people's opinions of how well I play fantasy sports bother me.	.84		

Table 3-7. Means and standard deviations for research variables

	Mean	SD
Athlete Expertise	6.56	0.63
Physical Fitness	6.18	1.03
External Team Factors	5.68	0.94
Credibility	5.33	1.51
Popularity	6.07	1.08
Attachment	3.64	1.78
Draft Intent	5.54	1.61
Involvement	5.64	1.25
Competitiveness	5.48	1.25
Hedonic Value Orientation	5.34	1.08
Utilitarian Value Orientation	4.79	1.07
Social Anxiety	2.14	1.20

Table 3-8. Path coefficients and statistical significance for the structural model

Path	Standardized Estimates (β)	Standard Error	Critical Ratio	Significance Probability
Ideal Fantasy				
Athlete Image →	.23**	.12	3.81	.000
Attachment				
Ideal Fantasy				
Athlete Image →	.03	.13	0.43	.665
Draft Intent				
Attachment →	.17**	.04	3.10	.002
Draft Intent				

** Significant at 0.05

Table 3-9. Description of participants for moderating effects (N = 363)

Variables	Description	Frequency	Percent
Involvement	High	129	35.5
	General	131	36.1
	Eliminated	103	28.4
Competitiveness	High	114	31.4
	General	118	32.5
	Eliminated	131	36.1
Hedonic Value Orientation	High	132	36.4
	General	138	38.0
	Eliminated	93	25.6
Utilitarian Value Orientation	High	144	39.7
	General	106	29.2
	Eliminated	113	31.1
Social Anxiety	High	123	33.9
	General	117	32.2
	Eliminated	123	33.9

Table 3-10. Measurement invariance analysis - Competitiveness

Model	Model fit indices	Invariance test
M0 Unconstrained model	$\chi^2(198)=447.43, p=.00$ RMSEA=.07, CFI=.90	-
M1 Measurement weight	$\chi^2(209)=464.24, p=.00$ RMSEA=.07, CFI=.90	M1-M0: $\chi^2_d(11)=16.81, p=.000$

$df(11) = 19.68 (p = .05)$

Table 3-11. Measurement invariance analysis – Hedonic value orientation

Model	Model fit indices	Invariance test
M0 Unconstrained model	$\chi^2(198)=354.66, p=.00$ RMSEA=.05, CFI=.94	-
M1 Measurement weight	$\chi^2(209)=371.88, p=.00$ RMSEA=.05, CFI=.94	M1-M0: $\chi^2_d(11)=17.22, p=.000$

$df(11) = 19.68 (p = .05)$

Table 3-12. Measurement invariance analysis – Social anxiety

Model	Model fit indices	Invariance test
M0 Unconstrained model	$\chi^2(198)=498.45, p=.00$ RMSEA=.08, CFI=.89	-
M1 Measurement weight	$\chi^2(209)=513.53, p=.00$ RMSEA=.08, CFI=.89	M1-M0: $\chi^2_d(11)=15.08, p=.000$

$df(11) = 19.68 (p = .05)$

Table 3-13. Measurement invariance analysis – Utilitarian value orientation

Model	Model fit indices	Invariance test
M0 Unconstrained model	$\chi^2(198)=431.81, p=.00$ RMSEA=.06, CFI=.92	-
M1 Measurement weight	$\chi^2(209)=455.69, p=.00$ RMSEA=.06, CFI=.92	M1-M0: $\chi^2_d(11)=23.88, p>.05$

$df(11) = 19.68 (p = .05)$

Table 3-14. Measurement invariance analysis - Involvement

Model	Model fit indices	Invariance test
M0 Unconstrained model	$\chi^2(198)=467.15, p=.00$ RMSEA=.06, CFI=.92	-
M1 Measurement weight	$\chi^2(209)=495.54, p=.00$ RMSEA=.06, CFI=.92	M1-M0: $\chi^2_d(11)=28.39, p=.000$

$df(11) = 19.68 (p = .05)$

Table 3-15. Standardized total effects for competitiveness moderation effects

Standardized total effect		
Group	Outcome	
Highly Competitive	Draft Intent	.27**
Generally Competitive		.14

** Significant at 0.05

Table 3-16. Standardized total effects for hedonic value orientation moderation effects

Standardized total effect		
Group	Outcome	
Highly Hedonic	Draft Intent	.36**
Generally Hedonic		.06

** Significant at 0.05

Table 3-17. Standardized total effects for social anxiety moderation effects

Standardized total effect		
Group	Outcome	
High Social Anxiety		.07
General Social Anxiety	Draft Intent	.20**

** Significant at 0.05

Table 3-18. Research constructs

Athletic Expertise	An athlete's individual achievement and athletic capability (Cattani, in progress).	This athlete has a good performance record This athlete is a dominating player in his/her sport This athlete has prominent athletic skills in his/her sport
External Team Factors	External factors influencing the given athlete: number of players at the position, style of offense, new coaches, new teams. (Cattani, in progress)	This athlete is the only individual at his position that receives significant playing time This athlete's play is unaffected by coaching changes This athlete's play has remained constant despite changes in the team
Credibility	A consumer's perceived image of an athlete based on athletes' off-field behavior. (Cattani, in progress)	This athlete is socially responsible This athlete is a good leader in the community This athlete makes socially acceptable decisions off the field of play
Popularity	The perceived notoriety of an athlete based on the attention an athlete receives (positive or negative) in the conventional media. (Cattani, in progress)	I can recognize this athlete among competing athletes I can quickly recall a symbol or logo of this athlete Characteristics of this athlete come to my mind quickly I can easily picture this athlete in my mind
Physical Fitness	A consumer's overall perception of an athlete's general physical fitness. (Cattani, in progress)	This athlete's physique is ideal for his/her sport This athlete is physically fit This athlete is in good shape
Involvement	The perceived interest in and personal importance of 'fantasy' sports to an individual. (Shank and Beasley, 1998)	To me, fantasy sports are: Important – Unimportant Exciting – Boring Useful – Not Useful
Competitiveness	The desire to outperform others. (Mowen et al, 2009)	I enjoy competition more than others I feel that it is important to outperform others I feel that winning is extremely important
Value Orientation	Chitturi, Raghunathan and Mahajan (2007) and Chernev (2004), have defined "utilitarian benefits" as those that refer to the functional, instrumental and practical benefits of consumption offerings and "hedonic benefits" as those that refer to their aesthetic, experiential and enjoyment-related benefits.	Hedonic Value Orientation: Playing Fantasy Sports gives me a feeling of excitement, fun, and/or enjoyment. I enjoy passing time by playing Fantasy Sports. Compared to other things, playing Fantasy Sports is really enjoyable. Utilitarian Value Orientation: A productive fantasy session is finding the information I am looking for in preparation of my next Fantasy Sports contest. Winning prize money is an important aspect of playing Fantasy Sports. I play Fantasy Sports to gain sport-specific knowledge.

Table 3-18. continued

Social Anxiety	Anxiety resulting from the prospect or presence of personal evaluation in real or imagined social situations. (Schlenker and Leary, 1982)	<p>I worry about what kind of impression I am making on someone while playing Fantasy Sports.</p> <p>I am usually worried about what kind of impression I make while playing Fantasy Sports.</p> <p>I am afraid that people will find fault with my performance while playing Fantasy Sports.</p> <p>Sometimes I think I am too concerned with what other people think about my performance while playing Fantasy Sports.</p> <p>I feel nervous if other people are watching me when I am playing Fantasy Sports.</p> <p>I usually get nervous when I play Fantasy Sports in front of even a few people who are watching.</p> <p>I feel that I will humiliate myself when I play Fantasy Sports.</p> <p>Other people's opinions of how well I play Fantasy Sports bother me.</p>
Attachment	An emotion-laden target-specific bond between a person and a specific object (Bowlby, 1988)	<p>I consider myself emotionally connected to this athlete</p> <p>I have a psychological connection to this athlete</p> <p>I have an emotional bond with this athlete</p>
Draft Intention	The intention to select a given athlete in a fantasy draft (Cattani & Ko, in review).	<p>Drafting of this athlete in future fantasy drafts is:</p> <p>Not Possible – Possible</p> <p>Unlikely – Likely</p> <p>Improbable – Probable</p>

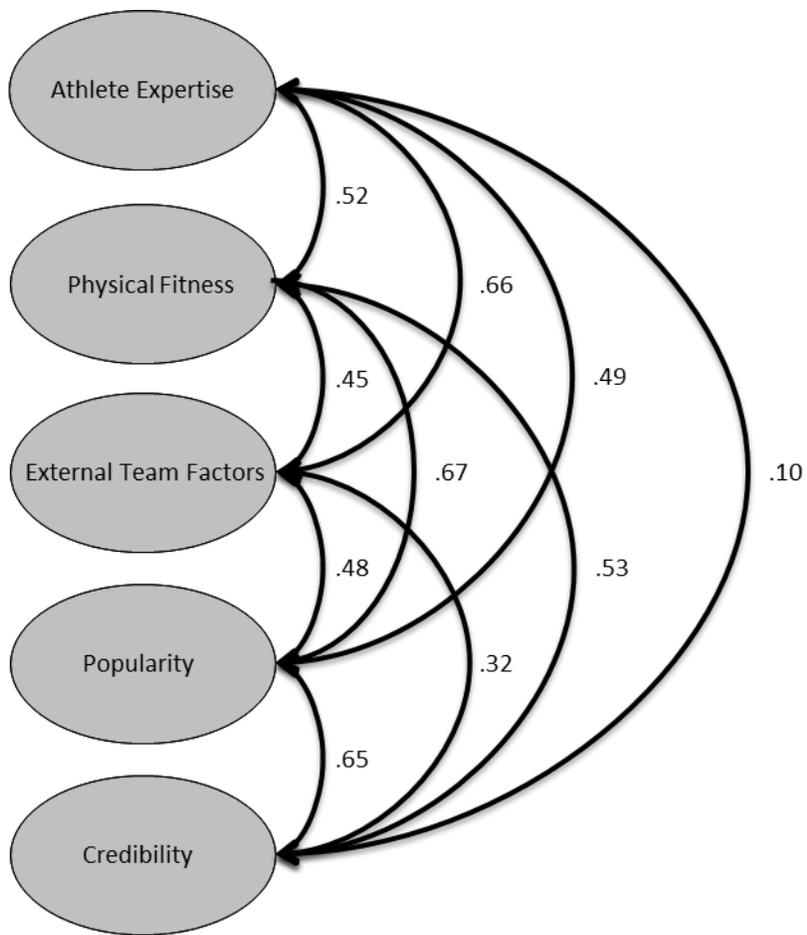


Figure 3-1. First-order confirmatory factor analysis results of factors of ideal fantasy athlete image

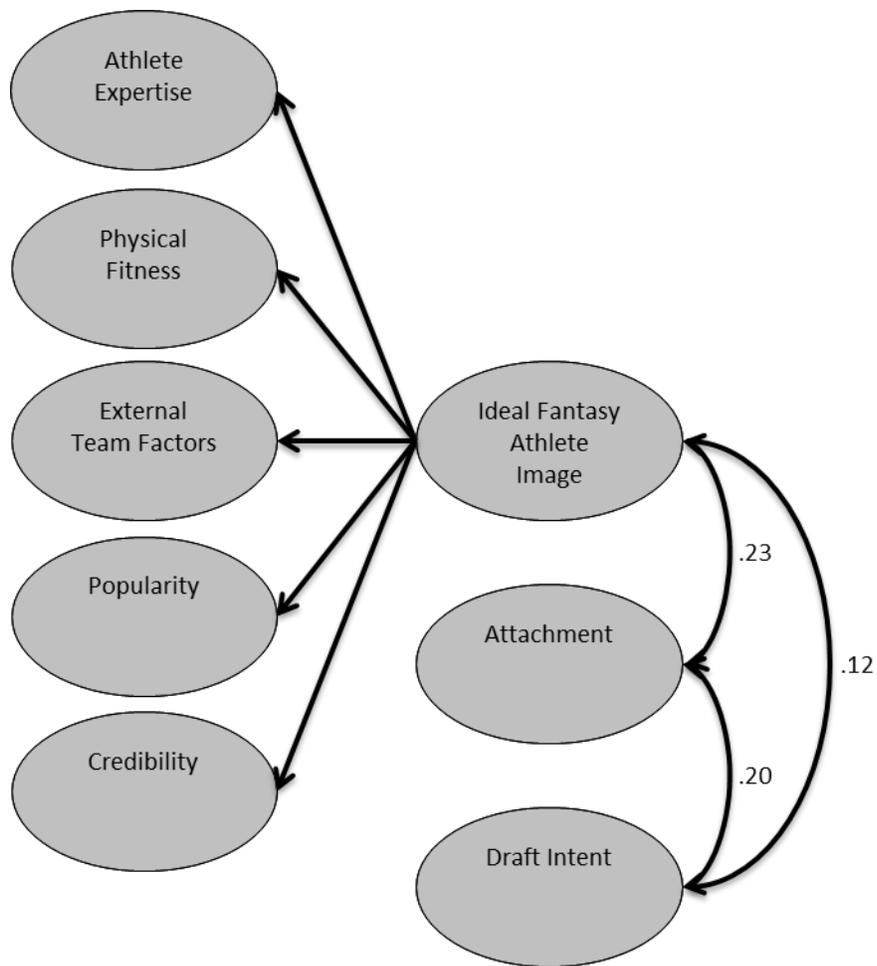


Figure 3-2. Confirmatory factor analysis results among research model variables

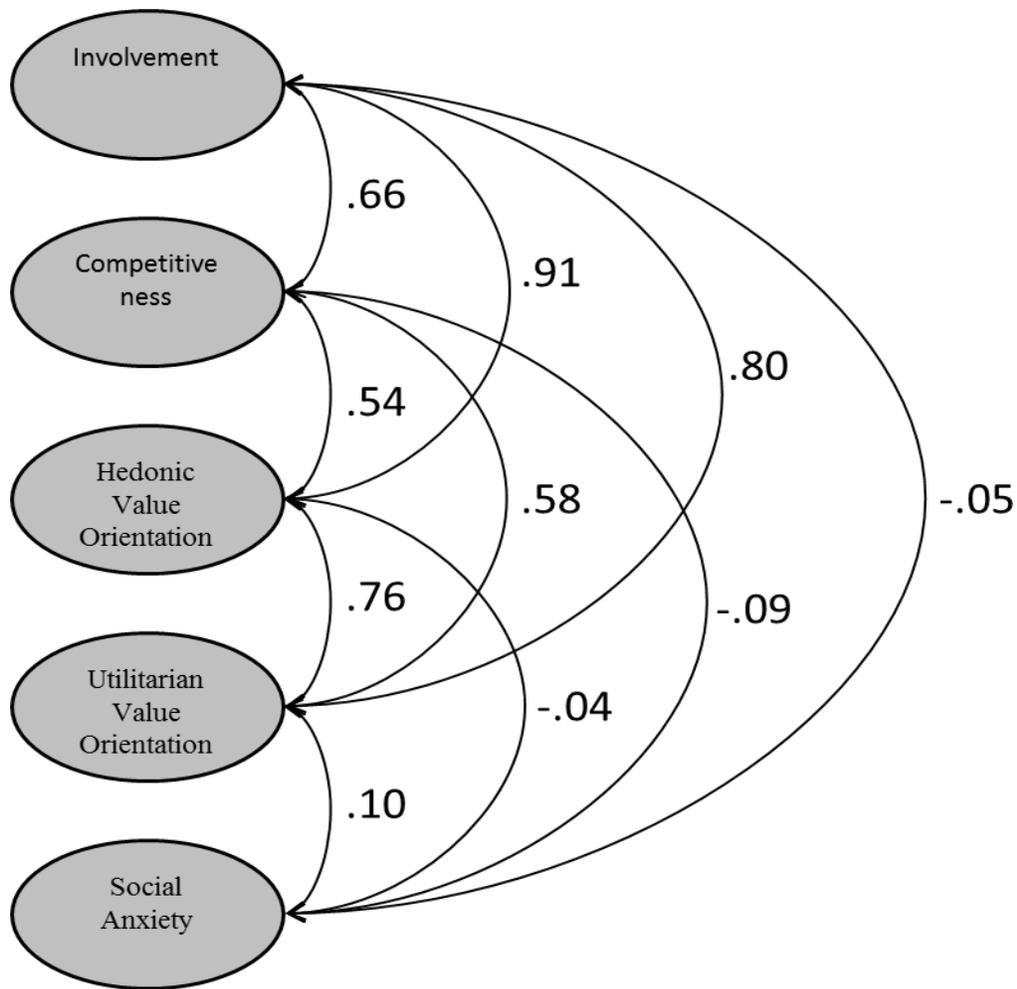


Figure 3-3. Confirmatory factor analysis results of moderating variables

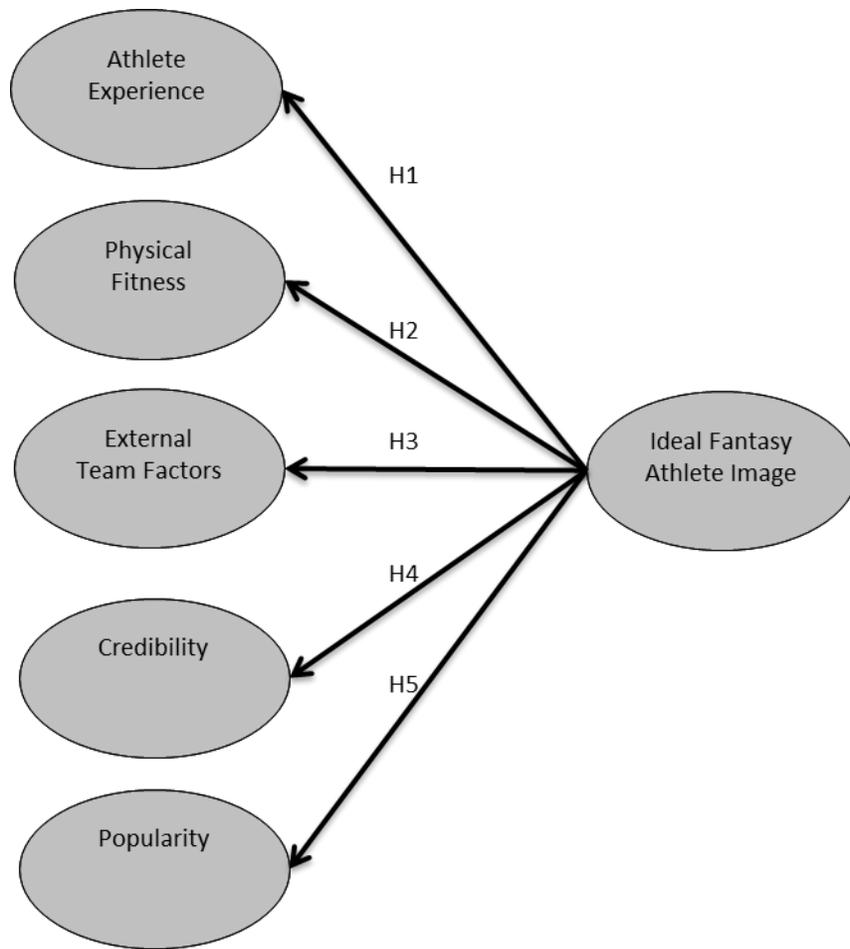


Figure 3-4. Higher order testing of ideal fantasy athlete image

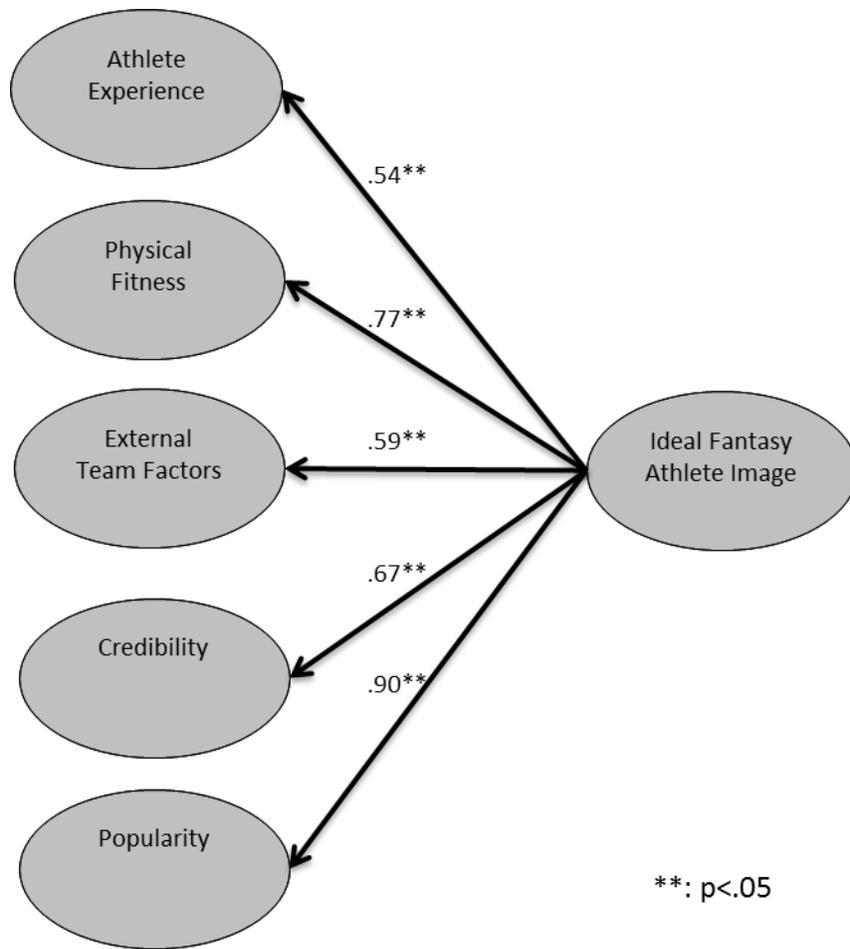


Figure 3-5. Results of higher order testing of ideal fantasy athlete image

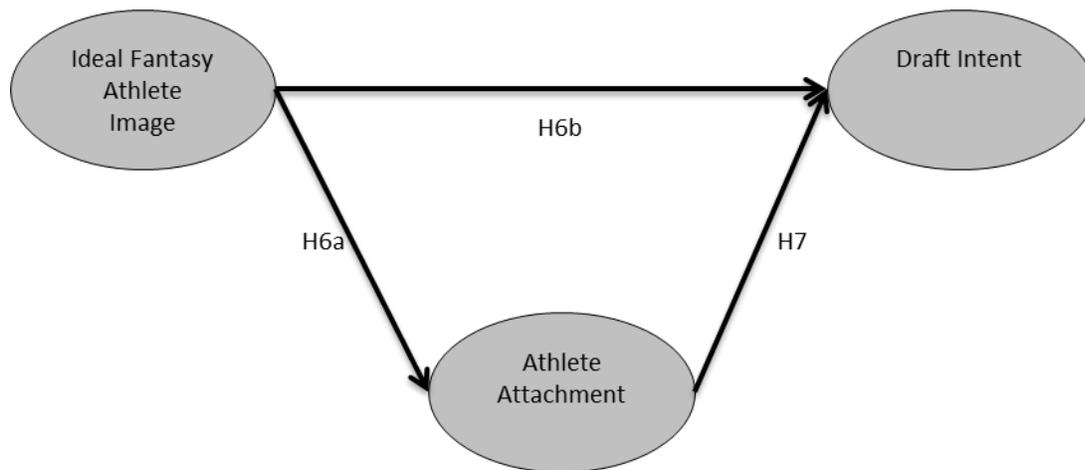


Figure 3-6. Structural model of research hypotheses

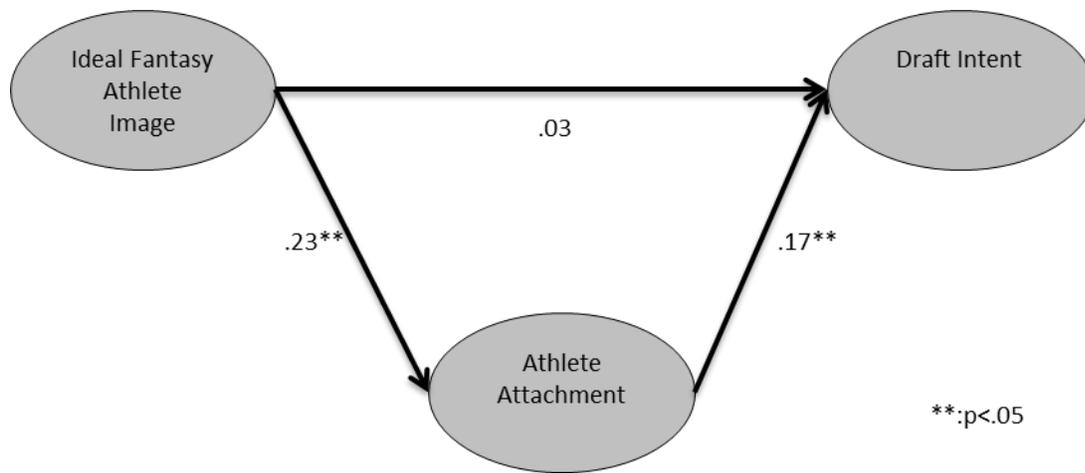


Figure 3-7. Results of structural model test: Indirect effect between IFAI and intent to draft through PAA

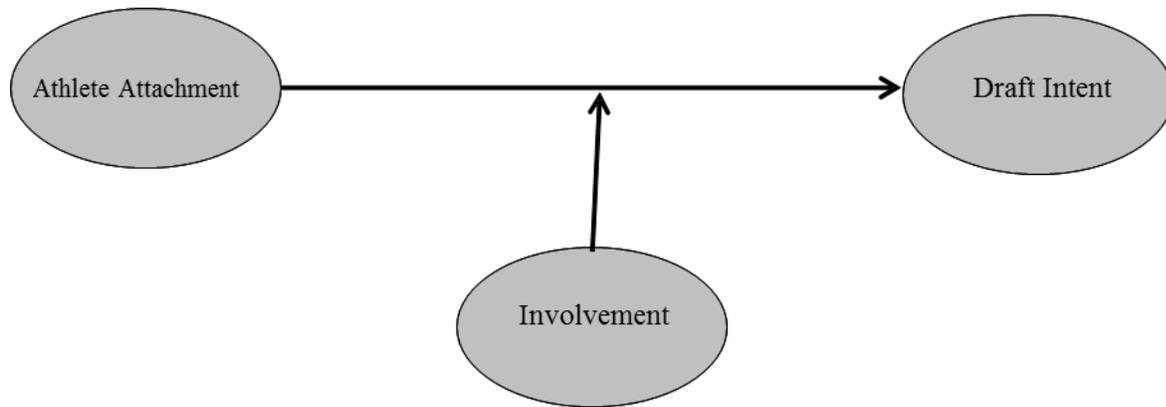


Figure 3-8. The proposed moderating effect of involvement on the link between athlete attachment and draft intent

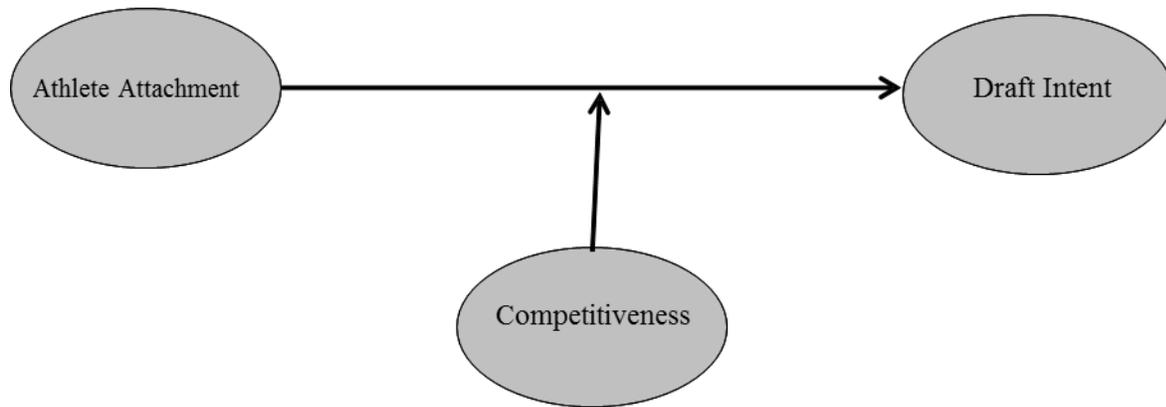


Figure 3-9. The proposed moderating effect of competitiveness on the link between athlete attachment and draft intent

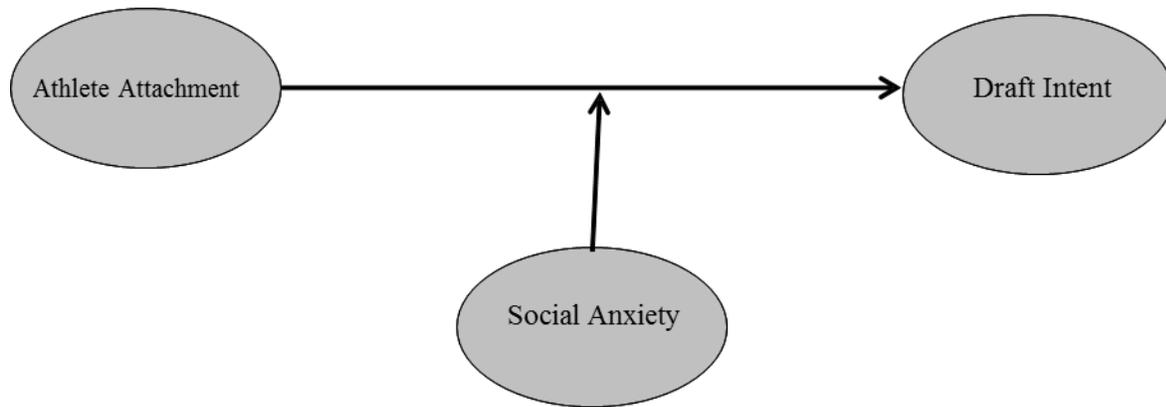


Figure 3-10. The proposed moderating effect of social anxiety on the link between athlete attachment and draft intent

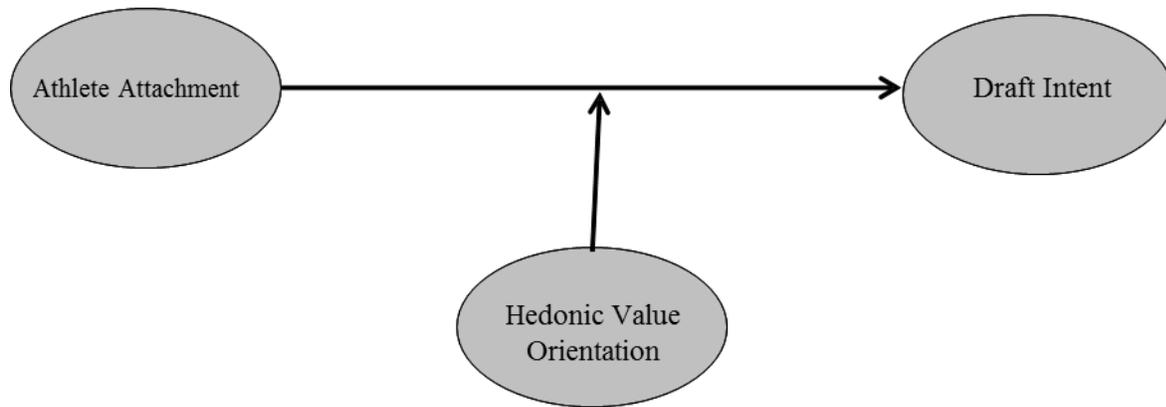


Figure 3-11. The proposed moderating effect of hedonic value orientation on the link between athlete attachment and draft intent

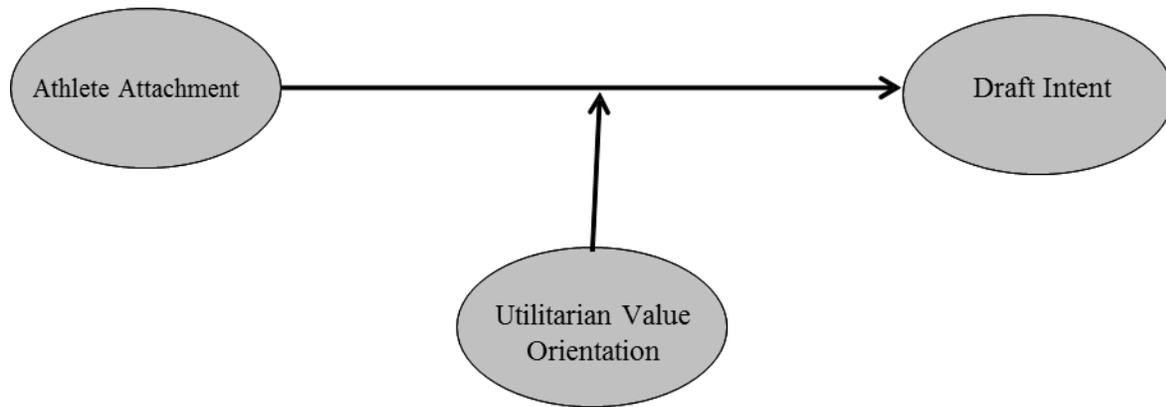


Figure 3-12. The proposed moderating effect of utilitarian value orientation on the link between athlete attachment and draft intent

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Kevin Philip Cattani's academic career began as an undergraduate student at the University of Florida in 2002. In addition to being a student in the Department of Tourism, Recreation and Sport Management, Kevin was fortunate to obtain a student equipment manager role with the football team. Having successfully attended to the demands of student and athletic life, he received his Bachelor of Science degree in Sport Management in 2006. Foregoing the private business sector, Kevin decided to continue his education by pursuing his master's degree in Sport Management. During this time, Kevin maintained his position with the University of Florida football team, in addition to a teaching assistantship in the Alan C. Moore Sport and Fitness Program where he taught various physical activity classes such as basketball, tennis and coaching baseball. He completed his Master of Science degree in Sport Management in 2008. While finishing his master's degree, Kevin developed a love of research and the academic lifestyle and decided, once again, to continue his education by accepting a graduate assistant position within the Department of Tourism, Recreation and Sport Management. Thusly, Kevin remained at the University of Florida to pursue his doctoral studies. While attending the University of Florida, he has assisted various faculty members in consultant roles for various market research projects, taught Principles of Sport Marketing and Sport Finance, along with guest lecture opportunities in Sport Sociology, Research Methods and graduate level Sport Marketing. Furthermore, he has mentored and advised student leaders through his teaching assistantship and internship advisory positions. Furthermore, while still a student equipment manager with the University of Florida football team, Kevin was fortunate to be a proud member of the 2008 Southeastern Conference and National Championship winning Florida Gators. In

2012, Kevin graduated from the University of Florida with a Doctor of Philosophy degree in Health and Human Performance.