

ATTENDANCE MOTIVATION AMONG DEMOGRAPHIC SUBGROUPS OF  
WASHINGTON WIZARDS SPECTATORS

by

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Spectators

A project submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of  
Science at George Mason University

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**LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

Major League Baseball .....	MLB
Major League Soccer .....	MLS
Metropolitan Statistical Area .....	MSA
National Basketball Association .....	NBA
National Collegiate Athletic Association.....	NCAA
National Football Association.....	NFL
National Hockey League.....	NHL
United States .....	U.S.
United Kingdom.....	UK
Sport Fan Motivation Scale .....	SFMS



## **ABSTRACT**

### **ATTENDANCE MOTIVATION AMONG DEMOGRAPHIC SUBGROUPS OF WASHINGTON WIZARDS SPECTATORS**

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The purpose of this project was to examine differences in game attendance motivation among demographic subgroups of Washington Wizards spectators. Data were collected from 250 Wizards spectators via the Sport Fan Motivation Scale and indicated attendance motivation differences among key demographics including age groups and gender.

Results of this study may be used by sport marketers and organizations to better define target market segments and to tailor marketing efforts to increase attendance and build a loyal fan base.

*Keywords:* sport marketing, fan identity, sport attendance, market segmentation

## CHAPTER ONE

The changing demographics in the U.S. are creating opportunities for professional U.S. sports leagues to target new markets to increase attendance and build a base of loyal fans. The U.S. population has experienced rapid growth among minority groups, specifically Hispanic/Latino and Asian segments which have each increased in size by 43% over the past ten years (U.S. Census, 2010). The Black/African American population has increased by 12%, compared to only a 5% growth among the White/Caucasian population (U.S. Census, 2010).

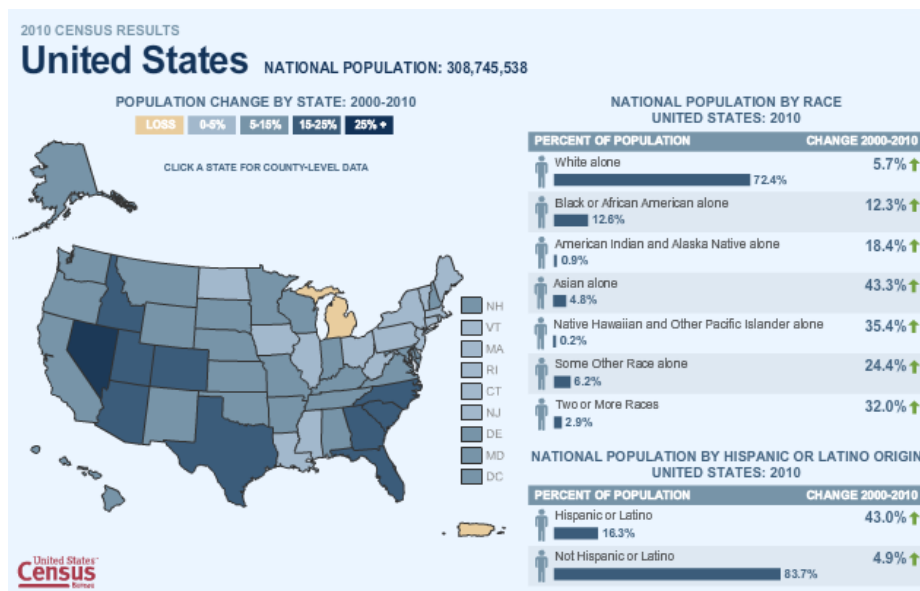


Figure 1. 2010 United States Census Results Showing National Population by Race.

While many assume that sport fans are predominantly men, the gender gap may not be as wide as most think. Dietz-Uhler, Harrick, End, and Jacquemotte (2000) found that women are just as likely as men to consider themselves a sports fan. As many as 46% of Major League Baseball (MLB) fans (Rykoff, 2012), 44% of National Football Association (NFL) fans (Jessop, 2012) and 40% of National Basketball Association's (NBA) fans (Vasquez, 2010) are women. With minority subgroups comprising a larger proportion of the U.S. population and the large representation of women as sport consumers, sport marketers must analyze the attendance motivations of their potential fan base in order to tap into this changing landscape.

As in the case study of the Washington Wizards, sport marketers have diverse fan bases. While generalized marketing to a broad audience serves brand enhancement, targeting messaging to specific market segments leads to increased conversions—or in the case of sport marketing, increased ticket sales. Market segmentation enables marketers to create more impactful marketing campaigns that resonate with the targeted audience and therefore yield higher sales. There are many ways to segment an audience and differing motivations for attendance may exist among key demographic segments including age groups, gender, and race/ethnicity. These motivational differences can be used to segment an audience and to identify marketing tactics specific to a segment.

With professional sports' broad appeal, I was interested to see how sport marketers were capitalizing on the changing demographic landscape in the U.S. Little research on the topic in regard to professional U.S. sports existed and conversations with the Washington Wizards indicated that it was an area of interest that had yet to be fully

examined. Upon further research, it became clear that marketers within the main professional U.S. sport leagues—NFL, NBA, MLB, National Hockey League (NHL), and Major League Soccer (MLS)—often focus their marketing efforts on primary demographic subgroups of the U.S. population with little variance in messaging and tactics to address minority segments. In recent years, these marketers have made concerted attempts to reach the Hispanic/Latino and Asian sub-populations through more targeted marketing campaigns but have had limited success (Armstrong, 2008; Clarke & Mannion, 2006; Jewell & Molina, 2005).

With a better understanding of the motivations for and determinants of attendance by demographic subgroups, marketers will be better able to segment their audiences and develop specific messaging and tactics to build attendance and fan loyalty, and ultimately, increased revenue. Research has examined determinants of sport attendance among groups of different cultural backgrounds (Armstrong, 2008; Armstrong & Peretto Stratta, 2004; Clarke & Mannion, 2006; Trail, Anderson, & Fink, 2005), but has not specifically focused on U.S. professional sport leagues. My research attempts to fill this void.

As a sports marketer, I am interested in ways in which practitioners in the marketing field can more efficiently and effectively market products. Understanding the attendance motivations of key demographic subgroups can reduce the inherent waste and inefficiencies of mass marketing by enabling marketers to create targeted marketing campaigns. Understanding variation in motivation may help marketers to reach new fans

with messaging that more meaningfully resonates with them, thereby reducing the time and money spent to build awareness and loyalty among new fan segments.

While several of U.S. professional sport leagues and their teams have attempted to increase game attendance by marketing to key demographic subgroups such as Hispanic/Latino or female populations, their marketing efforts are often an extension of their existing marketing campaigns and fail to take into consideration those factors which specifically influence these subgroups (Armstrong, 2008; Clarke & Mannion, 2006; Jewell & Molina, 2005). There are several examples in which U.S. professional sport teams have attempted to attract a specific demographic subgroup such as Hispanics/Latinos to increase game attendance. These efforts have had varying degrees of success and highlight the need for additional research into demographic subgroup motivations for attending sporting events.

In 2000, MLS bought the contract of Mexican League star Luis Hernández for a record \$4 million and placed him with the Los Angeles Galaxy—since this team had the largest Mexican American support at the time. Attendance for Hernández's debut soared to 40,000, but subsequent games' attendance numbers fell back to the pre-Hernández average of 18,000 (Jewell & Molina, 2005). One can speculate that the Mexican fans attracted to Hernández's debut game were dissatisfied with the quality of MLS play compared to the Mexican League level of play which they could access via domestic broadcasts. Alternatively, the surge in attendance could have come from casual soccer fans who wanted to see a star player but had no intention of becoming regular game attendees. Other explanations for the decline could be dissatisfaction with the stadium

atmosphere which varies greatly from the boisterous fan experiences in countries outside the U.S. or financial constraints prohibiting them from regularly attending games versus watching them on television. Regardless of the reason for the attendance decline after Hernández's debut, attempts to target subgroups must be holistic in nature and driven by the motivations of subgroup that is being targeted.

A similar example with a very different outcome can be seen in the case of the NBA Houston Rockets' acquisition of Chinese player, Yao Ming. To attract Asian, specifically Chinese, consumers in the Houston region, the Rockets integrated elements of the Chinese culture into their promotional materials—including billboards with Chinese characters, translating the Rockets' website into Mandarin, and celebrating the Chinese New Year with dragon dancers and Asian drums during one of the game introduction ceremonies (Clarke & Mannion, 2006). This level of integration led to a 12% increase in the purchase of group packages by Asian Americans (Clarke & Mannion, 2006).

In this case study, I investigate differences in game attendance motivation among key demographic subgroups of the Washington Wizards spectators and outline potential strategies as part of a comprehensive campaign devised to increase attendance and build a loyal fan base. While there is a great deal of research examining motives for sport participation and fan loyalty, there is limited research that focuses on fan attendance and motivations among demographic subgroups. Recent research by Armstrong (2008), Armstrong and Peretto Stratta (2004), Clarke and Mannion (2006), Jewell and Molina (2005), and Trail, Anderson, and Fink (2005) has begun to shed light on this topic;

however, with the exception of Jewell and Molina (2005), all have been restricted to amateur or non-U.S. markets. Due to the rapid growth among minority populations in the U.S. and the large proportion of women as consumers of sport, research on the attendance motivations of demographic subgroups specific to professional sports in the U.S. can provide great value to marketers.

### **Definitions**

There will be several terms used throughout the study that are defined as follows:

**Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA).** Defined by the U.S. Census as a geographic region with a relatively high population density at its core and close economic and social integration throughout the area.

**BIRGing.** Short for “Basking In Reflected Glory,” BIRGing is linked to identity theory in which a fan shares in the success of a chosen team (Trail et al., 2005).

**CORFing.** Short for “Cutting Off Reflected Failure,” CORFing is linked to identity theory in which a fan disassociates from a team due to the team’s poor performance (Trail et al., 2005).

### **Theoretical Lens**

This study will be guided by Identity Theory and Customer Satisfaction Theory.

**Identity Theory.** Defined by Burke and Stets (2009), Identity Theory explains the specific meanings that individuals have for the multiple identities they claim and how those identities interrelate, influence their behavior, thoughts, and feelings or emotions; and connect to society at large. One of the main concepts of Identity Theory is that multiple role-identities make up an individual’s concept of self and give meaning to a

person's past behavior and influence future behavior (Trail et al., 2005). Sport marketers must understand fan identity in relation to sports in order to segment and effectively market.

**Consumer Satisfaction Theory.** Consumer Satisfaction Theory is aimed at understanding and explaining the satisfaction of consumers in terms of their evaluation of product performance or service use relative to pre-purchase expectations (Dacko, 2008). Outcome can either confirm or disconfirm expectations and lead to customer satisfaction or dissatisfaction (Trail et al., 2005). Sport marketers fundamentally rely on Consumer Satisfaction Theory to create appropriate messaging. For instance, if a team is not a strong performer, sport marketers should focus on non-performance aspects of the game such as a family friendly atmosphere or giveaways to entice attendance. If a fan attends a game under the premise that the team is a top performer and the team loses, that fan's expectations will be disconfirmed and they are less likely to attend future games.

### **Purpose of Study**

The purpose of this project is to examine differences in game attendance motivations among key demographic subgroups of Washington Wizards spectators (i.e., differences among race/ethnicity, age, gender, and language subgroups). Results of this study may be used by sport marketers and organizations to better define target market segments and to tailor marketing efforts to increase attendance and build a loyal fan base.

### **Limitations and Delimitations**

The study was conducted with one professional sport team in Washington, D.C., the NBA's Washington Wizards. As such, the research findings may not be generalizable



across multiple sports, teams, and locations with differing fan base composition. I collected data at three home games obtaining a sample size of 250; motivations among those attending other games may have differed. The three games in which data was collected were during the beginning of the Wizards' season in which they had yet to win a game. This losing streak may have impacted the spectator motivations. Additionally, roughly half of the responses were collected prior to the start of the game and the remaining responses were collected during the game (primarily at half-time). Depending on the quality of the game, fans responses may vary if they took the survey before the game versus during the game. The minority composition of attendees for the specific Washington Wizards' games studied may not be generalizable to all Wizards' attendees or to multiple U.S. markets or different sports within the Washington, D.C., MSA.

Additionally, future research should consider the use of technology-enhanced data collection methods to simplify and improve the process. The use of iPads for in-person data collection could enable participants to take a survey in a variety of languages and reduce the possibility of data entry errors and culturally-biased responses.

## CHAPTER TWO

New technology within online media and customer relationship management (CRM) software has vastly improved marketers' abilities to target specific markets and create customized messaging based on demographic and psychographic characteristics. While technology has reduced segmentation barriers, it has created a complex planning process in which marketers must consider an exponential number of factors when creating marketing plans. This is often compounded by limited marketing budgets. Marketers must balance the need for targeted campaigns with the need to maximize the effectiveness of dollars spent. They must decide if reaching more people with a generalized message will be more impactful than reaching fewer people with more targeted messages.

With a homogenous target audience, marketers have the luxury of eschewing segmentation for mass marketing strategies. However, changes across the competitive landscape and consumer profile within the U.S. are forcing marketers to change tactics as mass marketing strategies become less effective. In many industries, including sports, there are more competitive challenges than ever. Consumers have limited disposable income and sports marketers are in competition with each other as well as with other forms of entertainment, including movies and concerts, to capture consumer dollars. Consumers cultural and socio-economic influences combined with increased competition

forces marketers to no longer rely solely on the strengths of their products but to communicate the benefits of their products based on the consumers' purchase criteria. Consumption patterns may vary among different cultural and socioeconomic subgroups and with the growth among across multiple subgroup of the U.S. population and the emergence of women as major consumers of sport, marketers must consider these different consumption patterns.

These changes in the consumer and competitive landscape are being noted by researchers as well. There is currently a significantly greater focus on fans than just twenty years ago when only 4% of research published in sport psychology and sociology journals focused on fans (Wann & Hamlet, 1995). This research has primarily illustrated that sport consumption motives may vary based on cultural identity (Armstrong, 2002). Two themes emerged from my literature review: fan identity and segmentation. To locate research on this topic, I performed a database search using Google Scholar and the e-journal library at George Mason University. I found thirteen articles published since 2000.

### **Fan Identity**

The ability for a fan to identify with a sport team is a key driver for sport attendance and fan loyalty. Fan identity has also been referred to as customer discrimination, or the tendency of fans to attend games in which players of their own race are playing (Jewell & Molina, 2005). Building fan identity can take many forms including employing players of similar heritage or nationality and teams holding cultural

events, creating marketing materials in various languages, and even creating marketing messages based on attendance motivations.

In 2003, Trail, Fink, and Anderson conducted a quantitative study to examine a variety of factors to determine why fans consume sport. They hypothesized that future sport consumption could be predicted by analyzing motives, level of identification, expectancies, confirmation or disconfirmation of expectancies, self-esteem responses, and the affective state of the individual. The researchers surmised that each factor had a sequential effect on the following factors. Data were collected from spectators at one men's and one women's intercollegiate basketball game at an NCAA Division I-A university. The questionnaire comprised the Motivation Scale for Sport Consumption and six other scales created specifically for the study. Of the 500 questionnaires distributed, 364 usable questionnaires were returned and used for analysis. The researchers' study indicates that all the variables tested could be used to predict future consumption of sport by fans and that individual motives explain variance in fan identification. By understanding the motives that enhance fan identification, sport marketers can target those motives to improve fan identification which will lead to stronger fan loyalty and influencing attendance behavior.

Trail, Anderson, and Fink (2005) built upon their previous research with a quantitative analysis using three models to determine sport attendance and fan loyalty. In the first model, the researchers examined whether the quality of the team influences a fan's mood and therefore affects loyalty. The second model posed that self-esteem is an intervening factor, where the quality of the team influences a fan's mood, the mood then

leads to self-esteem responses, and the self-esteem responses then affect loyalty. In the third model, the researchers additionally examined team performance as related to the aforementioned variables. The researchers collected data from attendees at a large Midwestern university at two home men's (n=530) and two home women's (n=749) intercollegiate basketball games. The survey—comprising the five scales Team Identification Index, (Dis)Confirmation of Expectancies Scale, Affective State Index, Self-Esteem Maintenance Behavior Scale, and Intentions for Sport Consumption Behavior Scale—was distributed to spectators as they entered each section of the stadium prior to the game; only the home team fans were asked to take the survey. After analyzing the data, the researchers determined that self-esteem ( $p=.00$ ) was a strong influencer of fan loyalty. When a fan's team wins, the fan's self-esteem increases and marketers can take this opportunity to deepen loyalty by increasing fan identification with the team. One such example is to encourage players and coaches to interact with fans after a home win.

Jewell and Molina (2005) examined the variables that determine attendance at MLS games and found that fan identity plays a role in attendance. Based on the premise that different population segments—in this instance, race—have different motivations for attending MLS games, the researchers collected demographic data for each MLS location from the U.S. Census web site and the Bureau of Economic Analysis web site and collected data pertaining to MLS attendance and performance directly from the MLS official web site. The research indicated that the Black population in relation to attendance is a negative coefficient. The researchers inferred that there are few Black

MLS fans because there are few Black players with whom Black fans can identify. The data also showed that an increased presence of Hispanics/Latinos within a population was related to a lower level of attendance. As much as 58% of the Hispanic/Latino population in the U.S. is of Mexican descent, and Mexican First Division games are widely available through two Spanish-speaking television networks in the United States (i.e., Univision and Telemundo). Hispanics/Latinos of Mexican origin are most likely fans of the soccer teams having players with whom they most identify, those from the Mexican First Division. The MLS has targeted other Hispanic/Latino populations, specifically Salvadorans, by adding a Salvadoran player to a MLS team with a large Salvadoran population in its home location. This tactic worked wonderfully to increase fan attendance among Salvadorans indicating this group is motivated by fan identity.

Armstrong and Peretto Stratta (2004) also examined the variances in determinants of sport attendance by race. The researchers analyzed whether there was a significant difference between Black and White consumers of professional women's basketball teams from two different markets in the U.S. They specifically looked at differences in communication tools consumers relied on for game or team information, their game/event purchase patterns, their active participation in basketball, factors motivating their game attendance decisions, and predictors of their game attendance frequency. For this study, the researchers collected data via a questionnaire at professional women's basketball games in the Southern and Midwestern markets. The results of this research indicate that fan identity does play a role in sport attendance. In the Midwestern market, game attendance frequency did *not* differ significantly based on the spectators' race. The

percentage of attendees by race corresponded to the market's racial composition, and the Midwestern home team also had an equal distribution of White and Black players on the team. In the Southern market, game attendance frequency *did* differ significantly based on the spectators' race. In particular, the Black spectators were overrepresented at the games and White spectators were underrepresented. The representation of Blacks in attendance at the Southern games was more than twice the percentage of Blacks living in the metropolitan statistical area. One explanation for this is that the players on the Southern home team were predominately Black. There was higher fan identification based on race in the Southern market resulting in the overrepresentation of Black spectators.

In 2000, Laverie and Arnett conducted a quantitative study that attempted to tie together various streams of research to develop a model devoted to fan behavior. The researchers' study is unique as it specifically examines influences of fan identity of which three factors (attachment, situational involvement, and enduring involvement) were identified and tested. The researchers gathered data from women's basketball fans at a large Southwestern university. The questionnaire included the Personal Involvement Inventory scale consisting of sixteen semantic differential items, the Enduring Involvement Scale consisting of nine semantic differential items, a nine-item attachment scale, a four-item identity salience scale, and a three-item satisfaction scale. The results indicate that involvement, attachment, and identity are all strongly related. If a person is involved with or attached to a sport team, then the person is likely to rate fan identity as important. The results suggest there are complex factors associated with being a fan but

fan identity is a major driver of consumption and a source of revenue that marketers should target.

In 2002, Giulianotti examined football's commodification on forms of spectator identification with top professional football clubs in Europe. The researcher outlines four spectator categories: supporters, followers, fans, and flaneurs. Supporters are ardent spectators who have long-term, emotional investment in their club similar to the relationship with a close friend or family member. Supporters have a strong sense of identification with the club so much so that they see themselves as part of the club and are active participants in club activities including attending games and organizing cheers, fanning rivalries, and participating in fan clubs. Like supporters, followers have a longer, more local identification with the club. However, followers are more distantly involved—keeping abreast of their club's developments but spend more time following the club via electronic media than in person. Fans have a strong sense of identity with a club but their identification manifests itself through commercial means such as club merchandise or consumption of football magazines. Lastly, flaneurs are detached spectators with a depersonalized relationship with football clubs. They interact with clubs via television and the internet and their loyalties may shift based on club performance. Giulianotti's research highlights four categories of spectator identification which can be used to define fan behavior and which marketers can use to strengthen spectator relationships.

There has been considerable effort to understand consumer sport behavior. Research suggests that fan identity plays a strong role in sport attendance and consumption. Identity can take many forms but is most often associated with cultural



diversity. Sport marketers can use existing research to determine appropriate ways in which to build fan identity among different segments of their fan population. Employing players who are the race or nationality of a target market can be a useful tactic (Jewell & Molina, 2005). Other tactics to consider are hosting cultural events, multi-language websites, multi-lingual customer service employees, and advertisements in the native language of the target (Clarke & Mannion, 2006).

### **Segmentation**

Fan segmentation—especially using fan demographics—is not new, but there is a trend to go beyond the age, gender, income, education demographics of the general population and begin to market based on cultural or socioeconomic diversity. Marketers must then use this information to create uniquely targeted marketing campaigns that enable these segmented groups to identify with their teams.

Team performance is a common motivator for sport attendance across races (Armstrong, 2008; Trail et al., 2005), but it is also a variable that marketers cannot control. Therefore, marketers should focus on identifying other motivational factors that they can directly influence. Existing research shows that motivations for sport consumption vary by segment demographics such as race/ethnicity (Armstrong, 2008; Armstrong & Peretto Stratta, 2004; Jewell & Molina, 2005). Marketers can use these motivations to create subgroups beyond demographics and create highly defined target audiences. An example of such is segmenting the general population by cultural diversity and then creating sub-segments based on differences in motivations. These sub-segments may be related to race, ethnicity, or nationality and specific motivational factors that have

been identified among their geographic population such as social, family, or aesthetic aspects of attendance.

Armstrong (2008) examined the importance of a variety of sport event attributes—such as event attractiveness, culture, and accessibility factors—to determine their influence on sport attendance. Differences in the impact of factors were noted between the White population and minority populations. The researcher also compared sport consumption dynamics between the White and minority populations as they relate to affinity and consumption frequency. Data was collected from a convenience sample in a large urban area on the West Coast in the U.S. The results of the study indicated differences did arise in the examination of factors that influence sport attendance. While there were no differences in consumers' responses based on the social interaction element of sport, the event's entertainment, family appeal, and promotions were more important to minorities than to the White population. Based on this data, marketers could create sub-segments for each influencing factor among a population and design specific promotional campaigns and marketing messages to target these groups and boost game attendance. An example of such an effort is the Houston Rockets' targeting of Asians. Since this population responds to cultural relevance more than other minority populations, the Rockets' marketers created a promotion that featured dragon dancers and Asian drummers.

Motivated by the expansion of U.S. sport leagues to international markets and increased international migration to the U.S., Falcous and Maguire (2006) conducted research on the nuances of creating local context within globalized sport. The research

highlights the tensions between the global branding pushed by the NBA and the production company and the local demand of the broadcaster and viewers. The contextual analysis and face-to-face interviews conducted enabled the researchers to discern the connections between the production and broadcasting entities. The researchers conducted two interviews and completed a contextual analysis from broadcasting samples during the 1999 NBA coverage by ITV in the UK. While the data sampling was limited, they were able to identify characteristics of the relationship between content producer and local consumer that created relevant feedback. As seen with other studies, the product was created for a generalized audience without consideration of the unique demands of the audience. In this instance, standardized content and packaging of the NBA as a product was created for the UK market. The UK audience, not being as familiar with the NBA, required the broadcasts to be packaged with additional content that featured NBA knowledge and content regarding team locations such as carefully constructed images and stereotypes—San Antonio is linked to ‘bucking broncos and Stetson hats’; Philadelphia with ‘Rocky’ and ‘brotherly love’; Boston with the TV program *Cheers*. This type of content within a U.S. broadcast may seem condescending, but added value to the UK audience. The research highlights the importance of segmenting an audience based on consumption drivers and delivering messaging that resonates with a particular market segment.

Effective segmentation practices result from developing a deep understanding, beyond mere demographic profiles, of the consumer and the psychological motivations for sport consumption. Rohm, Milne, and McDonald (2006) took a mixed methods

approach to look specifically at how researchers could develop market segments within the sport industry. Data gathered for this study was part of a larger data collection effort. A four-page questionnaire with cover letter, small incentive, and postage-paid return envelope was sent to 2,000 of *Runner's World's* 500,000 subscribers in the U.S. The respondents, all runners, could be segmented into one of four segments. Each segment had unique reasons for sport participation. For instance, the healthy joggers segment was motivated by fitness and spiritual reasons and was not influenced by social reasons and competition. This information can be quite useful to marketers as they can devise several unique marketing campaigns to reach each market segment. Featuring a professional athlete in an ad may resonate with the actualized athletes segment of this study but would have little influence on the healthy joggers segment.

As research highlights, it is important for marketers to segment their audience to effectively communicate with them (Armstrong, 2008; Faloutsos & Maguire, 2006; Rohm, Milne, & McDonald, 2006). Segmentation may start with demographics such as race, gender, and age, but marketers must take the next step to understand the attendance and consumption drivers for each of those segments. If targeting a defined target market is important, marketers must understand the dynamics that drive sport attendance for that market and then create a tailored marketing campaign specific to that segment.

## **Conclusion**

The review of literature suggests that many factors determine sport attendance and consumption. While team performance is a significant motivator of attendance, it is also a variable that marketers cannot control. Marketers should focus on attendance

motivators such as entertainment, family, group affiliation. Many attendance motivations are rooted in fan identification, which is a common theme found in current research on sport attendance (Armstrong & Peretto Stratta, 2004; Giulianotti, 2002; Jewell & Molina, 2005; Laverie & Arnett, 2000; Trail, Fink, & Anderson, 2003; Trail et al., 2005). When fans can strongly identify with a team whether it is because of a player of their nationality, cultural events held by the team, or a variety of other activities, fan loyalty and attendance increases. To understand how to build fan identity, marketers must first understand the factors that influence their target and then segment the populations accordingly. It is also important for marketers to understand that there are different levels of identification based on how fans relate to and interact with their teams (Giulianotti, 2002). In the globalized marketplace, a one-size fits all approach will no longer yield results.

There is strong qualitative data to understand factors that influence sport attendance for demographic subgroups. Existing research models can be used by marketers to create new studies specific to their sport and or geographic location. Several scales have been created, tested, and shown to be valid when addressing a variety of behavioral influencers such as identity, expectancies, self-esteem, and intentions. Limitations do exist among the existing research. Most research focuses on collegiate athletics which may not be generalizable to professional sports. Also, data collection methods have varied from in-season to out-of-season, one event to multiple events. Large samples collected over a longer time period may produce better results.

While there has been research conducted that examines various aspects of sport consumption drivers, limited work has focused specifically on attendance determinants of minority fans at professional sports. The research that exists has primarily focused on college athletics' spectators as the population from which data is collected. My study will attempt to fill this gap in the research as delimited to one professional sport team.

## CHAPTER THREE

This study was conducted with attendees at three NBA Washington Wizards home games. The Wizards, known as the Washington Bullets from 1974-1997, have a rich basketball history realizing their greatest success in 1978 with an NBA Championship (“Washington Wizards History,” n.d.). More recently, the team has struggled to find success on the court, and as such, Wizards marketers are looking for insights into fan motivation to refine their marketing tactics and messaging to increase game attendance. This chapter includes information on participants, the setting, methods of data collection, and a plan for analysis.

### **Participants**

The study is based on a convenience sample comprising 250 attendees at three Washington Wizards home games. The sample included 183 males and 64 females (three respondents did not disclose their gender). Since this research is intended to understand the motivations for attendance for those with purchasing power, only attendees 18 years of age or older were asked to participate in the study. Age was broken down into ranges commonly used for marketing planning. The sample was distributed relatively evenly among age groups 18-54 year (20% ages 18-24, 23% ages 25-34, 21% ages 35-44, and 24% ages 45-54) and 12% of respondents fell in the 55+ age category. The racial and ethnic composition of the sample consisted of 50% White/Caucasian, 35% Black/African

American, 5% Hispanic/Latino, 6% Asian/Pacific Islander, and 5% other. The other category for race/ethnicity comprises respondents who answered this question by selecting other or who did not answer the question. The racial composition of the Washington, D.C., MSA is 55% White/Caucasian, 26% Black/African American, 14% Hispanic/Latino, and 9% Asian/Pacific Islander (U.S. Census, 2010). Within the sample, 60% did not have a Wizards ticket plan, while 7% had a partial season ticket plan and 33% had a full-season ticket plan. Table 1 highlights the breakdown of respondents by gender, race, age, and ticket plan status.

Gender	#	%	Race	#	%	Age	#	%	Ticket Plan	#	%
Male	183	74%	White	121	50%	18-24	49	20%	No	149	60%
Female	64	26%	Black	86	35%	25-34	56	23%	Partial	18	7%
			Hispanic	11	5%	35-44	52	21%	Full	81	33%
			Asian	15	6%	45-54	59	24%			
			Other	11	5%	55+	29	12%			
Total	247			244			245			248	

Of the 250 respondents, sixteen indicated that English was not their primary language spoken at home. The non-English primary languages provided by participants include Chinese (7), Spanish (3), French (2), Estonian (1), Georgian (1), Oromo (1), and Tagalog (1). Forty-two participants listed a country of origin other than the U.S., which included twenty-six countries on six continents.



## **Setting**

The data were collected at three Washington Wizards home games during the beginning of the 2012-13 season before the Wizards had yet to win a game. The Wizards also lost each of the games at which data was collected which included November 17, 2012 when the Wizards played the Utah Jazz in front of 16,210 attendees; November 24, 2012 against the Indian Pacers with a game attendance of 14,426; and November 26, 2012 versus the San Antonio Spurs with a crowd numbering 13,879. All three games were evening start times with two games occurring on Mondays and one game on a Saturday. The home opener, special celebrations such as Military Night, and games occurring over holiday weekends were avoided.

The Washington Wizards provided a table draped with a Washington Wizards cloth that was located in the Verizon Center's main concourse. The table location varied by game. The table was staffed from one hour prior to the start of each game through the fourth quarter. Roughly half of the responses were collected prior to the start of the game and the remaining responses were collected during the game (primarily at half-time). Passersby were verbally recruited to participate in the study with the question, "Do you have a few minutes to complete a short survey about your Washington Wizards fan experiences?" If attendees were interested in participating, they were asked if they were 18 years of age or older. Only attendees 18 years of age or older were able to participate in the market survey.

Copies of the informed consent form were available to participants (although considered exempt from requiring signed informed consent forms from each participant).

Copies of the survey were provided along with pens and clipboards. Surveys were completed at the table in roughly two to five minutes and immediately returned. Upon completion of the survey, participants received a Washington Wizards keychain, which was provided by the Wizards organization. The incentive did seem to generate interest in participating in the survey.

### **Data Collection**

Data were collected via a self-administered questionnaire (Appendix A) comprising basic demographic and experience questions as well as a modified version of the Sport Fan Motivation Scale (SFMS). The SFMS section included a twenty-three items scored on a Likert-scale with response options ranging from 1 (low motivation) to 8 (high motivation). The scale comprises eight subcategories (i.e., eustress, economic factors, self-esteem, escape, entertainment, aesthetics, group affiliation, and family). Eustress accounts for positive stress such as anxiety or excitement related to the game. Economic factors take into consideration betting or gambling related to the games. Self-esteem looks at how personally someone takes to heart the wins and losses of their team. Escape measures one's ability to use the game as a means to forget about troubles in their life. Entertainment is the recreational value gained from attending a game. Aesthetics examines the physical beauty one sees in the game. Group affiliation takes into consideration someone attending a game to spend time with others in a group setting. Family looks at the value of attending games to spend time with a family member such as a spouse.

These questions were largely based on valid and reliable items from the U.S. Census and other studies. The SFMS is a valid and reliable instrument designed to assess the eight fan motivations (Wann, 1995; Wann, Schrader, & Wilson, 1999). The SFMS was initially validated by Wann in a two-study, multi-stage study and additional validation was achieved by Wann, et al. For this case study, the SFMS was proved reliable through three administrations of the scale in which a high level of consistency was apparent.

Due to the NBA's sensitivity regarding betting and gambling, the Washington Wizards requested that the three questions that comprised the economic factors motivation be removed. Therefore, the SFMS was modified for this study and consisted of twenty questions and seven subscales. Table 2 includes the items for each subcategory. The demographic questions included age, race, gender, and primary language as well as a question regarding frequency of attendance of Washington Wizards home games.

Table 2 <i>Sport Fan Motivation Scale</i>	
Motivation Subscale	Scale Items
Escape	Sports is like daydreaming because it takes me away from life's hassles.
	One of the main reasons that I attend games is that doing so allows me to forget about my problems.
	One of the main reasons that I attend games is that doing so gives me the opportunity to temporarily escape life's problems.
Eustress	I like the stimulation I get from watching sports.
	I get pumped up when I am watching my favorite teams.
	I enjoy being physiologically aroused by the competition.
Aesthetic	I enjoy watching sporting events because to me sports are a form of art.
	I enjoy the beauty and grace of sports.
	One of the main reasons that I attend games is for the artistic value.
Self-esteem	I enjoy watching sports because it increases my self-esteem.
	To me, my favorite team's successes are my successes and their losses are my losses.
	One of the main reasons that I attend games is that doing so makes me feel good when my team wins.
Group Affiliation	I enjoy watching sports more when I am with a large group of people.
	Most of my friends are sports fans.
	I am the kind of person who likes to be with other people.
Entertainment	To me, sports spectating is simply a form of recreation.
	I enjoy sports because of their entertainment value.
	I enjoy attending games simply because it is a good time.
Family	Attending games gives me an opportunity to be with my family.
	Attending games gives me an opportunity to be with my spouse.

The data collected in this study will remain confidential. The respondents were assured anonymity as no names or personally identifiable information were collected. All data collected were examined by the student researcher and the researcher's faculty advisor. Approved by the George Mason University Human Subjects Review Board, I do

not anticipate any harm, problems of confidentiality, or problems of deception to arise from this study. Again, all participants had access to review an informed consent form prior to participating in the study and data were collected via a short questionnaire based on participant opinions. No personally identifiable information was collected.

### **Analyses**

Descriptives statistics were run on the full data set. A multivariate analysis (using the SPSS GLM procedure) was used to determine if any of the motivations influenced sport attendance across the entire sample. Individual analyses of variance were run to determine differences among subgroups with regard to motivation. A statistical significance of  $p=.05$  was used to determine the significance of the model. Analyses of each segment were compared to determine differences in motivations for those attending Washington Wizards games.

## CHAPTER FOUR

The data collected was analyzed to examine attendance motivation differences among key demographic segments, and this chapter includes results of data analyses. Respondents were moderate to highly motivated overall. There were statistically significant motivational differences for attendance based on gender, age, and ticket plan status. While sixteen participants indicated a primary language other than English, their responses included seven languages and there were no statistically significant differences in motivations based on language. Similarly, twenty-six countries of origin other than the U.S. were listed for forty-two participants (or nearly 17% of the sample). However, no statistically significant differences in motivations were identified based on country of origin.

Language	Count
English	229
Chinese	7
Estonian	1
French	2
Georgian	1
Oromo	1
Spanish	3
Tagalog	1
Total	245

Table 4 <i>Countries of Origin of Respondents</i>	
Country	Count
Australia	3
Bahamas	1
Barbados	1
Brazil	1
Canada	5
China	1
El Salvador	3
England	2
Estonia	1
Ethiopia	1
France	1
Georgia	1
Germany	1
Ghana	1
Liberia	1
Mexico	1
Pakistan	1
Philippines	3
Scotland	2
Sierra Leone	1
Somalia	1
South Korea	1
Spain	1
Taiwan	5
United Kingdom	1
United States	206
Vietnam	1
Total	248

Not surprisingly, entertainment was the highest motivation overall for those surveyed ( $M = 6.53$ ,  $SD = 1.31$ ), while family ( $M = 4.72$ ,  $SD = 2.36$ ) and escape ( $M =$

4.57,  $SD = 2.22$ ) were the lowest motivations. Table 3 exhibits mean scores falling within a range from 1 (not at all descriptive of me) as the lowest and 8 (very descriptive of me) as the highest for each subscale based on responses from the entire sample.

Motivation	Mean (SD)
Entertainment	6.53 (1.31)
Eustress	5.60 (1.70)
Group Affiliation	5.59 (1.67)
Aesthetic	5.17 (1.86)
Self-esteem	5.07 (1.66)
Family	4.72 (2.36)
Escape	4.57 (2.22)

Although there were no statistically significant differences for motivations among race/ethnicity categories, an examination of the responses do indicate variances that are aligned with previous research on this topic. Table 4 shows means and standard deviations for each motivation subscale by race/ethnicity as defined by the survey participants. The family motivation was highest for Asians ( $M = 5.57$ ,  $SD = 1.78$ ) and was consistent with previous research showing family as a primary factor in purchase decisions for this group (Clarke & Mannion, 2006). The group affiliation motivation was also higher for the Asian segment ( $M = 6.27$ ,  $SD = 0.79$ ). Group affiliation is strongly tied to identity theory which is attributable to sport consumption. The lack of statistical significance could be a result of an insufficient sample size. Further data should be



collected to analyze motivations for attendance by race/ethnicity segments. Alternatively, one should consider if a statistical significance of  $p=.05$  is too stringent for market research of this nature in which the researcher is looking for directionality and trends. Using  $p=.10$  as the significance level would lead to more significant results that could be tested by practitioners.

Motivation	White Mean (SD)	Black Mean (SD)	Hispanic Mean (SD)	Asian Mean (SD)	Other Mean (SD)	Total Mean (SD)	F	P
Escape	4.54 (2.12)	4.65 (2.30)	4.71 (2.20)	4.53 (2.34)	3.27 (2.51)	4.57 (2.22)	.049	.826
Eustress	5.40 (1.65)	5.82 (1.71)	6.06 (1.81)	5.96 (1.49)	5.39 (2.13)	5.60 (1.70)	.431	.512
Aesthetic	4.78 (1.80)	5.76 (1.75)	4.58 (2.22)	5.49 (1.92)	4.96 (2.12)	5.17 (1.86)	2.69	.102
Self-esteem	4.81 (1.61)	5.32 (1.68)	5.25 (1.54)	5.60 (1.79)	4.70 (1.98)	5.07 (1.66)	2.72	.10
Group Affiliation	5.53 (1.56)	5.71 (1.77)	5.67 (1.67)	6.27 (0.79)	4.88 (2.38)	5.59 (1.67)	.015	.903
Entertainment	6.56 (1.15)	6.55 (1.40)	6.39 (1.36)	6.53 (1.13)	6.73 (1.60)	6.53 (1.31)	.011	.918
Family	4.63 (2.38)	5.06 (2.35)	4.00 (2.21)	5.57 (1.78)	3.64 (2.64)	4.72 (2.36)	.025	.873

Differences in sport motivation by gender were also considered. Table 5 displays mean and standard deviations for each motivation subscale based on gender. There was a significant difference between males and females with regard to eustress ( $F=5.37$ ,  $p=.021$ ). Males were more motivated by eustress ( $M = 5.74$ ,  $SD = 1.59$ ) than females ( $M = 5.26$ ,  $SD = 1.90$ ). Self-esteem was also a significant attendance motivation ( $F=4.83$ ,

$p=.029$ ) with males more motivated by self-esteem ( $M = 5.20$ ,  $SD = 1.64$ ) than females ( $M = 4.72$ ,  $SD = 1.73$ ). More men identify more strongly with being a sport fan than women (Dietz-Uhler, Harrick, End, & Jacquemotte, 2000; Wann & Waddill, 2003). Higher levels of identification account for as much as 50% variability in eustress and 47% in self-esteem (Wann, Royalty, & Rochelle, 2002). Male Wizards' fans strongly identify with the team and therefore are more likely to affiliate their team's wins and losses as their own wins and losses and to experience higher levels of excitement and anxiety based on team performance than female fans.

Motivation	Male Mean (SD)	Female Mean (SD)	Total Mean (SD)	F	P
Escape	4.62 (2.18)	4.40 (2.36)	4.57 (2.23)	.148	.701
Eustress	5.74 (1.59)	5.26 (1.90)	5.61 (1.69)	5.37	.021
Aesthetic	5.27 (1.75)	4.93 (2.15)	5.19 (1.86)	1.50	.222
Self-esteem	5.20 (1.64)	4.72 (1.73)	5.07 (1.67)	4.83	.029
Group Affiliation	5.68 (1.62)	5.46 (1.74)	5.61 (1.65)	1.03	.311
Entertainment	6.53 (1.31)	6.62 (1.15)	6.55 (1.27)	.264	.608
Family	4.57 (2.32)	5.28 (2.39)	4.75 (2.35)	3.47	.064

There were also significant differences among age group with regard to attendance motivations (Table 6), in particular eustress ( $F=5.00$ ,  $p=.026$ ) and group affiliation ( $F=4.52$ ,  $p=.035$ ). Eustress was a significant motivator for the 18-24 age group ( $M = 6.44$ ,  $SD = 1.14$ ) as was group affiliation, ( $M = 6.17$ ,  $SD = 1.30$ ). Higher group

affiliation for younger age groups is consistent with past research that showed group affiliation was negatively correlated with age (Armstrong, 2002). Both eustress and group affiliation are also closely tied to high levels of identification. This indicates younger fans' moods can be positively or negatively affected by the outcome of the game and may feed off the crowd and their friends in terms of post-game attitude. The Wizards have an opportunity to increase ticket sales by creating group ticket packages targeted at younger fans.

Motivation	18-24 Mean (SD)	25-34 Mean (SD)	35-44 Mean (SD)	45-54 Mean (SD)	55+ Mean (SD)	Total Mean (SD)	F	P
Escape	4.72 (2.27)	4.36 (2.43)	4.56 (2.12)	4.78 (2.02)	4.47 (2.39)	4.59 (2.22)	.017	.898
Eustress	6.44 (1.14)	5.45 (1.84)	5.33 (1.91)	5.58 (1.47)	5.21 (1.80)	5.62 (1.69)	5.00	.026
Aesthetic	5.57 (1.50)	5.03 (2.15)	5.28 (1.91)	5.16 (1.82)	4.76 (1.88)	5.19 (1.87)	1.37	.242
Self-esteem	5.45 (1.56)	4.96 (1.86)	4.97 (1.83)	5.15 (1.33)	4.72 (1.81)	5.08 (1.68)	.740	.391
Group Affiliation	6.17 (1.30)	5.54 (1.65)	5.57 (1.60)	5.63 (1.66)	4.89 (2.05)	5.62 (1.66)	4.52	.035
Entertainment	6.77 (1.01)	6.63 (1.25)	6.56 (1.42)	6.47 (1.04)	6.15 (1.75)	6.55 (1.27)	2.32	.129
Family	4.72 (2.40)	4.47 (2.53)	5.39 (2.20)	4.60 (2.26)	4.50 (2.31)	4.75 (2.35)	.112	.738

While entertainment was the primary motivation for all attendees regardless of ticket plan—full season ticket plan holders, partial season ticket plan holders, and those without a ticket plan—there were significant differences in motivation among ticket plan

status ( $F=4.04$ ,  $p=.046$ ) (Table 7). Entertainment was a significantly higher motivation for attendance for those without ticket plans ( $M = 6.72$ ,  $SD = 1.00$ ), than those with a full season ticket plan ( $M = 6.27$ ,  $SD = 1.30$ ) or with a partial season ticket plan ( $M = 6.44$ ,  $SD = 1.36$ ). This indicates an opportunity to boost individual game ticket sales with marketing campaigns that emphasize additional entertainment factors such as half-time shows, guest appearances, and in-game contests.

Motivation	None Mean (SD)	Partial Mean (SD)	Full Mean (SD)	Total Mean (SD)	F	P
Escape	4.57 (2.20)	4.41 (2.15)	4.61 (2.33)	4.57 (2.23)	.348	.556
Eustress	5.79 (1.62)	5.41 (1.79)	5.33 (1.77)	5.61 (1.69)	.301	.584
Aesthetic	5.20 (1.84)	5.45 (2.01)	5.11 (1.89)	5.19 (1.86)	.329	.567
Self-esteem	5.13 (1.69)	4.91 (1.90)	4.99 (1.61)	5.07 (1.67)	.118	.732
Group Affiliation	5.83 (1.50)	5.78 (1.60)	5.17 (1.84)	5.61 (1.65)	3.53	.061
Entertainment	6.72 (1.00)	6.44 (1.36)	6.27 (1.30)	6.55 (1.27)	4.04	.046
Family	4.73 (2.31)	5.61 (2.10)	4.62 (2.46)	4.75 (2.35)	.259	.611

## Summary

Overall, the results indicate that motivations that are aligned with identification are significantly greater for those aged 18-24 and males. Entertainment has the highest mean score for the entire sample and is a significant motivator for attending games by those who do not hold full or partial season ticket plans. While Wizards marketers can use these results to create marketing campaigns to increase ticket sales among the

younger generation of male fans, previous research and the results of this study show there may also be value in creating targeted marketing campaigns for female fans and racial/ethnic subgroups.

## CHAPTER FIVE

When devising marketing campaigns and tactics, the Wizards should place great emphasis on building and strengthening fan identification. Eustress, self-esteem, and group affiliation are significant motivations for attendance for various attendee segments identified in this study and are strongly tied to fan identity. These motivations indicate that both male spectators and 18-24 year old spectators have high levels of identification with the Wizards' team. The overlap in motivations (eustress for males and the 18-24 age group) and their relationship to fan identify will enable marketers to create campaigns specific to those motivations but that resonate with multiple target markets.

Any activity in which a fan can relate or identify with the players (i.e., the team) will create stronger fan identification. Such activities include social media interaction with players, post-game interaction between players and fans, advertising featuring players, and website content or in-game videos featuring a behind the scenes look at players. In advertisement, marketers should match players with the segment they are targeting. For instance, if an advertisement is targeting 18-24 year old, Black/African American males, the ad should feature a player that also falls within this segment. This is especially true if marketers are targeting a non-traditional market segment (e.g., featuring Brazilian players Nenê and Leandro Barbosa in ads that are placed in media heavily consumed by Brazilians). Naturally, targeting a segment would only make sense if there

is a strong representation in the team's MSA, as in the case of the Houston Rockets targeting the Chinese population in the Houston MSA (Clarke & Mannion, 2006; Keeler & Nauright, 2005).

Spectators with high levels of identification also participate in BIRGing and CORFing. Although marketers cannot control team performance, they can use performance to enhance identification. After wins, fans BIRG and it is important for the Wizards to continue this positive association. Many teams, including the Wizards, already do this by offering special discounts or promotions if the team wins. Another way to do this is to host special post-game events after big wins. After a successful season, fans will have strong positive emotions, and it is important to capitalize on them before they begin to decline. Offering full or partial season ticket plans immediately after a strong season (instead of several months after the season has ended) will enable the team to take advantage of fan BIRGing.

Conversely, poor team performance results in CORFing. This is the fans' means of protecting their self-esteem from declining due to their team's failures. It is important for the Wizards to emphasize attributes other than team performance when they are in a slump or in a losing season. This will enable fans to distance themselves from the disappointment of the current performance but also continue to create positive emotions for the team. Highlighting rising team stars, honoring team legends that have retired, and providing other forms of in-game entertainment (giveaways, promotions, half-time shows) help create this positive association. Additionally, after a poor season, it is important to give fans time to deal with their disappointment. Marketers should limit

team and player interaction with fans after a losing season and wait a few months before marketing ticket plans. This will enable the fans' negative emotions from a losing season to dissipate allowing the Wizards to promote ticket plans based on more positive team attributes.

Marketing based on controllable elements has been shown to boost consumer satisfaction. Marketing sets consumer expectations and the ability to retain consumers is affected by whether their expectations are confirmed or disconfirmed. For instance, marketing a team based on an anticipated successful performance sets the fan expectation that the team will be good and will perform well (i.e., win games). If this expectation is set and the team does not perform up to the level of fan expectations, fans are less likely to attend future games. With the acquisition of star players Dwight Howard and Steve Nash before the 2012-13 season, the Los Angeles Lakers touted themselves as championship contenders (Berger, 2012). However, at mid-season, the team has underperformed and is at risk of missing the playoffs. While this may not affect ardent Lakers fans, casual Lakers fans likely attended games expecting wins and have high levels of negative disconfirmation. These fans are not likely to attend future games.

On whole, Washington Wizards spectators were moderate to highly motivated. Although the results of this study only showed significant motivation differences by gender (males), age (18-24), and ticket plan status (none), marketers should not overlook the potential of female fans as a segment to increase ticket sales. Although their level of identification may not be as strong as their male counterparts', women are as likely as men to consider themselves a sports fan (Dietz-Uhler, Harrick, End, & Jacquemotte,



2000). Professional sport leagues count an ever growing number of women as part of their fan base—with females representing 46% of MLB fans (Rykoff, 2012), 44% of NFL fans (Jessop, 2012), and 40% of NBA fans (Vasquez, 2010). It should be noted that fans and spectators are two different populations. Spectators consume sport by attending games and fans consume sport through media—watch the game on TV, listen to the game on the radio, follow teams in the newspaper, check stats online. This distinction is important since females may not represent as large a percentage of the leagues' sport spectators (i.e., game attendees). That being said, the large numbers of females identifying themselves as fans of particular sport leagues mean there is opportunity to convert these fans into spectators.

The NFL has capitalized on its female popularity primarily through merchandise sales (Jessop, 2012). While this is a strong gateway to increase team identity among females which may eventually lead to an increase in game attendance, the same strategy may not be relevant for the NBA. The sleeveless NBA jerseys are far from a staple in anyone's wardrobe let alone females'. Some of the marketing tactics used to attract male fans may discourage female fans from attending games. These include scantily clad women heavily featured on the team website, and emphasis on cheerleaders during game. While neither of these tactics should be discarded, the placement of the cheerleaders on the website and the emphasis at games should be examined. Many sport teams have established women's fan clubs to increase fan identity among this segment via group affiliation. These clubs often send special electronic newsletters with information written to appeal to women. The clubs also offer positive benefits such as special discounts and

activities for club members, which increases fan identity and may lead to higher attendance. The Washington Capitals (NHL) have Club Scarlet for female Capitals fans and the Washington Redskins (NFL) have the Women of Washington for female Redskins fans. A similar club for the Washington Wizards or a partnership uniting the women's clubs for all Washington sport teams may have great value.

While this study did not identify specific motivational differences based on race/ethnicity, there is evidence that culturally-based marketing campaigns can be effective (Clarke & Mannion, 2006; Keeler & Nauright, 2005). The race/ethnicity of players on a team has been shown to influence sport consumption (Armstrong & Peretto Stratta, 2004). The Houston Rockets' focus on increasing attendance among Houston's Asian demographic led to a strategic marketing plan that resulted in a 12% increase in the purchase of group packages by Asian Americans (Clarke & Mannion, 2006). The NBA identified China as a new market and pursued it by acquiring a premiere Chinese player to place on an NBA team (Keeler & Nauright, 2005). The Rockets' marketing team then leveraged fan identity, in which consumers desire to watch players that they relate to (in this case by race). The Rockets are able to continue to leverage these past efforts with their Asian fan base because of the recent acquisition of Asian American player Jeremy Lin. The Wizards currently employ tactics to build fan identification by race. The team celebrated the Chinese New Year with decorations and Chinese dragons in the stadium concourse and featured a martial arts group as the half-time show. They also featured in game videos on the scoreboard with players and cheerleaders delivering New Year's messages to Asian fans. The Wizards also celebrated African American Heritage Night

with a pre-game panel on the significance of African American in basketball and a post-game, on-court photo opportunity. These types of activities are a solid foundation on which to build more elaborate marketing campaigns.

Fan identity does not need to be confined to race; it can also be applied to nationality. There are often small contingents of fans in support of specific international players. Anecdotally, there was a noticeable influx of French and Argentinian fans (identified via apparel and signs bearing those nations' flags) attending the Wizards versus San Antonio Spurs game on November 26, 2012. The Spurs' international laden roster includes French players Tony Parker, Boris Diaw, and Nando de Colo and Argentinian, Manu Ginobili. A team should not acquire a player of a specific race or nationality for the purposes of marketing, but minority or international players on a roster should be leveraged in marketing campaigns.

### **Summary**

The broad appeal of professional sports and the changing demographics in the U.S. mean that there is a great deal of diversity among sport team fan bases. While sport marketers recognize this as an opportunity and have made attempts to target specific demographic sub-groups such as Hispanics/Latinos, they have done so without properly investigating motivations for attendance for their fan bases. There tend to be significant differences in motivation among key demographic segments. It is important for sport marketers to understand the composition of their fan base and to identify target segments accordingly. Motivational differences for attendance may vary significantly among demographic subgroups as seen in the Washington Wizards case study.

Although other factors resulted in significant differences between segments, marketers should not lose sight of the fact that all attendees view the entertainment of sport as a primary reason for attending games. Creating other forms of entertainment at games, especially those that can build fan identity as discussed above, add to the positive effect of attending a game and can counteract negative effects from poor performance. It is evident that sport marketers need to proactively gathering information regarding their spectators and fan base to understand their motivations for attendance. This will enable marketers to create segments based on motivation rather than to rely on traditional demographic segments. By segmenting based on fan motivations for attendance, marketers can create tailored messaging to boost game attendance and in the process deepen fan identity.

Practitioners may rely on externally contrived categories for segmentation that may in fact hinder their marketing efforts. Proper market research can highlight segmentation possibilities—such as culturally-based motivations rather than racially/ethnically-based motivations—that may not be obvious without adequate data collection and analysis. This study provides a starting point for future research looking to identify attendance motivations for sport spectators as well as ways in which to segment and tailor marketing to spectator subgroups.

Future research on attendance motivation should look at other key demographic subgroups such as income and education. Additionally, researchers should examine demographic subgroups not represented in a fan base and determine the reasons why. For instance, if a team is located in an MSA with a high proportion of Asians (or a specific

nationality such as Chinese) but that segment is absent or underrepresented among the fan base, marketers should examine why this is. Testing additional scales in addition to the SFMS may also yield significant and actionable results.

## APPENDIX A



Welcome to the Verizon Center for today's Wizards game! We would like to better understand our fans and how we can improve the game day experience for you.

Your participation is voluntary. Your personal information will remain confidential. If you have any questions regarding the purpose of this survey or the privacy of your responses, please contact Nicole Hitpas at [nhitpas@gmu.edu](mailto:nhitpas@gmu.edu).

Please take 5 minutes to fully complete this. Thank you in advance for your time and feedback.

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Instructions: Please answer EACH of the following questions using the 1 to 8 scale below. In the space next to each item, simply circle how well each item describes why you attend Wizards games. There are no right or wrong answers; we simply ask that you be completely honest in your responses. Remember, these questions are about why you attend Wizards games.

<b>One of the main reasons that I attend Wizards games is...</b>	<b>This Is Not At All Very Descriptive of Me</b>					<b>This is Descriptive of</b>		
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. that doing so gives me the opportunity to temporarily escape life's problems.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
2. that I get pumped up when I am watching my favorite teams.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
3. for the artistic value.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
4. that I enjoy the beauty and grace of sports.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
5. that I enjoy being physiologically aroused by the competition.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
6. that doing so makes me feel good when my team wins.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
7. that doing so allows me to forget about my problems.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
8. because most of my friends are sports fans.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9. because to me sports are a form of art.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8

10. because it is like daydreaming because it takes me away from life's hassles.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
11. I am the kind of person who likes to be with other people.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
12. because of their entertainment value.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
13. I enjoy watching sports more when I am with a large group of people.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
14. because it increases my self-esteem.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
15. I like the stimulation I get from watching sports.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
16. simply because it is a good time.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
17. to me, sports spectating is simply a form of recreation.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
18. to me, my favorite team's successes are my successes and their losses are my losses.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
19. because doing so gives me an opportunity to be with my spouse.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
20. doing so gives me an opportunity to be with my family.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8

### About You

The following questions are about you. Your personal information will remain confidential. All information supplied in this section will be used in aggregate with other respondents' data.

- How would you classify your race and ethnicity? (check all that apply)
  - White/Caucasian
  - Black/African American
  - Hispanic/Latino
  - Asian-Pacific Islander
  - Native American
  - Other \_\_\_\_\_ (please specify)
  - I prefer not to say
- If other than the U.S., what is your country of origin? \_\_\_\_\_
- Is English your primary language spoken at home?       Yes       No  
 If not, please specify your primary language: \_\_\_\_\_

4. What is your gender?  
 Female  
 Male  
 I prefer not to say
  5. What is your age? \_\_\_\_\_ Years
  6. On average, how many Wizards home games do you attend in a season? \_\_\_\_\_ Games
  7. Are you a Wizards season ticket or ticket plan holder?  
 Yes, full season  
 Yes, partial plan  
 No
- 

**Thank you for your time. Enjoy tonight's game!**



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## **BIOGRAPHY**

Nicole Hitpas graduated as valedictorian from Mater Dei High School, Breese, Illinois, in 1999. She received a dual degree Bachelor of Science in Advertising and Marketing from Syracuse University in 2003. She was employed as a marketing and communications specialist at George Mason University for five years and received her Master of Science in Sport and Recreation Studies with a concentration in International Sport Management from George Mason University in 2013.