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EVALUATING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF CORPORATE SPONSORSHIPS AT A MINOR
LEAGUE BASEBALL PARK

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ABSTRACT

Determining the effectiveness of sponsorship is critical for small-market, community sport organizations, yet few studies have examined its impact within these types of venues (e.g., minor league baseball). Recent economic conditions have prompted businesses to question the value of their sponsorships, both in terms of community goodwill and sales. As the search for sponsorship dollars becomes increasingly competitive, small-market minor league teams would be well served to understand those factors that contribute to fan intentions to purchase sponsor products/services. Prior research has identified fan involvement, attitude toward the sponsors and goodwill as important and significant predictors of purchase intentions (Dees, Bennett, & Villegas, 2008). In assessing attitudes, these authors focused on the sponsor but, as sponsorships involve a two-way relationship between corporations and sport properties, it is important to assess attitudes toward both parties. Using similar measures and methods, the present study replicates and extends the work of Dees et al. (2008) within a small market minor league baseball venue. Furthermore, this study reassesses the extent that fan involvement and goodwill relate to purchase intentions. On-site fan surveys (N=246) were collected at 16 minor league home ball games (e.g., the State College Spikes, Medlar Field). The results show that four factors: attitude towards the sponsor, attitude toward the property, goodwill, and fan involvement significantly related to fans' intentions to purchase a product/service from corporate sponsors. Furthermore, path analysis revealed that the effects of goodwill and fan involvement on purchase intentions were mediated through sponsor attitudes. Goodwill also had a direct effect on the attitudes towards the sponsor which impacts the consumers purchasing behavior. These findings suggest that companies seeking to improve fan attitudes and purchase intentions should make a conscious effort to design sponsorship programs that promote fan involvement and goodwill.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND STUDY PURPOSE

In today's society, advertisements have become a ubiquitous part of the culture with many individuals unaware of how many advertising messages they see in a given day. On average, an individual is exposed to more than 5,000 selling messages daily (Appenzeller & Appenzeller, 2008). Due to the ever-growing volume of advertising messages, it is becoming more difficult for businesses to generate brand awareness and distinguish their products/services from competitors. Corporations are constantly seeking out new and creative channels to more effectively reach their target markets.

One of the most highly used promotional alternatives to advertisements is through sponsorships of causes and sports. Unlike advertisements, which focus on mass media to deliver a standard message (Fullerton, 2007), corporate sponsorships allow the consumers/attendees to relate a business to a place, event, product or service and create an association in the consumer's mind (Appenzeller & Appenzeller, 2008). Corporations sponsor events to achieve outcomes associated with sales drive, improve image, increased awareness, hospitality opportunities, or improved employee morale (Fullerton, 2007).

In 2013 companies in the United States are predicted to spend about \$19.94 billion dollars on sponsorship spending (Table 1), which is approximately a 5.5 % increase from 2012 (Schultz, 2013). Of the \$19.94 billion dollars spent on sponsorship, \$13.79 billion dollars will be spent on sports sponsorship (Schultz, 2013).

Table 1. Sponsorship Expenditure Trends and Projections

	2011 Spending (billions)	2012 Spending (billions)	% Increase from 2011	2013 Projected Spending	Projected % increase from 2012
Sports	\$12.38	\$13.01	5.1%	\$13.79	6%
Entertainment	\$1.85	\$1.93	4.3%	\$2.03	5.1%
Causes	\$1.68	\$1.70	1.2%	\$1.78	4.8%
Arts	\$0.87	\$0.89	2.5%	\$0.92	3.3%
Festivals, Fairs and Annual Events	\$0.80	\$0.82	2.6%	\$0.85	2.9%
Associations and Membership Organizations	\$0.53	\$0.55	3.4%	\$0.57	4%

Note: Adapted from *Sports Sponsorship Due For Record Surge Says New Forecast*, by E.J. Schultz, 2013, Advertising Age

Corporate sponsorship is defined as a cash and/or in-kind fee paid to a property (typically in sports, arts, entertainment or causes) in return for access to the exploitable commercial potential associated with that property (Ukman, 1996). Although sponsorships can pertain to both commercialized and nonprofit organizations, it should be noted that they are not interchangeable with corporate philanthropy or donations. Philanthropy is a support of a cause with any commercial incentive (Ukman, 1996). Corporations choose to sponsor events or organizations to expose their services and/or products effectively to their target audience.

In particular, the sport industry has thrived from the positive impacts of corporate sponsorships. The platform of corporate sponsorship involvement in sports reached critical mass at the 1984 Olympic Games held in Los Angeles (Appenzeller & Appenzeller, 2008). Before the 1984 Olympic Games, many cities that hosted the event found themselves losing money by the end of the games. The President of the Los Angeles Olympic Organizing Committee Peter Ueberroth, decided that by allowing corporations to sponsor the 1984 games, it would prevent such losses from occurring. With the assistance of corporate sponsorships, the 1984 games generated \$ 223 million dollars in profits (“Los Angeles 1984,” 2013). Although the 1984 games were limited to only thirty sponsorships to prevent clutter of sponsor messages, the games

were a huge financial success and began as the building block for corporate sponsorships in sports (Appenzeller& Appenzeller, 2008).

One can simply examine the expedient growth of sponsorship in the sporting industry to recognize its significance (Table 1). In 2012 businesses spent about \$13.1 billion dollars on sponsorship deals on sports in North America (Schultz, 2013). According to IEG, Inc., sponsorship in sport venues/contexts attract the lion's share of sponsorship spending and are predicted to grow at a faster rate than other forms of sponsorship contexts (e.g., entertainment, cause related, arts, festivals, associations and membership organizations; Schultz, 2013).

National recognition through increased brand awareness is one of the main reasons why major league professional sporting organizations are able to generate abundant revenue from corporate sponsors. Likewise, minor league or amateur sporting organizations can also depend on local businesses as well as corporations to sponsor them to generate significant revenue (Ozanian, 2008). While both major and minor league baseball teams utilize corporate sponsorships, one can make the case that corporate sponsorships are more valuable to the minor league teams than the major league teams. Prior studies have suggested that sporting organizations who win will see an increase in purchase intentions from their fans, which will then increase their revenue (Ngan, Prendergast, & Tsang 2011). While there are many factors that contribute to a team winning, one of the most important influences is the personnel on the team. Every year millions of dollars are invested by professional organizations into players and scouting departments that will hopefully increase the chances of the team winning. Minor league baseball organizations on the other hand have no control over their personnel. A minor league baseball player is given to the team by their affiliation, also known as the major league team in charge of player development. The ultimate goal from the major league team is for the minor

league player to develop into a better and will hopefully move on to either the major leagues or a higher level of competition minor league team. The player may “move on” from the minor league team at any given time. With this system in place, minor league baseball teams have very little control over the quality of their own team and must utilize corporate sponsorships as a consistent supplement to their incomes and as a way to support fan activities to drive ticket sales.

In order to generate as much revenue as possible, minor league organizations often focus on getting as many sponsors as they can. In fact, some minor league teams have found that a profuse amount of sponsors can be linked to the operational success of the organization. For example, Scott Hunsicker, the general manager of the Reading Phillies, linked the success of leading the league in attendance eight of the past ten years to the team’s philosophy of always being able assemble a large base of sponsors, regardless of how much they were willing to spend. Reading Phillies Director of Sales, Joe Bialek noted, “We have as many as 250 to 300 different sponsors to get the same amount of money as someone that does it with 10 or 11 sponsors” (Sottile, 2012). With over two hundred teams in minor league baseball, the Reading Phillies are just one example of an organization that depends heavily on corporate sponsorships.

Like any other industry, minor league organizations have been impacted by the recent economic conditions. Along with effects of a recessionary or recovering economy, some minor league sport sponsors have begun to question how they can increase the value of their investment to stand out from the market clutter created by the many other companies sponsoring the sporting event. In order to do so, small-market minor league teams must gain a better understanding of the psychological factors that contribute to fan intentions to purchase a sponsor’s products/services (Madrigal, 2001).

Theoretical Perspective

Understanding factors that contribute to increasing fans purchase intentions is key for not only the sponsors but for the sponsored organization (e.g., the sponsee). For the sponsors, studies examining the variables that have the greatest impact on increasing purchase intentions and purchases on the part of sporting fans can be viewed as a guide of the most effective way of sponsoring a property. Understanding predictors of purchase intentions can also help a sport property develop effective strategies for designing sponsorship agreements that suit the objectives of various corporate sponsors. In other words, the more effective the sport property is at increasing sales of their sponsorships, the more that property will be able to attract additional sponsorships, retain existing sponsors, and increase their own sponsorship fees based on increase sponsor perception of value. Previous studies have shown that team performance will significantly affect the consumers' purchase intentions (Ngan et al. 2011). More sponsors, sustained sponsorship relations, and higher sponsorship fees will likewise allow the sport property to increase their own revenue and sustain their market viability independent of team performance.

Meenaghan's (2001) foundational model on sponsorship effects started a proliferation of studies that examine the myriad factors contributing to favorable sponsorship outcomes, including purchase intentions and behaviors. Meenaghan identified the three main variables that effect consumer intent to purchase a product from the sponsor of a sporting event; fan involvement, attitudes toward the sponsor and goodwill. Many studies have examined and confirmed the impact that these separate independent predictors have on the consumer's behaviors (Alexandris, Tsiotsou, & James 2012; Dees, Bennett, & Villegas, 2008; Dees, Hall, Tsuji, & Bennett, 2010; Gwinner & Bennett, 2008; Meenaghan, 2001; Pope & Voges, 2000;

Smith, Graetz & Westerbook, 2008; Speed & Thompson, 2000). These studies generally conclude that goodwill, fan involvement, and/or attitudes toward the sponsor had significant impacts on increasing the consumers' intention of purchasing a product or service from a sponsor (Alexandris, Tsiotsou, & James 2012; Dees et al., 2008; Dees et al., 2010; Gwinner & Bennett, 2008; Meenaghan, 2001; Pope & Voges, 2000; Smith et al., 2008; Speed & Thompson, 2000). For example, Dees et al. (2008) examined the degree to which fan involvement, goodwill, and sponsor attitudes contributed to sponsor purchase intentions at an inter-collegiate football venue and found that all three constructs were positive, significant predictors of purchase intentions, but that goodwill was the strongest of these predictors and fan involvement was the weakest of these predictors.

While such findings are crucial to examining the relationship between corporate sponsors and fans of the sponsored organization, it is important to acknowledge that fan involvement, goodwill, and sponsor attitudes are not the only psychological constructs that may affect consumers' purchase intentions. Furthermore, the contribution of these and other constructs on sponsor purchase intention outcomes may not just be through direct effects alone. For example, in a follow-up study, Dees et al. (2010) found that fan loyalty and goodwill can have a positive influence on purchase intentions and brand attitudes. In this study, fan loyalty was defined as the level of emotional attachment an individual develops with a particular sport, team, or player. It is important to note that although fan loyalty from the Dees et al. (2010) was conceptually similar to fan involvement as examined in Dees et al. (2008), there are some minor differences between the concepts.

Beyond fan involvement, sponsor goodwill, and sponsor attitudes, it is possible that attitudes toward the property itself (whether defined as the event, venue, or team) might be

shaped by fan involvement and goodwill and, in turn, might also influence purchase intentions. In other words, high levels of fan involvement and goodwill might be associated with higher attitudes toward both corporate sponsors and the sponsees. If one is to agree with Meenaghan's model and subsequent empirical studies derived from that conceptual article, sponsor and sponsee attitudes would, in turn, predict intentions to purchase sponsor products/brands.

While Dees et al. (2008) examined the influence of fan involvement, goodwill, and sponsor attitudes on purchase intentions, they did not specifically examine the extent that fan involvement's and goodwill's effect on purchase intentions were mediated through sponsor attitudes. Nor did they (or others) examine whether, and the extent that, attitudes toward the sponsee mediate these relationships and contribute to an overall sponsorship effectiveness model. Examining attitudes toward sponsees is important because sponsorships fundamentally involve a two-way image transfer between the sponsor and the property (Gwinner & Eaton, 1999) and the performance of/ attitudes toward both parties could have implications for final consumer purchase decisions. In other words, if fans held negative attitudes toward a sport property, but positive attitudes toward a sponsor, a condition of cognitive dissonance arises and the consumer would subsequently seek to reduce dissonance by re-balancing their attitudes (e.g., lowering their attitudes of the sponsor or increasing their attitudes of the sponsee) Examining the nature of these relationships would help both sponsors and sponsees better understand how their mutual sponsorship performance shape fan attitudes and could identify which constructs are the most predictive of attitudes which are most predictive of purchase intentions and behaviors.

Study Purpose

With the current economic conditions and the lack of control over the personnel of the team, it is important to exam sponsorship effects within Minor League Baseball. While some

studies have been completed in this area of research, there are gaps in the literature. In their limitations and suggestions for future research, Dees et al. (2008) recommended additional research to examine the relationship between these constructs in different sporting contexts and with different measurement designs (e.g., structural equation modeling, path modeling) to more scientifically determine their relationships (Dees et al. 2008, p. 88). Moreover, they recommended further testing of construct reliability and validity. This study seeks to address these recommendations by replicating and extending their work within the context of minor league baseball, while also examining the effect of attitudes toward the property and the casual nature of relationships between the independent variables.

Specifically, this study utilizes similar constructs to not only re-test predictors of purchase intentions as outlined by Dees et al. (2008), but to also test a sponsorship effects model whereby attitudes toward sponsor/sponsee are examined as potential mediator variables between fan involvement, goodwill and sponsor purchase intentions (Figure 1). Goodwill, fan involvement attitude towards the sponsor, and attitudes toward the sponsee serve as the independent variables in this study because of their effects on the consumer's intent to purchase as identified by Meenaghan (2001). While actual purchase behaviors are the ultimate goal of sponsors, this study focuses instead on the behavioral antecedent of purchase intentions as measured by Dees et al. (2008). Thus, fans' intent to purchase from corporations sponsoring the sporting event (minor league baseball team) will serve as the dependent variable.

Research Questions

1. What are the overall levels of sponsor goodwill, fan involvement, attitudes toward corporate sponsors, attitudes toward the sport organization, and purchase intentions at a minor league baseball park venue?
2. Do perceptions of sponsor goodwill, fan involvement, attitudes toward corporate sponsors, and attitudes toward the sport organization relate positively and significantly with intentions to purchase sponsor products/services?
3. To what degree, if any, do attitudes toward the sponsor and sport organization mediate the relationships between fan involvement, sponsor goodwill and purchase intentions?

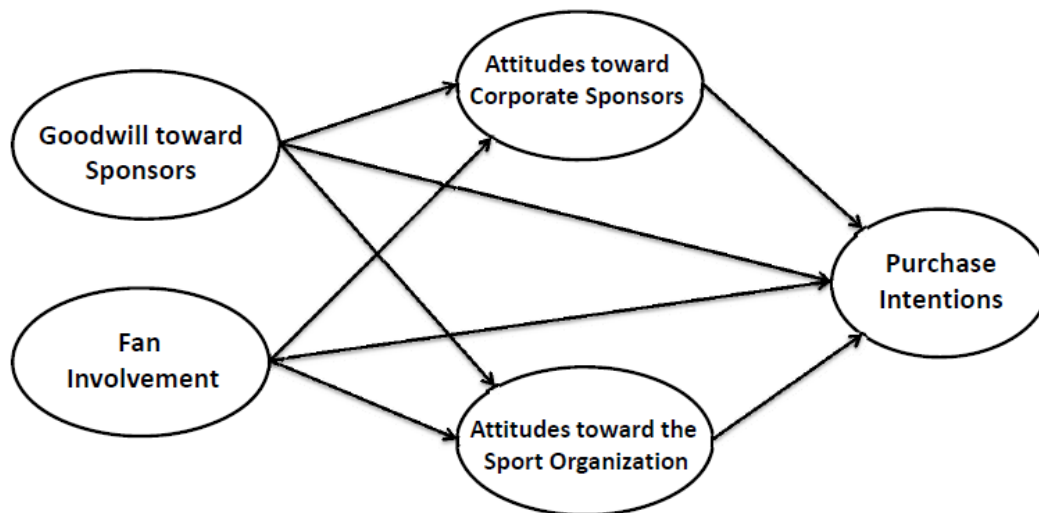


Figure 1. Conceptual Path Model of Goodwill, Fan Involvement, and Sponsor/Sport Organization Attitudes upon Purchase Intentions

Definitions

Sponsorships- a cash and/or in-kind fee paid to a property (typically in sports, arts, entertainment or causes) in return for access to the exploitable commercial potential associated with that property (Ukman, 1996)

Attitudes- an individuals' overall evaluation of an attitude object (Eagly & Chaiken 1993)

Attitude toward the Property- the consumer's overall evaluation of an organization hosting of an event

Attitude toward the Sponsor- the consumer's overall evaluation of an organization sponsoring an event

Fan Involvement- the extent to which consumers identify with, and are motivated by, their engagement and affiliation with particular leisure activities (Meenahan 2001)

Goodwill- the positive attitude consumers convey toward a sponsor that supports and facilitates an event, team or cause in which they are passionate about (Dees et. al 2008, p. 81)

Purchase Intentions- an individual's conscious plan to make an effort to purchase a brand (Spears & Singh 2004, p. 56)

Sponsee- a property available for sponsorship (Ukman 1996)

Sponsor- an entity that pays a property for the right to promote itself and its products or services in association with the property (Ukman 1996)

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

To inform the study purpose and implications, an overview of past sport sponsorship studies and theories is warranted. Chapter two identifies past studies and relative theories that have examined attitude towards the sponsor, goodwill, fan involvement, attitude towards the property and purchase intentions. Chapter two also compares the findings of different studies and explains why each independent variable and dependent variable was chosen.

Attitude towards the Sponsor

According to Eagly and Chaiken, (1993) an attitude is a psychological tendency that is expressed by evaluating a particular entity with some degree of favor or disfavor. Keller (1993) concluded that attitude is one of the most important factors to examine because their study can provide better insights into consumer choices. Pope and Voges (2000) claimed that a positive attitude towards a brand can affect a consumer's intent to purchase a product or service from brand exposure. There have been numerous studies dedicated to examining the importance of consumer attitudes. While it is difficult to measure attitudes because individuals may have a different psychological tendency towards the same object, attitudes toward an object predict behaviors related to that object. One of the most commonly used theories in studying attitudes is Heider's balance theory (Heider, 1946). Heider's balance theory states that people prefer to have balance, order and harmony in their lives using a P-O-X model. The P-O-X model examines that a person's (p) attitudes toward another person (o) or object (x) may be affected by how his or her attitudes perceive another variable resulting in psychological balance. This model could be used to explain why corporate sponsors choose to support events to create positive consumer attitudes toward their brand by "borrowing from" the favorable attitudes they have from the event.

Meenaghan (2001), Dees et al. (2008), and Schlesinger and Güngerich (2011) purport that favorable attitudes towards an event sponsor can lead to increased purchase intentions. Madrigal (2001) found attitudes held a stronger influence on a consumer's intent to purchase a sponsor's product or service with consumers who had lower fan identification towards the team than those with high fan identification. Further building upon Madrigal's theory, Dees and Bennett (2008) found that fans who held a higher attitude towards the sponsor at a professional tennis tournament were more likely to purchase that sponsor's product or services. Speed and Thompson (2000) also found that fans who experienced a more favorable attitude toward the event sponsor were more likely to respond by using the corporation's product or service than those who felt less favorable. Within the context of motorsports, results have shown that not only do NASCAR fans have a positive attitude towards those brands who sponsor his or her favorite driver, NASCAR fans can also have a negative attitude towards those brands who sponsor their least favorite drivers (Dalakas & Levin, 2005; IEG Sponsorship Report, 1994). Attitude towards a sponsor can have a positive influence on the consumer's purchase intentions which is the main reason it is so heavily studied (Gwinner & Bennett 2008). Other studies have shown that other factors such as team attachment can affect consumer behavioral intentions through the effects of attitudes toward the sponsor (Alexandris, Tsiotsou, & James, 2012).

It is important to note not all studies have proven that attitude towards a sponsor may effect purchase intentions. Nickell, Cornwell and Johnson (2011) found that not only does incongruent sponsorship have little positive impact on the consumer's attitude, but the linear path between attitudes toward the brand and impact of sponsorship is incorrect, claiming that the path is a nonlinear S shape model. The S shape model explains that the impact from sponsorship on consumers is marginal for those companies who they have already established a strong dislike or

like for (Nickell et al. 2011). The companies who sponsor that have a “modest” amount of established brand attitudes towards them have the most significant impact on the consumer attitudes (Nickell et al. 2011).

Goodwill

Goodwill is the positive attitude consumers convey toward a sponsor that supports and facilitates an event, team or cause in which they are passionate about (Dees et al., 2008).

Goodwill is believed to be the difference between sponsorship and advertising (Meenahgan 2001). Corporations try to benefit from this difference by hoping that, by sponsoring an event, the goodwill that consumers feel toward the event will rub off on their brands (Javalgi, Traylor, Gorss, & Lampman 1994). When studying the effectiveness of a corporate sponsorship on an elite intercollegiate football program, results showed that goodwill was the largest factor of the consumers purchase intentions when compared to attitude toward the sponsor and fan involvement (Dees et al., 2008).

While studies have suggested that sponsoring an event will create/transfer the consumer’s feeling of goodwill towards the corporate brand, other studies have suggested that marketing through caused-related sponsorship can have a negative impact on the corporations brand if the consumer feels skeptical towards the motives of the sponsor (Webb & Mohr, 1998). If a consumer feels that the corporation is exploiting the cause, the consumer will have highly negative attitude towards the sponsor. Corporations must also be aware that they simply can’t purchase goodwill; instead it must be earned (Meenahgan, 2001).

Fan Involvement

Fan involvement is a component of social identity theory, the extent to which consumers identify with and are motivated by their engagement and affiliation with particular leisure activities (Madrigal, 2001). Meenaghan (2001) examined that highly involved fans are generally more aware of the sponsor and whether or not that sponsor is helping or hurting the progress of the sport. There have been a variety of studies completed that show a consumer's fan involvement can be directly correlated to the consumer's attitudes. For example, passionate fans (those who watch or attend a game as a source of entertainment) of the National Football League have more positive attitudes towards the official sponsors of the National Football League than do less passionate fans (Wakefield & Rivers, 2012). Schlesinger and Güngerich (2011) found that although fan identity had a direct impact on the consumer's attitude toward the sponsors, fan involvement had no direct impact with the consumer's intention to purchase from the sponsor.

To gain a comprehensive understanding of fan involvement, one must realize the differences and similarities between fan identification and fan loyalty. Fan identification with a sports team, is the personal commitment, perceived connectedness and emotional involvement a spectator has with a particular team, where the team's failings and achievements are experienced as one's own (Stevens & Rosenberger, 2012). Fan loyalty on the other hand, is an attitudinal and behavior element that involves repeat consumer behaviors (such as game attendance and team merchandise purchases) and the consumers' attitude towards their team (Stevens & Rosenberger, 2012). Other studies have identified fan loyalty differently, by combining the two concepts together, that is the level of emotional attachment an individual develops with particular sport, team, or player (Dees et al., 2010). While there are no exact definitions for fan involvement, fan identification, and fan loyalty, and it is possible that fan involvement corresponds to fan loyalty

and fan identification (Stevens & Rosenberger, 2012). For the present study, fan involvement will only be examined as the consumer's engagement and affiliation with the leisure activity/sport (i.e. minor league baseball) not the particular property/team (i.e., the State College Spikes).

Attitude towards the Property

Attitude towards the sport property (or sponsee) is an additional independent, endogenous variable in this research. For this study, attitude towards the property is defined as the extent, to which consumers identify with, and are motivated by, their engagement and affiliation with the team. While attitude towards the property may share similar qualities with fan involvement, it is important to recognize that fan involvement is an affiliation with a particular leisure activity or sport rather than the actual team or players.

While studying an Australian football club, Smith, Graetz and Westerbook (2008) found that team support along with perception of a sponsor's integrity, was the key pathway to purchase intentions. Gwinner and Swanson (2003) identified that an individual attitude towards the property stems from how the fans identify themselves with the team or individual athlete and how the team does performance wise. Of course if an individual experiences a higher identification to the team or individual athlete or the teams overall performance is successful, (judged by wins and losses) he or she will experience a more positive attitude towards the property than those who experience a lower level of identification or if the team performs at a lower success rate.

Consumers who experience positive attitudes towards the property are more likely to invest in the sponsors if he or she believes the sponsor as being beneficial to the team (Gwinner & Swanson 2003). In *Sport Sponsorship, Team Support, and Purchase Intentions* (Smith, Graetz, & Westerbeek, 2008) studied members (season ticket holders) of a Professional Austrian

Football League club and found a positive correlation between fan passion for the team and individual purchase intentions. These findings highlight how fans identify themselves with the property and how the properties' overall performance affects purchase intentions. Fans that identify themselves as highly involved with the property are more likely to have more positive attitudes toward the property and also toward sponsors of the property. They may, therefore, be more likely to use the sponsor's products (Dalakas & Kropp, 2002). Hong (2011) claimed that not only do attitudes toward the property effect purchase intentions, but other variables, such as trust, overall satisfaction, and effective communication, predict sponsor evaluations.

Other studies have shown that attitudes towards a property can depend on other variables beyond team performance and identification. Tsotsou and Alexandris (2008) measured the psychological connection of consumers to a sports team. While Tsotsou and Alexandris defined this factor as "team attachment" one can see the similarity between team attachment and attitudes toward the property. Tsotsou and Alexandris (2008) found that highly involved fans were more likely to exhibit higher intentions to purchase a product or service from a sponsor and to recommend that sponsor's product or service to another individual.

Purchase Intentions

A purchase intention is defined as an individual's conscious plan to make an effort to purchase a brand (Dees et al., 2008). One of the most difficult concepts to understand for marketers is identifying what variables lead to a consumer's intent to purchase their product or service. As previously noted, purchase intentions can be depend on a consumer's goodwill, attitude toward the sponsor, fan involvement, and a consumer's attitude toward the property, however, these variables are not the only variables that affect consumer's intent to purchase a

product or service. Marketers use a black box model to try and explain consumers purchase behaviors (Figure 2).

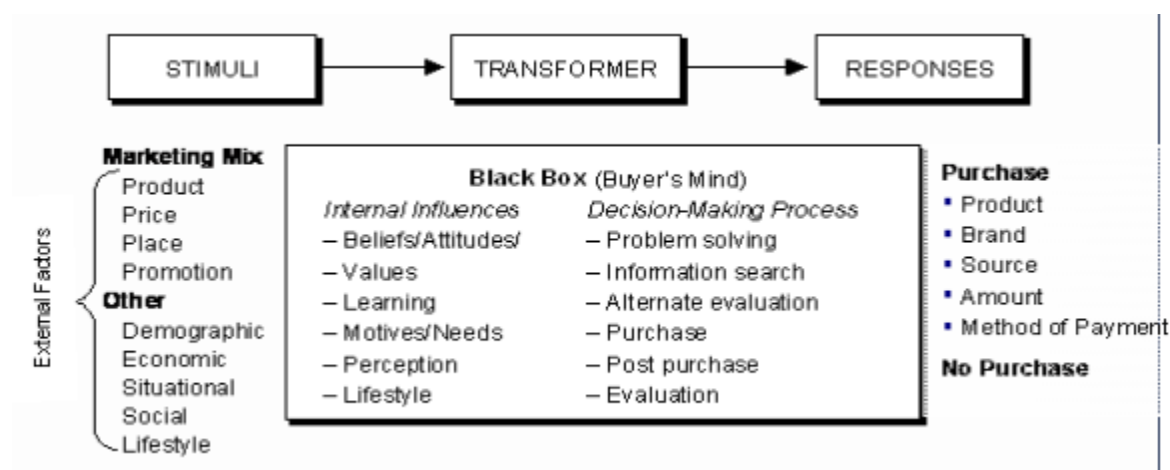


Figure 2. The Black Box Theory of Consumer Behavior (Kotler, Keller, & Burton, 2009)

The black box model divides what affects the consumers buying behaviors into three phases; stimuli, transformer, and responses (Kotler et al., 2009). Stimuli are external factors that can be controlled by the business such as product, price, place and promotion or other external factors that directly affect the consumer such demographic, economic, situational, social and lifestyle factors. These external factors are then processed by the buyer's mind in the transformer phase. During the transformer phase, whichever external factors from the stimuli phase affect the consumer's intent to purchase the product or service are "processed or transformed" by the consumer in the "black box." During the process, the external factor(s) are affected by the buyer's mind separated into two categories, internal influences and decision-making process. Personal characteristics in the black box that influence a buyer internally are beliefs/attitudes, values, learning, motives/needs perception and lifestyle. Decisions such as problem solving, information search, alternate evaluation, purchase, post purchase and

evaluation made by the consumer will interact with the external factors. Once the external factors have been transformed by the consumers “black box,” (which signifies the end of intent to purchase phase), the consumer is left with the response phase. During this phase the consumer is left with two options, purchase the product or service or not. These purchases are based off of the product, brand, source, amount, or/and method of payment (Kotler et al., 2009).

To add to the complexity of understanding the consumer’s intent to purchase, it should be acknowledged that the black box model is not considered a perfect model. In fact, the reason it is called the black box model is because scientists know so little about how the human mind works, we are not able to see into a mind and we really don’t know much about what goes on in the human mind, much like a black box. The black box model is, however, used for understanding consumer purchase intentions because it acknowledges the major internal influences and the major steps in the decision-making process which consumers use. However, behavioral scientists are not sure how consumers collectively transform the data with external factors to produce a decision to purchase or to not to purchase a product or service.

As previous studies have shown, extensive research has examined attitude toward the sponsor, goodwill, fan involvement, attitude toward the property, and purchase intentions. Few studies, however, have examined at their relationships among fans at a minor league ball park. The next chapter (Chapter 3) provides more detail on this study’s specific setting context, data collection, instrumentation, and analysis.

CHAPTER 3

METHODS

Study Setting

This study was conducted at a minor league baseball stadium: Medlar Field at Lubrano Park, home of the State College Spikes. Medlar Field is located in State College Pennsylvania, a town with the population of about 42,000 people. Medlar field serves not only the population of State College, but also surrounding communities from Centre County (pop. 155,000). The State College Spikes started playing baseball in 2006. During the course of the 2012 baseball season, the State College Spikes played 37 home games at Medlar Field. The Pennsylvania State University (University Park) is also located near State College (PA), and enrolls over 44,000 undergraduate and graduate students. Medlar Field is also the home of the Penn State Nittany Lions baseball team. During the sporting events, fans can engage in a wide variety of activities such as sponsorship displays, food and beverage stands, kid zone activities, theme night displays, mascot interactions, etc. The sample for this study was adults (18 and older) who attended a State College Spikes home baseball game during the summer of 2012.

Data Collection Procedures

A systematic sampling frame was used to identify 16 different home games (i.e., ten weekday games and six weekend games) where the survey would be conducted from July 2012 to September 2012 (Appendix A). After selecting these sampling dates, the State College Spikes staff worked with the researcher to identify different stadium sections/rows from which to invite fans to participate in the study. Each sampling date was associated with a different set of stadium sections/rows from which to approach fans and hand out a written invitation to participate in the survey. The systematic selection of different sections/rows helped control

potential biases the data collectors may have when asking participants to take the survey, provided a venue to approach fans that were “settling into the game” during the pre-game activities, decreased the chances of repeat invitations/participation, and controlled for other unforeseen confounding variables. The written invitation explained the purpose of the study and asked fans to proceed to a survey table at the entrance to the stadium (Concourse Level) for further information and instructions. A copy of the written invitation is provided in Appendix B. Across all 16 games, an average of 57 written invitations were passed out in the selected section/rows for each of the sampling dates and fans were notified that they would receive a small prize for participating in the study (e.g., free tickets to future Spikes games). During the middle of the 6th inning, an announcement was made over the stadium’s PA system to remind fans of the study invitation and direct them to the appropriate area of the stadium to complete the study.

Fans who were interested in participating in this study then proceeded to the survey location, which was a table positioned at the entrance to the ballpark. The researcher was stationed at this table, welcomed fans to the table, asked to see their written invitation, and proceeded to explain the study and formally request their study participation. Those who agreed to participate in the survey were informed of their rights as a study participant in accordance with procedures established by the University Institutional Review Board. Fans then completed a brief (10-15 minute) pen/paper survey concerning their ballpark experiences and behaviors. A secondary goal of this research was to assess their awareness of corporate sponsors. To reduce bias or contamination of this un-aided recall, participants were faced away from the stadium (facing the entrance). Upon completion of the questionnaire, study participants were thanked for

their time, provided the small prize, and given the researchers' contact information if they had further questions about the study.

Instrumentation

The questionnaire included a variety of items directly related to the purpose of this thesis or were important variables of interest to State College Spikes management such as unaided sponsor recall, fan demographics, overall satisfaction, and open-ended suggestions for improving the ballpark experience (Appendix C). In terms of variables related to the researcher's thesis, four survey sections were of interest: Fan involvement, goodwill, attitudes, and purchase intentions. Since this study used survey questions from Dees et al. (2008), the validity and reliability of these constructs can be drawn from that study. In their scale development stage, the content validity of the questions asked in the survey was examined by a group of experts. This group consisted of twelve graduate students in a research seminar class, one advertising professor and two sport management professors. The experts were asked to comment on the relevance, representativeness, clarity of items and provide suggestions for improving the questionnaire (Dees et al., 2008). Reliability measures were calculated for each of the four variables tested by Dees et al, the results showed the following, attitude toward the sponsor ($\alpha=.757$), goodwill ($\alpha=.692$), fan involvement ($\alpha=.881$), and purchase intentions ($\alpha=.742$). Each of the constructs employed in the present study was directly adopted from Dees et al. (2008) as well as other sponsorship effectiveness studies and their measurement is now discussed.

The independent variables for this study were specific beliefs or perceptions regarding level of fan involvement, perceived goodwill toward sponsor, and overall attitudes toward corporate sponsors as well as the sponsee property (e.g., State College Spikes). To measure fan involvement, study participants were asked to indicate their level of agreement with a series of 4

items that dealt specifically with their perceived personal involvement in minor league baseball: “It is important for me to be a part of minor league baseball,” “My friends/family view me as a strong fan of minor league baseball,” “It is very important to me that minor league baseball is played in my community,” and “I see myself as a strong fan of minor league baseball.”

Response items ranged from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. These fan involvement items were adopted from Dees et al. (2008) except that the attitude object was minor league baseball rather than (university) football.

To measure sponsor goodwill, participants were asked to indicate their level of agreement with a series of 4 items that dealt specifically with fan’s goodwill toward sponsors as a result of their support for minor league baseball: “Companies that support the Spikes through sponsors are involved in their community,” “Companies that sponsor the Spikes try to improve minor league baseball,” “Minor league baseball games at Medlar Field benefit from corporate sponsors,” and “Companies that sponsor the Spikes care about the fans of minor league baseball.” Response items ranged from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. Again, these items were adopted from the work of Dees et al. (2008), but were worded in a slightly different manner (e.g., minor league baseball rather than (university) football) and were more specific in terms of corporate support. For example, while Dees et al. had the item “Corporate sponsors try to improve (university) football,” this study used the item “Companies that sponsor the Spikes try to improve minor league baseball.” Further, while Dees et al. (2008) used the item “Corporate sponsors care about the fans of (university) football,” this study used the item “Companies that sponsor the Spikes care about the fans of minor league baseball.”

The final independent (and potential mediator) variables assessed in this study were general attitudes toward the sponsor and toward the sponsee. To assess sponsor attitudes,

participants were asked to respond to a series of 5 items on a five-point Likert Scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree): “I feel favorable toward businesses/organizations that support the Spikes through sponsorships,” “Businesses and organizations that sponsor the Spikes are successful,” “Businesses and organizations that sponsor the Spikes provide quality products and/or services,” “Businesses and organizations that sponsor the Spikes are highly qualified,” and “Businesses and organizations that sponsor the Spikes are reputable.” These items were similar to the sponsor attitude items from Dees et al. (2008) with minor wording changes. For example, whereas Dees et al. (2008) used the item, “I think favorably of companies that sponsor this event,” this study used the item, “I feel favorable toward businesses/organizations that support the Spikes through sponsorship.” Given that several of the Spikes sponsors were non-profit organizations, a decision was made to use the terminology “businesses and organizations” instead of “companies.”

In addition to sponsor attitudes, this research sought to assess general attitudes toward the sponsee or sport property (e.g., State College Spikes organization). The approach to create these attitude items was to adopt the sponsor attitude items from Dees et al. (2008) and change the attitude object from companies to the sporting property. Here participants were asked to respond to five items assessed on a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree): “I feel favorably about the State College Spikes as an organization,” “The Spikes offer a quality sport and entertainment experience,” “The Spikes organization is successful,” “The State College Spikes operates a successful corporate sponsorship program,” and “The State College Spikes is well qualified to work with corporate sponsors.” Again, minor changes were made from the Dees et al. (2008) item in that these new items did not gauge general success or professionalism, but assessed property success and professionalism/qualifications as they were related to the

Spikes management of their corporate sponsorship program. A comparative listing of the fan involvement, goodwill, and overall attitude measures between the current study and the work of Dees et al. (2008) is provided in Figure 3.

The dependent measure for this study was the fans' intentions to purchase corporate sponsor products/services. Participants were asked to response to a series of 6 items measured on a five-point Likert Scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). "I would consider purchasing products/services from the corporate sponsors of the State College Spikes," "I would try new products/services if I saw it at a State College Spikes baseball game," and "My overall attitude toward purchasing products/services from companies that sponsor the State College Spikes is positive" were representative of the items used to assess purchase intentions. Again, these items were adapted from Dees et al. (2008) with only minor changes to the attitude object (e.g., State College Spikes instead of University football game or this event). A comparison of the Dees et al. (2008) purchase intention items with the purchase intention items used in this study is provided in Figure 4.

Analysis

The independent and dependent variables (22 total items) were analyzed and reduced into their respective domains using factor analysis (principal components analysis, Varimax rotation, Eigen value > 1 rule). This analysis was used to reduce these constructs into more meaningful constructs and serve as the basis for subsequent scale reliability analysis and index creation. To assess Research Question #1, analyses of central tendency and dispersion (means, standard deviations) were used to document overall levels of fan involvement, goodwill, attitudes, and purchase intentions. To assess Research Question #2, multiple linear regression (simultaneous entry method) was used to determine whether the model was significant, which variables were

significant predictors, and the relative contribution (e.g., the strength or β values) of the independent variables upon purchase intentions. To assess Research Question #3, a path analysis was used to determine the direct and indirect effects (mediation) between the independent variables of fan involvement, goodwill, and sponsor/sponsee attitudes on purchase intentions.

Study Items by Anticipated Domain	Dees et al. (2008)
Purchase Intentions	
I would consider purchasing products/services from the corporate sponsors of the Spikes	I would consider purchasing products/services from the corporate sponsors of this event.
I would try new products/services if I saw it at a Spikes game	I would try a new product/service if I saw it at a [university] football game.
I would definitely purchase products/services from businesses that sponsor the Spikes	I would definitely purchase products/services from the corporate sponsors of [university] football.
My overall attitude toward purchasing products, services from companies that sponsor the Spikes is positive.	My overall attitude toward purchasing products, services from companies that sponsor this event is positive.

Figure 3. A Comparison of Purchase Intention Items

Study Items by Anticipated Domain	Dees et al. (2008)
<i>Fan Involvement</i>	
It is important to me to be a part of minor league baseball	It is important to me to be a part of [university] football.
My friends/family view me as a strong fan of minor league baseball	My friends view me as a strong fan of [university] football.
It is very important to me that minor league baseball is played in my community	It is very important to me that [university] football games are played.
I see myself as a strong fan of minor league baseball	I see myself as a strong fan of [university] football.
<i>Sponsor Goodwill</i>	
Companies that support the Spikes through sponsorship are involved in their community	[university] football sponsors are involved with their community.
Companies that sponsor the Spikes try to improve minor league baseball	Corporate sponsors try to improve [university] football.
Minor league ball games at Medlar Field benefit from corporate sponsors	This sporting event benefits from corporate sponsors.
Companies that sponsor the Spikes care about the fans of minor league baseball	Corporate sponsors care about the fans of [university] football.
<i>Sponsor Attitudes</i>	
I feel favorable toward businesses/organizations that support the Spikes through sponsorship	I think favorably of companies that sponsor this event.
Businesses and organizations that sponsor the Spikes are successful	Companies that sponsor [university] football are successful.
Businesses and organizations that sponsor the Spikes are highly qualified	Companies who sponsor [university] football provide quality products/services.
Businesses and organizations that sponsor the Spikes are reputable	Companies that sponsor [university] football are professional.
<i>Sponsee Attitudes</i>	
I feel favorably about the Spikes as an organization	--
The Spikes operates a successful corporate sponsorship program	--
The Spikes offer a quality sport and entertainment experience	--
The Spikes organization is successful	--
The Spikes is well qualified to work with corporate sponsors	--

Figure 4. A Comparison of Fan Involvement, Goodwill, and Sponsors Attitude Items

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

Description of the Sample

The survey was distributed during sixteen of the thirty-seven home baseball games (e.g., ten weekday games and six weekend games). Using a systematic sampling procedure, 928 invitations were passed out among different sections during each game. Of the 928 invitations handed out, a total of 246 surveys were completed (response rate = 27%).

Participants were asked to fill out demographic information at the end of the survey. This demographic section included questions about the participant's sex/gender, date of birth, and pre-tax household income last year. Of the 246 completed surveys, 57 % of the participants were male and 43% were female. The age groups included 20% in the 18-25 range, 17% in the 26-35 range, 31% in the 36-50 range, 25% in the 51-65 range, and 7% in the 66 and older range. The average age reported was 41.4 years old. The pre-tax household income groups included 16% in the \$0 - \$ 20,000 range, 27% in the \$20,000 - \$ 49,999 range, 22% in the \$50,000 - \$79,000 range, 19% in the \$80,000 - \$109,999, and 16% in the \$110,000 or more range.

In order to gain a better understanding of their past experiences, participants were asked to fill out questions about their visits to the State College Spike games. Questions included seat location, first time attendee, average number of games he or she attended in a typical season, what year was your first Spike's game, and who do you typically attend or visit the State College Spikes game with. Only 18.4% of participants answered that, yes, it was in fact their first time at a Spikes game, the other 81.6% responded that they had previously attended a game before. The average number of games in a typical season included 51% in the 1-3 games per season, 27% in the 4-9 games per season, and 23% in the 10 or more games per season. Twenty-three percent of

the sample size responded that this year (2012) was their first year attending a Spikes game, 26% responded that they had been to Spikes games ever since their inception in 2006 and 50% responded all other years (2007-2011). In response to who do you typically attend or visit the State College Spikes game with, 69% answered with family, 57% answered with friends, 9.4% answered with out-of-town guests, 16.7% answered with work colleagues and 12.7% answered with other associations/groups.

Factor Analysis of Study Constructs

A factor analysis was conducted to examine whether the 22 individual items would load on the proposed five domains of fan involvement, goodwill, sponsor attitudes, sponsee attitudes, and purchase intentions. Results indicate that the fan involvement, goodwill, sponsor attitudes and purchase intentions items loaded onto the four expected domains as described by Dees et al. (2008) and that the five sponsee attitude items loaded onto a separate, fifth domain as expected in this research (Table 2). Subsequent scale development and reliability analyses confirmed these separate measures were internally consistent with reliability values (Cronbach's Alpha) ranging from .84 to .89. Scale reliabilities are provided in Table 3. These reliability levels satisfy Nunally's (1978) minimum standard of .60 for exploratory research.

Descriptive Results and Bivariate Relationships

Descriptive analysis of study constructs (Research Question #1) revealed generally favorable perceptions and purchase intentions (Table 3) with mean scores higher than 3.0. Attitudes toward the sport property (e.g., State College Spikes) were the highest rating domain (mean = 4.49) while perceptions of fan involvement in minor league baseball were the lowest rating domain (mean = 3.80). A summary of these descriptive is provided in Table 3.

Table 2. Results from Principal Components Analysis of Study Items (loadings > .400)

Item	1	2	3	4	5
Businesses and organizations that sponsor the Spikes are highly qualified	.850				
Businesses and organizations that sponsor the Spikes provide quality products/services	.819				
Businesses and organizations that sponsor the Spikes are successful	.809				
Businesses and organizations that sponsor the Spikes are reputable	.764				
I feel favorably toward businesses & organizations that support the Spikes through sponsorships	.467				
I see myself as a strong fan of minor league baseball		.893			
My friends/family view me as a strong fan of minor league baseball		.871			
It is very important to me that minor league baseball is played in my community		.766			
It is important for me to be a part of minor league baseball		.756			
The Spikes offer a quality sport and entertainment experience			.849		
I feel favorably about the Spikes as an organization			.730		
The Spikes organization is successful			.711		
The Spikes are well qualified to work with corporate sponsors			.698		
The Spikes operate a successful corporate sponsorship program	.490		.560		
I would consider purchasing products, services from the corporate sponsors of the Spikes				.765	
I would definitely purchase products, services from businesses that sponsor the Spikes				.755	
I would try new products, services from corporate sponsors of the Spikes				.752	
My overall attitude toward purchasing products, services from companies that sponsor the Spikes is positive				.708	
Minor league ball games at Medlar Field benefit from corporate sponsors					.771
Companies that support the Spikes through sponsorship are involved in their community					.742
Companies that sponsor the Spikes try to improve minor league baseball					.660
Companies that sponsor the Spikes care about the fans of minor league baseball					.542

Factor Label Key: 1 = sponsor attitudes, 2 = fan involvement, 3 = sponsee attitudes, 4 = purchase intentions, and 5 = sponsor goodwill.

Table 3. Study Construct Means, Standard Deviations, and Reliabilities

	Mean	Standard Deviation	α
Fan Involvement	3.80	0.956	0.89
Sponsor Goodwill	4.16	0.681	0.84
Sponsor Attitudes	4.09	0.641	0.89
Sponsee Attitudes	4.49	0.527	0.86
Purchase Intentions	4.03	0.680	0.87

Similar to Dees et al. (2008), a correlational analysis was conducted on the sponsorship effectiveness domains. The results indicated that all five variables were significantly and positively correlated with each other at the $p < .001$ level. The strongest correlation was between sponsor goodwill and purchase intentions ($r = .610$) while the weakest (but still significant) correlation was between fan involvement and sponsor attitudes. A summary of these bivariate correlation results is provided in Table 4. It is important to note that these correlation values do not pose a threat to subsequent regression analysis due to multi-collinearity, meaning they are all below .80 and the variance inflation factors were below 10 (Farrar & Glauber, 1967).

Table 4. Bivariate Correlation of the Variables

Study Domain/Construct*	1	2	3	4	5
1. Attitude Toward the Sponsee (Sport Property)	--				
2. Attitude Toward Corporate Sponsors	.540	--			
3. Goodwill toward Corporate Sponsors	.580	.641	--		
4. Fan Involvement with Minor League Baseball	.453	.312	.430	--	
5. Sponsor Purchase Intentions	.520	.593	.610	.436	--

* All correlations are significant at $p < .001$

Results from Regression Analysis

A multiple regression analysis using simultaneous entry was conducted to analyze the relationships between the independent variables and the dependent variable (purchase

intentions). This analysis was similar to the Dees et al. (2008) study with the exception of the addition of sponsee attitudes. In order to answer Research Question #2, a regression analysis analyzed whether the overall model was significant, as well as the nature and strength of the relationships between goodwill, fan involvement, sponsor attitudes, sponsee attitudes and purchase intentions. Results indicate that all independent variables were positive and significant predictors of purchase intentions. Collectively, these four constructs explained about 48% of the total variance in the model ($R^2 = .482$; $F = 51.2$; $p = .000$; Table 5). While very similar in their predictive strength, sponsor attitudes ($\beta = .297$; $p = .000$) was a stronger predictor of purchase intentions than was sponsor goodwill ($\beta = .276$; $p = .000$). Fan involvement ($\beta = .169$; $p = .003$) was, likewise, a significant, but weaker predictor of purchase intentions than goodwill and sponsor attitudes (Table 5). Attitudes toward the sport property (sponsee) was only a marginally significant predictor of purchase intentions ($\beta = .124$; $p = .055$).

Table 5. Results from Regression Analysis*

	<i>B</i>	<u>SE B</u>	β	VIF
<i>Dependent Variable: Purchase Intentions</i>				
Sponsee Attitudes	.160	.083	.124*	1.754
Sponsor Attitudes	.315	.070	.297**	1.832
Sponsor Goodwill	.275	.069	.276**	2.047
Fan Involvement	.120	.040	.169**	1.329

Note. $R^2 = .482$; * $p = .055$; ** $p < .005$

Results from Path Analysis

In order to address future research needs as identified by prior sponsorship effectiveness research (e.g., Dees et al., 2008), a path model analysis was conducted on the five variables.

Specifically, this thesis sought to examine the degree to which sponsor and sponsee attitudes

might mediate the relationships between goodwill, fan involvement and purchase intentions. A series of simultaneous regressions were conducted in stages to determine both direct and indirect effects. Results from path analysis indicate a partial mediation model (Figure 5). The effect of goodwill upon purchase intentions was both directly ($\beta = .276$) and indirectly related ($\beta = .622$; $\beta = .297$) to purchase intentions through sponsor attitudes. The indirect effect of sponsor goodwill upon purchase intentions was also marginally mediated through sponsee attitudes ($\beta = .472$; $\beta = .124$). The effect of fan involvement upon purchase intentions was both directly related ($\beta = .169$) and marginally indirectly related ($\beta = .250$, $\beta = .124$) to purchase intentions through sponsee attitudes. The effect of fan involvement upon purchase intentions was not mediated through sponsor attitudes. Path analysis of the exogenous variables (e.g., fan involvement, goodwill) upon sponsor and sponsee attitudes indicated that goodwill was a stronger predictor of both sponsor and sponsee attitudes than was fan involvement (Figure 5). In particular, the strongest relationship in the model was goodwill's direct impact on sponsor attitudes ($\beta = .622$). Figure 4 illustrates key findings from this path analysis and provides not only the β values but also model statistics for each stage of the regression analysis.

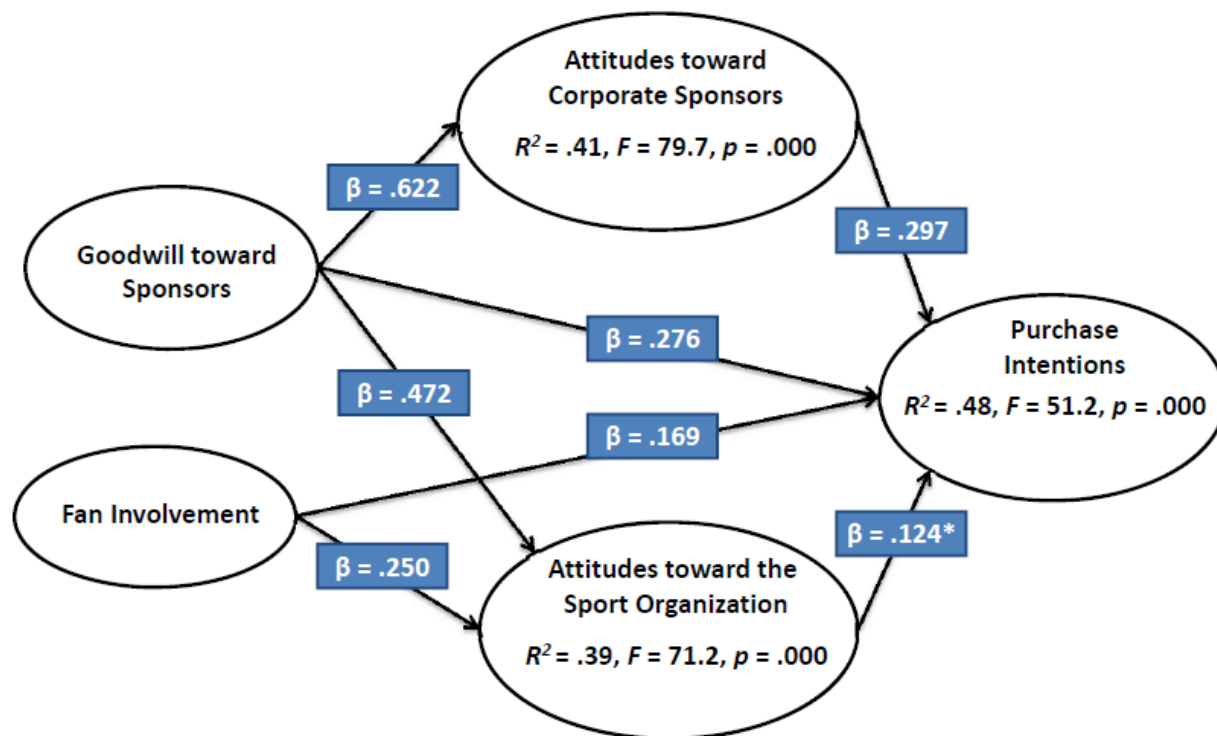


Figure 5. Final Path Model of Goodwill, Fan Involvement, and Sponsor/Sport Organization Attitudes upon Purchase Intentions

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

Discussion of Descriptive Results

Study findings indicated that Spikes fans held favorable attitudes and goodwill toward corporate sponsors, that they were moderately involved as fans of minor league baseball and were moderately motivated to purchase products/services from Spikes corporate sponsors. Further, fans reported very favorable attitudes toward the Spikes organization. These results are generally consistent with the findings of Dees et al. (2008), except that sponsor attitudes and sponsor goodwill, was perceived more favorably and fan involvement was perceived less favorably in the present study.

These variations may be explained by the different study context and sample. For example, younger fans were less represented in this study (20% in the 18-24 age bracket vs. 71% in this same age bracket in the Dees et al. study). Younger fans might be more inclined to be sport team fans and less inclined to perceive higher levels of sponsor goodwill and attitudes. The study setting for Dees et al. (2008) was also a major division one football program, while the State College Spikes is a local minor league baseball team. The atmosphere of a college football game is usually targeted towards students or a younger crowd, while the minor league teams tend to target families. Another contributor to the differences in age range is the calendar time of the survey. The Dees et al. (2008) study was taken during the fall football season, when students in school. The State College Spikes survey was done over the course of the summer, when the amount of students on campus is depleted compared to the fall and spring. A final, potential reason for the differences in age range could be contributed to the methods in which the surveys were distributed. Dees et al. (2008) chose to use a web-based survey to complete a

questionnaire, while the State College Spikes survey was completed on-site. The young adults who participated in the Dees study could have felt more comfortable using the internet to fill out a questionnaire than older adults.

Discussion of Bivariate, Regression, and Path Analysis

This study sought to verify the results of prior sport sponsorship studies by re-examining the importance of sponsor goodwill, fan involvement, and sponsor attitudes upon purchase intentions. Results from bivariate correlations provided promising results with all study constructs significantly and positively correlated. Bivariate correlations indicated that goodwill was the strongest correlate of purchase intentions ($r = .610$) followed by sponsor attitudes ($r = .593$), sponsee attitudes ($r = .520$) and fan involvement ($r = .436$). These results mirror the bivariate correlations reported by Dees et al. (2008) and support the importance of these variables for subsequent inclusion in regression/path modeling.

Results from multiple regression yielded both similar and different results than those reported by Dees et al. (2008). Here, the model was also significant but the percentage of variance explained ($R^2 = .48$) was somewhat lower than the model ($R^2 = .63$) reported by Dees et al. (2008). Similar to Dees et al. (2008), all independent variables, with the exception of the new sponsee attitude measure ($p = .055$), were significant predictors of purchase intentions at the $p \leq .05$ level. The strength of the individual predictors in this study, however, did vary from the regression findings reported by Dees et al. (2008). In the present study, attitudes toward the sponsor was the strongest predictor of sponsor purchase intentions ($\beta = .297$), followed closely by sponsor goodwill ($\beta = .276$) and then fan involvement ($\beta = .169$). The β value for sponsor goodwill was considerably lower than the value reported ($\beta = .412$) by Dees et al. (2008) but the β values for sponsor attitudes and fan involvement were generally consistent with the values they

reported. Interestingly, simultaneous inclusion of study constructs in the model switched the order of strength between sponsor goodwill and sponsor attitudes from previous bivariate correlations. In the final regression model, sponsor attitudes emerged as the slightly strongest predictor of purchase intentions and this differed from Dees et al. (2008) who reported and discussed goodwill as the strongest driver of purchase intentions.

One reason why goodwill may not have tested as prominently as a predictor of sponsor attitudes in this research could be explained by the study context. As stated earlier, a minor league baseball games target market is usually families; therefore, other non-baseball activities are going on during the game. These activities could be a theme night, fireworks, kid zone, specials off food and drinks and etc. Many people who attend minor league baseball games find these activities and experiencing a family atmosphere more enjoyable than the game itself. Therefore consumers may be less passionate about the actual minor league baseball team and may put more emphases on the overall evaluation of the sponsor's organization.

Consistent with the Dees et al. (2008) study, fan involvement was the weakest predictor of purchase intentions in comparison to sponsor goodwill and attitudes. As they hypothesized, purchasing products or services from an event sponsor may not necessarily bring a fan closer to the sport and strong, direct relationships should not be expected. While fan involvement was the lowest predictor, it is important to note that there was a significant contribution of fan involvement on purchase intentions in the model and this differs from the results of results of Schlesinger and Güngerich (2011), who found that fan identity had no direct effect on the fans purchase intentions.

The present study further suggested that attitude toward the sport property (sponsee) was an additional variable to be considered when modeling sponsorship purchase intentions and

sought to establish/test this measure in a revised model. While attitudes toward the sponsee (sport property) did factor as its own separate domain and was significantly correlated with purchase intentions in bivariate analysis, its inclusion into the regression model yielded only a marginally significant relationship with purchase intentions ($\beta = .124$; $p = .055$). Thus, it must be concluded that, while sponsee attitudes are an important sponsorship outcome in its own right such attitudes are not robust predictors of purchase intentions.

In summary, these regression results support the validity and reliability of the findings reported by Dees et al. (2008), but within a minor league baseball context. All three constructs are important considerations for corporations who wish to enhance consumer purchase intentions and corporations/properties should work collaboratively to enhance these fan perceptions and attitudes in order to increase the likelihood of purchasing sponsor products/services. Given the potential of goodwill as identified in prior research, this study also included an open-ended question which asked respondents, “What, could corporate sponsors of the Spikes do, if anything, that would increase your feelings of goodwill toward them?” A content review of these comments revealed a number of general strategies for companies and properties to consider in their efforts to increase perceptions of goodwill such as, “continuing to sponsor the Spikes,” “more fan activities and engagement during at the games,” “supporting other local causes and charities,” “providing helpful public service messages,” “communicating sponsor activities within the surrounding community,” and “providing more prizes and giveaways.”

This study sought to build upon Dees et al.’ (2008, p. 88) recommendation to “analyze the various constructs with different measurement designs, especially structural equation modeling or path modeling to determine more scientifically the relationships of these constructs.” A path model was, therefore, proposed whereby goodwill and fan involvement were

hypothesized to influence purchase intentions through their impact on both sponsor and sponsee attitudes. That is, a hierarchy of effects may occur where beliefs such as fan involvement and goodwill would first influence sponsor/sponsee attitudes, and these attitudes would subsequently influence purchase intentions.

Results from this path analysis revealed both direct and indirect effects; the influence of fan involvement and goodwill upon purchase intentions was partially, and not fully, mediated through sponsor attitudes while, given the marginal significance of sponsee attitudes on purchase intentions, was not mediated significantly through sponsee attitudes at the $p \leq .05$ level. The indirect path values of goodwill upon sponsor attitudes ($\beta = .622$) and sponsor attitudes upon purchase intentions ($\beta = .297$) were higher than the direct effects of goodwill upon purchase intentions ($\beta = .276$). These relationships indicate that goodwill has a stronger impact upon sponsor attitude formation than purchase intentions and that sponsor attitudes have a stronger impact on purchase intentions than did goodwill. Corporations that wish to increase purchase of their products, should first ensure that they enjoy a favorable attitude on the part of fans and that increasing perceptions of goodwill is a likely path to this outcome. Corporate sponsors whose objectives are primarily attitude improvement, should likewise focus on their perceptions of sponsor goodwill as there were no direct relationships between fan involvement and sponsor attitudes.

While the mediation of sponsee attitudes between fan involvement and purchase intentions was marginally significant ($p = .055$), the direct relationship of fan involvement with purchase intentions was stronger ($p = .003$). Thus, sponsors of minor league baseball who wish to improve purchase intentions through enhancing fan involvement and sponsee attitudes should focus their efforts primarily on fan involvement as a result of these path relationships. Despite

the mediation effects illustrated through this final path model, the fact remains that goodwill, fan involvement, and sponsor attitudes were still significant and direct predictors of purchase intentions and that sponsors consider and enhance all three constructs if they are to maximize purchase intentions.

It should be noted that purchase intentions are not the sole objective of corporate sponsorship programs. Many companies wish to enhance product/brand awareness (not assessed in this research) and increase consumer attitudes toward their business. Likewise, sport properties such as minor league baseball teams are also interested in enhancing fan attitudes as a way to support continued ticket sales/attendance and as a way to demonstrate, to potential sponsors, that they have a good image among the fan base and favorable image transfer effects are possible for the sponsor. The path analysis allowed the researcher to examine the extent that sponsor goodwill and fan involvement directly contributed to both sponsor attitudes and sponsee attitudes. Here, perceptions of sponsor goodwill contributed significantly to both sponsor attitudes ($\beta = .622$) and sponsee attitudes ($\beta = .472$). In other words, fans who felt goodwill or gratitude toward the activities of the corporate sponsor were not only more inclined to evaluate the sponsor favorably, but were also inclined to evaluate the sport property or team more favorably.

These findings confirm the critical importance of goodwill in the context of sponsorship effectiveness outcomes and further support the notion of image transference. That is, while perceived sponsor goodwill contributes to favorable sponsor attitudes, it also has a spill-over effect on the sponsored property itself. Sport properties should thus, pay particular attention to ensuring that sponsorship packages are designed with sponsor goodwill as their centerpiece.

Sponsors that provide significant contributions to the property, but do little to increase goodwill perceptions may, in the long run, be counterproductive in building a favorable property image.

Other interesting findings from this path analysis were the direct effects between the exogenous variable of fan involvement upon the endogenous sponsor and sponsee attitude variables. Unlike goodwill, fan involvement was only related to sponsee (sport property) attitudes. That is, those attendees whose identities were connected with minor league baseball and who were avid minor league baseball fans felt more favorably about the sport property/team. This is not surprising as measures of sponsee attitudes were directly tied to the attitude objects assessed through the fan involvement scale (e.g., minor league baseball).

Study Limitations and Future Research Directions

There were several limitations to this study such as the survey was only completed at home games, the survey was taken at only one ballpark, and awareness of sponsors was not factored in the analysis. One of the biggest limitations for this study was the limited sample size and the potential for response bias. The response rate was only 27%, and individuals who did not participate in the study may have been different in terms of their demographic characteristics and attitude profiles. It should be noted, however, that written invitations were handed out to non-eligible fans as well as eligible fans (e.g., those 18 or older) and these non-eligible fans were included as part of the response rate calculation. In order to assure enough participants would have the opportunity to take the survey, printed announcements (half-sheets) were given out to everyone in that particular section, including those who were not eligible to take the survey, such as people under eighteen and married couples. In order to filter these participants out, the half-sheets stated that participants must be over the age of 18 and only one person from a group may take the survey. It is important to assess the influence of sponsorship upon youth

because some corporate sponsors may be targeting that market section, especially at a family atmosphere event like a minor league baseball. Future studies may want to design their surveys to make them more appropriate for the younger audience by offering a parent guardian waiver and analyzing what sponsors a younger sample size is aware of them compared to the adults.

Further studies may also choose to look at how sponsors may increase goodwill and/or attitudes towards the sponsor in greater depth. A qualitative study using a focus group would be the idea way to assess how corporations can achieve this objective. Other studies may also want to explore how other constructs besides fan involvement, attitudes towards the sponsor, and attitudes towards the property affect consumers' behaviors. To try to gain a better understanding of this, participants were asked to answer an open-ended question on how the sponsors could increase goodwill. Responses included strategies such as: continued sponsorship, contributions to local charities/causes, more prizes, giveaways, discounts, and more active engagement with fans during the game rather than advertising at the venue. While these responses are adequate, future studies may choose to go more in depth with specific examples of how corporate sponsors could build upon goodwill, fan involvement attitudes toward the sponsors and attitudes toward the sport organization.

Conclusion

In today's society sporting organizations and corporations strive to improve their revenue through a variety of mechanisms. While most sporting organizations can invest in players to increase revenue through jersey sales, ticket sales and etc., minor league baseball teams have no control of their rosters and must find other ways to generate consistent source of revenue, one of which being corporate sponsorships. As such, it is important to understand what factors promote sponsorship effectiveness in these venues. This study was a replication and extension of Dees et

al. (2008) and was conducted to provide additional insights into the predictors of purchase intentions as they related to sponsor products/services. Consistent with prior research, the three original independent variables goodwill, fan involvement and attitudes toward the sponsor all contributed to the purchase intentions of the consumers. Although the strength of their impacts did vary, with attitudes toward the sponsor being the slightly strongest predictor of the three, results generally support the importance of these fan beliefs and attitudes upon purchase intentions. This study sought to extend prior work by examining whether sponsee attitudes affected the purchase intentions. However, this relationship was only marginally significant impact suggesting that, within the context of this minor league baseball venue, sponsee attitudes may not be a key driver of sales.

Knowing that goodwill, attitudes toward the sponsor, fan involvement and attitudes toward the property can positively impact the consumer's intentions to purchase their product or services, sponsors should find a way to maximize these perceptions and attitudes. Fan involvement also can have a partial mediation on purchase intentions through attitudes toward the property, although to a lesser extent than goodwill. If the sponsor's objective was to increase purchase intentions, then sponsors will be able to receive the most out of their investment by finding ways to increase goodwill and fan involvement because these factors do not only increase purchase intentions, but also have an effect on the consumer's attitude towards the property and/or sponsor.

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APPENDIX A.
SAMPLING SCHEDULE

Weekday Sampling Dates	Weekend Sampling Dates
July 19, 2012	July 14, 2012
July 24, 2012	July 15, 2012
August 01, 2012	July 21, 2012
August 15, 2012	August 18, 2012
August 16, 2012	August 25, 2012
August 17, 2012	September 02, 2012
August 24, 2012	
August 27, 2012	
August 29, 2012	
September 05, 2012	

Figure 6. Weekday and Weekend Sampling Dates

APPENDIX B.**WRITTEN INVITATION****Please Participate in a Survey!**

Feedback from fans like you help the Spikes improve the quality of the ballpark experience and enhance opportunities for sponsorship of fan activities. Tonight, your row has been specifically chosen to participate in a State College Spikes Fan Satisfaction Survey. You must be 18 years or older to take this voluntary survey and only one adult per family is eligible to participate.

Those who complete the survey will receive one free ticket to a future Spikes game. Please go to the survey table located next to the Collegiate Pride Customer Service Center anytime from the 7th inning stretch to the end of the game to learn more about the survey and to complete it.

There will also be a brief announcement during the 7th inning stretch reminding your row about this survey. Completing the questionnaire should only take about 5 minutes of your time. Questions about this survey may be directed to Chris Moore (clm5469@psu.edu). Thank you in advance for your consideration.

APPENDIX C.

SURVEY INSTRUMENT

Thank you for agreeing to take this brief questionnaire! The State College Spikes is committed to a quality relationship with its customers, community, and corporate partners. The following survey will ask you to respond to several questions regarding corporate sponsorship of the State College Spikes. In this survey, you will be asked your opinions of corporate sponsors, the Spikes, your awareness of corporate sponsors, and your purchase behaviors.

First, we have a couple questions about your visits to State College Spikes games/events...

1. On average, how many State College Spikes home games do you attend in a typical season? (check one)

___ This is my first game/visit here ___ 1-3 games per season ___ 4-9 games per season
___ 10 or more games

2. In what year did you attend your first State College Spikes game? _____

3. Who do you typically attend or visit State College Spikes games with? (check all that apply)

___ Family ___ Friends ___ Out-of-Town Guests ___ Work Colleagues
___ Other Associations/Groups

4. Please rate your overall satisfaction with your tonight's visit by circling the response that best describes your feelings

Extremely Dissatisfied	Somewhat Dissatisfied	Neither Dissatisfied nor Satisfied	Somewhat Satisfied	Extremely Satisfied
1	2	3	4	5

5. In your own words, what is your favorite part of a State College Spikes game?

The next series of questions relate to corporate sponsorship of the State College Spikes.

6. Please write down as many corporate sponsors of the State College Spikes as you can recollect from tonight's game. Please do not look around the stadium for clues. If you cannot remember any, please write down "None."

7. Where did you see or hear about these sponsors?

8. Within the past 6 months, have you purchased a product/service from a State College Spikes corporate sponsor?

___ Yes (If yes, what company/business was that? _____)
___ No
___ Unsure

9. Please respond to the following statements by indicating (circling) the response that best describes your feelings or opinions. 1 = Strongly Disagree 2 = Somewhat Disagree 3 = Neutral 4 = Somewhat Agree 5 = Strongly Agree

<i>Attitudes toward Companies that Sponsor the State College Spikes...</i>					
a. I feel favorable toward businesses/organizations that support the Spikes through sponsorships	1	2	3	4	5
b. Businesses and organizations that sponsor the Spikes are successful	1	2	3	4	5
c. Businesses and organizations that sponsor the Spikes provide quality products and/or services	1	2	3	4	5
d. Businesses and organizations that sponsor the Spikes are highly qualified	1	2	3	4	5
e. Businesses and organizations that sponsor the Spikes are reputable	1	2	3	4	5
<i>Attitudes toward the Spikes and their Corporate Sponsorship Program...</i>					
f. I feel favorably about the State College Spikes as an organization	1	2	3	4	5
g. The State College Spikes operates a successful corporate sponsorship program	1	2	3	4	5
h. The Spikes offer a quality sport and entertainment experience	1	2	3	4	5
i. The Spikes organization is successful	1	2	3	4	5
j. The State College Spikes is well qualified to work with corporate sponsors	1	2	3	4	5

10. The following items refer to your involvement as a fan of minor league baseball games and your goodwill toward corporate sponsors of minor league baseball. Please circle the response that best describes your feelings. 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Somewhat Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Somewhat Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree

<i>Fan Involvement</i>					
a. It is important to me to be a part of minor league baseball	1	2	3	4	5
b. My friends/family view me as a strong fan of minor league baseball	1	2	3	4	5
c. It is very important to me that minor league baseball is played in my community.	1	2	3	4	5
d. I see myself as a strong fan of minor league baseball	1	2	3	4	5
<i>Goodwill Toward Companies that Sponsor Minor League Baseball</i>					
e. Companies that support Spikes through sponsorship are involved in their community	1	2	3	4	5
f. Companies that sponsor the Spikes try to improve minor league baseball	1	2	3	4	5
g. Minor league ball games at Medlar Field benefit from corporate sponsors	1	2	3	4	5
h. Companies that sponsor the Spikes care about the fans of minor league baseball.	1	2	3	4	5

11. The following items pertain to your intentions to purchase corporate sponsors' products/services. Please circle the response that best describes your opinions. Again, response items are...

1 = Strongly Disagree 2 = Somewhat Disagree 3 = Neutral 4 = Somewhat Agree 5 = Strongly Agree

a. I would consider purchasing products/services from the corporate sponsors of the State College Spikes.	1	2	3	4	5
b. I would try new product/services if I saw it at a State College Spikes baseball game.	1	2	3	4	5
c. I would definitely purchase products/services from businesses that sponsor the State College Spikes.	1	2	3	4	5
d. My overall attitude toward purchasing products/services from companies that sponsor State College Spikes is positive.	1	2	3	4	5
e. I'm more likely to consider trying a product/service if that product/service is an official sponsor of the State College Spikes	1	2	3	4	5
f. I'm more likely to recommend a product/service if that product/service is an official sponsor of the State College Spikes	1	2	3	4	5

12. What could corporate sponsors of the Spikes do, if anything, that would increase your feelings of goodwill toward them? (please write in your response below)

Finally, to understand our different fans, we would like to know a little about you...

13. What is your sex/gender ___ Male ___ Female

14. What year were you born? 19 ___ ___

15. What was your approximate pre-tax household income last year? (check one)

___ \$0 to \$20,000 ___ \$20,000 to 49,999 ___ \$50,000 to \$79,000 ___ \$80,000 to \$109,999 ___ \$110,000 or more

16. What is your home zipcode? ___ ___ ___ ___ ___

17. Do you have any other suggestions for improving the quality of your visit to State College Spikes games?

That is the end of the survey. Thanks for your participation! Please place the completed questionnaire in the collection box at the table and gather your prize. Have a great evening and drive safe.

ACADEMIC VITA

Christopher Moore
CIm5469@psu.edu
(336) 339-1792

Objective: To obtain a career in the sports industry

Education:

The Pennsylvania State University - University Park, PA

B.S. Recreation, Parks, and Tourism Management- Commercial and Community Recreation
Expected Graduation: May 2013, with honors; Schreyer Honors College

Sports Administration Experience:

IMG College – Winston Salem, NC (Spring 2013)

University Sales Coordinator: Coordinated Marketing, Advertising and Promotional activities with IMG College key accounts. Assembled proposals and prospects, for sales team to pitch to past and new sponsors. Reviewed and analyzed sponsors ROI and recapture rates.

IMG-Learfield Ticket Solutions- Penn State University- State College, PA (Summer 2012)

Ticket Sales: Contacted new and past customers for event ticket purchase and donations. Used Archtics data system to target prospects and track of contact information and relationship between customers.

The Penn State Golf Course – State College, PA (Spring 2012)

Event Management Leader: Supervised and managed a student organized Penn State Golf event. Job duties included fundraising, marketing, budgeting, sponsorships, program benefits, organizing team members, events scheduling, staffing, risk management, registrations, assignment deadlines, site layout, survey analysis, overseeing equipment and supplies for operations.

Ken Chertow Wrestling – State College, PA (Summer 2010)

Sales and Operations: Assisted with day to day operations. Organized accounted and distributed inventory. Assisted with local events and experienced on sight sales and marketing. Data base maintenance to track of customer's payments options, contacts, and follow ups.

The Pennsylvania State University – University Park, PA (Fall 2010)

Student Assistant NCAA Regional Volleyball Tournament:

Assisted the event manager with the planning, coordination, and execution of NCAA 2010 volleyball regional semifinals.

Volunteer/Leadership Experience:

- Created and operated a skating program at Penn Skates
- Special Olympics Barbecue Fundraiser
- Broomball event planner for the Penn State Ice rink
- Assistant High School Football Coach

Awards and Recognition:

- Member of the Schreyer Honors College
- Dean's Honor List Student
- RPTM Outstanding Student Award in Community and Commercial Recreation for 2012
- Invited Presenter: 2013 Global Sports Business Association Conference

Work Experience:

- Target Inc. State College, PA (2011-Present)
- Bishop McGuiness High School (Summers 2009-2010)