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Examination of Women's Sports Fans' Attitudes and Consumption Intentions

Ceyda Mumcu

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John C. Barnes

Abstract

To date, few studies have focused on understanding fans of women's sport, which is especially true with regard to consumption intentions. This study was undertaken to 1) examine fans' attitudes toward women's sports, including both cognitive and affective evaluations as related to consumption intentions; 2) identify salient product attributes of women's sports related to fans' consumption intentions; and 3) examine group differences on attitudes. Multiple regression analysis and multivariate analysis of variance were conducted to address the research questions. Results of the study revealed that both cognitive and affective aspects of attitude were predictive of women's sport fans' consumption intentions. In addition, study results indicated excitement and entertainment price as two salient product attributes of women's sports that predicted consumption intentions. Lastly, differences in attitudes between former athletes and nonathletes and age groups were found.

Keywords: *Fan attitude, consumption intentions, women's sports, sport marketing*

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Introduction

A review of the history of women's professional sports reveals that women's sports have had a difficult time thriving in the United States. Throughout the 1990s and early 2000s, many professional sport leagues were established, only to be disbanded a few years later. The first two women's professional softball and basketball leagues filed for bankruptcy and folded within a few years after their establishment (Elyachar & Moag, 2002; Spencer & McClung, 2001; Wesley, 1999). Women's professional soccer shared the same destiny as women's professional softball and basketball. The Women's United Soccer Association (WUSA) suspended operations with losses of more than \$100 million in three years, due to a substantial decline in attendance, television viewership and lack of major sponsorship revenue (Michaelis, 2003; Rovell, 2003). More recently, the Women's Professional Soccer (WPS) league was terminated due to a lack of fan support and media coverage in 2012 (Pethchesky, 2012). Currently, the National Pro Fastpitch (NPF), Women's National Basketball Association (WNBA), and National Women's Soccer League (NWSL) continue their businesses with the support of their male counterparts, Major League Baseball (MLB), National Basketball Association (NBA), and Major League Soccer (MLS), respectively.

The aforementioned history demonstrates that women's professional team sports have struggled to be profitable and sustainable in the U.S. Although with the passage of Title IX in 1972, girls' and women's sport participation increased tremendously by 560% at college level and 990% in high schools (Women's Sport Foundation, 2013), sport has remained a masculine domain, and society's perception of female athletes and women's sports have changed very little (Lough & Mumcu, 2016). Yet, the increase in the number of women and girls participating in sports has not resulted in large fan bases for women's professional sports. For example, average attendance for the WNBA increased for the second consecutive year in 2014 and reached 7,578 (WNBA Attendance, 2014); however, it was still well below the average NBA attendance of 17,826 in the 2014–15 season (Brown, 2015). Similarly, NWSL does not attract a large number of attendees when compared with MLS. Although in 2015, average attendance in NWSL increased 23% with the excitement due to the U.S. national team's success in the FIFA World Cup, it was still averaging close to 5,000 fans (Goldberg, 2015), which was less than one third of the average MLS attendance of 19,149 (Tomasch, 2015). As a consequence, this limited fan following results in limited revenues for the women's teams and the leagues.

The success of women's sports properties will depend on their ability to increase attendance and television ratings, thereby increasing revenues from ticket sales and game-day sales at event venues, which in theory will result in an increase in revenues from sponsorships, advertisements, and broadcasting contracts. In order to increase attendance and develop a larger fan base, consumers' views of women's sports need to be better understood. Attitude theory claims that positively viewed

products are more likely to be consumed (Fazio, Powell, & Herr, 1983; Mahony & Moorman, 1999). Product evaluations can be understood by studying attitudes, which are defined as “an overall evaluation of a product/service” (Haddock & Maio, 2004, p. 1). Studying attitudes in women’s spectator sports setting would reveal spectators’ and fans’ views of women’s sports and identify positives and negatives of women’s sports as products. This information could be invaluable for marketers of women’s sports in identifying whether their product meets customer expectations or not and how to increase consumption. Therefore, this study examined sport fans’ attitudes toward women’s sports and its relationship to consumption intentions.

Consumer Behavior Theory

Consumer behavior theory is a critical tool for understanding consumers’ behaviors and their decision-making processes (Hawkins, Mothersbaugh, & Best, 2007). According to the Overall Model of Consumer Behavior (OMCB) (Hawkins et al., 2007), attitudes are one of two internal factors that drive consumer behavior. Attitudes explain an individual’s favorable-unfavorable evaluations of a product/service, and Bagozzi and Burnkrant’s (1979) Two-Component Model of Attitude claims that these evaluations are composed of cognitive and affective judgments of the product. Cognitive evaluations of a product are based on consumers’ beliefs about product attributes (Breckler, 1984; Kothandapani, 1971; Ostrom, 1969), and affective evaluations are consumers’ positive-negative emotional responses to the product (Breckler, 1984). Therefore, an individual’s overall attitude toward a product is composed of a consumer’s beliefs about the product and its attributes, as well as his or her feelings about the product.

In addition to explaining what attitude entails, consumer behavior theory presents a link between consumers’ attitudes and behaviors toward a product or service. According to the Two-Component Model of Attitude (Bagozzi & Burnkrant, 1979), cognitive and affective evaluations of a product lead to behavioral intentions (see Figure 1), and having favorable attitudes toward a product increases consumers’ likelihood of using and/or purchasing the product

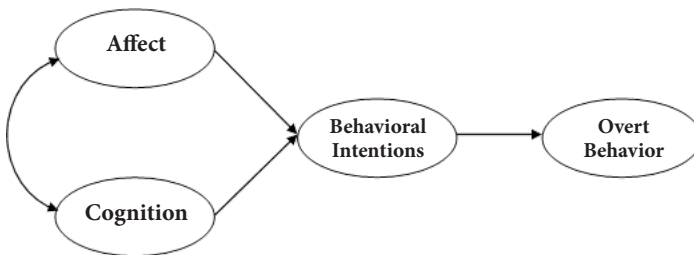


Figure 1. Two-Component Model of Attitude (Bagozzi & Burnkrant 1979)

(Dwyer, 2013; Lim, Martin, & Kwak, 2010; Martinez Caro & Martinez Garcia, 2007). Therefore, investigating attitudes toward women's sports would reveal fans' cognitive and affective evaluations of the sports product and be linked to their likelihood of consuming women's sports.

Sport marketing researchers have realized the importance of the attitude concept in understanding fan behavior. Mahony and colleagues (1998; 1999; 2000) investigated fans' attitudes toward NFL and NBA teams and the relationship to viewership behavior. They measured fans' attitudes based on liking-disliking teams, and reported that both strong positive and strong negative attitudes led to an increased viewership. In other words, fans were more likely to watch their favorite and most disliked teams. Similarly, Lim et al. (2010) examined fans' attitudes toward mixed martial arts (MMA) by focusing on the affect aspect of attitude and reported a positive relationship between attitudes toward MMA and fans' actual media consumption. These studies provide supporting evidence on the attitude-behavior relationship within the sport marketing field. However, these studies only focused on the affective aspect of attitude while neglecting to include the cognitive component. Therefore, their results only partially explain attitudes toward the chosen sports.

When compared to men's sports, fans' attitudes toward women's sports were studied scantily. Dixon (2002) examined media coverage and personal involvement as factors contributing to attitude formation and found media coverage to be most influential in attitude formation toward the LPGA events and professionals. In addition, McCabe (2008; 2011) investigated the relationship between multifactorial gender identity (sex, gender identity, and gender roles) and attitudes toward women's professional basketball. Similar to men's spectator sports, attitudes toward women's sports were measured via affect items, while the cognitive component of attitude was ignored. Moreover, neither Dixon's nor McCabe's studies investigated attitude-consumption relationship, although the correlation between attitudes and behavior/behavioral intentions was claimed and studied for men's spectator sports.

Studying attitudes toward women's sports and their relationship to consumption intentions remains important because women's sports still struggle to attain key metrics such as media attention and ticket sales. Understanding both cognitive and affective aspects of fans' attitudes toward women's sports, and how attitudes relate to consumption intentions may reveal valuable insights on why women's sports have continued to struggle in growing attendance and viewership numbers.

Moreover, various market segments within the women's sport market might evaluate a women's sport product differently, therefore their attitudes toward the women's sport may be different. For example, according to the WNBA (WNBA League Overview, 2009), 58% of their fans are female, 27%, 31%, 26% are from the age groups of 12-17, 18-34, and 35-54, respectively, and basketball participants are more likely to watch and attend WNBA games. Therefore, it is imperative to

investigate differences in attitudes among market segments. With this knowledge, sports marketers would be able to develop more consumer-based marketing strategies for different segments devised to create positive attitudes toward women's sports that could potentially increase sport fans' consumption intentions.

The purpose of this study was threefold: 1) to investigate fans' cognitive and affective attitudes toward women's sports and their relationship to consumption intentions; 2) to identify salient product attributes of women's sports in relation to fans' consumption intentions; and 3) to examine group differences (gender, age, and sport participation) on attitudes toward women's sports. To address this purpose, the researchers raised the following research questions:

RQ1: Which aspect of attitude (cognition or affect) predicts fans' consumption intentions?

RQ2: Which attributes of women's sport products are salient to the fans and predict their consumption intentions?

RQ3: Do attitudes toward women's sports vary based on gender, age, and sport participation background of fans?

Method

Participants

The Facebook followers of the Tucker Center for Research on Girls and Women in Sport, and the Women Talk Sports Network were the respondents of the study. Collectively, these two online communities have approximately 6,000 Facebook followers. The Tucker Center is an interdisciplinary research center examining how sport and physical activity affect the lives of girls and women, and the Women Talk Sports Network is a website based online community that provides comprehensive coverage of all women's sports. Subjects were solicited from these two sources because of their involvement with each community demonstrates their interest in and familiarity with women's sports. After IRB approval was granted, the two organizations posted brief information about the study and a link to the survey site on their Facebook accounts four times during a month to increase the response rate in accordance with Dillman's (2007) Tailored Design Method. The response rate was 78.5%, as 293 respondents started the online questionnaire but only 230 surveys were deemed useable. This strategy was also thought to be the best way to reach a nationwide sample which resulted in representation from 33 states and foreign countries.

Instrumentation

The instrument consisted of demographics, the Sport Fandom Questionnaire (Wann, 2002), the Attitude toward Women's Sports Scale (Mumcu & Marley, in press), and six consumption intention items. These items were gathered from

Cunningham and Kwon (2003), Ko, Kim, Claussen, and Kim (2008), and Kwon, Trail, and James (2007). Response options ranged from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). Scores of six consumption intention items were combined into one mean score and higher scores represented a higher likelihood of consumption of women's sport.

The primary measure in the study was the 34-item Attitude toward Women's Sports (ATWS) scale (Mumcu & Marley, in press). The ATWS scale was developed due to a need to measure both cognitive and affective aspects of attitude in a spectator sport setting. Previous literature revealed that attitudes were measured with item(s) based on liking-disliking sports, yet this approach only presented half of the picture. For this study, the cognitive component of attitude was included as it more fully explains consumers' attitudes and also can be used to predict fans' consumption intentions. Bagozzi and Burnkrant's (1979) Two-Component Model of Attitude was used as the theoretical framework in development of the ATWS scale; therefore, the scale covered both cognitive and affective aspects of attitude toward the women's sport product. Evaluations of product attributes of women's sports made up the cognitive component of attitudes, while affect was measured using adjective pairs assessing emotional responses to each women's sport. Items were rated on a 7-point Likert-type scale, ranging from (1) *strongly disagree* to (7) *strongly agree*, and higher scores represented a higher positive attitude toward women's sports.

The ATWS scale was developed and refined in three previous studies and content, construct and criterion validity and reliability evidence were collected. Development of the scale started with generation of a comprehensive item pool covering 16 subscales with 130 items. Of these 130 items, 76 were gathered from recent relevant studies (Bruner et al., 2005; Ferreira & Armstrong, 2004; Funk et al., 2001; Funk et al., 2002; Funk et al., 2003; Greenhalgh, Simmons, Hambrick, & Greenwell, 2011; Trail et al., 2002; Trail & Kim, 2011; Zhang et al., 2009). The content of these items were modified to fit the context of women's sports. For example, items taken from the literature were modified to read as product attributes such as "Women's sport competitions are exciting."

Item pool generation was followed by a subject matter expert (SME) review to assess content validity of the scale. A panel of eight SMEs, who were PhD-level academics with knowledge of attitude theory, sport consumer behavior, sport marketing, and motivation reviewed the item pool for adequate representation of the facets of the attitudes toward women's sports in the scale and judged the representativeness of the items under each sub-dimension. The scale was modified based on the SMEs feedback, and two pilot studies were conducted to purify the measure via item analyses. Items with floor and ceiling effects and items that did not contribute to Cronbach's alpha within each subscale were deleted. With a third sample, reliability, construct and criterion validity evidence for the scale were collected. Exploratory factor analysis was computed to identify the factor

structure of the measure, and an 8-factor model with 34 items explaining 68% of variance emerged. The final 34-item scale identified accessibility ($\alpha = .81$), aesthetic ($\alpha = .85$), athlete quality ($\alpha = .85$), drama ($\alpha = .81$), entertainment price ($\alpha = .75$), excitement ($\alpha = .85$) and opportunity for women ($\alpha = .84$) as product attributes of women's sports and a subscale measured affect ($\alpha = .74$) toward women's sports (See Appendix for items and relevant statistics). Cronbach's alpha statistics of each factor were above the acceptable value of .70 (Cortina, 1993). Finally, correlation analyses were performed to investigate the relationship between factors of the ATWS scale and consumption intention, and results provided supportive evidence for the criterion validity with positive correlations between each factor and consumption intentions ranging from .154 (correlation of consumption intentions with accessibility) to .458 (correlation of consumption intentions with excitement). Therefore, reliability and validity evidence was established for the instrument.

Analyses

The online survey was hosted by Survey Monkey, allowing for data to be downloaded in a format easily transferrable to SPSS, which was utilized in the data analyses. In order to investigate the relationship between attitude and consumption intentions, a multiple regression analysis was performed in which consumption intention scores were the outcome variable, and cognitive and affective components of attitudes were entered into the model as predictors. A second multiple regression analysis was conducted to identify salient product attributes of women's sports in relation to consumption intentions. Consumption intention scores were regressed on the seven ATWS factors to determine which specific product attributes were significant predictors of future consumption. Finally, to examine gender differences, age differences and sport background on attitudes toward women's sports, three MANOVAs were performed.

Results

The sample in the current study contained a total of 230 respondents. The purpose of the study was to investigate women's sports fans' attitudes. Therefore, to ensure a sample of women's sport fans, sport fandom scores of respondents were acquired using Wann's 8-point Sport Fandom Questionnaire (2002) and respondents with sport fandom scores of four or lower were discarded from the study. After deleting participants with low SFQ scores, the final sample size of 193 was reached, with a high level of women's sport fandom ($M = 6.58$, $SD = 1.22$) and scores ranging from 4.2 to 8.

Of the 193 respondents, 80.3% were female, the vast majority of the sample was Caucasian (72%) followed by Hispanic/Latino descent (13%) with the remainder of individuals reporting to be African American (4.7%), Asian/Pacific Islander (2.6%), Native American (1.6 %), or other (4.1%). Respondents represented different age groups; most of the respondents were between the ages of 25

and 34 (28%), which was followed by 45- to 54-year-olds (21.8%). The remainder of the respondents reported to be 35 to 44 years old (18.1%), 55 to 64 years old (13.5%), and 65 years or older (11.5%), with the smallest group being 18- to 24-year-olds (6.7%). From an educational perspective, 42% of respondents had a graduate degree, 38.3% had a college degree, and 19.2% had graduated from high school. The income within the sample showed 29% of respondents earning less than \$40,000, 33.2% earned \$40,000 to \$69,999, and 36.8% earned more than \$70,000. In addition to demographics, respondents were asked about their sport participation background, and 78.2% of the respondents participated in competitive sports in the past. Finally, respondents were asked to report their favorite women's sport and respond to the questions on the instrument focusing on their specified favorite women's sport. Participants identified 15 sports as their favorite women's sport with basketball (49.7%), soccer (13%), and softball (6.2%) being the most frequently reported sports.

Multiple Regression Analyses

A multiple regression analysis was computed to answer research question one that examined whether the cognitive or affective aspect of attitude predicted sport fans' consumption intentions for women's sports. The assumptions of the multiple regression analysis were assessed, and data were deemed suitable. The regression analysis was statistically significant $F(2, 167) = 24.578, p < .001$ and $R^2 = .227$. The two predictors within the model accounted for 22.7% of the variance in consumption intentions. Both cognitive and affective aspects of attitude predicted women's sport fans' consumption intentions. The standardized β for affect was .318, $t = 4.111$, and $p < .001$. This finding indicated that the more favorable an affective evaluation the respondents had the more likely they were to attend women's sporting events or view them on television. The standardized β for cognition was .235, $t = 3.044$, and $p < .01$. This finding suggested that fans' favorable cognitive evaluation of women's sports also increased their likelihood to consume women's sports.

Another multiple regression was performed to answer research question two. Fans' consumption intentions were regressed on seven product attributes to identify salient product attributes of women's sports predicting fans' consumption intentions. The analysis demonstrated statistically significant results, $F(7, 165) = 6.659, p < .001$, and $R^2 = .220$. The seven predictors within the model accounted for 22% of the variance in consumption intentions. Among seven predictors, excitement and entertainment price were the statistically significant predictors of women's sport fans' consumption intentions. This finding suggested that fans, who find women's sports exciting and think women's sport events are good entertainment for the price were more likely to consume their favorite women's sport (See Tables 1 and 2).

Table 1

Regression of Consumption Intentions on Seven Product Attributes of Women's Sports

	<i>R</i> ²	Standardized Beta	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Consumption Intentions (CI)	.220			
Excitement (EXC)		.395	4.142	.000***
Opportunity for women (OFW)		.027	.324	.747
Accessibility (ACC)		.014	.182	.856
Aesthetic (AEST)		.050	.575	.566
Drama (DRA)		-.107	-1.163	.247
Entertainment price (EPRC)		.156	2.105	.037*
Athlete quality (ATHQ)		.092	.986	.326

Note: **p* < .05, ****p* < .001

Table 2

Correlation Coefficients, Means and Standard Deviations (n = 193)

	CI	EXC	OFW	ACC	AEST	DRA	EPRC	ATHQ	AFCT	Mean	Standard Deviation
CI	1.00									5.96	1.08
EXC	.35**	1.00								6.15	0.91
OFW	.18*	.40**	1.00							5.64	1.24
ACC	.15*	.18*	.35**	1.00						4.08	1.49
AEST	.32**	.54**	.32**	.19**	1.00					5.55	1.16
DRA	.24**	.57**	.34**	.20**	.51**	1.00				5.11	1.13
EPRC	.20**	.07	.29**	.03	.03	-.07	1.00			5.52	1.28
ATHQ	.17*	.51**	.33**	.23**	.49**	.50**	-.10	1.00		6.02	1.06
AFCT	.38**	.50**	.35**	.12	.38**	.42**	.09	.40**	1.00	6.30	0.84

Note: **p* < .05, ***p* < .01

Multivariate Analyses of Variance

In addition to product attributes, components of attitude and their effect on consumption intentions, group differences on attitudes were investigated to identify differences between potential market segments for women's sports. Three separate MANOVAs were conducted to answer research question three, which aimed to compare gender differences, age group differences, and sport participation background on attitude toward women's sports. Prior to conducting the MANOVAs, Pearson correlations between the dependent variables were performed to test the assumption of correlated dependent variables (Meyer, Gampst, & Guarino, 2006), and acceptable correlations among the dependent variables were observed (See Table 2).

The first MANOVA was conducted to test the gender differences on attitudes toward women's sports, and the tests reported no multivariate gender effect. The second MANOVA was conducted to test the differences in attitudes toward wom-

en's sports between former athletes and nonathletes. The Box's M value of 66.24 was associated with a p value of .006, which was interpreted as nonsignificant based on Huberty and Petoskey's (2000) guidelines. Thus the covariance matrices between the groups were assumed to be equal for the purposes of the MANOVA. A statistically significant multivariate effect was obtained, Pillai's trace = .092, $F(8, 169) = 2.124$, $p < .05$, partial $\eta^2 = .092$. Before conducting univariate tests, homogeneity of variance assumption was checked by Levene's F tests and nonsignificant results were obtained. A statistically significant difference was found between former athletes' and nonathletes' excitement scores, $t(191) = -2.875$, $p < .01$. This result indicated that respondents who did not participate in sports ($M = 6.45$, $SD = .60$) found their favorite women's sport competitions more exciting than former athletes ($M = 6.08$, $SD = .91$), and Cohen's d for the statistically significant difference was .43.

The third MANOVA was performed to test differences among age groups' attitudes toward women's sports. The Box's M value was statistically significant, thus violating the assumption of homogeneity of covariance matrices. However, in case of violation of the assumption, Tabachnick and Fidell (1996) suggested using Pillai's trace as the most robust measure of multivariate significance and stated that "if cells with larger samples produce larger variance, the alpha level is conservative so that null hypotheses can be rejected with confidence" (p. 382). The MANOVA reported statistically significant Pillai's Trace = .362, $F(40, 840) = 1.640$, $p < .01$, partial $\eta^2 = .072$, indicating one or more mean differences among age groups and attitudinal factors. Prior to conducting a series of ANOVAs as follow-up tests, homogeneity of variance assumption was tested and met with Levene's F statistics. A follow-up one-way ANOVA revealed a statistically significant difference between age groups for athlete quality, which was measured in terms of athletes' skill and expertise in their sport, $F(5, 185) = 3.489$, $p \leq .01$. Tukey follow-up tests indicated that most age groups (18-24 years old [$M = 6.42$, $SD = .61$], 25-34 years old [$M = 6.19$, $SD = .86$], 35-44 years old [$M = 6.07$, $SD = .83$], and 55-64 years old [$M = 6.23$, $SD = 1.14$]) believed that female athletes were experts in their sports and more skillful when compared with participants from 65 and older age group ($M = 5.22$, $SD = 1.57$). The Cohen's d s for statistically significant age group differences on athlete quality ranged from .73 to .92.

Discussion

Attitude-Consumption Intentions Relationship

Results of the study revealed that both cognitive and affective aspects of attitude were predictive of women's sport fans' consumption intentions. Affect was measured in terms of fans' emotional evaluations of their favorite women's sports. Participants' positive affect regarding their favorite women's sport was a factor that increased their likelihood of consuming women's sports. Findings from the

present study were in alignment with related literature. For example, Lim et al. (2010) listed emotions as a key element of fandom for mixed martial arts (MMA). Similarly, Martinez Caro and Martinez Garcia (2007) reported that runners' affective reactions to a running event drove their satisfaction with the event. Therefore, sport marketers should stimulate fans' emotions and build emotional connections between fans, women's sports and female athletes. The WNBA successfully built emotional ties between fans and their soon to be WNBA rookies Skyler Diggins, Brittney Griner, and Ellena Delle Donne in 2013 via human-interest pieces broadcast by ESPN giving fans an inside look into these athletes' lives, struggles, and aspirations. Our findings support this strategy and point to the need for other women's sport leagues to model the WNBA's example.

However, affect was not the only predictor of consumption intentions. The cognitive component of attitude also contributed to the prediction of future behavioral intentions. Martinez Caro and Martinez Garcia (2007) found similar results, with runners' cognitive evaluation of the running event as the key predictor of intent to participate in the following years of the race. These findings support Bagozzi and Burnkrant's (1979) Two-Component Model of Attitude and also demonstrate that focusing on only the affective component of attitude (e.g., Dixon, 2002; Lim et al., 2010; Mahony & Moorman, 1999; McCabe, 2008; 2011) results in addressing only a portion of the attitude construct. Therefore, marketers should create strategies aligned with both affective and cognitive aspects of fans' attitude toward women's sports to increase attendance and viewership.

Salient Product Attributes Predicting Consumption Intentions

Understanding fans' attitudes toward women's sports from a cognitive perspective allows marketers to identify strengths and weaknesses of their product in terms of its product attributes and the product's ability to fulfill fans' needs and wants. Our results indicated excitement and entertainment price were two salient product attributes of women's sports that predicted consumption intentions. It was not surprising to find excitement of events as the strongest predictor of consumption intentions when sporting events are one of many alternative entertainment options. As Funk et al. (2003) found, fans attend and/or view women's sporting events to avoid boredom and escape from the stress of daily life, and excitement of events allows them to fulfill these motives. One question remaining is what makes women's sporting events exciting to the fans? Marketers should not assume what makes men's sports exciting also makes women's sports exciting. The same sport could be very different when performed by men as compared to women. For example, the style of play in the WNBA is below the rim for the most part and is very different than the style of play in the NBA. The WNBA emphasized hustle and skill in its 2008 "Expect Great" commercial and quality of players in their 2013 "I Love It" commercial. Meanwhile, the NBA emphasized its star power and brand image in its 2014 "Everybody Up" campaign. The unique aspects of each women's

sport product that makes it exciting to fans and distinct from other sport products needs to be understood to better facilitate long-term viability and sustainability.

Entertainment price was the other salient product attribute that was predictive of consumption intentions according to survey respondents. The respondents described their favorite women's sport events as affordable entertainment. In general, women's sporting events provide quality entertainment at a lower price when compared with their male counterparts. However, being priced well does not turn women's sporting events into highly sought events. Sport consumers evaluate event prices based on the value they assign to the event (Mullin, Sutton, & Hardy, 2014). Consumers evaluate alternative products by analyzing benefits of product attributes and determine which product provides the most value to them (Hawkins et al., 2007). For the present study, respondents perceived their favorite women's sports as exciting events with a good price, and these factors collectively increased their likelihood to attend and/or view these sports events in the future. Understanding salient product attributes such as affordability and excitement can assist marketers in communicating with fans more effectively via relevant messages.

Only two (excitement and entertainment price) product attributes were statistically significant predictors of women's sport fans' consumption intentions. A possible explanation for this finding lies in the attitude literature. Wilkie and Pessemier (1973) discussed a number of product attributes as predictors, and they reminded us that product attributes were perceptual rather than objective product constructs. Since consumers evaluated a product or service in terms of its potential to satisfy their needs and desires (Hawkins et al., 2007) important product attributes could differ on an individual basis and across market segments. Therefore, in the present study, although excitement and entertainment price were the significant product attributes predicting women's sport fans' consumption intentions, significant predictors might differ for other populations or various market segments as their expectations for the women's sport product may differ.

Group Differences in Attitudes Toward Women's Sports

In addition to examining the relationship between attitude and consumption intentions, and identifying salient product attributes of women's sports, we investigated group differences on attitudes toward women's sport. The first significant group difference was between former athletes and nonathletes. Respondents, who were competitive athletes in the past, found women's sports less exciting than respondents who were not former athletes. This finding raised the question of why former athletes viewed women's sports as less exciting. Further investigation of former athletes and nonathletes showed that the majority of both groups were female (approximately 80%); however, groups varied greatly on age. Nonathletes were older than the former athletes. The largest age group (43%) for nonathletes was 55+, while the largest age group (40%) for former athletes was 18-

to 34-year-olds. Younger former athletes might have evaluated women's sports not as exciting due to retiring from the game recently and being more critical of the performance. However, they identified as women's sport fans and demonstrated high consumption intentions. Perhaps encouraging the media to provide more statistical information on women's sports would increase the appeal among former athletes and more knowledgeable fans, given statistics on mainstream sports are an expectation and point of conversation.

The second significant group difference was found among age groups and their evaluation of the female athletes. Younger respondents perceived female athletes as more skillful and as experts in their sport when compared to the oldest participant group. Based upon this finding, athleticism and skill/competence of female athletes should be emphasized in marketing activities to younger fans. This result is in alignment with Kane and Maxwell's (2011) findings that "Sex sells sex... sex does not sell women's sport" (p. 1), and female athletes should be presented as highly competent and dedicated athletes. A recent Nike commercial called "Bring your game" is a perfect example supporting this finding. Elena Delle Donne is featured in the commercial, along with Kevin Durant, Kobe Bryant, LeBron James, and other NBA stars, and showing off her basketball skills to attract fans (Newport, 2015). Therefore, the athletic skills and competence of female athletes should be utilized in marketing campaigns to appeal to the younger women's sports fan base. Various fan segments of women's sports consume their favorite women's sports for different reasons and value different product attributes of the women's sport product. The findings from this study can be used to improve the marketing efforts targeting the current fan base for women's sport, as well as guide strategies to create new fans.

Limitations

This is the first study focusing on both cognitive and affective aspects of fans' attitudes toward women's sports. The results of this study provide insights regarding fan's attitudes and consumption intentions related specifically to women's sports. However, there are limitations to the results of the study. Fifteen women's sports were reported as the favorite sports by participants. As a result, the sample size for each sport was not large enough to perform statistical analyses specific to each sport. Therefore, data analyses were conducted by combining data from all women's sports fans who participated in the study.

Another limitation of the study was related to external validity of the results. Participants of the study were self-identified women's sport fans who were predominantly female (80.3%), and they were recruited via non-probabilistic sampling method. Therefore caution should be taken when generalizing results.

Future Directions

Sport-specific investigations should be conducted in future studies to examine evaluation of product attributes among fans of specific women's sports. In ad-

dition, attitudes of different market segments of women's sports should be studied along with gender differences. Lastly, future research is needed to determine what makes each women's sport exciting and why fans follow specific women's sports. This information will allow marketers to create targeted marketing strategies to grow the current fan base and improve the appeal of women's sports to develop new fans for women's sports.

Conclusion

Overall, this study found both cognitive and affective components of attitude as predictive of consumption intentions in terms of attendance and viewership. This finding confirms the results of previous studies investigating attitude (Lim et al., 2010, Martinez Caro & Martinez Garcia, 2007) and shows the positive relationship between attitude and consumption is also valid in the women's sports context.

In addition to investigating the attitude-consumption relationship, this study identified the salient product attributes of women's sports. Results of the present study revealed that consumption intentions were predicted by the attributes of excitement and entertainment price as well as by fans' positive affect for their favorite women's sport. Examining consumers' evaluations of the women's sport product in terms of its product attributes is important since consumers only value a few attributes of a product/service that will fulfill their needs and/or help them reach their goals (Hawkins et al., 2007).

Lastly, the present study also revealed group differences in evaluations of women's sports. Former athletes did not find women's sporting events as exciting as non-athletes, and the younger age groups valued female athletes' skills more than the 65 and over age group. These findings indicate the importance of studying various market segments as their expectations from women's sports differ. Developing a diverse fan base for women's sport will require attention to these differences and should be apparent in targeted marketing communication.

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Appendix

ATWS Scale Items and Relevant Statistics (Mean, Standard Deviation, Cronbach's Alpha)

Subscale and Corresponding Items	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>α</i>
Excitement		0.85
___ competitions are exciting	6.28 (1.01)	
___ competitions provide fun atmosphere	6.33 (.920)	
___ competitions are full of excitement	5.99 (1.30)	
There is high level of excitement at ___ competitions	6.00 (1.11)	
Opportunity for Women		0.84
___ increases opportunities for women in life	5.67 (1.48)	
___ creates areas that women can take part in life	5.42 (1.62)	
___ plays a leader role in gaining gender equality in life	5.46 (1.60)	
___ opens up opportunities for women to excel in life	6.03 (1.29)	
Accessibility		0.81
It is easy to find information about ___	4.83 (1.81)	
___ competitions can easily be accessed via television or the internet	3.26 (1.90)	
There are lots of opportunities to watch ___ competitions	3.95 (1.88)	
It is easy to find schedule of ___ competitions	4.29 (1.88)	
Aesthetic		0.85
There is a certain natural beauty to the ___ competitions	5.81 (1.32)	
There is beauty inherent in ___ competitions	5.63 (1.39)	
___ competitions are form of art	5.13 (1.63)	
___ competitions are aesthetically pleasing	5.48 (1.57)	
___ competitions are pleasing to eye	5.66 (1.46)	
Drama		0.81
___ competitions are usually close games/events.	5.25 (1.31)	
___ competitions are usually not one-sided	5.22 (1.37)	
___ competitions are usually tight matches/games.	5.12 (1.43)	
___ competitions are not blow outs	4.84 (1.50)	
Entertainment Price		0.75
It is affordable to be a fan of ___	6.00 (1.37)	
___ competitions are expensive	4.85 (1.78)	
___ competitions are not affordable	5.71 (1.54)	
Athlete Quality		0.85
___ athletes are experts at their sport	6.26 (1.13)	
___ has recognizable athletes	5.85 (1.51)	
___ athletes are the best at their sport	6.04 (1.33)	
___ has star athletes	5.85 (1.48)	
___ athletes have excellent skills	6.06 (1.31)	
Affect		0.74
Dislike Like	6.40 (1.37)	
Favorable Unfavorable	6.57 (1.07)	
Worthless Valuable	6.04 (1.48)	
Positive Negative	6.46 (1.01)	
Unimportant Important	5.99 (1.20)	
Consumption Intentions		0.86
The probability that I would go to ___ games/events is high	6.02 (1.31)	
I am likely to attend ___ games/events	6.04 (1.29)	
Attending ___ games/events is something I plan to do.	5.86 (1.41)	
I am likely to watch ___ games/events on TV	5.91 (1.51)	
The probability that I would watch ___ games/events on TV is high	5.87 (1.58)	
I intent to watch ___ games/events during the season	6.08 (1.41)	