

12-1-2012

# Professional basketball consumer behavior: an analysis of the NBA servicescape, atmospheric music and attendee attitudes, emotional responses, and behaviors

Crystal Southall

Follow this and additional works at: <http://digscholarship.unco.edu/dissertations>

---

## Recommended Citation

Southall, Crystal, "Professional basketball consumer behavior: an analysis of the NBA servicescape, atmospheric music and attendee attitudes, emotional responses, and behaviors" (2012). *Dissertations*. Paper 255.

This Text is brought to you for free and open access by the Student Research at Scholarship & Creative Works @ Digital UNC. It has been accepted for inclusion in Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Scholarship & Creative Works @ Digital UNC. For more information, please contact [Jane.Monson@unco.edu](mailto:Jane.Monson@unco.edu).

UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN COLORADO

Greeley, Colorado

The Graduate School

PROFESSIONAL BASKETBALL CONSUMER BEHAVIOR:  
AN ANALYSIS OF THE NBA SERVICESCAPE,  
ATMOSPHERIC MUSIC AND ATTENDEE  
ATTITUDES, EMOTIONAL RESPONSES  
AND BEHAVIORS

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirement for the Degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

Crystal Southall

College of Natural and Health Sciences  
School of Sport and Exercise Science  
Sport Administration

December 2012

This dissertation by: Crystal Southall

Entitled: *Professional Basketball Consumer Behavior: An Analysis of the NBA Servicescape, Atmospheric Music and Attendee Attitudes, Emotional Responses and Behaviors*

has been approved as meeting the requirement for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in College of Natural and Health Sciences in School of Sport and Exercise Science, Program of Sport Administration

Accepted by the Doctoral Committee

---

Dianna P. Gray, Ph.D., Chair

---

David K. Stotlar, Ph.D., Committee Member

---

Bob Brustad, Ph.D., Committee Member

---

Susan R. Hutchinson, Ph.D., Committee Member

Date of Dissertation Defense May 4, 2012

Accepted by the Graduate School

---

Linda L. Black, Ed.D., LPC  
Acting Dean of the Graduate School and International Admissions

## ABSTRACT

Southall, Crystal. *Professional basketball consumer behavior: An analysis of the NBA servicescape, atmospheric music and attendee attitudes, emotional responses, and behaviors*. Published Doctor of Philosophy dissertation University of Northern Colorado, 2012

Sport is a unique product within the domain of entertainment and leisure services.

Although the sport industry continues to grow, sport spectatorship has changed dramatically, with fans consuming sport through a variety of media outlets such as television and the Internet. Sport consumers can now watch live, delayed, or recorded sporting events when and where they choose, therefore sport organizations must focus their attention on sustainability through the creation of a competitive advantage in the staging of live sporting events. The National Basketball Association product is consumed in an increasingly stimulating consumptive landscape and therefore was the focus of the present study.

The purpose of the present study was to examine the extent to which professional basketball involvement influences attitudes toward the home team. This study also investigated the relationship between NBA involvement and team loyalty on emotional responses the servicescape and interpretation of atmospheric music. Data collection for this study took place during the 2010-2011 NBA season. Utilizing a cluster sampling procedure, 800 surveys were distributed during two separate games. A total of 425 participants completed the 42-item instrument, resulting in a 53% response rate.

To analyze the relationship between NBA involvement and loyalty to the home team an independent samples *t* test was utilized. The results revealed a positive relationship. One-way MANOVA analyses revealed significant main effects for both involvement and loyalty on the servicescape variables (arousal and pleasure) grouped together. Further, significant main effects were revealed for involvement and loyalty on the linear composite of music interpretation scores (liking, congruency, and distraction). Lastly, a cluster analysis was performed using Ward's (1963) method of hierarchical agglomeration to better understand which explanatory variables cluster participants into discernible and meaningful groups. Results revealed four meaningful clusters of participants.

The present study revealed a positive relationship between NBA involvement and team loyalty. Further, heightened emotional responses and increasingly positive perceptions of atmospheric music were experienced by highly involved and loyal participants. Results support the significant impact the servicescape has on the live sport-consumption experience. Since the goal of sport marketers is to attract and retain highly involved and loyal fans, sport marketers should work to control the service environment in order to increase sport-consumers' levels of pleasure and arousal, thereby increasing the frequency of purchase and repurchase intentions.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
I.	INTRODUCTION.....	1
	Purpose	
	Research Questions and Hypotheses	
	Rationale for the study	
	Delimitations	
	Limitations	
	Definitions of terms	
II.	REVIEW OF LITERATURE.....	14
	The Sport Product, Sport Consumer and Branding	
	Sport Consumer Behavior	
	The Production and Presentation of Sport	
	Conclusion	
III.	METHODOLOGY.....	51
	Sample	
	Instrumentation	
	Design and Procedures	
	Statistical Techniques and Data Analysis	
IV.	AN ANALYSIS OF NBA INVOLVEMENT AND TEAM LOYALTY ON CONSUMER ATTITUDES AND EMOTIONAL RESPONSES .....	79
	Review of Literature	
	Purpose and Hypotheses	
	Method	
	Results	
	Discussion	

CHAPTER	PAGE
V. AN INVESTIGATION OF NBA INVOLVEMENT AND LOYALTY TO THE HOME TEAM.....	105
Introduction	
Review of literature	
Method	
Results	
Discussion	
REFERENCES.....	132
APPENDIX A – SURVEY INSTRUMENT.....	146
APPENDIX B – INFORMED CONSENT FOR PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH.....	151
APPENDIX C – IRB APPROVAL LETTER.....	153

## LIST OF TABLES

TABLE		PAGE
1.	Summary of Adapted Scales.....	56
2.	PCM Facet Scoring .....	61
3.	Demographic Information of Current sample.....	92
4.	Mean Arousal and Pleasure Scores by Involvement group.....	94
5.	Mean Arousal and Pleasure Scores by Loyalty Group .....	95
6.	Atmospheric Music Interpretation Scores by Involvement Group..	96
7.	Atmospheric Music Interpretation Scores by Loyalty Group.....	98
8.	Cluster Means, Standard Deviations and Z-scores.....	118
9.	Cluster Purchase Intentions and Behaviors.....	119
10.	Select Demographic Information of <i>NBA</i> Cluster .....	120
11.	Select Demographic Information of <i>Model</i> Cluster.....	121
12.	Cluster Atmospheric Music Interpretation Scores.....	123



## **CHAPTER I**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Estimates of the economic worth and impact of the sport industry continue to grow. In 1995 it was estimated that the sport industry in the United States was a \$62 billion business (Meek, 1997). More recent estimates, place the value of the sport industry, including both the production and consumption of the sport product, in excess of \$152 billion (Broughton, Lee, & Netheny, 1999), with some estimates as high as \$410 billion (Plunkett Research, 2009), with estimates of annual consumer spending alone exceeding \$250 billion (Crompton, 2004). Milano and Chelladurai (2011), in an investigation of the 2005 Gross Domestic Sport Product (GDSP), provided similar estimates (between \$168billion to \$207billion). Further, according to Trail and James (2008) the U.S. sport-fan population is estimated at 200 million.

Although the sport industry continues to grow and expand (Masteralexis, Barr, & Hums, 2008; Pedersen, Miloch, & Laucella, 2007), sport organizations must focus their attention on sustainability through the creation of a competitive advantage. In today's marketplace sport organizations not only compete for consumers within their league, but also organizations in other sports or industry segments. In addition alternate forms of leisure and entertainment such as theatre, film, recreational activities, and theme parks are also direct competitors for sport-consumers' discretionary income. Further, sport spectatorship has changed dramatically, with fans consuming sport through a variety of

media outlets such as television and the Internet. As a result, sport consumer can now watch live, delayed, or recorded sporting events when and where they choose.

According to Nielsen (2010; 2012) data, there were over 43,700 hours of live sporting events broadcast in 2009 on both cable and network television, which increased to 42,500 hours of live sporting events that were broadcast in 2011. The National Basketball Association (NBA) also saw television revenues increase dramatically, from \$275 to \$365 million annually, during the decade between 1995 and 2005 (Ourand & Lombardo, 2007). These estimates do not include rebroadcasts of events nor highlight shows dedicated to recapping recent action. Additionally, with the advent of digital video recorders (DVRs) such as TiVo, sport consumers are no longer constrained by scheduled start times.

Even though today's sport consumer has many viewing options, attendance at live sporting events continues to be a significant source of revenue generation for sport organizations. Ticket sales are the life-blood of the industry, the foundation upon which all other sources of revenue (e.g., sponsorships, media contracts) depend (Southall & Dick, 2011), with the NBA alone typically generating 35% of its revenue from gate receipts (Schnietz, 2005). Within the United States recent estimates place the amount of money spent on attending sporting events at over \$11 billion annually (Howard & DeSchriver, 2005). Further, in the three decades between 1970 and 2000 overall attendance figures for the four major professional sport leagues in the United States increased 163% from 49 million to 128 million spectators annually (Moag & Company, 2002).

With the continued growth of the sport industry, as well as the various modes of sport consumption, the creation of a highly involved and loyal fan base has increased significance for sport organizations, as the creation and maintenance of such a foundation is essential for sustainability at the organizational level. Similar to any other industry and product, sport consumption is the result of choices made by individual consumers. According to Funk (2008), within the context of sport, consumer behavior stems from individuals' desire to seek out a consumption experience in order to satisfy internal needs and obtain associated benefits. Thus, it is essential for sport organizations and sport marketers to identify and understand significant influencers of consumer attitudes related to the sport consumption experience, and thus what drives sport consumption behaviors.

Given the unique nature of sport and the sport product, there is a need for sport specific consumer behavior research to examine the relationship between involvement with a specific sport league and loyalty to a specific franchise. Further, there is also a need for research to examine the experiential sport environment, in order to investigate how sport organizations may use elements in the space surrounding the presentation of the sport product to enhance both the experience of spectators, as well as their brand, thereby influencing consumer attitudes and behaviors which are antecedents of involvement, and thus by extension loyalty.

### **Purpose**

The purpose of the present study was to examine the relationship between spectators' involvement with the NBA and the level of attitudinal loyalty to a particular NBA team. Involvement is conceptually defined for the present study as an unobservable state of interest, arousal or motivation toward the attendance of NBA games, that is

induced by stimuli within a particular environment that mediates resultant sport consumer attitudes and behavior (Havitz & Dimanche, 1997; Rothschild, 1984). Attitudinal loyalty to a particular NBA team exists when an individual forms a psychologically meaningful connection and attachment to a team that is enduring and resistant to change when presented with alternatives or negative change (Heere & Dickson, 2008). Thus, involvement can be situational or change over time, while loyalty persists over time and is possible only when high levels of involvement have been achieved by an individual.

Sport spectators' purchase intentions and purchasing behaviors were also examined in the present study. Behavioral purchase intentions and actual purchasing behaviors have been used in past research as an indicator of both involvement and loyalty (e.g., Gladden & Milne, 1999; Howard & Crompton, 1995; Mullin, Hardy, & Sutton, 2007). According to Day (1969) the repeated purchase of a product does not indicate loyalty unless the consumer is highly involved with the product, thus displaying a psychological commitment to the brand through loyalty. Given that high levels of involvement are precursors of loyalty, a multidimensional concept that includes both behavioral and attitudinal components, it is necessary to fully understand both sport consumer involvement and loyalty in the present context. Additionally, participants' purchasing and attendance behaviors were investigated to better understand the degree to which they are correlated to emotional responses elicited by the *servicescape*, as well as the interpretation of the atmospheric music within the consumptive sport environment.

Today's sport marketplace has become increasingly cluttered and therefore, increasingly competitive for the time, money, and emotional investment of consumers (CITE?). Given the nature of the sport industry as well as the unpredictable nature of the

sport product, the establishment of a loyal fan base is of increasing importance to sport organizations. Franchises, or teams, are individual brands of their particular sport. Enhancing the value of the team's brand, through the creation of brand equity in the minds' of sport consumers, is essential in the creation of team loyalty. According to Amis, Slack, and Barrett (1999) the establishment of a foundation of loyal consumers is important as it can help to insulate an organization from external threats, as the revenue they generate can be relied upon, thus giving the organization time to react to environmental pressures.

Emotional responses to the environment, within which the sport product is both produced and consumed, were also investigated in the present study. The consumption of live sporting events takes place within an experiential service environment referred to as the servicescape (Bitner, 1992). Atmospheric music within the servicescape provides aural cues to sport consumers while they are in attendance of events. Sport organizations are in control of the atmospheric music being played, and therefore can use the music to create meaningful memories and associations with the consumptive experience and the sport brand in the minds' of consumers. Thus, responses to the servicescape and atmospheric music may result in both positive and negative brand associations and thus increase, or decrease, brand equity. The present study examined the extent to which attendee's levels of involvement with the NBA and attitudinal loyalty to team were related to the emotional responses elicited by stimuli presented in the servicescape during an NBA game.

### **Research Questions and Hypotheses**

- Q1 To what extent is the level of NBA involvement related to participants' loyalty to the home team?
- H1.1 A participant's level of involvement with professional basketball will be positively related to a participant's level of loyalty to the home team.
- Q2 To what extent are NBA involvement and team loyalty levels related to participants' emotional responses to the servicescape?
- H2.1 Participants' level of involvement with professional basketball will be positively related to their reported levels of arousal and pleasure experienced while in attendance of the game.
- H2.2 Participants' level of loyalty to the home team will be positively related to their reported levels of arousal and pleasure experienced while in attendance of the game.
- Q3 To what extent are levels of NBA involvement and NBA team loyalty related to the interpretation of the atmospheric music played during the game?
- H3.1 Participants' level of involvement with professional basketball will be positively related to the music interpretation scores of liking, congruency and distraction.
- H3.2 Participants' level of loyalty to the home team will be positively related to the music interpretation scores of liking, congruency and distraction.
- Q4 Which explanatory variables cluster participants into discernible and meaningful groups?

### **Rationale for the Study**

Consumer behavior research is vital in all industries, as it makes it possible for organizations to enhance their understanding of the wants and needs of consumers, thereby allowing for the construction and implementation of strategic marketing

initiatives that resonant with consumers. In the sport industry, consumer behavior research is of particular importance given the nature of sport and the dynamic sport product that is unpredictable and dependent on the success of the team (Mullin, Hardy, & Sutton, 2007). The sport consumer is also unique as the motives behind consumption fulfill both individual and social needs through attainment of intangible attributes and benefits of the sport brand (Keller, 1993). Further, research that focuses on the attitudes and behaviors of the sport spectator is needed as the consumption of sport continues to change, while at the same time spectators still represent the foundation from which organizations create an involved and loyal fan base.

Within the sport marketing literature there is a lack of agreement and consistency among researchers as to operational definitions of involvement and loyalty, as well as the constructs and processes that underlie the achievement of both within sport. Although inconsistencies exist, there is a general understanding that in order to remain competitive in an ever changing and expanding sport industry, sport organizations must create loyalty among their fans that is resistant to external pressures as well as poor performance (Funk & Pastore, 2000; Heere & Dickson, 2008). Loyalty is formed over time as a result of increased psychological and behavioral involvement. Further, according to Funk and James' (2001, 2006) Psychological Continuum Model the highest level of involvement (allegiance) is synonymous with definitions of attitudinal loyalty presented in the literature. Thus, the present study attempts to bridge the knowledge gap between sport involvement and loyalty by examining the relationship between NBA-league involvement and loyalty to a particular NBA team. Thus, the present study will add to the sport marketing literature by providing a significant link between the constructs of

involvement and loyalty, through the interaction between NBA involvement and NBA team loyalty.

In addition, this study also provides crucial information regarding the influence the sport environment, or servicescape, can have on consumer attitudes and behaviors. The interpretation and valuation of the servicescape by consumers can either enhance or detract from an organization's brand. Atmospheric music is a controllable form of stimuli within the experiential sport servicescape that can be used by sport marketers to create positive and meaningful brand associations in the minds' of consumers, thereby mediating resultant attitudes and behaviors (Gladden & Funk, 2002). Therefore, this study attempts to provide empirical support for the relative impact environmental stimuli and atmospheric music have on sport consumers.

Finally, the present study provides insight into the purchase intentions and behavioral purchasing behaviors of NBA attendees at varying levels of league involvement and team loyalty. The consumer' level of involvement with a particular product, or service, has been shown to directly impact attitudes and behaviors, as a result of increased relevance and importance of and commitment to the product (Kyle, Absher, Norman, Hammitt, & Jodice, 2007; Zaichkowsky, 1985). Attitudinal product loyalty is achieved when importance of the product has been confirmed and a psychological commitment has also been forged with the product over time. This enduring connection has also been shown to affect attitudes and behaviors, as the consumption of the product satisfies internal psychological needs (Havitz & Howard, 1995). Thus, results of this study will provide additional insight into the use of such traditional indicators of success with respect to varying involvement and loyalty levels within the sport domain.



In summary, sport is a unique product that is produced and consumed within a highly competitive and rapidly changing marketplace. Consumption of sport is no longer limited to live event attendance. The sport product can now be consumed via traditional media outlets, as well as emergent television and internet outlets dedicated solely to the presentation of sport content. In a marketplace full of alternatives and substitutes, sport managers must understand the motives of spectators. Further, managers must also recognize the importance of the environment in enhancing the experience of certain consumer segments in order to add value to the sport brand, thereby creating meaningful brand associations which will have a marked impact on consumer attitudes and repurchase intentions. Adding value to the sport brand will also aid in the creation of a loyal base of sport consumers, which is necessary to create a sustainable competitive advantage. Sport managers must focus on creating meaningful connections with consumers who are not yet loyal fans, in order to move them up the involvement continuum. Thus, the current investigation will provide valuable insight into the relationship between involvement at the league level and team loyalty, and consequently the effect this interaction has on resultant attitudes and behaviors. Additionally, a more in depth understanding of the important elements and stimuli that influence the consumption of the experiential NBA sport product will be gained.

### **Delimitations**

The present study examined the relationship between sport consumer involvement and loyalty, and how varying levels of the two constructs impact and influence consumer attitudes and behaviors, as well as responses to the servicescape Data were collected through self-administered surveys given to home-game attendees of a NBA team while

inside the team's respective arena. The results of the study therefore cannot be assumed to be representative of all organizations within the NBA. Further, it cannot be assumed that the results can be generalized to other professional sport leagues such as: professional football, professional hockey and professional baseball. However, according to Schnietz and colleagues (2005) the construction of the sample is representative of NBA attendees, or fans, and therefore, some of the consumer involvement information generated from the data may be generalizable to the population of NBA consumers.

The variables and instrument used to measure involvement and loyalty were selected after a comprehensive review of the business, leisure, and sport literature respectively. The use of the selected measures does not imply that they are the only indicators of sport involvement and attitudinal loyalty. Variables used to gauge participants' attitudes toward atmospherics in the servicescape were also selected after a thorough review of relevant consumer behavior and psychology literature. Similarly, it is not the intention of the study to imply that the selected variables are the only indicators of team loyalty, consumer attitudes and reactions to the servicescape and therefore, the only antecedents of purchase or attendance intentions.

### **Limitations**

1. Due to time, cost, and convenience constraints of both the researcher and participants, only one instrument was used to gauge participants' level of involvement. Alternative instruments which could be employed to measure consumer sport involvement were therefore excluded.
2. Due to time, cost, and convenience constraints of both the researcher and participants, only one scale was used to measure participants' level of attitudinal loyalty.

- Alternative instruments which could be used to measure the construct of attitudinal loyalty were therefore not included in the present study.
3. This study utilized a survey instrument that was administered using a face-to-face mode of dissemination as the primary method of data collection. As such, response errors may exist, such as: not knowing the answer, providing socially desirable responses, ambiguity in instructions or definition of terms, and intentionally providing the incorrect answer or leaving an item blank (Raj, 1972).
  4. The study relied heavily on quantitative methods by which to explain the effects of the servicescape on professional sport involvement, consumer attitudes and behaviors. Alternative methods, such as qualitative research methods may have been utilized; thereby presenting a more in depth understanding of participant attitudes and thus the phenomena under investigation.
  5. This study employed cluster sampling techniques in order to create a sampling frame by which to generate parameter estimates to represent the target population. This method was used due to time, cost, and logistical constraints given the design of the study. Alternative sampling methods which could be used to create a sampling frame were therefore not utilized in the present study. As such, the general increase in sampling error that is associated with cluster sampling (Som, 1973) must be taken into consideration when interpreting results.

### **Definitions of Terms**

*Atmospherics*: Aspects of the in-store environment that are created and present cues, which are processed and interpreted by consumers (Kotler, 1973). Cues are in-turn

used by consumers to create attitudes and resultant behaviors toward products and services.

*Attitudinal Loyalty:* The process of forming a psychologically meaningful connection and attachment to a team that is enduring and resistant to change.

*Behavioral Loyalty:* The amount, frequency, and duration of purchasing behavior related to a particular team.

*Consumer Behavior:* Attitudes, beliefs and emotional responses to products and services which elicit marked responses by consumers; as indicated by repeat purchase or attendance behaviors.

*Consumptive Environment:* The space within which consumers actively purchase, and thus consume, a product or service.

*Emotional States:* Core set of responses that occur in reaction to the physical environment, which includes: arousal, dominance, and pleasure. According to Mehrabian and Russell (1974) these three emotional dimensions constitute parsimonious descriptors that can be used to measure emotional responses to environments, as well as stimuli located and experienced within environments. A modified version of Mehrabian and Russell's Approach-Avoidance self-report model was used in this study to measure the emotional dimensions of arousal and pleasure within the professional sport consumptive environment.

*Involvement:* In general, definitions of involvement are rooted in Rothchild's (1984) definition which describes involvement as a state of motivation, attraction to, arousal by, or interest in a particular event or object. Involvement research originated in the psychology domain and has evolved and been applied to studies performed to

investigate consumer behavior, leisure, and more recently sport. The Psychological Continuum Model (PCM; Funk, 2001) was used in the present study to measure professional sport involvement.

*Servicescape:* The servicescape, as defined by Bitner (1992), encompasses all of the physical factors and elements contained within the service or consumer setting. Further, the physical factors can be controlled by an organization in order to elicit preferred consumer responses.

*Sport Consumption:* The active consumption of the sport product and has many forms such as the live, televised, or computer-based viewing of a sporting event. Sport consumption can also connote the purchase of memorabilia and merchandise, as well as engaging in fantasy sporting leagues, betting pools or gambling. In the present study sport consumption is understood to denote one's presence at a live sporting event.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The review of literature for the present study is divided into three main sections. The first section is dedicated to the distinct nature of the sport product, sport consumers, as well as the importance of the sport brand. Additionally, the concept of sport consumption is reviewed as well as the idea that sport is branded entertainment that is packaged by sport organizations and presented to sport consumers via multiple outlets to maximize profits and attract fans. The second section is centered on the concept of sport consumer behavior. The origins of both the involvement and loyalty constructs are examined. Additionally, relevant literature is presented highlighting the impact varying levels of involvement and loyalty have on consumer attitudes and behaviors. The third and final section's focus is on the production and presentation of sport as a form of entertainment that is both produced and consumed within the servicescape. The presentation and production of professional basketball within the NBA as a branded experiential entertainment product is discussed. Further, the use of the servicescape and atmospheric music as tools to enhance the entertainment value of the branded sport-product are examined.

#### **The Sport Product, Sport Consumer, and Branding**

Brooks (1994) defined the sport product as “any form of physical activity that pits one’s talents against an opponent’s” (p. 88). Sport is also a unique product within the

domain of leisure services; as sport is an unpredictable experiential and intangible service-product that is simultaneously produced and consumed. According to Bitner (1992) given the simultaneous production and consumption of services the total experience of the consumer has increased relevance. Therefore the environment, or servicescape, within which the sport product is presented, will have a significant impact on overall perceptions and opinions formed about the sport consumption experience.

Another salient aspect of sport is limited control of the performance of the core product. Sport organizations are able to control who is on the roster; while at the same time injuries, individual and team performance, and game outcomes are unpredictable and out of the organizations' direct control. According to Mullin and colleagues (2007) the limited control of the sport product is a distinguishing feature of sport marketing. Therefore it is imperative for sport marketers to create and increase levels of involvement and loyalty among sport consumers to provide a consistent customer base in times of change, uncertainty, or poor performance.

### **Sport Consumers**

Even though there is considerable competition and choice for today's sport consumer, attendance of sporting events continues to be a significant source of revenue generation for sport organizations. Within the United States recent estimates place the amount of money spent on attending sporting events at over \$11 billion annually (Howard & DeSchrive, 2005). Estimates for all of North America increase the total to \$26.17 billion when other elements, such as parking, concessions, and merchandise, are included (King, 2002). Further, in the three decades between 1970 and 2000 the NBA saw the largest increase in attendance figures among the four major US sport leagues,

with an average NBA fan being a white (67%; 18% African American, 15% Hispanic) male (59%) between the ages of 18-34 (37%), who attended or graduated college (62%) and earns more than \$50,000 annually (48%) (Schnietz et al., 2005). During this timeframe annual attendance increased by 362%, with the introduction of expansion teams, as well as an increase in the total number of sport consumers (Moag & Company, 2002). Further, during times of economic decline the NBA has continued to grow an average of 3.4%, or 424,000 fans, annually (Moag & Company, 2002). This ability to withstand economic instability is of considerable importance to the league and NBA franchises given the inevitable fluctuations that are bound to occur in the economy.

Although attendance figures have historically been encouraging for the NBA, today's sport fan has increasingly more options and modes by which to consume sport. According to a recent Nielsen (2012) report there were over 42,500 hours of live sporting events broadcast in 2011 on both cable and network television. This was an increase of 5% from the number of broadcast hours dedicated to sports programming in 2010. Further, sport is also increasingly being consumed via the internet. In an earlier Nielsen report (2010), each month in 2009 an average of 81 million people in the US logged-on to websites dedicated to sport to either follow their favorite team, follow their fantasy team, or catch-up on the latest sport related news. In October of 2011 alone, over 450 million video streams occurred on various sports websites that were viewed by more than 35 million people (Nielsen, 2012). With the continued growth and increased competition within the sport industry, as well as the influx and proliferation of various modes of sport consumption, the creation of a highly involved and loyal base of spectators has increased



significance for sport organizations, as the creation and maintenance of such a foundation is essential for sustainability at the organizational level.

Today's sports fan has limitless options and opportunities by which to consume sport. The ability of sport organizations to attract and activate attendance of live events still remains vital to an organization's long term viability and success in the industry (Funk, Filo, Beaton, & Pritchard, 2009). Given the availability of alternatives and substitutes, motives for the consumption of live sport have changed. The consumption and presentation of live sport is no longer solely about the game being played. Sport in today's society is a "brazenly commercial enterprise, that makes no pretense as to the paramount importance of delivering entertaining products designed to maximize profit margins" (Andrews, 2001, p. 154). Additionally, the expectations of the sport consumers that their hedonistic entertainment needs be met have also increased significantly. As Rein, Kotler, and Shields (2006) state, in their book *The Elusive Fan*, "it is no longer reasonable to expect fans to automatically appear because they either have nothing better to do or they are so addicted to the sport that they will put up with backless seats and rude ticket takers" (p.13)

Similar to any other industry and product, sport consumption is the result of choices made by individual consumers. According to Funk (2008), within the context of sport, consumer behavior stems from individuals' desire to seek out a consumption experience in order to satisfy internal needs and obtain associated benefits. Thus, it is essential for sport organizations and sport marketers to identify and understand significant influencers of consumer attitudes related to the sport consumption experience, and thus what drives sport consumption behaviors.

## **Branding**

Given the unique and unpredictable nature of sport, as well as the shift in both the production and consumption of sport, the creation of a strong brand holds increased significance for professional sport organizations. Further, given the hypercompetitive nature of the sport industry, the maintenance of a strong brand is also vital for long-term sustainability. Establishing a strong sport brand will work to differentiate an organization in an increasingly cluttered marketplace (Rein et al., 2006), thereby working to create and maintain a competitive advantage.

The creation of a strong sport brand is based upon the creation of brand associations. According to Aaker (1991) brand associations are any thoughts, images, or experiences located in a consumer's mind that are linked to a specific brand. Brand associations with the sport product include all of the experiential attributes and emotional benefits that consumers incur as part of the sport consumption experience (Gladden & Funk, 2002). The cumulative effect of brand associations is the establishment of a brands' image and the creation of brand equity in consumers' minds (Bauer, Stokburger-Sauer, & Exler, 2008). The difficulty in quantifying and understanding consumer brand associations is twofold. First, consumer reactions to experiences are not uniform; that is the reaction of one consumer to the same experience may differ from that of other consumers (Bagozzi, Gopinath, & Nyer, 1999). Secondly, brand associations, in addition to most of the benefits received from the sport product, are intangible, as they reside in the mind of the consumer (Mullin et al., 2007).

Given the intangible nature of the sport product and the benefits derived from its consumption, the experience of the consumer has taken on greater importance in the

development and management of the sport brand. According to Rein and colleagues (2006) “teams that can transform themselves into brands that offer fans a distinctive experience, one not dependent upon wins and losses, will remain competitive in the marketplace” (p. 99). Further, if a team is able to create a unique experience in support of its brand, they will be able to capitalize on the three main benefits of possessing a strong sports brand: permanence, connectivity, and premium.

Establishment of a sports brand also helps to counteract many of the short term issues that arise in relation to poor performance (Rein et al., 2006). A strong brand is also able to help sustain an organization when there are personnel changes, such as trades, injuries and the retirement of star players. The brand helps to provide a sense of permanence to consumers; that is, a more meaningful connection with the organization. This connectivity is thus able to sustain the organization, in terms of attendance and revenue, when faced with the inevitable ups and downs associated with sport. Consumers thus have a strong connection with the team; a connection that goes beyond a star player, event or facility. Ultimately, a strong brand will hold a premium position in the minds of consumers, and thus, command a premium price.

The creation of a strong sport brand can also be used by organizations to increase levels of involvement. As strong brand associations result in an increase in the meaning, significance and value attributed to the brand in consumers’ minds; essential factors in boosting involvement levels are established (Funk, 2008; Gladden & Funk, 2002). Further, effective branding strategies can also work to create team loyalty among consumers (Bauer et al., 2008; Gladden & Funk, 2002). Both increased involvement and loyalty are essential to the establishment of a strong and enduring fan base.

The live consumption of professional sport has emerged as an entertainment experience, where valuations of the sporting event are based more on the holistic consumption experience than the game being played. Additionally, the hypercompetitive nature of the current sport marketplace has made it necessary for sport organizations to transform the conventional competition-focused delivery of the sport product into a sport brand in order to meet the needs of the contemporary sport consumer. One important element in the transformation of an organization into a brand is the establishment of a brand's ethos.

Ethos is defined as "the character of the communicator as understood and believed by the audience" (Rein et al., 2006, p. 112). Ethos is the foundation of a sport brand's credibility. The establishment of credibility is essential for a brand to create a meaningful connection with consumers. According to Rein and colleagues (2006) this is of particular importance in sport as consumers must believe that the sport brand has integrity and therefore, they can trust it. Credibility is established by consumers and is the result of an organization meeting various expectations related to the production and consumption of sport (e.g., fair prices, accessibility, crowding aesthetics, etc.), as well as the core sport product (e.g., fair play, equal opportunity, following the rules, and maximum effort exerted by players, etc.).

One way a team can help to communicate, enhance, and establish a credible sport brand is through non-product related attributes. Non-product related attributes are external to the core sport product and that do not directly affect team performance. Further, they are also relevant to the consumption of the sport product and directly influence perceptions of the sport brand (Bauer et al., 2008). The servicescape is an

important non-program element that is central to an organization's brand (Bauer et al., 2008; Gladden & Funk, 2001), as elements in the servicescape can be used to meet and exceed consumer expectations (Rein et al., 2006). Additionally, atmospheric music, as a controllable element of the servicescape, has been repeatedly shown in service settings to influence consumer attitudes and behaviors (e.g., Chebat, Gelinias-Chebat, & Filiatrault, 1993; Jacob, 2006; Guégen et al., 2008; Milliman, 1982, 1986; North et al., 1999). Therefore atmospheric music can be integral in the creation, communication, and enhancement of the sport brand.

### **Sport Consumer Behavior**

Consumer behavior research has provided a framework by which to gain a deeper understanding of why people consume products and services. Additionally, it is also the study of what and how certain factors influence resultant attitudes and behaviors. Consumer behavior, and in general all behavior, is produced as the result of the impact of three classes of influencers: individual characteristics, environmental surroundings, and inherited biological genetic indicators (Chaudhuri, 2006). Thus, in the marketing literature, it is the manipulation of stimuli in the environment that may produce emotional responses within the individual's mind, thereby leading to desired behavioral responses (Chaudhuri, 2006).

Consumer research in the realm of sport seeks to gain a better understand of the attitudes and behaviors of sport consumers and fans. The goal of this type of research is to understand consumers' attitudes toward a particular sport, event or team in order to gauge behaviors and behavioral intentions. Consumer behavior research also seeks to identify key elements within the presentation of the sport product that influence attitudes

and behaviors. This information will thus enable sport managers and marketers to effectively package and present the sport product in order to successfully attract and retain sport consumers (Funk & James, 2006), by increasing the level of consumer involvement and thus, loyalty.

### **Involvement**

Involvement, for the purposes of the present study, draws upon both Havitz and Dimanche's (1997) definition of leisure involvement and Rothschild's (1984) definition of consumer involvement to be understood as an unobservable state of interest, arousal or motivation toward an event, that is induced by stimuli within a particular environment that mediates resultant sport consumer behavior. Further, it has also been proposed that there are three areas that influence an individual's level of involvement (Houston & Rothschild, 1978). The first of the three areas is an individual's personal values, interests, and needs. The remaining two areas speak to the stimulus object. The last two areas are any physical characteristics that may be present, and finally any situational attributes that work to increase interest or awareness in the object.

The ego is also central to understanding individuals and their resultant responses (Sherif & Cantril, 1974). The ego is the foundation of an individual, as it is the "constellation of the social and personal values one has acquired and which determine the enduring nature of one's identity" (Laaksonen, 1994, p.3). Thus, involvement occurs when an object, service or entity is conveyed to an individual, thereby evoking an emotional response and connection to the ego (Laaksonen, 1994). Ego involvement is therefore central to understanding the complex construct that is involvement.

An individual's level of involvement is also assumed to be a direct result of their attitudinal levels of acceptance, rejection, and non-commitment with respect to a given stimulus (Sherif & Hovland, 1961). Commitment is the ability of a persuasive message to influence levels of acceptance or rejection. As the level of involvement increases, so too do levels of rejection of alternatives. That is, as one becomes increasingly involved with an object or service the less likely they are to be persuaded to consider or be influenced by alternatives (Laaksonen, 1994). According to Sherif and Cantril (1974) the foremost characteristic of a highly involved individual is their resultant increased levels of rejection and resistance to persuasion. Thus, it follows that an individual who is characterized as having low levels of involvement will also have higher levels of acceptance of alternatives and non-commitment, while a highly involved individual will display increased levels of commitment and rejection of alternatives.

There are four key components of involvement: commitment to a position, social support, salience of the issue, and frequent espousal of arguments to support one's position (Laaksonen, 1994). The highly involved individual will possess all four of these elements with respect to the object, product or service in question. The individual will thus possess high levels of rejection to alternatives, as characterized by their level of commitment. A heightened position of involvement will also have value and meaning in both the personal and social domains, as indicated by the increased levels of salience and social support commitment to the object or product provides (Laaksonen, 1994).

Individuals are also involved at multiple levels, with various products and services, as well as in multiple domains. Involvement in such an array of areas and at numerous levels can lead to divergent responses on scales formulated to measure the

involvement construct across domains (Zaichkowsky, 1985). Zaichkowsky constructed the Personal Involvement Inventory (PII) to measure an individual's state of enduring involvement with a particular product or brand. Involvement with a given product was determined to be either high or low based on scores generated on the 20-item semantic differential scale. The PII was constructed to address concerns presented in the involvement literature as to the lack of a consistent and multi-item measure of involvement that could be applied to a variety of consumer products. Based on the scores generated on the PII, consumers who were highly involved were shown to have a preferred brand in a given product category. Highly involved consumers were also more interesting in seeking out information about the product as well as associate greater differences between their preferred brand and alternatives. Thus the product as well as the preferred brand held a positive and meaningful place of significance in the mind of the consumer, ahead of all alternatives.

Given the length of the PII, Munson and McQuarrie (1987) created Modified Personal Involvement Inventory (MPII) as an alternative instrument with the hopes that it would prove to be a more concise measure of involvement. The purpose of the research was to create a scale that would be easier to understand and shorter in length to adequately analyze and measure the involvement construct (Munson & McQuarrie, 1987). The MPII was tested using 16-items to analyze the involvement scores of college-age participants with respect to 12 diverse products from multiple categories (e.g., cars, soft drinks, business suits, etc.). The items included in the MPII were found to be consistent with the PII in signifying and predicting the level of consumer involvement across various product categories. These results also revealed that involvement is a



multidimensional and exceedingly complex construct. An individual is involved with multiple products, brands, and services at a given time. Further, involvement levels may change over time, given the level of exposure, information, and relevance of the product to the individual, as well as the ability of the product to fulfill specific needs, at a given point in time (Funk, 2008).

**Leisure involvement.** Within the leisure domain involvement has been defined “as an unobservable state of motivation, arousal or interest toward a recreational activity or associated product” (Havitz & Dimanche, 1997, p. 246). Therefore it is of critical importance as leisure involvement helps to make sense of the way in which leisure and recreation are viewed with respect to attitudes, as well as in understanding and predicting behaviors. An understanding of leisure involvement research conducted, and scales devised to measure the construct, is necessary to provide insight into involvement within the leisure domain.

McIntyre (1989) presented a modification of Laurent and Kapferer’s (1985) consumer involvement profile (CIP) to investigate leisure involvement. McIntyre’s investigation revealed three key dimensions central to understanding leisure involvement, in contrast to general consumer involvement. The three dimensions are attraction, centrality, and self-expression. Consequently, Kyle, Absher, Norman, Hammitt, and Jodice (2007) constructed a modified involvement scale (MIS), based on McIntyre’s (1989) scale to measure enduring leisure involvement. The MIS consists of five dimensions: attraction, centrality, social bonding, identity affirmation, and identity expression. The unique element presented in the MIS by Kyle and colleagues was the

presentation of the identity construct as two distinct dimensions of affirmation and expression.

Kyle and Mowen (2005) investigated the relationship between leisure involvement and leisure agency commitment among subscribers to a public-metropolitan leisure provider publication. The authors postured, and found, that the level of involvement with a particular leisure activity will translate, over time, into commitment to a particular service provider. The findings add to similar studies in the leisure literature (e.g., Kyle et al., 2007) which found that for certain leisure activities the setting within which the activity takes place holds greater significance to the individual than the activity itself in generating the desired experience of the leisure participant (Kyle & Mowen, 2005).

In Havitz and Dimanche's (1997) review of relevant leisure involvement literature, the authors found that nearly all of the studies conducted lent support to Zaichkowsky's (1985) contention that involvement levels vary among individuals. That is, any given individual's involvement levels will vary depending on the particular product or service that is presented to them. Further, their review revealed that there has been much support for the assertion that different products elicit disparate types, as well as varying degrees of involvement among consumers (Havtiz & Dimanche, 1997; Zaichkowsky, 1985).

**Sport involvement.** Research related to sport involvement, and in particular team sport spectator involvement, has not been as prevalent as that in the general consumer behavior and leisure domains. There are, however, some parallels and extensions that can be drawn from the latter to the realm of sport. Similar to leisure involvement, team sport

involvement provides individuals with the opportunity to express their true selves through active participation or immersion in an experiential environment (Havitz & Dimanche, 1999). Consumption has been conceptualized as experiential, whereby “symbolic meanings associated with more subjective characteristics“(Madrigal, 2006, p.267) are consumed. Further, highly involved consumers of sport seek out and consume a service within an experiential service setting, similar in many respects to the settings in which consumers dine, shop, travel, vacation, and participate in experiential leisure activities. As such, the impact of involvement within the sport domain on sport-consumer attitudes and behaviors should be of significance to sport marketers and managers just as they are to marketers and managers in other respective experiential retail/service environments.

Kerstetter and Kovich (1997) substantiated the multidimensional nature of the involvement construct among women’s college basketball spectators as measured by the CIP. The results also revealed two main dimensions of sport involvement: enjoyment and sign. Attendance duration was directly related to increased levels of enjoyment, which was shown to be a positive predictor of involvement. The results also revealed that risk factors, or costs, were also shown to be of little consequence to sport spectators’ level of involvement. The authors suggested that this finding may be a consequence of there being no actual risks associated with the attendance of sporting events as, “the monetary cost is low, the time investment is minimal, there is no threat of physical danger, there is limited social risk, and there isn’t any performance risk” (Kerstetter & Kovich, 1997, p.245). Additionally, the results suggest that the facet of enjoyment is more important than the second facet of sign when investigating team sport involvement. Further, the

principal determinant of involvement with basketball attendance may be linked to social dimensions (Kerstetter & Kovich; McIntyre, 1989).

Funk and James (2001) developed the Psychological Continuum Model (PCM) in an effort to investigate sport fan and spectator involvement. The PCM also introduced three facets, or factors, that may mediate an individual's level of involvement within the sport domain (Funk and James, 2001). The three facets introduced by the PCM are attraction, sign and centrality. Further, within the PCM there are four levels of psychological connection that exist along a continuum, which translate into an individual's level of involvement. The four levels, presented in ascending order of relative connection, are: awareness, attraction, attachment, and allegiance. According to the PCM, as individuals' progress up the aforementioned stages, they display increased levels of psychological commitment (Funk & James, 2001). Further, increased levels of psychological commitment can be translated into an increased level of involvement. The PCM will be explained in greater detail in the following sub-section.

Involvement with professional sport teams was also investigated by Funk, Ridinger, and Moorman (2004). In particular, the study focused on the spectating facet of sport involvement in the development of the team sport involvement (TSI) model. As a result the authors presented and validated a conceptual model, based on relevant behavior and involvement literature, to measure spectator involvement with a professional sport organization. The results revealed, in line with previous literature (Kerstetter & Kovich, 1997; Munson & McQuarrie, 1987; Zaichkowsky, 1985) that involvement is a complex construct that must be examined holistically. Further, the facets of attraction, self-expression, centrality, and risk were found to be the main determinants, or origins, of

involvement within the context of sport spectators (Funk et al., 2004). The latter three facets were also shown to be more useful in differentiating between high and low frequency segments, which is essential to understanding enduring involvement (Funk & James, 2001).

**NBA involvement.** The present study employed Funk and James' (2001) PCM to measure participants' level of involvement with the NBA. More specifically, the PCM was used to measure the level the unobservable state of motivation, arousal or interest in the live consumption NBA games (Funk, 2008; Havitz & Dimanche, 1997; Rothschild, 1984). Questions were reworded from the original instrument to reflect this emphasis on NBA spectator, or attendee, involvement (i.e., *Attending NBA games plays a central role in my life*). The PCM was chosen in an effort to use a parsimonious and easy to understand measure of involvement. The PCM uses only nine questions and the language used in the construction of the questions is easy to understand; therefore all participants should be able to answer the questions accurately and without difficulty.

The PCM measures three distinct facets of involvement. The three facets being: pleasure, centrality, and sign. Pleasure relates to the enjoyment gained through participation or attendance, centrality is associated with the extent to which the activity or event plays a central role in the life of the individual, and sign is representative of the amount of self-expression or value derived from participation or attendance (Funk, 2008). Three questions for each facet are included in the instrument. Each facet is then given a combined score based on the responses to each question, which results in the creation of an involvement profile. This profile is then used to place an individual into one of four stages along the involvement continuum.

According to Funk and James (2001) the four stages represent a continuum of psychological connection, which is representative of one's level of involvement. The four stages, presented in ascending order of relative connection, are: awareness, attraction, attachment, and allegiance. The awareness stage is characterized by low levels of cognition and attitude formation with respect to a particular sport, activity, or event (Funk, 2008). At the attraction stage psychological evaluation and engagement are present creating a cursory emotional response (Funk, 2008). Attachment indicates that a meaningful connection has been created, resulting in symbolic, emotional or functional significance relayed upon the sport or event (Filo, Funk, & O'Brien, 2009; Funk, 2008). Allegiance, the highest stage along the continuum, is achieved when there is psychological commitment to a sport or event. The three involvement facet scores are used to determine an individual's associated level of involvement along the psychological connection continuum. According to the PCM, as an individual's level of psychological connection to a sport or event increases they will progress up the continuum, which can be translated into an increased level of involvement (Funk & James, 2001).

### **Loyalty**

Loyalty to a brand is defined as a "biased (i.e., nonrandom), behavioral response (i.e., purchase) expressed over time by some decision making unit with respect to one or more alternative brands as a function of psychological (decision making, evaluate) processes" (Jacoby & Kyner, 1973, p. 2). Further, according to Day (1969) true loyalty can only exist in the presence of both a meaningful, positive attitude toward the product and repeated purchasing behaviors. In the sport domain this is of considerable importance given the limited control organizations have over the core sport product; therefore the

connections made with fans have increased importance in creating positive and meaningful valuations of the consumptive sport experience. In an increasingly cluttered and competitive marketplace, the ability of sport organizations to establish loyalty among consumers is of increasing importance.

In order to create and maintain a loyal core of customers, the construct of loyalty must first be understood. Loyalty within the sport and leisure literature has also been characterized as a multidimensional construct (e.g., Funk & James, 2006; Funk & Pastore, 2000; Mahony, Madrigal, & Howard, 2000; Park & Kim, 2000; Trail, Anderson, & Fink, 2000). Within the multidimensional construct the two main aspects of loyalty are behavioral loyalty and attitudinal loyalty. Sport consumer research has focused on better understanding attitudes and behaviors in response to the sport product as indicated by the two dimensions of loyalty in order to effectively enhance the production of the sport product.

Behavioral indicators, such as purchases and frequency of attendance, have traditionally been relied upon as indicators of loyalty in consumer research as well as in sport research (Mahony et al., 2000). Behavioral loyalty is the degree to which an individual repeatedly purchases a particular product, service, or brand. A consumer's level of loyalty toward a product or service has been shown to mediate their intention to repurchase that product or service in the future (Howard & Thompson, 1984; Mahony et al., 2000).

The attitudinal component of loyalty for the purposes of this study is based upon Heere and Dickson's (2008) conceptualization, and extension of Pritchard, Havitz, and Howard's (1999) definition of loyalty, and is presented as an individual's resistance to

change their level of psychological commitment. Thus loyalty is not psychological commitment itself, but rather the persistence of the strength of commitment to a particular team. Attitudinal loyalty is also the result of the interaction between internal psychological processes and connections, and any negative external changes that may occur (Heere & Dickson, 2008).

### **Team Loyalty**

The first attempt to create a measure of team loyalty in the sport management and marketing literature was undertaken by Mahony and colleagues (2000) who created the Psychological Commitment to Team (PCT) scale. The PCT scale incorporated elements of conventional marketing literature to create a measure of loyalty as a multidimensional construct consisting of both attitudinal and behavioral elements. Scores on the resulting scale placed consumers in one of four quadrants within a two-dimensional loyalty matrix (Backman & Crompton, 1991) based on a combination of the behavioral consistency (high/low) and psychological commitment (strong/weak). Based on their placement within the loyalty matrix, consumers' team loyalty is categorized as either: high, spurious, latent, or low.

The validity of the PCT as a measure of loyalty has been questioned in subsequent research (Kwon & Trail, 2003). Additionally, within the sport marketing and management literature the terms allegiance, commitment, and loyalty have all been used to explain sport consumer attitudes and behaviors toward a particular sport team. The lack of consistency and agreement among sport researchers has made it difficult to understand and gauge consumer loyalty within the sport domain. In response to both of



the above concerns, Heere and Dickson (2008) created the Attitudinal Loyalty to Team Scale (ALTS).

To measure loyalty to a particular NBA team, Heere and Dickson's (2008) ALTS was used in the present study. The ALTS is a parsimonious 4-item measure of the psychological connection an individual has to a specific team. As such, the scale is a unidimensional measure that separates internal psychological connections from behavioral responses in order to measure attitudinal loyalty. According to the authors it was necessary to use a unidimensional approach in order to separate the constructs of affective commitment from attitudinal loyalty in order to create a reliable and valid scale from which to measure attitudinal loyalty. Further, loyalty to a team represents an individuals' resistance to change when presented with alternatives, the team is in a slump, or changes are made to the team's lineup. Thus, loyalty represents a predictor of future behavioral intentions, regardless of the team's performance; which is significant given the unpredictable nature of sport and the sport product.

In the sport management literature allegiance has been used interchangeably with loyalty (e.g., Funk & James, 2001, 2006; Funk & Pastore, 2000). Within the PCM (Funk & James, 2001), as discussed previously, allegiance is presented as the highest level of involvement along a continuum. Thus allegiance signifies the highest level of psychological commitment to an organization. This definition of high level involvement is the same as the definition of loyalty presented by Heere and Dickson (2008) that is used as the framework for the present study. Therefore, loyalty can only be achieved after a consumer progresses up the four stages of the involvement continuum. Thus involvement can be understood as being a determinant of loyalty. For the purposes of the

present study the relationship between the constructs of involvement and loyalty were investigated using the PCM and ALTS. In particular the relationship between involvement with the NBA and loyalty to a particular NBA team.

### **The Production and Presentation of Sport**

Consumers today have seemingly limitless choices for how and when they spend their time, energy and money. According to Rein and colleagues (2006) at no other time in history have sports fans had so many options, alternatives, opportunities, venues and events to choose from. Thus, given the hypercompetitive nature of the sport industry, organizations must work to differentiate themselves in order to appeal to and connect with consumers is critical to long term viability and success. Adding value to sport attendance, through the creation of a sport entertainment experience, is one way in which sport organizations have chosen to attract consumers.

### **Sport as Entertainment**

According to Kellner (2002) the presentation of professional basketball best signifies the space sport holds within contemporary American society. The sport product is no longer confined to the competition between teams and athletes on the court; it also includes the venue and environment that surrounds the game. The NBA has embraced the notion that sport is more than a game and according to Andrews (2006) has “successfully blurred the boundaries between the sport, media, and entertainment industries” (p.13). As a result the production surrounding the presentation of NBA games works to create an experience for game attendees; thereby adding value in the minds of consumers to the cost of attendance. Additionally, the creation of an NBA game experience is meant to attract the largest number of consumers possible. The ultimate goal of such an approach

is to maximize profits by appealing to a diverse cross section of the market; thereby beating out other entertainment and leisure options for the time and money of consumers. Thus the NBA has “been transformed into a multifaceted media entertainment enterprise with the game of basketball as its intertextual core” (Andrews, 2006, p.18).

### **The Servicescape**

Bitner (1992) defined the servicescape as all of “the dimensions of the physical surroundings include[ing] all of the objective physical factors that can be controlled by the firm to enhance (or constrain) employee and customer actions” (p.65). The servicescape can also be broken down into four dimensions, each of which contains specific elements. The four dimensions presented by Bitner are: ambient conditions, spatial layout and functionality, signs, symbols, and artifacts, and the service typology and environmental dimensions. Each of the four dimensions lend to the creation of a framework by which to gain a deeper understanding of the impact the constructed environment can have on consumer responses.

Consumers make decisions which impact attitudes and behaviors through the processing of information regarding a specific product or service. An external search occurs in the minds of consumers as they seek knowledge, beyond that which is in their memories, to assess the value and quality of product alternatives (Baker, 1998). Additionally, the interpretation of cues presented to the consumer in the consumptive environment are used in the decision making process. As marketplaces become increasingly complex cues in the environment are of greater significance. Consumers navigating such an intricate landscape may not be able, inclined, or want to take the time to gather relevant information pertaining to the underlying characteristics and qualities of

a particular product or service. As such, easily accessible cues in the environment will be relied upon as a significant source of information when interpreting, making inferences about, and ultimately making judgments regarding product/service quality and value (Baker, 1998). The servicescape, and more importantly the cues presented within it, can thus be shaped to provide pertinent information to consumers about the quality of the product and experience. This staging of cues, thereby will contribute to the creation of immediate and lasting consumer attitudes and behaviors.

Semiotics, within the servicescape, is the framework within which cues are understood and are given meaning. The underlying element of importance within semiotics is sign. Sign is defined as “something that stands for something else and, more technically, as a spoken or written word, a drawn figure, or a material object unified in the mind with a particular cultural concept” (Gottdiener, 1998, p.31). Signs are presented to consumers within the servicescape as verbal and visual cues which are then interpreted and given particular meaning by consumers. Thus, the construction of the consumptive environment, and the signs within said environment, can result in the purposeful presentation of distinct signs that can result in the creation of particular responses and ascription of particular meaning by consumers as they interpret the experiential cues within the environment (Gottdiener, 1998).

According to Gottdiener (1998) there has been a change in the way that commercial spaces are shaped today. That is, there has been a shift towards the creation of themed milieus. Additionally, according to Aubert-Gamet and Cova (1999), this shift can also be seen as signifying a societal, as well as commercial, shift from modernism to postmodernism. The postmodern consumer actively seeks, and is drawn to, service

environments for their ability to create links with others and less for their functional utility (Cova, 1997). The service setting is therefore no longer solely a spatial environment, but also a social environment within which consumers are afforded the opportunity to interact with not only other consumers but also the environment itself (Aubert-Gamet & Cova, 1999). Therefore the ability of elements within the servicescape to create salient social links between consumers is of great significance in the postmodern experiential consumer context.

Consumers also interpret their environment in total, or holistically; as they take into account all of the various elements present within a given setting (Bitner, 1992; Falk, Sockel, & Warren, 2005; Namaslvayam & Mattila, 2007). Therefore, elements within the servicescape do not exist as a single entity, but as an interrelated whole working together to create the total service environment. This has particular importance in industries, such as sport, where the product is both produced and consumed simultaneously within a highly stimulating environment. Such an environment can also be thought of as being part of the experience industry (Mossberg, 2008) where a business is built around a story that is presented to consumers to enhance the meaning and value of their experience. According to Mossberg, storytelling in the servicescape can be used to create an advantage over competitors through the creation of a salient link in consumers' minds between a particular brand and the consumer. Further, if a particularly good story is communicated, it may lead to consumers becoming involved with the product as well as the creation of the service experience itself (Mossberg, 2008).

**The servicescape in the service industry.** Within the restaurant service environment the servicescape has been shown to have a significant impact on the

experience of the consumer. Namaslvayam and Mattila (2007) in a study of non-fast-food restaurants found that the servicescape influenced levels of consumer satisfaction during the service exchange. The ability of the service environment to reinforce or detract from individual consumers' preexisting mood states during the service exchange were shown to impact resultant levels of satisfaction (Namaslvayam & Mattila, 2007). Further, if the servicescape is able to reinforce positive mood states a higher level of satisfaction will be attributed to the service exchange, thereby have a positive impact on the frequency and duration of behavioral intentions.

In a similar study, Harris and Ezeh (2008) focused on UK restaurants and the effect of servicescapes on purchase and loyalty behaviors. The study led to the development of a multidimensional conceptual model to understand the impact of the servicescape on loyalty intentions. The model proposes that there is a linear relationship between loyalty intentions and four categories of servicescape variables. The four servicescape variable categories being: ambient conditions, design factors, staff behavior, and staff image. Further, loyalty intentions were shown to be moderated by both personal and environmental factors (Harris & Ezeh, 2008). The study also revealed that the servicescape directly impacts consumer loyalty and purchase intentions. Further, through the incorporation of a multidimensional model that evaluated the moderating effects of personal and environmental factors on loyalty, the findings also underscore the importance of a holistic approach to conducting servicescape research in order to gain a deeper understanding of the complex nature of servicescapes and their effect on consumer attitudes and behaviors.

**The servicescape in the sport industry.** The construction of multimillion dollar venues, as well as technological advances, has made it possible for organizations to customize the environment to enhance the entertainment value of the sport product. According to Westerbeek and Smith (2003) it is the ability of sport organizations to package the consumption of the sport product into customized entertainment experiences that meet the individual needs and expectations of consumers that will determine their success or failure in today's sport marketplace. Therefore the servicescape must be taken into consideration when evaluating sport consumer attitudes and behaviors.

Within the sport domain Wakefield and Blodgett (1994), investigated satisfaction levels and repurchase intentions with respect to perceptions of the servicescapes of two Major League Baseball (MLB) stadiums. The study evaluated perceptions of stadiums' servicescapes including the spatial layout/functionality and aesthetic appeal. Spatial layout and functionality elements included: length of concession and restroom lines, arrangement of seats, aisles and walkways, accessibility of concessions, restrooms, entrances and exits. Elements related to the aesthetic appeal of the stadium included: cleanliness, scents, architectural design, external environment, signage, upkeep, and physical condition of the stadium. The authors found that the perceived quality of the stadium's servicescape features were positively related to heightened levels of excitement and increased repurchase intentions. Excitement levels were related to increased levels of satisfaction with the servicescape, while increased purchase intentions related to an increased likelihood of attending future MLB games in the stadium with a positively perceived servicescape.

In a study of collegiate football stadiums, Wakefield and Sloan (1995) investigated the influence of certain stadium features on spectators' intentions to stay in the stadium. The elements investigated by the authors included: parking, cleanliness, crowding, fan control, and food service. The results revealed that spectators who were satisfied with the servicescape were likely to stay in the stadium as well as return in the future. The data also revealed that perceptions of crowding had the greatest influence on spectators desire to stay, while fan control had the weakest effect. Crowding goes beyond the size of the crowd, but also relates to crowding in concourses, concession and restroom lines, as well as seating areas.

Based on the elements of the servicescape (Bitner, 1992) presented in the literature Wakefield and Blodgett (1996) investigated the effect of the servicescape on consumer behavior across three distinct leisure service settings: major college football, minor league baseball, and casinos. The servicescape elements of layout accessibility, aesthetics, seating comfort, cleanliness, and electronic equipment and displays were investigated by the authors. The study revealed that satisfaction with the servicescape, across leisure settings and in line with previous research (e.g., Wakefield & Blodgett 1994; Wakefield & Sloan, 1995), has a consistent and significant effect on *repatronage* intentions and the amount of time spent in the service setting. The results support the authors' assertion of the importance of the servicescape as a determinant of consumer behavior, particularly when the service is experiential and consumed primarily for hedonistic reasons (Wakefield & Blodgett, 1996). Thus the study added to the servicescape literature by showing support for the contention that the controlled elements of the service environment have a direct, consistent, and significant impact on consumer



behaviors. This is of particular interest for the present study given that sport is classified as a hedonic service that is produced and consumed in an experiential environment.

In another study within minor league baseball, the impact of a newly constructed stadium's servicescape on behavioral intentions was investigated (Hightower, Brady, & Baker, 2002). The authors attempted to holistically investigate how attitudes regarding the servicescape shape perceptions of quality and satisfaction and by extension behavioral intentions. The data revealed, in keeping with previous research in sport settings (Wakefield & Blodgett, 1994, 1996; Wakefield & Sloan, 1995) that the servicescape had a significant influence on behavioral intentions; which included repurchase and attendance intentions as well as intended positive word-of-mouth (Hightower et al., 2002). The servicescape was also shown to positively influence positive affect as well as perceptions of quality and value; which all in-turn act to positively impact behavioral intentions. Further, increased levels of involvement were significantly and positively related to perceptions of the servicescape. The final finding holds particular significance for sport marketers as it suggests that organizations can use the servicescape, or elements within the servicescape, as a tool to increase involvement levels among spectators (Hightower et al., 2002)

**Approach-avoidance.** Within the sport industry, the servicescape is of particular importance given the extended amount of time consumers spend within the service setting while in attendance of a sporting event. According to Mehrabian and Russell (1974, 1976) any demonstrated response to a physical setting, or environment, can be categorized as being either an approach or avoidance behavior. All approach and avoidance behaviors can be attributed to emotional states, which are the intervening

variables between stimuli present in the environment and approach or avoidance behaviors toward the environment (Hines & Mehrabian, 1979; Mehrabian & Russell, 1974). Approach behaviors include an increase in the length of time spent in an environment and increased affiliation, contact, verbal and nonverbal communication with those who are present in the environment (Hines & Mehrabian, 1979; Magnini & Parker, 2009; Booms & Bitner, 1980). Conversely, avoidance behaviors are characterized by decreased time spent in the environment, as well as evading contact and communication, both verbal and nonverbal, with others in the environment (Donovan & Rossiter, 1982).

According to Mehrabian and Russell (1974; 1976) all approach-avoidance behaviors are related to the two emotional states of arousal and pleasure. Within any given environment, approach-avoidance behaviors are related to resultant levels of pleasure-displeasure felt by consumers as a result of stimuli in the environment. Increased levels of pleasure result in approach behaviors that are directly correlated to increased levels of arousal (Hines & Mehrabian, 1979). Further, as pleasure decreases, approach behaviors are inversely related to arousal. Emotional responses to the environment occur regardless of the type of stimuli that is present in the environment or how the stimuli are introduced into the environment. Further, emotional responses are a result of a consumers' reaction to the environment as a whole; that is taking into account all of the various elements present in a given setting (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974, 1976).

In the present study levels of arousal and pleasure among NBA game attendees were measured using an adapted version of Mehrabian and Russell's (1974) Semantic Differential Measures of Emotional Response to Environments. Drawing upon Mehrabian and Russell's (1975, 1976) arousal-pleasure hypothesis, the third emotional

state of dominance was not measured. Resultant arousal and pleasure scores are representative of approach-avoidance behaviors among game attendees in response to the NBA servicescape. The present study employed a holistic approach to investigating the servicescape; as consumer attitudes and their link to behaviors and behavioral intentions were measured in response to the entire servicescape.

The approach taken in the present study is a departure from previous servicescape research in the field of sport marketing and management which identified and measured responses to traditional elements of the servicescape, such as cleanliness, aesthetics and electronic equipment (e.g., Hightower et al., 2002; Wakefield & Blodgett, 1994, 1996; Wakefield & Sloan, 1995). It is understood that there are a multitude of elements within the professional basketball servicescape that work together to create the NBA experience. In the present study all of the elements of the servicescape were investigated as a collective whole in order to better understand consumer attitudes and behaviors. This approach allowed the researcher to gauge responses to the entire servicescape and therefore the entire consumption experience. According to Mehrabian and Russell (1974) a holistic approach is necessary when investigating the servicescape as elements within the servicescape do not occur in isolation and therefore are not interpreted alone. All of the elements of the environment are interrelated and therefore their effect on consumers should be investigated by looking at the environment in total.

### **Atmospheric Music**

Given that emotional responses to the environment influence consumer attitudes and behaviors, the influence and utility of certain elements within the environment may be greater than others. Although there are numerous influential elements contained within

the sport servicescape, atmospheric music is a particularly important aspect of the consumptive sport environment given its functionality and potential as a form of stimuli to influence and enhance the consumer experience. Further, atmospheric music has been investigated in various service settings (e.g., hotels, banks, malls, restaurants, bars) as part of countless consumer behavior studies, with results revealing music's effect on a variety of consumer attitudes and behaviors. Given the dearth of research in various service settings the present study attempted to fill the gap in the sport marketing and management literature by investigating consumer perceptions of the atmospheric music within the NBA servicescape. Atmospheric music was also investigated due to the strong presence this non-program element has in the production and presentation of NBA games.

Atmospherics exist within the servicescape and can be used to create, evoke, or manipulate responses, in the form of consumer attitudes and behaviors (Kotler, 1973). Based on Kotler's (1973) definition of atmospherics, atmospheric music is a stimulating facet of the in-store environment that presents cues to consumers that are processed and interpreted by consumers. The resultant information is then used by consumers in the formulation of attitudes and the demonstration of behaviors within the consumptive environment. It thus follows that the manipulation of atmospheric music can lead to the creation of consumer responses that are beneficial to the organization; such as repeat purchase and attendance intentions.

The impact of atmospheric music has been studied in regard to a wide variety of consumer behaviors. Music has been shown to influence the amount of time and money spent in various service settings. North, Shilcock, and Hargreaves (2003) in a study of

393 restaurant patrons found that the style of music being played impacted the amount of money spent. In the authors study, the presence of classical background music resulted in an increase in the amount of money spent by customers. The results were consistent with previous studies (Areni & Kim, 1993; North & Hargreaves, 1998) that also found that classical music increased purchasing behavior. Contextual congruency was presented in all three studies as a reasonable explanation for the behavioral impact of the atmospheric music. That is, classical music is considered to be upscale and its presence helps to create an upscale atmosphere (North et al., 2003). Therefore, consumers displayed congruent behavior, as displayed by their increase in the amount of money spent.

Congruency of atmospheric music with the service environment has also been shown to be important in gauging its impact on consumer behavior. Congruency theory states that consumers spend more money when the perception of the music being played is consistent with consumer perceptions' of the service setting (Jacob, 2006). In a study that analyzed purchasing behaviors of customers in a wine store North, Hargreaves, and McKendrick (1999) found that the type of music being played influenced the type of wine purchased. In the study the authors manipulated the type of music being played. When French music was played there was a significant increase in the amount of French wine sold. The same results were found when German music was played. The results suggest that when the music being played is congruent with the product being presented or service setting within which it is being sold, it can positively impact purchasing behaviors.

Atmospheric music has also been shown to influence the amount of time spent in a service setting. Milliman (1982) in a study of grocery store shoppers found that the

tempo of music influenced the amount of time spent in the store. Slower-paced music lead to an increase in the amount of time spent shopping. Similarly, slow-tempo music was also shown to increase the amount of time spent dining within among customers of a restaurant (Milliman, 1986). The result also revealed that the amount of time spent in the restaurant decreased when fast-paced music was played.

Further, increases in the amount of beverage consumption have also been shown to occur as a result of atmospheric music. Jacob (2006) found that when drinking songs were played in a pub, there was a marked increase in the amount of drinks consumed. McElrea and Standing (1992) reported that when fast-paced music was played the amount of time spent drinking a single beverage decreased. Similar results were found in a bar setting with respect to the sound level of music played (Guégen, Jacob, H el ene, Morineau, & Lourel, 2008). The amount of time it took patrons to drink a glass of beer was significantly less when the atmospheric music was played at a higher sound level. Thus, the literature supports the assertion that atmospheric music in the consumptive service environment influences multiple aspects of consumer behavior.

Studies have also shown that atmospheric music can have a distracting effect on consumers. Borling (1981) in a study of the effect of soothing music on alpha rhythms in the brain found that soothing music helped to focus attention on a task. Further, when presented with both visual and auditory stimuli, in the form of music, the very presence of aural cues act to distract from visual cues (Chebat et al., 1993). Thus, in a highly stimulating environment where multiple forms of stimuli are present, the insertion of atmospheric music can distract or divide consumers' attention.

Given that music can work to distract attention, the type of music played may lessen the distracting effect. Drawing on the advertising literature, when music is used as part of a visual advertisement, it should be used to attract attention to as well as enhance the core message (Hecker, 1984). Further, according to Macklin (1988) consumers can become so aware of music being played that they ignore or are unaware of the message being sent. This is particularly true when the music is unrelated or inconsistent with the message. Atmospheric music is most effective when it is used to enhance the experience and not compete for consumers' attention. Therefore, it follows that music played during a sporting event should be congruent with the sport and the environment as well as work to enhance the experience while drawing attention to the core sport product being presented on the court.

The influence of atmospheric music in eliciting preferred responses has also been shown to be related to involvement levels. Consumer behavior research has found that when consumers' have low levels of involvement with a product, positive feelings and associated attributes are more likely to be created by the introduction of stimuli, such as music (Kotler, 1973). When there is little cognitive investment in the product, in the form of involvement, atmospheric music can be used to create responses and associations with the product in the mind of the consumer. Therefore, atmospheric music presented as part of the live sport experience may be more useful in creating positive associations and memories related to the sporting event in consumers who display lower levels of involvement.

The present study examined participants' perceptions of the atmospheric music presented at an NBA game based on the perceived congruence, distracting effect, and

overall liking of the music. Given that organizations may not be able to control all aspects of the service environment; one aspect of the environment that organizations can control is the atmospheric music that is presented to consumers as part of the game experience. Therefore, it is important for sport marketers to understand the impact atmospheric music can have on consumer attitudes and behaviors. Additionally, the influence music can have in packaging the sport entertainment product also needs to be understood by sport marketers as they work to create and present a unique sport brand.

### **Conclusion**

Consumer behavior research has provided a framework by which to gain a deeper understanding of why people consume products and services. The servicescape, and the atmospheric elements contained within it, have been shown to directly impact consumer attitudes and behaviors (e.g., Chebat et al., 1993; Guégen et al., 2008; Hecker, 1984; Kotler, 1973; North et al., 1999). Further, consumer involvement and loyalty have also been shown to directly impact purchase behaviors and intentions (Hightower et al., 2002; Rein et al., 2006). Despite the depth of research consumer behavior research, as well as the prominence of the sport industry, there is limited information linking the experiential sport-servicescape to involvement, loyalty, and consumer behaviors.

Sport is unique, as it both a product and a service. Today's sport marketplace has become increasingly cluttered and therefore, increasingly competitive for the time, money, and emotional investment of consumers. Further, sport can also be thought of as a hedonic service that is consumed more for emotional satisfaction (Kempf, 1999) than for its utility (Hightower et al., 2002). As such sport organizations, may be able to bolster their central product of sport through the manipulation of the service environment



(Hightower et al., 2002) in order to create and maintain a competitive advantage within the hypercompetitive sport industry.

Given the nature of the sport industry as well as the unpredictable nature of the sport product, the establishment of highly involved and loyal fan base is also of increasing importance to sport organizations. The establishment of a foundation of loyal consumers is important as it can help to insulate an organization from external threats, as the revenue they generate can be relied upon, thus giving the organization time to react to environmental pressures (Amis et al., 1999). Additionally, increased levels of consumer involvement are an antecedent of consumer loyalty. Involvement occurs as a product or service begins to hold an increased place of significance in the life of consumers, while alternatives have less influence and significance for their time, energy, and money (Laaksonen, 1994). Thus, it is essential for sport organizations and sport marketers to identify and understand significant influencers of consumer attitudes related to the sport consumption experience, and thus what drives sport consumption behaviors (Funk, 2008) in order to establish a highly involved and loyal fan base.

Given the intangible nature of the sport product and the benefits derived from its consumption, the experience of the consumer has taken on greater importance in the development and management of the sport product and brand. The present study will provide a closer examination of consumer attitudes and emotional responses, which will help to provide insight into sport consumer behaviors. Further, it will also examine the relationship between involvement and attitudinal loyalty and the way in which these two constructs impact responses and attitudes toward the servicescape, as well as purchasing behaviors. Consequently, the present investigation will not only provide a significant

contribution to the sport management literature but it will also provide relevant information to sport managers in the production and presentation of sport in an experiential environment.

### **CHAPTER III**

#### **METHODOLOGY**

The primary purpose of the present study was to examine the relationship between involvement with the NBA and loyalty to a specific NBA team. NBA game attendees were also surveyed to gain a better understanding of the range of emotional reactions that occur in response to the consumptive sport environment. Individual interpretations and assessments of the atmospheric music played during the game were also analyzed. The experiential NBA environment provides an optimal setting to investigate how sport organizations may use elements in the space surrounding the presentation of the sport product to enhance both the experience of spectators, as well as their brand; thereby influencing consumer attitudes and behaviors which are antecedents of involvement, and thus by extension loyalty. Further, surveying attendees allowed for an investigation into which variables are significantly correlated to varying levels of NBA involvement and team loyalty.

The methodology utilized in the present study is separated into four main sections. The sections are organized as follows: (1) sample, (2) instrumentation, (3) design and procedures, and (4) statistical techniques and data analysis. The first section provides information regarding the target population, sampling frame, and sample size. The second section describes the variables, constructs, and scales that were used in the construction of the survey used to collect data in the present study. The next section is dedicated to the presentation of the framework that was used to design the present study

as well as the methods used in the collection of data. The final section presents information on the statistical techniques and data analysis procedures used to answer the research questions and hypotheses posed in Chapter I.

## **Sample**

### **Population**

The target population for the present study was individual National Basketball Association game attendees over the age of 18. The age restriction was employed to help ensure that participants would be able to understand, interpret, and properly complete the survey instrument used in the study. This helped to decrease the likelihood of participants' encountering common problems in answering survey questions, such as: misinterpretation, failure to follow instructions, problems configuring a response, and flawed judgment (Groves et al., 2004). Professional basketball games, and in particular games played in the NBA, were chosen due to the presence of a unique servicescape (i.e., unique event atmosphere and music incorporated into the staging of the game) surrounding the production of the traditional game form.

Participants were randomly selected from attendees of two NBA games in the southeastern region of the United States. The venues selected for the study represented the arenas of two eastern conference teams from among the 30-team league. Average attendance figures for the two teams' home games during the 2010-2011 season were 16,791 and 15,846, respectively (ESPN, 2011). The professional basketball organizations were also intrigued by the subject matter as well as the potential insights the data could reveal with respect to their fans and game-day operations. As a result, organizations provided open entry into their arenas and therefore access to potential participants.

## **Sampling Frame**

A sampling frame was used in the present study in order to establish the group of target population members who would constitute potential participants in the study. According to Raj (1972) the sample frame is “the list or map or any other acceptable material from which the sample is selected” (p.12). Restriction of the target population, through the use of a sampling frame, was also necessary due to both practical and financial considerations (Biemer & Lyberg, 2003), given the considerable size of the target population. Cluster sampling, using upper and lower seating levels, was thus used to construct the sample frame.

A cluster sample is a sample comprised of sampling units representing groups of population units (Lohr, 2008). Cluster sampling is useful, as part of a research design, to obtain a sample from a target population, which is often large in size, therefore making it extremely difficult to randomly sample individual members of the population (Huck, 2008). Clusters that contain members of the population are used in order to create an accessible sampling frame. Clusters can be naturally occurring or they can be constructed by the researcher based on proximity or convenience (Som, 1973). Clusters for the present study were constructed utilizing seating sections, which were already present and easily identifiable, within the selected data collection sites (i.e., professional basketball arenas).

The frame for the present study consisted of clusters of seating sections located in both the upper and lower arena bowls in an effort to include a representative cross-section of the target population in the sample frame. Inclusion of sections in the frame was based upon the random selection of sections in the two levels of each arena in order to include

the requisite number of seats necessary to meet set sample size guidelines. In order to include a representative sample from both upper and lower seating sections, 38% ( $n = 10$ ) of the sections included in the sample frame each game were located in the upper level and 62% ( $n = 18$ ) were located in the lower level; which represented the approximate distribution of upper and lower seating sections within the arenas.

Each seating section was assigned a numeric identifier, thereby renaming each section in the arena. Private luxury boxes, or suites, were not included in the assignment of numeric identifiers, and therefore, attendees seated in these areas were not included in the sample. Assigned numeric identifiers were not related to the location of the section, as the values were used for identification purposes only and not for selection (Orcher, 2005). Sections were randomly selected through the use of Stat Trek's electronic random number generator (Stattek, n.d.). Surveys were then randomly placed in cup holders within each seating section. The above process was used to help ensure the selection of random participants and sections for data collection.

### **Sample Size**

The sample size for the present study was constructed based on criteria set forth in three distinct methods of determining sample size in research. First, Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) table of suggested sample sizes, for use in educational and psychological research, was consulted. The table presents suggested sample sizes for populations with various sizes. Average home game attendance figures for the selected data collection sites, during 2010-2011 NBA season, were used to determine the estimated size of the target population. Based on average attendance figures of any given home game, the size of the target population was  $N \approx 32,000$ . Based on the estimated size

of the target population, a total sample size of approximately 380 was suggested by the table (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970). Given that MANOVA was one of the main statistical procedures used in the analysis of data, a second table was also consulted to determine the recommended sample size given specified levels of confidence and power (Guilford & Frunchter, 1978). For a four-group MANOVA, the table indicated the smallest suggested sample, to achieve desired levels of confidence ( $\alpha = .01$ ) and power (.90), was  $n = 370$ .

Daniel and Terrel's (1992) formula for determining sample size on a fixed research budget for a particular study was also utilized. The fixed-budget formula utilized was:  $n = C - Cf / Cv$  ( $n = 400 - 285 / .42$ ), where  $C$  is the total budgeted cost of the study,  $Cf$  are the fixed costs, and  $Cv$  are the variables costs per questionnaire (Daniel & Terrel, 1992). Utilizing the above equation, for the current study, the sample size required was determined to be approximately 274.

Based on the approximations described above, a sample size of  $n = 375$  was selected for the present study. A conservative response rate of 50% was assumed; therefore, 800 surveys were distributed. According to Hox and de Leeuw (1994), in an analysis of 45 studies that compared response rates across face-to-face, mail, and telephone survey methodologies, the face-to-face method of data collection resulted in the highest rate of response among participants. They found average response rate for in-person surveys to be 70.3% (Hox & de Leeuw, 1994). Although response rates for paper-based self-administered surveys tend to be higher than similar telephone and web-based surveys (Groves et al., 2004), increasing the number of participants contacted in the

administration of the survey allowed for a conservative estimate of nonresponse, while still ensuring the attainment of an adequate sample size.

### **Instrumentation**

The survey instrument used in the present study was comprised of six distinct sections, for a total of 42 items (See Appendix A). The main sections were: approach-avoidance (12 word-pairs), involvement (9 items), team loyalty (4 items), perception of atmospheric music (4 items), purchase intentions and behaviors (4 items), and demographic information (9 items). Participants were also asked to provide their email address as a means of entry into the random drawing for the chance to win one of the incentives described previously. Those participants who were randomly selected were also contacted via the email address they provided. Approach-avoidance, involvement, and team loyalty were all measured using adapted versions of scales used in previous research.

**Table 1**

*Summary of Adapted Scales*

<b>Name of Scale</b>	<b>Variable</b>	<b>Measure</b>	<b>Authors</b>
Semantic Differential Measures of Emotional Response to Environments Scale	Approach Avoidance	Arousal Pleasure	Mehrabian and Russell (1974)
Psychological Continuum Model (PCM)	Involvement	Pleasure Centrality Sign	Funk and James (2001)
Attitudinal Loyalty to Team Scale (ALTS)	Loyalty	Attitudinal Loyalty	Heere and Dickson (2008)



### **Emotional Responses Scale**

All approach and avoidance behaviors can be attributed to emotional states, which are the intervening variables between stimuli present in the environment and approach or avoidance behaviors toward the environment (Hines & Mehrabian, 1979; Mehrabian & Russell, 1974). Approach behaviors include an increase in the length of time spent in an environment and increased affiliation, contact, verbal and nonverbal communication with those present in the environment (Hines & Mehrabian, 1979). Conversely, avoidance behaviors are characterized by decreased time spent in the environment, as well as evading contact and communication, both verbal and nonverbal, with others in the environment.

According to Mehrabian and Russell (1974; 1976) all approach-avoidance behaviors are related to the two emotional states of arousal and pleasure. Within any given environment, approach-avoidance behaviors are correlated to levels of pleasure-displeasure induced by stimuli in the environment, regardless of the type of stimuli or how it is introduced into the environment. Increased levels of pleasure result in approach behaviors that are directly correlated to increased levels of arousal (Hines & Mehrabian, 1979). Further, as pleasure decreases, approach behaviors are also affected resulting in an inverse relationship with arousal levels. In order to gauge arousal and pleasure in the present study an adapted version of Mehrabian and Russell's (1974) Semantic Differential Measures of Emotional Response to Environments was used. Based upon Mehrabian and Russell's (1974; 1976) arousal-pleasure hypothesis the third emotional state of dominance, which was included in the original instrument, was not measured.

Twelve adjective pairs, six each, were used to measure arousal and pleasure. Each emotional state was gauged by responses to six corresponding adjective pairs. The final scale included the best six items for each of the two dimensions, with item order randomized and three items for each dimension inverted to control for response bias (Mehrabian and Russell, 1974). Each word-pair consisted of dichotomous adjective choices presented in the form of a semantic differential scale (+3 to -3 numerical score) and average scores for each dimension were obtained. The 12 adjective pairs used in the present study were cross-validated by Mehrabian and Russell (1974) in a three-stage study with over 5,500 observations from 511 undergraduate students, whereby factor analysis revealed through cross-validation that pleasure and arousal accounted for just over 50% of the total variance in participants' emotional responses to their environment (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974).

The present study utilized an adapted version of Mehrabian and Russell's (1974) Semantic Differential Measures of Emotional Response to Environments scale. Cronbach alpha reliability analysis was used to measure the internal consistency using inter-item correlation coefficients. Results revealed, for the present sample, reported arousal and pleasure scores were internally consistent,  $\alpha = .86$ .

### **Involvement Scale**

The involvement construct is of distinct interest when examining consumer attitudes and behaviors as it is an unobservable motivational state that directs energy toward an identified activity or product (Havitz & Dimanche, 1997, p. 246). Funk and James' (2001) Psychological Continuum Model (PCM) was chosen as the instrument to measure involvement in the present study. The PCM's foundation is based on an

understanding of involvement as being an unobservable state of motivation, arousal or interest in a sport or the consumption of sport (Funk, 2008; Havitz & Dimanche, 1997; Rothschild, 1984). The PCM was designed to investigate sport participation involvement as well as sport spectator involvement. The PCM has also been adapted and successfully utilized as a measure of participants' motives for participation in both competitive and charity sporting events (Filo et al., 2009; Funk, Toohey, & Bruun, 2007). Further, the validity of scores obtained from the PCM has also been confirmed by Beaton and Funk (2008), in an analysis of leisure participation frameworks.

In order to gauge involvement, individuals were presented with nine questions designed to measure three involvement facets. The three facets being: pleasure, centrality, and sign. Pleasure relates to the enjoyment gained through participation or attendance, centrality is associated with the extent to which the activity or event plays a central role in the life of the individual, and sign is representative of the amount of self-expression or value derived from participation or attendance (Funk, 2008). Three questions for each facet were included in the instrument. Each facet is assigned an average score based on scores gleaned from responses to three questions for each involvement facet presented in the PCM (See Table 2). Average facet scores are next rated as being either low ( $M \leq 4.49$ ), medium ( $M = 4.50 - 5.74$ ), or high ( $M \geq 5.75$ ). All three ratings (L, M, or H) are then used to create an individuals' involvement profile. The involvement profile is then used to place an individual into one of four stages along the psychological continuum based on the use of a staging algorithm tool created by the instrument's authors, which categorizes individuals as belonging to one of the four involvement stages based on the involvement profile constructed from the three average facet scores (Funk,

2008; Funk & James, 2001). The four stages, in ascending order of relative connection, are: *awareness*, *attraction*, *attachment*, and *allegiance*. For example, if an individual rated Low (L) on all three facets, she would be placed at the awareness stage of psychological connection. Further, if a second individual rated Medium (M) on pleasure, and High (H) on both centrality and sign, she would be placed in the allegiance stage.

According to Funk and James (2001), these four stages represent a continuum of psychological connection, which is representative of one's level of involvement. The awareness stage is characterized by low levels of cognition and attitude formation with respect to a particular sport, activity, or event (Funk, 2008). At the attraction stage psychological evaluation and engagement are present creating a cursory emotional response. Attachment indicates that a meaningful connection has been created, resulting in symbolic, emotional, or functional significance relayed upon the sport or event (Filo et al., 2009; Funk, 2008). Allegiance, the highest stage along the continuum, is achieved when there is psychological commitment to a sport or event. As measured by the PCM, as individuals' level of psychological connection to a sport or event increases they will progress up the continuum, which can be translated into an increased level of involvement (Funk & James, 2001).

In the present study the PCM was used to measure participants' level of professional basketball involvement; and in particular their level of involvement with the NBA. Items were reworded from the original instrument to reflect an emphasis on an NBA attendee's involvement. For example, participants were asked to rate their level of agreement with the following statement: Attending NBA games plays a central role in my life. Involvement facet scores were used to create an involvement profile, which was then

used to identify participants' associated level of involvement along the psychological connection continuum. Participants were labeled as being either high or low involved based on their progression up the continuum. The high-involved group contained participants whose combined average facet scores, or involvement profile, identified them as being at either the attachment or allegiance stage. Low-involved participants included participants whose involvement profile placed them at either the awareness or attraction level along the psychological connection continuum.

**Table 2**

*PCM Facet Scoring*

<b>Pleasure</b>	<b>Facet Score</b>	<b>Centrality</b>	<b>Facet Score</b>	<b>Sign</b>	<b>Facet Score</b>
Question 7 (P1)	= _____	Question 8 (C1)	= _____	Question 3 (S1)	= _____
Question 2 (P2)	= _____	Question 4 (C2)	= _____	Question 5 (S2)	= _____
Question 6 (P3)	= _____	Question 1 (C3)	= _____	Question 9 (S3)	= _____
<b>Total Score Average</b>	= _____	<b>Total Score Average</b>	= _____	<b>Total Score Average</b>	= _____

Note. Facet scoring table adapted from Step 2: Involvement Facet Calculation Table in D. C., Funk, 2008, *Sport Consumer Behavior*, p.81.

The PCM was also chosen in an effort to use a parsimonious measure of involvement; that is a relatively straightforward and concise measure. The PCM uses only nine questions to measure the involvement construct. Therefore, it can be completed by participants while in attendance of a basketball game without causing an unnecessary burden or intrusion on their experience. Further, the language used in the construction of the questions is easy to understand, and therefore participants are able to answer

questions accurately, thus increasing the reliability of the responses. Further, the PCM's Cronbach's alpha reliability was measured for the present sample. Results revealed reported scores were internally consistent ( $\alpha = .86$ ) and alpha would decrease if any of the nine items were removed from the scale

### **Team Loyalty Scale**

To measure loyalty to the home team, Heere and Dickson's (2008) Attitudinal Loyalty to Team Scale (ALTS) was used in the present study. The ALTS measures the psychological connection an individual has to a specific team. The scale is a unidimensional measure that gauges internal psychological connections as opposed to behavioral responses in order to measure attitudinal loyalty (Heere & Dickson, 2008). Further, according to the authors, it was necessary to use such a unidimensional approach thereby separating the constructs of affective commitment from attitudinal loyalty in order to create a scale that could elicit reliable and valid scores to measure attitudinal loyalty.

Heere and Dickson (2008) created a 4-item scale to measure attitudinal loyalty, or resistance to change. The parsimonious scale has been shown by the authors to produce reliable responses among 303 undergraduate students (Cronbach's alpha reliability estimate of .87). Validity of responses to the scale, as a measure of attitudinal loyalty, was also determined based upon the average variance extracted (AVE) score of .614 in the same study. Pilot study results for the scale also revealed convergent validity of the scale (AVE = .599). Cronbach's alpha reliability analysis, using the present sample, revealed reported ALTS scores were internally consistent,  $\alpha = .88$ .

Responses to the four loyalty measures were rated using a 7-point Likert-type scale (1 = strongly disagree and 7 = strongly agree). Participants' total scores on the four loyalty items reflected levels of attitudinal loyalty. Further, average loyalty scores were used to place each participant into one of four loyalty groups (absent [ $M = 1.0 - 1.5$ ], low [ $M = >1.5 - 3.5$ ], medium [ $M = >3.5 - 5.5$ ], and high [ $M = >5.5 - 7.0$ ]). In the present study the team of interest was the home team. Questions were reworded from the original scale to include the home teams' name. For example, participants were asked to rate their level of agreement with the following statement: I would still be committed to the (home team name) regardless of the lack of any star players.

### **Perceptions of Atmospheric Music**

Emotional responses evoked by atmospheric music in the servicescape have been shown to influence consumer attitudes and behaviors (Kotler, 1973). Further, involvement levels have also been shown to moderate the impact of atmospheric music in creating positive emotional responses (Alpert & Alpert, 1990). As such, low involved individuals are more likely to be influenced by atmospheric music in creating positive cognitive associations and memories of their attendance experience; thereby evoking the desired consumer attitudes and behaviors of the sport organization.

In an effort to measure participants' attitudes toward the atmospheric music played during professional basketball games four questions were included in the survey to assess participants' perceptions of the atmospheric music. Items in this section measured perceived congruency, distraction, and liking of the music. Construct scores were based on participants' responses to questions rated on a 7-point Likert-type scale

(1 = strongly disagree and 7 = strongly agree). Each construct is operationally defined below.

**Congruency.** Congruency suggests that the style of music presented is in-line with the expressed image of the organization or event. Further, the style of the music is also in keeping with the type of music consumers' associate with the organization, or the image of the organization. The congruency of atmospheric music with the service setting has been shown in the literature to influence consumer attitudes and behaviors (Jacob, 2006; North et al., 2003; North, Hargreaves, & McKendrick, 1999). Music has also been shown to have the most significant impact on consumer purchasing behavior when atmospheric music is congruent with the experiential environment (Jacob, 2006; North et al., 1999). In order to gauge participants' perceptions of atmospheric music congruency with the environment, participants were asked to rate their level of agreement with the following statement: The music played during the game was the type I associate with the NBA.

**Distraction.** It has been shown in the advertising literature that when atmospheric music is used to attract the attention of listeners, it should be done so as to direct attention toward the central message or product being presented (Hecker, 1984). It has also been revealed that atmospheric music is most effective when it is used to enhance the message or product being presented. According to Chebat and colleagues (2000), if listeners focus too much attention on atmospheric music, it can have a distracting effect, thus taking away from the cognitive processing of the message central to the product. Further, when music and visual stimuli are presented simultaneously, the very presence of auditory



stimuli is likely to have a distracting effect from the processing of visual stimuli (Chebat et al., 1993; 2000).

Given that atmospheric music can work to enhance or distract attention, in the experiential sport setting atmospheric music should be used to enhance the experience of the sport consumer, so as not to compete with the sport product and thus be characterized as a distraction. Participants thus were asked to report the extent to which they felt that the atmospheric music was a distracting element of the consumptive environment. For example participants were asked to rate their level of agreement, utilizing a 7-point Likert-type scale (1 = strongly disagree and 7 = strongly agree), with the following statement: The music interfered with my ability to interact and converse with those around me.

**Liking.** It has been posited in the atmospheric music literature that individuals' musical preference may influence emotional responses to the service setting (e.g., Guégen, Hélène, & Jacob, 2004). Given that individual musical preferences, or whether or not one likes the atmospheric music, can influence responses this variable should be considered when trying to explain consumer attitudes and behaviors within the experiential sport setting. Therefore, participants were asked to report the degree to which they liked the music being played during the event. For example, participants were asked to rank their level of agreement, with the following statement: I liked the type of music being played during the game (1=strongly disagree and 7=strongly agree).

### **Purchase Intentions and Behavior**

There has been a considerable amount of research that has shown the marked effect atmospheric elements within the service environment can have on consumer

purchasing behaviors (e.g., Alpert & Alpert, 1990; Areni & Kim, 1993; Morrin & Chebat, 2005; North et al., 2003). Further, atmospheric music is effective at eliciting responses and enhancing behavioral responses in experiential hedonic environments (Morrin & Chebat, 2005). Therefore increases in actual purchasing behaviors from intentions may be triggered by stimuli, presented here in the form of atmospheric music, within the servicescape.

**Concessions.** In an effort to gauge the impact of the servicescape on consumer purchasing behaviors, four questions were included in the survey instrument to measure the total amount of money participants intended to spend during the game they were attending. The total amount of money participants both intended to spend and actually spent on alcoholic beverages was also gauged in addition to, and separate from, the total amount of money spent on other types of concessions while in attendance of the event.

Participants were first asked to provide the amount of money they intended to spend when they arrived at the game. For example, participants were asked to self-report, in dollars, the amount of money they intended to spend by responding to the following question: When you arrived at the arena today, how much money (in dollars) did you intend to spend on alcoholic beverages? Given that atmospheric music has been shown to affect consumer-purchasing behavior, participants were then prompted to divulge the actual amount spent on alcoholic beverages during the event. The above information was collected in an effort to investigate the influence of atmospheric music within the NBA servicescape on the consumptive behaviors of game attendees.

## **Demographic Information**

Demographic variables were included in the present study in order to gain a better understanding of the characteristics of professional basketball attendees included in the sample. Further, demographic variable responses were also used to gauge how well respondents represented the average NBA fan. Participants were asked to provide information regarding their age, gender, educational background, occupation, income level, marital status, ethnicity, and zip code. Participants were also asked to reveal how many games of the home team, on average, they attend during a typical season. Respondents were also asked to provide an email address so that the researcher could contact them if they were amongst the randomly selected respondents, who provided a completed survey, to receive one of the incentives offered by the researcher.

## **Design and Procedures**

### **Design**

The present research was nonexperimental in design. In studies that utilize a nonexperimental design, levels of independent variables are not controlled, manipulated or assigned by the researcher (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001). According to Tabachnick and Fidell (2001) survey research is a common example of nonexperimental research. The purpose of the present study was to gauge the extent to which relationships existed between variables. Therefore, a correlational research design was employed to allow for an investigation into the degree of such relationships; thereby providing a deeper understanding into the nature of said relationships (Orcher, 2005)

### **Pilot Study**

Items were included in the final survey-instrument based on results of a pilot study. The pilot study utilized a bounded system case-study approach that focused on one NBA game (event) and the attitudes and behaviors of the individuals ( $n = 11$ ) who were in attendance of the particular game. Multiple sources of data collection were employed, in line with the tenets of the case study methodological approach (Creswell, 1998). Data were collected through the administration of surveys, audio-recorded semi-structured interviews, and participant observations. Data gained through observation served to corroborate the significance of constructs which emerged from an analysis of the interview and survey data; thus, supporting inclusion in the final survey instrument. Observations thus were used to “provide [further] knowledge of the context [and] provide specific incidents, behaviors, and so on that [were] used as reference points” for analysis and development of the survey instrument used in the current study (Merriam, 1998, p.96).

### **Procedures**

Self-administered surveys were distributed and completed by participants while in-attendance of two professional basketball games during the 2010-2011 NBA-season. Both the organizations and the games were selected as a result of access, time, and cost considerations, in addition to the availability of the lead researcher and the supporting research team. I was onsite to distribute and collect surveys. A research team, consisting of four individuals, also aided in the dissemination and collection of the survey. Access to research sites was gained by seeking and gaining approval of the arenas’ professional basketball organization.

Surveys, along with a writing instrument, were distributed to potential participants seated in the randomly selected sections, based on the stratified cluster sampling procedure described above. Surveys were randomly placed in cup holders of seats within selected sections prior to fans entering the arena. Instructions, clearly displayed on the front of the survey booklet, informed participants to complete their survey during the second half of the game and to leave completed surveys in their cup holder. The instructions also advised participants of the option of returning completed surveys to designated guest services locations within the arena. Two announcements were made during the game informing potential participants of presence and purpose of the surveys. Surveys left in cup holders were collected at the end of the game, after attendees had left the arena, from both locales (i.e., cup holders and guest services).

Each survey booklet also contained an introduction which presented the purpose of the study to each potential participant. The introduction also contained the anticipated time requirement to complete the survey (approximately 10 minutes), language ensuring confidentiality of disclosed information, as well as the appreciation of the researcher for respondents' voluntary participation (See Appendix B). Language was also included explaining to participants that both the completion and submission of the survey would act as entry into a drawing for a chance to receive an incentive (i.e., signed jersey or pair of tickets) procured by the researcher and provided by the organizations. Participants who successfully completed all sections of the survey were eligible for inclusion in the random drawing for said incentives. Two emails were randomly selected and winners were contacted via email to claim their prize. All of the above elements, along with the

instrument and research design, were created in compliance with, and approval of, the University of Northern Colorado's Institutional Review Board (See Appendix C).

### **Statistical Techniques and Data Analysis**

#### **Descriptive Analysis**

The first step in the data analysis was to conduct descriptive analyses. Descriptive statistics are used as a compulsory analysis of the data to determine if the basic assumptions were met in order to run subsequent statistical analyses. Further, general information is revealed regarding the nature of the data, such as variable mean, median, frequency, and variance.

Descriptive statistics as defined by Tabachnick and Fidell (2001) "describe samples of subjects in terms of variables or combination of variables" (p. 7). Descriptive analysis can also be used to organize as well as gain a compulsory understanding of data. This type of analysis can be used in the categorization of both continuous and categorical measures of variables as a method for "describing and summarizing, and reducing to manageable form the properties of an otherwise unwieldy mass of data" (Glass & Hopkins, 1996, p.2).

#### **Reliability Analysis**

Reliability analyses were next conducted, prior to running ensuing statistical analyses, to estimate the internal consistency of scores on the three scales used in the collection and analysis of data. Analysis concerning the reliability of items used to measure variables is standard practice in the social sciences. According to Groves and colleagues (2004) reliability is the "consistency of measurement across occasions or across items designed to measure the same constructs" (p. 262). Scores from any

instrument used to gauge responses must have some degree of reliability if they are to support score validity (Glass & Hopkins, 1996).

Given that the current study utilized a cross-sectional approach to administer a multi-item survey instrument to gauge participant scores on various constructs (Groves et al., 2004) Cronbach's alpha coefficients were used to report reliability. Reliability was estimated using inter-item correlation coefficients for the three primary scales (ALTS, PCM and Emotional Response to Environments) used in the present. Scores for a particular scale were considered reliable if the observed item scores were highly correlated with each other (Glass & Hopkins, 1996). Each scale was analyzed to determine the internal consistency of responses among participants on the scale. The closer each Cronbach's alpha coefficient was to 1.0 represented a greater degree of internal consistency (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001), with .80 generally regarded as a reasonable benchmark.

### **Research Question 1**

In order to examine the relationship between NBA involvement and participants' attitudinal loyalty to the home team, an independent samples *t* test was performed. Homogeneity of variance was determined based upon an examination of Levene's test for the equality of variance. The test was not significant ( $\alpha > 0.5$ ), suggesting that the assumption was met. The *t* test statistic was computed to determine if high and low involved participants differed in their amount of attitudinal loyalty to the home team. Further, a predetermined alpha level of .01 was used to determine if there was a significant difference between group means.

A *t*-test is a parametric statistical analyses that are used to determine if a statistically significant difference exists between the sample means of two groups (Li, Pitts, & Quarterman, 2008), and was therefore used to address the first research question. This technique is applicable when there is an interval or ratio dependent variable and an independent variable with two categories of membership. Independent samples *t* test is the most frequently used *t* test method. This method is used to establish if a significant difference between two sample means exists (Thomas & Nelson, 2001).

There are three major assumptions that must be met in order for an independent samples *t*-test to be considered as an appropriate statistical technique: (1) independence of the sample observations drawn from the population (2) homogeneity of variance, and (3) normal distribution of the population (Glass & Hopkins, 1996). Further, according to Glass and Hopkins the independence of observations is of supreme importance in order to ensure the accuracy of probability assertions related to an inflated risk of type-I error. Therefore, a conservative alpha level of .01 was utilized in the present study to account for the increased possibility of type-I error associated with cluster sampling.

### **Research Questions 2 and 3**

One-way MANOVA was the statistical technique used to analyze the data and test the hypotheses presented for both research question 2 and research question 3.

MANOVA is an extension of ANOVA that is appropriately employed in situations where there is more than one dependent variable. When a set of conceptually and empirically related dependent variables is present on which to compare groups, multivariate analysis of variance, or MANOVA, is the preferred statistical method of analysis as MANOVA may expose differences not seen in any of the univariate ANOVA designs (Tabachnick &



Fidell, 2001). Further, MANOVA may be employed when a design presents more than one independent variable as well as multiple dependent variables (Tabachnik & Fidell, 2001). The analysis allows the researcher to determine if a relationship exists between groups of dependent variables based on the presence of specified independent variables (Hyllegard, Mood, & Morrow, 2000).

As is the case with other techniques, there are certain assumptions in MANOVA that must be met in order to properly apply this type of analysis. The main assumptions associated with MANOVA are: homogeneity of variance-covariance matrices, multivariate normality within each group, independence of observations, and linearity of relations between dependent variables (Tabachnik & Fidell, 2001). The Box's test of equality of covariance matrices was examined for each MANOVA, revealing that the first assumption was not violated,  $p > .05$ . Visual analyses of histograms were relied upon to determine normality. Given that the current sample is greater than 200, formal testing of normality may reject the null hypothesis when only small deviations from the normal distribution exist (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001). Histograms for each MANOVA revealed relatively symmetrical distributions, suggesting the assumption of normality was not violated. Dependence of observations within seating-section clusters may exist, given that attendance of sporting events is an increasingly social experience. Thus, the experience of an individual sport fan is not truly independent of the other attendees surrounding them and enjoying the same experience. In order to account for the chance of dependence of observations a more rigorous alpha, .01, was used to account for the increased chance of type-I error as well as retain desired power, .90 (Stevens, 2002).

Scatterplots of the DVs for each MANOVA were also analyzed. Scatterplots of the servicescape variables (arousal and pleasure) reflected homoscedastic positive linear relationships between the DVs and levels of both involvement and loyalty (Glass & Hopkins, 1996). Arousal was shown to have the strongest correlation to both involvement ( $r = .221, p < .001$ ) and loyalty ( $r = .289, p < .001$ ), with pleasure also appearing to be significantly correlated to levels of involvement ( $r = .147, p < .002$ ) and loyalty ( $r = .201, p < .001$ ). Scatterplots of the atmospheric music variables (distraction, liking, and congruency) were revealed significant positive correlations ( $\alpha < .01$ ) between both congruency and liking and levels of both involvement and loyalty. The strongest music factor correlation was between liking and levels of involvement ( $r = .154, p < .001$ ) and loyalty ( $r = .149, p < .002$ ). There was also a negative correlation between levels of involvement ( $r = -.054, p > .01$ ) and music distraction, as well as a weak correlation to loyalty ( $r = .027, p > .01$ ).

Participants' level of NBA involvement (high v. low involved), as determined by responses to the PCM (Funk & James, 2001), was used as the independent variable of interest in hypothesis 2.1. The dependent variables used were participants' arousal and pleasure scores as determined by responses to Mehrabian and Russell's (1974) Semantic Differential Measures of Emotional Response to Environments. Hypothesis 2.2 was tested using participants' attitudinal loyalty (high, medium, low, or absent), as determined by scores on the ALTS (Heere & Dickson, 2008), as the independent variable; while the dependent variables of arousal and pleasure remained the same as those in hypothesis 2.1.

The third research question was also analyzed using MANOVA. Participants' level of NBA involvement served as the independent variable in the test of hypothesis 3.1. The dependent variables employed were participants' atmospheric interpretation scores as indicated by congruency, distraction, and liking of music. The second hypothesis (3.2) utilized the independent variable of ALTS (Heere & Dickson, 2008) scores with the same dependent variables (congruency, distraction, and liking of music) as those used to test hypothesis 3.1.

Descriptive discriminant analysis (DDA) was then utilized as a follow-up procedure to MANOVA for both research questions. DDA was used to determine whether or not the dependent variables of interest from the MANOVA (i.e., emotional responses to environment and music interpretation scores) significantly discriminated between levels of the MANOVA independent variable (i.e., involvement and loyalty groupings) which became the dependent variables in the descriptive discriminant analysis (Hyllegard et al., 2000). *F* to remove values were utilized to identify which variables contributed the most to differences in loyalty and involvement group membership. Higher *F* values indicated that a variable contributed more to differences in either loyalty or involvement depending on the particular analysis. Pearson coefficients, presented in the structure matrix, were also used to identify variables defining the music interpretation and emotional responses to the servicescape linear discriminant functions (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001). A structure coefficient (i.e., loading) of .33 or higher was used to identify salient variables, as this is generally accepted as the cut-off between prime and non-prime variable loadings (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001).

#### **Research Question 4**

The fourth research question was analyzed using cluster analysis. Cluster analysis is utilized to separate a group of participants into homogenous subgroups based on shared characteristics (Kachigan, 1991). The objective of this type of statistical analysis is to maximize the variation found between groups in relation to the variation found within groups (Kachigan, 1991). As such, cluster analysis is conceptually an exploratory procedure used to identify individuals who form groups based on the similarity of scores on a set of variables. Another objective of cluster analysis is to identify groups within a given set of data that might be generalizable to a target population.

The success of cluster analysis is primarily dependent upon the variables being measured and the algorithm used to generate clusters (Lorr, 1983). With respect to the first factor, the scales used to measure each variable will impact the amount of variability detected on each variable. Therefore standardized scores, or *z*-scores, were used to measure variables in order to stabilize the amount of variability across measures and thus aid in the creation of meaningful group clusters (Lorr, 1983). When *z*-scores are used to transform raw data, the group mean is fixed at zero and one standard deviation from the mean is 1.0. The transformation allows scores obtained from multiple scales to be compared based on an analysis of standard deviations from the group mean (Huck, 2008).

There are two basic types of clustering methods, hierarchical and non-hierarchical clustering. Hierarchical clustering methods have been the most commonly used approach in research settings (Aldenderfer & Blashfield, 1984). Further, there are four common hierarchical clustering methods: single linkage, complete linkage, average linkage, and Ward's method. Ward's (1963) method has been a preferred method in the social

sciences, as this method was designed to maximize the minimum variance within clusters by combining clusters for which the increase in the total within-cluster variation is the smallest (Lorr, 1983).

Given that cluster analysis is a statistical technique performed to investigate whether meaningful groups exist amongst data, in the present study a cluster analysis was used to reveal whether or not discernible groups of participants existed based upon the homogeneity of scores on a set of specified variables. This analysis also worked to provide insight into which explanatory variables, or characteristics, were shared by participants who displayed high levels of involvement, as well as those who scored high on the ALTS (Heere & Dickson, 2008).

Due to the exploratory nature of cluster analysis there were no hypotheses included in the formation of *research question 4*. There are no clear-cut, or distinct, guidelines for determining the number or composition of clusters, as cluster analysis includes a set of various methodological approaches (Punj & Stewart, 1983). Therefore, the research question did not include any assumptions as to how many meaningful clusters would or should be formed as a result of the analysis. Multiple iterations of the analysis were performed in order to determine the most appropriate number of interpretable and discernible clusters. Thus, multiple cluster solutions were created and analyzed to determine the best possible groupings necessary to provide a deeper understanding of the characteristics related to, and shared by, participant game-attendees.

Ward's (1963) method of hierarchical agglomeration was used in the present study. Ward's method has been widely used in the behavioral and social sciences to produce discernible and meaningful clusters (Borgen & Barnett, 1987; Lorr, 1983;

Milligan, 1981). This method detects clusters by joining groups of participants whose scores represent the minimum increase in the within-cluster sum of squares (Everitt, 1980). Thus, the total within-cluster variation is computed and the two clusters with the smallest increase in variance are combined. Resultant clusters are then interpreted to discern the formation of meaningful groups of participants based upon observed scores used to measure the variables of interest in the present study. A *dendogram* was also produced and analyzed in the interpretation of the data and construction of a final cluster solution. Multiple cluster solutions were analyzed; however, only solutions with 2 to 8 clusters were considered for practical purposes.

## **CHAPTER IV**

### **AN ANALYSIS OF NBA INVOLVEMENT AND TEAM LOYALTY ON CONSUMER ATTITUDES AND EMOTIONAL RESPONSES**

#### **Review of Literature**

Sport is a unique product within the domain of entertainment and leisure services, as it is an unpredictable experiential and intangible service-product that is simultaneously produced and consumed. Given this simultaneous production and consumption, the total experience of the consumer has increased relevance (Bitner, 1992). Therefore the environment, or servicescape, within which the sport product is presented, holds significant relevance upon consumers' overall perceptions and opinions formed about the sport consumption experience.

Another salient aspect of sport is the limited amount of control marketers and other event management personnel have over the performance of the core sport product, or the game itself. Sport organizations control who is on the roster; however injuries, individual and team performance, and game outcomes are unpredictable and out of the organizations' direct control. According to Mullin and colleagues (2007) the limited control of the sport product is a distinguishing feature of sport marketing. Therefore it is imperative for sport marketers to create and increase levels of involvement and loyalty among sport consumers to provide a consistent customer base in times of change,

uncertainty, or poor performance (Funk & Pastore, 2000; Heere & Dickson, 2008; Mahoney, Madrigal, & Howard, 2000).

### **Involvement**

According to Sherif and Cantril (1974) the foremost characteristic of a highly involved individual is increased levels of resistance to persuasion. Thus, it follows that an individual who is highly involved will display increased levels of commitment as well as be more likely to reject alternatives. Involvement is also a multidimensional and exceedingly complex construct. An individual can be involved, simultaneously, with multiple products, brands, and services at a given time (Havitz & Dimanche, 1999; Kerstetter & Kovich, 1997; Zaichowsky, 1985). Further, involvement levels may change over time, given the level of exposure, information, and relevance of the product to the individual, as well as the ability of the product to fulfill specific needs, at any given point in time (Funk, 2008).

Consumer involvement has been investigated considerably in both the marketing and leisure literature (Havitz & Dimanche, 1997; Munson & McQuarrie, 1987; Sherif & Cantril, 1974; Zaichkowsky, 1985). Research related to sport involvement, and in particular team sport spectator involvement, however is not as prevalent. Given that the relationship between involvement and sport-consumer attitudes and behaviors is of considerable import to sport marketers and managers, just as it is to marketers and managers in other respective experiential retail, service or leisure environments, Funk and James (2001) developed the Psychological Continuum Model (PCM) to measure sport fan and spectator involvement (Filo, Funk, & O'Brien, 2009; Funk, 2008).



The PCM measures three distinct facets of involvement: pleasure, centrality, and sign. Each facet is given a score, which works to create an involvement profile, which is then used to place an individual along a continuum of psychological connection; or one's level of involvement (Funk & James, 2001). The lowest end of the spectrum is awareness, which is characterized by low levels of cognition and attitude formation. At the high end of the continuum, allegiance occurs, whereby there is psychological commitment to a sport or event. Therefore, as an individual's level of psychological connection to a sport or event increases they will progress up the continuum, which is understood to represent an increased level of involvement (Funk & James, 2001).

### **Loyalty**

For the purposes of this study, the attitudinal component of loyalty is presented as an individual's resistance to alterations in the level of psychological commitment (Heere & Dickson, 2008; Pritchard, Havitz, & Howard, 1999). Specific to a team-sport setting, loyalty is not psychological commitment itself, but rather the *persistence* and *strength* of commitment to a particular team and therefore is contingent upon the creation of increased levels of involvement (Heere & Dickson, 2008). Attitudinal loyalty is also the result of the interaction between internal psychological processes and connections, and any negative external changes that may occur (Heere & Dickson, 2008).

To measure team loyalty, Heere and Dickson's (2008) Attitudinal Loyalty to Team Scale (ALTS) was used in the present study. The ALTS is a parsimonious 4-item measure of the psychological connection an individual has to a specific team. As such, the scale is a unidimensional measure that separates internal psychological connections from behavioral responses in order to measure attitudinal loyalty (Heere & Dickson,

2008). Further, loyalty to a team represents an individual's resistance to change when presented with alternatives, such as if the team is in a slump, or changes are made to the team's lineup. Thus, loyalty is a predictor of future behavioral intentions, regardless of the team's performance, which is significant given the unpredictable nature of sport and the sport product.

### **Emotional Responses to the Servicescape**

Bitner (1992) defined the *servicescape* as all of the aspects of a service environment that can be controlled by the firm. Within the servicescape easily accessible environmental cues are relied upon as a significant source of information when interpreting, making inferences about, and ultimately making judgments regarding product/service quality and value (Baker, 1998). In addition consumer behavior researchers (Bitner, 1992; Falk, Sockel, & Warren, 2005; Namaslvyam & Mattila, 2007) contend consumers holistically interpret their environment, taking into account all of the various elements present within a given setting. Therefore, elements within the servicescape do not exist as a single entity, but rather as interrelated components working together to create the total service environment.

Emotional responses to the environment occur regardless of the type of stimuli that is present in the environment or how the stimuli are introduced. Specific to consumers' emotional responses, Mehrabian and Russell (1974; 1976) noted such responses are a result of a consumers taking into account all of the various elements present in a given setting. According to Mehrabian and Russell (1974, 1976) any demonstrated response to a physical setting, or environment, can be categorized as being either an *approach* (e.g., increased time or affiliation) or *avoidance* (e.g., decreased

contact or evasion) behavior. Further, all behaviors can be attributed to emotional states, which are the intervening variables between stimuli present in the environment and approach or avoidance behaviors toward the environment (Hines & Mehrabian, 1979; Mehrabian & Russell, 1974). Therefore, levels of arousal and pleasure were measured in the present study using an adapted version of Mehrabian and Russell's (1974) Semantic Differential Measures of Emotional Response to Environments. Drawing upon Mehrabian and Russell's (1975, 1976) arousal-pleasure hypothesis, which posits that all approach-avoidance behaviors are related to the two emotional states of arousal and pleasure. Therefore, the third emotional state of dominance, which was included in the original scale (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974), was not measured in the present study.

Within the sport setting a consumer's perceptions of a servicescape have been shown to be a determinant of their behavior, particularly when the service is experiential and consumed primarily for hedonistic reasons (Wakefield & Blodgett, 1996). Within the minor league baseball system, Hightower, Brady, and Baker (2002) investigated the relationship between a newly constructed stadium's servicescape and behavioral intentions. Consistent with previous research (Wakefield & Blodgett, 1994, 1996; Wakefield & Sloan, 1995) the authors found the servicescape to have a significant influence on behavioral intentions, including repurchase and attendance intentions, and intended positive word-of-mouth (Hightower et al., 2002). The servicescape was also shown to significantly influence positive *affect*, in other words *arousal* and *pleasure*. Further, increased levels of involvement were significantly and positively related to perceptions of the servicescape (Hightower et al., 2002). These findings suggest that

organizations should analyze their servicescape and strategically manipulate servicescape elements to increase involvement levels among consumers (Hightower et al., 2002).

### **Atmospheric Music**

One servicescape element, atmospheric music, has been studied in relation to a wide variety of consumer behaviors and has been shown to influence both approach and avoidance behaviors, such as the amount of time and money spent in various service settings (e.g., Areni & Kim, 1993; Jacob, 2006; Milliman, 1986; North & Hargreaves, 1998; North, Shilcock, & Hargreaves, 2003). The influence of atmospheric music in eliciting preferred responses has also been shown to be related to involvement levels. Consumer behavior research has found that when consumers' have low levels of involvement with a product, positive feelings (e.g., liking) are more likely to be created with the introduction of stimuli, such as music (Kotler, 1973). Further, when presented with both visual and auditory stimuli (e.g., music), the presence of aural cues act to distract from visual cues (Chebat et al., 1993), particularly if the music is perceived to be incongruent with the service-environment (Jacob, 2006; North, Hargreaves, & McKendrick, 1999). Thus, in a highly-stimulating environment where multiple forms of stimuli are present, the insertion of atmospheric music may work to distract or divide consumers' attention from visual elements.

The present study examined participants' perceptions of the atmospheric music at NBA games, based on perceived levels of congruence, distraction, and overall liking of the music. Given that organizations may not be able to possess adequate resources to "control" all aspects of the service-environment; one element that organizations can easily control is the atmospheric music that is presented as part of the game experience.

Therefore, better understanding atmospheric music's influence on consumer attitudes and behaviors is an important consideration. Additionally, such music's influence on the sport-entertainment product would be relevant in sport marketer's representation of their team's unique brand.

### **Purpose and Hypotheses**

The purpose of the present study was to examine the extent to which professional basketball engagement explains individuals' attitude toward the home team. In order to investigate this relationship, participants' levels of involvement with professional basketball were measured in relation to levels of attitudinal loyalty. NBA basketball was chosen as the spectator sport of focus for the present study due to the unique nature of both the product and consumers. According to Andrews (2006) the NBA has embraced the notion that sport is no longer confined to the competition between teams and athletes on the court and has "successfully blurred the boundaries between the sport, media, and entertainment industries" (p.13).

Given the increasingly cluttered sport marketplace, there is also an impetus for sport organizations to establish a base of loyal consumers in order to grow their fan base and more fully insulate the organization from environmental threats (Amis, Slack & Barrett, 1999). Supporting the importance of fan loyalty, Funk and James (2001) noted that as a consumer's level of involvement with a sport or event increases they progress up the continuum of psychological commitment, a measure of established loyalty. As such, the first hypothesis was designed to examine the extent to which professional basketball involvement explains participants' level of loyalty to the home team.

H4.1: A participant's level of involvement with professional basketball will be positively related to a participant's level of loyalty to the home team.

A second purpose of the study was to examine the relationship between professional basketball involvement and attitudinal loyalty to the home team on emotional responses to the professional basketball servicescape. The NBA product is consumed within an increasingly stimulating consumptive landscape (Andrews, 2006). Additionally, the sport product itself has the power to produce strong emotional reactions and bonds. Within such a setting, individual consumers experience emotional reactions as they watch professional basketball games as well as experience and interpret various stimuli in the servicescape. Thus, the second and third hypotheses address the relationship between professional basketball consumer involvement and loyalty on emotional responses of arousal and pleasure experienced while in the consumptive service-environment.

H4.2: Participants' level of involvement with professional basketball will be positively related to their reported levels of arousal and pleasure experienced while in attendance of the game.

H4.3: Participants' level of loyalty to the home team will positively be positively related to their reported levels of arousal and pleasure experienced while in attendance of the game.

Lastly, the representation of professional basketball games is increasingly entertainment oriented, with atmospheric music playing a prominent role. In various service environments, the presence of atmospheric music has been reported to be salient in eliciting various consumer attitudes and behaviors (e.g., Areni & Kim, 1993; Jacob, 2006; North et al., 1999). Therefore, hypotheses 4.4 and 4.5 focus on the relationship between two factors: (a) professional basketball involvement and (b) attitudinal loyalty to

the home team on consumers' reported levels of "liking" the music being played, perceptions of the music as being congruent with professional basketball, and whether they thought the music was "distracting."

H4.4: Participants' level of involvement with professional basketball will be positively related to the music interpretation scores of liking, congruency and distraction.

H4.5 Participants' level of loyalty to the home team will be positively related to the music interpretation scores of liking, congruency and distraction.

## **Method**

### **Sample**

The target population for the present study was individual NBA game attendees over the age of 18. Participants were randomly selected from attendees of two professional basketball games that were played in the southeastern region of the United States during the 2010-2011 regular season. The venues selected for the study were arenas of two NBA Eastern Conference teams from among the 30-team league. Average attendance figures for the two teams' home games during the 2010-2011 season were 16,791 and 15,846, respectively (ESPN, 2011).

A sampling frame, utilizing stratified cluster sampling, was applied in order to establish potential participants in the study. Cluster sampling is useful, as part of a research design, when the target population is large, therefore making it extremely difficult to randomly sample individual members of the population (Lohr, 2008). Restriction of the target population was necessary, and appropriate, due to both practical (i.e., significant average attendance size) and financial (i.e., budget) constraints (Biemer & Lyberg, 2003). Clusters for the present study were constructed utilizing randomly selected seating-sections, which were present and easily identifiable, within the arenas.

## **Instrumentation**

The survey used on the present study consisted of seven distinct sections with a total of 42 items. An adaption of Funk and James' (2001) Psychological Continuum Model (PCM) 9-item scale (reworded specifically for this study) was used to measure participants' levels of involvement with the NBA. For example, participants were asked to rate their level of agreement, on a seven point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree), with the following statement: Attending professional basketball games plays a central role in my life. Involvement facet scores were used to determine participants' associated level of involvement along the psychological connection continuum (Funk & James, 2001). Participants were labeled as belonging to either the high (attachment or allegiance) or low (awareness or attraction) involved group.

Heere and Dickson's (2008) 4-item Attitudinal Loyalty to Team Scale (ALTS) was used to measure attitudinal loyalty to the home team. Loyalty was measured using a 7-point Likert-type scale (1 = strongly disagree and 7 = strongly agree). Total scores were used to determine their respective level of attitudinal loyalty to the home team. Participants were further place identified as belonging to one of four loyalty groups (high, medium, low or absent) based on their total loyalty score.

Mehrabian and Russell's (1974) Semantic Differential Measures of Emotional Response to Environments was used to measure levels of arousal and pleasure, as induced by stimuli in the environment, experienced by participants. Each emotional state was gauged based on responses to six respective adjective pairs, presented in the form of a semantic differential scale (+3 to -3 numerical score). Given that emotional responses



evoked by atmospheric music in the servicescape have been shown to influence consumer attitudes and behaviors (Kotler, 1973), participants' perceptions of the atmospheric music played during the professional basketball game were measured based on responses to four questions that gauged the respondents' perceived congruency, distraction, and liking of the music.

### **Procedures and Analysis**

Surveys were distributed and completed by spectators at two professional basketball games during the 2010-2011 NBA-season. Surveys and pencils were distributed throughout randomly selected sections, based on the previously described stratified cluster sampling procedure. The researcher, along with a supporting research team, was onsite to distribute, administer, and collect surveys. Research site access was approved and facilitated by each arena's professional basketball organization. All surveys (completed and non-completed) were retrieved from seat cup holders and/or designated in-arena guest services locations.

**Hypothesis 4.1.** In order to examine the relationship between NBA involvement and participants' attitudinal loyalty to the home team, an independent samples *t* test was performed. Homogeneity of variance was determined based upon an examination of Levene's ( $\alpha > 0.5$ ) test for the equality of variance, which suggested that the assumption was not violated. The *t* test statistic was computed to determine if high and low involved participants significantly differed ( $\alpha = .01$ ) in their amount of attitudinal loyalty to the home team.

**Hypotheses 4.2-4.3.** A One-way MANOVA was performed to determine if differences existed between levels of an independent variable on a specified vector of

dependent variables (Tabachnik & Fidell, 2001). Participants' level of professional basketball involvement (high v. low involved), as determined by responses to the PCM (Funk & James, 2001), was the independent variable related to hypothesis 4.2. The dependent variables of interest were participants' arousal and pleasure scores as determined by responses to Mehrabian and Russell's (1974) Semantic Differential Measures of Emotional Response to Environments scale. Data analysis to test hypothesis 4.3 employed the dependent variables of arousal and pleasure scores, but, levels of attitudinal loyalty (high, medium, low, or absent), as determined by scores on the ALTS (Heere & Dickson, 2008) was the independent variable.

Descriptive discriminant analysis (DDA) was then utilized as a follow-up procedure to the MANOVA analyses for both research questions to determine which of the dependent variables was most responsible for group separation (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001). *F* to remove values were reported to identify variables that contributed the most to differences in loyalty and involvement group membership. Pearson coefficients, as presented in the structure matrix, were also used to identify variables that were significant in defining the emotional response factor based on respective loadings. A cut-off .33 was used to identify significant variables, as this is generally accepted as the cut-off between prime and non-prime variable loadings (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001).

**Hypotheses 4.4-4.5.** The final two hypotheses were also tested using a one-way MANOVA. Participants' level of NBA involvement (high v. low involved) was used as the independent variable of interest in testing hypothesis 4.4, while levels of attitudinal loyalty to the home team (high, medium, low, or absent) were employed to test hypothesis 4.5. The dependent variables in both analyses were participants' atmospheric

interpretation scores as indicated by responses to congruency, distraction, and liking of music questions contained in the survey instrument. Additionally, descriptive discriminant analysis was again used as a follow-up procedure to MANOVA. *F* to remove values for music interpretation variables were utilized to identify which of the factor variables contributed the most to differences in loyalty and involvement group membership.

### **Results**

A total of 800 surveys (400 each game) were distributed during two NBA games. The study's usable sample ( $N = 425$  completed surveys, 53% overall response rate) was just above the conservative estimate of 50% assumed for the present study. Individual game samples were: first game ( $n = 194$ , 46%) and second game ( $n = 231$ , 54%).

Forty-seven percent ( $n = 199$ ) of respondents were seated in the arenas' "lower bowls," while 53% ( $n = 226$ ) had seats located in the upper bowls. Consistent with Schnietz and colleague's (2005) select NBA fan demographics, this study's "average" participant was a white (57%) male (61%) with either a bachelor's (33%) or graduate (24%) degree. Further, 51% of this study's respondents were married, with 34% earning more than \$100,000 annually. For a more in depth breakdown of study participants' demographic information see Table 3.

The reported average number of NBA games attended in a typical season was eight games, with 33% ( $n = 139$ ) participants typically attending one game a season. Seventy-seven percent ( $n = 327$ ) reported low levels of involvement with the NBA, with the remaining 23% ( $n = 98$ ) having high involvement levels. Forty-two percent of respondents ( $n = 176$ ) displayed low ( $n = 122$ ) or absent ( $n = 54$ ) levels of attitudinal

loyalty to the home team. Additionally, 41% ( $n = 172$ ) and 18% ( $n = 77$ ) reported medium and high levels of attitudinal loyalty, respectively. Prior to running statistical analyses to address the hypotheses, the internal consistency reliability of the involvement, loyalty, and emotional responses to the environment scale was also estimated.

**Table 3***Demographic Information of Current Sample (N = 425)*

<b>Variable</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
Gender		
Female	165	61
Male	260	39
Age		
18-20	60	14
21-30	96	23
31-40	86	20
41-50	99	23
50+	84	20
Ethnicity		
White	244	57
African American	151	36
Hispanic	15	3.5
Alaskan Native	10	2
Asian/Pacific Islander	5	1.5
Education		
High School	88	21
Some College/College Graduate	176	42
Graduate/Post Graduate Degree	153	36
Other	8	1
Marital Status		
Married	215	51
Single	141	33
Divorce	32	8
Separated	13	3
Widowed	5	1
Partner	19	5
Income		
<20K	95	22
20-40K	56	13
40-60K	51	12
60-80K	25	6
>80K	198	47

### **Hypothesis 4.1**

The *t* test statistic was computed to determine if high and low involved participants differed in their amount of attitudinal loyalty to the home team. Cronbach's alpha was first examined for the ALTS to ensure reliability of the scores for this scale. The results revealed ALTS scores were internally consistent,  $\alpha = .88$ , using the present sample. The PCM's Cronbach's alpha was also examined to confirm reliability. Results revealed scores, utilizing the present sample, were internally consistent ( $\alpha = .86$ ). Further, the Cronbach's alpha statistic would decrease if any of the nine items were removed from the scale.

The independent samples *t*-test ( $t [423] = -6.907, p < .001, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .05$ ) revealed reported levels of professional basketball involvement were positively related to individuals' attitudinal loyalty to the home team. Further, participants who displayed low levels of professional basketball involvement ( $M = 14.35; SD = 6.40$ ) also reported low, or the absence of, attitudinal loyalty to the home team, while individuals who were highly involved ( $M = 19.36; SD = 5.93$ ) with the NBA reported significantly higher levels of attitudinal loyalty.

### **Hypothesis 4.2**

First, the Cronbach alpha reliability estimate was examined for the adapted version of Mehrabian and Russell's (1974) Semantic Differential Measures of Emotional Response to Environments scale. Results ( $\alpha = .86$ ) revealed, for the present sample, reported arousal and pleasure scores were internally consistent. Descriptive analysis of involvement group membership and emotional response to the servicescape scores further revealed participants with high levels of professional basketball involvement appeared to

report higher levels of arousal ( $M = 5.13$ ;  $SD = 6.11$ ) and pleasure ( $M = 7.36$ ;  $SD = 7.36$ ) than their low-involved counterparts (See Table 4).

**Table 4**

*Mean Arousal and Pleasure Scores by Involvement Group*

		Arousal			Pleasure	
		<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Involvement Group	Low	327	1.80	6.246	4.99	6.537
	High	98	5.13	6.113	7.36	7.359

*Note.* Mean scores represent summed scores gauged in response to twelve semantic differential word-pairs contained on the Emotional Responses to Environments Scale (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974)

One-way MANOVA results revealed a significant main effect of the independent variable (involvement) on the set of servicescape variables (arousal and pleasure),  $F(2, 423) = 11.23, p < .001$ , Wilk's  $\lambda = .949$ . The results reflect a moderate association between involvement (high vs. low) and the combined servicescape variables, partial  $\eta^2 = .05$  (Huck, 2008). Results support hypothesis 4.2, which predicted a relationship between participants' levels of involvement and emotional responses experienced during an NBA game.

Next, a descriptive discriminant analysis was conducted to better understand differences in involvement group membership.  $F$  to remove values revealed that arousal,  $F = 12.898$ , contributed more than pleasure,  $F = .709$ , to differences in involvement. Further analysis of the structure matrix revealed that both arousal (.983) and pleasure (.644) seem to be meaningful variables in defining the emotional responses to the servicescape factor.

### Hypothesis 4.3

Preliminary analysis revealed mean differences between loyalty groups and emotional responses to the environment. Participants with high levels of attitudinal loyalty reported higher levels of both arousal ( $M = 6.55$ ;  $SD = 5.03$ ) and pleasure ( $M = 8.58$ ;  $SD = 6.88$ ) than participants who reported lower levels of attitudinal loyalty (See Table 5). Further, it appears that as loyalty increases, so too do levels of arousal and pleasure.

**Table 5**

*Mean Arousal and Pleasure Scores by Loyalty Group*

		Arousal			Pleasure	
		<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Loyalty Group	Absent	54	-.31	6.404	3.89	5.182
	Low	122	1.73	5.200	4.54	5.993
	Medium	172	2.28	6.859	5.41	7.358
	High	77	6.55	5.033	8.58	6.877

*Note.* Mean scores represent summed scores gauged in response to twelve semantic differential word-pairs contained on the Emotional Responses to Environments Scale (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974)

One-way MANOVA revealed a significant multivariate main effect for loyalty,  $F(6, 840) = 8.34$ ,  $p < .001$ , Wilk's  $\lambda = .891$ , on the combined servicescape variables. Results also indicated a moderate association between level of team loyalty (absent, low, medium, and high) and servicescape, partial  $\eta^2 = .06$ . Results support hypothesis 4.3, as there was a significant relationship revealed between participants' levels of involvement and emotional responses experienced during an NBA game. That is, there was a statistically significant difference between participants' level of involvement on the linear composite of arousal and pleasure scores.

Descriptive discriminant analysis was next conducted to better describe the differences between levels of loyalty to the home team, using arousal and pleasure scores as discriminating variables. Analysis of F to remove values revealed that arousal,  $F = 9.250$ , contributed more than pleasure,  $F = 1.007$ , to differences in loyalty. Analysis of the structure matrix further revealed both arousal (.976) and pleasure (.656) as salient variables in defining the emotional responses to the servicescape factor.

#### **Hypothesis 4.4**

Descriptive analysis of music scores revealed high ( $M = 5.49$ ;  $SD = 3.75$ ) and low ( $M = 5.94$ ;  $SD = 3.51$ ) involved participants reported similar music distraction scores. Mean differences were seemingly revealed between involvement groups and both atmospheric music congruency and liking. The means of the high involved group on both factors was higher than the low involved group (See Table 6). The variability of the two involvement groups on the three music interpretation factors also appear to be similar.

**Table 6**

*Atmospheric Music Interpretation Scores by Involvement Group*

		<i>N</i>	<i>Distracting</i>		<i>Congruent</i>		<i>Liking</i>	
			<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Involvement Group	Low	327	5.94	3.506	4.69	1.982	4.62	2.046
	High	98	5.49	3.745	5.38	1.791	5.36	1.823

*Note.* Mean scores represent summed scores in response to four Likert-type questions (1 = strongly disagree and 7 = strongly agree) contained to measure perceptions of atmospheric music distraction, congruency and liking.

One-way MANOVA revealed a significant multivariate main effect for involvement,  $F(4, 420) = 3.160$ ,  $p < .01$ , Wilk's  $\lambda = .971$ , on the set of atmospheric music dependent variables. The results reflect a modest association between involvement



(high vs. low) and grouped music interpretation scores, partial  $\eta^2 = .03$ . As predicted in hypothesis 4.4, there was a relationship between participants' levels of involvement and perceptions of music played during the NBA game. That is, there was a positive relationship between participants' level of involvement and the linear composite of music congruency, liking, and distraction scores grouped together.

Follow-up descriptive discriminant analysis was conducted to better understand separation in involvement group membership. Results revealed the music variables of liking,  $F = 1.905$ , and congruency,  $F = 1.779$ , contributed more to differences in NBA involvement than variables representing music as a distraction from interaction,  $F = .181$ , and distraction from the game,  $F = .528$ , which were revealed to be less influential contributors to differences in levels of involvement. The structure matrix also revealed that the two variables of music liking (.901) and congruency (.869) appear to be the music variables that are the most salient in defining the music interpretation factor as well as differences in levels of involvement.

#### **Hypothesis 4.5**

Initial descriptive analysis revealed similar mean ratings of music distraction for participants in disparate loyalty groups. Regardless of the level of loyalty to the home team, participants seemed to perceive the atmospheric music as a distracting servicescape element. Although there were no noticeable mean differences on distraction scores, music interpretation scores did reveal a positive relationship between team loyalty and music liking. That is, participants with higher levels of attitudinal loyalty appeared to enjoy the atmospheric music at higher levels than participants' displaying lower levels loyalty to

the home team (See Table 7). A similar positive relationship also appears to exist between levels of loyalty and perceptions of music congruency.

**Table 7**

*Mean Atmospheric Music Interpretation Scores by Loyalty Group*

		<i>N</i>	Distracting		Liking		Congruent	
			<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Loyalty Group	Absent	54	5.06	3.563	4.19	2.548	3.94	2.310
	Low	122	6.16	3.874	4.52	2.125	4.89	1.995
	Medium	172	5.90	3.290	5.05	1.806	4.98	1.803
	High	77	5.74	3.622	5.05	1.761	5.10	1.832

Additionally, there were also seemingly differences on reported levels of perceived atmospheric music congruency based on participants' level of attitudinal loyalty. In particular, there were mean differences between participants' with absent loyalty to the home team and all three other loyalty groups (low, medium, and high) on congruency interpretation scores. That is, participants with no reported attitudinal loyalty to the home team reported lower levels of perceived atmospheric congruency than participants with higher reported levels of loyalty (See Table 8).

Results of the one-way MANOVA revealed, a significant multivariate main effect for loyalty,  $F(4, 420) = 3.160, p < .001, \text{Wilk's } \lambda = .942$ , of the linear composite of music interpretation variables. Results also revealed a weak association between loyalty (absent, low, medium, and high) and grouped music interpretation scores,  $\text{partial } \eta^2 = .02$ . Hypothesis 4.5 was confirmed given the significance of the overall test. In-line with results of hypothesis 4.4, there were statistically significant relationship between levels of

attitudinal loyalty to the home team and the linear composite of atmospheric music interpretation scores.

Follow-up descriptive discriminant analysis was conducted to interpret separation among loyalty groupings (absent, low, medium, and high) based on music interpretation scores. Results of the analysis revealed high  $F$ -to-remove values for all four music interpretation variables. Music as a distraction from interaction,  $F = 3.522$ , and distraction from the game,  $F = 3.154$ , were revealed to be the most influential contributors to differences in levels of loyalty. Music congruency,  $F = 2.444$  and liking,  $F = 2.007$ , were shown to also have high  $F$  values, but to be less influential on differences in loyalty. Further analysis of the structure matrix revealed the two variables of music congruency (.769) and distraction from interaction (.497) as the variables most responsible for defining the underlying linear composite of atmospheric music interpretation scores.

### **Discussion**

This study's findings seem to be in-line with previous research, within various service sectors, as to the relationship between involvement and loyalty. Hypothesis 4.1 was supported, revealing that reported levels of professional basketball involvement among participants were positively related to an individual's attitudinal loyalty to the home team. This finding appears to be consistent with Sherif and Cantril's (1974) contention that the foremost characteristic of a highly involved individual is the presence of increased levels of rejection of and resistance to change. This conclusion has also been supported by investigations of involvement amid various sport consumers (Funk, 2008; Funk et al., 2004). Within the PCM framework (Funk & James, 2001), allegiance is used

to identify individuals with the highest level of involvement or psychological commitment to an organization. This operational definition of high level involvement is the same as Heere and Dickson's (2008) definition of loyalty used in the development of the ALTS. Therefore, loyalty to the home team can only be achieved after a consumer progresses up the four stages of the involvement continuum.

Additionally, results support previous research employed to garner a deeper understanding of emotional responses experienced by consumers in various service environments. Significantly higher levels of arousal and pleasure experienced by highly involved and loyal participants, as revealed in hypotheses 4.2 and 4.3, is in keeping with the consumer-behavior literature (Hightower et al., 2002; Hines & Mehrabian, 1979; Wakefield & Blodgett, 1994, 1996; Wakefield & Sloan, 1995). In addition, increased levels of arousal have been shown to result in the increased prevalence of approach behaviors, which may include an increase in the length of time spent in an environment, as well as increased affiliation, verbal and nonverbal communication with those who are present in the environment (Hines & Mehrabian, 1979; Magnini & Parker, 2009; Booms & Bitner, 1980).

Finally, these results confirm previous research on atmospheric music's impact on consumers. The consumer behavior literature provides insight into the atmospheric music interpretation results, in particular participants' distraction scores as revealed in hypotheses 4.4 and 4.5. The reported overall distracting effect of atmospheric by participants in the present study appears to be consistent with previous investigations that have demonstrated the divergent effect atmospheric music may have on an already stimulating environment (Chebat et al., 1993).

This study provides professional sport leagues, particularly the NBA, as well as individual franchises an opportunity to maximize the potential benefits to be derived from an optimally constructed servicescape. Experiential service environments are increasingly important to contemporary sport consumption. The sport product is no longer confined to the court; it includes all attributes of the servicescape. This reproduced ancillary experience is an extremely important element of the total sport product that organizations and marketers can control. Thus, it is imperative organizations understand the elements of the environment that meaningfully influence the attitudes and perceptions of sport consumers.

One distinct element of the servicescape that has a tangible impact on consumer attitudes and behaviors is atmospheric music. If the NBA is to fully embrace the re-presentation and consumption of an extended sport product, the league and its teams must systematically evaluate the chosen atmospheric music. Hypotheses 4.4 and 4.5 revealed that overall participants liked the style of music played, while they also found it to be congruent with their perceptions of the NBA. The hypotheses however, also revealed that participants felt the music could be a distraction from the game as well as their ability to socialize. Therefore, the type or style, as well as level and duration of music should be considered by teams, since consumers' perceptions of atmospheric music have been shown to influence both attitudes and behaviors (e.g., Areni & Kim, 1993; North & Hargreaves, 2003; North et al., 1999).

Additionally, given that the consumption of live sport has become increasingly a social experience, it is imperative sport organizations and sport marketers truly understand this trend and its relationship to attempts at manipulating the servicescape.

This study revealed a significant portion of participants felt atmospheric music interfered or detracted from their ability to converse and interact with those around them. This study confirms previous findings that when music is perceived as a distracting servicescape element, the music detracts from the overall experience (Chebat et al., 1993). Since introduction of aural stimuli in an already visual stimulating environment may work to distract consumers, it is imperative that a decision to introduce music into the live-sport consumption experience is given proper consideration. Succinctly, music played during a sporting event should be congruent with the sport and work to enhance an increasingly social experience; particularly when there is low involvement with the product (Kotler, 1973).

Finally, the ultimate goal of sport marketers is to create and sustain a loyal base of fans. Given the unique and transient nature of the core sport product, creating a strong sport brand, or building brand equity, is the foundation upon which to build a fan-base resistant to change or unlikely to be swayed by alternative entertainment opportunities. Since high levels of involvement are requisite to establishing loyalty, the ultimate goal of the sport marketer, sport marketers should work to control the service environment in order to increase sport-consumers' levels of pleasure and arousal, thereby increasing the prevalence of approach behaviors, which mirror indicators of increased involvement (e.g., increased duration, frequency and affiliation).

In conclusion, the results of this study serve to reinforce the positive relationship between involvement and loyalty (Funk, 2008; Funk et al., 2004). In addition, findings also appear to be support previous research analyzing the influence the servicescape (Hightower et al., 2002; Wakefield & Blodgett, 1994, 1996; Wakefield & Sloan, 1995),

as well as atmospheric music (Jacob, 2006; Milliman, 1986; North & Hargreaves, 1998; North et al., 2003), has on creating emotional responses amongst consumers, which ultimately influence behavioral responses (e.g., time allocated, affiliation, repurchase).

As competition within sport for the time, money and emotional investments of consumers continues to grow, there is a real need to understand fully the variables that significantly influence sport consumer behavior. Thus, the current study's findings of the attitudes and behaviors of a unique segment of sport consumers should be of benefit to both sport organizations and sport marketers as they package and re-present the live sport product. Further, given the limited amount of control sport marketers have over the performance of the core sport product, the service environment is of increased import. The ability of organizations and marketers to identify and operationalize significant influencers of consumer attitudes in the servicescape is key to the establishing highly-involved and loyal fans.

### **Limitations**

While the present study examined the relationship between professional basketball involvement and attitudinal loyalty to the home team, and examined the impact of involvement and loyalty on consumer emotional responses and perceptions of the atmospheric music within the servicescape, it cannot be assumed these findings can be generalized to other sport-consumers and other sport settings. However, the NBA does share consumers with other sports and is also presented within venues shared by other sports; therefore, results could be used to better understand consumers of other sport products. Further, the variables utilized in the present study were chosen for inclusion after a thorough review of the consumer attitudes and behavior literature, including

treatments of involvement, and loyalty. Consequently, while these variables are not an exhaustive list, they could potentially be used in subsequent research into sport-consumers' attitudes and behaviors.

### **Future Directions**

This study's design was cross-sectional in nature and served as a limiting factor; only NBA consumers were participants. Such sport consumers are not the only group that displays disparate levels of involvement and loyalty to a particular sport or team. Further, professional basketball, itself, is not the only form of sport produced and consumed by fans in an experiential environment. Therefore, it would be interesting to extend the current line of inquiry to attendees of other professional and collegiate sporting events. Additionally, it would be intriguing to compare and contrast consumer behavioral and attitudinal variables amongst various professional and collegiate sports as various types of service environments. Given that the sport industry is consumer driven and the live sport product is fundamentally a service, continued research into sport-consumer attitudes and behaviors is essential. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, inquiries focusing on the impact of distinct elements within the sport servicescape are necessary, since such research is clearly currently lacking.



## CHAPTER V

### AN INVESTIGATION OF NBA INVOLVEMENT AND LOYALTY TO THE HOME TEAM

Estimates of the economic worth and impact of the sport industry vary, but overall report continued growth. Meek (1997) estimated that the sport industry in the United States was a \$62 billion business. More recent assessments, place the value of the sport industry in excess of \$152 billion (Broughton, Lee, & Netheny, 1999), with estimates of annual consumer spending alone exceeding \$250 billion (Crompton, 2004). Milano and Chelladurai (2011), in an investigation of the 2005 Gross Domestic Sport Product (GDSP), provided similar valuations. GDSP figures place the industry's value from \$168.469 billion, conservatively, and \$207.503 billion using the most liberal criteria (Milano & Chelladurai, 2011).

With the continued growth of the sport industry, as well as the continued growth of disparate modes of consumption, the creation of a highly involved and loyal fan base has increased significance for sport organizations, as the creation and maintenance of such a foundation is essential for sustainability at the organizational level. Similar to any other industry and product, sport consumption is the result of choices made by individual consumers. According to Funk (2008) sport consumer behavior stems from individuals' desire to seek out a consumption experience in order to satisfy internal needs and obtain associated benefits. Thus, it is essential for sport organizations and sport marketers to

identify and understand significant influencers of consumer attitudes related to the sport consumption experience, and thus what drives sport consumption behaviors.

The sport industry is also unique, in that the core sport product exhibits many distinct characteristics that solidify its unique nature. One such defining characteristic is the simultaneous production and consumption of the core sport product (Mullin, Hardy, & Sutton, 2007). Additionally, there are numerous constraints that work to limit the control sport organizations and sport marketers have over the game itself. Sport organizations, however, do have considerable control over the environment within which the live sport product is produced and consumed. According to Bitner (1992), the total experience of the consumer, within an experiential setting, has increased relevance in understanding resultant attitudes and behaviors. Therefore the environment, within which the sport product is presented, will also have a significant impact on overall perceptions and opinions formed about the sport consumption experience, which will inform future behaviors.

According to Kellner (2002) the presentation of professional basketball best signifies the space sport holds within contemporary American society. The sport product is no longer confined to the competition between teams and athletes on the court; it also includes the venue and environment that surrounds the game. The NBA has embraced the notion that sport is more than a game and according to (Andrews, 2006). As a result the production surrounding the presentation of NBA games works to create an experience for game attendees; thereby adding value in the minds of consumers to the cost of attendance. Additionally, the creation of an NBA game experience is meant to attract the largest number of consumers possible. The ultimate goal of such an approach is to

maximize profits by appealing to a diverse cross section of the market; thereby beating out other entertainment and leisure options for the time and money of consumers.

Given this unique nature of sport and the sport product, there is a need for sport specific consumer behavior research to examine the relationship between involvement with a specific sport league and loyalty to a specific franchise. Further, there is also a need for research to examine the experiential sport environment, in order to investigate how sport organizations may use elements in the space surrounding the presentation of the sport product to enhance both the experience of spectators, as well as their brand, thereby influencing consumer attitudes and behaviors which are antecedents of involvement, and thus by extension loyalty. In an effort to examine these issues, the following research question was developed: Which explanatory variables cluster participants into discernible and meaningful groups?

## **Review of Literature**

### **Sport Involvement**

Sport involvement, for the purposes of the present study, is an unobservable state of interest, arousal or motivation toward an event that is induced by stimuli within a particular environment that mediates resultant sport consumer behavior (Rothschild, 1984). Further, team sport involvement provides individuals the opportunity to express their true selves through immersion in an experiential environment (Havitz & Dimanche, 1999). Highly involved consumers of sport seek out and consume a service within an experiential service setting, similar in many respects to the settings in which consumers dine, shop, travel, vacation, and participate in experiential leisure activities.

The present study employed Funk and James' (2001) Psychological Continuum Model (PCM) to measure participants' level of involvement with the NBA. The PCM was created specifically to investigate levels of sport fan, or spectator involvement. In line with previous research the PCM employs a holistic approach to measuring the complex construct of involvement (Funk, Ridinger & Moorman, 2004; Kerstetter & Kovich, 1997; Munson & McQuarrie, 1987; Zaichkowsky, 1985). ). The PCM contains questions created to measure three facets (attraction, sign and centrality), which are then used to assess an individual's level of psychological connection (awareness, attraction, attachment, and allegiance), along a continuum. Thus, as an individual progresses up the psychological continuum, she displays increased levels of psychological commitment which can be equated to an increased level of involvement (Funk & James, 2001).

### **Team Loyalty**

Behavioral indicators, such as purchases and frequency of attendance, have traditionally been relied upon as indicators of loyalty in consumer research as well as in sport research (Mahony, Madrigal, & Howard, 2000). Loyalty, however, is a multidimensional construct which includes not only behavioral loyalty, but attitudinal loyalty as well (Funk & James, 2006; Funk & Pastore, 2000; Mahony et al., 2000; Park & Kim, 2000; Trail, Anderson, & Fink, 2000). The attitudinal component of loyalty, in the current study, is presented as an individual's resistance they display with respect to changing their level of psychological commitment to the home team (Heere & Dickson, 2008; Pritchard, Havitz & Howard, 1999).

Heere and Dickson's (2008) Attitudinal Loyalty to Team Scale (ALTS) was used in the present study to measure loyalty to the home team. The ALTS is a unidimensional ,

parsimonious 4-item measure of the psychological connection an individual has to a specific team. ALTS scores represent an individuals' resistance to change when presented with alternatives, the team is in a slump, or changes are made to the team's lineup. Thus, loyalty can serve as a predictor of future behavioral intentions, regardless of the team's performance; which is significant given the unpredictable nature of sport and the sport product.

Additionally, within the PCM (Funk & James, 2001), as discussed previously, allegiance is presented as the highest level of involvement. Thus allegiance signifies the highest level of psychological commitment to an organization. This definition of high level involvement is the same as the definition of loyalty presented by Heere and Dickson (2008) used in the creation of the ALTS. Therefore, loyalty can only be achieved after a consumer progresses up the four stages of the involvement continuum. Thus, involvement can be understood as being a determinant of loyalty.

### **Sport Consumers**

Even though there is considerable competition and choice for today's sport consumer, attendance of sporting events continues to be a significant source of revenue generation for sport organizations. Within the United States recent estimates place the amount of money spent on attending sporting events at over \$11 billion annually (Howard & DeSchriver, 2005). Estimates increase to \$26.17 billion, when other elements, such as parking, concessions, and merchandise, are included (King, 2002). Additionally, according to Trail and James (2008) the population of U.S. sport fans is estimated to include 200 million individuals.

Although attendance figures have historically been encouraging for the NBA, today's sport fan has increasingly more options and modes by which to consume sport. According to a recent Nielsen (2012) report there were over 42,500 hours of live sporting events broadcast in 2011 on both cable and network television. This was an increase of 5% from the number of broadcast hours dedicated to sports programming in 2010. Further, sport is also increasingly being consumed via the Internet. In an earlier Nielsen report (2010), each month in 2009 an average of 81 million people in the US logged-on to websites dedicated to sport to either follow their favorite team, follow their fantasy team, or catch-up on the latest sport related news. Further, in October of 2011 alone, over 450 million video streams occurred on various sports websites which were viewed by more than 35 million people (Nielsen, 2012). With the continued growth and increased competition within the sport industry, as well as the influx and proliferation of various modes of sport consumption, the creation of a highly involved and loyal base of spectators has increased significance for sport organizations, as the creation and maintenance of such a foundation is essential for sustainability at the organizational level.

Today's sports fan has limitless options and opportunities by which to consume sport. The ability of sport organizations to attract and activate attendance of live events still remains vital to an organization's long term viability and success in the industry (Funk, Filo, Beaton, & Pritchard, 2009). Given the availability of alternatives and substitutes, motives for the consumption of live sport have changed. That is, the consumption and presentation of live sport is no longer solely about the game being played.

### **The Servicescape and Emotional Responses**

According to Mehrabian and Russell (1974; 1976) all approach-avoidance behaviors are related to the two emotional states of arousal and pleasure. Within any given environment, approach-avoidance behaviors are related to resultant levels of pleasure-displeasure felt by consumers as a result of stimuli in the environment. Increased levels of pleasure result in approach behaviors that are directly correlated to increased levels of arousal (Hines & Mehrabian, 1979). Further, as pleasure decreases, approach behaviors are inversely related to arousal. Emotional responses to the environment occur regardless of the type of stimuli that is present in the environment or how the stimuli are introduced. Thus, emotional responses are a result of a consumers' reaction to the environment as a whole; that is taking into account all of the various elements present in a given setting (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974, 1976).

The consumption of live sporting events takes place within an experiential service environment referred to as the servicescape (Bitner, 1992). Sport organizations are in control of the atmospheric music being played within the servicescape, and therefore can use the music to create meaningful memories and associations with the consumptive experience and the sport brand in the minds' of consumers. Atmospheric music, provides aural cues to consumers which have been shown to influence the amount of time spent in various service settings (Milliman, 1982; 1986), as well as the type and amount of purchase (Guégen et al., 2008; Jacob, 2006; McKendrick, 1999). Additionally, the insertion of atmospheric music has been to be most effective when it is used to enhance the experience and not compete for consumers' attention (Hecker, 1984; Macklin, 1988). Therefore, perceptions of music congruency, distraction and liking were investigated.

Behavioral purchase intentions and actual purchasing behaviors have been used in past research as an indicator of both involvement and loyalty (e.g., Gladden & Milne, 1999; Howard & Crompton, 1995; Mullin et al., 2007). According to Day (1969) the repeated purchase of a product does not indicate loyalty unless the consumer is highly involved with the product, thus displaying a psychological commitment to the brand through loyalty. Given that high levels of involvement are precursors of loyalty, a multidimensional concept that includes both behavioral and attitudinal components, it is necessary to fully understand both sport consumer involvement and loyalty in the present context. Additionally, participants' purchasing and attendance behaviors were investigated to better understand the degree to which they are correlated to emotional responses elicited by the servicescape, as well as the interpretation of the atmospheric music within the consumptive sport environment.

Consumer behavior research has provided a framework by which to gain a deeper understanding of why people consume products and services. The servicescape, and the atmospheric elements contained within it, have been shown to directly impact consumer attitudes and behaviors (e.g. Chebat et al., 1993; Guégen et al, 2008; Hecker, 1984; Kotler, 1973; North et al., 1999), including satisfaction ratings (Wakefield & Blodgett, 1996), experiences of positive and congruent affect (Jacob, 2006; North, Shilcock & Hargreaves, 2003), and an increased amount of time spent in the service environment (Milliman, 1986). Further, consumer involvement and loyalty have also been shown to directly and positively impact both repurchase and attendance behaviors, as well as intentions (Hightower et al, 2002; Jacob, 2006; Rein et al., 2006; Wakefield & Blodgett, 1994; Wakefield & Sloan, 1995). Despite the depth of research consumer behavior



research, as well as the prominence of the sport industry, there is limited research investigating the influence of the experiential sport-servicescape to levels of involvement and loyalty.

## **Method**

### **Sample**

The target population for the present study was individual men's professional basketball game attendees over the age of 18. A sampling frame, utilizing stratified cluster sampling, was used in the present study in order to establish the group of target population members who would constitute potential participants in the study. Restriction of the target population was necessary, and appropriate, due to both practical (i.e., significant average attendance size) and financial (i.e., budget) constraints associated with the present study (Biemer & Lyberg, 2003). Clusters for the present study were constructed utilizing randomly selected seating-sections, which were already present and easily identifiable, within the selected data collections sites.

Participants were randomly selected from attendees of two professional basketball games that were played in the southeastern region of the United States during the 2010-2011 regular season. The venues selected for the study represented the arenas of two eastern conference teams from among the 30-team league. Average attendance figures for the two teams' home games during the 2010-2011 season were 16,791 and 15,846, respectively (ESPN, 2011).

### **Instrumentation**

The survey used on the present study was comprised of seven distinct sections with a total of 42 items. The first section consisted of Funk and James' (2001)

Psychological Continuum Model (PCM) 9-item scale, which was used to measure participants' levels of involvement with professional basketball. Items were reworded from the original instrument to reflect the distinct purpose and focus of this study. Involvement facet scores were used to determine participants' associated level of involvement along the psychological connection continuum (Funk & James, 2001). Secondly, Heere and Dickson's (2008) 4-item Attitudinal Loyalty to Team Scale (ALTS) was used to measure attitudinal loyalty to the home team. Participants' total score on all items was used to determine their respective level of attitudinal loyalty to a specific team. Additionally, in order to gain a holistic understanding of distinct characteristics that may predict professional basketball involvement and ultimately loyalty, consumer attitudes, purchase intentions, purchase behaviors, and demographic variables were included.

Consumer attitude variables were selected based on an extensive review of the consumer behavior literature. Thus, in addition to the PCM and ALTS scales discussed above, Mehrabian and Russell's (1974) Semantic Differential Measures of Emotional Response to Environments was used to measure levels of arousal and pleasure experienced by participants, as induced by stimuli in the service environment which have been shown to influence consumer attitudes and behaviors (Kotler, 1973). Participants' perceptions of the atmospheric music played during the professional basketball game were also measured based on responses to four questions included to gauge perceived levels of congruency, distraction, and liking of the music.

There has been a considerable amount of research that has shown the distinct and real effect atmospheric elements within the service environment can have on consumer purchasing behaviors (e.g., Alpert & Alpert, 1990; Areni & Kim, 1993; Morrin &

Chebat, 2005; North et al., 2003). Therefore, increases in actual purchasing behaviors from intentions may be triggered by stimuli within the servicescape. Additionally, given the moderating influence involvement has on the influence of stimuli in the experiential environment, this information will help create a better understanding of the environmental factors and individual characteristics that affect participants' purchase intentions and actual purchasing behaviors. Questions were thus included in the survey instrument to measure the total amount of money participants intended to spend during the game they were attending as well as the total amount of money they actually spent while in attendance. The total amount of money participants' both intended to spend and actually spent on alcoholic beverages was measured separate from the total amount of money spent on other types of products (i.e., merchandise and concessions) while in attendance of the event.

Finally, demographic variables were included in the present study in order to gain a better understanding of the characteristics of professional basketball attendees included in the sample. Participants were asked to provide information regarding their age, gender, educational background, occupation, income level, marital status and ethnicity. Participants were also asked to reveal how many games of the home team, on average, they attend during a typical professional basketball season.

### **Procedures and Data Analysis**

Surveys were distributed and completed by participants while in-attendance of one of two professional basketball games during the 2010-2011 NBA-season. Surveys, along with a writing instrument, were distributed to potential participants seated in randomly selected sections, based on the stratified cluster sampling procedure described

in the preceding section. The researcher, along with a supporting research team, was onsite to distribute, administer, and collect surveys. Access to the research sites was gained by seeking and gaining approval of each arena's respective professional basketball organization. Participants were instructed to leave their survey in their cup holder upon completion. Instructions on the survey also advised participants of the option of returning completed surveys to designated guest services locations within the arena. Surveys were ultimately collected at the end of the game, after attendees had left the arena, from both locales (i.e., cup holders in selected sections and guest services).

A cluster analysis was used to reveal whether or not discernible groups of participants existed based upon the homogeneity of scores on a set of specified variables. The objective of cluster analysis is to identify groups within a given set of data that might be generalizable to the target population (Kachigan, 1991). Ward's (1963) method of hierarchical agglomeration was utilized. This method has been shown to be a preferred method in the social sciences (Borgen & Barnett, 1987; Milligan, 1981), as it produces clusters that are spherical and roughly the same size; given that it is designed to maximize the minimum variance within clusters by combining clusters for which the increase in the total within-cluster variation is the smallest (Lorr, 1983). For practical purposes, multiple cluster solutions were analyzed, however only solutions with 2 to 8 clusters were considered.

## **Results**

A total of 800 surveys were distributed during two separate professional basketball games, with 400 surveys disseminated during each game. Four hundred and twenty-five completed surveys comprised the final sample representing a 53% rate of

response. One hundred and ninety-four (46%) completed surveys were utilized from the first game and 231 (54%) from the second game, representing a 49% and 58% usable rate of response respectively. Only surveys that were filled out completely were included in the final sample. This reduced the overall response rate from 62% (56% and 68%, respectively) to the final rate of 53%, which was just above the conservative estimate of 50% assumed for the present study.

Forty-seven percent ( $n = 199$ ) of respondents were seated in the lower bowl, while 53% ( $n = 226$ ) had seats located in the upper bowl. The average participant in this study was a white (57%) male (61%) with either a bachelor's (33%) or graduate (24%) degree. Further, the average participant was married (51%) and earned more than \$100,000 (34%) annually. For a more in depth analysis of participants' demographic information see Table 3.

The average number of professional basketball games attended by participants in was 8 games, with attendance figures ranging from 0-45 games in a typical season. Thirty-three percent ( $n = 139$ ) of participants typically attend 1 game per season. Seventy-seven percent ( $n = 327$ ) of respondents reported low levels of NBA involvement, with 42% ( $n = 176$ ) also displayed low or a relative absence of attitudinal loyalty to the home team. Additionally, 18% ( $n = 77$ ) of participants reported medium and high levels of attitudinal loyalty. Prior to running statistical analyses to address both research questions, the reliability and internal consistency of the involvement, loyalty and emotional responses to the environment scales were also tested.

Cronbach's alpha reliability analyses were first performed to examine the reliability of scores on the primary scales contained in the research instrument. Results of

the estimate of reliability for the PCM revealed scores, utilizing the present sample, on the scale were internally consistent,  $\alpha = .86$ . Further, the Cronbach's alpha reliability estimate would decrease if any of the nine items were removed from the scale.

Cronbach's alpha was also examined for the ALTS; results revealed that reported ALTS scores were internally consistent,  $\alpha = .88$ . Lastly, analysis of the Emotional Response to Environments scale also revealed that, for the present sample, reported arousal and pleasure scores were internally consistent ( $\alpha = .86$ ).

**Table 8**

*Cluster Means, Standard Deviations and Z-scores*

Construct	Cluster											
	NBA (N = 199)			Model (N = 123)			Loyal (N = 98)			Capital (N = 5)		
	M	SD	Z <sub>mean</sub>	M	SD	Z <sub>mean</sub>	M	SD	Z <sub>mean</sub>	M	SD	Z <sub>mean</sub>
Involvement												
<i>Pleasure</i>	16.09	3.15	0.29	11.98	4.89	-0.71	16.13	2.91	0.30	15.00	.000	0.02
<i>Centrality</i>	7.20	3.67	-.01	5.09	3.12	-0.51	9.99	4.82	0.66	7.00	.000	-0.05
<i>Sign</i>	10.77	3.83	0.16	7.85	4.21	-0.53	11.67	4.03	0.37	9.00	.000	-0.26
Loyalty	14.92	6.24	0.19	17.21	7.40	-0.50	17.26	5.30	0.33	5.00	.000	-1.58
Em. Response												
<i>Arousal</i>	1.45	6.49	0.27	4.90	5.60	-0.58	6.22	4.58	0.19	2.00	.000	-0.09
<i>Pleasure</i>	4.95	7.20	0.27	6.95	5.91	-0.39	6.30	5.02	-0.07	8.00	.000	0.36

Next, a cluster analysis using Ward's (1963) method was conducted. Each participant responded to items contained in the survey instrument which included questions related to demographics (i.e., gender, ethnicity, age, occupation, marital status, education, income, frequency of attendance, section type), consumer attitudes (i.e., loyalty, involvement, atmospheric music), emotional responses to the environment (i.e., arousal, pleasure), and purchase intentions and behaviors (i.e., concessions and alcohol).

The hierarchical cluster analysis utilizing Ward's method produced four discernible and meaningful clusters. Means and standard deviations for essential survey items for the four-cluster solution are presented in Table 8.

#### **Four-Cluster Solution**

The first cluster, or *NBA* cluster, was characterized by participants' with low levels of involvement with the NBA and low to median levels of reported loyalty ( $M = 14.92$ ,  $SD = 6.24$ ) to the home team who attended five games in a typical season. In addition, cluster participants did not intend to, nor did they actually, spend a significant amount of money while in attendance, including both the purchase of alcoholic beverages and other concession items as displayed in Table 9. Members also reported median levels of pleasure ( $M = 4.95$ ,  $SD = 7.20$ ) and low levels of arousal ( $M = 1.45$ ,  $SD = 6.49$ ). The demographic profile of the NBA cluster, as presented in Table 10, seems to most closely resemble to demographic make-up of the typical NBA fan reported in previous research (e.g., Schnietz et al., 2005).

**Table 9**

*Cluster Purchase Intentions and Behaviors*

Reported Amt. (\$)	Cluster							
	NBA ( $N = 199$ )		Model ( $N = 123$ )		Loyal ( $N = 98$ )		Capital ( $N = 5$ )	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Intent Alcohol	\$.59	\$2.78	\$10.98	\$15.44	\$20.35	\$21.59	\$70.00	\$0.00
Spent Alcohol	\$.67	\$2.60	\$13.91	\$18.46	\$14.22	\$10.91	\$40.00	\$1.43
Intent Concessions	\$3.38	\$5.41	\$16.05	\$12.06	\$50.87	\$11.24	\$120.0	\$0.00
Spent Concessions	\$3.67	\$6.95	\$18.59	\$16.48	\$36.65	\$15.13	\$235.0	\$5.35

**Table 10***Demographic Information of NBA Cluster (n = 199)*

<b>Variable</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Gender</b>		
Female	52	26
Male	147	74
<b>Age</b>		
18-20	45	23
21-30	45	23
31-40	49	25
41-50	44	22
50+	16	8
<b>Ethnicity</b>		
White	122	61
African American	53	27
Hispanic	12	6
Other	12	6
<b>Education</b>		
High School	58	29
Associate's Degree	12	6
Bachelor's Degree	72	36
Graduate Degree	37	19
Post Graduate	17	9
Other	3	2
<b>Marital Status</b>		
Married	89	45
Single	79	40
Divorce	20	10
Separated	4	2
Widowed	2	1
Partner	5	3
<b>Income</b>		
<20K	56	46
20-40K	26	13
40-60K	26	13
60-80K	13	7
>80K	78	39



**Table 11***Select Demographic Information of Model Cluster (n = 123)*

Variable	N	%
Gender		
Female	60	49
Male	63	51
Age		
18-20	13	11
21-30	34	28
31-40	49	40
41-50	44	36
50+	16	13
Ethnicity		
White	71	58
African American	50	41
Hispanic	1	<1
Other	1	<1
Education		
High School	18	15
Associate's Degree	15	12
Bachelor's Degree	39	32
Graduate Degree	29	24
Post Graduate	19	15
Other	3	2
Marital Status		
Married	66	54
Single	38	31
Divorce	7	6
Separated	4	3
Widowed	1	<1
Partner	7	6
Income		
<20K	14	11
20-40K	20	16
40-60K	21	17
60-80K	14	11
>80K	54	45

The second cluster, or *Model* group, included participants with high levels of involvement and elevated loyalty ( $M = 17.2$ ,  $SD = 7.40$ ). Model group members also

spent roughly \$3.00 more than intended on both alcoholic beverages and other concession items, as displayed in Table 9. Additionally, members of the Model cluster displayed elevated levels of both pleasure ( $M = 6.95$ ,  $SD = 5.91$ ) and arousal ( $M = 4.90$ ,  $SD = 5.60$ ). Group members also attended five games in a typical season. Detailed demographic information related to the Model cluster can be found in Table 11.

The results further distinguished the third group, or *Loyal* group, based on age (40+), ethnicity (African American), education (college graduate or beyond), and marital status (married). The Loyal group also predominantly included participants with high levels of NBA involvement, who also had the highest mean levels of attitudinal loyalty to the home team ( $M = 17.26$ ,  $SD = 5.30$ ; See Table 8). In addition, cluster members came into the event intending to spend roughly \$70 on both alcoholic beverages and other concession items, and ultimately spent more on alcoholic beverages ( $M = \$14.22$ ) and other concession items (\$36.65) than both NBA and Model cluster members (See Table 9).

The fourth (*Capital*) group ( $n = 5$ ), though small in numbers, was the only group that was discernible, from all groups, based on distinct demographic variables (i.e., marital status, ethnicity, gender, age and education), with 100% of the participants included in the group being classified as a separated white-male, between the age of thirty and thirty nine, with a post-graduate education. Additionally, members of this last group had high levels of NBA involvement, yet extremely low levels of loyalty ( $M = 5.00$ ,  $SD = .000$ ) to the home team and only attended one game during a typical season. Participants of this cluster displayed elevated and median levels of pleasure ( $M = 8.00$ ,  $SD = .000$ ) and arousal ( $M = 2.00$ ,  $SD = .000$ ) respectively, and outspent, on

average, members of the other three groups on purchases of both alcoholic beverages (+\$31.50) and other concession items (+\$215). The Capital group also anticipated spending more money on both types of purchases as well as saw the most significant increase between intended and actual purchases than members of the other three clusters (See Table 9). As presented in Table 12, the Capital group reported the highest possible level of liking the music ( $M = 7.0$ ,  $SD = .000$ ), which was significantly higher than all other groups, in addition to the sample mean ( $M = 4.79$ ,  $SD = 2.02$ ).

**Table 12**

*Cluster Atmospheric Music Interpretation Scores*

Music Item	NBA ( $N = 199$ )		Cluster Model ( $N = 123$ )		Loyal Females ( $N = 98$ )		Capital ( $N = 5$ )	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Liking	4.58	2.10	5.03	1.82	5.78	1.31	7.00	.000
Congruent	4.65	2.09	5.18	1.61	5.43	1.56	6.00	.000
Distraction1	3.24	1.94	2.76	1.87	2.56	1.31	3.00	.000
Distraction2	2.88	1.89	2.50	1.76	2.26	1.10	4.00	.000

**Demographic Characteristics**

Comparisons of the four groups on demographic variables were next conducted using follow-up chi-square analyses. Differences were found among clusters for gender ( $X^2(3, N = 425) = 30.25, p < .001$ , Cramér's  $V = .27$ ), age ( $X^2(12, N = 425) = 80.75, p < .001$ , Cramér's  $V = .25$ ), ethnicity ( $X^2(15, N = 425) = 32.14, p < .006$ , Cramér's  $V = .16$ ), education ( $X^2(15, N = 425) = 55.18, p < .001$ , Cramér's  $V = .21$ ), marital status ( $X^2(15, N = 425) = 178.71, p < .001$ , Cramér's  $V = .38$ ), and income ( $X^2(18, N = 425) = 4961, p < .001$ , Cramér's  $V = .20$ ). The effect size for all findings, Cramér's  $V$ , were high,  $>.15$ , indicating strong relationships (Huck, 2008).

### **Involvement and Loyalty Measures**

The four clusters were compared on involvement and loyalty group membership as determined by responses to PCM and ALTS scale items. One-way ANOVA and chi-square analyses were conducted to determine if significant differences existed between clusters. Chi-square analysis revealed significant differences among clusters on level (high v. low) of professional basketball involvement ( $X^2(3, N = 425) = 49.99, p < .001$ ). Further, one-way ANOVA analyses revealed significant differences between clusters on the three involvement facets of pleasure ( $F(3, 420) = 36.25, p < .001, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .206$ ), centrality ( $F(3, 420) = 29.97, p < .001, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .176$ ), and sign ( $F(3, 420) = 20.99, p < .001, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .127$ ). Tukey post-hoc comparisons of the four clusters indicated the Model group ( $M = 3.99, 95\% \text{ CI } [3.70, 4.29]$ ) had significantly lower pleasure-facet ratings than both the NBA ( $M = 5.36, 95\% \text{ CI } [5.21, 5.51]$ ) and the Loyal groups ( $M = 5.38, 95\% \text{ CI } [5.18, 5.57]$ ),  $p < .001$ ). The Model group also had significantly lower centrality ( $M = 1.70, 95\% \text{ CI } [1.51, 1.88]$ ) and sign ( $M = 2.61, 95\% \text{ CI } [2.36, 2.86]$ ) facet scores than the Loyal group ( $M = 3.33, 95\% \text{ CI } [3.01, 3.65]$ ;  $M = 3.89, 95\% \text{ CI } [3.62, 4.16]$ ),  $p < .001$ ). Comparisons between the Capital group and the other three groups were not statistically significant, at  $p < .05$ , for the three involvement facets of pleasure ( $M = 5.00, 95\% \text{ CI } [5.00, 5.00]$ ), centrality ( $M = 2.33, 95\% \text{ CI } [2.33, 2.35]$ ) and sign ( $M = 3.00, 95\% \text{ CI } [3.00, 3.50]$ ).

One-way ANOVA also revealed significant differences among clusters on level of attitudinal loyalty to the home team ( $F(3, 420) = 23.39, p < .001, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .143$ ). Tukey post-hoc loyalty comparisons between the Model ( $M = 12.19, 95\% \text{ CI } [11.18, 13.20]$ ) and Capital ( $M = 5.00, 95\% \text{ CI } [5.00, 5.00]$ ) groups were not significantly

different at  $p < .05$ . Post-hoc comparisons of participant loyalty between the NBA ( $M = 16.74$ , 95% CI [15.86, 17.63]) and Loyal ( $M = 17.67$ , 95% CI [16.34, 19.00]) groups also revealed no significant differences at  $p < .05$ . Significant differences between the NBA group and the Model and Capital groups were revealed ( $p < .001$ ). Further, post-hoc comparisons showed significant differences between the Model group and both the NBA and Loyal groups ( $p < .001$ ) in addition to significant differences between the Loyal and the Capital groups ( $p < .001$ ).

### **Emotional Responses and Music Measures**

Bonferroni-adjusted one-way ANOVAs were used to further compare clusters on individual emotion and music constructs. Cluster membership was shown to have a statistically significant effect on the two emotional responses of arousal,  $F(3, 420) = 22.51$ ,  $p < .025$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .139$ , and pleasure,  $F(3, 420) = 12.14$ ,  $p < .025$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .08$ . Clusters also significantly differed on levels of music liking ( $F(3, 420) = 55.05$ ,  $p < .0125$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .282$ ), congruency ( $F(3, 420) = 16.65$ ,  $p < .0125$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .106$ ), distraction from interaction ( $F(3, 420) = 19.63$ ,  $p < .0125$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .123$ ), and distraction from the game ( $F(3, 420) = 22.55$ ,  $p < .0125$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .139$ ). Mean scores for music liking were statistically different between the Model group and all other clusters groups ( $p < .0125$ ). Liking scores also differed significantly between the NBA and the Loyal groups ( $p < .0125$ ). Additionally, the Model and Capital groups also rated the music as a distraction from the game at significantly higher levels than the other two groups ( $p < .0125$ ). The Model group also had the highest rating of the music as a distraction from interacting with those around them.

## Discussion

Results of the present study appear to support previous research, administered in various service environments, that has investigated the relationship between involvement and loyalty. That is, the present outcome with respect to this relationship indicates a positive relationship between an individual's level of involvement and psychological commitment, or loyalty. The primary attribute of highly involved individuals is the presence of highly developed levels of psychological commitment, or resistance to change. This prime attribute has been identified in the literature as allegiance (Funk & James, 2001), or the highest level of involvement. Further, the definitions of allegiance and high-involvement are synonymous with the definition of loyalty (Heere & Dickson, 2008; Pritchard, Havitz, & Howard, 1999), which this study's results support.

In addition, the cluster analysis revealed four discernible participant groups. A discussion of each group will provide a better understanding of participants' attitudes and behaviors, and thus NBA consumers. The *NBA* group most closely resembled the typical NBA fan, as identified in previous research (Schnietz et al., 2005), based on select demographic variables. Interestingly, members of this group displayed the lowest levels of pleasure and arousal amongst all four groups, as determined by mean scores on the Emotional Responses to Environment Scale (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974). Increased levels of arousal have been shown to result in the increased prevalence of approach behaviors, which may include an increase in the length of time spent in an environment, increased affiliation, contact, and both verbal and nonverbal communication with those who are present in the environment (Hines & Mehrabian, 1979; Magnini & Parker, 2009; Booms & Bitner, 1980; Wakefield & Blodgett, 1996). Conversely, decreased levels of

arousal may result in avoidance behaviors, which are characterized by decreased time spent in the environment, as well as evading contact and communication, both verbal and nonverbal, with others in the environment (Donovan & Rossiter, 1982).

The relatively low levels of pleasure and arousal experienced by participants in the NBA group, seems to help reconcile members also being classified as low-involved, as well as reporting low attitudinal loyalty to the home team. Further, members of the NBA group both intended to and spent the least amount of money on concessions and alcoholic beverages of all groups, which is indicative of avoidance behaviors. The results therefore seem to suggest the typical NBA fan, as identified in this study, was not fully-engaged while in attendance of the event, experiencing low levels of arousal and engaging in avoidance behaviors, such as decreased contact with the product and the amount of money spent (Mehrabian & Russell, 1976; Milliman, 1986; Wakefield & Blodgett, 1996).

The second, or Model cluster, contained participants with high levels of NBA involvement as well as loyalty to the home team, and attending 5 games during a typical season. Additionally, Loyal group members engaged in further approach behaviors based on reported purchasing behavior. This cluster's members reported a slight increase in the amount of money spent compared to that which they intended to spend. This increase in money spent is a prime example of approach behaviors, stemming from heightened levels of arousal and pleasure, which have been consistently reported in the consumer behavior literature (e.g., Guégen, et al., 2008; Jacob, 2006; McKendrick, 1999). It would thus be advantageous for organizations and marketers to continue to meet the wants, needs and desires of Loyal cluster consumers, as they display both attitudinal and behavioral loyalty

to the home team, which are essential for the sustainability of sport organizations in an increasingly fragmented and competitive marketplace (Amis, Slack, & Barrett, 1999; Funk et al., 2009)

Similar to the Model group, the Loyal cluster also consisted primarily of highly-educated professionals who were loyal to the home team. This result is in keeping with the arousal-pleasure hypothesis (Mehrabian & Russell, 1976), given that both cluster participants displayed elevated levels of both arousal and pleasure. Loyalty was further displayed by Loyal group members in their purchasing behaviors during the event, as group members spent roughly \$50 while in attendance of an NBA game, which interestingly was roughly \$20 less than members anticipated they would spend while at the event. In addition, participants in this cluster attended 19 games in a typical NBA season, further evidence of their heightened behavioral loyalty to the home team. The results further suggest, consumers who meet the Loyal-clusters' profile, if identified, could provide organizations and marketers with unique and profitable purchasing potential if provided attendance opportunities that better meet their distinct needs. For example, club seats with exclusive access to spaces designed to increase the sociability of the attendance experience (e.g., bar or restaurant style seating areas) without detracting from the ability to watch the game being played.

The fourth group, or Capital group, though significantly small in number ( $n = 5$ ), did display distinct characteristics that warrant discussion. First, all five members displayed matching demographic characteristics on all measures exclusive of occupation. In addition to demographic variables, all members were divergent from the other groups in the considerable amount money members intended to spend as well as actually spent



while in attendance on both concession items and alcoholic beverages. This finding, in particular, seems to be in-line with previous research, as increased levels of pleasure and arousal have been shown to have a direct influence on the amount of money spent while in a service environment (Hightower et al., 2002). Further, Capital group members also reported significantly increased levels of liking the music, which has also been shown to impact purchasing behaviors, such as an increase in the amount of money spent. This may help to reconcile both the sizeable amount of money spent while in attendance, which represented a significant increase from the amount of money members anticipated that they would spend.

The Capital group also displayed highly involved tendencies toward the NBA. Interestingly, as a group, they had the lowest median levels of loyalty to the home team. Given the high level of education (post-graduate degree) and disposable income (>\$100,000 annually), it would be advantageous for organizations to identify these consumers and work to increase consumption opportunities that meet their needs. The group reported attending only one game on average per season, therefore the organization seems to not be capitalizing on the opportunities to incite repeat purchase behaviors, especially given the significant amount of money ( $M = \$275$ ) spent while in attendance.

In conclusion, this study confirmed the findings of previous research studies that investigated the link between involvement and loyalty. Results worked first to support the positive relationship between involvement and loyalty (Funk, 2008; Funk et al., 2004). In addition, the findings also provided a framework by which to gain a deeper understanding of the attitudes and behaviors of the sport consumer in a keenly stimulating environment. The exploratory analysis used to address the second research question also afforded a

better understanding of the average NBA consumer and further their wants, needs, and desires. This information could be of great import to sport organizations and marketers as they work to increase levels of involvement, and thus loyalty, amongst current and future consumers.

### **Limitations and Future Directions**

The data analysis techniques and results are overall descriptive in nature and therefore, the present study is by no means an all-inclusive treatment of the variables of interest. Involvement and loyalty are also remarkably complex constructs. As such, they are constantly evolving within the literature as new studies are constructed and data are uncovered to explain facets of each respective construct. Further, due to time, cost, and accessibility constraints, only one scale was utilized to measure participants' level of attitudinal loyalty and involvement respectively. Given the complex nature of these variable discussed above, there are alternative scales exist that have been shown to be reliable and valid measures of each respective construct.

This study also employed cluster sampling techniques to create a sampling frame by which to generate parameter estimates to represent the target population of interest. This method was used due to time, cost, and logistical constraints. As such, the general increase in sampling error that is associated with cluster sampling (Som, 1973) must be taken into consideration when interpreting and generalizing the present research findings.

An intriguing next step may be to employ alternative measures of involvement and loyalty. Additionally, alternative research methods, such as qualitative methods of data collection, could also be used to provide a more in-depth understanding of participant attitudes and behaviors. Further, this study was limited to an investigation of

professional basketball participants. Expanding the target population to include other sport consumers (e.g., professional hockey, collegiate sports) may help to provide a deeper understanding of involvement and loyalty amongst sport consumers.

## REFERENCES

- Aaker, D. (1991). *Managing brand equity*. New York, NY : Free Press.
- Alpert, J. I., & Alpert, M. I. (1990). Music influences on mood and purchase intentions. *Psychology and Marketing*, 7(2), 109-133.
- Amis, J., Slack, T., & Berrett, T. (1999). Sport sponsorships as distinctive competence. *European Journal of Marketing*, 33, 250-272.
- Andrews, D. L. (ed.) (2001). *Michael Jordan Inc.: Corporate sport, media culture, and late modern America*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press.
- Andrews, D. L. (2006). *Sport-commerce-culture: Essays on sport in late capitalist America*. New York, NY: Peter Lang.
- Areni, C. S., & Kim, D. (1993). The influence of background music on shopping behaviour: Classical versus top-forty music in a wine store. *Advances in Consumer Research*, 20, 336-340.
- Aubert-Gamet, V., & Cova, B. (1999). Servicescapes: From modern non-places to postmodern common places. *Journal of Business Research*, 44, 37-45.
- Backman, S. J., & Crompton, J. L. (1991). The usefulness of selected variables for predicting activity loyalty. *Leisure Sciences*, 13, 205-220.
- Bagozzi, R. P., Gopinath, M., & Nyer, P. U. (1999). The role of emotions in marketing. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 27(2), 184-206.

- Baker, J. (1998). Examining the informational value of store environments. In Sherry, J. F. Jr. (Ed.), *Servicescapes: The concept of place in contemporary markets*. Chicago, IL: NTC Business Books.
- Bauer, H. H., Stokburger-Sauer, N. E., & Exler, S. (2008). Brand image and fan loyalty in professional team sport: A refined model and empirical assessment. *Journal of Sport Management, 22*, 205-226.
- Beaton, A. A., & Funk, D. C. (2008). An evaluation of theoretical frameworks for studying physically active leisure. *Leisure Sciences, 30*, 53-70.
- Biemer, P.P., & Lyberg, L.E. (2003). *Introduction to survey quality*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Interscience.
- Bitner, M. J. (1992, April). Servicescapes: The impact of physical surroundings on customers and employees. *Journal of Marketing, 56*, 57-71.
- Booms, B. H., & Bitner, M. J. (1980). Marketing services by managing the environment. *Cornell Restaurant Administration Quarterly, 23*, 35-39.
- Borgen, F. H., & Barnett, D. C. (1987). Applying cluster analyses in counseling psychology research. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 34*, 456-468.
- Borling, J. E. (1981). The effects of sedative music on alpha rhythms and focused attention in high-creative and low-creative subjects. *Journal of Music Therapy, 28*, 101-108.
- Brooks, C. (1994). *Sports marketing: Competitive business strategies for sports*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Broughton, B., Lee, J., & Netheny, R. (1999, December 20-26). The question: How big is the U.S. sports industry? *Street & Smith's SportsBusiness Journal, 23-29*.

- Chaudhuri, A. (2006). *Emotion and reason in consumer behavior*. Oxford, UK: Elsevier.
- Chebat, J-C., Gelinas-Chebat, C., & Filiatrault, P. (1993). Interactive effects of musical and visual cues on time perception: An application to waiting lines in banks. *Perceptual and Motor Skills*, 77, 995-1020.
- Chebat, J-C., Vaillant, D., & Gelinas-Chebat, C. (2000). Does background music in a store enhance salespersons' persuasiveness? *Perceptual and Motor Skills*, 91, 405-424.
- Cova, B. (1997). Community and consumption: Towards a definition of the linking value of products or services. *European Journal of Marketing*, 31, 297-316.
- Creswell, J. W. (1998). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five traditions*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Crompton, J. L. (2004). Conceptualization and alternate operationalizations of the measurement of sponsorship effectiveness in sport. *Leisure Studies*, 23(3), 267-281.
- Daniel, W. W., & Terrel, J. C. (1992). *Business statistics for management and economics*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin.
- Day, G. S. (1969). A two dimensional concept of brand loyalty. *Journal of Advertising Research*, 9, 29-35.
- Donovan, R. J., & Rossiter, J. R. (1982). Store atmosphere: An environmental psychology approach. *Journal of Retailing*, 58, 34-57.
- ESPN. (2009). *Attendance reports, 2009*. Retrieved February 4, 2010 from [http://espn.go.com/nba/attendance/\\_/year/2009](http://espn.go.com/nba/attendance/_/year/2009)
- Everitt, B. J. (1980). *Cluster Analysis, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed*. New York, NY: Halsted Press.

- Falk, L. K., Sockel, H., & Warren, H. (2005). Reactions to integrated store environments: The atmospheric matrix model in the virtual world. *Journal of Website Promotion, 1*(4), 85-108.
- Filo, K., Funk, D. C., & O'Brien, D. (2009). The meaning behind attachment: Exploring camaraderie, cause, and competency at a charity sort event. *Journal of Sport Management, 23*(3), 361-387.
- Funk, D. C. (2008). *Consumer behaviour in sport and events*. Oxford, UK: Elsevier.
- Funk, D. C., Filo, K., Beaton, A. A., & Pritchard, M. (2009). Measuring the motives of sport event attendance: Bridging the academic-practitioner divide to understanding behavior. *Sport Marketing Quarterly, 18*(3), 126-138.
- Funk, D. C., & James, J. (2001). The Psychological Continuum Model: A conceptual framework for understanding an individual's psychological connection to sport. *Sport Management Review, 4*, 119-150.
- Funk, D. C., & James, J. (2006). Consumer loyalty: The meaning of attachment in the development of sport team allegiance. *Journal of Sport Management, 20*, 189-217.
- Funk, D. C., & Pastore, D. L. (2000). Equating attitudes to allegiance: The usefulness of selected attitudinal information in segmenting loyalty to professional sports teams. *Sport Marketing Quarterly, 9*, 175-184.
- Funk, D. C., Ridinger, L. L., Moorman, A. M. (2004). Exploring origins of involvement: Understanding the relationship between consumer motives and involvement with professional sport teams. *Leisure Studies, 26*, 35-61.

- Funk, D. C., Toohey, T., & Bruun, T. (2007). International sport event participation: Prior sport involvement, destination image, and travel motives. *European Sport Management Quarterly*, 7, 227-248.
- Gladden, J. M., & Funk, D. C. (2001). Understanding brand loyalty in professional sport: Examining the link between brand association and brand loyalty. *International Journal of Sports Marketing and Sponsorship*, 3, 67-94.
- Gladden, J. M., & Funk, D. C. (2002). Developing an understanding of brand associations in team sport: Empirical evidence from consumers of professional sport. *Journal of Sport Management*, 16, 54-81.
- Gladden, J. M., & Milne, G. R. (1999). Examining the importance of brand equity in professional sports. *Sport Marketing Quarterly*, 8(1), 21-29.
- Glass, G. V., & Hopkins, K. D. (1995). *Statistical methods in education and psychology* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon.
- Gottdiener, M. (1998). The semiotics of consumer spaces: The growing importance of themed environments. In Sherry, J.F. Jr. (Ed.), *Servicescapes: The concept of place in contemporary markets*. Chicago, IL: NTC Business Books.
- Groves, R. M., Fowler, F. J., Couper, M. P., Lepkowski, J. M., Singer, E., & Tourangeau, R. (2004). *Survey methodology*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Interscience.
- Guégen, N., Hélène, L. G., & Jacob, C. (2004). Sound level of background music and alcohol consumption: An empirical evaluation. *Perceptual and Motor Skills*, 99, 34-38.



- Guégen, N., Jacob, C., Hélène, L. G., Morineau, T., & Loural, M. (2008). Sound level of environmental music and drinking behavior: A field experiment with beer drinkers. *Alcoholism: Clinical and Experimental Research*, 32(10), 1795-1798.
- Guilford, J. P., & Frunchter, B. (1978). *Fundamental statistics in psychology and education*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.
- Harris, L. C., & Ezeh, C. (2008). Servicescape and loyalty intentions: An empirical investigation. *European Journal of Marketing*, 42(3/4), 390-422.
- Havitz, M. F., & Dimanche, F. (1997). Leisure involvement revisited: Conceptual conundrums and measurement advances. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 29(3), 245-278.
- Havitz, M. F., & Dimanche, F. (1999). Leisure involvement revisited: Drive properties and paradoxes. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 31(2), 122-149.
- Havitz, M. F., & Howard, D. R. (1995). How enduring is enduring involvement? A seasonal examination of three recreational activities. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 4, 255-276.
- Hecker, S. (1984). Music for advertising effect. *Psychology and Marketing*, 1(3-4), 3-8.  
doi: 10.1002/mar.4220020303
- Heere, B., & Dickson, G. (2008). Measuring attitudinal loyalty: Separating the terms of affective commitment and attitudinal loyalty. *Journal of Sport Management*, 22, 227-239.
- Hightower, R., Brady, M. K., & Baker, T. L. (2002). Investigating the role of the physical environment in hedonic service consumption: An exploratory study of sporting events. *Journal of Business Research*, 55, 697-707.

- Hines, M., & Mehrabian, A. (1979). Approach-avoidance behaviors as a function of pleasantness and arousing quality of settings and individual differences in stimulus screening. *Social Behavior and Personality*, 7(2), 223-233.
- Houston, M. J., & Rothschild, M. L. (1978). Conceptual and methodological perspectives in involvement. In S. Jain (Ed.), *Research frontiers in marketing: Dialogues and directions* (pp. 184-187). Chicago, IL: American Marketing Association.
- Howard, D. R., & Crompton, J. L. (1995). *Financing sport*. Morgantown, WV: Fitness Information Technology, Inc.
- Howard, D., & DeSchraver, T. (2005). Financial principles applied to sport management. In L. P. Masteralexis, C. A. Barr, & M. A. Hums (Eds.), *Principles and practices of sport management* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Sudbury, MA: Jones & Bartlett.
- Howard, D. R., & Thompson, P. (1984). The critical importance of the distribution variable in marketing strategy. *Visions in Leisure Business*, 3(2), 34-40.
- Hox, J. J., & De Leeuw, E. D. (1994). A comparison of nonresponse in mail, telephone, and face-to-face surveys. Applying multilevel modeling to meta-analysis. *Quality & Quantity*, 329-344.
- Huck, S. W. (2008). *Reading statistics and research*. Boston, MA: Pearson Education.
- Hyllegard, R., Mood, D. P., & Morrow, J. R. Jr. (2000). *Interpreting research in sport and exercise science*. Dubuque, IA: McGraw Hill.
- Jacob, C. (2006). Styles of background music and consumption in a bar. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 25, 716-720.
- Jacoby, J., & Kyner, D. B. (1973). Brand loyalty v. repeat purchase behavior. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 10, 19.

- Kachigan, S. K. (1991). *Multivariate statistical analysis: A conceptual introduction*. Radius Press: New York, NY.
- Keller, K. L. (1993). Conceptualizing, measuring, and managing customer-based brand equity. *Journal of Marketing*, 37, 1-22.
- Kellner, P. (2002). *Media spectacle*. London, UK: Routledge.
- Kempf, D. S. (1999). Attitude formation from product trial: Distinct role of cognition and affect for hedonic and functional products. *Psychological Marketing*, 16, 35-50.
- Kerstetter, D. L., & Kovich, G. M. (1997). An involvement profile of Division I women's basketball spectators. *Journal of Sport Management*, 11, 234-249.
- King, B. (2002). Passion that can't be counted puts billions of dollars in play. *Street & Smith's SportsBusiness Journal*, 4(47), 25-39.
- Kotler, P. (1973). Atmospherics as a marketing tool. *Journal of Retailing*, 49(4), 48-64.
- Krejcie, R. V., & Morgan, D. W. (1970). Determining sample size for research activities. *Educational and Psychological Measurement*, 30, 607-610.
- Kwon, H., & Trail, G. (2003). A re-examination of the construct and concurrent validity of the Psychological Commitment to Team scale. *Sport Marketing Quarterly*, 12, 88-93.
- Kyle, G., Absher, J., Norman, W., Hammitt, W., & Jodice, L. (2007). A modified involvement scale. *Leisure Studies*, 26(4), 399-427.
- Kyle, G. T., & Mowen, A. J. (2005). An examination of the leisure involvement-agency commitment relationship. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 37(3), 342-363.
- Laaksonen, P. (1994). *Consumer involvement: Concepts and research*. London, UK: Routledge.

- Laurent, G., & Kapferer, J. N. (1985). Measuring consumer involvement profiles. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 22, 41-53.
- Li, M., Pitts, B., & Quarterman, J. (2008). *Research methods in sport management*. Morgantown, WV: Fitness Information Technology.
- Lohr, S. L. (2008). Coverage and sampling. In E.D. de Leeuw, J.J. Hox, & D.A. Dillman (Eds.), *International handbook of survey methodology* (pp. 97-112). New York, NY: Taylor & Francis Group.
- Lorr, M. (1983). *Cluster analysis for social scientists*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Macklin, C. M. (1988). The relationship between music in advertising and children's responses: An experimental investigation. In S. Hecker & D.W. Stewart (Eds.), *Nonverbal communication in advertising*. Lexington, MA: Heath.
- Madrigal, R. (2006). Measuring the multidimensional nature of sporting event performance consumption. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 38(3), 267-292.
- Magnini, V. P., & Parker, E. E. (2009). The psychological effects of music: Implications for hotel firms. *Journal of Vacation Marketing*, 15, 53-62.
- Mahony, D. F., Madrigal, R., & Howard, D. (2000). Using the Psychological Commitment to Team (PCT) scale to segment sport consumers based on loyalty. *Sport Marketing Quarterly*, 9(1), 15-25.
- Masterealexis, L. P., Barr, C. A., & Hums, M. A., (2008). *Principles and practice of sport management* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Sudbury, MA: Jones and Bartlett Publishers.
- McElrea, H., & Standing, L. (1992). Fast music causes fast drinking. *Perceptual and Motor Skills*, 75(2), 362.

- McIntyre, N. (1989). The personal meaning of participation: Enduring involvement. *Journal of Leisure Research, 21*, 167-179.
- Meek, A. (1997). An estimate of the size and supported economic activity of the sports industry in the United States. *Sport Marketing Quarterly, 6*(4), 15-21.
- Mehrabian, A., & Russell, J. A. (1974). The basic emotional impact of environments. *Perceptual and Motor Skills, 38*, 283-301.
- Mehrabian, A., & Russell, J. A. (1976). The three dimensions of emotional reaction. *Psychology Today, 10*(3), 57-61.
- Merriam, S. B. (1998). Qualitative inquiry and case study applications in education. San Francisco, CA: Josey-Bass.
- Milano, M., & Chelladurai, P. (2011). Gross domestic sport product: The size of the sport industry in the United States. *Journal of Sport Management, 25*(1), 24-35.
- Milligan, G. W. (1981). A review of Monte Carlo tests of cluster analysis. *Multivariate Behavioral Research, 16*, 379-407.
- Milliman, R. E. (1982). Using background music to affect the behavior of supermarket shoppers. *Journal of Marketing, 46*, 86-91.
- Milliman, R. E. (1986). The influence of background music on the behavior of restaurant patrons. *Journal of Consumer Research, 13*, 286-289.
- Moag & Company (2002). The sports industry's resistance to bear markets. Retrieved January 28, 2010 from [http://www.moagandcompany.com/i\\_a/industry\\_analysis.pdf](http://www.moagandcompany.com/i_a/industry_analysis.pdf)

- Morrin, M., & Chebat, J-C. (2005). Person-place congruency: The interactive effects of shopper style and atmospherics on consumer expenditures. *Journal of Service Research*, 8(2), 181-191.
- Mossberg, L. (2008). Extraordinary experiences through storytelling. *Scandinavian Journal of Hospitality and Tourism*, 8(3), 195-210.
- Mullin, B. J., Hardy, S., & Sutton, W. A. (2007). *Sport Marketing* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.
- Munson, J. M., & McQuarrie, E. F. (1987). The factorial and predictive validities of a revised measure of Zaichkowsky's personal involvement inventory. *Educational and Psychological Measurement*, 47, 773-782.
- Namaslvayam, K., & Mattila, A. S. (2007). Accounting for the joint effects of the servicescape and service exchange on consumers' satisfaction evaluations. *Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Research*, 31(1), 3-18.
- Nielson (2012, January). State of the media: 2011 year in sports.
- Nielsen (2010, January). The changing face of sports media. Retrieved January 28, 2010 from [http://en-us.nielsen.com/forms/report\\_forms/The-Changing-Face-of-Sports-Media-January-2010](http://en-us.nielsen.com/forms/report_forms/The-Changing-Face-of-Sports-Media-January-2010)
- North, A. C., & Hargreaves, D. J. (1998). The effect of music on atmosphere and purchase intentions in a cafeteria. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 28, 2254-2273.
- North, A. C., Hargreaves, D. J., & McKendrick, J. (1999). The influence of in-store music on wine selections. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 84, 271-276.
- North, A.C., Shillock, A., & Hargreaves, D.J. (2003). The effect of musical style on restaurant customer's spending. *Environment and Behavior*, 35(5), 712-718.

- Orcher, L. T. (2005). *Conducting research: Social and behavioral science methods*. Glendale, CA: Pyrczak Publishing.
- Ourand, J., & Lombardo (2007, June 4). NBA near deal with TV partners. *Street & Smith's SportsBusiness Journal*. Retrieved from <http://www.sportsbusinessdaily.com/Journal/Issues/2007/06/20070604/This-Weeks-News/NBA-Near-Deal-With-TV-Partners.aspx>
- Park, S. H., & Kim, Y. M. (2000). Conceptualizing and measuring the attitudinal loyalty construct in recreational sport contexts. *Journal of Sport Management, 14*, 197-207.
- Pedersen, P. M., Miloch, K.S., & Laucella, P. C. (2007). *Strategic sport communication*. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.
- Plunkett Research, Ltd. (2009). Sports industry overview. Retrieved January 28, 2010 from <http://www.plunkettresearch.com/Industries/Sports/SportsStatistics/tabid/273/Default.aspx>
- Pritchard, M. P., Havitz, M. E., & Howard, D. R. (1999). Analyzing the commitment-loyalty link in service contexts. *Academy of Marketing Science, 27*, 333-348.
- Punj, G., & Stewart, D. W. (1983). Cluster analysis in marketing research: Review and suggestions for application. *Journal of Marketing Research, 20*, 134-148.
- Raj, D. (1972). *The design of sample surveys*. McGraw Hill: New York, NY.
- Rein, I., Kotler, P., & Shields, B. (2006). *The elusive fan: Reinventing sports in a crowded marketplace*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.
- Rothschild, M. L. (1984). Perspectives on involvement: Current problems and future directions. *Advances in Consumer Research, 11*, 216-217.

- Russell, J. A. (1980). A circumplex model of affect. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 39*, 1161-1178.
- Schnietz, K. E., Advani, S., Henderson, T., McIntyre, H., Simms, D., & van Valkenburg, S. (2005). 5-Forces industry analysis. *Graziadio Business Report, 8*(4). Retrieved January 28, 2010 from <http://gbr.pepperdine.edu/054/nba.html>
- Sherif, M., & Cantril, H. (1974). *The psychology of ego involvement: Social attitudes and identifications*. New York, NY: Wiley.
- Sherif, M., & Hovland, C. I. (1961). *Social judgment: Assimilation and contrast effects in reaction to communication and attitude change*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Som, R. K. (1973). *A manual of sampling techniques*. London, UK: Heinemann.
- Southall, R. M., & Dick, R. (2011). Sport-sales and revenue generation. In Nagel, M. & R. M. Southall (Eds.), *Introduction to sport management: Theory and practice*. Dubuque, IA: Kendall Hunt Publishing.
- Stattrek. (n.d.). *Random number generator*. Retrieved February 4, 2010 from <http://stattrek.com/Tables/Random.aspx>
- Stevens, J. P. (2002). *Applied multivariate statistics for the social sciences* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Tabachnick, B. G., & Fidell, L. S. (2001). *Using multivariate statistics*. Needham Heights, MA: Allyn and Bacon.
- Thomas, J. R., & Nelson, J. K. (2001). *Research methods in physical activity* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.). Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.



- Trail, G. T., & James, J. D. (2008). Introduction to sport consumer behavior. In *Sport Consumer Behavior* (pp. 1-23). Columbus, OH: Sport Consumer Research Group Internet Publishing Company.
- Trail, G. T., Anderson, D. F., & Fink, J. S. (2000). A theoretical model of sport spectator consumption behavior. *International Journal of Sport Management*, 1, 154-180.
- Von Eye, A., & Schuster, C. (1998). *Regression analysis for social sciences*. San Diego, CA: Academic Press.
- Wakefield, K. L., & Blodgett, J. G. (1994). The importance of servicescapes in leisure service settings. *Journal of Services Marketing*, 8(3), 66-76.
- Wakefield, K. L., & Blodgett, J. G. (1996). The effect of servicescapes on customers' behavioral intentions in leisure service settings. *Journal of Services Marketing*, 10(6), 45-61.
- Wakefield, K. L., & Sloan, H. J. (1995). The effects of team loyalty and selected stadium factors on spectator attendance. *Journal of Sport Management*, 9, 153-172.
- Ward, J. H. (1963). Hierarchical grouping to optimize an objective function. *Journal of the American Statistical Association*, 58, 236-244.
- Westerbeek, H., & Smith, A. (2003). *Sport business in the global marketplace*. London, UK: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Zaichkowsky, J. L. (1985). Measuring the involvement construct. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 12, 341-353.

APPENDIX A  
SURVEY INSTRUMENT

## FRONT COVER

The purpose of this survey is to gain important information from game attendees in order to gain a better understanding of sport consumer attitudes and behaviors. This survey will take less than 10 minutes to complete. All responses are anonymous and your information will be kept confidential. We appreciate you taking the time to fill out this survey and your assistance in the completion of this research project.

Please leave your survey in your cup holder upon completion. You may also return your completed survey to one of the Guest Services locations outside sections 102/103 and sections 401/402.

Don't forget to provide your email address, to be eligible to win a signed jersey or a pair of tickets to an upcoming home game!

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

## INSIDE COLUMN 1

\*\*For each of the following statements please indicate you level of agreement.

1. Attending professional basketball games takes up a majority of my time.  
Strongly Disagree 1 : 2 : 3 : 4 : 5 : 6 : 7 Strongly Agree
2. I find attending professional basketball games offers me a sense of enjoyment.  
Strongly Disagree 1 : 2 : 3 : 4 : 5 : 6 : 7 Strongly Agree
3. Attending professional basketball games says a lot about who I am as a person.  
Strongly Disagree 1 : 2 : 3 : 4 : 5 : 6 : 7 Strongly Agree
4. Attending professional basketball games plays a central role in my life.  
Strongly Disagree 1 : 2 : 3 : 4 : 5 : 6 : 7 Strongly Agree
5. You can tell a lot about me by watching my behaviors when I attend professional basketball games.  
Strongly Disagree 1 : 2 : 3 : 4 : 5 : 6 : 7 Strongly Agree
6. Compared to other professional sporting events I attend, attending professional basketball games are much more interesting to me.  
Strongly Disagree 1 : 2 : 3 : 4 : 5 : 6 : 7 Strongly Agree
7. Attending professional basketball games provides me the opportunity to relax.  
Strongly Disagree 1 : 2 : 3 : 4 : 5 : 6 : 7 Strongly Agree
8. A lot of my time is spent organizing and planning my attendance of professional basketball games.  
Strongly Disagree 1 : 2 : 3 : 4 : 5 : 6 : 7 Strongly Agree
9. When I attend professional basketball games, I am able to act more like myself than in other social settings.  
Strongly Disagree 1 : 2 : 3 : 4 : 5 : 6 : 7 Strongly Agree

## INSIDE COLUMN 2

\*\*For each of the following statements please indicate you level of agreement.

10. I would still be committed to the (home team) regardless of the lack of any star players.  
Strongly Disagree 1 : 2 : 3 : 4 : 5 : 6 : 7 Strongly Agree

11. I could never switch my loyalty from the (home team) even if my close fans were fans of another team.

Strongly Disagree 1 : 2 : 3 : 4 : 5 : 6 : 7 Strongly Agree

12. I would still be committed to the (home team) regardless of the lack of physical skill among the players.

Strongly Disagree 1 : 2 : 3 : 4 : 5 : 6 : 7 Strongly Agree

13. It would be difficult to change my beliefs about the (home team).

Strongly Disagree 1 : 2 : 3 : 4 : 5 : 6 : 7 Strongly Agree

\*\* Thinking about the experience you are currently having attending a professional basketball game, please indicate which adjectives best describe your feelings. For each pair of adjectives listed below, please put an X closer to the adjective which you feel best describes your feelings regarding your attendance experience. The more appropriate the adjective seems, the closer you will want to put the X to that that particular adjective. Do not take too long thinking about your responses, as your initial response is usually best at capturing your true feelings.

(For example: Glad     : X :     :     :     :     :     : Sad )

14. Stimulated	<u>1</u> : <u>2</u> : <u>3</u> : <u>4</u> : <u>5</u> : <u>6</u> : <u>7</u>	Relaxed
15. Alert	<u>1</u> : <u>2</u> : <u>3</u> : <u>4</u> : <u>5</u> : <u>6</u> : <u>7</u>	Distracted
16. Excited	<u>1</u> : <u>2</u> : <u>3</u> : <u>4</u> : <u>5</u> : <u>6</u> : <u>7</u>	Calm
17. Uncomfortable	<u>1</u> : <u>2</u> : <u>3</u> : <u>4</u> : <u>5</u> : <u>6</u> : <u>7</u>	Pleasant
18. Aroused	<u>1</u> : <u>2</u> : <u>3</u> : <u>4</u> : <u>5</u> : <u>6</u> : <u>7</u>	Content
19. Wide Awake	<u>1</u> : <u>2</u> : <u>3</u> : <u>4</u> : <u>5</u> : <u>6</u> : <u>7</u>	Drowsy
20. Amicable	<u>1</u> : <u>2</u> : <u>3</u> : <u>4</u> : <u>5</u> : <u>6</u> : <u>7</u>	Standoffish
21. Pleased	<u>1</u> : <u>2</u> : <u>3</u> : <u>4</u> : <u>5</u> : <u>6</u> : <u>7</u>	Irritated
22. Satisfied	<u>1</u> : <u>2</u> : <u>3</u> : <u>4</u> : <u>5</u> : <u>6</u> : <u>7</u>	Dissatisfied
23. Agitated	<u>1</u> : <u>2</u> : <u>3</u> : <u>4</u> : <u>5</u> : <u>6</u> : <u>7</u>	Fulfilled
24. Engaged	<u>1</u> : <u>2</u> : <u>3</u> : <u>4</u> : <u>5</u> : <u>6</u> : <u>7</u>	Disengaged
25. Happy	<u>1</u> : <u>2</u> : <u>3</u> : <u>4</u> : <u>5</u> : <u>6</u> : <u>7</u>	Miserable

### INSIDE COLUMN 3

\*\* For each of the following statements please indicate you level of agreement.

26. The music ***did not*** interfere with my ability to interact and converse with those around me.

Strongly Disagree 1 : 2 : 3 : 4 : 5 : 6 : 7 Strongly Agree

27. The music ***did not*** distract me from watching the game being played.

Strongly Disagree 1 : 2 : 3 : 4 : 5 : 6 : 7 Strongly Agree

28. I liked the type of music being played during the game.

Strongly Disagree 1 : 2 : 3 : 4 : 5 : 6 : 7 Strongly Agree

29. The music played during the game was the type I associate with professional basketball.

Strongly Disagree 1 : 2 : 3 : 4 : 5 : 6 : 7 Strongly Agree

**\*\*Please tell us a little about yourself.**

30. When you arrived at the arena today, how much money (in whole dollars) did YOU INTEND to spend on concessions and merchandise? <Blank Space>
31. If over 21, when you arrived at the arena today, how much money (in whole dollars) did YOU INTEND to spend on alcoholic beverages? <Blank Space>
32. How much money (in whole dollars) have YOU ACTUALLY spent on concessions and merchandise during today's game? <Blank Space>
33. If over 21, how much money (in whole dollars) have YOU ACTUALLY spent on alcoholic beverages during today's game? <Blank Space>

### **BACK FLAP COLUMN 1**

**\*\*Please tell us a little about yourself.**

34. How many (home team) home games do you attend during a typical season?  
<Blank Space>
35. What is your gender?
  - a. Female
  - b. Male
36. What is your age?
  - a. 18-20
  - b. 21-30
  - c. 31-40
  - d. 41-50
  - e. 50 or above
37. What is your zip code? <Blank Space>
38. What is your ethnicity?
  - a. Black or African American
  - b. Hispanic or Latina
  - c. Asian
  - d. White
  - e. American Indian or Alaska Native
  - f. Native Hawai'ian or other Pacific Islander
39. What is your marital status?
  - a. Married
  - b. Divorced
  - c. Single/Never Married
  - d. Separated
  - e. Widowed
  - f. Partner
40. Please indicate the highest level of education you have completed.
  - a. High School or less
  - b. 2-year or Associates Degree
  - c. Bachelor's Degree
  - d. Graduate Degree
  - e. Postgraduate Degree
  - f. Other (please specify)

41. What is your approximate annual household income?
- a. \$20,000 or less
  - b. \$20,001-\$40,000
  - c. \$40,001-\$60,000
  - d. \$60,001-\$80,000
  - e. \$80,001-\$100,000
  - f. \$100,001 or greater
42. Which of the following best describes your profession/occupation?
- a. Sales/marketing
  - b. Education professional
  - c. Medical professional
  - d. Retired
  - e. Student
  - f. Other (please specify)

APPENDIX B  
INFORMED CONSENT FOR PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH

**Project Title:** Involvement, Team Loyalty, and the Servicescape: An Investigation of NBA Spectator Attitudes and Behaviors in the Experiential Sport Environment

**Lead Researcher:** Crystal Southall, M.S., School of Sport and Exercise Science

**Email:** crystal.southall@unco.edu

**Faculty Advisor:** Dr. Dianna Gray, School of Sport & Exercise Science

**Email:** dianna.gray@unco.edu

I am conducting research on sport consumer behavior and attitudes while in attendance of professional sporting events including purchasing behaviors and perceptions of atmospheric music. If you agree to participate you will be given a brief survey to complete. The questions contained in the survey will focus on your feelings, attitudes and behaviors as a sport consumer. There will also be questions regarding your reactions, feelings, attitudes and behaviors toward the environment. The survey should take between 5-8 minutes to complete during the second half of the game.

I foresee no risks to participation in this study. However, no names will be used in the presentations and/or publication of data collected in order to ensure the confidentiality of your participation. Results of the study will be presented in group form only (e.g., averages) and all original paperwork will be kept in a locked private office and password protected personal computer. Participation is completely voluntary. You may decide not to participate in this study and if you begin participation you may still decide to stop and withdraw at any time. Your decision will be respected and will not result in loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Having read the above please complete the attached questionnaire if you would like to participate. By completing the questionnaire you will give us permission for your participation. If you have any concerns about your selection or treatment as a research participant, please contact the Office of Sponsored Programs, Kepner Hall, University of Northern Colorado Greeley, CO 80639; 970-351-2161

Thank you for your time and assistance with this study!



APPENDIX C  
IRB APPROVAL LETTER

UNIVERSITY of  
**NORTHERN COLORADO**  
 Institutional Review Board (IRB)



February 24, 2010


TO: Gary Heise  
 School of Sport and Exercise Science

FROM: The Office of Sponsored Programs

RE: Exempt Review of *Involvement, Team Loyalty and the Servicescape: An Investigation of Consumer Attitudes and Behaviors*, submitted by Crystal Southall (Research Advisor: Dianna Gray)

The above proposal is being submitted to you for exemption review. When approved, return the proposal to Sherry May in the Office of Sponsored Programs.

I recommend approval.

 15 Mar 2010  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 Signature of Co-Chair Date

The above referenced prospectus has been reviewed for compliance with HHS guidelines for ethical principles in human subjects research. The decision of the Institutional Review Board is **that the project is exempt from further review.**

IT IS THE ADVISOR'S RESPONSIBILITY TO NOTIFY THE STUDENT OF THIS STATUS.

Comments: *Timing Heise* } e-mailed 12 Mar 2010  
*OSP phone*  
*typos.*

25 Kepner Hall ~ Campus Box #143  
 Greeley, Colorado 80639  
 Ph: 970.351.1907 ~ Fax: 970.351.1934