

A Theoretical Model of Team-Licensed Merchandise Purchasing (TLMP)

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Abstract

Although it is evident that sales of team licensed merchandise (TLM) contribute to the overall consumption of sport, research efforts that comprehensively describe what triggers the consumption of TLM is lacking (Lee, Trail, Kwon, & Anderson, 2011). Therefore, based on multiple theories (i.e., values theory, identity theory, attitude theory, and satisfaction theory) and other concepts that influence product consumption, this study proposed a theoretical model that explains purchase intention of TLM. The proposed model consists of various factors including personal values, team identification, attitude (toward brand and product), past experience, perceived product attributes, expectancy disconfirmation, satisfaction, and intention to purchase (brand and product). The comprehensiveness of the model would allow scholars and researchers to test and explain various commonly occurring consumption activities at a domain level.

Key words: personal values, attitude, satisfaction

The combined retail sales of team licensed merchandise in the United States and Canada reached \$12.5 billion in 2009 (Licensed Sport, 2010) generating millions of dollars for teams through royalties. However, team licensed merchandise (TLM; trademarked official merchandise) is more than just another source of revenue for teams and sport organizations. For example, Mayers (2010) noted that trademarked rave-green scarves helped fans connect with the Seattle Sounders and allowed the team to set major league soccer attendance records and sell more merchandise than the next three teams combined. For the Sounders, this indicates that TLM is a critical component of what Mayers calls a "flourishing brand that resonates globally and serves as a model for franchises in all sports" (n.p.).

Although team merchandise may be a critical component of the brand for sport organizations and generates revenue, the aspects that influence people to purchase TLM is not clearly understood. Do people purchase TLM because of the attraction to the sport organization, the attributes of the merchandise itself (e.g., rave-green), previous experience with similar merchandise, the preference for the brand manufacturer, attitude toward the product, or a combination of all of the above?

Within the general consumer behavior literature, researchers have identified various theories and constructs that influence product consumption behavior: personal values (Belk, 1988; Kahle, 1983; Richins, 1994; Sweeney & Soutar, 2001), identity (Vinson, Scott, & Lamont, 1977), attitude (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1977; Eagly & Chaiken, 1993, Lutz, Mackenzie, & Belch, 1983), satisfaction (Oliver, 1989, 1997a, 1997b; Westbrook & Oliver, 1981) and product attributes (Lutz, 1977).

Within the context of sport, various theories and constructs

have also been used to explain general consumption activity such as game attendance, participation in leisure activity, and media consumption. For example, researchers have found that team identification and behavioral intention are two common factors that have disparate effects on sport consumption (Madrigal, 2001; Trail, Anderson, & Fink, 2000, 2005; Trail & James, 2001; Wann & Robinson, 2002). Attitude has also been studied as an influential factor for sport consumption (Cunningham & Kwon, 2003; Mahony & Howard, 1998; Mahony & Moorman, 1999), as has satisfaction (Laverie & Arnett, 2000; Leeuwen, Quick, & Daniel, 2002; Madrigal, 1995; Trail et al., 2000, 2005; Zhang, Smith, Pease, & Lam, 1998). Product attributes (such as price of a product, aesthetic appearance of a product, or quality of a product) have also been investigated (Lee, Trail, Kwon, & Anderson, 2011).

However, there are few research findings that explain TLM purchasing, and those few existing studies tend to include only a few constructs, which often resulted in explaining only a small amount of variance in TLM purchasing behavior (Kwon, Trail, & James, 2007; Lee & Trail, in press). For example, Lee and Trail found that values explained a minimum to medium amount of variance in team merchandise purchasing behavior (a single value explained a maximum of 4% of the same purchase). In addition, research efforts that simultaneously incorporate relevant theories and concepts influencing product consumption to understand TLM purchasing is lacking (Lee et al., 2011). Therefore, this study was intended to propose a theoretical model that would explain purchase intention of TLM based on multiple theories (i.e., values theory, identity theory, attitude theory, and satisfaction theory) and other concepts influencing product consumption.

Proposed Theoretical Model to Understand Consumption of TLM

We are proposing a theoretical model (Figure 1) that consists of two major parts. First, the model depicts the latent structural relationships flowing from personal values to attitudes to behavioral intention. In addition, the model depicts the influence of satisfaction (i.e., the disconfirmation or confirmation of expectancies about the purchase and satisfaction with the purchase) and perceived product attributes (i.e., consumer's perceived benefits derived from available product features) on the formation of attitude.

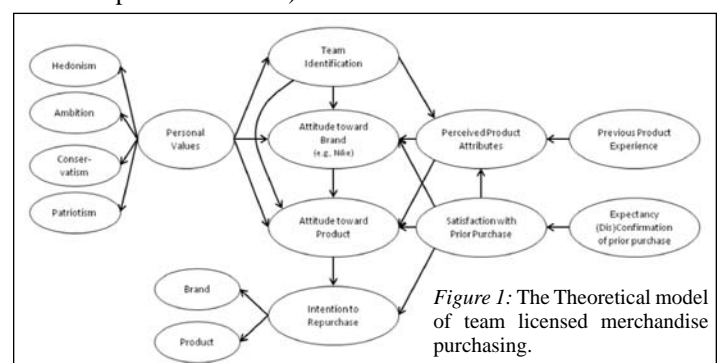


Figure 1: The Theoretical model of team licensed merchandise purchasing.

In the case of the latent structural relationships flowing from personal values to attitudes to behavioral intention, attitude is further classified into two aspects: attitude toward a brand (e.g., Nike) and attitude toward the product (i.e., team licensed merchandise). The model shows that the influence of personal values on the formation of attitude toward the product may be mediated by both identification (i.e., identification with a team) and attitude toward the brand. In addition, because attitude is separated into attitude toward the product and attitude toward the brand, those same two aspects of behavioral intention are considered: purchase intention of product and purchase intention of the brand. In the latter premise, it was further hypothesized that an individual might have a perception about product attributes based on satisfaction with prior purchase(s). The perception about product attributes was hypothesized to influence the formation of attitude toward the brand and the product.

Theoretical Background

We use value theory (Rokeach, 1973a, 1973b), attitude theory (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975), identity theory (Stryker, 1968), and satisfaction theory (Oliver, 1980) to explain the relationships among the following latent constructs: personal values, team identification, attitude (toward brand and toward product), intention to purchase (brand and product), perceived product attributes, satisfaction, expectancy disconfirmation, and past experience. Although one theory might better corroborate a specific phenomenon related to product consumption, a combination of various theories might facilitate even greater understanding about a specific consumption activity. Indeed, our attempt to link the discussed theories was based on an assumption that behavior (or behavioral intention) was a result of various factors. In other words, many of the discussed factors of each theory are related to the same consequence-attitude formation, behavioral intention, or behavior-and thus, they are at least related to some extent. To this end, linkages between theories were also discussed.

Personal value theory. Personal values are defined as established beliefs that result in "a specific mode of behavior or end-state of existence [that] is preferred to an opposite mode of behavior or end-state" (Rokeach, 1973a, p. 25). Rokeach indicated that individuals within a particular culture tended to display similar personal values. The function of a value system of a person may vary due to dissimilar degrees of importance of the value in the person's life. Schwartz (1996) and Schwartz and Bilsky (1990) indicated that values could be distinguished from each other based on the "motivational types of goals" they conveyed. More specifically, Schwartz (1992) indicated that the benevolence value tended to conflict with the achievement value because the former was more concerned with others' welfare whereas the latter was more concerned with the self. At the same time, a complementary relationship may also exist between any two values. For example, the achievement value may be compatible with the hedonism value because both types of values tend to direct the individual to pursue his or her own desired end state of existence (Schwartz, 1992).

Homer and Kahle (1988) examined relationships among values, attitudes, and behaviors in a shopping context and asserted that values influenced the formation of attitudes and ultimately impacted consumers' behavior. Vinson et al.'s (1977) three levels

of values classification (i.e., global, domain-specific, and product evaluation) are somewhat related to Homer and Kahle's value-attitude-behavior hierarchy. Homer and Kahle suggested that attitudes played a mediating function between values (as guiding principles) and behaviors. Rokeach's (1968) distinction of attitude from values is consistent with this theme in that attitudes differ from values as attitudes are generally situation-specific. Thus, we suggest that personal values have a direct relationship with attitudes (both brand and product) and intentions to purchase (brand and product).

Although values are related to various types of behaviors such as media preferences, leisure activities, or shopping behaviors (Beatty, Kahle, Homer, & Misra, 1985; Kahle, Beatty, & Homer, 1986), the small amount of variance explained in behavior does not make a very convincing case for values to be immediate antecedents of behaviors (Lee & Trail, in press). More specifically, Lee and Trail examined the relationship between personal values/goals and eight criterion measures that consisted of two cognitive measures (i.e., general sport fanship and team identification) and six behavioral measures (i.e., televised sports viewing, sport merchandise purchasing, readership of print media, game attendance, listenership of radio, and internet consumption). They found that the combined set of values/goals explained less than 9% of the variance on team merchandise purchasing behavior. No single value explained more than 4% of team merchandise purchasing behavior (Lee & Trail). However, values/goals did explain approximately 28% of the variance in team identification and several values explained anywhere from 4% to 12% individually. Four personal values (i.e., hedonism, ambition, conservatism, and patriotism) were significantly correlated with the chosen dependent variables. A possible reason why personal values may not sufficiently explain subsequent sport consumer behaviors by themselves stems from the idea that other variables (such as identification) may mediate the relationship between values and the ultimate consumption activities (Lee & Trail). Based on these findings, we propose:

H1: Personal values (i.e., hedonism, ambition, conservatism, and patriotism) will influence team identification.

H2: Personal values will influence the formation of attitudes toward brand either directly or mediated by team identification.

H3: Personal values will influence the formation of attitudes toward products either directly or mediated by attitude toward brand.

Identity theory. Identities are defined as "internalized role expectations" that provide a guideline for interpreting life experiences (Stryker & Burke, 2000, p. 286). Stryker and Burke asserted that Mead's (1934) symbolic interactionism perspective, which stresses the function of relationships with others and the importance of shared meaning in forming of identities, played a fundamental role for the study of individual role-related behavior, which provided a basis for contemporary identity theory. It is worth noting that as opposed to the social identity point of view that emphasizes intergroup discrimination (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), the identity theory that the current study uses as a theoretical framework views identity as a self-centered role expectation that is relative to target objects in a given situation (Stryker & Serpe, 1994).

An individual tends to verify an identity by comparing his

or her identity standards to the relevant self meanings (Stryker & Burke, 2000). An individual may develop multiple identities based on multiple roles the individual chooses to play (Stryker & Burke), for example, academic roles, athletic/recreational roles, extracurricular roles, and dating roles (Serpe, 1987). Any roles that an individual identified will then define who they are (e.g., father, coach, daughter, fan, etc.). In turn, an identity specifically relevant to a behavior is more likely to be activated when the level of commitment is higher (Stryker & Burke, 2000). An identity may be more salient than others depending on circumstances (Stryker & Burke). Therefore, the salience of an identity becomes a key predictor of a behavior (Stryker, 1968).

Researchers typically agree that a fan's identification with a team (team identification) plays a significant role in enhancing consumers' experience of sport (Branscombe & Wann, 1991; Cialdini et al., 1976; Laverie & Arnett, 2000; Sutton, McDonald, Milne, & Cimperman, 1997; Trail, Fink, & Anderson, 2003; Trail & James, 2001; Wann, 2002; Wann & Dolan, 1994a). Wann and Dolan (1994b) found that participants with high identification tended to evaluate a team's performance more favorably (attitude) than did participants with low identification, indicating that team identification influences attitude toward a product, in this case the game itself. Madrigal (2001) argued that the relationship between team identification and purchase intention was mediated by attitude toward the purchase behavior. Buying a particular piece of branded sport merchandise over a list of other types of merchandise may reflect the fan's identity with the team because sport fans often purchase sport licensed merchandise to support their favorite teams or players for themselves or for someone else. Thus, those who display higher levels of identification with a team are more likely to attend games, buy team merchandise, and support the team (Trail et al., 2005).

More recently, Kwon et al. (2007) tested three models (a direct effect, a partially mediated, and a fully mediated) depicting relationships among team identification, perceived value of product attributes, and purchase intention. They reported the fully mediated model as the most parsimonious one, indicating that identification with a team influenced intention to purchase licensed-sport apparel, which was mediated by consumers' perceived value of product attributes.

The influence of team identification on the formation of brand attitude within the context of sport is conceptually supported by Gladden and colleagues' study of brand equity. For instance, based on Keller's (1993) framework of brand association, Gladden and colleagues (Gladden, Irwin, & Sutton, 2001; Gladden & Milne, 1999; Gladden, Milne, & Sutton, 1998) argued that consumers' perceived favorability (a common measure of attitude) toward a brand constituted brand association. In addition, the brand associations are derived from "the emotional identification with a particular team" (Gladden et al., 1998, p. 3). Based on these findings, we propose:

H4: Team identification will influence the formation of attitude toward brand either directly or mediated by perceived product attributes.

H5: Team identification will directly influence attitude toward the product.

Attitude theory. Rokeach (1968) asserted that values were

distinct from attitudes in that personal values were not limited to specific objects and situations, whereas attitudes were. In a similar manner, Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) defined attitude as "a learned predisposition to respond in a consistently favorable or unfavorable manner with respect to a given object" (p. 6). In addition, Eagly and Chaiken (1993) simply defined attitude as an "evaluative tendency" (p. 32). Individuals tend to evaluate classes of stimuli that they encounter; as a result, an attitude is formed from their responses to the stimuli (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993). Likewise, an attitude may be formed toward a specific entity, a so-called attitude object (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993). An attitude may also be formed toward tangible entities (e.g., a product or a person) or intangible entities (e.g., a brand or a behavior). Attitudes toward brands and products are the two foci of interest for this model. Attitude toward a product tends to be relatively concrete in comparison to attitude toward a brand. Brand attitude has been defined as the "recipients' affective reactions toward the advertised brand or, where desirable, attitude toward purchasing the brand" (Lutz et al., 1983, p. 533). Empirical findings supported the influence of attitude toward brand on purchase intention in that attitude toward brand explained 31% to 74% of the variance in an intention to purchase a general product (i.e., toothpaste; Lutz et al.). Similarly, it is hypothesized that attitude toward a particular product may also be formed as a function of perceived benefits derived from consuming the product, based on the attributes specific to the product.

Homer and Kahle's (1988) investigation of the structural relationships among personal values, attitudes, and behaviors indicated conceptual continuity or the idea that personal values influenced attitude, which in turn affected behavior. Personal values explained up to 33% of the variance in attitude, and attitude explained 31% of the variance in behaviors (Homer & Kahle). However, when the direct influence of personal values on behaviors was measured, personal values explained only 2% of the variance in actual behaviors. This was a significant decrease from the amount of variance explained in behavior when mediated by attitude (Homer & Kahle). From this information, values theory and attitude theory would link to explain product consumption behaviors. Ajzen and Fishbein (1977) indicated a conceptual connection among values (subjective norms), attitudes, and intentions in that intentions tended to be a function of attitudes and values. Thus, attitudes may not directly influence actual behaviors; instead, behavioral intentions may be an immediate precursor for behaviors. Irwin, Lachowetz, Cornwell, and Clark (2003) provided supporting evidence for the influence of attitude on sport consumption in that attitude positively influenced the purchase of sport sponsored products. Attitude also explained 31% of the variance in the purchase intentions toward the products of corporate sponsors (Madrigal, 2001). Based on these findings, we propose:

H6: Attitude toward brand (e.g., NIKE) will influence the formation of attitude toward product (e.g., jackets, hats, or jersey).

H7: Attitude toward product will subsequently influence intention to purchase team licensed merchandise.

Satisfaction theory. Among many other conceptualizations of satisfaction, Oliver's (1981) description tends to provide a clear meaning: "the emotional reaction following a disconfirmation

experience which acts on the base attitude level and is consumption-specific" (p. 42). Oliver (1981) emphasized two core elements of satisfaction that included expectation and its confirmation process. In a later study, Oliver (1997a) described a cycle of satisfaction in the process of consumption. Specifically, previous experience sets a standard (expectation), and then the confirmation or disconfirmation of the expectancy mediates the level of satisfaction, which in turn affects the formation of an attitude. Formation of attitude then affects one's intention to consume in the future.

The status of one's satisfaction with a product is determined when relative product attributes are compared and appraised in accordance with one's prior experience with the product. Accordingly, researchers have commonly agreed that satisfaction is a function of expectancy disconfirmation (Oliver, 1980, 1981, 1997b; Oliver & Linda, 1981). Leeuwen et al. (2002) supported this premise in that disconfirmation of preexisting expectations was directly associated with customer satisfaction. Preexisting expectations set a standard for future evaluation, and post-experience evaluation may fall short of the preexisting expectation (i.e., negative disconfirmation), meet the preexisting expectation (i.e., confirmation), or exceed the pre-existing expectation (i.e., positive disconfirmation). Likewise, disconfirmation of an expectation may occur when there is a discrepancy in an individual's mental comparison between actual experience and anticipated probability (Oliver, 1981). Therefore, satisfaction status is determined as a function of the disconfirmation process (e.g., satisfied as a consequence of positive disconfirmation or dissatisfied as a consequence of negative disconfirmation). To this end, expectancy disconfirmation is defined as "perceived satisfaction deficit (surplus) after the product experience" (Oliver & Linda, 1981, p. 89). It is worth noting that unlike other constructs (i.e., personal values, identity, attitude, and product attributes) satisfaction is distinctive as it is only measured using a variety of post-exposure variables (Oliver & Linda).

Oliver and Linda (1981) argued that product satisfaction mediated the relationship between expectancy (dis)confirmation and attitude or intention. This relationship also implies a relationship among them (satisfaction, attitude, and intention), which tends to provide a rationale that supports a conceptual link between satisfaction theory and attitude theory. When satisfaction was regressed on preference, 2 to 4% of the variance was explained; however, when satisfaction was regressed on intention, 46 to 49% of the variance was explained (Oliver & Linda). It is apt to describe both theories as pertinent to each other in that ultimate consequences of both theories tend to be similar, whether behavioral intention or actual behavior. Accordingly, satisfaction theory and attitude theory would link to explain sport product consumption behaviors.

Satisfaction has often been studied to explain sport spectator behavior. For instance, Madrigal (1995) suggested a cognition-affect-satisfaction sequence to explain individuals' consumption behavior. Madrigal (2003) also proposed a model that depicted performance satisfaction influencing participants' optimism about future performances of the team that they supported. He determined that satisfaction with the team's performance explained 23% of the variance in entertainment values and 15% of the variance in optimism about how well the team would do in the future. This finding may suggest that satisfaction will influence attitudes

positively because affect (i.e., feelings/confidence), which is the main component of attitude measurement, was used to represent the optimism. Regardless of these efforts to relate satisfaction and sport consumption, many available satisfaction studies within the context of sport have narrowly focused on game attendance (Cunningham & Kwon, 2003; Lapidus & Schibrowsky, 1996; Laverie & Arnett, 2000; Leeuwen et al. 2002; Madrigal, 1995; Zhang et al. 1998) or leisure activity (Wakefield & Blodgett, 1994). Based on the review of literature, we propose:

H8: Satisfaction is the function of the (dis)confirmation process based on comparison of product attributes to one's prior experience with (or expectations of) the product.

H9-10: Satisfaction will have an effect on the formation of attitudes toward a brand or product.

H11-12: Consumers' post-usage evaluation (satisfaction/dissatisfaction) with a product will influence the perception about the product or purchase intention.

Perceived product attributes and past experience. The influence of personal values, identification, attitude, and satisfaction on behavior and their interrelationships have been discussed. It is worth noting that although they are fundamental to explaining behavior, there may be other factors that also have an influence on individuals' consumption behavior, such as perceived product attributes and past experience.

Perceived product attributes. External factors, such as product attributes, have received attention due to the fact that internal factors, by themselves, may not be sufficient in illuminating consumption behaviors. Vinson et al.'s (1977) three-dimensional value classification (i.e., global values °V domain-specific values °V evaluative values) provides a potential explanation of the causal influence of product attributes on purchase behavior. Evaluative values are specifically related to product attributes in that one's perceived value (or benefits) of a product tends to be an evaluation of obtainable information such as (cheaper) price, (good) craftsmanship, and aesthetics (Lee et al., 2011). Various other types of attributes are identified as influential factors on product consumption. Those include price (Lee et al., 2011; Sheth, Newman, & Gross, 1991; Oliver, 1999), logo (Broughton, 2005), design (Lee et al., 2011), durability (Sheth et al., 1991), and reliability (Sheth et al., 1991). Kwon et al. (2007) found that perceived value of product attributes explained a large amount of variance (42.6%) in purchase intention.

Although Kwon et al. (2007) found a direct relationship between product attributes and intentions to purchase the product, we hypothesize that an individual typically establishes a perception about the product's attributes (e.g., expense relative to the perceived quality of the product) in relation to the level of satisfaction with the prior purchase(s), which will subsequently influence the formation of attitude toward the brand or product. In other words, rather than proposing product attributes as a construct having a direct effect on behavior or behavioral intentions, the current study hypothesized a mediating function of attitude (i.e., attitude toward brand and product) connecting the perceived product attributes and behavioral intentions. This relationship was evident in Mitchell and Olson's (1981) empirical test of the mediating role of attitude in linking product attributes and behavioral intention. More specifically, Mitchell and Olson concluded that attitude

toward the brand, along with attitude toward the advertisement, had a mediating effect on the relationship between beliefs about product attributes (i.e., softness, convenience, absorbance, price, and color of facial tissue) and behavioral intention. Kardes (1988) indicated that consumers made inferences about product attributes, which resulted in significant effects on brand attitude. Graeff's (1997) experimental results partially supported Kardes' claim in that inferences about product attributes explained 23% of the variance in brand attitude. Thus, we propose:

H13: Consumer's perceived product attributes will have an effect on both brand attitude and product attitude.

Past product experience. Consistent with Ajzen and Fishbein's (1977) theme, it is evident that past behavior serves as an antecedent for attitudes in the context of sport. For instance, Trail, Anderson, and Lee (2006) showed that past experience explained approximately 21% of the variance in preseason team identification and 25% of the variance in behavioral intentions (future game attendance), but only 2% of actual attendance. Cunningham and Kwon (2003) demonstrated a significant relationship between past experience (i.e., game attendance) and behavioral intentions, but the small amount of variance explained (2%) is a concern. The small amount of variance explained may imply that there may be other or mediating factors that better explain consumption activity. Based on this review of literature, we propose:

H14: Past product experience will have an influence on an individual's perception of product attributes, and will subsequently impact intention toward a behavior mediated by the individual's attitude toward the product.

Summary and Conclusion

This study represents an effort that simultaneously incorporates relevant theories and concepts influencing product consumption to understand TLM purchasing, and the proposed theoretical model has increased comprehensiveness and applicability when explaining TLM purchasing. Comprehensiveness of such a model would allow scholars and researchers to develop theories that explain various commonly occurring consumption activities at a domain level. In turn, gaining understanding of this conceptual idea could also help retailers better communicate with sport product consumers, which consequently will contribute to the overall sales of TLM.

Based on values theory, identity theory, attitude theory, satisfaction theory, and other concepts that influence product consumption in general, a structural model has been proposed that explains purchase intention of TLM. The theoretical model depicts as follows: intention to purchase of TLM is a function of personal values, team identification, attitude toward brand, attitude toward product, satisfaction, perceived product attributes, satisfaction, past experience, and the role of expectancy disconfirmation, offering unique features of TLM purchase intention compared to other sport consumption segments. Literature consistently supports the proposed relationships in the model. This theoretical model establishes a framework for developing a measurement instrument for future studies. In future studies, confirmatory factor analysis may be used to examine the measurement structure and structural equation modeling techniques may be used to estimate the model fit to empirical data. Thus, the TLM Model can serve a

good starting point for future studies.

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