The concept of sports fandom psychology essay

This chapter will provide the related views of the different studies concerning sports fan, sports spectatorship, sports watching behavior, fan motivations and team identification. An extensive review of literature is needed to give a better understanding of its earlier findings to relate it to the research questions. The review of literature is presented in the following headings:

The concept of sports fandom is not clearly defined in research but normally deals with the state or attitude of being a fan or spectator. Wann (1995, 1997) believes that sports fandom is comprised of sports fans and sports consumers. There are different explanations of " fandom" (Gantz and Wenner, 1995) which can constitute a fan or a spectator, because not all spectators are fans. They identified three distinct fandom categories: (a) fans, or " true believers," deeply committed to their team; (b) spectators, or mere observers with a minimal level of interest; and (c) non-fans, or those not necessarily interested in sports, but who watch to be with others.

Pooley (1978) suggests there is a need to differentiate between a fan and a spectator, claiming that the difference is a matter of degree of engrossment and passion. Thus, it is important to define and distinguish between sports fans and spectator when performing a research.

Smith (1988) also claims that at times these two terms are used together at once; this may lead to confusion as it must be reminded that sports fans and spectator has two very different definitions. The term sports fan and sports spectator have been used often in researches concerning these topic. However, only a number of them differentiate these two terms

independently as this is confusing because spectators may not necessarily be fans (Jacobson, 2003).

Spinrad (1981) defines a fan as the person who thinks, talks about and is oriented towards sports even when [the fan] is not actually observing, or reading, or listening to an account of a specific sports event. A sports fan has also been defined as an affiliation in which a great deal of emotional significance and value are derived from group membership (Hirt, Zillman, Erickson & Kennedy, 1992). Jones (1997) suggests that spectators will observe a sport and then forget about it, while fans will have more intensity and will devote parts of everyday life to the team or the sport itself. Madrigal (1995) suggests that fans represent an association that provides the individual with a great deal of emotional and value significance.

Wann, Dolan, McGeorge, and Allison (1994) found that fans supposed that they had an ability to influence the outcomes of football and basketball games, whereas spectators perceived less influence over those outcomes which concluded there were differences between fans' and spectators' view of their influence on result of games.

Researchers agree that the difference is in the degree of devotion to the team or a player. Anderson (1979) states that that since it is derived from the word ' fanatic', a fan can be defined as an ardent devotee of sport, or as an individual possessed frequently by an excessive enthusiasm for sport.

Sports viewers can come from a variety of people such as from non-fans, to observers, or spectators, to highly avid fans (Sloan, 1979). Viewers of sports programmes are diverse, and their purpose for watching can vary as there

are some whom might be interested in watching sport of good quality, while others are mainly interested in cultivating their favourite teams or athletes (Solberg H. A, Hammervold, 2008).

Wann, Melnick, Russell and Page (2001) outline the differences between a fan and a spectator as well as the differences between highly and lowly identified fans. They defined sports fans as individuals who are interested in following a sport, team and or athlete, and sports spectators are consumers who actively witness a sporting event in person or through some form of media, such as television, radio, etc.

2. 2 SPORTS WATCHING BEHAVIOR

Although sports is perceive as a tool in education and social life, the rich showing of sports broadcasts on television and other media avenues should give an idea regarding sports viewers behavior. However it is surprising that there is lack of studies pertaining audiences behavior with sports broadcasts. Even though, there are studies concerning this issue, the majority of it is limited to experimental settings, students' samples or a focus on particular sporting events such as the Olympics (Wenner, 1989).

2. 2. 1 Sport Watching Behavior and Gender

In Malaysia, ESPN Star Sports reported the 2011 foreign football league season saw a 28% spike in local viewership with 6. 3 million home viewers tuning in. Demographics of viewers also changed with higher number of female viewers and young males towards the English Premier League and Spanish La Liga (Marketing Interactive, 2012). Viewership of football leagues among Malaysians increased across demographics, including 45% increase

in the male pay-TV viewers aged 15-29 years old and 21% increase among female viewers aged 15 years-old (Marketing Interactive, 2012).

Firstly, it is important to note that this research is primarily focus on sports viewing frequency. There have been a few studies which have examined males' and females' television sports viewing experiences (Gantz, 1981; Gantz & Wenner, 1991; Gantz & Wenner, 1995). Gantz and Wenner (1991) found that men spent more time watching sports on television than women and had greater knowledge of sports than women. Similarly, Gantz (1981) found sex differences in behaviors prior to watching sport on television, feelings while watching sports on television, and in behaviors while watching sports on television.

Currently, the consumption of media has change tides, as females seem to have higher levels of television exposure compared to males (Besley & Shanahan, 2003). Women exude the importance of personal gratification shown by such things as a comfortable life, pleasure, and happiness, contributes to the increase in their television viewing habits. The number of females watching televised sport is a justifiable claim. Recent studies have indicated that women have an increasing interest in sport events (Shachar & Emerson, 2000). McCarty & Shrum (1993) claims that, females may perceive a certain amount of fulfillment of personal gratification through television viewing. However, men, do not find fulfillment of values accommodating women when it comes to watching television (McCarty & Shrum, 1993). Newspapers seem to be a regular among men than women readers (Besley and Shanahan, 2003). Moreover, men have a tendency to obtain information

(including sports) from newspapers as it is a medium that is seen to produce the most reliable information (Hudson, 2001).

A study done by examining 707 adults whom experience televised sports through telephone interviews by Gantz, Walter; Wenner, Lawrence A. (1991) stated that men behaved and reacted more like fans than women; televised sports appeared to involve more of men's emotions and a greater investment of their psyches. Men seem to be frequently engaged in pregame rituals such as talking and reading about the upcoming action. Women more often watched televised sports for company, while men watched to unwind and became wrapped up in the unfolding excitement and drama. Men are expected to act much like those who are in attendance in the sports venues. In addition, men were more likely to actively watch and participate in the experience. Men more often kept the game alive after the final whistle. When their team wins, men are more likely to celebrate in victory, however when the supported team end in defeat men are more likely to avoid confrontation with others.

Similarly, females were less likely than males to engage in other sport fan behavior such as watching on television and discussing sports with others (Dietz-Uhler et. al., 2000).

In 2006, Ashley K. Gibson and Dan Drane conducted a research on the frequency of viewing sport-related media among fifty-five undergraduate sport management students and found that gender to have statistically significant impact upon the frequency of viewing sport-related media with race and age found to be insignificant predictor of sports viewing frequency.

Merrill J Melnick and Daniel L Wann (2011) found that in a sample of 163 Australian university students found that. Males scored higher on every measure of sport fandom behavior including attending sports events, watching sports on television, listening to sports on the radio, engaging in a sports conversation with others, and accessing sport information via the Internet.

The 2008 Beijing Olympics was the most watched television event television history, and represented a broad expansion and emphasis on online sports content in the United States. Tang, Tang; Cooper, Roger (2012) reported that men and women were significantly different in sports viewing and media use in general and they shared similarities in seeking Olympic content on various media platforms.

2. 2. 2 Sport Watching Behaviors and Team Identification

There have been numerous studies related to fan behavior and developing instruments to measure aspects of fans ' behavior (Dietz-Uhler & Murrell, 1999; Fisher & Wakefield, 1998; Laverie & Arnett, 2000; Shank & Beasley, 1998; Wann & Branscombe, 1993; Wann & Schrader, 2000; Wann et al., 1999).

Milne & McDonald, 1999 reported that team identification is a good predictor of sports fan consumption behavior. Fisher & Wakefield, 1998; Laverie & Arnett, 2002; Wann & Branscombe, 1993 stated that, fans who recognized their favourite sports team highly tend to watch games in persons or through media, pay more for tickets, spend more on team merchandise, be satisfied, and stay loyal to the team during periods of poor performance

In 1993 and 1997, Wann and Branscombe and Sutton et al. respectively said that individuals who portray high team identification would be more involved with a team. This high level of identification with a team comes from the long number of years being a fan, higher attendance rates at games, high expectations for future consumption-related behaviors, and greater investment of time and money in following a team (Sutton et al., 1997).

Sutton et al. 1997; Fink, Trail, & Anderson, 2002) stated that team identification a good predictor of sport fan consumption behavior and that highly identified fans are more willing to invest money in a team they identify with, particularly in terms of purchasing team-related merchandise and remain loyal to their team regardless of poor performance (Madrigal, 1995; Wakefield, 1995; Wann & Branscombe, 1993).

In 2007, Pantelis Nassis, Nicholas D. Theodorakis, Symeon P. Vlachopoulos & Yannis Afthinos showed that fan behaviors such as (a) the number of games of their favorite team attended in the last season, (b) the number of years fans fol- low their favorite team and (c) the frequency fans follow their favorite team trough television / radio / newspapers is a substantial predictor for team identification. Overall, the study's results provided evidence of the importance of team identification in predicting fans' behavioral loyalty.

Bauer et. al. (2005) stated that there six activities that constitute to behavioral loyalty and one of them is watching the favourite club's matches on television or other related media. Mariana Moreira (2008) concluded that age is not related to attendance or to numbers of hours dedicated to a team

during the week but exists a strong positive correlation between age and number of years.

Hu, Anne Wan-Ling; Tang, Lin-Ru (2008) reported that identification had a clear positive relationship with viewing behaviors. The results showed that most fans viewed broadcasts of major league baseball games three times a week, with the second largest group watching two times a week with also high identification, it showed that Taiwanese viewers recognized themselves as fan of Taiwanese players or Yankee in major league baseball. They concluded that fan identification had a significant relationship with viewing behavior.

2. 3 Sport Fan Motivation

Before going in depth on fan motivation and its domains that exists it is vital to understand and be clear regarding the development of the Sports Fan Motivation Scales throughout the years and how they relate to sports fans and spectator. Wann (1995) developed the Sport Fans Motivation Scale (SFMS) was to assess the motivations of sports fans. The SFMS uses 23 items to identify eight basic factors influencing fan behavior: group affiliation, aesthetic, self-esteem, entertainment, escape, eustress (pleasurable stress), economic, and family subscales. Wann's framework didn't allow the SFMS to forecast attendance patterns instead the SFMS scale was specifically made to explain and identify what motivates people to become sports fans which in turn leading them in becoming a sports spectator.

There have been recent efforts to modify and improve the scale to analyze fan motivation namely by Mahony, Nakazawa, Funk, James, and Gladden

(2002) and at the moment the most valid , most up-to date scale so far and reliable scale was developed by Yousof Al-Thibiti (2004) because it covers all the preceding scales related to fan motivation. The FMS developed by Yousof Al-Thibiti (2004) is composed of 22 items and six dimensions. The following are the domains;

Game quality domain; is the attractiveness of the spectacular aspects of the activity watched during the sportive activities.

Escape domain; is the state of escape from problems with stress ad troublesome psychological effects in the daily lives of the people participating sports activities

Boredom avoidance domain; is the sportive activity participants' state of evaluating their spare time

Social domain; is the participants' state of communication and interaction during sportive activities

Entertainment domain; is the sportive activity participants' state of entertainment and pleasure

Sport atmosphere domain; is the participants' state of being in an exciting and different atmosphere escaping from monotony during sportive activities.

2. 3. 1 Sport Fan Motivations and Gender

Wann (1995) reported that among a sample of college students, male sports fans tend to have a higher level of eustress, self-esteem, escape, entertainment, and aesthetic motivation. Their female counterparts tend to

be motivated by their family (Wann et al., 2001). Also, he reported no gender differences on the economic and group affiliation subscales.

In addition, the difference found between gender were similar to the differences found in the study by Dietz-Uhler et al (2000), it showed that female fans were more motivated to be sport fans by the opportunity to spend time with family, and being social, compared to males. Likewise, the male sports fans were more likely than female fans to look for arousal and exhilaration, self-worth, and grace of sport performances (Wann et al, 2001).

A case study done on women's college basketball fans revealed that male participants in this study scored higher than female participants on the total SFMS and on the escape, aesthetic, group affiliation, entertainment and family subscales. Female participants in this study scored higher on the eustress, self-esteem and economic subscales. The male participants' sport fan motivation rankings: entertainment, eustress, family, aesthetic, group affiliation, self-esteem, escape and economic. The female participants' sport fan motivation rankings: entertainment, eustress, aesthetic, group affiliation, self-esteem, family, escape, and economic. What's more unexpected, in this research showed that the male participants reported higher levels of family motives. In this research the family domain showed significantly different between genders.

Wann and Waddill (2003) stated that before studying the link between sports fandom and gender and an individual's masculinity should be considered first. Due to gender role stereotypes women scored higher on family motivation. Most women feel that they are obligated to put family first. They

are usually the ones who form a major part of their identity with the family. Moreover, most sports are masculine in nature thus this factor lends supports this study, as because masculinity was associated with higher scores on most of the motives. The study shows that men and women have significantly different levels of fan motivation, which is consistent with societal norms.

The SFMS developed by Yousof Al-Thibiti (2004) found that In terms of differences in fan motivations based on gender, the study revealed that that males and females have significant differences in the total FMS and in the subscales quality of the game, escape, and boredom avoidance in which males had higher mean scores. He concluded that males are more likely than females to attend or watch sporting events for reasons such as to see highly skilled players, to escape the daily routine, or to avoid boredom. The social motive is the only subscale that females had higher mean than males. The highest mean score for males and females was in the entertainment component, which indicates that entertainment is a strong motive for sport fans to watch or attend sporting events

2. 3. 2 Sport Fan Motivations and Team Identification

Sports fans motivation are dependent on several factors such as game attractiveness, economic factors, competitive factors, demographic factors, stadium factors, value of sport to the community, sports involvement, and fan identification (Shank, 2001).

Fink et al. (2002) and Wann (1995) recognized motives that relate to team identification. Fink et al. (2002) stated that there were nine motives that are

predictive of team identification which are vicarious achievement (the need for social prestige, self esteem, and a sense of empowerment that individuals can receive from their association with a successful team), aesthetics (the artistic appreciation of the sport due to its inherent beauty), drama (the need to experience pleasurable stress or stimulation gained from the drama of the event), escape (the need to find a diversion from work and the normal unexciting activity of everyday life), family (the opportunity to spend time with one's family doing something everyone enjoys), acquisition of knowledge (the need to learn about the team or players through interaction and media consumption), appreciation of physical skills of the athletes (the appreciation of the physical skill of the athletes or the well-executed performance of the team), social interaction (the need to interact and socialize with others of like interests to achieve feelings that one is part of a group), and physical attraction to the athletes (watching sports because of the physical attractiveness or " sex appeal" of an individual athlete or group of athletes.

Individuals who are highly identified with a sport team react negatively to the team's losses because their sense of self-worth is tied to the outcome of competitions involving the team (Wann, 1997) this is due to their team's performance is personally important to them. Since, motives are inclined towards a team's performance, commonly these individuals may express the need of the team to be successful to adhere to their self esteems or feel good about themselves. On the other hand, these individuals may not be able to relax or enjoy the sports being played. Sutton and colleagues (1997)

proposed that individuals with a low level of identification may be attracted purely by the entertainment value of the product.

Wann, Brewer, and Royalty (1999) examined the relationship between team identification and fans motivation as well as the relationship between emotional reaction and motivation. In the first study, they asked 68 participants to complete the SFMS and the Sport Spectator Identification Scale developed by Wann and Branscombe (1993). The results revealed that fans with a strong psychological connection to a team do not necessarily tend to be extrinsically motivated as was predicted. The subsequent study concerning 67 college students during a college basketball game showed that fans are motivated by entertainment factor of the game scored higher on the mood scale while those motivated by family need scored lower on the mood scale.

Li-Shiue Gau, Jeffrey D. James, & Jong-Chae Kim (2009) indicated that highly identified fans showed high levels of motives, were more likely to participate in consuming for media (TV and newspapers) and more willing to spend their money purchasing merchandise products provided by the team, perceived higher service quality, and finally were more likely to be motivated by self-definitive motives (achievement and team affiliation) than by entertainment and sociability. The results from the study looking at the effects of team identification on motives showed that 61% of respondents were characterized by high team identification and 39% were characterized by low team identification. Consequently, the results provide more information about those reporting high levels of team identification. This implies that

entertainment and sociability are more likely to drive low identified people to attend games than self-definitive motives.

2. 4 Team Identification

Prior to reviewing literature regarding team identification it is important to recognize and be clear regarding the measurement of team identification throughout the years and the importance of having general understanding of team identification.

Team identification is influenced by social identity theory and Wann & Brascombe (1993), Wann, Melnick, Russell & Pease (2001) defines team identification as the extent to which a fan feels psychological connected to a sports team and the team's performances are viewed as self relevant. Due to its acceptance in the sports science fraternity, Wann's idea is the working definition of team identification.

In order to further understand team identification, a few measures have been created and are substantially used by researchers be it from sports science or sports marketers. The Psychological Commitment to Team Scale (PCT) developed by Mahony, Madrigal and Howard in 2000 and the Connection to Team Scale developed by Trail and James (2001) have garnered most attention from sports marketing and management individuals. However, Kwon and Trails claim that the 14 Likert-scale PCT needed further improvements obtain better psychometric results. Moreover, these two scales have been used mainly for predicting marketing behaviors of sports fans.

The Sport Spectator Identification Scale (SSIS), was introduced and developed by Wann and Branscombe (1993). The SSIS contains seven items with responses ranging from 1 to 8. Higher numbers represent greater levels of team identification. After answering the seven items proposed by Wann and Branscombe (1993), the sum of all responses is added up to determine the level of identification with a certain team. Scores below 18 indicate a low level of identification, while scores above 35 suggest a high level of identification, and individuals scoring between 18 and 35 would be classified as moderately identified (Wann, Melnick, Russell, & Pease, 2001). In an attempt to validate the proposed scale, Wann and Branscombe (1993) conducted an empirical study with undergraduate students (N = 188) attending the University of Kansas. Wann and Branscombe (1993) found the scale to be reliable as the results yielded an acceptable Cronbach alpha coefficient of . 91 (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994).

The SSIS serves as one of the earliest reliable measures to demonstrate team identification, as various international scholars have successfully administered the scale in different settings including the United States (Gayton, Coffin, & Hearns, 1998), England (Jones, 1997, 2000), and Japan (Uemukai, Takenouchi, Okuda, Matsumoto, & Yamanaka, 1995). Despite the sound reliability and internal consistency scores, there have been concerns surrounding the items. Dimmock and Grove (2005) note, â€•the scales measure team identification indirectly by inferring it from other responses. Furthermore, the SSIS has been criticized as measuring team identification as a unidimensional variable (Dimmock, Grove, & Eklund, 2005; Heere, 2005; Heere & James, 2007b). For instance, Heere (2005) in his dissertation work

realized the uni-dimensional perspective of measuring team identity was losing valuable information, not truly grasping an individual's relationship with the team (group).

Wann and Branscombe's (1993) article does not make an attempt to measure it as a multi-dimensional construct focusing only on the single construct characterized by the sense of belonging (or attachment). Despite the concerns surrounding dimensionality, the scale developed by Wann and Branscombe (1993), has been utilized extensively or alluded to in the sport management literature (Gayton, Coffin, & Hearns, 1998; Jones, 1997, 2000; Sutton et al., 1997). The work by Wann and Branscombe (1993) opened the doors for scholars to advance our understanding by developing new instruments to measure team identity (Dimmock, Grove, & Eklund, 2005; Heere & James, 2007b).

2. 4. 1 Team Identification and Gender

James (2002) found men reported a stronger connection to sports in general, though women did report being fans of sport in a significant way. This was reflected in the findings of Dietz-Uhler, End, Jacquemotte, Bentley and Hurlbut (2000) which stated that men were more enthusiastic and attracted to sport than women.

In relation to team identification, Branscombe and Wann (1991) did not find significant differences between males and females, while Dietz-Uhler et. al. (2000) reported that males were more identified with a team than females. Dietz-Uhler et. al. (2000) pointed to ingrained gender stereotypes as justification for the higher male identification levels. Similarly, females were

less likely than males to engage in other sport fan behavior such as watching on television and discussing sports with others (Dietz-Uhler et. al., 2000). Dietz-Uhler et al. (2003) noted when applying the Sports Spectator Identification Scale (SSI), women and men identified themselves as sport fans in similar ratios, although it was determined that males had higher levels of team identification than females. The results were significant at a $p <. 001$.

Markus Ruhl (2010) studied on fans of New Zealand's only professional football club, the Wellington Phoenix FC. The research shows that male participants are more uniformly distributed across all fan ID levels than females, but with a tendency towards high (24. 2%) and very high (22. 4%) fan ID levels. This makes almost half of the male participants (46. 6%) very highly or highly identified with Wellington Phoenix. By contrast, less than one in four female participants (24. 1%) is very highly or highly identified. Furthermore, more than one third of female participants (34. 5%) however demonstrate a very low fan ID level. Thus, he concluded that there is a significant relationship between gender and fan identification level but no significant between-group differences for age and marital status.

İhsan Sarı, Ersin Eskiler, Fikret Soyer (2011) reported that significant differences were observed between males and females for resistance to changing team [$t(901)= 3. 85, p <0. 05$], loyalty to team [$t(901)= 6. 58, p <0. 05$] questioning loyalty [$t(901)= 2. 35, p <0. 05$] and overall commitment to team [$t(901)= 6. 06, p <0. 05$] However it was found that males scored significantly higher in resistance to changing team, loyalty to team, questioning loyalty and overall commitment to team. Similar to Giray

and Salman (2008), this result suggested that males are more attached to their sport teams than women. Supporting this gender differences, Gantz and Wenner (1995) reported that men generally were more involved in televised sports than women. Moreover, Dietz-Uhler et al. (2000) and Carvalho (2008) reported that men and women consider themselves to be sports fans, however men identify more strongly with being sports fans than do women.