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### Understanding Season Ticket Holders' Buying Behaviors

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## Understanding Season Ticket Holders' Buying Behaviors

### Abstract

Increasing the average dollar spent from fans is important for an organizations' bottom line. Existing literature focuses on general attendance versus the unique population of season ticket holders. Having already invested fans consume more, due to higher attendance, can increase the bottom line. By having the Rochester Red Wing's season ticket holders fill out a survey it will uncover their buying behaviors and what affects their attendance. The results show aroma is how fans decide what concessions to buy and new merchandise is how fans decide what merchandise to buy.

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Understanding Season Ticket Holders' Buying Behaviors  
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**Abstract**

Increasing the average dollar spent from fans is important for an organizations' bottom line. Existing literature focuses on general attendance versus the unique population of season ticket holders. Having already invested fans consume more, due to higher attendance, can increase the bottom line. By having the Rochester Red Wing's season ticket holders fill out a survey it will uncover their buying behaviors and what affects their attendance. The results show how fans decide what concessions to buy and how fans decide what merchandise to buy.

### **Increasing the Season Ticket Holders' Overall Attendance**

On a warm summer day you think what a great day to be at the ball park. The feeling of the warm sun, the smell of the fresh cut grass, and the excitement of being at the game makes it worth being a season ticket holder. Plus you're enjoying the game with the same fans and friends which you've known for the last five years. After seven long innings it's time to stretch your legs and go grab something to eat for dinner. You take a stroll around the ball park and heads towards your favorite concession stand. As the stand comes into sight, it hits you, its Wednesday. The dinner you were so eager to have and would make this night perfect is not available, again. So you shrug it off like you have done so many times before and figure you will swing by the merchandise store to see if there is any new product out. After looking around for a second you realize you have bought everything in the store. As you head back towards your seat you start to think about how hungry you are and that your son will be disappointed because you didn't buy him something new from the store like you promised. After sitting back down in your seat you bring up your bad experience to the other fans and they all agree, coming on a Wednesday might not be the best. If the Red Wings only had open the concessions they wanted and a few new products in the store, then it would make weekday games so much better.

It's imperative for the companies to find different ways to increase their revenue. Some examples of increasing the bottom line would include using more energy efficient lights, lowering insurance premiums, and producing at optimal efficiency. In this day and age keeping an open door when it comes to listening to your customers will bring a large return. The Rochester Red Wings, a minor league affiliate of the Minnesota Twins, could use additional revenue like many other teams. In sports and any other industry, knowing how to satisfy your customers and give them a better experience will bring additional dollars to the organization.

The reason why the information would be helpful to the Red Wings is because they can better understand their most avid fans and how to better satisfy them. With more satisfied fans they will attend more games. The end goal will be higher overall revenue from the additional dollars spent by on concessions and merchandise. There is limited research the season tickets holders' attendance. Therefore there is an opportunity to build on the previous studies which have been conducted. In addition this research will be adding to Classical Learning Theory. This will all be possible because the Red Wings will understand their fans better because they are willing to listen by keeping their doors open.

### **Literature Review**

#### **Theoretical Framework**

This research will use classical conditioning theory, also known as classical learning theory, to understand the buying behaviors of season ticket holders. This theory is explained by Chen-Yueh and other authors as a “pairing a positive, unconditioned stimulus with a conditioned stimulus does result in positive attitudes towards the conditioned stimulus” (Chen-Yueh, Yi-Hsiu, & Chia-Lin, 2012). This theory is used by marketers to shape the attitude of their buyers. Pavlov was the founder of this theory because of his experiment on dogs (Solomon, 2009). The experiment was using dog food (unconditioned stimulus) to get salvation to occur (unconditioned response) from the dog (Limbad, 2013). Then Pavlov introduced a bell by ring it every time the food was given to the dog. The bell was called the neutral stimulus. By pairing the bell and the food together, after a few repetitions, the dog started to salivate at the sound of the bell. This is how classical conditioning was discovered.

There is other research which shows how classical conditioning theory can shape the attitudes of consumers towards products. In *The Role of Affect in Attitude Formation: A*

*Classical Conditioning Approach*, the authors found choosing and arranging visual imagery, along with repetitions, will lead to a greater positive brand attitude (Kim, Jeon-Su Lim, & Bhargava, 1998). An additional study found positive music which is appropriate for the product, will increase positive attitude more successfully than pairing a random choice to the good (Tom, 1995). For example if an organization picks the most popular rap song and pairs it with ballet shoes to increase profits, the effects would be meniscal compared to a more appropriate song.

In classical conditioning when the neutral stimulus, the bell, is turned into the conditioned stimulus, it can be viewed as a trigger. An example is everything you hear Zoom Zoom you think of Mazda or you see a large yellow M you want McDonalds. The sound and the sight of these elements are the triggers to make your brain think of these items. There are these same types of triggers in sport. The trigger could be simply going to the game itself and that could trigger you to want concessions or merchandise. Then there are other triggers where the fan walks by a concession stand and the smell of the food, the trigger, is what makes the consumer purchase. Another possible trigger is an advertisement of alcohol, on the jumbo screen, which makes the fan want to go buy beer. There are many different triggers in the sport arena and knowing what those are is very useful information.

### **Factors that Affect Attendance and Consumption**

A sport organization needs people in attendance in order to have consumption of their concession and merchandise products. Therefore knowing the factors which have the greatest impact on season ticket holders' attendance is important. This section will discuss those factors which include pricing, promotions, stadium, and fan identity. Each factor will show the effects it has on the attendance of sport fans. This study takes into account of other causes which the Red Wings wouldn't have direct control over. These elements, which will not be discussed, include

weather, winning, losing, and others. Understanding concession pricing is valuable information because the effects it has on the consumers. In addition this section will discuss how the organization's revenue can be increased or decreased because of the buying habits of the season ticket holders. Factors such as impulse buying help to explain why this particular fan base purchases the merchandise and concessions they buy.

### **Pricing.**

There are some differences and similarities between Major League Baseball (MLB) and Minor League Baseball. When it comes to pricing, there has been research conducted which shows an effect on attendance and revenue in both leagues (Shapiro, & Drayer, 2012). Different ticket pricing strategies include VTP (variable ticket pricing) and DTP (demand ticket pricing). "VTP allows teams to set higher price points for premium games" but "this strategy still may not accurately depict consumer demand for each game" (Shapiro, & Drayer, 2012, pp.532-533). While DTP can change prices daily on a game to game basis because of the varying demand conditions and due to factors which include "weather, player performance, team performance, opponent, and other situational factors" (Shapiro, & Drayer, 2012, pp.532-533). DTP and VTP have been used by many different teams to help with increasing their revenue and attendance.

In addition one research article conducted in 2007 stated "this study supports the use of VTP both to increase and decrease prices from average seasonal levels" (Rascher, McEvoy, Nagel, & Brown, p.431). In addition lowering ticket prices for less desirable games would potentially create more positive relationships between teams and their fans (Rascher, et al). Since the demand for a sporting event can change so quickly, a revenue management strategy, such as DTP, provides an opportunity for sport organizations to optimally price tickets (Shapiro et. al., 2012). These types of pricing structures are beneficial for general admission rather than season

ticket holders. Since season ticket holders pay up front for all 72 games, at the beginning of the season, these pricing structures would not affect them. It's important to show how different pricing structures are being used compared to the traditional ways. Having a different structure for season ticket holders can be explored in further research to increase their attendance.

### **Promotions.**

Promotions are used in every sporting event. Knowing which ones are effective is very important to a sport organization. Promotions could be possible incentives to increase the overall attendance of the season ticket holders in one season. Promotions are important because "they can encourage fans to be more involved and facilitate interaction between groups of fans and players, which could enhance attachment" (Laverie, & Arnett, 2000, p. 238).

In case the game itself isn't of high quality, a team must offer a variety of peripheral products to be successful (McDonald, & Rascher, 2000, p.15). In this statement by McDonald and Rascher, it shows how important promotions are to sport teams however the research is outdated by 13 years. Updated research, conducted in 2010, states promotions are still important because when an organization has a sport's team as the main product, it needs a controllable product which are promotions (Lanzillo). The uses of promotions do increase attendance like sport organizations would want (McDonald & Rascher, 2000). These studies concluded that promotions are important and they are something teams have control over. Knowing the promotions which work the best and are cost effective is very helpful for sport organizations.

Special events are effective and low cost but when the giveaways, like bobble heads, are coupled with an event it draws in even more fans (Price & Sen, 2003). Boyd & Krehbiel also came to this conclusion that there is high effectiveness of the combining giveaways and special events, known as stacking (2006). There are many different types of special events which sport

organizations can use. Boyd and Krehbiel found some special events could be less than five dollars (2006). Knowing the particular events which have little cost but a large impact is very beneficial because the team is saving money, increasing their attendance. The three events which showed a high success rate for the Savannah Sand Gnats back in 2009, included fan participation events such as Tug-A-War, Dizzy Bat Race, and Karaoke Fans (Lachowetz, Dees, Todd, & Ryan, 2009). These events were made more successful pairing them with popular promotions like “fireworks, adults beverage specials, community involved complimentary tickets, and give-a-ways”. The give-a-ways included “bobble-heads, baseball card team sets, t-shirts, hats, mini-bats, gloves, magnetic calendar schedules and drinking glasses” (Lachowetz, et al, 2009, p.226). All of the promotions just listed can also have a positive impact for other teams, particularly, the Red Wings. As stated earlier, stacking events and promotions would have a higher success rate together versus by themselves.

Another promotion in a separate study than Lachowetz, Dees, Todd, and Ryan to see if it affects fans' attendance was fireworks. The author, Lanzillo, concluded the fireworks promotion has a larger impact on fans who attend a few games per season (2010). Since season ticket holders go to more games than just a few, fireworks would not impact them. On the other hand, certain give-a-way promotions which reflect player affiliation, such as hats and t-shirts, had a larger impact on loyal fans like season ticket holders (Lanzillo, 2010). Sport organizations should know the effects of their promotions before implementing them. One author found promotions may create an ambience and event culture that will influence sport attendance decisions (Armstrong, 2008, p. 219). In other words you could affect a fan's attendance if a sport organization is marketing promotions to only one type of ethnic group. All teams should be aware of this problem because they could be spending money on promotions which in fact

decrease the attendance and revenue. Again knowing which promotions work best will help to save money by not spending it on promotions which have less effect on ticket holders.

### **Stadium**

Updating the sport organization's stadium is another factor other authors have studied. There are a few researchers who have concluded changes to a baseball stadium can improve attendance. One study discusses how playing in a newly constructed stadium is associated with a significant increase in attendance, and this effect lessens as the stadium ages (p.550). In addition any renovations done will also increase attendance (Beckman, Cai, Esrock, & Lemke, 2012). Having something new will generate curiosity and a need for the fans to enjoy the renewal of something old. These authors show one side of how renovating a stadium can affect the attendance. There has been other research which shows highly identified fans having a negative attitude on changing a baseball stadium.

The research conducted at Fenway Park was to gather fans' opinions on having renovations done to the stadium. Also the study asked fans if a new stadium would be more favored opposed to keeping the stadium the way it is. Majority of the participants stated they were highly identified fans and the results indicated those fans wish to keep Fenway Park as it is (Sargeant, 2012). This goes against the research from Beckman, Cai, Esrock, and Lemke but the studies are different because Fenway Park is very unique. Changes to a field seem to affect fans depending on the stadium itself. Therefore neither study proves or disproves one another because it's a case by case difference.

### **Fan Identity**

Fan identity is very important because "if a person is involved with and/or attached to a sports team, he/she is more likely to rate their fan identity as more important than other

identities” (Laverie & Arnett, 2000, p. 238). Different identities could include a book club, being a part of a volunteering group, or other non-sport groups. In addition if a team has high fan identification it doesn’t matter whether a team is unsuccessful or not, the fans will still attend games and purchase products. The reason for why fans do this is because unsuccessful team’s fans focus more on aspects of the group and its member while ignoring information about the poor performance of the team (Fisher & Wakefield, 1998). For the successful team’s fans, the fans associated with how much the team was winning versus the aspects of the group (Fisher & Wakefield, 1998). It seems multiple researches conclude a sport organization with high Fan Identification results in increase consumption (Lanzillo, & Wert-Gray, 2012). This is beneficial when trying to increasing a sport team’s revenue because it will bring more fans to the stadium.

Teams need to be careful because too much fan identity “could drive fans to be overzealous” and lead to “avid fans in their zest to support their teams may act in a manner that violates regulations” (Laverie & Arnett, 2000, p. 241). This would happen more so at the collegiate level versus minor league baseball but sport organizations should be aware. An example would be SMU and their money scandal, which end their football program for years because of their boosters were overzealous. Cities which hold professional sport organizations have experienced riots because of avid fans demonstrating their support of their team’s victory.

There are other studies which conclude with slightly different results than highly identified fans’ attendance not being affected by their unsuccessful teams. Other authors found self-esteem and positive emotions were higher, after a team’s success than after a failure, and therefore fans tended to associate more with the team after a success (Bizman, & Yinon, 2002, p. 389). The Fisher and Wakefield study was only done four years earlier than the Bizman and Yinon study. The differences between the two studies are that sports are different. Another study,

conducted at an earlier time, found teams pursue a goal to win because fan attendance is related to a team's success (Hansen & Gauthier, 1989). Understanding there can be an effect on fans self-esteem depending on winning or losing is important because it could affect attendance.

Ways to increase fan identity is by having "charitable events, getting local schools involved, and other grass roots programs" (Lachowetz et al., 2009, p. 227). Having a community be directly benefited from a sports team makes the public want to help in return (Lachowetz et al., 2009). The more a sport organization is involved with the lives of adults and children, will essentially increase loyalty to the team (Lachowetz et al., 2009). This is important to realize the potential of having the players and their team, actively engaging the community.

One factor that can decrease the amount of fan identification with a team stems from athlete behavior. From what was previously discussed, decreasing the fan identification could lead to lower attendance and revenue generated. In "Off-field behavior of athletes and team identification: Using social identity theory and balance theory to explain fan reactions" it states "unscrupulous acts by athletes can affect highly identified fans' level of identification with a team" (Fink, Parker, Brett, & Higgins, 2009, p.152). It's also important for sport organizations to be aware of this relationship because not responding in a certain way could dispirit the general public and the core base of highly identified fans (Fink, et al., 2009). Also knowing what will decrease fan identity is just as important as being aware of what can increase it.

One author found reasons why season ticket holders go to more games or discontinue their tickets. After conducting the surveys on many different professional sports it was concluded fans would become season ticket holders or attend more games because of tangible reasons, like discounts, and intangible reasons like, feeling more involved (McDonald & Stavros, 2007,

p.225). It's important to understand why season ticket holders make certain buying decisions because it can help other vendors within the organization.

### **Concessions.**

Concession pricing is another factor which needs to be reviewed from previous literature. Multiple authors agree and concluded setting concession prices in the inelastic portion of demand will create profit maximization. An example would be complementing admissions with concessions and similar products (Marburger, 1997). Some sport organizations will make the tickets prices lower and receive most of their profits from marked up concessions (Drayer, Shapiro, & Lee, 2012). Two reasons for selling tickets at a lower cost can be to fill up enough seats to receive television coverage and have more leverage when selling advertisement spots (Drayer, Rascher, & McEvoy, 2012). In "Can we find it at the concessions? Understanding price elasticity in professional sports" the author says owners of sport organizations set tickets prices in the inelastic (rather than unit-elastic) range of demand (Krautmann & Berri, 2007, p. 190). Another research concluded "that an inelastic ticket price is consistent with profit maximization" (Marburger, 1997, p.379). Coates and Humphreys (2007) had found franchises set ticket prices to maximize concessions' revenues (p.162). All these examples show owners already have calculated the concession prices to make sure their products are set at a profit maximizing range.

Inelastic pricing is about maximizing long-run profits that will set short- run marginal revenue (MR) below marginal costs (MC), a necessary condition for inelastic demand (Krautmann & Berri, 2007, p. 185). Sport teams have to find their own price range which creates inelastic demand. Most franchises already take into account how much the total Fan Index Cost should be and what price to set tickets so concession demand isn't decreased (Coates & Humphreys, 2007). All of this is important to understand because owners need to set their prices

in a profit maximizing inelastic range. The cause will have fans purchase more concessions which will increase the baseball team's overall revenue.

### **Merchandise**

Merchandise is a large component to increasing the bottom line revenue of a sport organization. When it comes to purchasing merchandise, sport fans have different buying behaviors, which play a large role in what products are bought.

Preferences for merchandise and concessions, of season ticket holders, can change based off of numerous factors such as weather and location. There are other variables, like brand loyalty, which have a stronger impact on the buying preferences of the fans. Wang found fans with higher identification have positive brand attitude/loyalty, which brings more favorable purchase intention (Wang, 2012). If merchandise and concessions are stocked with trademarks that have an emotional tie to the season ticket holders then there will be an increase in sales (Wang, 2012). In other words, stronger emotional connections between brands and consumers will increase sales of those products.

Other than brand loyalty affecting fans preferences of what they buy or don't buy, there are other strong influences on season ticket holders. Other factors include visual display and communication of merchandise and concessions. What many companies have started to gravitate towards is a different form of communication to their consumers. Marketers have moved away from presenting facts and started to focus on emotional connections (Seo, 2010). An example would be to focus on using a picture of a family enjoying a baseball game together (emotional connection), rather than listing out the reasons why a baseball game is enjoyable (presenting facts). This statement agrees with the study of author Wang mentioned above. An example of this type of communication would be the feeling of importance a fan receives when supporting

their team, after buying their merchandise. Communicating symbolically to fans, like having an advertisement with a popular player wearing a new team t-shirt, is a lot more effective because the connection to the fan is stronger (Seo, 2010). Additionally using visual displays such as big logos, versus small logos, is more attractive to sport fans and will produce more merchandise sales (Kwon, 2002). The reason why this occurs is because consumers pay more attention to larger visuals than smaller visuals (Solomon, 2009).

There are other variables worth pointing out because of their impact on what products consumers might buy. For example impulse buying helps to explain why sport fans buy certain goods. Impulse purchasing stood out the most because there has been a lot of research done by many authors. A few authors concluded this type of buying was a large reason why fans made their purchase. A reason for impulse buying was due to high fan identity to the team's brand (Kwon, & Armstrong, 2002). In addition fans that are in a group with high cohesiveness, while shopping, have a tendency to buy more on impulse (Chen, Lin, & Chang, 2013).

### **Research Question and Purpose**

After reviewing previous literature, extensive research has explored pricing, concessions, promotions, stadium, and fan identification. Some studies did focus on how a select group of consumers spent their money. There were only a few authors who focused their studies on season ticket holders specifically.

The previous research lacks additional information regarding how to better satisfy the season ticket holders preferences, with a focus on how fans spend their money. Majority of fan consumption is from concessions and merchandise. If there was information regarding spending patterns and decision making, the Red Wings could see an increase in consumption. This research will answer these two questions:

1. How do fans decide what concessions to buy?
2. How do fans decide what merchandise to buy?

By answering these questions, the Red Wings will understand the buying habits of their respondents. This research will provide, the local baseball team, with information needed to become a better organization for their customers. Also there is an opportunity to build on the research which has already been conducted on season ticket holders.

### **Method**

#### **Participants**

The participants included in this study are highly identified fans who attend the Rochester Red Wings home games. The fans that participated in the study were at random. It was the fans' choice whether they would like to participate or not, by opting in or out of the survey. Further details on the population are discussed in the results section of this paper. This way of getting a sample was by using a convenience sampling method because it was simple to access the desired fan population (Chen, 2011). There was access to the external population through Mr. Craig, an account representative. Mr. Craig had sent out the survey to all their season ticket holders and their fan base.

#### **Measures and Variables**

This research collected the thoughts of the highly identified fans. Particularly why the fans purchase the concessions and merchandise they buy. Using and focusing this research on variables the Red Wings can control is important when implementing them. The independent variables include the triggers or reasons as to how fans decide which concessions and merchandise to purchase. Examples of these triggers can be the aroma of a vendor, advertising, logos, new merchandise, weather and others. The dependent variables include the type of

vendors used and the physical merchandise in the store. For example if aroma is the main trigger as to how fans decide to buy concessions and one vendor has a better smell than the other, the better smelling vendor will have more sales.

This research focused on the factors outlined in the literature review section which include merchandise and concessions. The most influential independent variables are stated by the participants to describe how they decide what concessions and merchandise to buy. The dependent variables are controlled by the Rochester Red Wings such as the type of vendors that are available for the fans. After completion of this study, the dependent variables can be adjusted to attempt to increase sales such as getting a better vendor.

### **Data Collection Instrument**

The collection of data was through a survey distributed to all the season ticket holders and highly identified fans of the Rochester Red Wings. The design is a cross-sectional/survey design. A survey is the most cost and time effective way to obtain the information to answer the research question (Gratton, & Jones, 2010). Other reasons why a survey is beneficial for this type of research include “accessibility, reduction in bias, anonymity, structured data, and increased time for respondents” (Gratton, & Jones, 2010, p.129). The survey has breaks in order to help with flow and separate the two topics, concessions and merchandise. There are a total of three page breaks throughout. First the fans were asked basic questions to see how often they attend games and which days of the week they decide to go. This helped to separate fans who don’t attend games at all, those who only go to a few games or attend a lot of games. The fans, who do not attend games, were opted out because they couldn’t complete the survey accurately.

As the participants scrolled through the questions, they were able to click and type answers. The answers are in vertical format instead of the horizontal to create better flow and

space. This survey is simple and quick, consisting of 17 questions. All of the questions are able to measure frequency in order to gather results. In addition, there are a few questions used for chi-square analysis. The exact questions that are used for both frequency and chi-square analysis are discussed in data analysis plan section of this research.

There are options to insert additional comments on what items the fans would like to see added, any changes and how to better serve them to increase their attendance. There are many different scales such as “likert, ranking, list, and filter questions” (Gratton, & Jones, 2010, p.134-136). The questions and the entire layout of the survey are included in this research (see Appendix A for the survey).

### **Data Collection Plan**

The first step was to type an e-mail and embed a link which the participants had clicked on to access the survey. In the e-mail it stated the reasons for why the Red Wings are conducting this survey (see Appendix B for the cover e-mail). After typing the e-mail and embedding the survey, it was sent to a Red Wing’s account manager to look it over. This e-mail was changed due to the preference of how the Rochester Red Wings wanted to send it. Pilot testing was conducted as soon the e-mail was sent to the account manager. The cover email that was sent to the participants for the pilot testing is included in this research (see Appendix C for cover e-mail of the pilot testing). Once the account manager approved the survey, they sent it out to all the season ticket holders at the bottom of a promotional advertisement.

The online questionnaire was sent just as the season started in March and on a Friday. There was a two week time limit for the participants to answer the survey. Within the two week time limit there was a follow up on Twitter and Facebook (see Appendix D for Twitter and Facebook posts). By sending a social media post to the fans, the participants and scope of the

research became more generalized versus just a focused sample. This will be discussed further in the results and implication sections.

After the survey was closed I collected all of the results and sent a thank you to the account manager to send to all participants (see Appendix E for the thank you e-mail). The collection was done using survey software to download the results to an excel spreadsheet. Once the information was on the excel spreadsheet it was download and analyzed through SPSS Statics (Gratton, & Jones, 2010).

### **Data Analysis Plan**

The data was organized and summarized into numerical data through using descriptive statistics. The descriptive statistic, frequency, and inferential statistic, chi-squared, were used to draw conclusions from the collected data. All of the questions in the survey were analyzed using frequency. The questions as to why the fans bought concessions because they saw, smelled, and/or heard something and how many times they purchase concessions, was analyzed by using chi-square. The merchandise questions analyzed with chi-squared included why do you buy merchandise and how often do you buy merchandise. How all of these questions were examined can be found in the results portion of this research.

### **Results**

There are 118 participants who took the survey and 109 of those were deemed useable. The population was reduced by eliminating all contributors who did not complete the survey. Using 109 surveyed results is justified as valid because other researchers have used less in the past. For example, the study *Baseball Fans' Motivation: An Investigation of Psychological, Sociological, and Environmental Factors* by Chen in 2011 used only 200 participants. The two hundred participants were gathered from six different games, in three different stadiums, creating

a large fan base to gather a sample from. This research studied the participants to understand spending patterns and answer these two questions, how do fans decide what concessions to buy and how do fans decide what merchandise to buy.

### **Overview**

The first frequency table (see *Table F1*) shows how many total games the majority of fans surveyed attend. The table shows 58.7 percent of highly identified fans go to at least 1 to 10 games out of the season. This is the majority of the fans, whereas 10.1 percent go to either 11 to 20 games or 41-50 games out of the season. Only 2.8 percent either attend 51-60 games or all of the games in a season. From this table it shows, most of the fans go to less than half of the games in one season.

In addition, the results showed 58.7 percent of fans go to weekend games which consist of Fridays, Saturdays, and/or Sunday games. There are 39.4 percent of fans who attend both weekday and weekend games. Having more fans attend weekend games only over both weekday and weekend was expected.

After finding out if the fans attend the games and which days, the next question analyzed was if they purchased food (see *Table F2*). A majority of Red Wing respondents answered yes (96.2 percent) that they did in fact buy food at the games. Then 33.0 percent purchased concessions more than once a game and 54.0 percent stated they buy food and/or beverages once a game (see *Table F3*). Therefore 87.0 percent of fans buy food at least once a game when they attend.

When fans purchase concessions, most of them stay within a range. A majority or 55.6 percent of fans buy \$1.00-\$20.00 of concessions, 29.3 percent buy \$21.00-40.00, and 11.1 percent purchase \$41.00-\$60.00 (see *Table F4*). The majority of respondents (96.0 percent)

purchase between \$1.00-\$60.00 worth of food and/or beverages and 87.0 percent do so at every game they attend.

There were 42.5 percent of fans who are satisfied with both the quality and variety of vendors (see Table F5). Compared to 17.0 percent said they would like more variety and 19.8 percent of respondents said they want better quality. The Rochester Red Wings have done a good job of satisfying almost half of the fans with the vendors they use for concessions.

The first general merchandise question analyzed was regarding whether or not the fans buy merchandise. There is 61.2 percent of respondents who do not buy merchandise and 38.8 percent which do purchase retail goods (see Table F2). This is much different results than the concessions. Out of the 38.8 percent of fans who do buy merchandise, the majority of them (79.5 percent) only purchase merchandise a few times in a season (see Table F3). In addition, a combined 77.5 percent of the respondents spend \$21.00-\$60.00 on merchandise, 50.0 percent spend \$21.00-\$40.00 and 27.5 percent spend \$41.00-\$60.00 (see Table F4). The highly identified fans spend more money on concessions, on a consistent basis, than they do on merchandise.

### **Concessions**

In this section the results analyzed pertain to the questions which address how fans decide what concessions to buy. There are triggers that have emerged from the data collected. The meaning of this data is deliberated later in the discussion portion of this research paper.

The first question asked the respondents if they bought concessions because they heard, smelled, and/or saw something which reminded them of a vendor. Out of the fans 66.7 percent said they did and 33.3 percent stated no they do not. In addition, 44.6 percent said they buy food and/or beverages every once a game because of this trigger (see *Table F6*).

The proceeding questions found out which two triggers influenced the respondents the most when it came to buying concessions from a vendor. Aroma and hunger/thirsty were the dominate factors. Out of the respondents 50.8 percent said aroma was the reason why they purchased from a certain vendor. Hunger/Thirsty was also a frequently picked choice, with 41.4 percent of the season fans stating that's why they bought concessions. In the first chi-square analysis the comparison was made between fans that attended less than half the games and more than half of the game with how frequently they purchased food. There was a significant difference between the amount of games attended and how frequently the fans purchased food  $X^2_{(2)}=17.752$ ,  $p<.001$ . The second chi-squared was to see a correlation between how frequently do fans purchase concessions because of either advertising and aroma. There was no significant association between purchase frequency and the two triggers  $X^2_{(1)}=0.024$ ,  $p=.877$ .

### **Merchandise**

Even though there weren't as many fans who buy merchandise, compared to concessions, there were triggers that emerged for those who did buy. The results shows 41.7 percent of the respondents bought merchandise because it was new in the store (see Table F7). The second highest reason, 13.9 percent of fans, buy merchandise because of the way it's displayed in the store.

The fans do not buy for others very often because 64.1 percent said they purchase the items for themselves. Out of the 35.9 who purchase merchandise for others, 78.6 percent buy for their child or children and 50.0 percent buy retail items spur of the moment. The last chi-squared was analyzed for correlation between fans who attend less than half of the games and more than half the games with how many times they purchase merchandise. There was no significant

association between the how many times a fan goes to a game and how many times they purchase merchandise  $X^2_{(1)}=1.812$ ,  $p=.178$ .

### **Discussion and Conclusions**

The results support and build upon most of the past literature with these findings. There are clear reasons as to how most Rochester Red Wing highly identified fans decide what concessions and merchandise to buy. From these reasons or triggers there are certain buying behaviors the fans demonstrate.

The fans used in this research are highly identified because they are either season ticket holders or fans who follow the team on Twitter and/or Facebook. The fans who follow the team on social media are consider highly identified because they are more involved than fans who don't follow the team. The reason why this study is using only fans that are highly identified is because they are not affected by psychological motivational factors in regards to attendance (Chen, 2011). The author stated "there is no significant difference in the level of psychological motivational factors between males and females, age brackets, married and unmarried, employed and unemployed, and others" (Chen, 2011, p. 176). Since there is no significant difference in the motivational factors, participants can be looked at as a whole because they are highly identified.

To address the first research question which is, how do fans decide what concessions to buy? The 33.3 percent, discussed above, shows a large portion has a trigger when buying concessions. From the results it shows that the fans choose their vendor of choice by their sense of smell. Therefore having vendors which smell the best to the fans will trigger them to purchase the concessions. If an unpleasant smell came from a majority of the vendors, there would be a significant drop in food and/or beverage sales. If the Rochester Red Wings can find the best smelling vendors and put them in the stadium, it will draw fans to the concessions. Also having

scents, which smell like food, dispersed within the stadium would entice fans to buy concessions. This study adds to previous literature because there is little to no research conducted on what triggers a fan to buy concessions and/or merchandise. The trigger of being hungry/thirsty was a predominate reason as to why fans purchased concessions.

Knowing the fact highly identified fans buy food and/or beverages because they are hungry or thirsty might not be as surprising as the aroma trigger. Understanding this trigger effects fans purchases and how to use it to increase sales makes this information beneficial. One way of using this to the Red Wing's advantage is by changing the start time of the games. Having games start before lunch or dinner will help to increase the probability the fans will be hungry and/or thirsty at the game.

In addition, according to the chi-squared analysis highly identified fans shouldn't be treated all the same. There is a significant difference between fans that go to less than 30 games compared to the fans that go to more than 30 games. According to the results the fans who purchase most of the concessions are the ones going to fewer games. These fans, which go to fewer games, might be bingeing because they have limited opportunity. The fans that go to more than 30 games might start to become bored with the concessions or start to budget their spending. Implementing coupons that can be redeemed at the concessions as rewards for coming to more games would increase the amount spent by fans who consistently attend games. A better approach would be to use a variable-ratio reinforcement method (Solomon, 2009). This method is when an organization gives out coupons randomly. By using this fans never know when they could receive a discount just for walking in the stadium and should increase both concessions and attendance.

Also the literature review discussed a buying behavior, impulse purchasing, as a way to describe certain customers. Since the fans are buying based off of the sense of sell and then making a decision, shows traits of an impulse buyer. Therefore this supports the literature review on how some consumers make purchasing decisions. Understanding how impulse buyers behave and knowing the fans are acting on impulse, will help marketers sell to fans more effectively. The way fans decide how to buy their merchandise, also supports the fact the Red Wing's fans are impulse buyers.

When the results were analyzed to answer the second research question which is, how fans decide what merchandise to buy, different triggers emerged. The most dominate reason as to why fans buy merchandise is because of new retail items in the store. This means there will be more sales if the merchandise store has brand new items for fans more often. If they do not have new items then the sales will suffer. Majority of the fans did not buy merchandise. The cause of this could be the lack of new items in the store and not as frequently as the fans would like them.

In addition, most fans stated they buy merchandise because of the way it's displayed in the store. Having an effective store layout will be helpful when increasing the sale of retail items. Merchandise is also different because according to the chi-squared fans can be all treated equally versus separately. It was found highly identified fans who attend less than 30 games and those who attend more than 30 games all behave similarly when deciding how to purchasing retail items. Therefore having both new merchandise and an effective display will increase the sales for all fans. Both of these triggers, new merchandise and display, are again an impulse purchase behavior. Also fans mentioned when buying for their children, they do so on a spur of the moment more often than any other reason which supports impulse buying. There were a few results which fans mentioned what was a trigger for them outside of the reasons provided.

In the results of this study some fans mentioned other items as to which they would purchase concessions. One of the most common answers was cone head. The employee is a widely known person within the Rochester Red Wings community. The fans stated seeing and/or hearing him made them purchase food and/or beverages. Again this supports the reason as to why majority of the fans are impulse buyers.

### **Limitations and Future Directions**

There are a few weaknesses and holes in this research. First would be the lack of results received from the fans. If at least 1,000 fans responded it could have changed the results that were collected or could have been exactly the same. This research only had 109 respondents, even though the results are still valid, the results could have been more accurate. In addition if the season ticket holder were the only fans to receive the survey versus highly identified fans, the research would have been more focused instead of broad.

A suggestion for future research on Rochester Red Wings season ticket holders and fans, to get the best results, would be to add a promotion or reward to completing the survey. Adding a reward at the end is an “inducement” and “questionnaires containing a monetary reward produce better results than ones without” (Gratton, & Jones, 2010, p.147). However adding a reward to filling out the survey will increase the costs of conducting it. If the Red Wings could find a sponsor to fund the reward it would cover the cost and have a better response from the ticket holders. Also another suggestion is to “follow-up” to receive a higher response rate (Gratton & Jones 2010, p.147). Combining both an inducement method and follow-up method should increase the response rate. Also having the actual e-mails of the ticket holders would have made the data collection go a lot more smoothly.

It would be good for further researchers to expand the survey to multiple teams and compare results. This way the results can show if there is a difference in the buying behaviors of the fans between the locations of the stadiums. Shortening the survey would be a good idea and help to code the results better. Some of the fans mentioned triggers which weren't listed such as cone head. Some of the fans might have picked that trigger if it was listed with the other triggers such as aroma and advertising. Finding out certain triggers to a particular population would have helped.

### **The Experience**

It's a start of another season and you're excited for the first game. As you head to the game you realize what a nice sunny day it is and how hungry you are. The games have changed their start times right before dinner and you haven't had the time to eat yet. You walk up to the gates, hungry, and usher surprises you with a coupon for the concessions. What a great surprise and exactly what you need right now. As you head to your seat, eager to catch up with your fellow fans, you smell something wonderful. You stop and see a new vendor that smells great. As your stomach groans and you look at your coupon, you think it's a perfect time to grab some food and beer.

As you make it back to your seat, you think what a great start to the game because you have food from a great new vendor. You see your friends and as you start to converse, they all ask you what that great smell is. You tell them where you purchased the food and how, they then all immediately get up to get their own. As the game goes on, the seventh inning comes around and it's time to stretch your legs. You figure since you didn't spend so much money on the first round of food and drinks, you might as well buy some more. As you head towards that great smelling vendor you pass the merchandise store. The first thing you see perfectly displayed is a

newly designed shirt. Without any hesitation at all you grab two pairs, one for yourself and your daughter, and buy them.

As you head home you think back to your experience of the home opener. What a great time you had. You received an unexpected discount for concessions, the team won and you get to surprise your daughter with a new shirt she will love. Your last thought is if my experience is going to be this great from now on, I need to find more time to go to more games. Plus you need to show off how good looking you and daughter will be wearing new matching shirts at the next game.

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*Appendix A*  
Survey

0. **Explanation and Purpose:** The reason for this survey is to understand how season ticket holders decide what merchandise and concessions to buy. This research will help to comprehend why some of the most avid fans purchase certain items over others. By participating in this research, you're being asked to take a survey which will help explain why you purchase merchandise and concessions. Completing the questionnaire will only take 5-10 minutes of your time.

Receiving your response will help to create a more satisfying and enjoyable experience while attending a home game. There are no risks related to taking this survey unless you choose to disclose your answers to others. Any answers provided in this survey will remain confidential and will only be used in the research study. Names and contact information will not be required to participate. Only the results of the survey will be presented.

Participation is voluntary and once the survey has begun you can choose to withdraw at any time. Also you can choose not to partake in the research. Any decision you make will be respected. After reading the above, please complete the survey if you would like to be part of this research.

Once the survey is complete or if you choose to withdraw before finishing, you have granted me permission to analyze the answers provided.

- a. Accept
- b. Decline

Skip Logic (If Decline Is Selected, Then Skip To End of Survey)

-----Page Break-----

1. How many games do you attend in one season? If you give some of your tickets away and still attend games, just select how many games you attend.
- a. 1-10
  - b. 11-20
  - c. 21-30
  - d. 31-40
  - e. 41-50
  - f. 51-60
  - g. 61-71
  - h. All
  - i. You give all tickets away and don't attend any games

Skip Logic (If you give all tickets away a... Is Selected, Then Skip To End of Survey)

2. Which days in the week do you usually attend these games? Check all that apply.
  - a. Monday
  - b. Tuesday
  - c. Wednesday
  - d. Thursday
  - e. Friday
  - f. Saturday
  - g. Sunday

-----Page Break-----

3. Do you purchase any food and/or beverages at the concessions during the games?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No

Skip Logic (If No Is Selected, Then Skip To Do you purchase any type of merchandise)

4. How frequently do you purchase any food and/or beverages at the concessions?
  - a. More than once a game
  - b. Once a game
  - c. Once every 2-3 games
  - d. Once every 4-6 games
  - e. A few times in a season
5. How much do you usually spend on food and/or beverages within the time period you selected from the question above?
  - a. \$1.00-\$20.00
  - b. \$21.00-\$40.00
  - c. \$41.00-\$60.00
  - d. \$61.00-\$80.00
  - e. \$81.00-\$100.00
  - f. More than \$100.00
6. Which of these factors would make your experience at a game more enjoyable? Click all that apply
  - a. Wider variety of vendors
  - b. Better quality of food and beverages
  - c. You are satisfied with the quality and variety of the vendors
7. Have you bought food/beverages from a vendor because you saw, heard, or smelled something which reminded you of that particular vendor?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No

Skip Logic (If Yes Is Selected, Then Skip To How frequently do you buy food/beverages...)  
(If No Is Selected, Then Skip To Out of these reasons which ones describes...)

8. How frequently do you buy food/beverages from a vendor because you saw, heard, or smelled something which reminded you of the particular vendor?
- More than once a game
  - Once a game
  - Once every 2-3 games
  - Once every 4-6 games
  - A few times in a season
9. Which choices remind you of a particular vendor and then you purchase from that vendor? Click all that apply.
- Advertisements of the vendor on the big screen
  - The aroma of a particular concession
  - Hearing a jingle for a concession
  - Seeing a concession's logo
  - Other (Enter Answer)
10. Out of these reasons which ones describes why you purchase concessions? Click all that apply
- You enjoy a certain vendor
  - People you're with want to eat
  - You enjoy trying new concessions
  - Hungry/thirsty
  - Other (Enter Answer)

-----Page Break-----

11. Do you purchase any type of merchandise at games?
- Yes
  - No

Skip Logic (If No Is Selected, Then Skip To End of Survey)

12. How frequently do you purchase any type of merchandise at games?
- More than once a game
  - Once a game
  - Once every 2-3 a games
  - Once every 4-6 games
  - A few times in a season
13. How much do you usually spend on merchandise?
- \$1.00-\$20.00
  - \$21.00-\$40.00
  - \$41.00-\$60.00
  - \$61.00-\$80.00
  - \$81.00-\$100.00
  - More than \$100.00

14. Out of these reasons which one describes why you purchase merchandise? Click all that apply.

- a. New items in the store
- b. The display of the merchandise
- c. Your friends are buying a similar outfit
- d. Weather
- e. Other (Enter Answer)

15. Are most of your purchases of merchandise made because you're buying for yourself or someone else?

- a. Myself
- b. Someone Else

Skip Logic (If someone else is Selected, Then Skip to who do you buy the merchandise...)  
(If Myself Is Selected, Then Skip To End of Survey)

16. Who do you buy the merchandise for the most often?

- a. Your child or children
- b. Significant other
- c. Friends
- d. Other (Enter Answer)

17. Why are most of your purchases of merchandise made for someone else?

- a. As gift
- b. Spur of the moment
- c. The person needed new merchandise
- d. Other (Enter Answer)

End of Survey

*Appendix B*  
Cover E-mail

From: (Sport Team)  
Subject: (Sport Team) Customer Feedback Survey

Dear Season Ticket Holder,

I want to thank you in advance for taking the time to help improve the (Sport Team) organization. By taking this survey it will benefit you because the (Sport Team) will be able to better serve you, make adjustments to fit your needs, and improve your overall experience at games.

This survey will take a brief 5 to 10 minutes of your time. To access the survey, click the link at the bottom or cut and paste the URL into your browser. The survey will expire (date 2 weeks) so don't miss the chance to voice your opinion. You're a valuable fan and you're part of a select group who will receive this survey. Again we appreciate your feedback.

Click here to access survey: URL

If you have any questions please contact the researcher, Stephen Castro, at [smc07114@sjfc.edu](mailto:smc07114@sjfc.edu) or the research advisor, Dr. Dane, at [edane-staples@sjfc.edu](mailto:edane-staples@sjfc.edu).

Thank you,  
(Sport Team)

*Appendix C*  
Pilot Test E-mail

From: Stephen Castro (Myself)  
Subject: Pilot Test: (Sport Team) Customer Feedback Survey

Good Afternoon,

I want to thank you in advance for taking the time to help improve my survey. By participating in this survey and providing your feedback, will point out any areas I have overlooked. The survey was designed universally so it can be sent to any team's season ticket holders. The two sport teams I'm considering is the Rochester Knighthawks and Rochester Red Wings.

This survey will take a brief 5 to 10 minutes of your time. To access the survey, click the link at the bottom or cut and paste the URL into your browser. When you have a moment please send any suggestions to my e-mail below. Please send any suggestions to me via e-mail. Again I appreciate your feedback.

Click here to access survey: [URL](#)

If you have any questions please contact me at [smc07114@sjfc.edu](mailto:smc07114@sjfc.edu) or my research advisor, Dr. Dane, at [edane-staples@sjfc.edu](mailto:edane-staples@sjfc.edu).

Thank you,  
Stephen Castro (My name)

*Appendix D*  
Twitter and Facebook post

Twitter Post

@RocRedWings Hey Rochester Red Wings fans I'm looking for your help. Please take the survey below. Thanks! [https://sjfc.co1.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV\\_2coeFwi8EAlxVPv](https://sjfc.co1.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_2coeFwi8EAlxVPv)

@RochRedWings Hey Rochester Red Wings fans I'm looking for your help. Please take the survey below. Thanks! [https://sjfc.co1.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV\\_2coeFwi8EAlxVPv](https://sjfc.co1.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_2coeFwi8EAlxVPv)

Facebook Post

Hey Rochester Red Wings fans I'm looking for your help. Please take the survey below. Thanks!  
[https://sjfc.co1.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV\\_2coeFwi8EAlxVPv](https://sjfc.co1.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_2coeFwi8EAlxVPv)

*Appendix E*  
Thank you e-mail

From: (Sport Team)  
Subject: (Sport Team): Thank You

Dear Season Ticket Holder,

I want to thank you for taking the time to help improve the (Sport Team) organization. By taking this survey it has benefited you and the (Sport Team) because we will be able to better serve you while improving your overall experience at games.

You're a valuable fan and again we appreciate your feedback.

Thank you,  
(Sport Team)

*Appendix F*  
Frequency Tables

Table F1

Frequency of total games attended		
	n=109	%
1-10	64	58.7
11-20	11	10.1
21-30	5	4.6
31-40	7	6.4
41-50	11	10.1
Give all ticket away	3	2.8
51-60	3	2.8
61-70	2	1.8
All	3	2.8

Table F2

Frequency of purchasing food or merchandise				
	Food		Merchandise	
	n=105	%	n=103	%
Yes	101	96.2	40	38.8
No	4	3.8	63	61.2

Table F3

Frequencies of the fans' purchases for concessions and merchandise				
	Food		Merchandise	
	n=100	%	n=39	%
More than once a game	33	33	1	2.6
Once a game	54	54	1	2.6
Once every 2-3 games	10	10	3	7.7
Once every 4-6 games	1	1	3	7.7
A few times in a season	2	2	31	79.5

Table F4

Frequency of how much fans spend on food and merchandise

	Food		Merchandise	
	n=99	%	n=40	%
\$1.00-\$20.00	55	55.6	2	5.0
\$21.00-\$40.00	29	29.3	20	50.0
\$41.00-\$60.00	11	11.1	11	27.5
\$61.00-\$80.00	2	2.0	2	5.0
\$81.00-\$100.00	1	1.0	3	7.5
More than \$100.00	1	1.0	2	5.0

Table F5

Frequency of satisfaction level of vendors

	n=106	%
0	7	6.6
Variety	18	17.0
Quality	21	19.8
Satisfied	45	42.5
Variety & Quality	11	10.4
Variety, Satisfied	1	.9
Quality, Satisfied	2	1.9
Variety, Quality, Satisfied	1	.9

Table F6

Frequency of buying food because of a trigger

	n=65	%
More than once a game	9	13.8
Once a game	29	44.6
Once every 2-3 games	11	16.9
Once every 4-6 games	2	3.1
A few times in a season	14	21.5

Table F7

Frequency of a particular trigger when buying merchandise		
	n=36	%
New Merchandise	15	41.7
Display	5	13.9
Weather	4	11.1
New, Display	2	5.6
New, Weather	6	16.7
Display, Weather	1	2.8
New, Display, Friends	1	2.8
New, Display, Weather	1	2.8
	1	2.8