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Joseph Tyson
St. John Fisher College

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Abstract

When sports organizations are affiliating themselves with minor league teams, there can be many factors that go into the decision of what teams to align themselves with. Management should pay particular attention to the aspects of fan motivation, identification, behavior and avidity of the minor league team fans when making these decisions. By associating themselves with teams within close proximity, they could maximize the positive outcome created by that affiliation. Little research has been done however on the relationship between fans of minor league and major league teams within close proximity of each other. This paper is meant to examine this relationship by surveying season ticket holders of three different minor league teams and examining the extent of the correlation between the fan avidity and the motivations of the minor league fans. Upon completion of this research, I showed that there can be economic benefits and an increase in fan avidity of minor league fans when their major league affiliate is within close proximity.
Introduction:

In the sports world, there is a major emphasis put on the aspect of being a fan as organizations are constantly monitoring fan attendance and spending. Researchers such as Aiken & Koch (2009) and Dietz-Uhler, Harrick, End and Jacquemotte (2000) have conducted research that shows that people are fans of different teams for many different reasons. The dictionary defines fan avidity as the enthusiasm or dedication that one shows when rooting for a team. In contrast, fan identification is described as the perception of another group as the extension of oneself. There is also the concept of fan behavior, or the way that one acts toward a particular team or while rooting for that team. There have been many research articles written on these three topics, all of which are unique in their own way.

In professional sports, minor league franchises, which are referred to as “farm clubs” align themselves with a major league affiliates, which are referred to as “parent clubs” and use the minor leagues as a breeding ground for home grown talent. With this affiliation though comes the opportunity for the minor league team to be very profitable. Anecdotal evidence from fans of Major League Baseball and the National Hockey League suggests that the dominate reason to go to a minor league sporting event is to get an early preview of those athletes who will someday be in professional sports, but yet others say that there is a special feeling of support they get when they back their hometown team.

Within this paper, I am looking to determine if there is a relationship between the level of a fan’s avidity of a major league affiliate and the proximity of their minor league affiliate. The research question that I am looking to explore is does how close a major league team plays to its minor league affiliates exhibit a relationship in regards to how often or how intensely minor league fans will follow their local team? Attendance and support by fans is one of the major driving economical forces behind a minor league team, and with the right affiliation to drive the
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fans, minor league sports could become major winners. This research could have great future implications on affiliation decisions, especially if a major league team feels that there is merit to being associated with a minor league team within close proximity of themselves. While there is very little research in support of this question, there has been plenty of research on fan avidity, fan motivation and fan identification, including many studies performed by Daniel Wann, Daniel Funk, and Galen Trail, who seem to be the leading researchers in this field. With the work that I do on this paper, I feel that this could be the first steps to determine the importance of affiliating a minor league team with a major league franchise that is located within close proximity.

Literature Review:

Fan Motivation

As described by Aiken and Koch (2009) there is an essential need to focus on and understand the need of the preference formation and the motives of being a fan. “Much the same way that a particular brand is an outward symbol of an individual’s internal attitude, sport team preference communicates information about oneself” (p. 82). When formulating a particular association with a sport team, an individual is expressing a form of emotional attachment, just as if they only wear particular manufacturer’s clothes, or will only buy a certain brand of food. While many times people cheer for the local team, there are a lot of decision and motivations that goes into to formulation of a “favorite team”. Wann (1995) focused on the development of a Sport Fan Motivation Scale (SFMS) to assess the potential motives of fans and to analyze how the different motives interact. Trail and James (2001) take it one step further, “Distinguishing between individuals who merely enjoy watching an event and those who think of sport as an important part of their life requires understanding the psychological motivations that influence
sport consumption” (p. 109). These are all ideas of how to categorize what causes a person to become a fan.

Other researchers such as Funk, Filo, Beaton and Pritchard (2009), Koo and Hardin (2008), Laverie and Arnett (2000), and Trail and James (2001) have studied motivations as to why fans attend events. Koo and Hardin (2008) classified fans into different levels of emotional attachment, and studied their fan avidity based on that. The conclusion that they drew was that it was feasible to lump spectators into two clusters, fans and spectators, with the fans having higher emotional attachment than that of spectators. Funk et al. (2009) designed the SPEED (Socialization, Performance, Excitement, Esteem, and Diversion) theoretical framework to study the motivation on sport fan attendance. Funk et al. (2009) describes the framework as follows:

Socialization is the extent to which a person perceives attending a sport event is viewed as an opportunity to interact with family, friends, and other spectators…Performance is the extent to which an individual believes that sport events provide excellence, beauty, and creativity of athletic performance…Excitement is the extent to which a sport event is perceived as providing excitement and drama with an element of uncertainty as to the outcome of the game…Esteem is the extent to which an individual perceives a heightened sense of personal and collective esteem based on vicarious achievement when his/her favorite team wins…Diversion is the extent to which a person perceives attending a sport event provides an opportunity to escape or ‘get away’ from the hassles and normal routine of everyday life. (p. 127)

Within this research, they found that the more that a spectator/fan attends events, the more likely they are to associate with the SPEED facets of motivation (p. 134). These two examples of prior research have led us to a pretty well defined idea of fan avidity, which refers to the intensity of a fans following, and fan motivation, which refers to the reasons that a fan watches a particular team.
Further research has been done to help determine what sport fans associate with. Wann, Grieve, Zapalac and Pease (2008) performed research to determine why sports fan like particular types of sports. In their research, they compared individual and team sports, aggressive and nonaggressive, and stylistic and non-stylistic sports and then researched the effect that these different types of sports had on the eight fan motives. The eight fan motives that they focused on were escape, economic, eustress, self-esteem, group affiliation, entertainment, family and aesthetics. Wann et al. (2008) described the following:

The escape motive involves the use of sport fandom and spectating as a diversion from the rest of one’s life… The economic motive is found among individuals attracted to the potential economic gains to be accrued through sport wagering… Eustress involves a desire to gain excitement and stimulate through sport…group affiliation concerns the social nature of sport spectating…entertainment includes many individuals become involved in sport fandom simply because it is perceived as an enjoyable pastime…the family motive involves the consumption of sport because it provides an opportunity to spend time with family members…the aesthetic motive involves an individual’s desire to participate in sport as a fan because he or she enjoys the artistic beauty and grace of sport movements. (p.6-7)

Wann’s research has helped to show common motives that feed into an individual’s identification with a particular sport. With this research, subsequent researchers have a better grasp on what motivates fans to become fans of particular sports, and with the research done here we could possibly associate this with affiliation as well. Research has also been done to determine the different motivational factors of the different sexes. Dietz-Uhler et al. (2000) looked into the similarities and differences of sport fanship and sport fan behavior between male and female college students. In this research they find that females are fans of sports for more “social” reason, while males are fans of sports because they play sports, like sports in general, and enjoy acquiring information about sports.
Fan Identification

According to Fisher and Wakefield (1998) fan identification is quite possibly the most important trait that a professional sport team needs to look at when developing their fan base. “When sport teams portray strength, teamwork, success, or other desirable qualities, fans attracted to these attributes often attach themselves psychologically and identify with those teams (p. 25).” With these strong identifications, teams have the base that they need to sustain their viability and possibly increase their profits. Pritchard, Stinson and Patton (2010) showed that “both affiliation and affinity processes demonstrated a significant influence on the formation of ID” (p. 74). In his research, Wann (2006) provides evidence in his results that there is a strong support for each of his three predictions comprising the Team Identification – Psychological Health Model. These predictions include “1) high levels of identification with a local sports team will lead to positive psychological health, 2) high levels of identification with a distant sport team will not be related to psychological health, and 3) high levels of mere sport fandom will not be related to psychological health (p. 88)”. The Psychological Health Model is closely related to the way that Wann and Grieve (2005) link fan identification and social well being in their study. “By using coping strategies such as in-group favoritism, sports fans can better cope with threats to this valued social identity” (p. 541).

Quite possibly the most noticeable form of fan identification is the concept that social psychologists have labeled BIRGing (bask in reflected glory) and CORFing (cut off reflected failure). Kwon, Trail and Lee (2008) researched these two concepts, and stated “It is critical for sports teams to develop a high level of fan identification in their spectators. High identification makes it less likely that people will CORF and more likely that people will BIRG” (p.209). As stated in the article by Kwon et al.(2008), the importance of BIRGing and CORFing stretches far
beyond the psychologically impact of the fan, to the economic impact of the team, as people are more prone to spend money on a successful team rather than an unsuccessful team, and vice versa.

*Attendance and Behavior*

Attaining a better understanding of motivation and identification allows for a better understanding of attendance and behavior. Laverie and Arnett (2000) use the Social Identity Theory as their framework for explaining involvement, attachment and satisfaction at sporting events and develop a model that examines variables including identity salience, involvement, attachment, and satisfaction, and demonstrate that these are all useful for explaining fan behavior. Other researchers, such as Greenwell, Lee and Naeger (2007) used the Critical Incidents Technique to gather information about fan attendance and experience.

Findings identify which aspects of the spectator experience are most relevant to spectators at minor league sporting events, distinguish aspects that satisfy and dissatisfy customers, and suggest critical aspects are not the same for customers of different sports or for different demographical groups (p. 190).

To go one step further, Gitter and Rhoads (2010) state:

In fact, minor league baseball teams are often noted most for the creativity of their promotions department in attracting fans to the game. However, evidence is beginning to emerge… to suggest that minor league baseball fans may be responsive to more than just special promotions (p. 615).

Gitter and Rhoads go on to suggest that “…fans seem to treat MLB and minor league baseball as substitutes and geographic proximity to an MLB team can additionally affect attendance (p. 615)”. These studies highlight why fans attend games, and even show in one case that minor league baseball can be used as a substitute to MLB for those with geographical hurdles, but again they fail to examine the relationships that a close proximity affiliation would have with the idea of substituting minor league baseball for major league baseball. With this study I was not looking
to see if minor league sports serves as a substitute of close proximity major league sports, but rather to see if they affiliated themselves together, whether they could both work as a complement to each other.

**Franchise Relocation**

Franchise relocation is unfortunately a reality that some fans eventually have to face. Foster and Hyatt (2007) performed a study on 23 Hartford Whaler fans after the team relocated to Raleigh, North Carolina and created the Expanded Model of Organizational Identification (EMOI), which breaks down five different ways that a fan can continue to identify with a team after it relocates. Elsbach (1999) created the original EMOI scale and states “Individuals do not just positively identify with an organization. Identification is an active process that might include positive, negative, or neutral connections with an organization (p. 179)”. Through their research, Foster & Hyatt found that most of the fans reacted in different ways with their team leaving, showing that there is no real common theme.

**Literature Review Summary**

Although there has been a lot of research done on the topic of fan avidity and fan behavior, and that of sport team affiliation, there has been no research that I have found merging the two concepts. It was my goal that by performing this research, I could shed a little light on the existence of a correlation between a minor league team and a major league team being in close proximity of each other, and how that affects the fans. I was interested in finding out if there was any kind of economical or even intangible benefits to either the minor or major league fans with this decision of affiliating with a team within close proximity. I was also interested to find out if the eight motivational factors that Daniel Wann speaks of in his research were
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basically all encompassing with regards to fan motivations, or if there might be other reasons why fans are motivated to attend professional sporting events.

Methods:

When I started this research, my initial intention was to distribute my Qualtrics survey to a sample of season-ticket holders of three minor league franchises, the Rochester Americans (American Hockey League), the Rochester Red Wings (International League Baseball), and the Portland Pirates (American Hockey League) via a link in an invitational e-mail that I sent to the fans. I decided to survey those fans who were season-ticket holders because I felt that they had a more rooted interest in the teams then the occasional fans. I included a question at the beginning of the survey asking if the person taking the survey was a current full season-ticket holder or multi-pack ticket holder of one of the three teams, and then I was able to group the individuals based on how they answered this questions to break down the results into different groups. Unfortunately when the time came to distribute this survey, I came across a couple of the organizations who decided that they were unwilling to help with the distribution of my survey. At this point, I decided to use social media to gather even more results by providing a link to my survey on the different teams Twitter feeds, but unfortunately this did not generate the amount of surveys that would be sufficient to draw any conclusions. Fortunately, the distribution of my survey to the season ticket holders and the multi-pack ticket holders of the Rochester Red Wings was able to generate 287 valid survey responses, and that is the information that I used.

I chose the original three teams to conduct my research because I felt that it gave me an insight into the motivations between the different sports, and I could also use the disparity in proximity to help show the correlation of this proximity. I was hoping to regain this opportunity by distributing my survey link on these same teams Twitter feeds, but as I stated earlier this was
ineffective. I used the Qualtrics software to survey fans of the local minor league teams throughout the season and asked for their feelings on a myriad of topics such as identification to major league affiliate, reasons for becoming a fan of that team, and how often they spend money on the team.

My survey consisted of a cross-sectional sample of fans, as I understood that I was not going to be able to get every single fan of any team that I am looking to research. Since I was limited in the time that I had to complete this survey, I decided to use convenience sampling, and used the group of fans that was the most convenient for me to get at.

For my research, I used an interpretivist perspective for my research tradition. I was looking more for an understanding of why fans have the feelings that they do towards their local teams rather than to quantify that feeling. My survey consisted mainly of likert-scale questions with which I was left to statistically analyze the information that was gathered. Since it is almost impossible to predict causal relationships, approaching this research from the interpretivist aspect was the best choice for my research. While using this approach, I understand that the results that I received will not be able to be generalized to other settings, but are only specific to this research topic, and any adjustment to my research questions would warrant a brand new survey and would result in completely different results.

When it comes to fan motivation and fan identification, there has been a lot of prior research done studying the actual reason why people are motivated and why they identify with certain teams (Hunt, Bristol and Bashaw, 1999; Kim and Trail, 2010; Koo and Hardin, 2008; Wann, 1995; Wann, 2006; Wann et al., 2008). They have all developed different scales on how to classify these fans and what factors are most important in doing so. Included in these scales are the Sport Fan Motivation Scale (Wann, 1995), the SPEED facets of motivation (Funk et al.,
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2009), and the Sport Interest Survey (Funk, Mahoney & Ridinger, 2002) With this research question, I am adding to the body of information that we already have concerning what motivates fans to attend events, by trying to correlate the motivations with avidity towards a particular major league affiliate.

In reviewing my literature, I found that Daniel Wann is one of the leading researchers in fan motivation. He has spent a considerable amount of time to create and validate the Sport Fan Motivation Scale (SFMS) (Wann, 1995) which assesses eight different motives of why sports fans attend sporting events including eustress, self-esteem benefits, escape from everyday life, entertainment, economic factors, aesthetics qualities, group affiliation, and family needs. I decided to use Wann’s theory on Sport Fan Motivation to identify to reasons why fans attended minor league sporting events, and see if there was any correlation to their avidity to their major league affiliate.

Within this study, I looked at the different levels of identification that were present in season ticket holders, multi-pack ticket holders, individual ticket holders, and just casual fans. A season ticket holder is someone who purchases tickets to every single home game, a multi-pack ticket holder is someone who has a package of multiple games during the season, an individual ticket holder is someone who purchases tickets on a game by game basis, and a casual fan is someone who may follow the sport, but does not necessarily attend the games.

I used the information that I had gathered through previous research to look for correlations between motivations for attending the games and fan avidity towards the major league affiliate. I included questions in my survey that would help me determine the avidity of the respondents such as “How many games in the season did you attend?” and “Given the chance to purchase tickets again, would you maintain your season ticket package, add to it, decrease it,
or get rid of it all together?”. I modeled my questions on fan motivation after the questions that
were asked in the development of the Sport Fan Motivation Scale (Wann, 1995), and used a
Likert-scale rating system to analyze these results.

**Results:**

Upon completion of data collection, I found that I was able to collect 287 valid,
completed surveys. Of these 287 surveys, 273 of them identified themselves as season ticket
holders or multi-pack ticket holders of the Rochester Red Wings. Breaking this down even
further, I received 179 surveys that identified themselves as multi-pack ticket holders and 94 of
whom identified themselves as season ticket holders. As shown in Figure 1, within these 273
surveys, I found that 83 of them (30.4%) had attended more than 21 games last season, an
additional 20 (7.3%) had attended 16-20 games, and another 34 (12.5%) had attended 11-15
games. That means that a total of 137 of the 273 respondents (50.2%) had attended at least 11
games of the Rochester Red Wings in the last season, showing that they have a rooted interest in
this team and are willing to continue supporting the team. At the same time, Figure 2 shows how
many of the major league affiliate (Minnesota Twins) games they had attended and 222
responded with 0 games. According to the website Mapquest.com, for someone to drive from
Rochester, New York to Minneapolis Minnesota it would be 1009.29 miles and would take a
total of over 16 hours to drive there. 81% of the respondents had not made the over 1,000 mile
journey to see the Minnesota Twins play last season, of the 51 that had, 37 of them only attended
1-5 games in Minnesota.
Another major question that was asked of the respondents was how far they would be willing to travel (in time) to attend a major league affiliates baseball game. I broke this down into two categories, with the first being to attend at least one game, and the second being to attend at least 5 games. For the first question (Figure 3), I found that 57 of the respondents (20.9%) would be willing to travel up to 1 hour, 52 (19%) would be willing to travel up to two hours, 40 (14.7%) would be willing to travel up to three hours and 53 (19.4%) up to four hours. This shows that 74% of the people who participated in this survey, who have already identified themselves as season-ticket or multi-pack ticket holders would be willing to travel up to 4 hours to watch a major league affiliates baseball game. But, the more startling thing was that 71 people (26%) responded that they would be willing to travel more than 4 hours to watch one of these games. According to the data collected though, only 18.7% of the people actually made this trip. The numbers that I received for the minimum of five games were somewhat similar, but skewed more towards the shorter distance to attend more games (Figure 4).
The final aspect that I looked at was how the respondents replied when they were asked for their motivations to attend games of the major league affiliate (Twins). As shown in Figure 5, 71 of the respondents (26%) replied that they do not follow the affiliate. Of the other 200 valid responses, 15 of them responded with the “other” option. This means that 92.5% of the respondents agreed with Daniel Wann’s Sport Fan Motivation Scale that these eight factors are the only motivating factors to attend sporting events. Of the 15 that responded with other, 11 completed the following question to explain the other option and 5 of them (45.5%) responded with the reason they attend major league affiliate games was to watch the players progress to the major leagues.

Figure 5:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The primary reason that I do/would attend games of the major league affiliate is:</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is a way to relieve stress and stimulate my senses</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I get a sense of accomplishment when my team is successful</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>6.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It gives me an escape from my busy day-to-day life for a few hours</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>36.9</td>
<td>36.2</td>
<td>42.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It gives me an entertainment option</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>46.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I see the sport as a form of art</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>9.2</td>
<td>9.2</td>
<td>55.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It gives me a sense of belonging in the community and I like to see the local team do well</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>12.8</td>
<td>12.9</td>
<td>68.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It gives me a chance to spend quality time with my family</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>73.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>26.0</td>
<td>26.2</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I do not follow the major league affiliate</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>271</td>
<td>99.3</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.7</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>273</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Discussion:

As I started this research project, my main objective was to prove that the proximity of major league and minor league affiliates can affect the avidity of the fans who attend both of the teams games. I was interested in researching this because our local American Hockey League (AHL) team in Rochester has switched its affiliation three times in the past ten years, and I thought it would be nice to get some insight to the fan’s reaction of these decisions. I was wondering how much more avid of a fan the Rochester fans were towards the Rochester Americans when they were affiliated with the Buffalo Sabres then when they were affiliated with the Florida Panthers. I figured that the answer would be that the closer the minor league team was to the major league affiliate, then the more interest there would be in following both organizations, simply because it was convenient to do. Unfortunately, I did not get the cooperation from the Rochester Americans organization that I needed in order to complete my research.

I did however get cooperation from the Rochester Red Wings who belong in AAA baseball’s International League and play as the top minor-league affiliate to the Minnesota Twins of Major League Baseball (MLB). I was able to reach 273 season ticket holders or multi-pack ticket holders of the Rochester Red Wings, and was able to get information on how many games they attended of the Red Wings and how games they attended of the Twins. I was also able to get information on how far these fans would be willing to travel and what motivates the fans to attend the minor league games, and what would motivate them to attend games of their major league affiliate. With the information that I collected from the Rochester Red Wings respondents, I was able to draw some conclusions to the original research that I was looking to perform.
With my results, I found that season ticket holders and multi-pack ticket holders, in general, are willing to travel to watch their major league affiliate. The major question is, how far are they willing to travel. With this research, I found that 26 percent of the people who were surveyed were willing to drive more than 4 hours to see a game of their major league affiliate, which was the largest percentage of all of the choices offered. For fans to say that they would travel over four hours to attend one game shows that there is some affinity and avidity there. The question about how far the fans would be willing to travel to see multiple games (five or more), skews the numbers a little lower, but 42.1% still said that they would drive up to an hour and an additional 30.4% said that they would be willing to drive up to two hours. This is information that I figured that I would get if I had the opportunity to work with the Rochester Americans, and I fell that I could have proved the fact that the Americans were and are better off being affiliated with the Buffalo Sabres.

The second point that I was trying to investigate here was to find out if my respondents were in agreement with Wann’s research that there are eight main motivating factors that lead to sport’s fans making their purchasing decision. As I found with this survey, 92.5% of the respondents, when given the choice of the eight motivating factors or an other option, chose one of Wann’s factors. And as I expected, a majority of those who did chose the other option said that they follow the Twins to watch the players who developed in Rochester go on and succeed in the major leagues.

The conclusions that I have drawn from doing this research is that it can definitely be beneficial and have positive economic impact for a major league team to affiliate themselves with a minor league team within close proximity. Not only is it cheaper for the team and more feasible for player movement, but the fans are willing to drive and are motivated to attend both
the minor league games and the major league games. I have shown that the fans of the Rochester Red Wings at least are willing to travel up to four hours or more to attend games of their major league affiliate, but unfortunately as it stands right now, their major league affiliate is over 12 hours away. These are potential revenue streams that they are missing out on which could possibly be gained by being affiliated with a closer team. Of the 273 fans that completed the survey, 81.3% of them did not make that 12 hour trip to Minnesota this past season. And we see with the results from these same surveys that these respondents are true baseball fans, fans that attend multiple games a year. Even if the team was able to cut the number in half of fans who don’t make the trip to the major league city, they could greatly increase their fan base and bring in some additional revenue.

Unfortunately, as mentioned earlier, this survey had multiple limitations that were out of my control. The first and foremost being the lack of cooperation from the teams that I reached out to. Had I gotten the cooperation that I was looking for, I could have done more thorough research and looked at the motivation factors of baseball fans and hockey fans, and been able to compare and contrast these. I also would have gotten a broader pool of information that I could have used for my statistical analysis. Another limitation that I had was the time of year that I was working on this project. When I was at the point of collecting data, it was right at the beginning of the season for baseball teams, and right at the end of the season for hockey teams. These are obviously two very busy times for the actual organizations and made it difficult for them to be able to help me by sending out an additional e-mail to their season ticket holders.

I also chose to include some delimitations when performing my research. I decided to select only minor league teams that I wanted to distribute my survey to because I wanted to see how they would respond to questions about their major league affiliate. I also wanted to look into
a couple teams who were affiliated within close proximity and a couple teams who were not within close proximity, and try and get responses from both situations. I also decided once my data collection was done to analyze the responses that I got from the Rochester Red Wings, as the information that was collected from the other teams through their Twitter feeds was very sparse, and they would not have been any reasonable conclusions that I could have come up with using so little information.

While this project may have laid the groundwork for this topic, I believe that there is much more research that can be done on this topic. Obviously, there is the need to explore other teams and the motivations of their fans. With more time and better timing, I am sure that I would have been able to make contact with more teams, and been able to do comparative analysis between the teams and see if the information collected was consistent between teams and leagues. There is also some benefit to doing the reverse of this study and to look at the fans of the major league teams and see if the same results hold true for them. There is also some value in actually figuring out the threshold amount of time that fans would determine as being the maximum amount of time that they would be willing to travel to attend games of their major league affiliate. As we saw from this survey, fans overwhelming said that they would be willing to travel over 4 hours to attend a major league affiliate’s game. It would be interesting to see at what point the fans then decide that it would be too far to travel. There is also the possibility for someone to look at the success of franchises located within close proximity of each other, and see if besides the economical benefit that this affiliation could bring if these decisions could lead to more successful products on the field or the ice.

The recommendations that I would give after doing this research are pretty obvious. If there is a chance for a major league team to affiliate itself with a local minor league affiliate, it is
almost always going to be the right choice. The logistics alone of player movement and scouting make it cost effective to do this, but there is also the opportunity to draw larger crowds and to develop a larger pool of fans and to extend your geographical fan area. With larger fan bases, there is much more potential for revenue generating, and as we all know, revenues are what drives professional sports. Franchises must take this factor into account when making an affiliation decision, and while it may not be a popular choice in the fans eyes at the time to change affiliations, in the long run, the closer you are to your affiliate, the happier and the more motivated your fans will be to attend.
References:


FAN AVIDITY AS IT RELATES TO PROXIMITY OF AFFILIATES


Appendix A: Survey that was distributed

Fan Avidity Survey

Purpose and Description: The purpose of this study is to gain an understanding of the correlation that may exist between Minor and Major League affiliates based on the proximity of location to each other. You were selected to take this survey because you were identified as a season ticket holder or multi-ticket holder. The results of this study could influence future affiliation decisions. The complete survey should take approximately 10-15 minutes to complete. By completing this survey, we are looking to find motivation and identification characteristics that lead sports fans to cheer for certain minor league teams. We are interested in finding how proximity affects the decisions that are made when rooting for particular teams. While the risks involved in completing this survey are very minimal, they include the possibility of being seen taking this survey, and possible undue judgments being placed on you based on your season-ticket purchase habits. Responses to this survey will be kept completely confidential, names will not be recorded, and responses will not be used individually in the presentation of results. Participation in this survey is completely voluntary. You may decide at any point during the survey to terminate your participation, and there will be no negative consequences. By reading through this statement, and continuing on to the survey, you give me permission to use your responses in my analysis of this topic. Your participation is greatly appreciated and will be very insightful in this research. You may print this form if you wish to keep for your own records. If you have any further questions regarding this study, please contact the researcher listed below. If you experiences emotional or physical discomfort due to participation in this study, contact the Office of Academic Affairs at (585) 385-8034 or the Wellness Center at (585) 385-8280 for appropriate referrals. Project Title: Fan avidity as it relates to the proximity of Minor and Major League affiliates Researcher: Joseph Tyson E-Mail: jmt02521@sjfc.edu Phone: (585)402-9662 Advisor: Dr. Katharine Burakowski E-Mail: kburakowski@sjfc.edu Do you agree with the terms listed above?

☑ Yes
☑ No

Your Age:

☑ 13-17
☑ 18-34
☑ 35-49
☑ 50-64
☑ 65+
Please select gender

- Male
- Female

Which (if any) minor league team do you attend more than 5 games in a season?

- Rochester Americans
- Lake Erie Monster
- Portland Pirates
- Rochester Red Wings
- Pawtucket Red Sox
- Iowa Cubs
- None of the Above

What types of tickets do you purchase for minor league sports?

- Season Ticket Package
- Multi-Pack Ticket Package
- None of the above

How many games did you attend of this minor league team in the most recently completed season?

- 0
- 1-5
- 6-10
- 11-15
- 16-20
- 21+
How many games of the major league affiliate of this team did you attend during the most recently completed season?

☐ 0
☐ 1-5
☐ 6-10
☐ 11-15
☐ 16-20
☐ 21+

How far would you be willing to travel (in time) in one direction to see at least one game of your major league affiliate during the upcoming season?

☐ 0-1 Hour
☐ Up to 1-2 Hours
☐ Up to 2-3 Hours
☐ Up to 3-4 Hours
☐ More than 4 Hours

How far would you be willing to travel (in time) in one direction to see at least five games of your major league affiliate during the upcoming season?

☐ Up to 1 Hour
☐ Up to 2 Hours
☐ Up to 3 Hours
☐ Up to 4 Hours
☐ More than 4 Hours

Have you ever purchased the MLB Extra Innings package or the NHL Center Ice package through your cable or satellite provider to view the games of your major league affiliate?

☐ Yes
☐ No

Did you purchase the MLB Extra Innings package or the NHL Center Ice package through your cable or satellite provider to view the games of your major league affiliate in the most recent completed season?

☐ Yes
☐ No

One of the main reasons I purchase season tickets is:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither Agree nor Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Doing so gives me the</td>
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<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunity to temporarily escape life's problems</td>
<td>So I can bet on the outcome of the game</td>
<td>I get pumped up when I attend the games</td>
<td>For the artistic value of the game</td>
<td>Because of the beauty and grace of the game</td>
<td>So I can bet on the outcome of the game</td>
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One of the main reasons I purchase season tickets is:
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<th>FAN AVIDITY AS IT RELATES TO PROXIMITY OF AFFILIATES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Because it is like daydreaming so I can get away from life's hassles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>So I can be around other people while at the games</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I enjoy attending the games because of the entertainment value it provides</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I enjoy attending games more when I am with a large group of people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I enjoy attending games because it makes me feel better about myself</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I enjoy attending games simply because it is a good time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attending games is a form of recreation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My favorite team's successes are my successes and their losses are my losses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>So I can attend games and be with my significant other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>So I can attend games with my family</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The primary reason that I do/would attend games of the major league affiliate is:

- It is a way to relieve stress and stimulate my senses
- I get a sense of accomplishment when my team is successful
- It gives me an escape from my busy day-to-day life for a few hours
- It gives me an entertainment option
- There is an opportunity to bet on the sport and make money
- I see the sport as a form of art
- It gives me a sense of belonging in the community and I like to see the local team do well
- It gives me a chance to spend quality time with my family
- Other
- I do not follow the major league affiliate

Please explain your "other" option:

The secondary reason that I do/would attend games of the major league affiliate is:

- It is a way to relieve stress and stimulate my senses
- I get a sense of accomplishment when my team is successful
- It gives me an escape from my busy day-to-day life for a few hours
- It gives me an entertainment option
- There is an opportunity to bet on the sport and make money
- I see the sport as a form of art
- It gives me a sense of belonging in the community and I like to see the local team do well
- It gives me a chance to spend quality time with my family
- Other
- I do not follow the major league affiliate

Please explain your "other" option: