

Using the Psychological Commitment to Team (PCT) Scale to Segment Sport Consumers Based on Loyalty

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to develop a psychological commitment to team (PCT) scale to be used in segmenting sport consumers based on loyalty. Previous research on the loyalty construct suggested the importance of using both behavioral and attitudinal measures when attempting to assess the loyalty of consumers (Backman & Crompton, 1991a; Day, 1969). Although measures of behavioral loyalty are readily available in team sports (e.g., attendance, television viewing), no appropriate measure of attitudinal loyalty was available prior to the current study. A number of statistical procedures and four separate data collections were used to assess the strength of the PCT scale. The PCT scale provides sport marketers with a reliable and valid measurement tool for differentiating consumers into discrete segments based on the strength of their overall loy-

alty. Alternative strategies for strengthening fan allegiance for each of the different loyalty segments are provided.

"Marriages come and go. So do jobs, hometowns, friendships. But a guy's attachment to a sports team? There's a bond that holds the heart."

The preceding statement on fans' obsession with sports teams appeared recently as the lead sentence in a feature article in *USA Today*, the United States' largest daily newspaper (Eisler, 1997). The quote captures the fanaticism or intense partisanship that Guttman

taled \$8.8 billion, an increase of 126% over the \$3.9 billion spent in 1990 (National Sporting Goods Association, 1996). Although fans' time and monetary investments in sports seem to have grown exponentially in recent years, it is important to recognize that not all those who watch or attend sporting events are fans committed to the teams they view. Zillman and Paulus (1993) characterized *spectators* as individuals who watch a game but then forget about the experience once it is over, whereas Sloan (1989) said a *fan* is one who watches as an enthusiastic devotee.

The Concept of Fan Loyalty

Although the notion of loyalty to team extends back to antiquity (Lee,

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(1986) uses to define fans as "emotionally committed consumers of sporting events" (p. 6). The attention given to sport by hard-core fans and other spectators is well documented. Americans buy almost 200 million tickets to attend professional and collegiate sporting events each year (U.S. Bureau of Census, 1993), spending about \$5 billion annually for admission (Bureau of Economic Analysis, 1996). In 1996, the retail sales of products bearing the trademark or logo of teams in the four major professional sports leagues in the United States and Canada to-

1983), very little is known about the social-psychological factors that produce strong emotional attachment to sports teams or organizations. Previous research outside the sport-fan literature has shown that individuals who are emotionally involved devotees to a particular product or service are far more likely to repurchase that product or service and to evaluate the brand or experience more positively (e.g., Havitz & Howard, 1995). Smith, Patterson, Williams, and Hogg (1981) found the same relationship extended to sport fans. Although not

addressing the concept of loyalty directly, their study of avid sport fans found that "deeply committed fans" displayed a much greater propensity to watch and attend sporting events featuring their favorite teams. More recently, Wakefield and Sloan (1995) concluded that "team loyalty," defined as enduring allegiance to a particular team, was the most important factor in determining spectators' desire to attend live sporting events.

Although there are many behaviors that may be an expression of fan loyalty (e.g., television viewing, radio listening, team merchandise purchases), prior research has relied heavily on attendance data to measure fan loyalty to sports teams. Total attendance (e.g., Baade & Tiehan, 1990), increases in ticket sales (e.g., Howard & Crompton, 1995), and the extent of repeat attendance (e.g., Mullin, Hardy, & Sutton, 1993) have been used as behavioral indicators of consumers' loyalty to a sports team or organization. Mullin and his associates demonstrated the potency of repeat patronage, confirming the application of the "80-20 principle" (Evans & Berman, 1994) to sports teams. In their analysis of season attendance at Pittsburgh Pirates games, Mullin et al. found that 80% of the increase in ticket sales from one season to another was produced by 20% of the existing attendees' buying more tickets. Although repeat attendance may be the most evident manifestation of a person's attachment to a team, this strictly behavioral indicator ignores the underlying psychological processes explaining why some people attend more games over time.

In fact, research has shown attendance alone is a poor measure of

loyalty. Murrell and Dietz (1992) found individuals' support for a particular team may be strong regardless of actual attendance. Backman and Crompton (1991a) identified several factors explaining why strictly behavioral or "observable" measures like attendance are inadequate indicators of loyalty. They contend that "behavioral measures do not discriminate between purchasing based on habit or lack of convenient opportunities" (p. 206). For example, an NFL fan in Nashville, Tennessee, may attend Tennessee Titans games because there are no other professional football options in the area, and he or she may not necessarily be a committed fan of the Titans. Therefore, "true" loyalty exists only when the consumer regularly purchases the product or service and also displays a strong, positive attitude toward a specific brand (Day, 1969).

Loyalty as a Two-Dimensional Construct

The multidimensional nature of loyalty has long been of interest to brand loyalty researchers. In order to provide a focus for this research, Olson and Jacoby (1971) developed a six-point definition of brand loyalty, which is now widely cited. Their definition, later restated slightly by Jacoby and Kyner (1973), states that brand loyalty is "(1) a biased (i.e., nonrandom), (2) behavioral response (i.e., purchase) (3) expressed over time (4) by some decision making unit (5) with respect to one or more alternative brands (6) as a function of psychological (decision making, evaluate) processes" (p. 2). Although Jacoby and Kyner (1973) focused on testing all six of the elements, most of the

loyalty research has focused primarily on two main dimensions, behavioral and attitudinal (e.g., Backman & Crompton, 1991a, 1991b; Jacoby & Chestnut, 1978). Although Day (1969) was the first to propose a two-dimensional conceptualization of loyalty integrating both behavioral and attitudinal components, later research provided empirical evidence that consumer loyalty was in fact composed of these two separate but related elements (e.g., Backman & Crompton, 1991a, 1991b; Olson & Jacoby, 1971).

For example, Backman and Crompton (1991a) used attitudinal and behavioral scores to segment respondents in their study of golf and tennis participants. A 13-item semantic differential scale was used to measure "participants' general feelings toward the activities" (p. 208). The researchers referred to this dimension as attitudinal loyalty. The proportion of participation devoted to golf or tennis during the previous 12-month period was used as the measure of behavior. They then used a two-dimensional matrix to distinguish four discrete levels of loyalty (Figure 1). The resulting four-quadrant matrix served to classify participants into specific groups by weak or strong attitudes and high or low behavioral consistency.

Following Day's (1969) earlier characterization, those demonstrating strong psychological attachment (i.e., high attitudinal loyalty) as well as active participation (i.e., high behavioral loyalty) were placed in the upper left quadrant, labeled "High (True) Loyalty." Consumers placed in the upper right quadrant, labeled "Spurious Loyalty," were those who exhibited high behavioral loyalty, but low attitudinal loyalty. Because of the low level of attitudinal loyalty, dropout rates among these spurious loyal consumers tends to be high. In contrast, respondents who were strongly attached to their activity (i.e., high attitudinal loyalty), but exhibited a low frequency of participation (i.e., low behavioral loyalty) were placed in the lower

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Psychological Commitment

		Strong	Weak
Behavioral Consistency (Attendance Frequency)	High	High (True) Loyalty	Spurious Loyalty
	Low	Latent Loyalty	Low (Non) Loyalty

Figure 1. Loyalty Model

left quadrant, labeled "Latent Loyalty." Latently loyal consumers often express a strong desire to participate, but may lack the means (e.g., time, money, equipment) to engage in the activity on a regular, ongoing basis. Finally, those in the lower right quadrant, or "Low Loyalty" segment, were respondents who exhibited low levels of both behavioral and attitudinal loyalty.

Backman and Crompton (1991b) advanced the understanding of loyalty in a sport and leisure context in two important ways. First, their two-dimensional approach reaffirmed and extended Day's (1969) claim that any measure of a person's commitment to a brand or, in the case of Backman and Crompton's work, a sport "activity" must take into account the individual's disposition toward that activity (i.e., attitude) as well as the frequency of his or her participation (i.e., behavior). Second, their identification of four discrete levels of loyalty provided important insights into the complexity of the construct. They demonstrated that the traditional all-or-none portrayal of loyalty as a simple dichotomy between loyal and nonloyal consumers was far too narrow. For ex-

ample, the ability to measure consumers' strength of attachment to a particular sport product or service in order to separate the highly loyal from the spuriously loyal is crucial to distinguishing genuine loyalty from habitual purchase behavior.

Commitment as Attitudinal Loyalty

Although Backman and Crompton (1991a) demonstrated the importance of linking attitudes with behaviors in measuring loyalty, the approach they used in operationalizing the attitude component, which they termed "psychological attachment," was very

for measuring the attitude bias component of loyalty. These researchers developed a scale for measuring loyalty toward specific travel-service providers, such as airlines and hotels. They used the construct of commitment as the foundation for explaining the psychological processes underlying and leading to consumer loyalty. A number of researchers have argued that psychological commitment best describes the attitude component of loyalty. Day (1969) contended true loyalty exists only when there is "commitment to a brand or product." Jacoby and Chestnut (1978) further elaborated the construct's

connection to loyalty, stating that "as a result of this evaluative process, the individual develops a degree of commitment to the brand in question; he is 'loyal.' The concept of commitment provides an essential basis for distinguishing between brand loyalty and other forms of repeat purchasing behavior (p. 84).

According to Crosby and Taylor (1984), people who are high in psychological commitment "resist changing their preference in response to conflicting information or experience" (p. 414). Drawing heavily from the work of Crosby and Taylor, Pritchard et al. (1999) operationalized psychological com-

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tency between an individual's beliefs and feelings toward an object produces a stable behavioral intention toward that object (Rosenberg, 1965). Support for Crosby and Taylor's interpretation of commitment based on resistance to change is found in Kiesler's (1971) earlier work on commitment. Kiesler and associates established in several experiments that the "effect of commitment is to make an act less changeable" (Kiesler & Mathog, 1971; Kiesler & Sakamura, 1966, p. 349). Moreover, recent research suggests "that loyal consumers—those who have a strong commitment to a service or brand—show strong resistance to counter persuasion attempts" (Schiffman & Kanuk, 1997, p. 223).

Proceeding, then, on the belief that psychological commitment was a strong barometer of preference stability, Pritchard et al. (1999) developed a scale that measured the attitude component of loyalty on the basis of how committed people were toward a specific travel service. Following a rigorous scale construction procedure (Churchill, 1979; Dawis, 1987), the researchers developed a 13-item scale that demonstrated strong psychometric qualities. Using samples across three travel-service subsets (destination golf resorts, airlines, hotels), Pritchard and his associates produced an instrument displaying consistently high reliability as well as discriminant and convergent validity.

Creating a Commitment to Team Scale

The purpose of this study is to extend Pritchard et al.'s (1999) work to establish a scale for assessing the strength of an individual's commitment to sport teams. It is expected that fans who demonstrate loyalty toward a sports team possess an attitude bias that is both resistant to change and persistent over time. In addition, it is expected that strong and weak attitudes, or levels of personal commitment, toward a team would be effective guides to behav-

ior (Fazio, 1995; Petty, Haugtvedt, & Smith, 1995). Those individuals scoring high on the personal commitment scale would accurately represent those fans truly devoted to a particular team. Conversely, those scoring low would be classified, at best, as spuriously loyal, with a substantial number having little or no emotional attachment to the team. Determining the strength of an individual's attitude or commitment, therefore, would allow for meaningful differentiation between "fair-weather" and "deeply committed" fans (Smith et al., 1981).

Scale Development

The Psychological Commitment to Team (PCT) scale (see Table 1) was developed using multiple steps and four phases of data collection. Instrument development relied heavily on the work of Pritchard et al. (1999) and the suggestions of Churchill (1979) on scale development (e.g., generating items, purifying the measure, assessing reliability and validity). Specifically, the following steps were taken in the current study: (a) items were generated; (b) items were pretested; (c) scale was tested with three separate samples in three different team sport settings (i.e., professional football, college football, professional basketball) to establish internal consistency and reliability; and (d) scale was tested with two samples (one from the University of Oklahoma and one from The Ohio State University) to determine if it had construct and predictive validity.

Generating Items

Based on the findings of Crosby and Taylor (1983) and the results of recent attitude strength studies (Haugtvedt & Petty, 1992; Haugtvedt & Wegener, 1994), resistance to change was believed to be a critical factor underlying commitment. Therefore, items were generated that emphasized the importance of resistance to change. In particular, the authors attempted to measure whether fans would remain committed to the team when

something occurred that might change their commitment (i.e., poor team performance, loss of good players, change in the coach).

A couple of items from the original Pritchard et al. (1999) PCI scale were determined to be easily adaptable to a sports context and were included in the item pool. As suggested by Churchill (1979), additional items based on a review of the literature on sport fans were then generated by the authors. Churchill's suggestion that items be worded both positively and negatively was also followed. The Psychological Commitment to Team (PCT) scale used a 7-point Likert scale ranging from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*. Positively worded items were scored from 1 for strongly disagree to 7 for strongly agree, whereas negatively worded items were scored from 7 for strongly disagree to 1 for strongly agree. Therefore, a higher score always represented greater psychological commitment to the team. The 15 total items generated were then sent to a panel of judges to determine the appropriateness of each item with respect to clarity and face validity. The panel, which included experts in research related to sport consumer behavior, provided unanimous support for the inclusion of all 15 items.

Pretesting Items

A convenience sample ($N=100$) was then used to examine the scale for internal consistency. Using an initial sample to purify the measure is also a suggestion made by Churchill (1979). All surveys collected were usable. The respondents were incoming freshmen at The Ohio State University who were recruited from the 1994 summer orientation program. Each was asked to answer the questions with regard to his or her favorite National Football League (NFL) team. Professional football was selected because of its popularity in the United States and because of the general awareness of NFL teams. A *USA Today/Gallup Poll* found that professional football

Table 1. Item-to-Total Correlations and Alpha Coefficients If That Item Were Deleted for the PCT Scale

Item	Item-to-Total Correlations			Alpha If Deleted		
	Sample 2 (N=151)	Sample 3 (N=157)	Sample 4 (N=76)	Sample 2	Sample 3	Sample 4
1. I might rethink my allegiance to my favorite team if this team consistently performs poorly.	.595	.481	.739	.87	.88	.94
2. I would watch a game featuring my favorite National Football League (NFL) team regardless of which team they are playing.	.255	.353	.679	.88	.88	.94
3. I would rethink my allegiance to my favorite team if management traded away its best players.	.371	.473	.773	.88	.88	.94
4. Being a fan of my favorite NFL team is important to me.	.635	.550	.760	.87	.87	.94
5. Nothing could change my allegiance to my favorite NFL team.	.673	.684	.723	.87	.87	.94
6. I am a committed fan of my favorite NFL team.	.733	.713	.808	.86	.86	.94
7. It would not affect my loyalty to my favorite NFL team if management hired a head coach that I disliked very much.	.513	.497	.653	.88	.88	.94
8. I could easily be persuaded to change my favorite NFL team preference.	.690	.564	.791	.87	.87	.94
9. I have been a fan of my favorite team since I began watching professional football.	.360	.516	.569	.88	.88	.94
10. I could never switch my loyalty from my favorite NFL team even if my close friends were fans of another team.	.690	.728	.814	.87	.86	.94
11. It would be unlikely for me to change my allegiance from my current favorite NFL team to another.	.765	.754	.781	.87	.86	.94
12. It would be difficult to change my beliefs about my favorite NFL team.	.813	.760	.714	.86	.86	.94
13. You can tell a lot about a person by their willingness to stick with a team that is not performing well.	.354	.300	.465	.88	.88	.94
14. My commitment to my favorite NFL team would decrease if they were performing poorly and there appeared little chance their performance would change.	.426	.346	.739	.88	.88	.94

ranked first in popularity among the four major professional sports in the United States (as cited in Mihoces, 1995). Examination of the item-to-total correlations found one item ("It is normal for a person to change their allegiance to a local team after relocating") had a low negative correlation with the total ($r=.08$). Because the item had such a low correlation and did not ask about the fan's per-

sonal relationship with his or her favorite team, the item was eliminated from the scale, resulting in the 14-item PCT scale that was further tested with the three remaining samples.

Establishing Internal Consistency and Reliability

A second convenience sample ($N=151$) was recruited from undergraduate classes at the University of

Oklahoma. The original sample size was 153, but 2 respondents were eliminated because they indicated they had no favorite team. The final sample ($N=151$) included 89 men (58.9%) and 62 women (41.1%) with a mean age of 23.45 (approximately 23 years 6 months old). Respondents were again asked to answer the questions with regard to their favorite NFL team. As per

Churchill's (1979) recommendation, Cronbach's (1951) coefficient alpha was used initially to examine the measure's internal consistency to help establish reliability. Cronbach's coefficient alpha estimate for the 14-item PCT scale was .88. This estimate was greater than the .70 minimum that has been suggested by Nunnally and Bernstein (1994). Examination of the item-to-total correlations (see Table 1) found that only item number 2 had an item-to-total correlation of less than .30 ($r = .25$). This item was not eliminated from the scale for several reasons: (a) eliminating this item would not have changed the coefficient alpha estimate; (b) the item-to-total correlation was very close to the .30 mark being used in this study; (c) the item had an item-to-total correlation well above .30 during the pretesting of the scale ($r = .54$); and (d) the item was believed to be important in measuring psychological commitment to team (PCT) because of the results of prior research and the studies related to the domain of this

item-to-total correlation for item 2 was .353. Therefore, the authors believe the decision to keep this item was appropriate.

The fourth convenience sample ($N=76$) was collected from students at The Ohio State University. Self-identified Ohio State fans were asked to fill out the scale with regard to the OSU football team. The only item that had to be adjusted

group. One common method for determining the validity of a scale is to distribute the scale to a group that should score high on the scale (Churchill, 1979). If the group does in fact indicate a high score, this would be further evidence to support the scale's construct validity. When examining the fourth convenience sample, fans who indicated they had a very strong interest in Ohio State

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somewhat was item number 3. The item, which was worded "I would rethink my allegiance to my favorite team if management traded away its best players" when examining professional sport teams, was changed to "I would rethink my allegiance to the Ohio State football team if their best players left the team (i.e., trans-

football ($N=43$; a score of 6 or 7 on a one-item measure with 1=Minimal Interest to 7=Strong Interest), the PCT score was very high ($M=88.09$, $S.D.=8.76$). This is much higher than the average score on the PCT scale with the professional football sample ($M=70.12$) and the professional basketball sample ($M=62.60$). In addi-

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construct (Crosby & Taylor, 1983).

A third convenience sample ($N=157$) was recruited from a number of graduate and undergraduate classes at the University of Louisville. The sample included 113 men and 44 women with a mean age of 23.01 years. This time respondents were asked to answer the questions with respect to their favorite National Basketball Association team. Cronbach's coefficient alpha was used once again to examine the scale's internal consistency. Cronbach's alpha estimate for the 14-item scale was again .88, establishing the reliability of the scale items. The item-to-total correlations (see Table 1) were .30 or better for all items. In particular, the

fer, graduate, etc.)." All questionnaires were completed, and they were all usable. Cronbach's coefficient alpha was used once again to examine the scale's internal consistency to help further establish reliability. Cronbach's alpha estimate for the 14-item scale was .94, again exceeding the minimum threshold of .70 suggested by Nunnally and Bernstein (1994). The item-to-total correlations, shown in Table 1, were better than .45 for all items.

Establishing Construct and Predictive Validity

The authors used a number of methods to establish construct and predictive validity. First, the authors examined the PCT scale with a known

tion, a one-way ANOVA (with interest in OSU football as the independent variable and score on the PCT as the dependent variable) showed that fans who indicated a strong interest in OSU football (6 or 7) scored significantly higher on the PCT scale than did fans who had less interest in OSU football ($N=33$; less than 6 on a scale of 1 to 7), $F(1, 74) = 104.33$, $p < .001$. Therefore, the examination of the known group provided support for the construct validity of the PCT scale.

Second, another method for determining if an attitude scale is valid is to examine if scores derived from the scale can predict related behaviors. In fact, a recent meta-analysis by Kraus (1995) found that

attitudes have been very useful in predicting future behavior in a variety of settings. Because a strong relationship is expected between attitudinal loyalty and behavioral loyalty, a series of analyses were used to determine if the Psychological Commitment to Team (PCT) scale was significantly related to various measures of behavioral loyalty. Using the second convenience sample, the current study examined the relationship between score on the PCT scale and (a) the duration of one's commitment to a team, (b) the frequency with which, according to their own report, the respondents generally watched their

to Team scale again demonstrated good predictive validity when used to analyze Ohio State football fans in the fourth convenience sample. The relationship between score on the PCT scale and three behavioral measures of fan loyalty was examined. First, a regression analysis was used to determine whether the respondents' scores on the PCT scale could be used to predict the number of Ohio State football games attended during the last season. The results indicated that psychological commitment to the Ohio State football team did make a significant contribution to the prediction of the number of games attended,

$p < .001$. Analysis of the frequencies indicated those who scored higher on the PCT scale were more likely to make every effort to watch or listen to the team.

Overall, the PCT scale demonstrated strong predictive validity, and the analysis provided evidence of its construct validity. Therefore, the scale appears to be useful with both college and professional teams.

Conclusion and Implications

The Psychological Commitment to Team (PCT) scale provides researchers with a reliable and valid tool for measuring attitude loyalty,

Knowing what percentage of a team's existing fan base falls into high, spurious, latent, or low loyalty categories provides a starting point for developing customized programs that account for varying levels of attachment held by fans. The varying attitude-behavior combinations represented in each cell in Figure 1 suggest that different approaches to changing or maintaining current levels of loyalty are required for each segment.

favorite team on television, and (c) the percentage of games featuring their favorite team that the respondents actually watched during the NFL regular season.

The correlations between the Psychological Commitment to Team (PCT) scale and all three behavioral loyalty measures were examined to determine whether the scale demonstrated effective predictive validity. High correlations with these behavioral loyalty measures would indicate that the measure is appropriate for assessing attitudinal loyalty. First, there was a significant positive correlation between the PCT scale and the number of years as a fan of the favorite team, $r = .426$, $p < .001$. Second, there was a significant positive correlation between the PCT scale and how often the respondents generally watched their favorite team, $r = .584$, $p < .001$. Third, there was a significant positive correlation between the PCT scale and the percentage of the favorite-team games respondents actually watched during the NFL season, $r = .563$, $p < .001$.

The Psychological Commitment

($R^2 = .273$, $p < .001$). Second, a chi-square analysis examined whether scores on the PCT scale (a median split was used on PCT score) could predict whether students had purchased Ohio State football tickets during the prior season. The results of the chi-square analysis indicated there was a significant relationship between psychological commitment to the OSU football team and the purchase of season tickets, $\chi^2 (df=1) = 8.85$, $p < .003$. Analysis of the frequencies indicated that those who scored higher on the PCT scale were more likely to buy season tickets. Third, another chi-square analysis examined whether "score" on the PCT scale (a median split was again used on PCT score) could predict whether the student "makes every effort to watch or listen" to Ohio State football games he or she does not attend. The results of the chi-square analysis indicated there was a significant relationship between psychological commitment to the OSU football team and making an effort to watch or listen to the team, $\chi^2 (df=1) = 14.77$,

or the strength of fans' commitment to a particular sports team. Previous research has shown that capturing the dispositional nature of attachment is crucial to establishing true loyalty (Day, 1969; Dick & Basu, 1994). Research by Howard and Thompson (1984) has shown that customers' level of loyalty to a particular brand or service mediates their responsiveness to accompany-

With spuriously loyal fans, the strategy would be to increase the psychological commitment to the team they are already supporting behaviorally. Again, increased attitudinal loyalty among this segment is extremely important because these are generally the fans who will stop supporting the team when something goes wrong (e.g., team performance decreases; a popular player is traded).

ing information and their intentions to repurchase that good or service. The stronger the attitude typically the greater the likelihood of congruent behavior. Not surprisingly, then, the more positively disposed individuals are toward a particular object, the more likely they are to attend to advertising messages relevant to that object, share positive affirmations (e.g., word of mouth) about the object, and ultimately, purchase the product.

The initial tests conducted in this study demonstrated the score derived from the PCT scale by itself can be very useful in predicting attendance at sporting events and television viewing behavior. The scale's capabilities for predicting loyal behavior in the future, how-

ever, are more fully realized when the PCT score is combined with a measure of past behavior. As Backman and Crompton (1991a, b) and Pritchard et al. (1999) demonstrated, combining attitude loyalty

with behavior (e.g., frequency of repeat purchase) provides a basis for differentiating customers into meaningful loyalty segments. The easy-to-administer PCT scale provides sport marketers with a tool for assessing the extent to which their existing fan base falls into deeply committed or fair-weather fan categories. Knowing what percentage of a team's existing fan base falls into high, spurious, latent, or low loyalty categories provides the basis for developing a marketing program that optimizes the potential for strengthening fans' attachment to the team.

Knowing what percentage of a team's existing fan base falls into high, spurious, latent, or low loyalty categories provides a starting point for developing customized pro-

grams that account for varying levels of attachment held by fans. The varying attitude-behavior combinations represented in each cell in Figure 1 suggest that different approaches to changing or maintain-

ing current levels of loyalty are required for each segment (see Table 2). The following sections discuss specific marketing strategies and tactics for optimizing the strength of fans' attachment to a team for each of the four loyalty segments.

High-Loyalty Segment Description

In the upper left quadrant of Figure 1 are the truly loyal fans (i.e., high loyalty). Fans in this segment score high on the PCT scale (i.e., high attitudinal loyalty) and exhibit strong behavioral loyalty (e.g., attending games, watching games on television). For these fans, the relationship with the team has probably become a significant part of their lives, and they are unlikely to change their behavior or level of commitment. However, the loyalty level of this group may decrease slowly over time if this segment is ignored by marketers or may decrease more quickly if something very drastic happens.

Strategy

A reinforcement strategy is the best means for marketing to the highly loyal fans (Pritchard et al., 1999; Sheth, 1987). This strategy should focus on reinforcing existing cogni-

Low-loyalty consumers are the most challenging segment. These infrequent or nonattending patrons hold, at best, an ambivalent attitude toward the sports team. Converting this segment's behavior and predisposition is likely to be very expensive, and even then, the probability of success is low.

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Table 2. Suggestions for Marketing to the Four Loyalty Segments

Segment	Suggestions
High Loyalty	Marketers should use a reinforcement strategy that includes reinforcing behavioral loyalty through economic incentives and attitudinal loyalty through personalized encouragement. This strategy is designed to increase the yield from this segment and to avoid any chances of losing the segment.
Spurious Loyalty	Marketers should focus on increasing the fans' psychological commitment through the use of a rationalization strategy. This can be done by promoting the positive attributes of the product or service, getting the fans to articulate why they support the team, and/or coupling attendance with support of a relevant social cause.
Latent Loyalty	Marketers should focus on increasing the positive behaviors of the latently loyal fan by using a market inducement strategy. This can be done by removing significant barriers to behavior and by offering economic incentives to engage in certain behaviors.
Low Loyalty	Although some might suggest marketers use a confrontation strategy, which requires a direct attack on the fan's existing attitudes, others believe this may only lead to strengthening the fan's low level of commitment. Many strategists instead recommend focusing on using either a rationalization strategy to increase commitment or an inducement strategy to increase behavior as a first step to high loyalty.

tions, allaying the potential for dissonance to occur (Pritchard et al., 1999; Sheth, 1987). Because they are so valuable to the team, marketers want to avoid a situation in which highly loyal fans would decrease their behavior or reconsider their allegiance to their favorite team. Moreover, marketers want to focus on increasing the behavior of these loyal fans (e.g., number of games attended, amount of merchandise purchased) and increasing the strength of their commitment. Therefore, the reinforcement strategy involves a two-pronged approach. First, behavioral loyalty can be reinforced extrinsically through economic incentives (e.g., discounts, value-added services). Second, psychological reinforcement based on intrinsic rewards can be provided by personalized encouragement (e.g., newsletters, VIP treatment). The objective is to progressively increase the yield from these best consumers by developing a long-term, interactive, value-added relationship.

For example, the San Diego Padres have developed a successful program for rewarding their most loyal customers ("With Frequency," 1996). Recently, this Major League Baseball team developed a loyalty program designed to reward frequent attendance, as well as to encourage fans to attend as many games as possible. The Padres reward fans by allowing those who attend games to register for membership in the Compadres Club. Based on frequency of game attendance, club members earn points ("hits") toward increasingly attractive prizes, including exclusive autograph sessions and inclusion in pregame chalk talks. Registration for club membership also allows the Padres to identify their most loyal customers, to send customized newsletters, and to solicit consumer satisfaction feedback from these most desirable fans.

Spurious-Loyalty Segment Description

Spuriously loyal fans, those in the upper right quadrant of Figure 1, are fans who exhibit high levels of

behavioral loyalty, but score low on the PCT scale. These fans may appear to most observers to be loyal fans of the team because they behave in the same manner as the truly loyal fans (e.g., frequently attending games, frequently watching games on television). However, they are not committed fans of the favorite team and could drop out at any point with little dissonance. There may be a number of reasons for this high level of behavior accompanied by low commitment, such as (a) they attend games primarily because friends or family want to attend; (b) they attend games of the home team, but are fans of a team in another location; (c) games are a relatively cheap source of entertainment; (d) they are given the tickets for free (by an employer or another business); or (e) they go to the game for other reasons (e.g., business interactions, socializing, drinking, gambling).

Strategy

With spuriously loyal fans, the strategy would be to increase the psychological commitment to the team they are already supporting behaviorally. Again, increased attitudinal loyalty among this segment is extremely important because these are generally the fans who will stop supporting the team when something goes wrong (e.g., team performance decreases; a popular player is traded). Sheth (1987) recommends a market rationalization strategy as a way to strengthen consumers' commitment toward a product they are already buying. The intent is to create rationalized reasons to justify their behavior.

One approach is to focus on promoting the attributes of the product or service (Sheth, 1987) in an attempt to provide the spuriously loyal fan with rational reasons why he or she should support the team (e.g., first-class tradition, fan-friendly team). Second, it would also be helpful to get the fans "to articulate, at least on a rationalized basis, why they buy or use the product/service" (Sheth, 1987, p. 27). Prior research

suggests that as consumers try to justify their purchase, they tend to become more committed to the product or service they purchased (Schiffman & Kanuk, 1997).

Third, coupling attendance with support for a relevant social cause may be an important rationalized reason for some spuriously loyal fans. An emerging strategy, called alignment marketing, attempts to improve a brand or company's fortunes by linking it to some highly valued celebrity or cause (IEG, 1995). Alignment marketing is based on the belief that if an organization is able to build a link in the consumer's mind between the product name and a cause that is of great importance to that consumer (e.g., feeding and sheltering the homeless, civic pride), then there is a strong probability that the consumer's perception of that particular brand or product will improve. This strategy may also provide the basis for fans to rationalize and, therefore, strengthen their emotional commitment to a team. A team, for example, that demonstrates its commitment to helping battered women by pledging a portion of each ticket sold to fund or construct a new shelter provides the spuriously loyal fan one more important reason to care about the organization and to attend games. In a college sport setting, it may be possible to focus on the team's high graduation rate, suggesting this is a program that values education first, or focus on the number of local players on the team, playing on the belief of some that it is important to support local "kids."

Latent-Loyalty Segment Description

In contrast to spuriously loyal fans, latently loyal fans (lower left quadrant of Figure 1) are those who scored high on the PCT scale, but exhibit low levels of behavioral loyalty. Although these fans are unlikely to change their team allegiance, they do not exhibit many of the behaviors that would benefit the team (e.g., attending games). There may be a number of reasons for

their low level of behavior including the high cost of some games, the time it takes to attend a game, and the accessibility of games. Many people in this segment may constitute what Mullin et al. (1993) refer to as "media consumers," those whose commitment is high but whose behaviors related to their favorite team are limited to more passive, indirect involvement through watching or listening to games and reading about the team in the newspaper. Moreover, fans who live outside their favorite team's region may have difficulty obtaining even media access to games and would, therefore, exhibit even less loyalty-related behavior.

Strategy

According to Sheth (1987), the market inducement strategy is most useful in reaching latently loyal consumers. To induce these fans to move toward more active, direct participation and into the "high-loyalty" group, where their behavior matches their attitude, Sheth recommends two approaches. First, the facilitation of inducement involves eliminating any obstacles that prevent consumers from purchasing the product or service they like. "It involves removal of time, place and possession barriers in target segments" (Sheth, p. 26). Second, economic incentives are another way to induce people to engage in behavior toward which they have a positive predisposition. Incentives could include a range of sales and promotional programs, such as coupons, ticket-price discounts, and the offering of lottery prizes.

The Milwaukee Brewers initiated a ticket-package campaign intended to reach fans who had not historically purchased season ticket packages (Eisengerg, 1993). Rather than just offering traditional full- (81 games) or halfseason (40 games) ticket options, the Major League Baseball club created a series of miniticket packages (13 games) tailored to the specific interests and abilities of their fan base (Eisen-

gerg). In effect, fans were offered the opportunity to attend Brewer games on the dates (e.g., weekdays, Saturdays, and/or Sundays only) they most preferred and at the time they most preferred (afternoon or evenings) and to watch the combination of teams they most preferred, all at a substantial discount. The new program was enormously successful, increasing new or first-time season ticket sales by 41% (Eisengerg). Meanwhile, teams may also want to focus on increasing the media coverage of their games in order to reach fans who are not geographically close to their favorite team. For example, many college sport teams are focusing on increasing the radio reach of their games (e.g., picking stations with a wider reach, offering games over the internet) and on increasing access to televised games (e.g., pay-per-view) in order to reach their fans and alumni who do not live in their geographic region.

Low-Loyalty Segment Description

Finally, low-loyalty fans (lower right quadrant of Figure 1) are those who scored low on the PCT scale and exhibited low levels of behavioral loyalty. These fans are not committed to the team and rarely support the team by attending games or by watching on television. It is likely that when these fans do attend games, it is merely for some reason unrelated to the team itself (e.g., to watch a particular player, to watch the opposing team, to socialize). They could drop out, and this would have no psychological impact on them and would result in almost no change in their daily lives.

Strategy

Low-loyalty consumers are the most challenging segment. These infrequent or nonattending patrons hold, at best, an ambivalent attitude toward the sports team. Converting this segment's behavior and predisposition is likely to be very expensive, and even then, the probability of success is low. Sheth

(1987) recommended a confrontation strategy for reaching this disenfranchised market. This approach requires a direct attack on existing attitudes of the consumer. However, achieving the desired change may be very difficult. As Kiesler (1971) points out, this approach often results in a "boomerang effect" in which counterpersuasive communication strengthens the recipient's resistance to change. Moreover, the confrontation process is not a cost-efficient approach in terms of actually turning consumer attitudes and behavior.

A second approach would be to allow the movement of fans toward genuine loyalty to be undertaken gradually, concentrating on either behavioral or attitudinal change first (i.e., movement to spuriously or latently loyal). Marketers could focus on increasing the behavior first. This could be done by offering packages to various groups (e.g., families, businesses) that may result in the low-loyalty fans attending more games, by selling the game to the low-loyalty fans as part of an entire entertainment package, or by focusing on attributes other than the team (e.g., opposing team, star player). In addition, the rationalization strategy could be used to first focus on building a level of commitment to the team. However, both of these approaches are unlikely to produce highly successful results with this segment and may not be the best use of resources. Consequently, many strategists recommend focusing on the more attractive, less resistant spuriously loyal and latently loyal fans (Hawkins, Best, & Coney, 1995; Rothschild, 1987).

Summary

In general, the PCT scale can be very helpful to sport marketing practitioners who wish to use psychographic information to better target their fans and to better assess the current feelings about the team among fans and/or local residents. The scale is relatively short (it could even be used as part of a phone survey), easy to administer, and easy to

adjust to different team sports at different competition levels. Use of the scale will allow marketers to better assess loyalty toward their team and to be better prepared for their future. The scale can also be useful in assessing the impact of past and current marketing and customer service efforts. Sport marketers who wish to move beyond the "build it and they will come" philosophy of sport marketing should find this scale useful in moving their marketing efforts forward.

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