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**SPORTS SPONSORSHIP: FAN LOYALTY AND PERCEPTION OF
THE LAKE COUNTY CAPTAINS MINOR LEAGUE BASEBALL TEAM**

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MARK WEISSMAN

ABSTRACT

Sports sponsorship is a multi-billion dollar industry that takes place at all levels of sport. Each sponsorship comes with a different level of exposure for the sponsoring company. In most cases, the cost of the sponsorship has a significant relationship to the level of exposure received. Numerous studies have been conducted to assess fans' perception of sponsorship in sport. However, the majority of these studies were conducted at the professional or intercollegiate level. More than 41 million people attended Minor League Baseball games in 2012, and this number was higher than both the National Basketball Association and National Football League attendance combined for that year. This study assessed brand loyalty, perception, receptiveness, and recollection of fans of the Lake County Captains minor league baseball team on the companies that sponsor the team. It was hypothesized that there would be significant differences in the awareness of sponsorship, perception of brand loyalty, perception of sponsorship, and receptiveness of sponsorship (1) between Lake County Captains fans and non-fans, (2) between males and females, (3) among different education levels of spectators, and (4) among participants with different household incomes.

Two hundred and ninety-two participants (163 females and 126 males) completed this study. Participants completed the questionnaire, which included a demographics section, a question about team allegiance, and two Likert scales testing participants' perception and knowledge about sponsors of the team in relation to: Sponsorship, Brand

Loyalty, Perception, Receptiveness, and Sponsorship Recollection. One-way MANOVAs were used to assess the impact of allegiance, gender, education, and income on spectators' opinions of sponsorship, brand loyalty, perception, and receptiveness. Follow-up univariate ANOVAs were used to examine significant differences of each demographic among all the measuring variables.

The results showed that the majority (76%) of fans either follow the Lake County Captains sometimes or consistently follow the Lake County Captains. Significant differences were found in opinions of sponsorship, brand loyalty towards sponsors, opinions of perception, receptiveness towards sponsors amongst fan allegiance. Fans with higher levels of allegiance rated items significantly higher than those with lower allegiance. Significant differences were also found in opinions of sponsorship, brand loyalty towards sponsors, and receptiveness towards sponsors amongst education of fans. Fans with a higher education rated items higher than those with lower levels of education. The overall feeling towards sponsorship was positive amongst the spectators. Most participants were not very brand loyal towards the sponsors of the Lake County Captains. However, participants of the study saw the sponsoring companies in a very positive light. It was found that spectators had a very high perception of the companies that sponsored the Captains due to their financial support of the team. The positive perception of the sponsoring companies did not just revolve around sports. Many participants of the study rated the sponsoring companies as good companies to work for and as companies that care about the surrounding communities. Participants were more interested in receiving coupons and discounts from the companies than in learning about the products and services offered by them.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Sports sponsorship is a multi-billion dollar industry that takes place at all levels of sport. Sponsorship is “the relationship between a sponsor and a property in which the sponsor pays cash or in-kind fee in return for access to the exploitable commercial potential associated with the property” (Tomasini, Frye, & Stotlar 2004, p. 216). The sponsoring of a sports team does not just take place in the United States, it has become a global phenomenon. Sponsorship in sports can include a variety of levels that allows access to different benefits. Sports sponsorship may include a company spending \$50 for a program advertisement with a local high school basketball team, a \$5 million commercial that airs during the Super Bowl, being the title sponsor of the Rose Bowl (\$15 million), and anything in-between. Each sponsorship comes with a different level of exposure for the sponsoring company. In most cases, the cost of the sponsorship has a significant relationship to the level of exposure received.

A company may wish to allocate money for the sponsorship of a sports team for various reasons. Some of these reasons include increasing brand awareness or perception, loyalty towards the brand, brand image by attaching the company name or product to a successful team, and purchase intentions of a specific market or demographic. No matter what the reason is behind the sponsorship, every company is looking for a significant return on their investment. Levin, Beasley, and Gamble (2004) suggest that sponsorship is based on the belief that association with a sports team or sporting event will improve brand recognition of a company, thus creating connectivity between the two which can provide an opportunity for increased brand impressions. This can raise the profile and awareness of the brand and ultimately, its sales. By gaining recognition amongst fans and improving a product's brand image, a company may reap other benefits. Not only do products of companies with a strong brand image sell more than a competitor's products, but there is the potential of charging a higher price than the competition. According to Hoeffler and Keller (2003) and Keller (2000), "strong brands provide their parent companies with many strategic advantages, including the ability to charge price premiums because of customer loyalty" (Becker-Olsen & Hill, 2006, p. 73). Sponsoring companies want to know that the money they spend translates into results. Company executives want to ensure that the fans of a sports team, event, or league that they sponsor have a greater awareness of their product, and are more partial to their brand as well as are more likely to use their product.

Sponsorship of a sports team has become very costly, regardless if the team is at the collegiate level, the minor league system, or the professional ranks. Even with a 21% decrease in sponsorship cost from 2009 to 2010, the average price of a sports sponsorship

was \$101,427 (Lefton, 2010). As such, it is important for a sports team and the companies wishing to become sponsors to understand their fan base, including the attitudes towards and awareness of current sponsors. It is also essential for a sponsoring company to know what types of products and brands the fans are using. A sponsor wants to make sure they are directing their advertisements towards the appropriate fan base. It would be ineffective for a company to advertise with a team whose demographic does not use the product or service they sell. On the other side of the spectrum, a sports team wishes to ensure they are charging the right price to the sponsoring company. It is important for an organization to know exactly what their advertising space is worth. A drastic miscalculation of what advertising space is worth could cost a team or league hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of dollars.

Some studies have demonstrated that the amount of money spent on sports sponsorship throughout the world has greatly increased over the past several decades, and continues to grow immensely. From the mid 1980s through the late 1990s, worldwide sports sponsorship spending increased to nearly \$16 billion, from the \$2 billion spent in 1984 (Speed & Thompson, 2000). The amount of money spent on sports sponsorship continues to increase. The amount spent on sports-related advertisements increased to a projected \$28 billion globally in 2004 (Ali, Cornwell, Nguyen, & Coote, 2006). By 2011, corporate sponsorship of sport increased to nearly \$48.7 billion with approximately 68% of all sponsorship dollars incorporated in the sports market (Lee & Cho, 2012). The increasingly significant amount of money being spent on sponsorship in sport has caused this venue to quickly become one of the fastest growing areas in marketing.

Research plays a key role in understanding the relationship between a team, league, event, fans and sponsors. Research has a significant impact on both the companies sponsoring a sports team and the teams themselves. This research will be beneficial to companies that currently sponsor or wish to sponsor a sports team by allowing them to better understand brand loyalty as well as perception and receptiveness of a fan base in relation to sponsors. Companies can use the results of this research to obtain a better understanding as to whether or not sponsoring a specific team will be beneficial. Studies like this are also important to sports teams and their marketing departments. This will benefit sports franchises to ensure they get the most out of their partnerships with sponsoring companies. A team does not want to undercharge companies for their sponsorships and thus lose out on additional revenue. At the same time, a team does not want to overcharge for their sponsorships and thus lose out on potential partnerships.

The goal of sports sponsorship is to increase the sponsoring company's awareness and popularity with the fans. As a result, more fans are likely to purchase the product or service of the sponsoring company. By understanding the perception that fans have about a team's sponsors, companies can formulate practical expectations and evaluate potential benefits of having a sponsorship. On the other hand, the sports teams themselves can be better equipped to put a realistic value on a sponsorship.

Purpose of This Study

The purpose of this study was to evaluate brand loyalty, perception, receptiveness, and recollection of fans of the Lake County Captains minor league baseball team on the companies that sponsor the team.

Significance of Study

Numerous studies have been conducted to assess fans' perception of sponsorship in sport. However, the majority of these studies were conducted at the professional or intercollegiate level. Most research in the United States has focused on NASCAR (Levin et al., 2004), Major League Baseball (MLB; Wakefield, Becker-Olsen, & Cornwell, 2007), and the Professional Golf Association (Roy & Cornwell, 2004); while overseas studies have concentrated on soccer (Barros & Silvestre, 2006; Holt, 2007). Research at the intercollegiate level has frequently been conducted at large universities with the main focus being placed on basketball and football (Pitts & Slattery, 2004; Tomasini et al., 2004).

According to Minor League Baseball (MiLB, 2013), more than 41 million people attended a MiLB game in 2012, which is higher than both the National Basketball Association and National Football League attendance combined for that year. With 160 teams, MiLB has a wide range of locations, which gives sponsors the ability to reach out to a vast number of fans. However, little research has been conducted at the minor league level.

The following hypotheses were examined in this study:

Hypothesis 1: There would be significant differences in the awareness of sponsorship, perception of brand loyalty, perception of sponsorship, and receptiveness of sponsorship between Lake County Captains fans and non-fans.

Hypothesis 2: There would be significant differences in the awareness of sponsorship, perception of brand loyalty, perception of sponsorship, and receptiveness of sponsorship between males and females.

Hypothesis 3: There would be significant differences in the awareness of sponsorship, perception of brand loyalty, perception of sponsorship, and receptiveness of sponsorship among different education levels of spectators.

Hypothesis 4: There would be significant differences in the awareness of sponsorship, perception of brand loyalty, perception of sponsorship, and receptiveness of sponsorship among participants with different household incomes.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

As stated previously, the amount of funding that has gone into sports sponsorship continues to grow by leaps and bounds. With as much money being designated to sponsorship in the realm of sports, it is important to understand if such sponsorship is efficient and effective. Understanding the dynamic between a company's initial investment and an anticipated return on said investment is important for both the sponsoring companies and the teams receiving the sponsorship. Previous research has investigated many aspects regarding sports sponsorship. Research regarding sponsorship in sports has mainly focused on professional teams and leagues in the United States and throughout the world. Although some limited research has focused on minor league sports, further research is needed to fully understand the implications of sports sponsorship at this level. It is vital for businesses and the teams and leagues they may wish to sponsor to comprehend related research. Knowing the effectiveness of

sponsorship on its intended target provides a measured value to these companies, teams, and leagues.

This review of literature has been broken down into four specific areas of research: brand loyalty, fans' attitudes of sponsorship, awareness of sponsorship, and sponsor relatedness. These four areas are important when looking at the overall subject of sports sponsorship. Previous studies regarding sports sponsorship will be reviewed and grouped together based on these topics.

Brand Loyalty

Sports fans' brand loyalty of a team's sponsors has recently become a highly researched topic. Knowing how and why a fan connects with the sponsors of a specific team is meaningful when trying to understand how sports sponsorship works, especially related to brand loyalty. To gain insight into how a fan identifies with a team's sponsors, it is helpful to first understand how that fan identifies with a given team. Knowing team identification by a fan allows for better comprehension of sponsor identification and loyalty.

Loyalty Factors

Wu, Tsai, and Hung (2012) found that there is a significant indicator of a fan's intended repatronage of a team. The study of Wu et al. was completed in two different stages: a pretest stage and the actual survey stage. The study which was completed on baseball fans was designed to understand the role that trust has in fan loyalty relationships. The pretest stage consisted of 26 participants. The actual study surveyed 217 participants, the majority being males, with the largest age group being under the age of 30 years. In addition, more than half of the participants were students. The factor that

was found to be a significant indicator of a fan's intended support, known as repatronage of a team, was the level of identification towards that team. In essence, the stronger a fan identified with a team, the greater the possibility he or she would continually support the team. The study found that one of the most important characteristics of a fans' identification level towards a team was their trust in that team. The more trust a fan had in the team, the stronger the fan would identify with that team; thereby increasing support for the team. Wu et al. (2012) concluded that it was more important for a sports team to invest in the long-term future of the team, gaining trust in fans, rather than the short-term future. Although fans want to see a winning team as soon as possible, it is important to achieve sustained success. The findings indicate that the more an owner invests his or her own money on a team, the more fans are willing to invest their money by purchasing tickets, merchandise, and sports television packages.

Biscaia, Correia, Rosado, Ross, & Maroco (2013) researched how team loyalty affected perception and loyalty towards team sponsors. The survey, which was completed on professional soccer fans in a marketing database, was collected through the mail. The participants ranged from 16-70 years and were 87.7% males. The researchers found that "attitudinal loyalty was a significant predictor of behavior loyalty" in terms of team support (p. 296). Behavioral loyalty, not attitudinal loyalty, can significantly predict the amount of awareness fans may have of the teams' sponsors. A very important part of recalling specific team sponsors was the amount of repeat exposure a fan got to those sponsor's advertisements. In terms of fans' attitudes, it was found that there was a significant relationship between the attitudes towards a team and towards a sponsor (Biscaia et al., 2013).

Understanding how and why a fan is brand loyal towards a team is the first step in recognizing how and why a fan is brand loyal toward that team's sponsors. By understanding these relationships, teams and companies wishing to become sponsors can have a better knowledge of consumer habits. This, in turn, lays the foundation for companies and teams to create a more successful partnership by reaching out to the correct fan base. One essential benefit of sponsoring a sports team is gaining a connection with the team's fans. The expectation is that by sponsoring a team, fans loyal to that team will also become loyal to the sponsoring company or brand. Brand loyalty of a team's fans is an important benefit sponsors look for as a reward for their sponsorship. This reward can come as a huge payoff to sponsoring companies.

Group Norms

A significant amount of the research conducted on sports sponsorship in relation to brand loyalty of professional sports in the U.S. has been completed on the National Association for Stock Car Auto Racing (NASCAR), its fans and sponsors. NASCAR fans have been known to be the most brand loyal of all professional sports leagues in the U.S. In a study conducted by Performance Research, Inc. in 1994, it was found that "nearly three-quarters of the fans said that they frequently choose a product because it was a sponsor of NASCAR, and more than 40% of fans said that they would switch brands in order to support a brand that supported NASCAR" (Levin, Beasley, & Gilson, 2008, p. 195). This study holds value to companies that are contemplating becoming a sponsor of NASCAR or any other sports league or team. Companies can be confident that they will increase sales solely due to their affiliation with NASCAR and the brand loyalty shown by fans.

Another important concept introduced by Levin et al. (2008) was the influence that perceived group norms had on purchase intentions when related to brand loyalty. Levin et al. (2008) used data that was originally obtained by Levin, Beasley, and Gamble (2004). This study surveyed 413 respondents at NASCAR race in Sparta, Kentucky. A majority of the respondents were male (66%) and between the ages of 35 and 49 years. The researchers argued that “group norms are a powerful force for NASCAR fans that impact on everything from the hats and shirts they wear displaying their favourite drivers, to the sponsors’ products they purchase in order to show their loyalty to the sport” (p. 196). A model developed by the researchers showed a progression from fan identification to perceived group norms to purchase intentions. Once a fan identified with a team or driver, or simply with the sport itself, the fan would allow what he or she perceived as normal group behavior to govern their purchasing decisions. These norms could include decisions such as what brand of cereal to eat, or what kind of vehicle to purchase, the next time such a decision is made. This type of group norm behavior has been observed by NASCAR fans as well as with fans of other sports.

The original study (Levin et al., 2004) showed similar results. According to the researchers, the “sense of self is connected to a larger community of NASCAR fans. As such, one would expect that the behavior of NASCAR fans would be affected by any NASCAR fan community norms, such as the expectation that fans will purchase the products of sponsors” (Levin et al., 2004, p. 19). This idea is important and can affect many businesses and employers. It is important for companies to understand the value and significance sponsorship may have on their company. Companies must investigate all facets of a sponsorship in order to obtain a complete understanding of its value.

Fan Recall

Information regarding the effects and implications of a switch in sponsorship has been studied through a variety of sporting events. McAlister, Kelly, Humphreys, and Cornwell (2012) tested the recall of fans at various sporting events that had recently switched sponsors or broadcasters. The idea was to see if participants were able to name the new sponsor/broadcaster of the event, or if the previous sponsor/broadcaster were still linked to the event. The survey was divided among four different sporting events, each having two separate data collection periods. The four different sporting events were a tennis match, an Olympic broadcast, an auto-racing event, and a horse-racing event. The participants of sample one were mostly comprised of university students and staff, 128 being male and 305 female. The second study was also comprised mostly of university students and staff with 110 being male and 315 being female. Participants were questioned at the time of the event and then again six months after the event was finished. Three of the four events had respondents from a university (staff and students), while one of the events surveyed event enthusiasts. The results indicated that although a higher percentage of individuals were able to name the “replacement sponsor/broadcaster” at the time of the event, this was not the case when they were questioned six months after the event. The percentage of correct to incorrect sponsor recall was more than 2-1 during the first data collection period. However, the results were vastly different six months after the event. When fans were asked to recall the current sponsor of the event six months later, most fans mistakenly named the “former sponsor” by more than a 2-1 ratio. These results indicated there was a “spontaneous recovery,” or increase in recognition of the previous event sponsor. In this case, there was a spontaneous recovery of 25.2% from the

first time data was collected. The spontaneous recovery of the former sponsors can be troubling to current companies sponsoring an event or team. A sponsoring company will not find value in a sponsorship that has fans recalling a different company as the sponsor. This is especially true if the current company is looking to attach itself to the event, or team, and form brand recognition amongst fans. It is important that a sponsoring company use the benefits provided to them, including the opportunity to continually advertise and promote their name at the event, or stadium they sponsor. This is pertinent in order to ingrain themselves as the sponsor in the minds of fans.

A fan's brand loyalty towards the sponsors of a sports team, event, or league is one of the major benefits and driving force behind companies spending so much money to sponsor or become a brand partner. The opportunity to attract a segment of a large fan base who is willing to purchase a product or service based on a company's relationship to a specific team, event, or league is one reason why sports sponsorship makes up such a large percentage of money spent on advertising. Although there are other reasons and benefits behind sponsorship in sports, the opportunity to obtain new and loyal customers is intriguing to many companies.

Fans Attitudes of Sponsors

An important benefit to a company sponsoring a sports team is the fans' recognition of the sponsor's brand, connecting the team and company. This can allow positive attitudes a fan may have of the team to transfer to the sponsoring company. Although positive attitudes can transfer from team to sponsor, it does not guarantee that a positive attitude will translate into sponsor identification or even purchase intention.

Naming Rights

With spending on stadium construction in the United States and throughout the world continually approaching or going over the \$1 billion milestone, teams and the cities they play in must get creative in the funding of such extravagant venues. One way to help offset the rising cost of stadium construction is to sell the naming rights to the venue. This form of sponsorship has become more and more mainstream. Since the mid-1990s, the number of stadiums that have corporate naming rights attached to it have expanded, and now more stadiums have a corporate sponsor than those that do not. As the idea of corporate sponsorship progresses, the amount of money and length of time involved with these sponsorships grows (Deschriver & Jensen, 2003; Moornan, 2002).

One of the most expensive and recognizable forms of sponsoring a sports team is to purchase the naming rights to the stadium or arena. Research suggests that a company that purchases the naming rights to a stadium can expect significant company/brand awareness amongst fans and potentially among local residents (Fatsis, 1997; Reysen, Snider, & Branscombe, 2012). This type of sponsorship has the potential to reach individuals in a demographic outside of those who are fans of a specific team, unlike many other types of sponsorships that may just reach the specific fan base. This happens through the repeated use of the sponsoring company's name in the media when discussing the team and where they play, whereas other types of sponsorships are generally seen only at the stadium or on television during the broadcast of the game. However, research suggests that although this type of sponsorship may provide significant financial benefits to the team and even the sponsoring company, they can also come with unexpected negative side effects.

Reysen et al. (2012) completed a study at the University of Kansas. The study investigated the correlation between the degree to which an individual identified with a sports team and the individual's reaction to the possibility of a stadium/arena name change. The study had 122 participants (mean age of 19.3 years, with 56% males). The results showed that an individual's identification with a specific team related to feelings of lost team identity and feelings of anger towards a venue name change. The stronger the relationship a fan had with the team, the more he or she felt a loss of identity when an arena changed names. This loss of identity often led to a greater feeling of anger towards a venue name change and even the sponsoring company that purchased the new naming rights.

Sponsor Identification

In a study regarding sponsorship of Euro 2004, a European soccer tournament played every four years, Barros and Silvestre (2006) evaluated brand recall and specific brand preference of sponsors relating to attitudes amongst fans. The study, which received 676 responses, was conducted from August through October 2004 in Lisbon, Portugal. The results showed no significant correlation between fans' attitudes towards a sponsor and their ability to recall specific sponsors. Additionally, there was no significant relationship between fans' attitude toward a sponsor and preference of a sponsor's product. However, there was a significant relationship between fans' perceptions of importance relating to the event and importance relating to the sponsor (Barros & Silvestre, 2006). These results could potentially affect the mindset of companies when sponsoring a sports team. If, in fact, positive attitudes transfer from team to sponsor, this research suggested that positive attitudes did not always mean a

more successful sponsorship. Therefore, sponsoring a team based on performance was not always effective. This research debunked the idea that a company would get more out of a sponsorship with a winning team. The imperative factor in this research was how fans viewed the team or event in relation to their importance. Therefore, the more important a team or event is regarded, the more important a sponsor will be regarded.

This study was significant because although fans' attitudes did not impact their preference of a sponsor's product, their perception of event or sponsor importance had a more significant influence. Companies can conclude that sponsoring important events such as the World Cup or the European Cup may be more worthwhile than sponsoring a smaller league's championship match. Research suggests that attitudes do not play an important role in sponsor recall or preference of product-related purchases. The imperative factors are perception of importance (of both sponsor and event) as well as recognition of sponsors.

The idea of sponsor prominence and how it is related to correct identification of sponsorship has been considered in numerous studies. An example of this was a study by Wakefield and Bennett (2010) completed at the Phoenix International Raceway throughout the weekend of a NASCAR event. The researchers received 228 completed questionnaires, with the mean age of respondents being 39 years. A significant portion of the respondents (76%) were male. Pre-test studies for sponsor prominence and relatedness were completed in a college sports marketing class prior to the main study. Fans were given the names of 34 racecar drivers, each paired with a sponsor. Half of the drivers were paired with their correct sponsor while the other half were paired with a fake sponsor. The respondents were asked to answer whether the driver was actually

sponsored by the attached company/brand. Respondents were also asked to give a rating of how well they liked the drivers. The results revealed that the highest number of correctly identified driver/sponsor pairs (95.8%) were those drivers who had a prominent and related sponsor. Pairs that had drivers with a prominent but unrelated sponsor also had a very high positive identification rate. These provide further evidence that prominence of a sponsor in comparison to a related sponsor can create fan preference towards the prominent, sponsoring brand.

Event and Team Perception

Fans' attitudes towards sponsorship of events, specific sponsors, and a team or event can be interconnected. The attitudes and feelings towards any one of these specific items can affect the others. Several studies have been conducted to investigate the connections between these feelings and attitudes. A fan's attitude toward sponsorship in sport can be influenced by many different variables. One specific area that was studied by Mikhailitchenko, Tootelian, and Mikhailitchenko (2012) was the number of sponsors, in this case, related to on-shirt advertising, and how it affected the team's image and fans' purchase intentions. On-shirt advertising, television advertisements, or advertising in stadiums can all succumb to sponsorship clutter, with potential lasting effects on fans' attitudes towards sponsorship and team image. Sponsorship clutter is the over existence of sponsors, which may draw attention away from any one specific sponsor, potentially drowning out the effectiveness of sponsorship and causing a negative reaction towards the team or event and its sponsors. The study took place in the U.S. and Russia, and collected 180 surveys. The sample included graduate students between the ages of 23 and 37 years. The results showed that sponsorship clutter on a shirt can have a negative

effect to both a team's image and to the companies sponsoring a team. Executives of sports teams and sporting events, as well as executives of sponsoring companies, should value this research. Sports executives will want to limit the number of sponsors that are included on jerseys, promotional t-shirt giveaways, and other related materials. An overuse of sponsorship will negatively affect the team. Executives of companies wishing to sponsor an event will want to make sure they do not become lost amidst the clutter of other sponsors.

A study by Alexandris, Douka, Bakaloumi, and Tsasousi (2008) investigated spectators' attitudes toward an event, spectator involvement with the activity of the event, and spectators' beliefs about sponsorship affected beliefs and attitudes towards an event. The study took place during three different sporting events: a snowboard exhibition, Greek basketball all-star game, and a folklore dancing festival with respondents ranging from 18 to 63 years. The results showed that individuals who are more attached to an event had an increased likelihood of naming or recalling an event sponsor. The researchers recommend in this instance that companies looking to sponsor an event should sponsor events that have a significant percentage of spectators that are fans of the event/sport. It is important that fans' had a positive attitude towards the idea of sponsorship. The more accepting a fan is of the idea of sponsorship, the more accepting they will be of specific event sponsors. Lastly, the results showed that demographics could have an effect on sponsorship. Researchers recommend that companies wishing to sponsor an event should do so with a younger and well-educated fan base.

Smith, Graetz, and Westerbeek (2008) evaluated the impact of team support and the perception of sponsors on purchase intentions by fans was completed using spectators

of a professional football team in Australia. A majority of the 1,647 participants were male (65.5%), and between the ages of 30-49 years (46%). The results were similar to those completed on the fans of NASCAR. The results of the study established a majority of the fans were found to have strong passion towards the team (9.02 out of 10) and positive support of the team (8.03 out of 10). Although the receptiveness towards sponsorship amongst the fans was closer to normal (5.76 out of 10), fans still had strong support of the team's sponsors. Overall, the fans had an optimistic view of the team's sponsors, rating the integrity of the companies in a positive manor (7.29 out of 10). Additionally, fans surveyed were likely to purchase products and services provided by the sponsoring companies (8.31 out of 10). It makes sense that there would be a high level of positive fan support towards the team considering the high level of passion amongst the fans. It is also possible to relate the fans' positive view relative to integrity of the sponsors to the positive purchase intentions they have towards those companies. Here the researchers concluded that the success a company had in terms of sponsorship was related to the excitement of a fan towards the team. A sponsorship could have increased success if the excitement generated towards a team was increased as well (Smith et al., 2008).

The study of the attitudes fans have towards sponsors of events and teams can have a lasting impact on companies that are or wish to become sponsors. There are many different aspects and variables that executives at potential sponsor companies should research and understand before making a decision on where to spend marketing money.

Awareness of Sponsorship

Companies spend hundreds of thousands, even millions, of dollars sponsoring a sports team in order to increase fans' awareness of their brand. The hope is that an increased awareness will increase sales and thus, profit. Research regarding fan awareness of sponsors in sport has become increasingly relevant.

Sponsorship Identification Accuracy

A study by Johar, Pham, and Wakefield (2006) measured identification accuracy and awareness of sponsorship in minor league baseball (MiLB). The value of studying and understanding this portion of sponsorship is significant. As the researchers pointed out, the value of a sponsorship could easily become uncertain if fans were unable to correctly identify team sponsors. What is potentially worse is if fans were to improperly select a non-sponsor as a sponsoring company of the team or league. The researchers received 316 responses to their study, of which 56 percent were male. Respondents' median age was 37 years with a median household income between \$65,000-\$80,000. In this study, the researchers compiled a list of 45 companies that were actually sponsors and 45 companies that were not sponsors of the team. Fans were asked to identify whether a company was a sponsor of the baseball team. The results of this study demonstrated that spectators were able to properly identify a majority of the sponsors and to correctly 'reject' a majority of the non-sponsors. Despite the fact that a majority of the sponsoring companies were identified as sponsors and the decoy companies were classified as such, there was still a high rate of incorrect identification amongst both groups. The researchers found that there was a positive influence between the number of games attended and the number of sponsors being identified correctly. It was found that

the more games a fan attended, the more likely they were to correctly identify actual sponsors and to reject false sponsors. More games a fan attended, the more sponsorship they were exposed to, thus instilling sponsoring companies into their memory.

Intercollegiate athletics has become an ever-growing market for sports sponsorship. As the popularity of sponsoring collegiate athletic teams increases, so does the cost of sponsorship. With an increased popularity and cost in sponsorship at the intercollegiate level, the expectation for desired results also grows. As such, companies that spend vast amounts of money to advertise with intercollegiate athletic teams want to see swift results. It is not wrong for companies to expect results shortly after they begin a sponsorship; however, research shows that in most cases, the best results may take some time to accomplish.

Pitts and Slattery (2004) investigated college football fans' awareness of sponsorship over the four-month season. There were six home games played at the selected school to which spectators were exposed to sponsors' advertisements. Researchers received 117 responses, of which 77% were male. The mean age of participants was 49 years, with 80% of all respondents having a college degree. It was found that as exposure to the sponsors increased, so did the recognition rates of these sponsors. The researchers found there was an increase in the recognition rate for eight of the nine sponsoring companies over the season. Initially, the recognition rates ranged from 0.08% to 79.5%, but increased to 0.17% to 89.7% as the study progressed (Pitts & Slattery, 2004). Sponsoring companies need to allow time for their sponsorship to have an effect. This research indicated that the desired outcome of a sponsorship might not be effective right away. Time is necessary for fans and spectators to become aware of

sponsors. As time goes on and repeat visits to a stadium or arena are made, fans gain an increased awareness of sponsors. In reality, companies may not see any results for several months after starting a sponsorship or advertising campaign. Thus, there should not be a decision made as to the effectiveness of a sponsorship campaign for some time after the sponsorship has begun (Johar et al., 2006).

Virtual Advertising

As new forms of advertising find a niche in the vast market of sports sponsorship, more research is needed to understand the effectiveness of these sponsorship and advertising techniques. It is not only important to understand how these new methods measure up with the previous forms of sponsorship and advertising, it is also important to learn the strengths and weaknesses of these new techniques. Virtual advertising is a new method that uses technology to provide the seamless superimposition of images into a television broadcast (Sander & Altobelli, 2011; Tsuji, Bennett, & Leigh, 2009). An example of virtual advertising is the down and distance markers in the middle of the football field during a television broadcast. This important piece of information is usually accompanied by the logo of a sponsoring company. These images are completely digital and do not physically exist. Although people attending the football game cannot see these images, the people watching the game on a television or a computer can. In fact, this form of advertising has the potential to reach a larger audience than a sponsorship or advertisement at the stadium. Depending on the market, a significantly larger number of people may view the game through other forms of media than will physically attend the event at the stadium or arena.

Tsuji et al. (2009) studied factors of brand awareness related to virtual advertising in baseball. The sample, which consisted of 208 participants, was obtained from physical education classes at a large university in the southwestern portion of the U.S. The researchers had students watch one of six different 24-minute videos of a MLB broadcast featuring virtual advertisements throughout. It was found that repetition was an important factor in sponsorship awareness. When participants were asked to use unaided recall, brands that had a higher exposure rate were remembered more frequently than those only viewed once. The results were similar when assessing the hit rate accuracy (correctly identifying a sponsor). Companies wishing to sponsor a sports team can understand that in order to see evidence of a successful sponsorship, it is important to consider that successful sponsorship includes generating greater awareness amongst fans/viewers. It is imperative to ensure their sponsorship is seen more often and for a longer period of time than others.

A study completed by Lardinoit and Derbaix (2001) investigated the effects of field and virtual sponsorships in terms of unaided and aided recall of sponsors' names. The study comprised 240 participants with a mean age of 18.3 years. A majority of the participants (56%) were female. The results showed that although field and television sponsorships were both effective in regards to unaided recall, television sponsorships were significantly more effective than field sponsorships. The results were similar in terms of effectiveness when related to aided recall as well. It was found that field and television sponsorships were both effective in terms of aided recall. Again, television sponsorship was more effective in this study than was field sponsorship. These results are significant and can have an impact on potential sponsorship of a sports team or event.

If a company is looking to increase their overall brand awareness through sponsorship, it might behoove them to use television sponsorships rather than an on-field/in stadium sponsorship. In conclusion, knowing where fans are most aware of sponsorship, and how well they remember sponsors, is important for teams, television networks, and sponsoring companies. The awareness fans show toward the sponsoring companies of a sports team or event can play a big role in deciding the cost of stadium and virtual advertisements.

Sponsor Relatedness

Another important aspect that affects a fan's view of a sponsor is the relationship between the sponsor and the team. In other words, how well does the sponsoring company and the team or event being sponsored go together? The idea of sponsor fit is not a new concept since research related to sponsor fit has been conducted since the 1980s. There are several important concepts that have been studied concerning this topic including the idea of sponsor fit and image transfer, how sponsor relatedness serves to predict intent to purchase sponsor brand products, and the impact of fan recall of sponsorship.

Sponsor Fit

The idea of sponsor fit and image transfer were just two of the related factors studied by Gwinner, Larson, and Swanson (2009). The researchers tested what kind of impact the perception of sponsor relatedness (sponsor to event fit) had on image transfer process and purchase intentions of fans. The intent of this study was to better understand the connection between how closely a fan related to a team, and to what extent they connected a sponsoring brand to an event, leading to purchase probability. The researchers received 881 valid responses from the three football games they attended, two

of which were NFL games while one was a college game. The mean age of the respondents was 32.7 years with the majority (59.7%) being males. It was found that there was a significant positive relationship between both general and specific image transfer and the fans' purchase intentions and this relationship was stronger as team identification increased.

Research related to sponsorship fit has been conducted using a wide range of variables including product relevance, attitude similarity, geographic similarity, size similarity, image similarity, audience similarity, and sponsorship duration. Olson and Thjømmøe (2011) studied all of these factors (and more) to better understand what specific variables contribute to a fan's fit perception. Using three different studies, the researchers were able to understand what variables were best used as fit predictors. The results showed that while participant and audience similarity were the two best forecasters of fit in the eyes of fans, and geographic similarities as well as attitudinal similarities were also important in the prediction process. The researchers concluded that it was ideal for companies and teams to have a high level of fit, specifically between certain variables, in order to have a successful sponsorship. However, there is a possibility that sponsorships that do not have a high level of fit can overcome barriers by using successful communication techniques. For example, certain techniques completed well (such as articulation) can increase perception in a positive manner (upwards of 30%).

Researchers have taken steps to classify the levels of connection or fit between a sponsor and its partners. The results of this type of research have established two levels of fit, high and low. A study published by Becker-Olsen and Hill (2006) addressed the

effects a high fit sponsor and a low fit sponsor have on consumers. The 236 participants involved in this study had an average age of 35 with 52% being male. A high fit resulted in a more positive reaction of the fans in regards to the sponsor, while a low fit between a sponsor and its partner tended to result in an undesirable reaction. In the consumers' eyes, a high fit relationship makes more sense and can be less confusing than a low fit relationship because a consumer can relate a high fit sponsor to its partner more easily than a low fit sponsor (Becker-Olsen & Hill, 2006).

Gwinner and Bennett (2008) studied the idea of sponsor fit. The researchers collected data from 552 individuals who attended the Dew Action Sports Tour in Louisville, Kentucky. The majority of the participants were Caucasian (91%) males (65%) between the ages of 12-24 (44%) years. Gwinner and Bennett (2008) proposed four hypotheses that related to brand and sponsor fit. They suggested that high perceptions of brand cohesiveness would result in higher perceptions of event-sponsor fit. They proposed that higher levels of identification with a sport would result in higher perception of event-sponsor fit. Higher perceptions of event-sponsor fit would result in a more positive attitude toward the sponsoring brands. Lastly, a positive attitude toward the sponsoring brands would result in a higher purchase intention. The results indicated that all four hypotheses were found to be valid, meaning that there is in fact a strong connection between event and sponsor fit. A strong connection between these two aspects of sponsorship can lead to stronger attitudes of event sponsors and even higher purchase intentions.

Fan Recall

Other researchers suggest that the relationship between a sponsor and a team has a

significant impact upon fan recall (e.g., the stronger the connection between a sponsoring company and the team, the higher the recall rate). This is seen as a natural relationship (Wakefield et al., 2007). Research can prove valuable for companies wishing to invest sponsorship dollars in sports. Research can assist in their decision as they explore with whom they should spend their money.

Similar results were found in a different study relating sports sponsorship and the rate of fan recall. Bohnsack, Pokrywczynski, and Brinker (2013) sampled 110 individuals in which they watched a clip of sports coverage and then completed an online questionnaire. The researchers found a positive relationship between the interest level a fan has of a sporting event and their ability to recall the brands at the event. This research can be beneficial for both the companies wishing to become an event sponsor and those that put on the event. Understanding this research and finding an event that is well liked, such as a major tournament or championship game, would benefit a sponsoring company since the interest level should most likely be very high. Moreover, those hosting the event can charge more knowing that the sponsorship may increase in value as companies achieve better results.

Levin, Joiner, and Cameron (2001) looked at the impact of sports sponsorship on brand attitudes and recall using a clip of a NASCAR race, including a segment of the race plus commercials. A preliminary study was followed by the main study testing several measures of sports sponsorship. The participants were 60 undergraduate students. The study had several important findings. The brand recall of sponsors was higher for brands that had an advertisement on the car than those only had an advertisement, and recall and recognition was increased for the sponsors that had both a commercial and car

sponsorship. Both of these findings relate to the amount of time the participants were exposed to the sponsoring brands. It is likely there is more exposure to brands that advertise on a racecar than to just a commercial or ad at the racetrack. There would also be a greater amount of exposure when a brand has an advertisement both on a racecar and elsewhere during a race. Therefore, it is possible to conclude that fan recall of brands can be influenced by the amount of exposure to those specific brands (Levin et al., 2001).

When discussing fan brand loyalty of sponsorship, it is important to review research related to NASCAR. NASCAR fans have been found to be some of the most loyal in all of sports. Understanding this can help other sponsors in other leagues try and replicate these results. A fan's attitude towards sponsoring companies can extend far beyond purchase intentions and affect how they are seen in the community. A sponsorship that includes naming rights to a stadium or arena can be very beneficial inside and outside of the sports demographic and extend into the non-sports community. Although there are many benefits to purchasing the naming rights of a stadium, it is important to understand any repercussions that may exist.

Depending on the sporting event, there can be several dozen sponsors with advertisements throughout the stadium. At times, this can get very confusing to someone attending the event. One way a company can help fans remember their brand is through an increase in exposure throughout the game or season. As fans sift through all of the sponsorship that appears on TV or throughout the stadium, opinions can be easily formed about certain sponsors. Previous research has found that sponsors that have a high fit, or those that can be easily related to the event or team are viewed more favorably than those that are a low fit.

CHAPTER III

METHODS

Baseball, known as America's past time, is one of the most popular sports in the U.S. and is growing in popularity in other parts of the world. Sponsorship at baseball games can be seen on the scoreboard, on the outfield walls, and on separate advertising signs around the stadium. In addition, announcements over the public address system (PAs) may include sponsors' advertisements. In general, Minor League Baseball (MiLB) has more advertising on outfield walls and over the PA system in contrast to Major League Baseball (MLB), which has a majority of their sponsorship on the scoreboard or other electronic signs throughout the stadium. The research in this study focused on fans' perspective towards sponsorship in MiLB.

Participants

The Lake County Captains are the Single-A minor league affiliate with the Cleveland Indians. The Lake County Captains play their home games at Classic Park in

Eastlake, Ohio. Classic Park's maximum capacity for baseball games is approximately 7,000 people. During the 2013 season, attendance for the Lake County Captains home games totaled 235,002. Having played 66 home games, the average attendance for the 2013 season was 3,561 people per game. The participants in this study were individuals attending selected Lake County Captains home baseball games during the 2013 baseball season (April to September). Any individual over the age of 18, who had not previously filled out the survey during any of the five baseball games at which the study was conducted, was eligible to partake in this study. Dates for data collection were June 10 (rained out), June 16, July 3, July 6, July 8, and August 12, 2013. Participants were asked to complete only one survey over the course of the study.

Instrument

The instrument was developed through an extensive review of literature and site observations of sport facilities. Items from various questionnaires were reviewed and additional questions that addressed the gaps in the literature were formulated by the primary and secondary researchers. As a result of this process, 50 items were generated. Among them, two items in brand loyalty, four from in perception, and three items in receptiveness were adopted from Smith et al. (2008); whereas one item in perception and two items in receptiveness were based on the study of Barros and Silvestre (2006). The scale was submitted to the management of the Lake County Captains for review. Following their feedback, the final scale was developed (Appendix A).

The survey asked participants to rate their feelings, opinions, and knowledge about sponsors of the team in relation to: sponsorship, brand loyalty, perception, receptiveness, and sponsorship recollection. Fans rated their answers on two different 5-

point Likert scales. The first Likert scale was used for rating Sponsorship usage factors (1 = *0% of the time*; 2 = *25% of the time*; 3 = *50% of the time*; 4 = *75% of the time*; 5 = *100% of the time*). The second Likert scale was used for brand loyalty, perception of sponsorship, and receptiveness to sponsorship (1 = *Strongly Disagree*; 2 = *Disagree*; 3 = *Neutral*; 4 = *Agree*; and 5 = *Strongly Agree*). Lastly, fans were asked to fill out general demographic information and a question regarding fan allegiance at the end of the survey.

Procedures

The management of the Lake County Captains as well as the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Cleveland State University approved the study. The survey was distributed at multiple Lake County Captains home baseball games played during the 2013 season (June to August). These games were all played at Classic Park in Eastlake, Ohio. With the help of volunteers, the researcher distributed the surveys at the predetermined baseball games.

Due to the variance in attendees at the baseball games, specific games on specific days of the week were selected for survey distribution. Examples of this include a larger number of families that attend weekend games, the ‘Thirsty Thursday’ food and drink promotion, which is tailored to a more adult crowd, and ‘Monday Buck Night’ which has several food promotions for one dollar.

Tables with surveys, staffed by the volunteers, were set up at the main entrance to the stadium. Once the gates opened, surveys were distributed to fans passing by the concourse tables as researchers walked through the stadium. An announcement informing fans of the survey was read over the PA system. Spectators had the option of taking the survey from the time the gates opened until the end of the 6th inning.

Spectators were able to return the survey to the tables set up on the concourse or let the researchers collect the surveys in-between innings. Those fans who returned a completed survey were entered to win one of several prize packs which consisted of Lake County Captains merchandise and tickets.

Data Analysis

Data was analyzed using PASW Statistics 18 for Windows. Factor Analysis (Reduction) was used to identify the factor structure of the scales. Univariate and Factorial MANOVAs were used to examine the mean differences amongst the spectators of the Lake County Captains in the subsequent classifications of: age, marital status, gender, ethnicity, profession, and income. A Pearson Correlation tested the relationship between the spectators of Lake County Captains baseball games and the sponsoring companies. The significance level was set at $p < .05$.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Demographics of the Participants

Initially, 355 individuals agreed to participate in the study by taking a survey to complete. However, only 299 (82.2%) of the surveys originally distributed were returned to the researchers. Of the 299 returned surveys, 292 were completed and able to be analyzed.

Demographics of the participants are shown in Table 1. It was found that 163 of the participants were female (56%) while 126 were male (44%). Approximately one-third of the participants ($n = 99$) had some college education but no degree, followed by those with an undergraduate degree ($n = 90$). The remaining one-third of the participants either had a high school ($n = 54$) or a graduate degree ($n = 45$). The majority of participants ($n = 66$) had a household income between \$40,001 and \$60,000 followed by participants with a household income of \$60,001-\$80,000 ($n = 51$). Those with a

household income level of \$80,001-\$100,000 ($n = 45$), and participants with an income over \$100,000 ($n = 44$) were nearly identical. There were not as many participants with household income below \$40,000, as there were ($n = 38$) with a household income of \$20,001-\$40,000 and only ($n = 13$) had a household income below \$20,000.

Table 1. Demographics of Participants ($N = 292$)

	<i>N</i>	Percent
Age		
18-25 Years	26	8.9%
26-35 Years	37	12.7%
36-50 Years	111	38.1%
51-65 Years	87	29.9%
Over 65 Years	30	10.3%
Marital Status		
Single	60	20.6%
Married	201	69.1%
Divorced	14	4.8%
Widowed	11	3.8%
Other	5	1.7%
Gender		
Male	126	43.6%
Female	163	56.4%
Household Income		
UNDER \$20,000	13	5.1%
\$20,001-\$40,000	38	14.8%
\$40,001-\$60,000	66	25.7%
\$60,001-\$80,000	51	19.8%
\$80,001-\$100,000	45	17.5%
OVER \$100,000	44	17.1%
Ethnicity		
Caucasian/White	273	93.5%
Black/African American	8	2.7%
Hispanic/Latino	2	0.7%
American Indian/Alaskan	2	0.7%
Asian/Pacific Islander	1	0.3%
Other	6	2.1%

Table 1 (Continued)

	<i>N</i>	Percent
Education		
High School Diploma	54	18.8%
Some College	99	34.4%
Undergraduate Degree	90	31.3%
Graduate Degree	45	15.6%
Occupation		
Management	39	13.6%
Technical	12	4.2%
Medical	29	10.1%
Sales	22	7.7%
Clerical	19	6.6%
Education	25	8.7%
Skilled Worker	19	6.6%
Law/Legal	9	3.1%
Engineering	7	2.4%
Home Maker	16	5.6%
Retired	35	12.2%
Student	11	3.8%
Other	44	15.3%

Table 2. Fan Allegiance (N= 292)

	<i>N</i>	Percent
Allegiance		
I am not a Lake County Captains fan	16	5.5%
I follow the Lake County Captains sometimes	160	55.9%
I consistently follow the Lake County Captains	58	20.3%
The Lake County Captains are my favorite baseball team	52	18.2%

Factor Analysis

Factor structure of the instrument was identified using exploratory factor analysis. Alpha extraction with promax rotation first identified seven factors. Seven items were either loaded on two factors or had factor loading less than .45, and thus were removed. After the refinement, the final scale consisted of four factors comprised of 26 items: Sponsorship (5 items), Brand Loyalty (4 items), Perception (12 items), and Receptiveness (5 items). The alpha reliability of these four factors was .81, .81, .91, .85, respectively as shown in Table 3.

Mean Results of Scale Items

Sponsorship

Many of the participants tended to look through a game day program ($M = 3.61$) while just slightly less seemed to notice who advertised in it ($M = 3.36$). Many participants paid attention to advertising around the stadium ($M = 3.56$) slightly more than in the game day program. However, the participants paid closest attention to the on field activities/contests that took place between innings ($M = 4.15$). These results indicated that the participants were very aware of sponsorship throughout the stadium.

Brand Loyalty

As a whole, participants were not willing to pay a higher price for brands that advertise with the Captains than other similar brands ($M = 2.49$). Although participants did purchase Lake County Captains merchandise when attending the game ($M = 3.07$), it was not necessarily merchandise of a sponsor. Participants were committed to the sponsors of the Captains ($M = 2.91$), which meant that a company that sponsors the team was not more likely to sell its products or services at the game compared to non-sponsors.

Table 3. Factor Analysis of the Scale

Factors	I	II	III	IV
Sponsorship ($\alpha = .81$)				
I look through a game day program at a Captains baseball game.	.59	.05	-.08	.08
I notice who advertises in Captains' game day program.	.82	.00	-.08	.09
I pay attention to advertising around the venue at a Captains game.	.62	.06	.08	-.03
I pay attention to who sponsors a Captains baseball game.	.69	.06	.01	.04
I pay attention to the activities/contests sponsors put on between innings.	.45	-.02	.19	.00
Brand Loyalty ($\alpha = .81$)				
I am willing to pay a higher price for brands that advertise with the Captains than other similar brands.	.02	.75	-.04	-.02
I am more likely to purchase/use a brand that the Captains' coaches/players use.	-.02	.82	-.02	.04
I purchase Captains merchandise when I attend a Captains game.	.06	.60	-.04	-.06
I am committed to the sponsors of the Captains.	.20	.58	.06	.02
Perception ($\alpha = .91$)				
Companies that sponsor the Captains have quality products/services.	.09	.24	.55	-.10
Companies that sponsor the Captains have appropriately priced products/services.	.02	.22	.61	-.07
Companies that sponsor the Captains are well known.	.21	.01	.58	-.08
Companies that sponsor the Captains practice good business habits.	.09	.08	.71	-.08
Companies that sponsor the Captains care about the community.	.08	-.11	.80	-.11
I felt that the sponsors of the Captains show genuine interest in its supporters.	-.01	-.02	.83	-.07
Companies that sponsor the Captains only care about making a profit.	-.23	.04	.64	.12
Companies that sponsor the Captains are good companies to work for.	-.09	-.02	.73	.09
Companies that sponsor the Captains are looked upon favorably.	-.16	.30	.49	.11
I like all sponsors of the Captains because they support my team financially.	.13	-.27	.72	.03
It is good to see a big company sponsoring a local team like the Captains.	.04	-.09	.49	.22
There is a logical connection between the Captains and its sponsors.	-.05	.03	.57	.12
Receptiveness ($\alpha = .85$)				
I am interested in learning more about the sponsors of the Captains.	.04	.11	-.10	.74
I would like to receive information about the products/services of the sponsors.	.02	.12	-.10	.77
I would like to receive coupons/discounts from the sponsors.	.10	-.18	.03	.68
I know more about the sponsors' business since they started sponsoring the Captains.	.05	-.10	.13	.72
A company sponsoring the Captains makes me like them more.	-.08	.10	.29	.47

Perception

In general, participants of the study looked favorably upon sponsors in regards to perception of the companies. They believed that the companies that sponsored the Captains cared about the community ($M = 3.93$) and indicated they showed genuine interest in their supporters ($M = 3.78$). The participants liked the sponsors of the Captains because they supported their team financially ($M = 4.22$). Participants agreed that it was good to see a big company sponsoring a local team like the Captains ($M = 3.63$). Of all those factors, perception had the highest overall mean value. Participants of the study had a very high perception of the companies that sponsored the Lake County Captains. This is good for companies that are looking to increase their overall image and public perception.

Receptiveness

Participants did not want to learn more about the sponsors of the Captains ($M = 2.90$) or receive information about the products/services of the sponsors ($M = 2.94$). However, participants knew more about the sponsors' business since they started sponsoring the Captains ($M = 3.13$). In addition, participants were very receptive to the idea of receiving coupons/discounts from the sponsoring companies of the Lake County Captains ($M = 3.65$). Notwithstanding the fans' lack of interest, sponsors of the Captains could increase knowledge of their company to their target audience. Descriptive statistics of all the items of those four factors is depicted in Table 4.

Table 4. Mean Results of the Scale Items (N = 292)

Factors	Mean	±SD
Sponsorship		
I look through a game day program at a Captains baseball game.	3.62	±1.44
I notice who advertises in Captains' game day program.	3.36	±1.30
I pay attention to advertising around the venue at a Captains game.	3.56	±1.11
I pay attention to who sponsors a Captains baseball game.	3.48	±1.17
I pay attention to the activities/contests sponsors put on between innings.	4.15	±0.92
Brand Loyalty		
I am willing to pay a higher price for brands that advertise with the Captains than other similar brands.	2.49	±1.02
I am more likely to purchase/use a brand that the Captains' coaches/players use.	2.72	±1.01
I purchase Lake County Captains merchandise when I attend a Captains game.	3.07	±1.13
I am committed to the sponsors of the Captains.	2.91	±1.11
Perception		
Companies that sponsor the Captains have quality products/services.	3.64	±0.79
Companies that sponsor the Captains have appropriately priced products/services.	3.50	±0.74
Companies that sponsor the Captains are well known.	3.87	±0.78
Companies that sponsor the Captains practice good business habits.	3.62	±0.81
Companies that sponsor the Captains care about the community.	3.93	±0.87
I felt that the sponsors of the Captains show genuine interest in its supporters.	3.78	±0.79
Companies that sponsor the Captains only care about making a profit.	3.49	±0.71
Companies that sponsor the Captains are good companies to work for.	3.69	±0.71
Companies that sponsor the Captains are looked upon favorably.	3.41	±0.79
I like all sponsors of the Captains because they support my team financially.	4.22	±0.82
It is good to see a big company sponsoring a local team like the Captains.	3.63	±0.89
There is a logical connection between the Captains and its sponsors.	3.55	±0.83
Receptiveness		
I am interested in learning more about the sponsors of the Captains.	2.90	±0.99
I would like to receive information about the products/services of the sponsors.	2.94	±1.05
I would like to receive coupons/discounts from the sponsors.	3.65	±1.04
I know more about the sponsors' business since they started sponsoring the Captains.	3.13	±1.00
A company sponsoring the Captains makes me like them more.	3.30	±1.05

Allegiance

A one-way MANOVA was used to compare the impact of allegiance on sponsorship, brand loyalty, perception, and receptiveness. There was a significant effect for the allegiance model ($F_{12, 738} = 3.803, p < .001$; Wilk's $\Lambda = .853$). Follow-up univariate ANOVAs indicated the level of allegiance was significantly different in all of the four areas under investigation: sponsorship ($F_{3, 282} = 9.429, p < .001$), brand loyalty ($F_{3, 282} = 5.626, p < .001$), perception of sponsorship ($F_{3, 282} = 3.022, p < .001$), and receptiveness towards sponsors ($F_{3, 282} = 5.332, p < .001$). Fans with higher levels of allegiance in general were more favorable with the team sponsorship than their counterparts. Specifically, there were no significant ($p > .05$) differences in the perception of sponsorship between non-Captains fans ($M = 3.11 \pm .99$) and those who followed the team sometimes ($M = 3.47 \pm .87$) as well as between fans who consistently followed the team ($M = 3.98 \pm .75$) and those who considered the Captains as their favorable baseball team ($M = 3.96 \pm .88$). However, fans who consistently followed the team had significantly ($p < .001$) higher sponsorship perception scores than those non-Captains fans or those who followed the team sometimes. Likewise, fans those who considered the Captains as their favorable baseball team had significantly higher sponsorship scores than those non-Captains fans ($p = .001$) or those who followed the team sometimes ($p < .001$).

Similar results were found in brand loyalty. There were no significant ($p > .05$) differences in brand loyalty between non-Captains fans ($M = 2.41 \pm .94$) and those who followed the team sometimes ($M = 2.64 \pm .80$) as well as between fans who consistently followed the team ($M = 3.12 \pm .87$) and those who considered the Captains as their

favorable baseball team ($M = 3.09 \pm .77$). However, fans who consistently followed the team had a significantly higher level of brand loyalty than those non-Captains fans ($p = .002$) or those who followed the team sometimes ($p < .001$). Correspondingly, fans those who considered the Captains as their favorable baseball team had a significantly higher level of brand loyalty than those non-Captains fans ($p = .004$) or those who followed the team sometimes ($p = .001$).

In terms of perception toward sponsors, no significant ($p > .05$) differences were found between fans who consistently followed the team ($M = 3.92 \pm .57$) and those who considered the Captains as their favorable baseball team ($M = 3.88 \pm .48$). Nevertheless, fans who followed the team sometimes ($M = 3.60 \pm .54$) had significant ($p = .020$) higher perception scores than those non-Captains fans ($M = 3.27 \pm .52$); whereas fans who consistently followed the team or those fans who considered the Captains as their favorable baseball team had significantly ($p < .001$) higher level of perception than those people who followed the team sometimes as well as those non-Captains fans. On the other hand, the outcomes of receptiveness were similar to those of the perception toward sponsors. There were no significant ($p > .05$) differences between fans who consistently followed the team ($M = 3.44 \pm .81$) and those who considered the Captains as their favorable baseball team ($M = 3.47 \pm .60$). Yet, fans who followed the Captains sometimes ($M = 3.05 \pm .81$) had significantly ($p = .031$) higher receptiveness scores than those non-Captains fans ($M = 2.61 \pm .79$); whereas fans who consistently followed the team and those who considered the Captains as their favorable baseball team also had significantly ($p < .001$) higher receptiveness scores than their counterparts.

Education

To examine the impact of education on sponsorship, brand loyalty, perception, and receptiveness, a one-way MANOVA was used for data analysis. The results indicated the model was significant ($F_{12, 744} = 2.033, p = .019$; Wilk's $\Lambda = .918$). Follow-up univariate ANOVAs indicated education level was significantly ($p < .05$) different in three of those four areas under investigation: sponsorship ($F_{3, 284} = 3.509, p = .016$), brand loyalty ($F_{3, 284} = 7.135, p = .018$), perception of sponsorship ($F_{3, 284} = 1.971, p = .119$), and receptiveness towards sponsors ($F_{3, 284} = 2.759, p = .043$). Post hoc comparisons indicated the sponsorship scores of those participants who had some college ($M = 3.66 \pm .85$) did not significantly ($p > .05$) differ from people who had a high school diploma ($M = 3.92 \pm .82$) as well as those who received an undergraduate degree ($M = 3.55 \pm .96$) or a graduate degree ($M = 3.36 \pm .93$). However, people with a high school diploma had significantly higher sponsorship scores than those who had an undergraduate degree ($p = .017$) or a graduate degree ($p = .002$).

In terms of brand loyalty, there were no significant ($p > .05$) differences among those who had a high school diploma ($M = 3.02 \pm .81$), some college ($M = 2.83 \pm .89$), or an undergraduate degree ($M = 2.76 \pm .81$) as well as no significant ($p > .05$) differences between those who had an undergraduate degree and those people with a graduate degree ($M = 2.49 \pm .78$). However, those with a graduate degree had significantly lower brand loyalty scores than those fans with a high school diploma ($p = .002$) or those who had some college ($p = .025$). On the other hand, the receptiveness scores of those fans with some college ($M = 3.33 \pm .74$) were significantly ($p = .005$) higher than those with a

graduate degree ($M = 2.92 \pm .87$). No significant ($p > .05$) differences were found among other groups in receptiveness.

Income

A one-way MANOVA was also utilized to investigate the impact of income level on sponsorship, brand loyalty, perception, and receptiveness. No significant effect was found for income ($F_{20, 823} = 1.1316, p = .160$; Wilk's $\Lambda = .901$). In other words, sponsorship, brand loyalty, perception, and receptiveness were not influenced by the income level of the participants.

Gender

In order to assess the influence of gender on sponsorship, brand loyalty, perception, and receptiveness, a one-way MANOVA was employed for data analysis. No significant effect was found for gender ($F_{4, 248} = .648, p = .629$; Wilk's $\Lambda = .991$). This indicated that sponsorship, brand loyalty, perception, or receptiveness was not influenced by gender.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to evaluate brand loyalty, perception, receptiveness, and recollection of fans of the Lake County Captains on the companies that sponsor the team. The goal was to understand how well sponsorship works and to what extent opinions about sponsorship may vary between demographics. After the survey was completed, factor structure of the survey was analyzed using EFA. Six items were removed from the initial scale, leaving 26 items fixed to four factors. The four factors all had an alpha reliability over .80. The alpha reliability of the four factors was: Sponsorship ($\alpha = .812$), Brand Loyalty ($\alpha = .808$), Perception ($\alpha = .909$), and Receptiveness ($\alpha = .846$). Having an alpha reliability this high indicates that the scale is reliable in testing for these factors. In the following discussion each factor will be discussed in further detail and how each factor related to the selected demographic will be examined.

Sponsorship

The results indicated that spectators paid attention to sponsorship in general, while activities/contests sponsors put on between innings was where spectators agreed they paid closest attention to sponsors during an event. This might be a result of the down time between innings and the fact that fans were not missing part of the game by paying attention to sponsorship at this time.

Brand Loyalty

The results indicated that spectators were not brand loyal to the companies that sponsor the Lake County Captains. In fact, brand loyalty had the overall lowest mean scores for any factor in the study. One possible reason for this was that the companies sponsoring the team may not have been sponsors for any significant length of time and thus, had not gained the loyalty of the fans who attended the games. Another explanation was that there were other, stronger factors besides sponsorship at Captain's games that play into an individual's loyalty to a specific brand. An example of this would be that participants in the study might become brand loyal through other means besides the Lake County Captains baseball games. Participants might not take into account sports sponsorship when choosing a brand to purchase or use.

Perception

The results of this study showed that individuals who attended the Lake County Captains baseball games had a very high perception of the companies that sponsor the team. Despite not being brand loyal to the companies, sponsors were seen in a positive manner. There were several explanations as to why spectators had a high perception of the sponsoring companies but were not brand loyal. One possibility is that the

individuals in attendance did not have a need or desire for the products and services advertised at the games. Perception had the highest overall mean score of any factor in the study.

Receptiveness

The receptiveness of sponsorship by spectators fluctuated as shown by the mean scores in this factor. Spectators who attended Lake County Captain's games were not very interested in learning about the team sponsors, but were more receptive to receiving coupons/discounts from those sponsors. Lack of interest in learning more about the companies might coincide with the fact that spectators were not brand loyal to the sponsoring companies. Since coupons and discounts were important to the spectators, sponsors providing such coupons/discounts at the games might contribute to a higher overall perception of the companies.

Differences in Allegiance

In this study, a majority of the participants (55.9%) followed the Lake County Captains sometimes. This is the second lowest response of the four possible outcomes for this item. This directly correlated with the fact that a majority of the people attending Captain's games were 'casual fans', fans that attend a few games a year, as opposed to season ticket holders who would have a stronger allegiance to the team. This makes sense for a minor league team. According to Funk and Jam (2006), team allegiance is built around specific items, mainly: nostalgia, escape, star player, success of the team, peer group acceptance, logo design, and tradition. Many of these items can explain why the majority of the sample did not have a strong allegiance towards the Lake County Captains. Since the Lake County Captains have only been around since 2002 and have

had fluctuating success, it can be challenging to build nostalgia and rally behind an inconsistent and relatively new team. Due to the nature of minor league baseball, it is hard to keep a star player for any length of time, as they will quickly be promoted to the next level. In this case, nostalgia, star player, and success of the team can be detrimental in the minds of spectators and negatively affect team allegiance.

In this study, it was hypothesized that there would be significant differences in the awareness of sponsorship, perception of brand loyalty, perception of sponsorship, and receptiveness of sponsorship amongst allegiance levels. The results indicated that hypothesis one (H1) was accepted as there were significant differences amongst allegiance in all four factors. In this case, sponsoring companies may want to gear advertisements and promotions towards spectators that do not frequently attend games. Spectators who consistently follow the Lake County Captains and those who say the Captains are their favorite team have a much higher overall mean score for all four factors when compared to spectators that are not fans or only follow the team occasionally. Since a majority of spectators only follow the team sometimes, it may be wise to try and close the gap between how these spectators feel compared to the feelings of those who have a stronger allegiance to the team.

Differences in Gender

A majority of the participants (56.4%) in this study were female. Although there were more females represented than males in the survey, the numbers are not far off when compared to gender attendance percentages in professional sports. A decade ago Adams (2003) reported that in sports such as MLB (47% female) and NBA (46% female), the male-female ratio is nearly 50-50. The gender makeup of sports fans was

much closer than many may have previously thought. Many teams and leagues have made a concerted effort to attract a more diverse fan base by becoming creative with promotions and the overall experience at the stadium or arena.

Previous studies such as Ridinger and Funk (2006) found that women rate motive factors for attending sporting events significantly higher than males. Understanding the factors that motivate spectators to attend sporting events is important for sponsoring companies since they can gain insight into the habits of those attending the events. This, in turn, enables more effective marketing campaigns.

In this study, it was hypothesized that there would be significant differences in the awareness of sponsorship, perception of brand loyalty, perception of sponsorship, and receptiveness of sponsorship amongst gender. The results indicated that hypothesis two (H2) was rejected, as there was not a significant difference amongst gender in any of the four factors.

Differences in Education Level

In this study, approximately one-third of the respondents (34.4%) had completed some college coursework but did not have a bachelor's degree. Nearly half of all participants (47%) had a bachelor's or graduate degree.

It was hypothesized that there would be significant differences in the awareness of sponsorship, perception of brand loyalty, perception of sponsorship, and receptiveness of sponsorship amongst education levels. The results indicated that hypothesis three (H3) was accepted as there were significant differences amongst different education levels in three of the four factors. It was found that there was a significant difference amongst awareness of sponsorship, perception of brand loyalty and receptiveness of sponsorship.

Awareness of sponsorship differed between having a high school diploma and having an undergraduate or graduate degree. Those with a high school diploma were more aware of sponsorship than those with a higher education. In terms of brand loyalty, there was a significant difference between having a graduate degree and a high school diploma or having completed some college. Those with a graduate degree scored much lower than those that had a high school diploma or completed some college. One possible explanation for why those with a high school diploma scored higher is that they were more aware of sponsorship. They may have recognized sponsoring brands and were more willing to be brand loyal to those brands they were familiar with. There was a higher receptiveness of sponsorship by those that completed some college compared to those with a graduate degree. One reason those that only completed some college were more receptive to sponsors than those with a graduate degree could have been because they were also more brand loyal. The increased brand loyalty shown by those that completed some college could have easily transferred to receptiveness of those same sponsors. The only factor that was not significantly different was perception of sponsorship.

Differences in Income

According to the results of this study, a majority (25.7%) of the participants had a household income between \$40,001 and \$60,000. This aligns with the 2012 United States Census, which found the average household income in 2011 was \$51,324. It was found that most of participants (54.4%) had a household income above \$60,000. This indicates that the sample of this study had a significantly larger than average household income when compared to the general population of the United States. Although the

household income of participants in this study was much greater than the national average, those that completed the survey can still be considered price conscious. A majority of the respondents were not willing to pay a higher price for brands that advertised with the Captains than for similar brands. Companies need to understand that being a sponsor of the Captains would not give them the advantage to charge a higher price and expect consumers to purchase their products over similar brands. In addition, a majority would like to receive coupons/discounts from the sponsoring companies. One advantage a sponsor of the Captains could have in this instance is the accessibility to the fans in order to distribute the coupons and discounts they desire, giving them a chance to earn more business. This could be a way to earn new business, by having people try their products at a discount to find out they would like to continue to use them.

It was hypothesized that there would be significant differences in the awareness of sponsorship, perception of brand loyalty, perception of sponsorship, and receptiveness of sponsorship amongst income levels. The results indicated that hypothesis four (H4) was rejected. There was not a significant difference amongst income levels when related to the four factors of this study. Levin et al. (2004) also found that income was not a significant factor when relating to the NASCAR Fan Identification Index, which looked at fan allegiance and brand loyalty. To a certain extent, the fan base income should not be a significant concern for companies when deciding if they should become a team sponsor and/or what products or services they should advertise. This may not be significant partly due to product fit. It is highly probable that companies that produce expensive products for a majority of a fan base, or that a majority of a fan base have no use for, do not choose to sponsor a specific team. This eliminates a significant difference

amongst income levels when only a small portion of the fan base would have interest. Nevertheless, companies should consider providing fans with an incentive, such as a coupon or special discount, to entice them to use their products.

Limitations

As with any research, limitations existed in this study. The sample of this study came from spectators of a single minor league baseball team. This sample may not be a good representation of all minor league baseball fans in the U.S. Samples from other teams and stadiums in other parts of the country should be used in future studies.

Although many of the demographics were very diverse, several were not. Reliability of the results may be affected since some demographics were not represented as strongly as others. Of all the participants surveyed, a majority (93.5%) were Caucasian. This may not reflect the overall population of minor league baseball spectators around the country. In addition, a majority (68%) of participants were between the ages of 36 and 65 years. These ages may not accurately reflect the sponsorship opinions of those younger than 36 or older than 65.

Weather was a big obstacle throughout the study. The initial game that was selected to begin surveying was rained out before the gates opened. Two of the additional games in which research was conducted were shortened due to inclement weather. This not only shortened the amount of time surveys were distributed and collected, but it also caused participants to become distracted as the severe weather approached the stadium. Any time an event is held outdoors, weather can be a factor.

Future Research

Future research should examine teams in other class-levels (e.g., Double A and Triple A) and teams outside of the Midwest League. Research should be conducted in other cities and states. It would also be ideal to have a larger sample size. Future research may consider grouping sponsors into different categories in order to get an in-depth understanding of opinions and feelings of different types of sponsorship.

Conclusions

In this study, the majority of the participants were Caucasian (93.5%), females (56.4%) between the ages of 36-50 years (38.1%). Although a majority of the participants only followed the Lake County Captains sometimes (55.9%), the fans who consistently followed the team or those participants who said the Captains were their favorite baseball team rated all four factors the highest. The overall feeling towards sponsorship was positive amongst the spectators. The participants took notice of sponsors in different locations throughout the stadium, with the most frequent being on field activities that the sponsors hosted in-between innings. Participants were not very brand loyal towards the sponsors of the Lake County Captains. Most participants were not willing to pay a higher price for the brands that advertise with the Captains compared to other similar brands. Perception of the team's sponsors was the highest among any of the four factors in the study. The participants of the study saw the sponsoring companies in a very positive light. Most spectators had a very high perception of the companies that sponsored the Captains due to their financial support of the team. The positive perception of the sponsoring companies did not just revolve around sports. Many participants of the study rated the sponsoring companies as good companies to work for

and as companies that care about the surrounding communities. Participants were more interested in receiving coupons and discounts from the companies than in learning about the products and services offered by them. Sponsors of the Lake County Captains should consider providing fans of the team with more coupons to entice them to use their products and services.

This research is important to the Lake County Captains organization and the sponsors as well as potential sponsors of the team. Understanding this information can allow companies that are currently sponsoring or are considering becoming a sponsor of the Captains a better understanding of the fans. In this case companies looking to boost their reputation may strongly consider a sponsorship while companies looking to sell more products and services may not find a desirable outcome through a sponsorship.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

SPORTS SPONSORSHIP: FAN LOYALTY AND PERCEPTION

PURPOSE: This survey is for the purpose of understanding relationships between sponsors and fans of baseball games at Classic Park home of the Lake County Captains. This survey is voluntary and any information collected is confidential and will be solely used for research. The completion of this survey constitutes your consent to participate in this study. We thank you in advance for your participation. Please be as honest as possible and respond to all questions and one survey per person.

DECISION INFORMATION: The following statements are indicative of specific motives. Please circle the appropriate number that best describes the degree to which you DISAGREE or AGREE with each statement.

1 = 0% of the time, 2 = 25% of the time, 3 = 50% of the time, 4 = 75% of the time, and 5 = 100% of the time

Sponsorship	0	25	50	75	100
1. I look through a game day program at a Captains baseball game.	1	2	3	4	5
2. I notice who advertises in Captains' game day program.	1	2	3	4	5
3. I use any coupons or discounts distributed to me before or after a game.	1	2	3	4	5
4. I use the coupon or discount on the back of my ticket.	1	2	3	4	5
5. I pay attention to advertising around the venue at a Captains game.	1	2	3	4	5
6. I pay attention to who sponsors a Captains baseball game.	1	2	3	4	5
7. I pay attention to the activities/contests sponsors put on between innings.	1	2	3	4	5
1 = Strongly Disagree (SD), 2 = Disagree (D), 3 = Neutral (N), 4 = Agree (A), 5 = Strongly Agree (SA)					
Brand Loyalty	SD	D	N	A	SA
1. I am more likely to purchase/use a brand if they advertise with the Captains.	1	2	3	4	5
2. If all else is equal, I would prefer to purchase a brand that advertises with the Captains over another similar brand.	1	2	3	4	5
3. I am willing to pay a higher price for brands that advertise with the Captains than other similar brands.	1	2	3	4	5
4. I am more likely to purchase/use a brand that the Captains' coaches/players use.	1	2	3	4	5
5. I purchase Lake County Captains merchandise when I attend a Captains game.	1	2	3	4	5
6. I am committed to the sponsors of the Captains.	1	2	3	4	5
Perception	SD	D	N	A	SA
1. Companies that sponsor the Captains have quality products/services.	1	2	3	4	5
2. Companies that sponsor the Captains have appropriately priced products/services.	1	2	3	4	5
3. Companies that sponsor the Captains are well known.	1	2	3	4	5
4. Companies that sponsor the Captains practice good business habits.	1	2	3	4	5
5. Companies that sponsor the Captains care about the community.	1	2	3	4	5
6. I feel that the sponsors of the Captains show genuine interest in its supporters.	1	2	3	4	5
7. Companies that sponsor the Captains care about their customers.	1	2	3	4	5
8. Companies that sponsor the Captains only care about making a profit.	1	2	3	4	5
9. Companies that sponsor the Captains are good companies to work for.	1	2	3	4	5
10. Companies that sponsor the Captains are looked upon favorably.	1	2	3	4	5

11. Companies that sponsor the Captains are companies I prefer to purchase from.	1	2	3	4	5
12. I like all sponsors of the Captains because they support my team financially.	1	2	3	4	5
13. It is good to see a big company sponsoring a local team like the Captains.	1	2	3	4	5
14. There is a logical connection between the Captains and its sponsors.	1	2	3	4	5
15. The image of the Captains and the image of its sponsors are similar.	1	2	3	4	5
Receptiveness	SD	D	N	A	SA
1. I am interested in learning more about the sponsors of the Captains.	1	2	3	4	5
2. I would like to receive information about the products/services of sponsors.	1	2	3	4	5
3. I would like to receive coupons/discounts from the sponsors.	1	2	3	4	5
4. I know more about the sponsors' business since they started sponsoring the Captains.	1	2	3	4	5
5. A company sponsoring the Captains makes me like them more.	1	2	3	4	5

Sponsorship Recollection:

- Who is the official sponsor of the Skipper's Lil' Buddies Club? _____
- Which two radio sponsors broadcast Captains baseball games? _____

Media:

- I read about the Captains athletics in the newspaper. ¹ YES ² NO
If yes, which newspaper? _____
- I listen to the radio when they talk about the Captains ¹ YES ² NO
If yes, which radio station? _____
- I listen to the Captains games when they are broadcast on the radio ¹ YES ² NO
If yes, which station? _____
- Where do find the most information regarding the Captains event sponsorship? (Check One)
¹ Scoreboard signs ² Scoreboard messages ³ PA announcements ⁴ On-field promotions
⁵ Concessions area ⁶ Media guides ⁷ Game day handout ⁸ Other (specify) _____

Please rate your fandom in relation to the Lake County Captains

- ¹ I am not a Lake County Captains fan ² I follow Lake County Captains sometimes
³ I consistently follow the Lake County Captains ⁴ My favorite baseball team is the Lake County Captains

DEMOGRAPHICS: (Please check only one answer to each item)

- How old are you?** ¹ Under 18 years ² 18-25 years ³ 26-35 years ⁴ 36-50 years
⁵ 51-65 years ⁶ Over 65 years
- Marital Status (check one):** ¹ Single ² Married ³ Divorced ⁴ Widowed
⁵ Other (specify) _____
- How far did you travel?** ¹ Less than 5 miles ² 5-10 miles ³ 11-15 miles
⁴ 16-20 miles ⁵ 21-25 miles ⁶ 26-30 miles ⁷ Over 30 miles
- Gender:** ¹ Male ² Female

5. **Household size:** _____ (total number of people living in the house)

6. **Ethnicity (check one):** ¹ Caucasian/White ² Black/African American
³ Hispanic/Latino ⁴ Am Indian/Alaskan Native ⁵ Asian/Pacific Islander
⁶ Other (specify): _____

7. **Highest Education Level:** ¹ Some High School ² High School Diploma
³ Associate Degree ⁴ College Degree ⁵ Master's Degree ⁶ Doctoral Degree
⁷ Other _____

8. **Occupation (check one):** ¹ Management ² Technical ³ Medical ⁴ Sales
⁵ Clerical ⁶ Education ⁷ Skill worker ⁸ Law/Legal ⁹ Engineering
¹⁰ Home maker ¹¹ Retired ¹² Student ¹³ Other (specify) _____

9. **Annual Household Income (before taxes):** ¹ Under \$20,000 ² \$20,000-\$40,000
³ \$40,001-\$60,000 ⁴ \$60,001-\$80,000 ⁵ \$80,001-\$100,000 ⁶ \$100,000+

10. **How many Lake County Captains games have you attended in the last month before today?**

¹ 0 contest ² 1-3 contests ³ 3-5 contests ⁴ More than 5 contests

What is your Section _____ of today's game?

Appendix B

LAKE COUNTY CAPTAINS APPROVAL LETTER



Mark Weissman
Office Assistant, Health and Human Performance
Cleveland State University

Dear Mark,

Please accept this letter as permission from the Lake County Captains for you to conduct your fan survey during mutually agreed upon home games at Classic Park. The survey you provided to me and the questions it contains are approved as well.

If you have any other questions I can be reached via e-mail at nstein@captainsbaseball.com or via phone at 440-975-8085.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Neil Stein".

Neil Stein
Assistant General Manager
Lake County Captains
35300 Vine Street
Eastlake, OH 44095



Appendix C

EXAMPLE LIST OF LAKE COUNTY CAPTAINS SPONSORSHIP

Collection Automotive Group (Naming Rights to Stadium)

Dick's Sporting Goods

Discount Drug Mart

ERC Health

Lake County Solid Waste District

Lake Health

Ohio Lottery

PNC Bank

Universal Windows

Yellow Pages