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Abstract

High school sports are popular in the United States and the associated state championships are often publicized, well-attended special events providing an economic impact on host communities. Understanding attendees, particularly those variables affecting market demand for high-profile interscholastic sporting events, would help athletic directors and state associations improve marketing efforts. Through an abridged adoption of the Theory of Reason Action, this study was conducted to develop a consumer profile of high school tournament spectators by understanding their sociodemographic characteristics and market demand variables. Based on a review of literature, we identified four market demand factors to influence attendance (Event Attractiveness, Economic Consideration, Local Attractiveness, and Venue Accessibility) and studied high school regional basketball tournament attendees ($N = 647$). The factors were tested in a confirmatory factor analysis and t-tests and general linear model found three of the factors influenced attendance, while one influenced economic spending.

Introduction

Interscholastic sports are a fundamental student activity and popular extracurricular activity in high schools. In the United States, more than 7 million students regularly participate in high school sports, comprising approximately 75% of all high school students (National Federation of State High School Associations [NFHS], 2014). In addition to the popularity to students, high school athletics can provide excitement for their respective communities (Coakley, 2015; NFHS, 2014). In fact, more than 500 million spectators attended high school athletics events in 2011 (Howard, 2011). Additionally, some people attend high school sporting events three times more often than collegiate and professional sports combined (PlayOn! Sports, 2014). Basketball is the most popular sport in terms of number of teams and spectators, with about 170 million event attendees in 2011 (Howard, 2011; NFHS, 2013, 2014). Despite the popularity, little research can

be found on the understanding of high school sporting event attendees.

In the US, interest in high school sporting events is at an all-time high. This interest is reflected in attendance and media coverage via television and internet broadcasts of high school sporting events, from regular season to state playoffs (PlayOn! Sports, 2014). The attention has led to an arms race of sorts, similar to college programs. There is an increased focus on winning, leading to competition among high school athletic departments to provide better facilities, equipment, and/or coaches' salaries (Coakley, 2015). However, many high school athletic departments have struggled with the increase in costs of program operations, Title IX compliance, budget competition among sport teams within an athletic program, market competitions, and budget cuts in state funding (Garcia, 2009; Pierce & Peterson, 2011).

Similarly, championship events at the district, regional, and state levels are an important part of high school athletics and also major revenue generation opportunities for the governing bodies. Yet, high school state associations also face challenges in generating funding. From a state high school athletic association vantage point, managing state championships has increased in cost despite their increased publicity in recent years. The impact of community support on the financial success of high school sports is important (Bravo, 2004; Pierce & Peterson, 2011). Given the revenue generation concerns, many schools have turned to private funding/boosters, community support, creative fundraising efforts, advertising, sponsorships, television rights, and/or a “pay to play” option (Bussell & Pierce, 2011; Cook, 2013; Pierce & Peterson, 2011). High school associations also rely on sponsorships, media rights, and ticket revenue of their regional or playoff events. High school sports leaders, at both the school level and state association level, would benefit from market research on their consumers to better prepare and implement marketing efforts, as well as to drive consumption/attendance or improve community support.

Earlier sport marketing studies focused on answering who the consumers were, how many there were, and where they were from. More recent research focuses have progressed toward studying those tangible perspectives explaining why people consume a sport product. One such a perspective is the concept of market demand, which relates to consumer-perceived influence or expectations towards the attributes of the core product (Zhang, Lam, & Connaughton, 2003). Essentially, market demand is a cluster of pull factors associated with the game that an organization can offer to its new and returning spectators. It is comprised of a multitude of belief (i.e., cognitive-oriented) variables that may predict sport consumption behavior (Braunstein, Zhang, Trail, & Gibson, 2005; Byon, Zhang, & Connaughton, 2013; Hansen & Gauthier, 1989; Schofield, 1983). Previously, market demand research has been utilized to identify key factors that influence spectators’ consumption, including attendance and economic spending at sporting events, in a variety of settings, such as professional sports (e.g., NBA, minor league hockey, expansion teams, etc.), intercollegiate athletics, and participatory sports (e.g., taekwondo). Although findings of these studies can be useful references for guiding the formulation of marketing plans for high school sports, unique market context and environment associated with high school sports, such as comparatively more parental and family involvement, local competition, and intensive tournament schedule, may require specific considerations when developing marketing procedures. Therefore, the

purpose of this study was to examine the sociodemographics of high school tournament attendees for market segmentation purposes and explore the market demand factors of these events, with relation to past and future consumption. Because high school basketball is the most popular sport in the US in terms of the number of teams and attendance according to the NFHS, we chose to examine a high school basketball state tournament in this study.

Theoretical Background

High School Sports Market Environment

Public high school athletics are funded through the school’s annual budget provided to the school by the district or state (Bravo, 2004). In addition to state funding, high school athletic budgets rely on revenue generated through fundraising efforts from private donations of parents and community supporters/boosters. To offset the current wide-range of budget cuts for educational services, schools are becoming more reliant on creative revenue generations and commercialism to support the athletic department, such as sponsorships, ticket sales, concessions, and donations from boosters and community support (Bravo, 2004; Coakley, 2015; Pierce & Bussell, 2011). The concept of “pay to play,” by charging student activity fees, is also prevailing in high schools, which at times is coupled by reduction in the number of competitions, travel costs, equipment expenditures, and even an entire sport in an effort to cope with financial shortage (Cook, 2013).

In an effort to maximize community support through activities such as fundraising, advertising, sponsorships, or event attendance, it is important to understand how high school teams typically receive the support. Oftentimes, successful high school sport teams receive more administrative attention and support, leading to more funding. For example, a local high school football team that is of perennial state champion caliber would receive local or possibly national publicity. This may result in more stress on that school and program to be successful, maintain the coaching staff, and provide better facilities. This emphasis on winning can also lead to more parental, alumnus, and community support, which may translate into increased booster giving, sponsorship dollars, and income from event attendance (Pierce & Peterson, 2011). The potential financial resources as a result of winning are essential for maintaining and growing athletic programs. Additionally, as parents and the community become more connected and involved with high school sports, they are more likely to support favorable budget measures when public funding is dis-

cussed and voted on during political forums and elections (Garcia, 2009).

In fact, there is a conflicting paradox as high school sports have become competitive and commercialized. Some private schools have adopted recruiting techniques and provided scholarships to attract athletic talents, just like college athletics. Similar to college athletics, high school programs may be involved in an arms race against other schools for funding and providing state-of-the-art facilities; however, on the high school level it involves the local community. For example, Allen High School in Texas has an 18,000-seat, \$60-million football stadium, which was funded through city approved bonds ("Allen High School Facility," 2012). The support of the community comes from the realization that the stadium and successful sport team can be a focus and pride point for the city. To become a state champion and continuously gain the recognition that this town may be interested in, the school's football program has seen unprecedented financial support from various sources ("Allen High School Facility," 2012).

In the US, high school sports have a well-established competition system that is comprised of district, regional, state, and even national championships. The NFHS organizes and regulates rules, officiating, coaching certifications, and competition (NFHS, 2014). The respective state high school associations organize the state championships for the sponsored activities. These governing bodies manage the playoff system for each sport, such as hosting regional events leading to the state championships (NFHS, 2014). The playoff and championship tournaments are popular for the players, their families and friends, and the surrounding communities, as they are a platform for the best teams to compete at a high level for a coveted championship. Families and community members often choose to travel to the regional and state championship games to support the student-athletes. Revenue generated from regional and state championship events provides increased resources for both the involved teams, through subsequent community support, and the state association, via sponsors, media, and ticket revenue. Hosting these events can also be an economic boost and a source of pride for the host organization and community involved. The host city may vary from year to year. Yet, the draw of top competitions, attendees, businesses, and local media are factors that may benefit a host city. Similar to other sporting events, increased attendance generates revenue through the ticket sales, concessions, merchandise, and other tourism expenditures in addition to adding value to the event sponsorships. It is becoming increasingly apparent that community support and event attendance are criti-

cal for the survival and success of high school sports in the US.

It is important to note that high school basketball regional tournaments have a number of unique characteristics, when compared to other sporting events. High school basketball tournaments usually feature a number of teams participating (e.g., 32 teams in the current study: 16 boys and 16 girls teams), with multiple games usually being held simultaneously in the afternoon and evening (e.g., six games in the current study). The tournament event is usually held within a short period of time (e.g., four days in the current study) in an effort to be fiscally efficient for the host organization and the competing teams. There is usually a large audience affiliated with one or possibly more teams in some way (e.g., parents, same town). Thus, the tournaments' characteristics lend themselves to further study of their potential factors that may impact attendees. These unique characteristics often lead to a large crowd, audience mobility, intensive traffic, and strong consumer demand on venue accessibility, such as parking, crowd control, traffic convenience, and facility cleanliness. Due to the single-elimination mechanism of the tournament and the small-scale event nature, local tourism attractions often play a significant role in drawing consumers to the event (Byon & Zhang, 2010). Understanding the makeup of the event consumers and those factors affecting event attendance would be beneficial for effectively marketing and operating the event.

Consumption and Market Segmentation

Researchers often focus on past, present, and future consumption behaviors when examining consumption levels of individuals (Mullin, Hardy, & Sutton, 2007). In sports, game/event consumption can be measured through game attendance, tournament event attendance, and event sport tourism expenditure. Secondary revenue sources include annual giving (boosters), merchandise, concessions, parking, program book, stadium/arena signage/advertising, and sponsorships. One approach to understanding the different levels of spectator game consumption is through market segmentation. According to Mullin et al. (2007) and Pitts and Stotlar (2013), market segmentation is central to the understanding of sport consumer behavior. Market segmentation can provide crucial information to better explain event attendance. Weinstein (1994) indicated that market segmentation is the process of partitioning markets into groups of potential customers with similar needs or characteristics, who are likely to exhibit similar consumption behaviors. Of the various segmentation procedures, sociodemographics (state of being), psychographics (state of mind), and their rela-

tionships to consumption behaviors are the most often adopted approaches to study consumer behavior. Acknowledging the differences in consumers' backgrounds and consumption frequencies and grouping consumers accordingly into market segments are primary steps in the marketing process. Specifically, understanding market segmentation, sociodemographics, and market demand factors and their relationships to consumer past attendance, future attendance, and economic tourism spending is of concern in this study.

Researchers have identified a number of sociodemographic variables that are associated with the level of sport event consumption, where participation rates within activities are highly correlated with certain demographics (Pitts & Stotlar, 2013). Attendance rates at different events are highly correlated with certain demographic segments such as gender, age, ethnicity, family income, family size, marital status, education, and occupation. When considering high school basketball, people most likely to attend are those related to the student body (e.g., student athletes) of a high school (family, friends, students, and faculty/staff). Previous findings were primarily derived from the frequency counting of spectators, which are relevant to promotional procedures used to attract new spectators from the targeted population. To retain current specta-

tors and enhance their own consumption levels, sociodemographic variables need to be studied with other marketing variables on how they function together to elevate attendance frequencies (Williamson, Zhang, Pease, & Gaa, 2003). Beyond market segmentation based on sociodemographics, consumer demand for the core product features of a sport event would help explain the factors that attract event attendance.

Market Demand in High School Sport Tournaments

Market demand factors are the cluster of pull factors associated with the provisions and operations of the game events (Braunstein et al., 2005; Hansen & Gauthier, 1989; Schofield, 1983; Zhang, Pease, Hui, & Michaud, 1995). Marketing research on these pull factors can influence sport managers by knowing how and the extent to which they may entice consumer response. Sport marketers could then utilize this information to develop marketing strategies based on identifying the factors that influence attendance. Previous market demand research has primarily focused on intercollegiate athletics or professional sports in a variety of settings (e.g., professional team sports, expansion franchises, spring training, minor league hockey, women's professional basketball, etc.). Because each

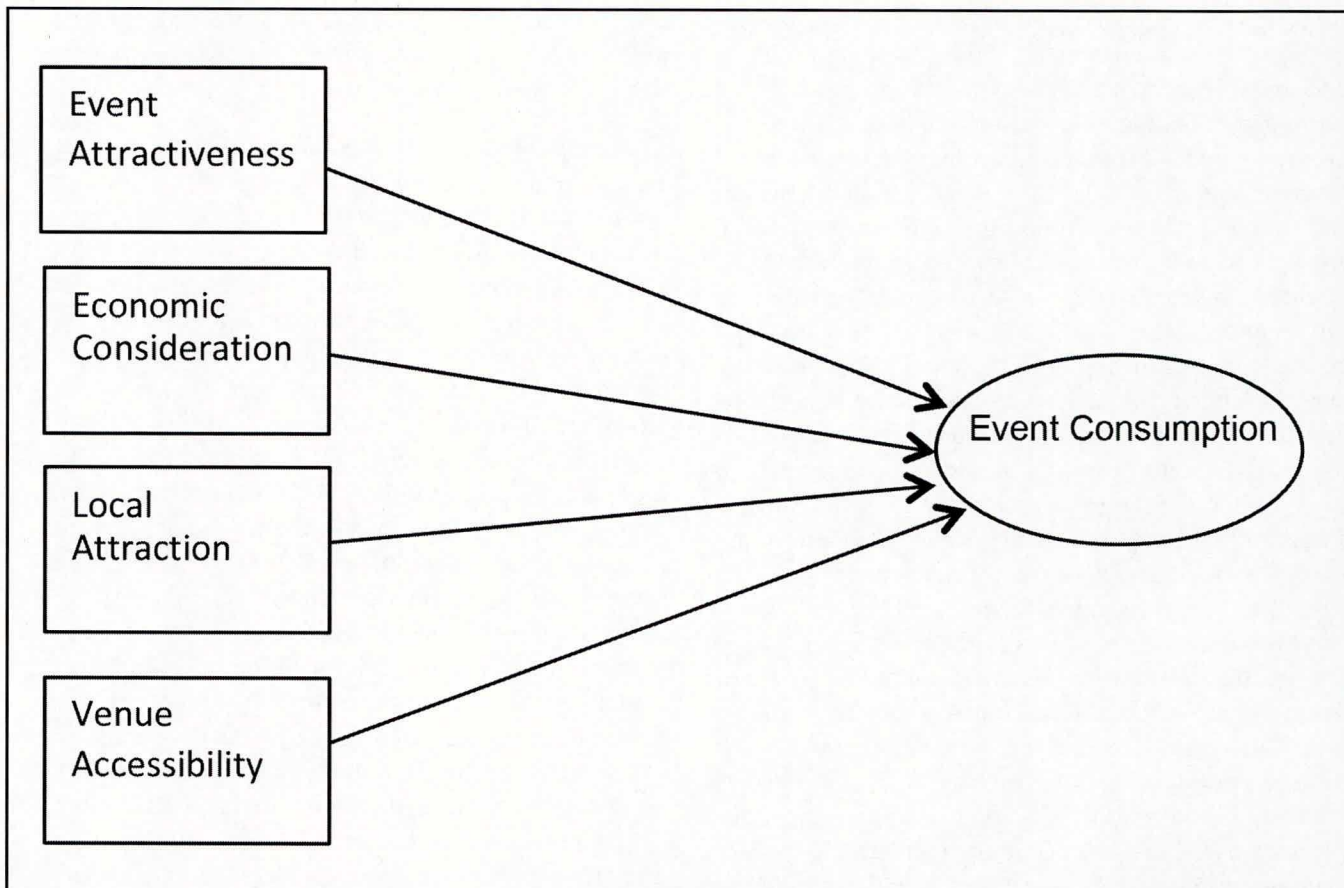


Figure 1. Theoretical constructs for market demand factors associated with high school sports events

level of sport from amateur to professional has been found to have varying market demand factors, it is necessary to examine high school sports due to their differences from the other levels. High school sports have been virtually ignored in the literature.

Oftentimes, the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975) was adopted in previous sport market demand studies (e.g., Byon et al., 2013; Kim, Zhang, & Ko, 2009). TRA is based on the assumption that individual behavior is a direct outcome of behavior intentions, which is a combination of individual belief and attitude toward the behavior. People would have a positive attitude toward performing the behavior if they thought that the outcome of performing the behavior was positive. Attitude toward the behavior is influenced by the individual's perceptions and beliefs about the consequences of performing a behavior and his/her evaluation of the outcomes, irrespective of whether the outcomes are positive or negative. Exposure to different information leads to the formation of different knowledge about the attitude object, which also reflects a person's past experience. According to Fishbein and Ajzen (1975), there is a causal relationship, both direct and indirect, from perception and belief to the attitude object and behavior. If a person intends to influence people's behavior, it is necessary for him/her to ensure people are exposed to sufficient information and also that they alter their knowledge about the attitude object in a social environment. As an exploratory investigation into the marketing of high school sport events, in the current study TRA was partially applied to examine the direct influence of market demand factors to consumption behaviors. As the concept of market demand is related to consumer-perceived influence or expectations towards the attributes of the core product (Zhang, Lam, et al., 2003), its factors represent perceptions and beliefs that spectators usually develop from experiences, observations, and/or exposures to promotional information. Representing perceptions and beliefs in TRA, four potential market demand factors for high school sport tournaments were identified through a comprehensive review of literature (Figure 1): Event Attractiveness, Venue Accessibility, Economic Consideration, and Local Attractions. Based on the popularity of high school athletics and the increasing commercialization of high school sports, athletic directors would benefit from research findings on market demand factors associated with high school athletics, especially those regional tournaments.

Event Attractiveness. In a basketball tournament, the game itself is the core product. Event attractiveness relates to the elements of the teams and players that comprise the core product. Individual player skills,

team playing style, team records, opportunity for record-breaking performances, and closeness of competition are all elements of event attractiveness. These have been frequently studied and found to impact spectator attendance at sporting events (e.g., Hansen & Gauthier, 1989; Kim et al., 2009; Schofield, 1983; Zapalac, Zhang, & Pease, 2010; Zhang et al., 1995). Zhang, Lam, et al. (2003) were among the first to identify market demand variables for professional sports, determining Game Attractiveness, Economic Consideration, and Marketing Promotions to be three factors, representing 12 variables that were predictive of consumption. Byon, Zhang, and Connaughton (2010) found that elements of event attractiveness, such as opposing team and home team, played a significant role in professional team sporting event consumption. On the collegiate side, Zapalac et al. (2010) also found attractiveness impacted spectators' game attendance. It would appear that the game attractiveness of a state high school championship, with the top teams playing for a title, would be an important factor for event attendees. Marketers would then be able to promote the event focusing on this championship aspect.

Venue Accessibility. When operating sporting events, the event management (athletic directors, marketing staff) usually has little involvement in the process of core product. Instead, the management staff primarily focuses on other product functions related to event operations, particularly service activities associated with venue accessibility and enjoyment. The quality of event operations often affects the overall effectiveness of a tournament, and even promotes the consumption levels of consumers (e.g., Zhang et al., 2007). A sporting event with ease of entry and abundant parking is often more favorable to attend than one without those amenities. Likewise, elements such as crowd control and venue cleanliness may influence event attendees in this situation. Zhang, Braunstein, Ellis, and Lam (2003) found while studying minor league hockey that unlike major league sports, game attendance relied more on economic considerations (such as ticket price and ticket discount), convenience, and passion for sport than event attractiveness. This concept of convenience appears relevant to the high school basketball event situation. Applying the same logic to another nonprofessional level of sport, namely high school competition, these convenience/accessibility and economic factors warranted further examination.

Economic Consideration. Economic consideration, such as ticket price, event promotions, and concession costs, has been previously identified as influencing spectator decision making in attending sporting events (e.g., Byon et al., 2010; Hansen & Gauthier, 1989; Schofield, 1983; Zhang et al., 2004; Zhang et al., 1995).

This has been consistent in different event types and levels. Braunstein's et al. (2005) research on attendance at Major League Baseball spring training events showed the role that economic consideration plays in attendance at sporting events. Ticket price, in particular, was an area that seemed to have a major impact on consumer decisions. Similarly, Zapalac et al. (2010) found affordability to impact game attendance in collegiate volleyball game events. As aforementioned, Zhang, Lam, et al. (2003) found that these cost-related variables influence consumption levels and should be examined as a means to understand and focus on what drives consumer behavior. While this study was conducted with a focus on professional level athletics, the findings were consistent with those found in other areas of athletic events, showing the validity of these variables in the prediction of consumption levels. This consistency and validity information appears relevant at the high school level.

Local Attraction. In addition to the attractiveness, accessibility, and economic consideration, there has been a growing recognition of the relationship between sport and tourism in recent years (e.g., Gibson 1998, 2003; Gibson, Qi, & Zhang, 2008). Sport tourism is "leisure-based travel that takes individuals temporarily outside of their home communities to participate in physical activities, to watch physical activities, or to venerate attractions associated with physical activities" (Gibson, 1998, p. 49). Event sport tourism, where participants travel to watch sports, is an important kind of sport tourism (Gibson, 2003; Gibson et al., 2008). Crompton (2004) pointed out that similar to mega sport events, small-scale sport events, such as high school basketball tournament games, could considerably generate consumer interest in local attractions, where destination image is an important factor that likely exerts significant impact on the decision-making process of sport tourists. In particular, these small-scale, repeating events are often organized by a local community and/or institutions, and usually focus on local attractions and uniqueness. Byon and Zhang (2010) showed the relationship between athletic achievement, sport identification, and destination image on tourism behavior. They assessed small-scale sport events and noted that four factors—Infrastructure, Attraction, Value, and Activities—influenced destination image, which in turn influenced consumer behavioral intentions. By studying this tourism factor, or local attraction, marketing steps can be put into action to increase attendance and as a result benefit the event, as well as the community in which it is held.

Research Questions

This study conducted an in-depth synthesis and analysis of the relevance and significance of segmenting high school basketball events through sociodemographic and market demand perspectives. Specifically, we sought to understand:

Q1. What are the sociodemographics of high school basketball tournament attendees for market segmentation purposes?

Q2. Do the market demand factors (event attractiveness, venue accessibility, economic consideration, and local attractions) hold true to high school basketball tournament event?

Q3. What is the relationship between the market demand factors (event attractiveness, venue accessibility, economic consideration, and local attractions) with past and future attendance?

Q4. What is the influence of the market demand factors (event attractiveness, venue accessibility, economic consideration, and local attractions) on economic tourism spending?

Methods

Participants

Participants ($N = 647$) were attendees of a high school basketball sectionals (regionals) tournament in a large southeastern city. The sectionals tournament featured both boys and girls teams, and teams advanced to the state championship via a single-elimination system. The tournament events were held over a four-day period in a large multi-purpose arena with over 75,000 seats. For the high school basketball tournament, the facility was set up with six basketball courts, and games were held simultaneously during an afternoon session and evening session. A nominal admission fee was charged for event attendance.

Instruments

Based on a comprehensive review of literature (e.g., Hansen & Gauthier, 1989; Kasky, 1994; Lu & Pitts, 2004; Pitts, Lu, Ayers, & Lucas, 2004; Schofield, 1983; Zhang et al., 1995), a questionnaire was developed that included three sections: (a) sociodemographics, (b) market demand factors, and (c) consumption variables. The sociodemographic section included the following variables: gender, ethnicity, age, role in attendance, education level, occupation, marital status, number of children, household income, and companion(s) to the event. The market demand section of the survey included the following four factors: Event Attractiveness, Economic Consideration, Venue Accessibility, and Local Attraction, with a total of 14 items (see Table 2) on a 5-point scale ("no influence"

to “strong influence”). To measure sport consumption behavior, two dichotomous (yes/no) items assessed previous and future event attendance. Monetary budget spent on the trip to the tournament was one item measuring the range of budget spent for this event (Pitts & Stotlar, 2013; Zhang et al., 2007). A preliminary questionnaire was first reviewed by a panel of three experts for content clarity, relevance, and representativeness. Following the feedback mainly in the areas of formatting, and wording, edits and modifications to the survey questionnaire were made.

Procedures

A convenience sampling method (i.e., mall intercept technique) was employed by positioning survey stations in major entrances and hallways of the venue. Trained research assistants helped with collecting the data via paper and pencil. Of the four event days, survey administration was conducted at two randomly selected tournament days. Following the institutional review board’s guidelines for the use of human subjects, participation in this study was voluntary.

Data Analyses

Descriptive statistics of the sociodemographic, consumption, and market demand variables were conducted, as well as cross tabulations on the sociodemographic variables. A confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted to assess factor validity of the market demand factors. Prior to the CFA, data normality check was conducted via evaluation of skewness and kurtosis values for the items. For the skewness cut-off value, an absolute value of 3.0 would be considered extreme. For the kurtosis threshold value, an absolute score greater than 3.0 would be considered extreme (Chou & Bentler, 1995). Following Hair, Black, Babin, and Anderson’s (2010) suggestion, multiple fit indexes were used that included the following: (a) Chi-square, (b) Comparative fit index (CFI, $>.90$), (c) Root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA, $<.08$), and (d) Standardized root mean square residual (SRMR, $<.08$).

Convergent validity was assessed via statistical significance of standardized factor loadings (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988). In addition, discriminant validity was tested by means of correlation between constructs, and comparison of squared correlation between constructs and AVE value (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Kline, 2010). Following suggestions of previous studies, three reliability tests were conducted that included: (a) Cronbach’s Alpha (α), (b) Composite reliability (CR), and (c) Average Variance Extracted (AVE). The threshold for α and CR was .70, respectively (Hair et

al., 2010), and cut-off criterion for AVE was .50 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

Upon confirmation of the factor validity via CFA, *t*-tests were conducted to determine importance of the market demand factors on event attendance based on mean score comparisons. General linear model determined the influence of the market demand factors on previous attendance, future attendance, and total budget spent on the trip.

Results

Cross tabulations of the sociodemographic characteristics (see Table 1) revealed that core consumers of the state high school basketball tournament were a fairly even mix of men (55.6%) and women. Of the respondents, most had ethnic backgrounds of African American/Black (44.0%) or Caucasian (53.6%). The majority of participants was between the ages of 36-55 years old (53.6%) and married (51.7%). The majority were event spectators or participants (22.3%). Likewise, the majority was Caucasians or African Americans, who were either high school students or young to middle age adults with children and middle to high income levels.

Descriptive statistics for the market demand variables are shown in Table 2. A total of 14 items were subject to a CFA with maximum likelihood (ML) estimation method to examine the factor validity of the market demand factors. Prior to CFA, we tested data normality, finding all skewness and kurtosis values for the market demand items were well within the acceptable threshold, indicating that data distribution was normal (Table 2). The measurement model did not fit the data well ($\chi^2(71) = 411.10$; CFI = .87; RMSEA = .086 (.078-.095), and SRMR = .084). One item, “closeness of competition” was found to be statistically non-significant. After deleting the item, the four-factor model with 13 items fit the data well ($\chi^2(59) = 254.94$; CFI = .92; RMSEA = .07 (.063-.081), and SRMR = .063). All factor loadings were statistically significant with expected direction ($p < .001$), indicating that convergent validity was established (see Table 3; Anderson & Gerbing, 1988). Discriminant validity was assessed with bi-variate correlation. All correlation coefficients were less than the suggested criterion ($>.85$; Kline, 2010), ranging from .29 (Economic Consideration and Event Attractiveness) to .75 (Economic Consideration and Venue Accessibility). More rigorous, Fornell and Larcker’s (1981) method (i.e., comparing squared correlation with AVE) revealed all AVE value for the latent variable exceeded squared correlations between constructs, except for Venue Accessibility, indicating that discriminant validity was promising but only partially confirmed (see Table 4).

Table 1
Demographic Variables of Event Attendees (N = 647)

Variable	Category	N	%
Gender	Male	355	55.6
	Female	284	44.4
Age	13-18	140	21.8
	19-24	68	10.5
	25-35	99	15.4
	36-45	149	23.2
	46-55	132	20.6
	56-65	34	5.3
	Over 65	19	3.0
Ethnicity	White	339	53.6
	Black	278	44
	Asian	7	1.1
	Hispanic	4	0.6
	Other	4	0.6
Marital Status	Married	329	51.7
	Single	240	37.7
	Divorced	33	5.2
	Living with partner	19	3.0
	Other	15	2.4
Household Income	Under \$15,000	43	7.8
	\$15,000-19,999	15	2.7
	\$20,000-29,999	26	4.7
	\$30,000-39,999	66	11.9
	\$40,000-49,999	71	12.8
	\$50,000-74,999	131	23.7
	\$75,000-99,999	60	10.8
	\$100,000-149,999	82	14.8
	Over \$150,000	59	10.7
Children in Household	0	204	36.0
	1	133	23.5
	2	127	22.4
	3-4	90	15.9
	5+	12	2.1
Occupation	Tradesperson/Skilled	41	6.9
	Clerk	24	4.1
	Education	159	26.9
	Homemaker	22	3.7
	Military	8	1.4
	Professional	153	25.9
	Technical	44	7.4
	Other	140	23.7
Education	Elementary	12	1.9
	Junior High	50	7.8
	High School	193	30.1
	Undergraduate	192	30.0
	Some Post-Graduate	70	10.9
	Masters	86	13.4
	Doctorate	20	3.1
	Other	18	2.8

Table 2
Descriptive Statistics for Market Demand Variables

Variable	M	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis
<i>Event Attractiveness</i>				
The record of teams	3.43	1.36	-.51	-.91
A chance to see the top seeds	4.06	1.20	-1.25	.62
A chance to see which team makes the finals	3.98	1.22	-1.17	.42
*Closeness of competition	3.20	1.31	-.32	-.93
<i>Economic Consideration</i>				
Price of the ticket	3.40	1.38	-.40	-.98
Price of concession	3.18	1.47	-.19	-1.31
Variety of concession	3.08	1.33	-.12	-1.03
<i>Local Attraction</i>				
Other sporting events in the city	2.84	1.29	.07	-.96
Other activities taking place nearby	2.60	1.28	.27	-.94
<i>Venue Accessibility</i>				
Accessibility of venue	3.40	1.31	-.46	-.82
Availability of parking	3.23	1.37	-.35	-1.05
Size of facility	3.37	1.36	-.43	-.96
Staff professionalism and courteousness of staff	3.53	1.29	-.56	-.68
Crowd behavior	3.41	1.37	-.45	-.97

Note. * Item was deleted during CFA procedure due to low factor loading

Table 3
Factor Loadings of the Measurement Model

Variables	Indicator Loadings
<i>Event Attractiveness (3 items)</i>	
The record of teams	.42
A chance to see the top seeds	.87
A chance to see which team makes the finals	.87
<i>Economic Consideration (3 items)</i>	
Price of the ticket	.35
Price of concession	.60
Variety of concession	.76
<i>Local Attraction (2 items)</i>	
Other sporting events in the city	.76
Other activities taking place nearby	.71
<i>Venue Accessibility (5 items)</i>	
Accessibility of venue	.64
Availability of parking	.64
Size of facility	.66
Staff professionalism and courteousness of staff	.72
Crowd behavior	.68

Table 4

Construct Correlations, Squared Correlations, Cronbach's Alpha, Composite Reliability (CR), and Average Variance Extracted (AVE)

Construct	Economic Consideration	Local Attraction	Event Attractiveness	Venue Accessibility	α	CR	AVE
Economic Consideration	—				.60	.61	.35
Local Attraction	.44 (.19)	—			.71	.70	.53
Event Attractiveness	.29 (.08)	.21 (.04)	—		.74	.78	.56
Venue Accessibility	.75 (.56)	.45 (.20)	.46 (.21)	—	.81	.80	.44

Notes: All correlations are statistically significant at .001 level. Parentheses are squared correlations.

As for reliability test, alpha coefficients were .74, .60, .81, and .71, respectively for Event Attractiveness, Economic Consideration, Venue Accessibility, and Local Attraction factors, indicating that these factors were overall of acceptable internal consistency (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988). Composite reliability also exceeded the threshold (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988), ranging from .61 (Economic Consideration) to .81 (Venue Accessibility). However, AVE values for two latent constructs (Economic Consideration and Venue Accessibility) were lower than the cut-off criterion of .50. Overall, items measuring each of the four constructs showed reasonable internal consistency, pending further validation of the items (see Table 4).

One-sample t-tests with adjusted alpha level revealed that mean Economic Consideration, Event Attractiveness, and Venue Accessibility factor scores were significantly ($p < .05$) greater than the respective mid-point score of each factor, indicating that the attendees considered these three factors important when making a decision to attend the event. Conversely, mean Local Attraction factor score was significantly ($p < .05$) lower than the mid-point score of this factor, indicating that the attendees did not consider this factor important when making a decision to attend the event. With respect to the relevance of the market demand factors, general linear model analyses revealed that they were significantly (Wilks' $\Lambda = 46.945$; $p < .05$) related to whether the attendees attended this event in previous years, where Event Attractiveness was the significant ($p < .05$) contributor to the relationship, explaining a total of 24.1% variance. However, the market demand factors were not found to be significantly (Wilks' $\Lambda = 1042.683$; $p > .05$) related to whether the attendees would attend the event in the future. Regression analyses revealed that of the market demand factors, Local Attraction was sig-

nificantly ($F = 34.428$; $p < .05$) predictive of the total budget spent on making the trip, with 5.6% variance explained.

Discussion

Through an abridged adoption of the TRA, this study examined the direct impact of market demand factors in terms of event attractiveness (core game product), event operations (venue accessibility), economic considerations, and local attractions, which were deemed uniquely associated with a high school basketball tournament event. Further, the relationship between these factors and game consumption variables, along with economic tourism spending, were explored. It is anticipated that a well-developed understanding and discussion on these issues would help provide sport-specific and event-specific information on the marketing of a high school basketball tournament.

High school sports are very popular in the US and the associated championship events are often highly publicized and well-attended events. According to NFHS, high school sports event attendance was 510 million in 2011, two and a half times the attendance of college sports events (Howard, 2011). Basketball was the most popular with the highest attendance. Yet even though a comprehensive review of literature revealed that event attendance and other forms of financial support to high school basketball are critical for this sport to survive and thrive in the US, research investigations on marketing issues associated with high school basketball events have been rather limited and rarely assessed. According to several scholars (e.g., Mullin et al., 2007; Pitts & Stotlar, 2013), analyses of consumer variables, such as factors affecting decision making for sport event attendance, are fundamental for formulating effective marketing strategies to promote the events. Accordingly, in order to attract and retain spec-

tators for high school basketball tournament events, it is necessary for the hosting organization, sport association, and teams to evaluate those factors that may affect game attendance. Periodic evaluation should be conducted to determine target markets, analyze market situation and environment, develop marketing objectives and strategies, and provide feedback about the implementation of an overall marketing plan.

Sociodemographics for Market Segmentation

Findings of this study revealed that core consumers of the state high school basketball tournament were Caucasians and African Americans, who were either school students or young to middle-aged adults with children. Given that the tournament was comprised of 32 different teams/schools, from different locations throughout the state, this provides a broad representation, compared to examining just one high school game. We also found attendees had middle to high income levels. According to Simmons Market Research Bureau (2010) and Zhang, Pennington-Gray, et al. (2003), people most likely to attend professional men's sporting events are young to middle-aged Caucasian males with good financial resources. Young to middle-aged Caucasian females are most likely to attend professional and amateur female sporting events. Unlike professional sport events, the sociodemographic characteristics identified in the current study suggested that high school basketball event promotional activities should target Caucasian and African American families with middle to high income, who have children in middle or high school. Intuitively, event participants (e.g., athletes, cheerleaders, coaches, and administrators) and their families, friends, and affiliated schools, residential areas, and athletic conferences would be interested in attending the tournament events; although this study did not investigate these variables, findings from Williamson and Zhang (2003), who studied consumers of a collegiate sport tournament, confirmed these insights. The segmentation information revealed in this study is also beneficial in attracting potential event sponsors or advertisers, who would capitalize on their product exposure to consumers with middle to high incomes.

Different sporting events attract different sponsorship opportunities, and thus, different sponsoring companies with applicable sets of objectives. Professional sports, college sports, Olympic sports, and Paralympics sports each attract sponsorship from companies aiming to target the markets unique to the event (Nam & Lee, 2013). Sponsorship of high school sports has become common practice of businesses and of sport marketing plans (Pierce & Peterson, 2011; Pierce & Bussell, 2011). According to Wartella (2009), in a

study on sponsorship in interscholastic sports, sponsors of high school athletic associations engage in this activity to develop brand association and loyalty in the teen market. The basketball tournament crowd demographic finding supports this sponsorship strategy of capitalizing on the teen market, but also suggests there is an opportunity to reach the parents, who have moderate to high incomes.

Relevance and Importance of Market Demand Factors

With regards to the market demand variables, the findings indicated that Event Attractiveness was a key factor of pulling consumers to the state high school basketball tournament. This includes variables of teams playing, their records, the crowd, and the final round. This was impactful both for the current event, as well as a contributor to past attendance, explaining 24.1% of the variance. The finding of Event Attractiveness being an important factor is consistent with past research on professional sports, collegiate sports, and event marketing literature (Byon et al., 2010; Kim et al., 2009; Schofield, 1983; Zapalac et al., 2010; Zhang, Lam, et al., 2003). As a marketer of the event, a focus on promoting the teams would be a draw for potential consumers. When considering a regionally hosted event, where potential local consumers may not be aware of the teams playing, the impact of the games and their records may be a selling point. For example, advertising that promotes "Catch the 21-0 North High School take on the 18-2 South High School" would appeal to those who are driven to watch teams with good records.

Economic Consideration was a factor that was identified to be influencing attendance, similar to past research on college and professional sports (Byon et al., 2010; Chen-Yueh, Ti-Hsiu, & Yen-Kuang, 2012; Zhang et al., 1995; Zhang et al., 2007; Zhang, Braunstein, et al., 2003). Economic Consideration significantly influenced many consumer decisions about the sports, venues, and event plans. In assessing the ticketing structure of high school athletic tournaments, the organizing body should be aware that there is price sensitivity among the spectators and aim to create a price level that supports the sociodemographics of the attendees.

In previous studies, Venue Accessibility was often considered an important game support element for event operations, not necessarily related to the core product features (Byon et al., 2013). Due to the nature and set-up of a high school basketball tournament, Venue Accessibility was actually a major consideration by the event attendees of the tournament, indicating that the market demand factors are situational in terms of sport event contexts. Essentially, consumers' expect-

tations towards the attributes of the core product would differ according to the product line; in fact, this notion was consistent with research findings of a number of previous studies (Braunstein et al., 2005; Byon et al., 2013; Hansen & Gauthier, 1989; Zhang, Lam, et al., 2003). For any given sport event, the marketers need to identify the key factors pulling consumers to the game; thus, organizers of high school basketball tournaments should take care in selecting the venue itself, noting the ease of getting to the venue and parking impact the event attendees. Selecting a venue that is accessible will help appease this consumer demand.

Local Attraction was not found to be a factor that was important to consumers when making the decision to attend. This suggests that people attend the tournament event because of the teams themselves, the cost, and the ease of accessing the venue; whereas, local attraction is not a major consideration. However, Local Attraction did influence the event attendees' financial spending while in town for the event. Unlike professional and collegiate sports, locations of high school sectionals and championships are often mobile, changing from one year to another, so families have to travel to events; thus, local attractions can play a role in event attendance decisions. This finding may make practical sense that available local tourism attractions can be appealing to event attendees in terms of extended stays, visiting the attractions, and increased spending; according to Byon and Zhang (2010), destination image and attractions do make a difference when a consumer decides to attend or not to attend a sport event, and on how long to stay. Thus, depending on the goals and objectives of a state high school athletic association, understanding the relevance of local attractions can help decide where to locate the regional or championship events.

The market demand factors were not found to be related to whether the attendees would attend the event in the future. These results may be a reflection of the event itself. With the state high school basketball tournament featuring the top 32 teams, perhaps people are unsure of attending in the future because their attendance is reliant upon their favorite teams making the tournament next year. With this uncertainty, the attractiveness of the game might not impact their intent to attend in the future, and not be a reflection of a poorly run event. This suggests there may be other factors that are influencing future attendance, such as socio-motivation, attachment to players or teams, record of winning by the home team, and certainty of qualification to state tournament.

Of the four market demand factors, only Local Attraction was found to impact economic spending. While an attractive location with many surrounding

activities will not drive consumers to the sporting event, it will lead to the attendees spending more money. Similar to findings of past research (e.g., Byon & Zhang, 2010; Williamson & Zhang, 2003), local attraction has been found to influence behavior concerning monetary spending. In sport tourism literature, this theoretical notion has been tested in spectator-based events (Byon & Zhang, 2010) and participant-based events (Kaplanidou, Jordan, Funk, & Ridinger, 2012), suggesting that the host organization and city promote local attractions through destination marketing. When spectators travel, they spend money on local businesses; so, even high school sporting events could bring economic impact. This is an attractive economic consideration for visitor centers or those who bid for events, and it would be a selling point for hosting the event. As spectators travel to the event, they are spending money on local attractions and impacting the host community. It is important for the host cities to promote the local attractions to the visitors so that they are aware of what the city has to offer. Additionally, this would be an opportunity for event hosts to obtain sponsorships with local restaurants and attractions. There is no doubt that the organizing bodies must focus on event attractiveness as the primary promotional mechanism (Byon & Zhang, 2010; Gibson et al., 2008; Kaplanidou & Gibson, 2010, 2012; Williamson & Zhang, 2003).

Summary, Limitations, and Future Research

High school athletic departments have relied on public funding and private donations to fund their programs. An increase in family and community support may help defer some of the costs of managing the sports, especially with current economic constraints. When high school teams are successful on the field/court, support may be more prevalent. High school sectional tournaments may prove to be an area to foster fan involvement and grow the community support. Tournaments and championships can be a revenue stream for high schools. Because this is becoming increasingly more important, it then becomes increasingly important for the administrators to be better marketers. Consumer segments, such as family, students, faculty and staff, friends, and high school sports fans, must be identified and analyzed. Through market research such as this study, the high school sports marketers can make strategic marketing decisions toward optimal plans that have better chances for success.

A number of limitations associated with this study are recognized. A basketball tournament event may have yielded factors that are different from other high school playoff events, especially those that are gender specific, such as softball or football, or those with less

frequency, such as a one-day swim meet or one-time games, such as soccer, rather than a four-day span.

In the current investigation, those factors influencing the attendance of a state high school basketball tournament event were studied from only one perspective, namely market demand. Whereas this study presented a foundation for high school marketing research, including segmentation and market demand, future research can focus on obtaining a better understanding of attractions and social motives for various sport events. This information would be imperative to hosting a successful high school tournament. Especially, those concepts such as fan involvement, social and community support, and family contributions should be explored. High school sports have become commercialized and often mirror collegiate athletics in terms of their organizational and management styles, and even facilities in some cases. There is a great need for more research into high school sports in general, within and involving different aspects, to make better informed decisions on marketing and management. Additionally, in this exploratory study, only direct relationships of the market demand factors to consumption variables were examined, in which attitudinal concepts and constructs were not included. According to Fishbein and Ajzen (1975), attitude is an important component of the TRA that mediate the relationship between perception and behavior. Byon et al. (2013) and Kim, Zhang, Jackson, Connaughton, and Kim (2013) have identified various attitudinal concepts, such as perceived value, perceived benefits, and customer satisfaction, that could partially mediate the relationship between sport market demand factor and consumption behavior. Future studies are encouraged to take these into consideration.

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