Chapter 9
Fan Attitudes of Basketball: Collegiate vs. Professional

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ABSTRACT
The purpose of this chapter is discovering the basis of fan attitudes towards collegiate and professional basketball and the factors that influence them. The findings are then compared and contrasted between the two types of basketball to determine where the greatest fan attitudes lie. Fan attitudes have been broken down into three components: motivation, knowledge, and identity. Attendance, television ratings, and consumer spending are all outputs of fan attitudes that help quantify it. It was found that respondents had stronger fan attitudes towards collegiate basketball. However, they had a greater knowledge of professional basketball. The results from this study will help those companies that are currently involved and those companies that plan on being involved with collegiate and professional basketball to understand the optimal target market for their marketing efforts.

INTRODUCTION
In any organization, it is important to understand how consumers view the different dimensions of a product. The explanation as to why consumers have these attitudes helps the provider make adjustments to better the experience. Some companies products are one-dimensional (e.g., groceries or school supplies) and the assessment of them comes mostly from their use. Other products, however, have many dimensions where the consumer’s opinions are formed by multiple factors. An example of this type of multi-dimensional product is sports games. Sports fans can have different perceptions of a game based upon many different aspects, such as their seating in the stadium, the apparel that they buy, concessions they purchase, the announcer, or the camera angle while watching a game on TV (Crawford, 2004).

Although collegiate basketball and professional basketball share many common aspects, they are often perceived by fans quite differently. The factors that drive these unique perceptions are the atmosphere, product on the court, and
the feel of the team. These are all major factors of fan identification at sporting events. Other factors include the action on the court, stadium features, team loyalty, and social experiences (Douvis, 2007).

Collegiate basketball has a very fan oriented feel to it (Griffen, 2006). The atmosphere created in a collegiate basketball arena is one of excitement and anticipation. Another factor of this atmosphere is the various promotions that are extremely fan oriented. At most collegiate basketball games, halftime promotions are held in order to get fans directly involved in the game-day experience. This is not often found in professional basketball games, which revolve more around the actual play on the court rather than allowing the fans to feel immersed in the experience. There is greater separation between the game and the fan experience in professional basketball (Greenwood, Kanters, & Casper, 2006).

The product on the court is also a factor that separates the two types of basketball. The primary reason for this is that collegiate basketball has constant turnover between each school year. Players are not on the team for more than four or five years. Therefore, the team representing the school is constantly changing. This is not the case for professional basketball. This is due to the fact that many of the big name players are committed to long-term contracts, which results in players staying on the team for longer periods of time.

The focus of collegiate basketball games is very different from that of a professional basketball game, which accounts for the main differences between them. For example, collegiate basketball is all about the success of the team as a whole. While there are some standout players, there is not a heavy focus on their production. This is not the case in professional basketball. The NBA is often driven by the star power of the players. According to Wann & Martin (2008) “star players serve as the objects that fans identify with. Fans likewise attend a game to cheer for their favorite teams, and objects that fans identify with are the teams.” For example, this upcoming season the majority of the fans will most likely be drawn to a Philadelphia 76ers game to see the new star player on the team, Andrew Bynum.

This report will focus on the fan attitudes in regards to collegiate and professional basketball. The goal of this study is to discover the difference, if any, between the attitudes consumers have of the two types of basketball, and to understand how these differences affect their consumption of them and why they exist. The impact this has on the fan experience consumers have while viewing these games will also be explored.

**BACKGROUND**

Being a sports fan is often a complicated thing. There are many factors that influence a person’s attitudes towards sports. Throughout the industry, research has been done to determine differences that lie between the different sports and their influencing factors. A model (See Figure 1) has been created that will help to operationalize fan attitudes between college and professional basketball.

The independent variables that have been established for this study are knowledge, motivation, and identity. The dependent variable that has been identified is fan attitudes. Attendance, television ratings, and consumer spending are all outcomes from fan attitudes, which help to quantify the dependent variable.

**Hypothesis**

For this study, five hypotheses have been developed. The first hypothesis states that there are stronger fan attitudes towards collegiate basketball versus professional basketball. The second hypothesis of this study is that the attendance, television ratings, and consumer spending are greater in collegiate basketball. The third hypothesis is that there is a greater motivation for fans to view collegiate basketball games to watch their favorite team, while the biggest motivation