

CONSUMER DEMAND FOR CORE PRODUCT FEATURES OF PROFESSIONAL
WOMEN'S BASKETBALL EVENTS

by

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(Under the Direction of James J. Zhang)

ABSTRACT

Understanding the consumer demand for the core product of WNBA games from a consumer perspective is important because professional sports are a part of the growing attention economy that is fighting for people's sustained engagement. Sports spectators want personalized experiences and activations with team participation to help affirm and communicate their brand loyalty (Imbriano & Downing, 2010). Knowing what consumers demand from a professional sporting event experience adds a great perspective from marketers and decision makers. There is currently a lack of research connecting an extension of core traditional product features to contemporary consumer demand factors of fan interactions in the form of interactive fan engagement activities and social justice activations which we will refer to as advocacy programming with consumption behavior. This research will define interactive game event activities and advocacy programming variables through a scale and measure its ability to predict WNBA game consumption.

INDEX WORDS: Consumer Demand, WNBA Consumption, Fan Engagement

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B.S., Hampton University, 2014

M.S., Hampton University, 2015

A Dissertation Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of The University of Georgia in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirement for the Degree

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

ATHENS, GEORGIA

2021

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August 2021

DEDICATION

To Black Women:

“Education is something no one can ever take away from you.”

~Ernest Edwards Johnson

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First, I would like to thank my major professor and committee chair Dr. James J. Zhang. Thank you for your expertise, guidance, and compassion. You have taught me how to lead with grace and empathy throughout my entire PhD journey. I would also like to thank my outstanding committee members Dr. Bryan McCullick, Dr. Jepkorir Rose Chepyator-Thomson, Dr. Yiran Su, Dr. Brandon Mastromartino, and Dr. Yizhou Qian. I feel blessed to work with this group of talented scholars and will be forever grateful for the energy you all put in to this project. Next, I would like to thank all of my family, friends, and colleagues. Thank you Mom for all that you have sacrificed for me. You are an amazing parent, licensed therapist, business woman, and woman of God. Thank you to my two brothers, Nicholas Scott and Justin Ernest for your friendship and support. Thank you to all of my basketball coaching colleagues who have expressed their support over the past couple of years. I also would like to acknowledge the great friendships I have made at the University of Georgia. I am proud and honored to have studied along side all of you and look forward to everything that we will accomplish in our careers. Lastly, I would like to thank my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. All good, perfect, and wonderful things come from you, and I promise to continue to carry myself in your image.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Prior to Title IX in the United States, sports and sports spectatorship were recreational and informal rather than formal and scheduled competitions (Gerber et al., 1974). In the early 1900's as women sought to become more physically active, prompting them to start informal clubs such as tennis, croquet, bowling, and archery. The rise of women's sports began with women becoming involved in a variety of sport activities but were not fully integrated with their male counterparts. When female clubs were started, which were parallel to men's sporting groups developed, drastic differences could be seen in male college clubs and women's social metropolitan clubs. These differences included the fact that the men's teams were often sponsored competitive events while female sport events were often organized with men in coed physical activities in social gatherings (Gerber et al., 1974). Directly prior to Title IX, early college sports encompassed many competition events, offered as a female sport product. During this time, spectatorship and record keeping were nearly non-existent as competition was centered around intramural clubs, sorority matches, and formal playdays (Hult, 1994). By 1966 having organized playdays for women to be physically active became the dominating form of sport competition.

Increasingly as college athletics for men became big business, women started to explore intercollegiate athletic competition among different educational institutions (Gerber et al., 1974). The first ever intercollegiate match for women occurred in the sport of basketball. This was met with pushback from administrators who wished to keep women athletics under greater control and free from the refinement of amateurism that the men were experiencing (Thelin, 1994). By

1966 there were several commissions that were created to help organize competitive women's sports. The division for girls and women in sport appointed a commission of intercollegiate sports for women to assist in conducting intercollegiate competitions. The positive attitude towards women sports carried over into the 1970's, when there was a great emphasis on leading and conducting competitive programs (Gerber et al., 1974).

With the passage of Title IX in 1972, there was a push towards equitable resources for men and women in secondary and post-secondary schools with programs still being separated at the time (Acosta & Carpenter, 1985). Title IX was defined by law that no person in the United States should be discriminated on the basis of sex. This included an exclusion of participatory activities by an education program that is receiving federal funding. These words are credited with igniting a new reality for women in education and sport. Underrepresented groups were now able to receive equal rights to an equal education and women were able to solidify themselves as athletes, without the notion that their athletic events were not competitive or organized. As the NCAA adopted the commission for women's athletics, men's programs and athletic directors absorbed female programs allowing for women's programs to have even greater access to facilities and financial resources (Hult, 1999).

As competition and spectatorship rose, more money and interest from male administrators and coaches became entrenched with women's sports. The talent, structure, and sponsorship support of female athletic competition at the collegiate and youth ranks fueled a loyal following of supporters who often touted the beauty and grace of women's sports in relation to their male counterparts. As competitions grew more sophisticated, investors and corporations looked to capitalize by forming professional sport leagues to fully aggregate themselves in this new realm of sport that had promise to be complementary to the hundreds of

millions of dollars in revenue that were starting to be realized for men. Collegiately, this resulted in interest, and opportunity skyrocketing. In 1981 the NCAA Women's Championships were formed signaling the full adaptation of an annualized, structured, and lucrative business opportunity of sponsors and event organizers. Over time, amateur sports programs at the collegiate and high school levels grew exponentially as popularity for athleticism in females continued to reach new levels. The impact of Title IX has profoundly influenced U. S. society. First, the number of female student-athletes and teams in universities increased. Since the 1996–1997 season, the number of women's teams in the NCAA exceeded the number of men's teams. Particularly, in the 2017–2018 season, 10,586 women's teams competed in the NCAA compared to 9,159 men's teams. Furthermore, while fewer than 35,000 women played sports in college in 1971, 216,378 female athletes participated in NCAA athletics in the 2017–2018 season, accounting for 44% of total participation (Berri, 2018, Schwarb, 2018). In maintaining compliance with gender equity, schools are finding new opportunities to provide female athletes with ways to participate in college athletics.

Commercialization of Professional Women's Sports

The talent, structure, and sponsorship support for female athletic competition at the collegiate and youth ranks fueled a loyal following of supporters who often touted the beauty and grace of women's sports in relation to their male counterparts. Female athletes improved in skill and had the talent to continue playing after secondary education was over. During the time when Title IX was passed, the beginning of many professional sporting competitions was starting to take place and form. From 1974 to 1984, the first women's professional soccer league was formed, as well as professional leagues for golf, softball, volleyball, and basketball. The Olympic Committee introduced more sports for women including rowing and handball. In 1982, the

European figure skating championships and 1984 world tennis teams were being organized as demand, interest, and talent grew. With competitions growing more sophisticated, investors and corporations capitalized on this by pouring more resources into the commercialization of professional sport leagues to fully aggregate themselves into this new realm of sport that had a promise to be complementary to the men (Berri, 2018, Schwarb, 2018).

With the 1996 Olympic Games in Atlanta, Georgia was seen as the catalyst in the United States for the push to sponsor female athletes and market their abilities to reach new consumers. This was done as a response to the success that women had, along with the new formation of women pro sport leagues. For example, there have been three women's professional soccer leagues started in the United States that include the Women's United Soccer Association which formed as a spillover effect of the momentum gained from the United States winning their second FIFA world cup. This league lasted for three years and was followed by the Women's professional soccer league that failed and the National Women's Soccer league which is currently entering its ninth season. The WNBA is soon entering its 25th season, making for a showcasing season where the league's continued commitment to the sport will be demonstrated with athletes' superlative performance to elevate the sport to mainstream prominence. The campaign for this year will be titled "Count It" and will have season long celebrations and events for fans. Throughout the history of the WNBA, its players have exceeded expectations, shattered ceilings, and have been great advocates for social change and inclusion. While many past professional women's sports leagues have faced insurmountable adversity, the WNBA continues to innovate with new partnerships and game competitions to demonstrate its ability to fulfil the needs of its fans (Johnson et al., 2020; Lee, 2001).

The rise and failure of professional teams have led many to question the sustainability, profitability, and interests in these leagues. Investors who contribute to a league or team's success must be able to see a path to growing support and revenue. Failing professional leagues have resulted in questions regarding the riskiness of the business aspect of women's sports. Fan support and the on-field product has always been a bright spot for entertainment value so now it is imperative to understand the strategy that could lead to more consumption and highlight the core product strengths of women professional sport to men and women consumers. Due to the prior belief that women had little bearing on the U.S. economy. Early marketing efforts focused on gaining men as consumers for women's sports, much more so than focusing on women and girls. It was not yet discovered that women do the majority of household purchases. As economists started to realize the impact that women have financially, they also realized that the women and girls who support sports, are more likely to play in youth organizations and school teams. Increased engagement of females in sports resulted in the growth of the sport economy for women sports and the sponsorship dollars they generate (Johnson et al., 2020; Lough, 2001).

Brief History of WNBA

The WNBA will be used as the backdrop for this study to understand the relationship between consumer demand for in person game attendance features and consumption patterns in the WNBA. The WNBA started with approval from the NBA board of governors in 1996. A year later it was officially started with support from the National Basketball Association (NBA). This has turned out to be one of the most successful and longest tenured women's professional leagues in the United States. In the first year of the WNBA, eight teams made up the league, with four designated in the eastern conference and four in the western conference. All WNBA teams were initially owned by the NBA. However, a major shift in the league happened in 2002 when

WNBA teams were sold to individual owners of the NBA team in the same city or individual investors that were not associated in the same city. This created a situation where WNBA teams were forced to find new ownership or fold. Currently two conferences consist of twelve total teams. In terms of consumption, the WNBA has the largest fan base of any U.S professional women's teams. The current makeup of the league is 50% white, 33% black, 13% Hispanic, 2% Asian, and 2% other. Also, 58% of women, family, and teens comprised their fanbase (Williamson et al., 2003).

In 1999 there was a study conducted that built a profile of WNBA fans. Findings of this study revealed that marketing activation efforts and word of mouth grassroots marketing was the best strategy to reach their fans (Armstrong, 1999). Another finding was that multiple game attendance was not as prevalent and as such teams should look to bundle multiple game promotions. The author also found that the majority of fans were women with a noticeable gap of fans of college ages missing (Armstrong 1997). Lastly, fans wished to view themselves and female athletes more cohesively with the advertisements and promotions present in the area. It has also been found in studies following WNBA consumption that mixed ticket packages such as player meet and greets, merchandise, and concession deals, and NBA ticket bundling were effective in increasing attendance by as much as 20% (King, 2005).

Even Though the WNBA is the most successful and longest running women's league in the sport's history, there are still debilitating challenges that threaten the success of the league. These challenges include a lack of financial independence and investment (Johnson et al., 2020; Lombardo, 2008; Williamson et al., 2003). Two major revenue sources for the WNBA and other professional sports teams are ticket sales and broadcasting rights (Lachowetz et al., 2001; Leonard, 1997; Sawyer & Smith, 1999). Revenue generation from secondary sources such as

parking fees, game-day event merchandise, concessions, and operations, advertisements, licensing, and media rights are also crucial for the financial success of a league. All of these items center around spectator retention. As a result, it is critical for WNBA teams to understand and identify contemporary variables that affect game attendance and subsequent consumption behaviors. This study seeks to identify the product of game event consumption through a consumer demand lens to see which variables related to their experience lead to consuming more WNBA games.

Importance of Live Events and Spectator Attendance

Having fans support sporting events by attending in person has proven to be the single most important factor for growing and capitalizing on the core product of professional competition. Media and television rights, apparel sales, digital engagement, and community support all stem from the ability for individuals to see their team play, interact with other fans, gain insight into players and team personnel, and grow an attachment to a team or league. Live events in the form of the actual game, pre-game warm ups, fan zones, clinics, and player appearances are all part of the core product that occurs when individuals attend live sport events. Generational fan building is traditionally done from these events as the feeling of being connected is greatly heightened by coming in person (Johnson et al., 2019; Lee et al., 2020).

Historically, spectating live sporting events comprises the largest portion of the multi-billion-dollar sport industry. It has continuously gained popularity and economic impact (Higgs & Mckinley, 2005). In terms of economic activity, sports fans are plentiful and consume media at a rapid pace. It was found in the Sport Business Journal by Street and Smith that more than 90% of adults in the United States consider themselves fans of at least one sports team. King (2005) reported that sports fans consume 9.2 hours of media, whereas the average U. S.

person consumes 8.5 hours of media daily. The growth of spectating and consumption is said to be influenced by the key factors including greater fan attendance level, more profitable sponsorship partners, and lucrative TV contracts (Jose, 2013). Sport consumers in particular have more entertainment options now more than ever before (Byon et al., 2013). These attention hours can be spread among virtual reality, movies, festivals, and arts (Min, 2014). The competition among sports leagues and teams as well as other live events leads to the importance for the WNBA to curate a core product that attracts loyal fans.

Professional sports for women receive the same benefit from live attendance; however, their live event interaction is less consistent and easily swayed by internal and external factors. The importance of women being able to articulate, market, and emphasize their core product around live game consumption is even more apparent because of the current reaction to attending women's events. Where the NBA specifically has many teams that are historically underachieving in their on-the-court performances, many of these franchises have seen consistent attendance numbers and fan interaction. This is because the NBA has built a customer experience and event-like atmosphere for all of their games that highlight their players as athletic dunkers and their entertainment as top notch. The NBA has also found a way for smaller markets and struggling teams to capitalize on the success of other teams by bundling ticket packages for fans to see top performing teams when they play in their arena. The WNBA's attendance records for each team is often predicated on a win-loss record for that individual season and less on the atmosphere present for each game. Due to budget restrictions and the part-time nature of many WNBA event operational positions, half-time and pre-game performances are often amateuristic, unorganized, or absent altogether. Prices for merchandise and concessions at arenas are often

much higher than their male counterparts, and star players are less likely to get the same promotional efforts to garner fans to see that particular player (Johnson et al., 2020).

When fans are able to see the beauty of the women's game, they are more likely to understand that it is a different product than the men's game. League and team executives must learn to highlight the core product of the league by investing in content creators who put together sequences and in game entertainment that shows athletes at their strengths and strategic game play. However, there is currently a gap in literature and professional understanding on what core product features of the women's game truly leads to more consumption. What fans of women's basketball want to see is important to study because the results can mean more revenue for teams, leagues, and the expansion of more professional sports for women.

Professional Women's Sports Challenges

While the WNBA and other professional sports leagues and events are garnering talented athletes and dedicated fans, financially these organizations still have a way to go to truly capitalize financially from their supporters as men's leagues. Operational costs for women's professional matches and events are often the main causes of negative balance sheets and million dollar losses. Historical challenges for the WNBA have been present since the onset of the league, with prominent teams filing for bankruptcy or dissolved because of decreased investor interest. In a pivotal point in the league's history, the great recession of 2008-2009 resulted in a decline of disposable income that affected most U.S. professional leagues. Some of these league-wide challenges included a decrease in ticket sales and a significant loss in attendance revenue (CBSnews, 2009, Metcalfe, 2009). Attendance has been an issue for the league. In the inaugural seasons of the WNBA there were approximately 11,000 average fans in attendance. In 2011, there were approximately 8,000 fans, and a diminishing 6,500 fans in 2019. This decline

has been attributed to insufficient financial backing and consistency. In order to increase the number of consumers interested in the league, the WNBA must improve its in-game experience to be more attractive and interactive (Min, 2014). The reason why increasing attendance is so important is because in person spectatorship results in loyal fans, greater media attention, and sponsorships (Johnson et al., 2020; Zhang, 2011).

For the WNBA, more problems arose when women were placed in arenas used for male sporting events. Without having the amount of fans present at every game to fill and justify operational spending costs, teams spent unnecessary money to fit their product into the mold of the NBA. However, recently professional basketball and soccer women's leagues have started to downsize stadium and event operations to fit the needs and desires of female fans. As a result, this created a better atmosphere where fans were closer to the on-court product and were able to fully integrate themselves into the core product of the women's game (Johnson et al., 2020). In 2020, the commissioner of the WNBA, Cathy Engelbert, stated that the biggest challenge her league was facing was getting fans to attend their games in person one time. The thought process and subsequent feedback for fans has been that after attending one game, they are more likely to become fans of the league and follow the league in other digital and apparel avenues. Her quote specifically stated that "the WNBA does not have a product problem; it has a marketing problem."

Recent challenges in professional sports are often related to growing fan consumption, momentum, and equitable compensation for women in their respective sports. The Covid-19 pandemic that put a halt to the global sports industry in 2020 also resulted in a plague for women's leagues. The Women's World Cup U.S.A. win in France highlighted the country's growing demand for women's sports and competitions. Through shattering ticket and viewership

numbers, the U.S. turned to legal action against the U.S. soccer federation of sex discrimination in pay. As women proved that they can garner the attention, revenue, and operational event success as men, it has become apparent that people consume women's sports with the same energy and fiscal ability as male sports. Due to the pandemic, momentum has seemingly been halted for many professional sport leagues. For example, the National Women's Soccer League was going to begin its 8th season with new partnerships and television contracts. The cancellation of the Olympics was also detrimental to professional volleyball and softball teams, as they were said to see a boost from Olympic participation. Being able to truly capitalize on women's sports is important because it has been proven that when done right, they can garner the same attention, revenue, and engagement as male sports. The introduction of women's soccer into FIBA video games, and the WNBA, into NBA2k live are examples on how the exciting on field product that is seen can translate into more support digitally across multiple platforms.

Traditional Consumer Demand of Core Product Features

For this study, the core product will relate to the in-person game experience of a WNBA game that incorporates the athletes, game play, activations, and fan consumption engagement opportunities while at the arena. The core product of WNBA game consumption includes the entire experience for fans attending live events. The core traditional consumer demand product of professional sports teams is the live game itself. Consumer demand can be defined as consumer expectations towards the central attributes and qualities of that core product (Byon et al., 2013; Lee et al., 2020; Zhang et al., 2003). Consumer demand could be referred to as a group of pull factors that are associated with the game event features that an organization can use to entice new and returning spectators with. This is different from internal or intrinsic motivators for spectators. These motives are known as push factors (Harris, 1973; Qian et al., 2020). In

order to best understand consumer expectations and marketing strategies, researchers have noted the importance of conducting a thorough analysis of consumer demand variables (Byon et al., 2013; Hansen & Gauthier 1989; Qian et al., 2020; Zhang et al., 1995).

Four consumer demand variables that have been statistically proven to affect professional sport consumption are Game Attractiveness, Game Promotion, Economic Consideration, and Schedule Convenience (Zhang et al., 1995; Zhang et al., 2003). These variables have been found to have a significant positive relationship with attendance (Baade & Tiehen, 1990; Hansen & Gauthier, 1989; Jones, 1984; Zhang et al., 1995). For example, Economic Consideration variables such as income and ticket discounts have a positive relationship on attendance. However, ticket price, other forms of entertainment, and competition has a negative relationship with game consumption (Zhang et al., 1997; Zhang & Smith, 1997). The most common consumer demand factor studied is Game Attractiveness which includes individual athletes, team records, leagues standing, competition, team history, schedule, convenience, and stadium quality. Game promotion, Economic Consideration, and Schedule Convenience have been studied to a lesser extent.

What a consumer perceives is important in their experience has led to more consumption. However, we do not know what specific factors in the contemporary landscape of the WNBA lead to high perceptions of product quality. Previous researchers (e.g., Tsuji et al., 2007; Yoshida & James, 2010; Wang et al., 2020) have analyzed the positive and significant relationship of consumers' perceptions of core product quality on their total satisfaction of spectating sporting events. The notion that a product or service provided results in pleasurable fulfillment can be directly linked to a customers' satisfaction level (Oliver, 1997). This has been used to effectively increase the number of returning customers, raise profits, and lower marketing

expenses with a more focused consumer target (Reichheld, 1996). Ultimately, the relationship between core product satisfaction and marketing outcomes is a positive one that leads to greater purchase intention, consumption, and merchandise purchasing (Bennett & Smith, 2005; Greenwell et al., 2002; Johnson et al., 2019; Lee et al., 2020; Zhang, et al., 2003; Zhang et al., 1998).

The WNBA faces great competition and thus needs to add to a positive spectating experience for fans attending games in person. Competition among different sports leagues and entertainment options for the attention hours and dollars of consumers adds to the importance of studying WNBA core product consumer demand from a consumer perspective (Johnson et al., 2020). To understand the core product of women's sports it is important to understand items that fans demand and the relationship to consumption if given these things. Two proposed ways of increasing the sale of this core product are to focus on consumer interaction over product placement and to make female fans and decision makers a priority to enhance sponsorship rate of return and fan support (Imbriano & Downing, 2010). Having more fans in person does not only help the on court product, but it helps generate revenue by attracting sponsorships and corporate partners. Another growing factor resulting from core product consumption is from the user generated content of fans sharing the experience online with a community of fans who are digitally connected.

New Development in Consumer Demand

Interactive Activity. The traditional core product features do not offer insights needed to truly understand today's WNBA and the full essence of the game day attractions and variables that entice fans to buy tickets. While traditional core product features of game attractiveness, home and away team offer insights into the actual game, the WNBA offers a game day

experience that encompasses much more than those traditional features. The clear distinction this research intends to make is found in the introduction of interactive activity as an extension of a core product consumer demand features for attending a WNBA game day in person. Interactive Activity for the WNBA has been a cornerstone of the league and experiences provided for fans. As an extension of the actual game, the game day experience for fans begins with the communication that a team makes to make fans aware of what they can expect when they attend a particular game day. As a part of the fabric of the league, individual teams have players, coaches, referees, and facilities at their disposal to create interactive experiences (Min, 2014; Williamson et al., 2003).

A unique facet of the interaction the WNBA has with their fans is in the availability of their players. Before and after games, players can be seen signing autographs, taking pictures, and meeting fans. Players are incorporated into season ticket holder events that provide exclusive access to the most dedicated of fans. Players are also in attendance for pre-game sponsorship activations where executives can perform on-court basketball activities and meet team personnel. Players and coaches work together to create spaces for young boys and girls to compete before and during the halftime of games. This takes shape in the form of skill clinics and youth teams having the opportunity to scrimmage with the help of official WNBA referees. Coaches also enhance the quality of the game day experience by conducting interviews and in-game analysis that are shown in real time to the fans present in the arena. Assistant coaches also make themselves available in different parts of the arena such as in the atrium when pre-game shows are being conducted in front of fans. Fans are also provided entertainment options that allow them to get to know players and coaches better through pre-recorded segments displayed on the arena video boards (Johnson et al., 2020; Zhang et al., 2003).

Creative game promotions involving fans and these pre-recorded videos create great interaction moments where fans are often given the opportunity to compete for prizes if they can answer questions and facts posed by players (Mastromartino, Wann, & Zhang, 2020). During in-game activation opportunities for media timeouts and half-time, the WNBA uses fan participation for interactive entertainment. This involves promotional giveaways, on-court competitions, and opportunities to compete for upgraded ticket packages. Another facet of WNBA game day social interaction is in the content shared and generated by both a team and their fans. WNBA teams have specific filters and hashtags that allow fans to share pictures of themselves at the arena to post online. This turns fans into content creators who become live ambassadors by posting game updates and pictures of their game experiences. Arena interaction also attracts sponsors who attach their logos and brands to social media posts and signage. The success of this in-game event helps increase the likelihood of advertisements and sponsorships featuring WNBA players. While these events add a great experience for attendees, it also helps raise the profile of athletes and coaches by increasing their appearance fees and marketability. These facets of interactive fan interactions point to clear differences from traditional core product consumer demand factors (Johnson et al., 2019; Lee et al., 2020). Currently, interactive activity variables have not yet been defined and implemented in a core product extension scale to study sport consumption. This study will look to understand the relationship among WNBA social interaction game day initiatives and live game consumption.

Advocacy Programming. Another core product extension that is proposed in this study for contemporary consumer demand are variables related to social justice and social responsibility initiatives through a new term, *Advocacy Programming* that is currently being integrated into live WNBA game day experiences. These possible variables are related to the

commitment that the WNBA has made to support its players, personnel, fans, and community through recognition of issues important to them. Part of the draw of attending WNBA games is knowing that you are supporting an organization that champions inclusivity. This is woven into the fabric of the live game experience by activations and player initiatives that contribute to LGBTQ+, women empowerment, political climate, the fight for racial justice, and other initiatives. The individual fight for these causes by WNBA athletes have been matched by the league's commitment to support their players. LGBTQ+ fans and attendees are a welcomed part of the WNBA family and are specifically targeted with advertisements and engagement. Women empowerment initiatives include honoring leaders in the community and presenting them with awards during games or having fundraisers that provide ticket proceeds to a particular organization. Politically, the athletes of the WNBA have taken a stance that their voice matters and above their athletic ability, they are human beings who speak out against injustices. During the 2020 season, WNBA players spoke up against one of their own team owners who denounced the players' fight for racial injustice. The result was WNBA players wearing politically charged t-shirts campaigning for the candidate that best reflected the values that they believed in. The WNBA and its franchises have also been supportive of players sitting out from competition to fight for equality and justice.

Opportunities for the WNBA to capitalize on the synergy created by the players, leagues, and fans are centered around the stand taken on societal issues. In order to truly understand what opportunities and features entice fans the most for consumption, it is important to understand how the WNBA uses its platform to enhance fan and community commitment. For example, the league has implemented various initiatives such as giving fans the opportunity to donate ticket proceeds to different charities, shedding light on female leaders in business during the #MeToo

movement, enhancing physical activity opportunities for women and girls, and having themed LGBTQ+ nights and other theme nights that add additional entertainment features. The former president of the league has stated that the driving uniqueness of the WNBA is in its commitment to diversity and inclusion in society, the workplace, and community. In a live game, this manifests itself by the league initiating different members of the community for pregame and halftime entertainment appearances, fan appreciation nights, and group ticket packages for individuals and partners.

Need for Studying Market Demand from Consumer Perspective

Understanding the consumer demand for this core product from a consumer perspective is important because professional sports are now a part of the attention economy that is fighting for people's sustained engagement. Sports fans want personalized experiences and activations with team participation to help affirm and communicate their brand loyalty (Imbriano & Downing, 2010). Knowing what consumers demand from a professional sporting event experience adds a great perspective from marketers and decision makers. Researchers have conducted numerous studies confirming the importance of understanding sport consumer behaviors such as consumption intentions and best promotional practices (Byon et al., 2010; Kwon et al., 2007; Qian et al., 2020; Swanson et al., 2003; Theodorakis & Alexandris, 2008; Trail & James, 2001). WNBA consumption studies have been conducted from the earlier emergence of the league (Armstrong, 1999; Williamson et al., 2003; Zhang et al., 2003). To find out what variables indicate live game consumption, researchers have approached this topic from a market segmentation, consumer demand, social motivation, and consumer lifestyle lens.

Researchers have conducted numerous studies and confirmed the importance of understanding sport consumer behaviors such as consumption intentions and best promotional

practices. Decision making variables for sports consumers have been sought out in previous literature. One of these variables is motivation which considers an individual's intrinsic needs that push them towards attending sport events to fill their needs. Specific motivators that lead to sport consumption have been explored in various studies (Pease & Zhang, 2001; Trail & James, 2001; Wang et al., 2020; Wann, 1995). Motivations such as an individual's need for escapism, seeking excitement, searching for competitive balance games, vicarious achievement, and socialization affect different sport consumption behaviors (Funk et al., 2003; Gladden & Funk, 2001; Mahony et al., 2002; Wang et al., 2020). These behaviors include attending live sport events, digital engagement of sports media, or the purchasing sport's merchandise to display their fan support).

However, to properly assess the live game entertainment factors of WNBA games that lead to increased demand consumption, consumer demand will be explored in this study. Market demand is a key determinant of a fan's ability to consume sport. This has become a focus of sport management researchers, who sought to understand why sport spectators make the decisions they do. Studying consumer demand is appropriate for understanding WNBA consumption predictability. Market demand, also referred to as quality factors for a core service (Byon et al., 2013), is defined as a spectator's expectations and perception of the core product attributes that are associated with a particular sporting event (Zhang et al., 1995). The study of consumer demand in spectator sport consumption research has been conducted by other researchers (Braunstein et al., 2005; Byon et al., 2010; Zhang et al., 1995; Zhang et al., 2003; Wang et al., 2020). Examples of traditional core attributes include cognitive-based variables such as quality team, quality of both the home and opposing opponent, promotion of the game, scheduling convenience, and economic, personal and environmental factors. Market demand can be seen as

a group of constructs that organizations use to pull in new and keep returning customers to in person sport events.

Long lasting profitability and consumer engagement for Women's professional sports has been a resounding issue adding to the uniqueness of the industry. Men and Women's professional leagues and associations are not the same product, nor are they consumed the same. However, much can be learned about the ways that men's professional leagues were able to highlight their core competencies to grow their fan bases through managing game day and event operations. Having fans physically attend games can be seen as the cornerstone for revenue generating activities for a franchise. Digital interaction, merchandise, and television rights are all predicated on the core product and trying to replicate the feeling received while attending in person through other mediums. For women's leagues specifically, professional sporting events have always been a place where fans can build a community among each other, and teams can use their platform before, during, and after games to provide entertainment and value to their consumers. A major focus for professional sport executives is growing their generational fanbase. This strategy has been done domestically and internationally to attract consumers in their community and nationwide.

Statement of Problem

Previous studies have not yet examined the impact of contemporary WNBA consumer demand extension features on sport consumption. In recent years, the WNBA has cemented their commitment to supporting their communities through social justice initiatives, individuals with disabilities, environmental disasters, and use of their platform to uplift individuals of different races, gender, socio-economic statuses, and sexual orientations. The enticing nature of the WNBA is often present because of the athletes who make up the league. The NBA provides a

product that is distinguished by its athletic prowess, dunking, and outstanding individual performances. The WNBA has a different distinction as a game filled with strategic half-court offenses, and players who exhibit grace and finesse. The competitive nature of the WNBA is in large part due to the athletes who play all year round in different leagues across the world. While the on-court product of the WNBA is one of the most competitive professional sports leagues in the world, its fans attendance at games where they are also entertained by pre-game performances, arena wide activations, giveaways, special honorees and theme nights could be a special addition to augment revenue generation through increased ticket sales and selling of merchandize. With WNBA live game attendance as the subject of this study, core consumer demand features before, during, and after a WNBA game will be analyzed in relation to game consumption behaviors to examine what elements of a game lead to repurchase intentions. There is a clear distinction on previous core product studies, and what is now needed are ways to fully understand what WNBA game event engagement features attract and retain fans. There is currently a lack of research connecting an extension of core traditional product features to contemporary consumer demand factors of social fan interactions in the form of interactive activities and social activism activations, which we will refer to as advocacy programming with consumption behavior. This research will define interactive game event activities and advocacy programming variables through a scale and measure its ability to predict WNBA game consumption.

When assessing consumer demand for live WNBA games it is important to explore interactive activity and advocacy programming that the league has launched as a part of its contemporary program features. The ability to interact with players before games has now been woven into the fabric of the league. Giving young athletes the ability to participate in games and

clinics before the game and during halftime is another way that WNBA teams interact with its fans. Understanding specifically which fan interactions yield the greatest perception can increase its understanding of their fan base. The ability to contribute to social change advocacy programming initiatives is now being officially induced into the WNBA. The social change council that has been started by the league is one of the first of its kind in professional sports. Fans that support the WNBA are now clearly aware that their support also goes towards solving societal issues such as racial injustice, women's rights, LGBTQ+ issues, hunger, and underserved members of their communities. Many individual teams make it a point to program events and community engagement opportunities that encompass a whole "game day". This is a stark difference from the 2-3 hour game within which the competition is being held. These core product extensions have not been studied in previous literature, as constructs that can lead to increased consumption intentions need research investigation. This study will (a) define social interaction and social change fan engagement features in the context of core product demand extension features and (b) analyze which factors can predict consumer demand for WNBA games. In brief, the purpose of this proposed study is to examine the dimension of consumer demand for core product features of professional women's basketball events and their impacts on consumer satisfaction and perceived value and subsequently on consumption behavior.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The Women's National Basketball Association (WNBA) started its league with marketing, financial, and operational support of the National Basketball Association (NBA). The eight original WNBA teams used similar logos and branding as their partner NBA teams present in the same city. This was done to establish a connection and to make an easy transition for fans to quickly establish a strong association with the WNBA. With the help of the NBA, the WNBA set consecutive growing attendance records from 1997-2002. This feat gave the WNBA the distinction as one of the most successful women's professional leagues in the history of Women's professional sports (Williamson et al., 2004; WNBA, 2008). Much of the initial success of the WNBA was directly tied to the financial resources, public reputation, and support of the NBA (Kurtzman & Zauhar, 2005; Williamson et al., 2004). The NBA extended their relationships with major corporate sponsors and million-dollar television contracts for the benefit of the WNBA. In addition, during the first season, the NBA spent about 15 million dollars on marketing efforts for the WNBA. The achievement of success for the WNBA is also due to their grassroots marketing strategy. For example, the WNBA makes a special effort to appeal to families, the LGBTQ community, and community programs. Another marketing strategy for the league is centered around their mandate to make players available for the media, community relations, and fan engagement before and after games. Player accessibility also comes in the form of open practices and multiple player and coach appearances. Consumer loyalty and an affinity towards a team are increased by the opportunities to meet and engage with team personnel. These items have also

been found to improve a consumer's consumption level of game and media products (Kurtzman & Zauhar, 2005; Lee, 2001; Min, 2014).

Despite these great efforts, the WNBA faces several challenges in the crowded realm of professional sports. Arenas for WNBA teams are often empty and game attendance remains a primary concern for the growth prospects of the league. As a result, in-game fan attendance is often the central focus of WNBA marketing campaigns. Poor spectatorship in game event attendance leads to a lack of revenue from media rights deals (Arrington, 2008). Team administrators are concerned with low television ratings and game consumption issues (Lombardo, 2007). To face the challenges of declining live game attendance, televised game viewership, and partnerships, the league has tried to adopt several strategies. These strategies include allowing for private ownership, stronger administrative systems, and more experienced leadership (Lombardo, 2007). This was a move away from the original structure where the WNBA owned each team.

Armstrong (1999) analyzed factors that significantly influenced increased attendance at professional women's basketball games. Several consumption-related variables were found including: opportunity to support women's professional basketball, opportunity to see role models, entertainment value, quality of play, and the chance to see individual players. In previous WNBA spectator identification research Williamson et al. (2003) discovered that the factors of pride, reflection, and followership led individuals to attend games. Zhang et al. (2003) similarly found that these factors are related to demographic background variables of spectators. Zhang et al. also examined the relationship among demographic background, lifestyle, and level of WNBA game consumption for spectators. These researchers all found that the majority of demographic variables were related to game consumption. This helps demonstrate the

meaningfulness of promoting WNBA games through demographic specific marketing efforts. Another study that contributes to the knowledge we currently have about WNBA game consumption is studied from a consumer demand factor lens. The previously mentioned factors of game attractiveness, market promotion, and economic consideration were found to be related to demographic variables that predicted professional sport event consumption in other leagues. However, professional sport and WNBA consumption studies have failed to make the connection between contemporary WNBA game event consumer demand and consumption.

Contemporary WNBA Organizational Characteristics

Throughout the history of the WNBA, its players and league personnel have used their platform to influence societal change and provide its fans with an atmosphere that is inclusive of their community of supporters. Attending a WNBA game does not just consist of watching the four-quarter competition. Before a fan even arrives at a game, they are digitally welcomed and encouraged to engage with a team through specialized community groups and ticket offers. At an arena, fans are provided with opportunities to meet players and coaches. Community groups such as dance teams and musicians are often provided with the opportunity to be a part of the entertainment. Another major component that is present at WNBA events are in the live game experience portion. Highlights and interactive player segments are digitally shown during the game. A huge grassroots marketing effort for the WNBA is in their commitment to highlight young athletes that often get to participate in scrimmages and skills competitions during a game. Free promotional items are dispersed among fans, leading to the overall atmosphere of a game. Lastly, themed game nights, charity partnerships, and segments honoring community contributors make up the staple of uniqueness of the WNBA. Before it is possible to analyze the exact consumer demand of these core products of WNBA games, it is important to truly understand the WNBA's commitment to uplift their community of supporters and create an

atmosphere that demonstrates the causes important to the individual players and franchises (Johnson et al., 2020; Min, 2014).

Contemporary initiatives of the WNBA are centered around the challenges and opportunities currently presented in society. An opportunity present for WNBA teams is in the overall growth of women and girls in physical activity. The NBA and WNBA have both established league-wide initiatives such as Game Growers with Nike, HerTimeToPlay, and the Jr. NBA World Champions to provide support and outreach to young female basketball players. These groups of players are often showcased at games and provided with opportunities to be a part of the game day operations through clinics, meet and greets, and merchandise giveaways. The Covid-19 pandemic of 2020 caused a stop in operations for many professional sport teams. However, the WNBA was fortunate to be able to quarantine their players and host a 2020 season on the campus of the IMG Academy in Bradenton, Florida. While there, the WNBA took strides to advance society around them by donating food and resources to those struggling from the pandemic. During this time, the league made a historical decision to support its players and fans by using its platform to speak out on social justice and the political climate. Fans of the WNBA have now expected this level of social awareness from the league that in many respects is at the forefront of protest, donations, and shedding light on important societal issues. Besides social injustice and the pandemic, the WNBA also uses its live games to provide awareness to the special Olympics, guests with sensory disabilities, and inclusion with members of the LGBTQIA+ communities. These commitments are not new from the league or WNBA players.

WNBA Social Justice History

Borders (2018) wrote an article detailing the actions and impact that WNBA players have had on the league and society since the inception of the league. As the former president of the

WNBA, the author had a direct viewpoint on not only the players but also had a sustained commitment to the entire league to impact the communities around them by using their voice. From their personal experiences, WNBA players speak out against racism, sexism, and homophobia. They have been drivers of public debate and conversation voicing their truths of equality and justice (Borders, 2018). During times of division, the WNBA has strived to create an atmosphere that brings people together. This uniqueness adds to the core product feature of WNBA live games and adds to the importance of understanding the relationship between consumer demand factors and consumption. Both the league and its fans have embraced the idea that the WNBA is committed to giving its players a platform woven into the fabric of their live games and marketing. Another interesting point made by Borders (2018) is that women were playing organized basketball before they could vote. The fight for equal rights by female basketball players has been present through the implementation of Title IX and fight for gender norm discrimination. The former president added that being committed to what they stand for guides how the WNBA responds to societal issues and displays its commitment to equality in its live game day activations.

In the summer of 2020, the protest of the police incidents involving George Floyd, Jacob Black, and Breonna Taylor prompted a response from the WNBA that resulted in several league-wide actions that put the league ahead of its professional sport franchise peers in standing for equality. With an understanding that the WNBA fully supports its players, fans stuck by the league contributed to the highest viewership ratings in league history. These initiatives included dedicating the 2020 season to the Black Lives Matter Movement and creating the Social Justice Council. Teams wore special uniforms and apparel with the names of Sandra Bland, Breonna Taylor, Vanessa Guillen, and others to bring awareness of female victims of police and racial

violence. Players wore Nike warm-up shirts that had phrases such as “Black Lives matter” and “Say Her Name.” These phrases were also largely displayed on the court during the season. The Social Justice Council, enacted by the league, has pledged to create activities and opportunities to engage with educators, activists, business and community leaders by holding roundtables, player podcasts, and community conversations.

However, the aforementioned activity is not the first time that the league has used its live games to increase fan loyalty, societal issues, and uplift the voice of players. Before Colin Kaepernick kneeled during the National Anthem at NFL games, WNBA players used their platform to protest the police killings of Philando Castinle and Alton Sterling in 2016 by individual teams, such as the Minnesota Lynx and New York Liberty, wearing pre-game shirts calling for change. At the time, the league was faced with an issue on how to respond and react to these individual teams as they previously had a policy enacted that banned any alterations of uniforms promoted for teams to wear. To solidify the WNBA’s stance in supporting its players, the league decided to lift any fines associated with violating the league’s uniform policy after discussing the matter with the players. Before the protest of 2020 that saw leagues across the WNBA, NBA, MLB, and across sports refuse to play games in response to the shooting of Jacob Black, the WNBA organized media blackouts, protested the National Anthem, and took a unified stance to bring social justice into their live games. While there has been backlash for the unwavering stance of the WNBA, a majority of WNBA fans have responded by attending live games and showing their support for the individual players who decided to speak out on the injustices that personally impact their daily lives (Borders, 2018).

To further this momentum, some of the biggest stars in both the NBA and WNBA convene in major cities to hold conversations with law enforcement, community leaders, and

other members of the community to further their social activism. Both player's unions run social responsibility programs in a similar format that engage individuals to promote fitness and mental health initiatives, champion for individuals with disabilities, and raise awareness of other issues through activations. When fans attend games, there are often initiatives including health screenings, financial seminars and invited members from community organizations that add to the consumer demand factors of attending a WNBA game live.

Interactive Activity

To properly assess the impact of interactive activations on game consumption, it is necessary to define what is meant by interactive activations in the context of WNBA games fan engagement. Proposed constructs will be put forth based on previous literature and engagement features. Being able to interact with fans has been a great feature for the WNBA. Engaging fans begins before they arrive in the arena. Fans can help feel connected to their team by participating in game day activities that are attributed to a particular theme, event, or cause. These proposed constructs have previously been mentioned in conjunction with game consumption for professional sport teams. However, in the WNBA, interactive activity has certain distinctions in the WNBA.

Player Fan Interactions. A distinguishing factor in the experience that WNBA fans can expect is in the player availability before and after games. A broad overview of these interactions have previously been identified in fan engagement literature. Fan interactions promoted by teams and executed by players that create relationships enable fans to interact with a team, personnel, and other fans can be defined as fan engagement (Yoshida et al., 2014). For example, when players sign autographs and take pictures with fans before and after games there is a great emphasis on relationships rather than a transactional exchange. However, many interactions

involving players and fans are specific to the WNBA. There are 12 WNBA teams across the United States spread out in prominent cities that have a large women's basketball following. Compared to other professional sports leagues, this small number of teams makes it harder for fans to attend games. As a result, teams have players with fans from their hometowns or college programs who travel for hours to see them play. Players acknowledge this and often cut their warm up routines short to interact with these fans. Teams also appreciate this fan commitment and set activities for these fans. Understanding which one of these factors can lead to an increased amount of consumption and an organization of customer profile (Johnson et al., 2020).

Coach and Team Personnel Appearances. Another social interaction feature is when coaches and other team members make appearances at events, broadcasts, and in game breaks. Season ticket holders and club members of WNBA teams are given access to events where team personnel are present to provide a deeper insight into team and organization strategy. Some of these events include draft parties, meet and greet nights, and shows that provide insight into game strategy (Johnson et al., 2020; Williamson et al., 2003).

Youth Basketball Initiatives. Another distinguishing element to social interaction in professional sport live games is the opportunity for young athletes from the community to participate in skills clinics and competitions before, during, and after live games. This serves multiple purposes for a team. The first being generational fan building. When a team is able to curate safe spaces to play for their community, they are able to grow the sport and its attachment from an early age. When young fans are given the opportunity to interact with a brand from an early age, those experiences lend themselves to an attachment that can result in recurring revenue in ticket sales in the future. Hosting opportunities to compete at the arena on game day is often the first time that a family has an opportunity to attend a game and experience an arena. This

interaction also provides an opportunity for sponsors to get involved and cover the cost of registration fees and apparel. Many of these events are monitored and attended by the professional athletes, coaches, and referees (Min, 2014; Williamson et al., 2003).

Digital Content Creation. Fans that attend games in person often become ambassadors for that team due to their digital interaction and content creation in real time. While professional sport teams have adopted this move to digital entertainment during live events, the WNBA is able to provide specific opportunities for these fans to post and share experiences, predict outcomes through apps, and offer real-time game analysis. This digital adoption can be seen in apps that provide easy access to tickets, team updates, schedules, and customer service interaction. Not only do these digital exchanges connect an organization with a fan, but they also allow fans to connect with each other, and brands to connect with fans. Teams also are able to gather insights on fan wants and patterns as individuals show their level of attachment (Shapiro et al., 2013). This can help enhance revenue by ensuring that fan profiles are marked for sponsorships, advertisements, and promotions (Johnson et al., 2020; Min, 2014; Olson, 2010).

Advocating Programing

Since the inception of the league, the WNBA has been on the forefront of advocating for social change through programming. To many fans, supporting the WNBA is more than just being fans of the league, teams, and its players. Its communities of supporters are ingrained in the idea of supporting female athletes and cultural social impact that the league represents. The visible change of how women are given opportunities to play professional sports and how they are perceived is adding to the draw of the WNBA (Walker, 2012). The WNBA is one of the only professional sport leagues that have women in commissioner, executive, coaching, and other administrative positions (Lapchick, 2009). The support that the WNBA receives is often in a

reciprocal manner, as many look at the personnel of the WNBA as role models. Social change initiatives are an important part of how the players are able to show their fight for important things outside of basketball. However, in order for the WNBA to function as a league, revenue still remains the most important factor of the success of the WNBA. For the WNBA to proceed in strengthening their social and cultural community commitment, it must also ensure that they are able to celebrate inclusion and diversity in a way that leads to more game consumption.

Racial Inequality. The WNBA welcomes and supports individual players' fight for racial justice in society. The social justice council, a newly enacted initiative, is bringing activism to WNBA representation in communities to formalize the grassroots efforts to create a just society. When fans attend live games, this fight for equality is not masked for the sake of competition. Apparel, signage, and messaging promoting equality is prevalent throughout the event day.

Women empowerment. Fans who support and identify with a women's sport team can be indicative of psychological factors that encourage an individual to engage in that particular event. In terms of gender identity and the support of women's rights, supporting a team and its players is a way to express discontent with the status quo (Delia, 2020). Regardless of their own gender, it is possible that these fan's understanding of a social movement can lead to increased consumption.

LGBTQ. The WNBA was one of the first leagues to embrace the LGBTQ+ community by having pride nights and honoring members of their community. Muller (2007) first explored that the lesbian community in the context of the WNBA and discussed how the league became an emblem of empowerment at a time when identifiable lesbian spaces were not prominent. The author equated the community that the WNBA created with safe spaces that have been

historically designed to offset an oppressive social climate. Fan participation at WNBA games has also been examined from a feminist framework to understand WNBA game spaces and lesbian fan engagement in these spaces. Fan experiences and their perceptions of the WNBA live games can be examined through a consumption lens (Muller, 2009).

Market Demand and Consumption

Studying WNBA event spectator consumption from a consumer demand perspective can help designate important factors that are directly tied to individuals wanting to consume more games. Market demand is measured by different attitudinal constructs that are related to the core product features of the product or service for returning consumers (Braunstein et al., 2005; Byon et al., 2010; Wang et al., 2020). Motivational variables include a person's intrapersonal drive that motivates people to engage in certain consumption behaviors (Brown et al., 2018). Market demand is different from the motivational perspective, as it is an attitudinal construct that is indicative of someone's expectation and evaluation of essential attributes of core product features. Theoretically, sport consumer demand can be evaluated from cognitive-oriented theories such as the theory of planned behavior, reasoned action, and behavioral outcome theories (Ajzen, 1991). Putting these behavioral theories in a sport spectator consumption context, it is important to understand that a consumers' positive attitude towards the core attributes of a live event game product can lead to re-attendance and media engagement (Byon et al., 2010; Zhang et al., 2003). Given these research findings and importance of consumer demand variables on consumption, several studies have explored specific consumer demand variables in professional, collegiate, and amateur sports (Braunstein et al., 2005; Zhang et al., 1995, 2006, Wang et al., 2020).

Sport fans are individuals who actively engage in behaviors and consumption patterns to satisfy their knowledge and psychological attachment to sport (Gantz et al., 2006, Lee et al., 2020; Wann, 1995). Fans consume sports through watching games live in person and on television, through streaming platforms, engaging with teams on social media and in their community, and consuming products and services related to a sport or a team. Understanding the motivations, patterns, and psychological attitudes of sports fans can help organizations maximize the revenue generated by fans and advertisers who wish to reach these fans. In terms of live game experiences, consumer demand can be defined as spectators' expectations revolving around the core attributes of the game itself (Zhang et al. 1995). The concept of consumer demand incorporates different cognitive-oriented constructs, such as home team and opposing team quality, scheduling convenience for fans, the cost of tickets, and star players (Byon et al., 2010; Zhang et al., 1995). These factors have been proven to predict behavior intentions. The core product of live sport games also includes other product extensions such as pregame activations or half-time shows. Market demand can be subsequently viewed as a group of pull factors that are provided to new and returning customers by sport leagues and franchises (Braunstein et al., 2005; Byon et al., 2010; Schofield, 1983; Zhang et al., 1995, 2003). For professional sport competitions, consumer demand constructs consist of core product service quality factors in spectator sport (Byon et al., 2013). Sport management research should continue to explore the factors that represent a core product, particularly for spectator live sports (Byon et al., 2010; Mullin et al., 2014; Zhang et al., 1995, 2003)

Schofield (1983) conducted the first consumer demand study that identified and proposed the following demand categories: demographic variables, game attractiveness, economic variables, and residual preference. Currently, professional sport consumption has been found to

be influenced by the following consumer demand variables: Game attractiveness, game promotion, economic consideration, and schedule convenience (Braunstein et al., 2005; Byon et al., 2010; Greenstein & Marcum, 1981; Hansen & Gauthier, 1989; Wang et al., 2020; Zhang et al., 1995, 2003). Game attractiveness has been the most commonly studied by researchers and it is determined by certain factors such as a home and opposing team's league standing, team record and record history, rivalry between two competing teams, and the skills demonstrated by individual athletes and their record-breaking performance. Another consumer demand variable is game promotion. Game promotion includes publicity of the event, direct promotional initiatives, special activations, giveaways, and other programs for entertaining. Economic consideration includes the ticket price, available discounts or sales, and seat locations. Lastly, schedule convenience considers factors such as the time of the game within the day and on what day.

The impact that consumer demand has on sports consumption has been previously studied in sport management research. The categories recently introduced of game attractiveness, game promotion and schedule convenience have all been found to have significant positive relationships with game attendance (Baade & Tiehen, 1990; Hansen & Gauthier, 1989; Marcum & Greenstein, 1985; Zhang et al., 1995). For example, in the variable of economic consideration, discounted tickets have resulted in a positive relationship to attendance; however, a negative relationship was found between game consumption and the price of tickets (Baade & Tiehen, 1990; Hansen & Gauthier, 1989; Zhang et al., 1997; Zhang & Smith, 1997). This has also been confirmed by Byon et al. (2010) where a multi-attribute model of consumer demand was proposed using reasoned action theory. This article reflected the uniqueness of the previously reported five live sporting events: consumer demand functions of home team, opposing team, game promotion, economic consideration, and schedule convenience can determine a fans

consumption patterns. To understand these items more closely, a detailed description of each variable will be explained.

Economic Consideration. Economic consideration incorporates a customer's perception of several economic variables such as the price of tickets, affordability, discounts, and/or good. Previous studies have reinforced evidence of a relationship between various economic variables and game consumption (Baade & Tiehen, 1990; Bird, 1982; Hansen & Gauthier, 1989; Siegfried & Eisenberg, 1980; Zhang et al., 1997). The findings of previous studies vary in their results. Several studies revealed that economic consideration for fans had a negative impact on game attendance for a general professional sports audience (Hansen & Gauthier, 1989). However, other studies have found different results. For example, Zhang et al. (1995) discovered that certain economic consideration factors such as discounted tickets, favorable seating, and cost of group ticket packages were positively attributed to attendance at NBA games. This positive relationship between a fan's economic consideration towards live sporting events and their consumption of these events has also been explored in other studies (Zhang et al., 1997, 2003, 2004). Based on these results, economic consideration has been shown to be an important consumer demand factor in professional sports' live events.

Schedule Convenience. Schedule convenience is represented by the time and weekday assigned for a sport event and the perceived convenience that would entice a consumer to attend. The schedule of any sport event could play an important role in a fan's attendance and consumption decision can be heavily swayed by the schedule of that particular sport. It was discovered in a MLB context that consumption increased during weekend and season ending games; however, no such relationship was found for afternoon games (Hill et al., 1982). Zhang (1998) also found in a minor league hockey game context that spectators preferred attending

Sunday afternoon games or weekday and Saturday evening games for consumption. The relationship between schedule convenience and consumer demand for professional sports has been supported by several existing studies (Braunstein et al., 2005; Byon et al., 2010; Zhang et al., 1995).

Home Team. The definition of a home team dimension is a spectators' perception of the home team's quality in performance. This can be demonstrated by a team's win-loss record, previous reputation given a team's past record, standing in their league, overall performance, and prominent players. Existing research of this aspect of consumer demand and its impact on sport consumption has been analyzed in previous studies. Home team performance and subsequent factors have been found to be one of the most important factors to drive game attendance. For example, Zhang et al. 's (1995) studied the home team's win/loss record, presence of superstars standing in their league, and performance. These factors were discovered to be positively related to attendance at NBA basketball games. A significant positive relationship was also discovered between the variables of win/loss record and the game attendance for NBA season ticket holders (Zhang et al., 2000). In a minor league hockey context, Zhang et al. (1997) discovered that the factors of home team performance history, home team quality, reputation, league standing, and presence of star players had a relationship with game consumption. Byon et al. (2010) also found that a home team's win-loss record, team reputation of success, and league standing had a positive relationship on spectators' intention to come back for another game. These previous studies included considerable evidence that highlighted the significance of home team factors on professional sport game consumption.

Opposing Team. The opposing team dimension incorporates certain factors such as the opposing team's overall performance, overall quality of team players, team performance

tradition, rivalry with the home team, team league standing, and the presence of star athletes. Previous studies have discovered a positive significant relationship between opposing team variables and the level of game consumption. In a study conducted in the context of the NHL, Hone's (1984) study showed the influence of the opposing team's star players on sport attendance. Previous research has also demonstrated that factors contributing to game attendance include the presence of prominent players, opposing team's quality, team performance history, and league standing (Greenwell et al., 2002; Zhang 1995, 1997). In addition, Byon et al. (2010) found that spectators' intention to re-attend professional sport games were positively influenced by the opposing team factors of overall team performance, reputation, quality of players, team performance quality, and excitement of play. Relationships were also found among certain factors such as the opposing team's competitive quality and spectator satisfaction (Madrigal, 1995).

Game Promotion. Game promotion is a dimension defined by the combination of marketing efforts used by a sports team to attract consumers to their events and products (Kotler & Armstrong, 1996). It has been used by professional sport marketers as a prominent marketing strategy because of its ability to create consumer demand, interest, and product sales (Fullerton & Merz, 2008). As a result, many researchers have studied the effect of game promotion on game consumption (Baad & Tiehen, 1990; Byon et al., 2010; Hansen & Gauthier, 1989; Jones, 1984; Zhang et al., 1994). As a consumer demand dimension, game promotion incorporates several variables such as sales, advertising, direct mail communication, publicity, and digital content. Zhang et al. (1995) displayed that the factor of game promotion should be considered separate from in-game entertainment amenities, which team marketers can curate based on the individual games. This could be particularly relevant in the context of the WNBA that plans in

game activations in accordance with the core audience. Several other studies have demonstrated that marketing directly to consumers can be effective in promoting a sense of loyalty with an organization (Fullerton & Merz, 2008; Kotler & Armstrong, 1996). For studies conducted in the context of the NBA and NFL, a positive relationship was discovered between game promotion factors and game attendance (Zhang et al., 1995, 2003, 2004). In contrast to the aforementioned studies, Byon et al. (2010) reported different findings. Interestingly, a negative relationship was found between game promotion factors such as sales, advertisement, direct contact. The context of the individual league may affect this relationship. These studies show the importance of the influence that game promotions can have on the consumption level of fans.

Market Demand Instrumentation

Sport management scholars have developed several scales to measure consumer demand factors and their impacts on sports consumption in professional sports, such as the NBA (Zhang et al., 1995), MLB (Braunstein et al., 2005), NFL (Zhang et al., 2004), and Taekwondo (Kim et al., 2009). Zhang et al. (1995) developed the first widely used instrument titled The Spectator Decision Making Inventory (SDMI) using over 800 live NBA spectators at six regular season games. The purpose of this scale was to explore a possible relationship between consumer demand and NBA consumer behaviors for sports fans. To create this scale a comprehensive review of literature and administrative interviews were conducted, in conjunction with a test of content validity, and a pilot study. This resulted in a scale developed with 20 items. The scale was further reduced to 17 items by an expert review panel. Following an exploratory factor analysis, four factors with 15 items were demonstrated to be effective: Home team, opposing team, game promotion, and schedule convenience. Zhang et al. (1995) concluded that these four factors were significant predictor variables for fans deciding to attend a NBA basketball game.

This study was the first to develop a scale of consumer demand factors that influence game event attendance from a sport perspective.

SDMI's original factors were then re-examined by Zhang et al. (2003) by using CFA. Six-hundred and eighty-five spectators from five NBA games were surveyed and resulted in a reduction from 15 to 13 items. Following the result of the CFA, 13 items under the initial four factors were developed: Home team, opposing team, game promotion, and schedule convenience. The revised scale showed that certain psychometric properties, along with the results, could be used as a predictor for game consumption by explaining 15 to 22% of the variance. The revised scale was then modified (Zhang et al., 2004) for an NFL expansion team using an EFA. As a result, four factors were used: game attractiveness, marketing promotion, economic consideration, and socializational opportunity. With 14% of the variance explained, all of the reported factors were displayed to be predictive of NFL game consumption through attendance intentions with 14% of the variance being explained. Byon et al. (2010) furthered Zhang et al. 's (2003) study and developed the Scale of Market Demand (SMD) instrument using data from 453 sport consumers. EFA, CFA, and SEM were all used during a comprehensive process to test the measurement. After a CFA was conducted, there were 17 items remaining under five main factors: Home team, opposing team, game promotion, economic consideration, and schedule convenience. A SEM analysis revealed that the factors of home team, opposing team, and game promotion explained 17% of the variance in a participant's intention to re-attend a professional sports game.

Byon et al. (2013) recently examined the impact of core service, also known as consumer demand and service quality on spectator consumption of professional sport games. This highlighted game support services encompassing the overall experience. This study also used

perceived value as a mediating variable. The results were that among the consumer demand factors, behavior intention was supported by home team, opposing team, game promotion and home team directly influenced a consumer's perceived value. One of the main findings of this study is that perceived value has a direct effect on behavior intentions for consumers. As a result, consumer demand (core service quality) is important for sport organizations who wish to attract and retain both new and existing consumers.

Theoretical Concepts

Stimulus-Organism-Response Theory

The stimulus-organism-response theory helps organize the theoretical underpinnings needed to justify studying consumer demand features in order to predict WNBA consumption. Discovered by researchers Mehrabian and Russell, the stimulus–organism–response (SOR) theory has increased in wide acceptance because of its in-depth and exploratory process in analyzing human behaviors. The theory demonstrates that behavioral responses (R) such as avoidance or consumption are influenced by aroused emotions and feelings (O), which is initially influenced by environmental stimuli (S). Due to its wide adaptability, researchers have modified the SOR theory in their own research contexts. Cognitive and affective elements have been added and adapted into the framework to help understand perceived relationships between behavioral phenomena such as consumption. Considering the flexibility of this framework, this study aimed to explore the relationships between traditional consumer demand and contemporary consumer demand factors including interactive activations and advocating programming of social issues (S), social learning of attitudes and expectations of these factors(O), and satisfaction and behavioral intentions to consume the WNBA.

Social Influence: Social Learning Theory

Social learning theory helps to distinguish the social influence stimulus in the SOR framework. It will further denote how a WNBA fan's consumption behavior can be influenced by perception of his/her in-game observations and the product features that they experience. Social learning theory is defined by a theory of social behavior and learning process that can explain how behaviors and patterns are created by observing and following the actions of others. Learning is both a behavioral and cognitive process that takes place through observation and instruction. It occurs in a social context and can also come from reinforcement in the form of rewards or punishments. Social learning theory from a behavioral perspective can help provide insight into the important role of internal processes for an individual's ability to learn. Bandura (1977) is credited as being one of the first researchers to bring social learning theory to the forefront by conducting a series of experiments exploring if the social behavior of aggression could be learned from observation. Starting in 1961, Bandura's experiments involved children observing an individual punching an inflatable doll to investigate the notion that children mimic behavior by observation. These were known as the Bobo doll experiments. Subsequently in 1997, Bandura developed the social learning theory. In 1986, this theory evolved into the social cognitive theory. This is centered around the idea that learning takes place in a social framework.

Following earlier work by renowned psychologist Skinner, Bandura advanced behavioral psychology by uncovering that individuals learn behavior through observation, in addition to the environment and reinforcement. Social learning theory has four processes that act as mediations to help determine if a new behavior will be acquired. Similarly, social learning theory has been referred to as the bridge between behaviorism and cognitive approaches. This is because mental factors result in a human's information processors that make them aware of the relationship

between behavior and consequences (Bandura 1977). Observational learning occurs when mental factors intervene or mediate to determine a new behavior. The thought processes of attention, retention, reproduction, and motivation occurs between observing the behavior and the actual imitation of the behavior. These include: Attention, retention, reproduction, and motivation.

Attention. Before a behavior is imitated, it has to be noticed. When something grabs a person's attention, it is of great importance because of the number of behaviors observed daily. Out of all of the behaviors observed, not all of them are important or noteworthy. Attention provides a person's perspective on whether a behavior should influence learning. Attention is crucial in realizing if a behavior influences the imitation and learning of that behavior. A mental representation of the behavior is formed by an individual, highlighting the importance of paying attention to both the behavior and its consequences.

Retention. Retention involves how well a behavior is remembered. Social learning is not immediate. It requires that a behavior is remembered to be performed. Even if a behavior is noticed, it will not be performed unless there is a memory formed. This could also hold true for memorable experiences and situations which could influence a participant's desire to attend those events again. The majority of social learning is not an immediate endeavor. The process of retention, therefore, is a necessity when memory is needed to be referred to.

Reproduction. Reproduction includes the ability or accessibility to perform the behavior learned. When a model of a behavior is present, having the ability to reproduce this behavior is not always possible. This influences an individual's decision as to whether he/she will try to perform the behavior. Physical abilities limit an observed behavior.

Motivation. Motivation or having the will to exemplify a behavior is related to vicarious reinforcement. Instead of through direct experience, learning occurs through observing the

consequences of other people's actions. Modeling a behavior also takes into consideration the rewards and punishments that follow an action. Observers are likely to imitate a behavior if the rewards outweigh any potential punishments or costs. If the vicarious reinforcement is not seen as favorable enough, a learner will not imitate the behavior.

For sports specifically, this could manifest itself in a continuously changing environment with shared interactions between people, the setting, and behaviors. This concept has been explored further in social learning theory through the concept of reciprocal determinism. This important factor states that an individual's behavior is influenced by the environment, and the environment is also influenced by the individual's behavior. Simply stated, a person's environment, personal qualities, and behavior all influence each other and have the ability to impact the people around them. Observation and direct experience are Bandura's contributions to social learning theory that widened the scope of a learning model that can be mediated to understand a future consequence's impact on imitated learning.

There are certain assumptions that ground social learning theory and its applications. These include that view that: People do learn through observation and can acquire new behaviors and knowledge through observation along; Behavior and learning are indirectly influenced by reinforcement and punishment; individual's expectations about the future results of a situation based on observed reinforcements or punishments; Lastly, an assumption linked with social learning theory is that learning does not directly lead to a change in behavior.

To get a full understanding of a possible model that can explain an understanding of learning experiences, behavioral and cognitive theories are integrated into social learning theory. This possible model of social learning theory incorporates assumptions and foundational tenets.

In 1963 and 1977 Bandura defined key components of social learning theory that still hold true today:

1. Learning incorporates both behavioral and cognitive processes in a social context.
2. Learning can occur by observing both a behavior and a consequence also known by vicarious reinforcement.
3. Reinforcement is not entirely responsible for learning however it does play a role.
4. Observable changes in behavior are not required for learning.
5. There is not a passive influx of information. Cognitive functions, environmental factors, and behavior mutually influence each other in learning. This is also known as reciprocal determinism.

Social learning theory involves the importance of observing, reciprocating, and imitating the behaviors, reactions, and attitudes of others in learning. The researcher also states that social learning theory emphasizes how environmental and cognitive factors work together to influence behavior and human learning (McLeod, 2016). Social learning theory also has the ability to impact change in society. Learning and imitating socially desired behaviors is reflected in entertainment and sport. Modeling in the form of entertainment can take the shape of viewers learning socially desired behaviors from actors portrayed in a particular program. Every element such as music, imagery, actors, scenery, and wardrobe can be used symbolically to influence the learning of certain cultures. Observational learning is a way for organizations to promote and design events that can bring forth new ways of thinking and behaving. Sports specifically can help contribute to how individuals see and construct their social reality. Sports can be seen as an emotional experience that can evoke emotion and attachment towards people, places, and causes. Television and sporting events can contribute to how viewers see their social reality. As a result,

organizations crafting sporting events can use their events as a reflection of the change they would like to see in society. Any effort and initiative to change beliefs by a league or franchise must be directed toward the practices and socio-cultural norms of their target audience.

Psychological Influence: Attitudes

Environmental impact affects behavior when a person accepts information from outside sources and self-generated inferences. This theory states that for someone's behavior to be influenced, they must be exposed to a great amount of information in a social environment that has the potential to alter their beliefs. In return, these beliefs determine the attitudes, norms, intentions, and corresponding behaviors. The conceptual component of this theory can also be explained as a person's behavior being determined by their intention which is influenced by their attitude and subjective norms. Attitudes of a particular behavior is influenced by that individual's beliefs about consequences of the outcomes. Fully connected, there are significantly strong relationships among beliefs, attitude, intention, and behavior. The influencing factors of attitudes, perceived behavior, and subjective cultural norms can predict a person's behavioral intentions (Ajzen, 1991). Fielding et al. (2008) demonstrated that positive attitudes and support were significantly correlated to engage in activism.

Attitude can be defined as a person's view and overall favorableness towards an object, action, or behavior (Ajzen, 1991). Attitude is developed by an individual's behavioral beliefs about the outcome of conducting a behavior. Subjective norms also influence these beliefs because of the perceived societal pressure to perform a certain way. Subjective norms are determined and influenced by normative beliefs, where important individuals may approve or disagree with performing a behavior. To carry out a behavior, perceived behavioral control assesses one's confidence and ability to carry out a behavior. However, there are factors outside a

person's individual control that can affect an individual's intentions to perform a behavior. When looking at perceived behavioral intentions from an event consumption perspective, one's beliefs regarding available resources and opportunities present to attend or purchase an experience can contribute to the execution of a behavior. The antecedents used to explain behavioral intention include attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control (Fielding et al., 2008; Low et al., 2011).

In conjunction with the impact of this theory on consumption, Oliver (1980) was one of the seminal researchers in identifying that attitude has an impact on purchase intention. Behavioral intention can be the result of a prior expectation and subsequent performance of a service. A fan's attitude towards live game components, which will be conceptualized as their perception of core product consumer demand features, will be measured with the amount of games that fans attend per season. This attitude is directly tied to human behavior in consumption patterns. By understanding this relationship, it is possible for these results to help understand future behavioral intentions of WNBA games. Having a strong attitude or feeling towards a certain aspect of an aspect or activation associated with a live game could also influence consumer behavior. Having a positive attitude can positively impact consumer behavior (Fazio et al., 1989). From a sport consumption framework when a fan has a favorable attitude towards certain features of a game such as performance, or game schedule it is possible for this attitude to lead to increased attendance behavior (Zhang et al., 2003).

A consumer's attitude towards six consumer demand factors: opposing team, home team, game promotion, economic consideration, epitome of sport, and scheduling convenience was used in a study by Zhang et al. (2004) to predict consumption behavior. Behavioral intention is defined as having a direct impact on actual behavior, and as a result it is important that quality

products, services, and experiences invoke a feeling that gives consumers incentive to consume in that matter. High service quality has been analyzed and found to lead towards favorable behavioral intentions towards the organization that provides that service and also towards a consumer to engage further. Understanding the core product features of live events is important for organizations to know what activations, entertainment, and game elements they should highlight, include, and promote to their fan base. From a consumer perspective, favorable behavior intentions can result in a customer willing to pay a higher price for a product or service (Hoch & Deighton, 1989). The inverse of this is dissatisfaction that is often seen as an insight into a customer wanting to discontinue transactions from a seller. Customers who are dissatisfied have lower repurchase intention and are more likely to express continued negative sentiment throughout consumption (Zhang et al., 2011).

Buying Behavior: Service Quality Satisfaction

When examining game consumption and core product features of live WNBA, a service quality lens can provide insight into the features and factors fans desire. This attitude towards the service quality of a game can add a theoretical framework to the questions needed to understand what factors lead to increased behavioral intention to attend more sporting events. In using service quality researchers seek to understand consumer pleasure or displeasure from a satisfaction lens (Geurin et al., 2018; Lam et al., 2005). Researchers have looked at repurchase intention and engagement by examining its impact among service quality, customer satisfaction, repurchase intention and behavior. Perceived value of a service in a sport or fitness event quality perspective can influence repurchase intention, as it is essential to keeping a loyal customer base and revenue. Service quality has historically been seen as a deciding element on whether or not customers revisit sport facilities and events (Parks & Zanger, 1990). A lingering concern in sport

marketing posed by Yiannakis (1989) is in understanding the satisfaction, needs, wants, and expectations for consuming events.

Consumer demand variables help conceptualize the pull factors that comprise core products and services that a sport organization provides to fans (Braunstein et al., 2005; Wang et al., 2020; Zhang et al., 2003). Examining what influences consumer behavior can be theoretically looked at from an attitude construct with cognitive variables (Byon et al., 2013; Geurin et al., 2018). The pull factors are indicative of consumer's expectations for a core product's features (Kim et al., 2009; Zhang et al., 2003). Studying the pull variables in relationship to sport consumption is usually looked at from the viewpoint of a consumer demand and event operation programs (Zhang et al., 2003, 2004). These two concepts start from the theory of sport service quality (Greenwell et al., 2002). From a service quality viewpoint, core service framework variables are divided into core service that is related to a sport product, program, or performance and peripheral services that consider the promotion and sport event operation (Mullin et al., 2014; Van Leeuwen et al., 2002). Market demand factors are defined as consumers' expectations of key features of a core product or service (Zhang et al., 1995). In professional sports, the game itself can be described as the core product (Mullin et al., 2014; Zhang et al., 1995). The first consumer demand study by Schofield (1983) categorized consumer demand variables by demographics, economic variables, game attractiveness, and other preferences. Market demand can be seen as the foundation of sports consumption research. The expectations of activities, programs, and services for consumers is what existing and future customers demand.

The origins of using consumer demand as a theoretical framework for sport consumption was predicated on the theory of reasoned action/theory of planned behavior. These theories help to explain behavioral intentions from an attitude and subjective norm perspective (Fishbein &

Ajzen, 1975). Previous studies have explained behavioral intentions in consumption through understanding attitude as a more powerful construct than both subjective norms and perceived behavioral controls (Byon et al., 2013). Previous researchers have established that when a consumer has a steadfast opinion or attitude on a service or project it serves as inspiration to behave in certain ways. A driving principle of consumer demand studies in the context of service quality is that having a positive attitude can be the driving force for a customer to exhibit attendance behaviors (Braunstein et al., 2005; Cianfrone & Zhang, 2013). For sport service attributes, customer service, facility accessibility, and event amenities provide support programs that add enjoyment to service quality (Zhang et al., 1998). Service quality attributes in a sport event context can be controlled before, during, and after by sport managers. This is slightly different from consumer demand for core product attributes that often are solely in the hands of the consumers once the product is transferred. Controllable variables in sporting events are important for sport organizers in ensuring that consumers re-attend (Mullin et al., 2014).

Service quality was originally thought of in two components comprising technical and functional quality (Grönroos, 1984). Technical service quality are the tangible services related to the outcome of a service. Functional quality are the intangible service quality attributes that are present during the process of the services. These attributes are also related to the positive feedback that consumers give for these services. Future attendance can be predicted by how satisfied they are with the service during the event. This is a widely known discovery preliminarily discussed by (Byon et al., 2018; Geurin et al., 2018; Zhang et al. 1998) as they revealed that live event sport consumption behavior was influenced by the quality of game support service programs.

In operational management traditional or core products are different from core service products such as strategic game play, coaches, players, and referees are out of the control of marketing and promotional decision makers. Contemporary or peripheral services for a sport event can be categorized as game support and operation programs. Team management is in charge of the peripheral services that surround the product functions of the game. This includes ticket service, arena operations, and before, during, and after activations. The overall quality and perception of effectiveness of a professional sports event is impacted by the quality of the supportive programs surrounding the game. These game support programs and the subsequent peripheral service quality affect spectatorship consumption (Byon et al., 2018; Zhang et al., 1998). From a service quality perspective, game support programs and activations are controllable elements. This puts all WNBA teams on an even playing field in terms of their creativity and ability to understand what their consumers want out of their live game experience. Where consumer demand factors have proven to be related to game consumption, service quality through spectator satisfaction is also predictive of game attendance. Examining service quality through game support programs has been studied by several to measure predictability in sport consumption behaviors. Zhang et al. (2005) conducted a study where four factors: ticket services, game amenities, arena services, and arena accessibility made the development of the Scale of Game Support Programs. This study has since been updated to include game amenities, ticket services, and venue quality.

In examining the relationship service quality, consumer demand, and behavioral intention theories, many of the live game sport attendance studies overlap in terms of the factors that explain the variance in game attendance. In many studies, consumer demand and core service quality factors were used interchangeably. Core service quality factors for professional game

events have included home team, opposing team, schedule convenience, game promotion, and economic consideration have all been found to explain game attendance, TV viewership, and re-attendance (Greenwell et al., 2002; Zhang et al. 1997; Zhang et al., 2000; Zhang et al. 2003). Byon et al. (2010) found that the core service quality factors of home team, opposing team, and game promotion explained around 17% of the variance for re-attendance for professional sport games. These factors have also been used in consumer demand studies.

Gendered Differences in the WNBA. The over-sexualization of female athletes has been a persistent issue in the perception of women's professional sports. Female athletes have often been judged by their sexual orientation, appearance off the court, and ability to fit into gender norms. This wide acceptance of what a female athlete should look and act like has been challenged by many who support women athletics outside of the physical aesthetics of the athletes. Athletes in the WNBA in particular often obtain physiques and height that were once deemed too muscular and unfeminine-like in society. As a result, the WNBA, its players, and events took on a space that challenged hegemonic definitions of how a female athlete can perform and act (Muller, 2007). The hegemonic framework that historically has plagued society's view of female athletes is guided by the notion that women are the weaker sex, and female athletes' bodies are incapable in performing in ways that are traditionally shown by men (Henderson & Zhang, 2019; Sabo & Mesner, 1993). Traditional gender roles are still communicated through the media and through the way that fans are introduced to women's professional sports. Women's professional leagues and individual athletes still face discrimination based on appearance, lifestyle, and their particular sport (Heineken, 2016). The media landscape for athletics is dominated by men in every facet of storytelling (Carini & Webster, 2012). Historically, sports media tries to project female athletes as feminine and

highlights their graceful features rather than their athleticism and skills. From male broadcasters, journalists, and producers, it is evident that in order to be in control of their perception, the WNBA must fully take control of how their players and games are marketed and presented to their loyal fans without bias or constant comparison to the men of the NBA.

To combat widely held beliefs, the WNBA has positioned itself as a niche sport that appeals to a smaller, more focalized audience (Miloch & Lambrecht, 2006). Examples of niche sport leagues include the Arena Football League, minor leagues such as the G-League, and emerging sports that are the top level of their sports such as Major League Soccer, Professional Bull Riding, and leagues like the WNBA and LPGA (Thompson et al., 2017). Leagues, like the WNBA, face unique challenges such as a lack of daily news coverage, exposure, and financial backing. To combat these things, the WNBA must create their own publicity and grow their fan base without the dependency of national attention (Greenhalgh et al., 2011). Pan and Baker (1999) explained that having an effective marketing strategy for niche sports is essential in developing a competitive advantage. Product differentiation for professional sports events can take the place in the form of different entertainment features, activations, and fan engagement opportunities. Producing differentiation can help meet the wants, demands, and personalization that fans want. The WNBA has thus far been able to understand what makes their product unique from other professional leagues. The league is in a position to give their fans the kind of access and opportunity to be involved with their teams and athletes in ways that are not afforded in many mainstream sport organizations. For women's sports in general, it has been found that fans are attracted to the opportunities to see wholesome family entertainment, role models, and supporting advancement opportunities for women. Understanding WNBA sport consumption

further can help attract and retain fans in alternative means that highlight the on-court product (Greenhalgh et. al., 2011).

WNBA Consumption

In the context of women's professional basketball games, there have been a low number of studies done in comparison to other leagues. Understanding the importance of consumption is evident in the context of the WNBA as a couple of studies have explored this direction. Zhang et al. (2003) explored WNBA game consumption through segmenting fans among sociodemographic, lifestyle, and amount of games attended. The results of this study are that sociodemographic and lifestyle variables were related to game consumption (Zhang, 2003). Funk et al. (2003) measured the level of consumer support for women's professional sport with items including level of interest, frequency of attending home games, frequency of watching televised games, and level of commitment to the team. This study used the Sport Interest Inventory scale (SII) and contributed to the instrument development to measure the motivation of spectators and fans. The sample size used included 620 single game attendees and season ticket holders. In addition to their four new findings, combined with the 14 constructs of the SII, there are 18 factors unique to women's professional basketball consumption. These factors include: role model, wholesome environment, team interest, entertainment value, supporting women's opportunities, drama, aesthetics, excitement, bonding with family, interest in sport, the knowledge of sport, customer service, vicarious achievement, socialization, escapism, community support, level of consumer support, and interest in players. A multiple linear regression showed that 10 spectator motives explain 48% of the variance (Funk, et al., 2003). Another WNBA consumption study conducted by Kim and Trail (2010) developed a model predicting the variance in attendance using three constructs. These constructs include: internal

and external motivators, internal and external constraints, and attendance. These findings showed that 34% of variance in attendance could be explained by their level of attachment to the team (internal motivator, lack of success, internal constraint), and leisure alternatives (external constraint). The importance of digital and in-game media on WNBA consumption was also examined by Zhang et al. (2011). The sample used was made up of about 1400 spectators attending several WNBA games. They found that there was a significant positive relationship for media performance factors and game consumption.

Mumcu and Lough (2017) examined public opinions of WNBA's Pride campaign, which was the first US professional sports league to publicly seek gay fans to attend their events. They found that LGBTQ fans looked more favorably on these campaigns. However, both heterosexual and homosexual fan consumption intentions were comparable. Jackson et al., (2017) conducted an online survey to understand people's attitude towards the WNBA. They found that while participants were satisfied with the affordability and family oriented atmosphere, a certain excitement element was missing to retain fans. It was concluded that league executives need to continue to innovate to find new ways to appeal to their fan base. These studies highlight the importance of understanding factors that influence WNBA fan consumption. However, to understand WNBA consumer behavior during this current time of complexity, it is important to look at in-game experience factors with more detail that include the league's commitment to social issues, user generated digital engagement, and before, during, and after game activations.

Summary

A primary revenue producer for professional sport teams is in ticket sales and live game consumption. Broadcasting rights, parking, digital streaming, licensing, and event operations are all secondary revenue resources for professional sports teams (Leonard, 1997). Spectator retention is critical to the financial success of an organization because of the primary and secondary revenue generated from spectator attendance (Sawyer & Smith, 1999). Seminal works in spectator participation for professional sports teams have suggested that gaining knowledge on customer's perception and participation is important for the development of strategies for sport organizations (Hansen and Gauthier, 1989). However, research on women's professional sports still lags behind male professional sports spectators and consumption studies. The WNBA, as well as other professional women's sports leagues have faced problems in sustaining live game attendance. A literature review has revealed the relationship between traditional consumer demand factors and consumption. However, the WNBA provides different game elements from male traditional sports. Franchises currently curate their entertainment, in game digital media, and promotions according to the desires of their fanbase. This league in particular has embraced its ability to impact social change through its league wide initiatives. However, there is a gap in literature in uncovering the contemporary landscape of the WNBA, fanbases, and the adoption of innovative live event programs designed to compete with the ever growing attention economy.

The review of literature revealed that consumer demand for core product features of professional women's basketball events would affect consumer satisfaction in turn affect consumption behavior. Therefore, the purpose of this proposed study was to examine the dimension of consumer demand by examining both traditional and contemporary consumer

demand features of professional women's basketball events and their impacts on consumer satisfaction and perceived value and subsequently on consumption behavior (Figure 1).

H1: Traditional Market Demand positively influences Satisfaction

H2: Traditional Market Demand positively influences WNBA Consumption Intentions

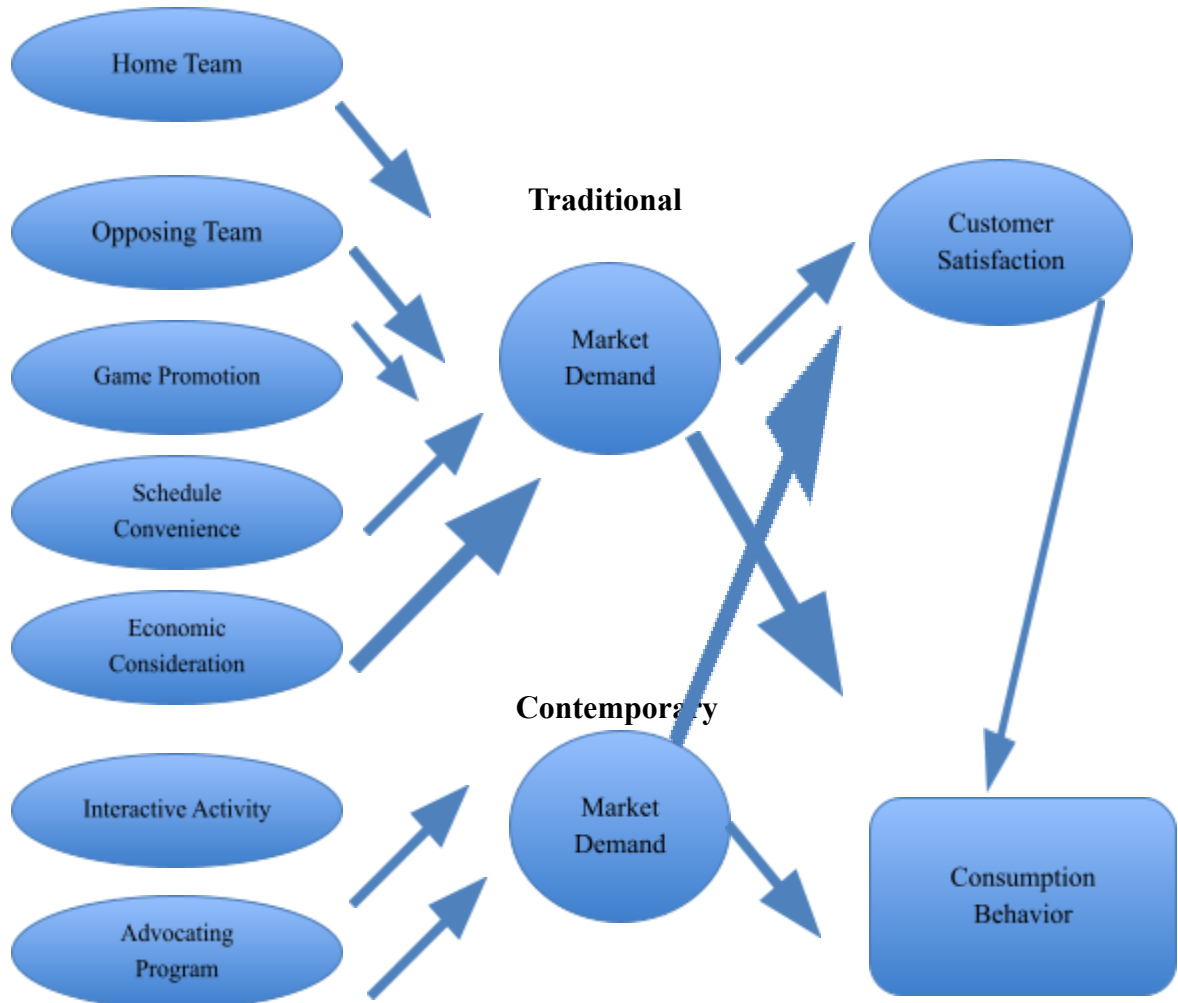
H3: Contemporary Market Demand positively influences Satisfaction

H4: Contemporary consumer demand positively influences WNBA Consumption Intentions

H5: Satisfaction positively influences WNBA Consumption Intentions

Figure 2.1

Dimension of Consumer Demand by Examining Both Traditional and Contemporary Consumer Demand Features of Professional Women's Basketball Events and Their Impacts On Consumer Satisfaction and Perceived Value



Theoretical Framework

To understand the theoretical justification for conducting this study in its present manner that seeks to connect consumer demand factors, satisfaction, and subsequent WNBA consumption intentions the S-O-R (Stimulus-Organism-Response) approach was introduced. This theory was used to understand how traditional and contemporary consumer demand factors can act as a stimulus for spectators when taking in all that a game day has to offer. When spectators are not physically at an arena, they are not aware of everything present that can influence spectators to attend more games. While the on-court product is an important factor in consumption, the ability for spectators to interact with team personnel and support advocating programming can also influence attitudes, expectations, and social influence. The next part of the S-O-R approach of organisms relates to how the stimulus is interpreted. Through social learning theory, we were able to connect how certain consumer demand factors experienced in the arena with other spectators can help inform individuals of which one of these factors meet their expectations and influence attitudes. Spectators assess the impression made on them from consumer demand factors and internalize how other spectators and peers react to game day features. The social interaction present at games from the organization to the spectators and spectators to other spectators whether positive or negative fulfill expectations and in turn influences the response of spectators to either consume more or less. The response in this study is looked at through the lens of WNBA consumption intentions and satisfaction. It was expressed through literature that consumption intentions and satisfaction have been found to be positively influenced by consumer demand factors. Overall, this framework allowed the researchers to conceptualize how certain factors can influence WNBA consumption intentions.

CHAPTER 3

METHOD

A study utilizing PLS-SEM has been conducted in this study to investigate the proposed research questions. The research method is described in the following sections: (a) participants, (b) procedure, (c) measurements, and (d) data analyses.

Participants

Participation in this survey was voluntary for individuals 18 years of age or older who are WNBA consumers. Qualification for this study included attendance at least two WNBA games in person in the last 5 years. Participants also had to identify a home team, or team that they consider to be their local team. This sampling condition ensured that research participants were aware of the game products and features of a professional sports team. Demographic background information was collected at the end of the questionnaire to collect a population sample description. Included in the questionnaire were the following variables: gender, age, ethnicity, marital status, occupation, education level, household income, and type of ticket purchased.

Of the total participants (see Appendix B), 58.6% were male and 39.3% were female. Regarding the age of participants, 63.6% ranged between 26 and 34 years old, 24.9% between 18 and 25 years old, and 11.5 % were 35 or older. The largest ethnic group represented in this study was Caucasian (41.8%), followed by Black/African American (24%), Hispanic (22.7%), and Asian/Pacific islander (1.9%). With regard to marital status, 49.7% were married or in a partnership and 45.4% were single. Household income levels varied among the participants: less than \$14,999 (4%); \$15,000 to \$ 34,999 (13.6%); \$35,000 to \$74,999 (19.4 %); and about 63.4%

with a household income of \$75,000 or more. A majority of respondents had a good educational background, with more than 56.5% of respondents reporting an undergraduate or advanced degree. All occupation categories were represented, with the highest percentage in the technical category (29.5%), followed by professionals (27.6%) and management (17.4%). Of the total respondents, 56.6% were season ticket holders; 32.4% of respondents had half or partial season tickets, and 11% were in possession of single game tickets. Participants reported that they attended a game with family members 40.1% of the time, friend(s) or a fan group 29.5% of the time, and co-workers 21% of the time.

Measurement

Traditional Consumer Demand Factors. The scale that was used to measure consumer demand was adapted from the SMD (Min, 2014). This is deemed appropriate for the study in focus because it was developed to measure professional team sports in a general sense. The five sub-dimensions of the SMD include Home Team (3 items), Opposing Team (5 items), Economic Consideration (3 items), Game promotion (3 items), and Schedule Convenience (3 items). These items were originally measured on a five-point Likert-Type Scale that ranges from “1 = Not expected at All” to “5 = Extremely Expected.” The validity and rigor of the traditional SMD has been tested and designed through conducting a literature review, through reliability, validity, and confirmatory factor analysis measures. This is a 5-factor model that displays 17 items as having a good fit to the data. This was confirmed in its study with a RMSEA=.084(CI=.072 to .096), SRMR= .077, ECVI= 1.66, and CFI= .92. The scale also presented good discriminant and convergent validity. It also displayed a favorable internal consistency (α ranging from .80 to .91; CR ranging from .76 to .82). For this particular study,

Contemporary Consumer Demand Factors. To measure a participant's identification with interactive activity factors enacted by the WNBA, a scale was designed to measure the components of the game day experience. Identification scales for social interaction intensive institutions have been used for sport teams, religious groups, schools, social and community activities, workplace initiatives, and community involvement (Crisp et al., 2006). The original items of consumer demand core product features were modified to measure each area of identification with ways that the WNBA interacts with their fans. Examples of these statements include the items: Player Pictures and Autographs, Pre-Post game events, Youth competitions, Team Meet and Greets, and in-game promotional giveaways. These will be measured on the same 1-5 Likert Scale as the adapted SMD in the context of meeting a fan's expectations. Mediated-interactive activity includes interaction activities that involve technology and media interaction while at the live game. The development of items for mediated-interactive activity includes themes of exclusive player interactions, interviews, in-game player tracking and trivia (Goebert & Greenhalgh 2020).

Similarly, to measure advocating programming on WNBA consumption the social change construct will include the following 6 items to see which factors are expected of WNBA live games: Women's empowerment, racial injustice, LGBTQ+ initiatives, community Non-profit organizations, donations to marginalized groups, and social relevant causes. These will be measured on the same 1-5 Likert Scale as the adapted SMD in the context of expectation. Items were adapted from a cause-related sport marketing study that introduced the items of strategic giving, non-profits, and specific causes that invoke individual social identity (Nichols, et. al., 2019).

Satisfaction Scale. Overall satisfaction with the game experience was influenced by studies from Brady et al. (2005), Yoshida and James' (2010), and Min (2014) into a single global question: I am satisfied with my experience at the WNBA event.

Consumption Scale. Consumption was measured by the amount of games self-reported by the participants. Participants were also asked about the level of tickets purchased. This level included full season-tickets, half season-tickets, and single-game tickets. Three other items for re-attendance intentions based on Soderlund (2006) consumer behavior scales are used. A Likert-type scale with 5 ranking points, ranging from 1 = 'Extremely Unlikely' to 5 = 'Extremely Likely' was enacted. Other variables measuring the level of WNBA consumption include: number of games attended in the three previous seasons, total number of games intended to attend this upcoming season, the number of games intended to attend in future seasons, and type of ticket in the previous season. Inclusion of these variables was based upon the suggestions of previous researchers (Min, 2012; Mullin et al., 2014; Noll, 1974; Pitts & Stotlar, 2012). Response format for these specific questions will be either a fill in the blank or multiple-choice format

Procedures

After the preliminary questionnaire was formed, a panel of experts reviewed the questionnaire for a series of validity testing evaluating its content. This panel included professors in sport management, and a professional sport practitioner. Questionnaire items were evaluated on whether the format and context was (a) appropriate, (b) representative, and (c) accurate (Zhang et al., 1995). The feedback provided by the panel of experts helped modify the relevance and wording of the preliminary questionnaire. Items were retained according to an alpha reliability coefficient of greater than .70 (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). The survey administered

through Qualtrics had a digital cover letter that explains the purpose of the study and informed consent. This survey instrumentation also included demographic and general information to help develop a participant profile. Before a survey was administered, approval from the University of Georgia's Institutional Review Board for human participants was obtained. Participants recruited for this study will be fans of the WNBA who have attended at least 2 games in the past 5 years.

The data collection followed a standardized procedure that includes: (1) politely contacting customer service representatives from individual WNBA teams, (2) explain the purpose of the study, (3) inform teams and potential participants of the voluntary and anonymous nature, (4) providing an available Qualtrics link for managers to send out to season ticket holders or post on their social media, (5) digitally collect all data through questionnaires, and (6) express appreciation for individual and team participation (Zhang et al., 2004). To attract the majority of needed participants, individuals were recruited from WNBA league forums and team fan groups via social media through a Reddit post that was shared on many forums. Data collected through such recruiting forums has been widely used as an effective data collection tool for both behavioral and psychological research (Chandler et al., 2014).

Data Analyses

Descriptive statistics were conducted using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). An analysis of the measurement models of all individual scales and models was enacted first. This followed with an examination of relationships between consumer demand, satisfaction, and consumption. Measurements include those of central tendency such as mean, mode, and median. They also included measures of variability including range, variance, and standard deviation.

The following goodness-of-fit measures will be used in the data analysis: root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), standardized root mean residual (SRMR), chi-square statistic, normed chi-square, and comparative fit index (CFI) (Hair et al., 2010). To truly evaluate the overall fit of the measurement model, goodness-of-fit measures for each test must meet certain standards. A chi-square statistic should show a non-significant difference between expected and observed covariance matrices. However, for a normed chi square, a reasonable fit is indicated by representing a value of less than 3.0 (Bollen, 1989). For a RMSEA value to indicate a closet fit, the value should be less than .05 (Browne & Cudeck, 1992). Others have suggested that a cut off less than .06 is accurate as well. For SRMR, having a value that is less than .09 is recommended to test the goodness of fit (Hu & Bentler, 1999). Values less than .10 are also used as a good fit. For the CFI, an acceptable fit is indicated by a value greater than .90. Whereas a close fit will result in a value larger than .95. In conjunction with the following goodness of fit test, a series of tests were appropriately deployed to measure the reliability of the scales: Cronbach's alpha to test the coefficient's internal consistency ($<.70$), construct reliability (CR), and AVE or average variance extracted ($>.50$). A convergent and discriminant validity is also present to test the validity of constructs presented. Factor loadings for each variable is displayed to determine the convergent validity. These factor loadings should display a value of greater than .70 (Hair et al., 2010). To examine the inter-factor correlations a discriminant validity will be used and must show a measurement of below .85 (Kline, 2005). This can be conducted by a squared correlation for two constructs that are lower than the AVE.

After the proposed model is tested using the CFA, a SEM or structural equation model was conducted to examine the relationships among previously defined constructs that include consumer demand, perceived value, consumer satisfaction, and consumption behavior. The same

measurement test of fit will be used to test and possibly reject the proposed relationships (Kline, 2005). A bootstrapping test and confidence interval (CI) was then performed to test for a mediation effect. The empirical sampling distribution that arose from the bootstrapping test is important and more efficient than assuming that samples are normally distributed.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

The results of this study are organized into four sections presented as follows: (a) descriptive statistics (b) assessing the validity of formative and reflective models, (c) PLS-structural equation modeling/MGA, and (d) Important Performance Matrix Analysis.

Descriptive Statistics

<Insert Table 4.1>

Descriptive Statistics

The consumer demand scale had a mix of 5 traditional factors and 4 contemporary factors measuring how well certain factors met the spectator's expectations for attending a WNBA game. Ratings were based on how much it met your expectation for attending your most recent WNBA game on a scale of 1 = not meeting your expectation at all (0%); 2 = inadequately meeting your expectation (less than 50% or less); 3 = close to meeting your expectation (50-80%); 4 = fully meeting your expectation (80-100%); 5 = exceeding your expectation (over 100%). All mean scores reported were greater than the midpoint (3.0) on the 5-point scale, signifying that the consumer demand variables were considered important when determining the expectation level of participants when consuming the WNBA. Scores over 3.0 signify that the factor in question was close to meeting the participant's expectation.

Traditional Consumer Demand. The means of the 17 items measuring the five traditional consumer demand dimensions followed a very tight range hovering around the 3.3 mark. Standard deviations ranged from 1.025 to 1.124. The factor of Home Team had the highest

mean, whereas the item of economic consideration had the lowest mean. Of all the consumer demand variables, the item “home team reputation” had the highest mean ($M = 3.432$, $SD = 1.121$), while the item “Ticket affordability of the game event” had the lowest ($M = 3.257$, $SD = 1.081$).

Contemporary Consumer Demand. The means of the 20 items measuring the four contemporary consumer demand dimensions similarly averaged 3.3. Determining that fans' expectation levels were all close to fully met. Standard deviations ranged from 1.031 to 1.156. The factor of On-Court Interactive Activity had the highest mean, followed by General Advocating Programming, Issue-Specific Advocating Programming, and Mediated Interactive Activity having the lowest mean. Of all the contemporary consumer demand variables, the item “Gameday theme focusing on social causes” and “Youth basketball competitions held on the court” had the highest means ($M = 3.432$, $SD = 1.033$ and $M = 3.417$, $SD = 1.1$), while the item “Promotions for diversity via the PA and Jumbotron” and “In-game team social media communications” had the lowest ($M = 3.278$, $SD = 1.031$ and $M = 3.281$, $SD = 1.055$).

Satisfaction. To measure satisfaction, a single global question, “I am satisfied with my experience at the WNBA event” was asked using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. On the 5-point Likert scale (3.0 mid-point) a reported mean of 4.134 and standard deviation of .78

Consumption Variables. Means and standard deviations for the Consumption variables are also presented in the Descriptive Statistics Table. All variables had a mean score above 3.7 on the 5-point Likert scale, indicating that participants reported a relatively high level of intention to consume WNBA. The means ranged from 3.793 to 4.088 and standard deviations ranged from .924 to .993. The item “I am likely to support the WNBA” had the highest mean (M

= 4.088, SD = .945), and the item “I am likely to attend future WNBA games” had the lowest (M = 3.793, SD = .993).

Assessing Measurement Models

Formative Measurement Model. The formative measurement model was assessed through an examination of collinearity and the relevance of formative indicators. First, the variance inflation factor (VIF) value was used to detect possible issues of collinearity. The PLS Algorithm computations showed that collinearity was not a concern because VIF scores were all below 5.0 (Hair et al., 2016). The relevance of formative indicators was then determined by examining the significance of their outer weights and loadings. Bootstrapping results revealed that the formative indicators’ outer weights and loadings were all statistically significant ($p < .01$). This suggests that the indicators present had appropriate relative and absolute contributions to their respective formative constructs. The statistical properties of the formative and reflective constructs display the size and significance of the weights generated using the bootstrapping procedure with 5,000 subsamples.

Reflective Measurement Model. To measure the reflective measurement model, an examination of each reflective indicator’s loading on its intended underlying construct ($\lambda > .7$), Cronbach’s Alpha ($\alpha > .7$), composite reliability value ($CR > .7$), average variances extracted value ($AVE > .5$), and the Fornell-Larcker criterion (Hair et al., 2010; Hair et al., 2016) was measured. The reflective measurement model presented appropriate psychometric properties with the reflective indicators all surpassing recommended thresholds. The square roots of AVE values were all greater than inter-construct correlations proving this reliability and validity. The conservative cut-off value of .85 was also enacted (Henseler et al., 2015). In conclusion, the

convergent validity, reliability, and discriminant validity of the reflective constructs were established.

<Insert Table 4.2 here>

<Insert Figure 4.1 here>

Partial Least Squares

PLS-SEM. The structural model accounted for 15.6% of the variance of satisfaction and 51.2% of WNBA Consumption Intentions. In addition, as shown in *A summary of PLS-SEM results Table* and the 2nd Order Model-T-Statistic Path Model, traditional consumer demand had a significant, positive effect on WNBA consumption intentions ($\beta = .294$, $p = .002$) and Satisfaction ($\beta = .185$, $p = .05$) providing support for H1 and H2. Contemporary consumer demand had a significant, positive relationship on Satisfaction ($\beta = .222$, $p = .021$) supporting H3. In contrast, we did not find contemporary consumer demand to significantly affect WNBA consumption intentions ($\beta = .013$, $p = .888$). Therefore, H4 was not supported. Further, Satisfaction ($\beta = .264$, $p < .01$) was found to exhibit a significant, positive effect on WNBA consumption intention, supporting H5.

<Insert Figure 4.2 here>

<Insert Table 4.4 here>

PLS-MGA. For partial measurement invariance to be established (Henseler et al., 2016), the measurement invariance of composite models (MICOM) procedure was completed. The sample was first divided into two sub-groups of spectators, including (a) male ($n = 276$) and (b) female ($n = 185$); then, the three-step procedure suggested by Hair et al. (2016) was executed. Permutation test results *A summary of Gender MICOM results in Table 5* confirmed partial

measurement invariance as the correlations across two sub-groups were not significantly different from 1 (i.e., permutation p-values > .05; Henseler et al., 2016).

<Insert Table 4.5 about here>

The sample was then divided into two sub-groups of spectators given their ticket type, including (a) full season ticket holders (n = 257) and (b) Half Season and Single Game ticket holders (n = 197); the three-step procedure suggested by Hair et al. (2016) was then again executed. Permutation test results *A summary of Ticket Type MICOM results Table 7* confirmed partial measurement invariance as the correlations across two sub-groups were not significantly different from 1 establishing partial measurement invariance (i.e., permutation p-values > .05; Henseler et al., 2016).

<Insert Table 4.7 about here>

Following the confirmation of partial measurement invariance, we then proceeded to test the effect of gender and tickets type by following a permutation-based procedure for MGA (Hair et al., 2016). The path from satisfaction to WNBA consumption intentions was found to be influenced by both gender and ticket type. The path from satisfaction to WNBA consumption intention was found to be significantly stronger among males ($\Delta\beta = .314$, $p < .05$), suggesting satisfaction had a stronger impact on WNBA consumption intention for males than female spectators (MGA Results: Male-Female Table 6). Likewise, the path from satisfaction to WNBA consumption intention was found to be significantly stronger among first-time spectators ($\Delta\beta = .011$, $p < .05$), suggesting satisfaction had a stronger impact on WNBA consumption intention for full season ticket holders than half ticket and single game ticket holders (MGA Results: Full Season Tickets vs. Single Game/Multi Game Tickets Table 8).

<Insert Table 4.6 here>

<Insert Table 4.8 here>

Important-Performance Map Analysis

The importance-performance map analysis (IMPA) is used to extract useful insights into the consumer demand latent variables that most predict satisfaction and WNBA consumption intentions within different categories of spectators. The IMPA is an analysis that prioritizes constructs to help support a certain target dimension by identifying the most important areas of specific factors. The findings that the IMPA provides are important in particular in studies with practical implications that help identify the impacts that certain dimensions of a construct have on phenomena. In this study, the different consumer demand factors including both traditional and contemporary. This technique has been supported in sport management and other relevant sectors. Each exogenous latent variable, along with its influence on the endogenous latent variable (i.e., WNBA Consumption Intentions) is shown given their importance and performance scores. *The IMPA Consumption Intentions Results Full Data Set table 9* shows that Satisfaction scores higher than traditional and contemporary dimensions in impacting WNBA Consumption Intentions. When considering the full dataset, the indicators that perform the best in influencing WNBA Consumption in order of performance include satisfaction, home team, visiting team, economic, and on-court interactive activity. When looking at the constructs that impact satisfaction for the entire dataset, the contemporary factors scored higher in its importance-performance score than traditional factors. The indicators that scored the highest in influencing satisfaction in order of importance-performance include on-court interactive activity, issue-specific advocating programming, home team, visiting, and economic factors.

<Insert Table 4.9>

<Insert Figure 4.3a-d>

In addition to the total population, we distinguished between gender and ticket type. The two genders depicted were male (276 cases) and female (185 cases). Ticket types were broken up into two groups, Season Ticket holders (257 cases) and Half Season and Single game ticket holders (197 cases). The IMPA results are reported for both gender and ticket types given their influence on satisfaction and WNBA consumption intentions. The IMPA maps depict each consumer demand constructed by the order that they significantly influence satisfaction and WNBA consumption intentions.

Gender. The Gender Importance-Performance Satisfaction Table presents the IMPA scores for male and female in relationship to the significant predictors of satisfaction and WNBA consumption intentions. When looking at the indicators that predict WNBA consumption intention, there are differences between what indicators perform higher for males and females when determining WNBA consumption. The indicators that are the most significant predictors of WNBA consumption intentions for males in order of their performance scores are satisfaction, home team, visiting team, and economic consideration. For females, the highest performance indicators are satisfaction, home team, visiting team, and issue-specific advocating programming. The indicators that are the most significant predictors of satisfaction for males are on-court interactive activity, general advocating programming, issue-specific advocating programming, and home team. For females, top indicators include issue-specific advocating programming, on-court interactive activity, home team, and visiting team.

<Insert Table 4.10-4.11>

<Insert Figure 4.4a-4.4d>

<Insert Figure 4.5a-4.5d>

Ticket Type. The Ticket Type Importance-Performance Satisfaction Table presents the IMPA scores for Full Season ticket holders and half/single ticket holders in relation to the significant predictors of satisfaction and WNBA consumption intentions. When looking at the indicators that predict WNBA consumption intention, there are also differences between what indicators perform higher for season ticket holders and half/single ticket holders when determining WNBA consumption. The indicators that are the most significant predictors of WNBA consumption intentions for full season ticket holders in order of their performance scores are satisfaction, on-court interactive activity, home team, and economic considerations. For half/single ticket holders' performance score indicators that are significant predictors of WNBA consumption intentions are satisfaction, schedule, home team, and issue-specific advocating programming. The indicators that are significant predictors of satisfaction are also different in their performance scores according to the type of ticket they are in possession of. The full season ticket holders, when considering satisfaction, highest indicators are on-court interactive activity, issue specific advocating programming, and home team. However, full season ticket holder's worst performing indicator is generally advocating programming. Half and Single game ticket holders' top predictors in order of performance include issue-specific advocating programming, general advocating programming, mediated interactive activity, and home team. However, the lowest performing indicator of satisfaction is promotion.

<Insert Table 4.12-4.13>

<Insert Figure 4.6a-4.6d>

<Insert Figure 4.7a-4.7d>

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

When understanding the consumer demand factors that influence WNBA consumption, a formative and reflective model has been used to distinguish between reflective constructs such as WNBA consumption intentions, and formative constructs such as contemporary and traditional factors. Sport consumer demand research has used this method to analyze similar measurement models noting its usefulness in theoretical and methodological explanations (Qian et al. 2020, Hulland et al., 2018). The statistical methods of PLS-SEM and PLS-MGA for assessing the impact of consumer demand can add to the body of sport management literature using this approach. The findings from the PLS-SEM analyses confirmed that both traditional and contemporary consumer demand factors are capable of influencing satisfaction, which positively affected WNBA consumption intention. Traditional consumer demand had a direct, positive effect on WNBA consumption intentions. The findings for traditional consumer demand factors were consistent with previous studies emphasizing the importance of these consumer demand factors being pivotal to professional sport consumption (Byon et al., 2010; Min, 2014; Zhang & Byon, 2017). Contemporary consumer demand factors did not have a direct, positive effect on WNBA consumption intentions, but had a direct, positive effect on satisfaction more significantly than that of the traditional consumer demand factors. Given these results, we partially confirm previous findings on the relationship between consumer demand variables and professional sport spectators' behavioral intentions. The PLS-SEM analyses also showed that satisfaction has a positive effect on WNBA consumption intentions.

Even though contemporary consumer demand factors did not have a direct, positive effect on behavioral intentions, its strong positive relationship on satisfaction revealed the important role dimensions such as interactive on-court activity and general advocating programming has on today's professional sport spectatorship. The confirmation of the impact of traditional consumer demand factors on behavioral intentions and satisfaction speaks to WNBA spectators desire to see a quality product on the court. This study also employed a novel approach of testing the different effects of traditional and contemporary consumer demand on WNBA consumption and satisfaction between males and females, as well as between full season ticket holders and half and single game ticket holders. This provided a deeper understanding of the impact of consumer demand factors on WNBA consumption.

The S-O-R theory explained in the literature review helped make the connection between the consumer demand factors on spectator responses in the form of satisfaction and consumption. The results explored the relationships between traditional consumer demand and contemporary consumer demand factors as the stimulus (S), the ability of these factors to meet their expectations (O), and (R) spectator responses in the form of satisfaction and consumption intentions. Spectators internalize how other spectators and peers react to game day features and often use that to inform their own decisions. The response of spectators after experiencing the consumer demand factors on a game day is looked at through the lens of WNBA consumption intentions and satisfaction. However, it was also found in the literature review that these responses may vary for different groups of spectators including gender.

This study confirmed previous studies of spectator participation for professional sports that looked to further understand customer's perception and participation and found it important for the development of strategies for sport organizations (Hansen & Gauthier, 1989). The results

that found positive and significant relationships between consumer demand factors, satisfaction, and consumption intention helps add to the body of literature for women's professional sports.

The WNBA, as well as other professional women's sports leagues have faced problems in sustaining live game attendance so understanding spectator differences with WNBA consumers can help further inform sport marketers.

The SEM-MGA results revealed that the influence of contemporary consumer demand on WNBA consumption was more powerful among women than men. Likewise, the results also revealed that the influence of contemporary consumer demand on satisfaction was also more powerful among women than men. Both of these relationships were more powerful for women when considering traditional consumer demand factors as well. As stated previously, female spectators do consume sports differently. In the context of the WNBA, female spectators have strong expectations of a quality on-court product, as well as interactive and advocating programs that are unique to the WNBA game. When looking at the type of ticket a spectator has, it was discovered that the influence of contemporary consumer demand factors on WNBA consumption intentions is strengthened among individuals with full season tickets. This now provides evidence to suggest that adding and bolstering interactive fan activities on and off the court, as well as advocating for general and specific issues can strengthen full season ticket holdership and intentions to continue to support the WNBA. However, the influence of contemporary consumer demand on satisfaction was more powerful among individuals with half season and single game tickets. When looking at satisfaction, this finding encourages organizations to market their interactive fan activities and advocate programming to individuals who are looking to experience a WNBA game. These items have been found to lead to the increased significance of these contemporary factors on satisfaction. This understates the importance of making sure new

consumers know of their availability. Through the IMPA, this study analyzed the effects of consumer demand factors in different spectator populations on WNBA consumption intentions and WNBA game event satisfaction. These factors were analyzed and measured by importance for gender and the type of ticket type a spectator possesses. As previously mentioned, the IPMA is formed by standardized regression coefficients (importance) and adds an additional dimension to the original analysis that considers the values of the predictor variables, displayed in terms of a scaled performance figure. The findings have revealed the effects of each indicator on WNBA consumption intentions and satisfaction. These results will add knowledge to organizations and event spectatorship engagement decision makers who must prioritize certain aspects of the WNBA game event. Results of the IMPA revealed that when considering the indicators that perform the best on the impact of WNBA consumption intention, occur in the same order for both male and female. These indicators are satisfaction, home team, and visiting team. However, when considering indicators that perform best in impacting satisfaction male spectators value (in order of performance) on-court interactive activity, general advocating programming, and issue-specific advocating programming, whereas female consumers value (in order of performance) issue specific advocating programming, on court interactive activity, and home team. For sport marketers in WNBA organizations that are trying to understand how to specifically increase a particular gender's consumption, this study can help inform practices moving forward. When planning activities and programming that will influence more men to consume the WNBA, marketers can increase their on-court interactive activity to give those fans up close access to players, fans, and engagement with mascots and cheerleaders during the game. Female fans, however, are most influenced by the specific advocating programming being executed, and also want the same close access and play of the home team. These findings for

female spectators are important because the home team quality is still a great influence on behavioral intentions and satisfaction. Having a quality on court performance by the home team is still regarded very highly in male and female spectators deciding to consume the WNBA more.

The IMPA also showed that the indicator that performs the best on the impact of WNBA consumption intention is satisfaction for both full season ticket holders and individuals who buy half season/single game tickets. For full season ticket holders, the subsequent highest indicators in the order of performance on WNBA consumption intention are on-court interactive activity, home team, and economic considerations. The worst performing indicator for full season ticket holders is schedule. However, when looking at those with half season/single game tickets the indicators performing highest after satisfaction are the schedule, home team, and issue-specific advocating programming. The worst performing indicators for half season/single game ticket holders is mediated-interactive activity. When using the IMPA to examine the consumer demand factors that perform the best on satisfaction for season ticket holders, contemporary indicators were heavily represented as high performing. Indicators performing the best for full season ticket holders in the order of performance include on-court interactive activity, issue specific advocating programming, and home team. However, for half season/single game ticket holders the three best performing items were issue-specific advocating programming, general advocating programming, and mediated interactive activity.

From a strategic planning perspective, WNBA organizations should consider what type of tickets the majority of their fans hold when planning game event activities and programming. Full season ticket holders value on-court interactive activity as a major factor impacting the intention to consume the WNBA. Knowing this, organizations can provide more opportunities for their season ticket holders to interact with coaches, players, and participate in activities on the

court. When looking deeper into individual on-court interactive activity, providing opportunities for young athletes to play in games and clinics during the game day was the best performing item. Those who are single game ticket holders or have half season tickets greatly value the schedule, quality of the home team, and issue-specific advocating programming when determining the factors that lead to greater satisfaction and consumption intentions. The traditional factors of schedule and home team are in conjunction with the findings of other studies when determining consumption. However, knowing that those who buy individual tickets are also influenced by what specific issues are being advocated for can help improve an organization's view of what items perform the best for these spectators. The highest performing items for fans when considering issue specific advocating programming are presentations honoring community non-contact organizations.

This study contributes to the existing literature in professional sports consumer behavior by establishing that positive relationships exist between consumer demand and WNBA consumption intentions. The results found in this study add to the body of literature confirming that the utilizing consumer demand to predict consumer behavior in sports is still prevalent in the WNBA. Where traditional dimensions such as home team, visiting team, and economic considerations are major factors in event satisfaction and WNBA consumption intentions confirming Hypothesis 1 and Hypothesis 2, our introduction of four new contemporary factors was proven to in many cases have an even stronger impact on satisfaction. This suggests that the factors of on-court interactive activity, issue-specific advocating programming, and general advocating programming now need to be taken into major consideration for WNBA decision makers. Hypothesis 3, that stated that contemporary consumer demand factors would have a significant positive relationship on satisfaction was supported. However, the relationship

between these contemporary factors on WNBA consumption intentions was positive but insignificant. This disproves Hypothesis 4. Engaging in these social interactions for fans is expected in the WNBA, and has the ability to target these spectators in ways that increase their game day experience and want to buy more tickets to games.

Looking at consumer demand, it was discovered these factors have a positive relationship with satisfaction. This confirms Hypothesis 5 that stated that satisfaction would have a significant positive relationship on WNBA consumption intentions. The significant and positive relationship between consumer demand and satisfaction is consistent with the findings of previous studies (e.g., Yoshida & James, 2010; Kim et al., 2013; Brady et al., 2006, Yoshida and James, 2010, and Kim et al., 2013). These studies did acknowledge that traditional consumer demand factors can be antecedents of satisfaction and that consumer demand satisfaction will exhibit satisfaction in overall satisfaction with the sporting event in focus. In the consideration of spectator sports, this positive relationship between consumer demand and satisfaction is especially important. Other studies (e.g., Min, 2014) have widely utilized consumer demand to directly prove its influence on WNBA consumptions.

In conclusion, the major findings of this study make a significant contribution to the sport management literature. The Market Demand-Satisfaction-Consumption formative and reflective model helps us understand the dimensions that can influence consumption intentions and behavior. This study helps connect how the perception of expectations being met in the form of these contemporary and traditional consumer demand factors can influence individuals who want to consume more of the product. Introducing these contemporary factors helped strengthen the social learning of fans in how activations and advocating programming influences their intentions to engage more through consumption. In a broader sense, sports consumptions in the

form of spectatorship will occur once the consumer feels that his or her needs will be met through satisfactory consumer demand dimensions.

Limitations and suggestions for future research

Limitations of this study center around the data collection, as the Covid-19 Pandemic of 2020 and 2021 affected the ability for the in-person recruitment of spectators at a WNBA event. Future studies can look to meet these spectators and the point of consumption.

Moving forward, as these contemporary factors become prevalent in more professional sports, this scale can be used to understand consumption intentions and satisfaction in more prominent professional leagues.

Comments:

1. A nicely written dissertation.
2. Read over again and look out for use of prepositions. I have made corrections where I can but I may have missed some. I recommend having an editor read it after you make committee changes. It will save you time.
3. Add to limitations and implications.

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Appendix A

Preliminary Questionnaire

Section 1 - Consumer Demand Factors

Directions: This scale is measuring how well certain factors meet your expectations for attending a WNBA game. Please rate each of the following Consumer Demand Factors based on how much it met your expectation for attending your most recent WNBA game on a scale of 1 = not meeting your expectation at all (0%); 2 = inadequately meeting your expectation (less than 50% or less); 3 = close to meeting your expectation (50-80%); 4 = fully meeting your expectation (80-100%); 5 = exceeding your expectation (over 100%).

Visiting Team

1. The visiting team's overall performance	1	2	3	4	5
2. The visiting team's reputation	1	2	3	4	5
3. The overall quality of the visiting team players	1	2	3	4	5
4. The quality of the visiting team	1	2	3	4	5
5. The visiting team's quality of exciting play	1	2	3	4	5

Home Team

1. The home team's win/loss record	1	2	3	4	5
2. The home team's reputation	1	2	3	4	5
3. The home team's league standing	1	2	3	4	5

Game Promotion

1. Game's advertisement	1	2	3	4	5
2. Game's direct mail and notifications	1	2	3	4	5

3. Game's sales and discount packages

1	2	3	4	5
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Economic Consideration

1. The total cost for the game event
2. Ticket affordability of the game event
3. Ticket discounts of the game event

1	2	3	4	5
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1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

1	2	3	4	5
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Schedule Convenience

1. Game time
2. The convenience of the game schedule
3. Day of the week of the game

1	2	3	4	5
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1	2	3	4	5
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1	2	3	4	5
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Interactive Activity

1. Team's meet-n-greet activities
2. Player picture-n-autograph sessions
3. Pre-game fan interaction activities with the team
4. Post-game fan interaction activities with the team
5. Cheerleaders and Mascots interacting with the audience
6. Youth basketball competitions held on the court
7. Fan group recognition via the PA and Jumbotron
8. In-game team social media communications
9. Trivia questions via cellphone response

1	2	3	4	5
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1	2	3	4	5
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1	2	3	4	5
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1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

1	2	3	4	5
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1	2	3	4	5
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1	2	3	4	5
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10. Activities for fan group interactions during the game	1	2	3	4	5
	1	2	3	4	5

Advocating Program

1. Activities advocating for racial justice	1	2	3	4	5
2. Social justice signage in the arena	1	2	3	4	5
3. Advocacy messages on athlete uniforms	1	2	3	4	5
4. Promotions for diversity via the PA and Jumbotron	1	2	3	4	5
5. Activities to empower women	1	2	3	4	5
6. Activities advocating for the LGBTQ+ community	1	2	3	4	5
7. Presentations honoring community non-profit organizations	1	2	3	4	5
8. Solicitation of donations to marginalized groups	1	2	3	4	5
9. Activities showcasing socially relevant causes	1	2	3	4	5
10. Gameday theme focusing on social causes	1	2	3	4	5

Section 2 - Satisfaction

Direction: Please rate the following statement that assesses your satisfaction with live WNBA games on a scale of 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree

- | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. I am satisfied with my experience at the WNBA event | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|

Section 3 - WNBA Consumption

ATTENDANCE LEVEL. Please provide the following by filling out a blank or circling an answer.

1. Total number of game(s) attended in 2019? _____
2. Total number of game(s) that you intend to attend: This season (2021)? _____ Next season (2022)? _____
3. Your ticket type in 2019? a. full season ticket b. half season ticket c. single game ticket
4. Your ticket type this season (2021)? a. full season ticket b. half season ticket c. single game ticket

Direction: Please rate the following statements that assess your intentions for future attendance at the WNBA game events on a scale of 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree

- | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. I am likely to attend future WNBA games | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2. I am likely to purchase WNBA merchandise | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3. I am likely to buy WNBA clothing | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4. I am likely to support the WNBA | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Section 5 - Sociodemographic Information

Direction: Please provide the following information by filling out a blank or circling an answer.

1. Gender: a. Male b. Female c. Transgender Male
d. Transgender Female e. Non-Conforming f. Other g. Prefer not to answer.
2. Age _____

3. Ethnicity: a. Caucasian b. Black c. Hispanic d. Asian
 e. mixed race f. other
4. Marital status: a. single b. married/partnership/civil union c. divorced d. widowed
 e. Other_____
5. Number of children: female _____ male _____ non-conforming _____
6. Total number of people in your household _____
7. Sexual Orientation_____
8. Annual household income: a. \$9,999 or less b. \$10,000-\$14,999 c. \$15,000 -\$24,999
 d. \$25,000-\$34,999 e. \$35,000-\$49,999 f. \$ 50,000-\$74,999
 g. \$75,000-\$99,999 h. \$100,000-\$149,999 i. \$150,000-\$199,999 j. \$200,000-249,999
 k. \$250,000 or more j. Prefer not to answer
9. Highest education level completed: a. No HS degree b. high school diploma or GED c. Some College
 d. college degree e. advanced degree
10. Occupation: a. management b. technical c. professional d. sales e. clerical f. retired
 g. skilled worker h. education i. nonskilled worker j. Other k. Unemployed j. Prefer not to answer
11. Who is usually coming to the game with you? a. spouse b. daughter c. son
 d. brother/sister e. parent(s) f. friend(s) or fan group g. co-worker
 h. business associate i. came alone j. Other k. Prefer not to answer

Appendix B. Description of Demographic Background

Variable	Categories	<i>N</i>	%
Gender	Male	276	58.6
	Female	185	39.3
	Transgender/Gender-Non-Conforming	8	1.6
Age	18-25	91	24.9
	26-34	233	63.6
	35-Older	42	11.5
Ethnicity	Caucasian	197	41.8
	Black/African American	113	24
	Hispanic	107	22.7
	Asian American/Pacific Islander	9	1.9
	Mixed ethnicity or Others	27	5.8
Marital Status	Single	214	45.4
	Married/Partnership	234	49.7
	Divorced	12	2.5
	Widowed	3	.6
	Other	2	.4
Household Income Level (Annually)	\$9,999 or less	2	.4
	\$10,000-\$14,999	17	3.6
	\$15,000-\$24,999	31	6.6
	\$25,000-\$34,999	33	7.0
	\$35,000-\$49,999	38	8.1
	\$50,000-\$74,999	53	11.3
	\$75,000-\$99,999	84	17.8
	\$100,000-\$149,999	99	21.0
	\$150,000 or more	111	23.6
	Management	82	17.4
Occupation	Technical	139	29.5
	Professional	130	27.6
	Sales	39	8.3
	Clerical	19	4.0
	Retired	5	1.1
	Skilled worker	11	2.3
	Education/Student	15	3.2
	Non-skilled worker	5	1.1
	Others	10	2.1
	Unemployed	4	.8

Education	No high school diploma	1	.2
	High school graduate	45	9.6
	Some college	152	32.3
	College graduate	159	33.8
	Advanced degree	107	22.7
	Prefer Not Answer	107	1.1
Type of Ticket	Full Season	257	56.6
	Half Season	147	32.4
	Single	50	11
Attending With	Spouse	55	11.7
	Daughter	27	5.7
	Son	43	9.1
	Brother/sister	56	11.9
	Parent(s)	8	1.7
	Friend(s) or fan group	139	29.5
	Co-worker	99	21.0
	Business associate	15	3.2
	Came alone	10	2.1
	Other	6	1.3

Note: Number of cases does not include missing observations.

Appendix C. Description of Individual Scale Items

Construct	Variable	Item
Visiting Team	Visiting1	The visiting team's overall performance
	Visiting2	The visiting team's reputation
	Visiting3	The overall quality of the visiting team players
	Visiting4	The quality of the visiting team
	Visiting5	The visiting team's quality of exciting play
Home Team	Home1	The home team's win/loss record
	Home2	The home team's reputation
	Home3	The home team's league standing
Game Promotion	Promotion1	Game's advertisement
	Promotion 2	Game's direct mail and notifications
	Promotion3	Game's sales and discount packages
Economic Consideration	Economic 1	The total cost for the game event
	Economic2	Ticket affordability of the game event
	Economic3	Ticket discounts of the game event
Schedule Convenience	Schedule1	The total cost for the game event
	Schedule2	Ticket affordability of the game event
	Schedule3	Ticket discounts of the game event
On-Court Interactive Activity	Interactive1	Team's meet-n-greet activities
	Interactive2	Player picture-n-autograph sessions
	Interactive3	Pre-game fan interaction activities with the team
	Interactive4	Post-game fan interaction activities with the team
	Interactive5	Cheerleaders and Mascots interacting with the audience
	Interactive6	Youth basketball competitions held on the court
Mediated Interactive Activity	Interactive7	Fan group recognition via the PA and Jumbotron
	Interactive8	In-game team social media communications
	Interactive9	Trivia questions via cellphone response
	Interactive10	Activities for fan group interactions during the game
Issue-Specific Advocating Programming	Advocating1	Activities advocating for racial justice
	Advocating5	Activities to empower women
	Advocating6	Activities advocating for the LGBTQ+ community
	Advocating7	Presentations honoring community non-profit organizations
	Advocating8	

		Solicitation of donations to marginalized groups
General Advocating Programming	Advocating2 Advocating3 Advocating4 Advocating9 Advocating10	Social justice signage in the arena Advocacy messages on athlete uniforms Promotions for diversity via the PA and Jumbotron Activities showcasing socially relevant causes Gameday theme focusing on social causes
Satisfaction	Satisfaction	I am satisfied with my experience at the WNBA event
WNBA Consumption Intentions	Consumption1 Consumption2 Consumption3 Consumption4	I am likely to attend future WNBA games I am likely to purchase WNBA merchandise I am likely to buy WNBA clothing I am likely to support the WNBA

TABLES and FIGURES

Table 4.1. Descriptive Statistics for the Consumer Demand Variables

Construct/Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis
<i>Visiting Team</i>	3.358			
Visiting1	3.333	1.054	-0.281	-0.556
Visiting2	3.359	1.103	-0.296	-0.556
Visiting3	3.376	1.124	-0.298	-0.745
Visiting4	3.400	1.056	-0.305	-0.664
Visiting5	3.321	1.106	-0.293	-0.578
<i>Home Team</i>	3.392			
Home1	3.377	1.083	-0.311	-0.638
Home2	3.432	1.121	-0.386	-0.622
Home3	3.367	1.085	-0.241	-0.715
<i>Game Promotion</i>	3.350			
Promotion1	3.307	1.086	-0.278	-0.56
Promotion2	3.379	1.085	-0.398	-0.455
Promotion3	3.363	1.032	-0.368	-0.455
<i>Economic Consideration</i>	3.286			
Economic 1	3.310	1.099	-0.272	-0.625
Economic2	3.257	1.081	-0.218	-0.611
Economic3	3.292	1.057	-0.173	-0.675
<i>Schedule Convenience</i>	3.308			
Schedule1	3.336	1.066	-0.267	-0.567
Schedule2	3.321	1.035	-0.231	-0.522
Schedule3	3.267	1.025	-0.24	-0.45
<i>On-Court Interactive Activity</i>	3.367			
Interactive1	3.396	1.049	-0.37	-0.535
Interactive2	3.353	1.093	-0.313	-0.593
Interactive3	3.342	1.09	-0.29	-0.635
Interactive4	3.356	1.058	-0.288	-0.586
Interactive5	3.338	1.156	-0.255	-0.847
Interactive6	3.417	1.1	-0.38	-0.539
<i>Mediated Interactive Activity</i>	3.333			
Interactive7	3.376	1.104	-0.274	-0.627
Interactive8	3.281	1.055	-0.274	-0.435

Interactive9	3.338	1.112	-0.297	-0.693
Interactive10	3.336	1.091	-0.389	-0.564
<i>Issue-Specific Advocating</i>				
<i>Programming</i>	3.337			
Advocating1	3.360	1.05	-.24	-.501
Advocating5	3.323	1.112	-0.29	-0.605
Advocating6	3.333	1.088	-0.265	-0.628
Advocating7	3.366	1.048	-0.314	-0.478
Advocating8	3.304	1.117	-0.237	-0.646
<i>General Advocating</i>				
<i>Programming</i>	3.355			
Advocating2	3.368	1.037	-0.339	-0.418
Advocating3	3.365	1.062	-0.277	-0.748
Advocating4	3.278	1.031	-0.21	-0.451
Advocating9	3.345	1.093	-0.329	-0.518
Advocating10	3.423	1.033	-0.275	-0.5
<i>Satisfaction</i>				
Satisfaction	4.134	.78	-0.797	.648
<i>WNBA Consumption</i>				
<i>Intention</i>	3.931			
Consumption1	3.793	0.993	-0.82	0.28
Consumption2	3.941	0.924	-0.386	-0.854
Consumption3	3.903	0.975	-0.652	-0.457
Consumption4	4.088	0.945	-1.138	1.287

Table 4.2. Statistical Properties of Formative and Reflective Constructs

Construct	Construct/Variable	ω / λ	VIF	α	CR	AVE
Traditional market demand	<i>Visiting Team</i>	.917	3.449	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Visiting1	.772	1.89			
	Visiting2	.772	1.678			
	Visiting3	.751	1.548			
	Visiting4	.764	1.6			
	Visiting5	.763	1.808			
	<i>Home Team</i>	.906	2.723	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Home1	.830	1.44			
	Home2	.811	1.429			
	Home3	.781	1.425			
	<i>Game Promotion</i>	.817	2.938	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Promotion1	.789	1.401			
	Promotion2	.836	1.613			
	Promotion3	.825	1.559			
	<i>Economic Consideration</i>	.878	2.722	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Economic1	.786	1.314			
	Economic2	.800	1.4			
	Economic3	.774	1.338			
	<i>Schedule Convenience</i>	.775	2.772	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Schedule1	.817	1.507			
	Schedule2	.839	1.507			
	Schedule3	.779	1.422			
Contemporary market demand	<i>On-Court Interactive Activity</i>	.958	3.887	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Interactive1	.755	1.615			
	Interactive2	.733	1.543			
	Interactive3	.759	1.696			
	Interactive4	.749	1.631			
	Interactive5	.751	1.753			

Satisfaction	Interactive6	.741	1.643	n/a	n/a	n/a
	<i>Mediated Interactive Activity</i>	.844	3.591			
	Interactive7	.774	1.58			
	Interactive8	.788	1.557			
	Interactive9	.741	1.424			
	Interactive10	.776	1.461	n/a	n/a	n/a
	<i>Issue-Specific Advocating Programming</i>	.935	3.820			
	Advocating1	.754	1.572			
	Advocating5	.773	1.71			
	Advocating6	.768	1.704			
	Advocating7	.786	1.618			
	Advocating8	.768	1.621	n/a	n/a	n/a
	<i>General Advocating Programming</i>	.900	4.745			
	Advocating2	.792	1.88			
	Advocating3	.775	1.698			
	Advocating4	.756	1.593			
	Advocating9	.767	1.631			
	Advocating10	.741	1.552			
	<i>Satisfaction</i>					
	Satisfaction					
WNBA Consumption intentions	<i>WNBA Consumption Intention</i>			.947	.952	.497
	<i>Consumption1</i>	.639	1.23			
	Consumption2	.788	1.54			
	Consumption3	.793	1.568			
	Consumption4	.805	1.653			

Note. All factor weights and standardized factor loadings were significant ($p < .01$); ω = Factor weight; λ = Factor loading; VIF = Variance inflation factor; α = Cronbach's Alpha; CR = Construct reliability coefficient; AVE = Average variance extracted.

Table 3. HTMT Ratios

Discriminant Validity- HTMT Ratios			
	Contemporary Factors	Satisfaction	Traditional Factors
Contemporary Factors			
Satisfaction	.400		
Traditional Factors	1.005	.405	
WNBA Consumption Intentions	.580	.759	.596

Figure 4.1. First Order Model

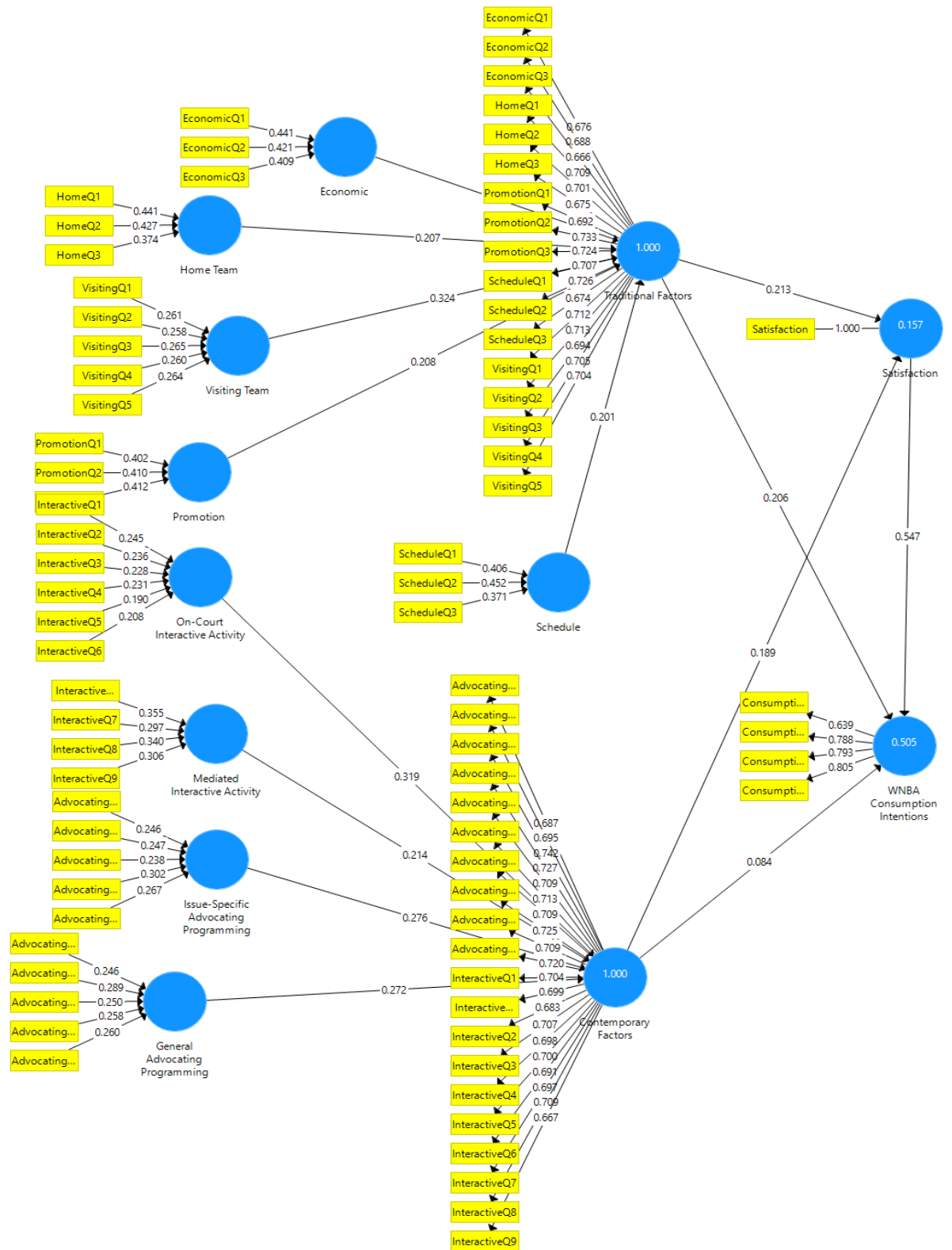


Figure 4.2. Second Order Model-T-Statistic Path Model: R Square

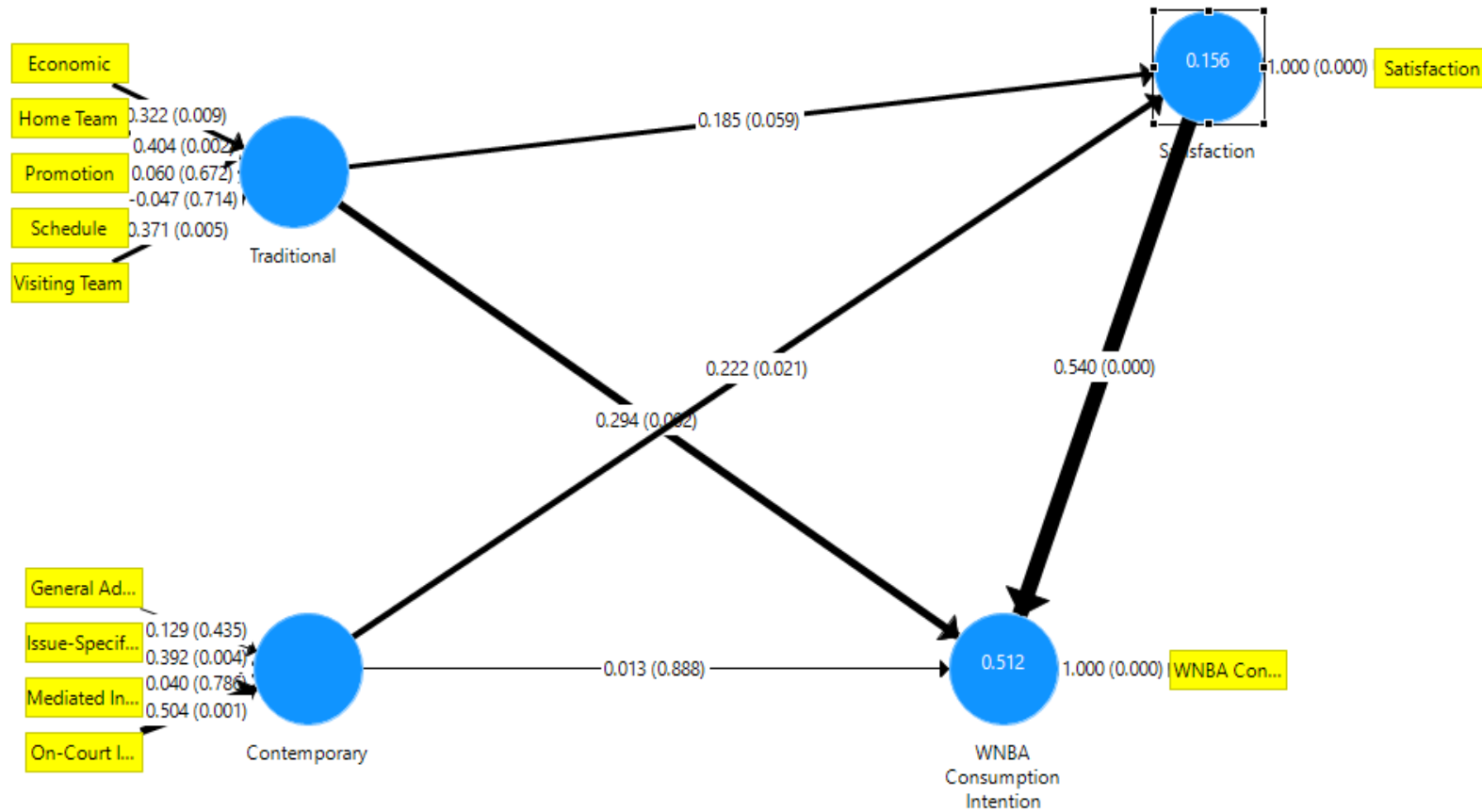


Table 4.4. A Summary of PLS-SEM Results

Hypothesized relationships	Hypothesis Supported	<i>Standardized Coefficient</i>	<i>p</i>		t-value
H1: Traditional market demand → Satisfaction	Yes	.185	.059		1.892
H2: Traditional market demand → WNBA Consumption Intentions	Yes	.294	.002		3.087
H3: Contemporary market demand → Satisfaction	Yes	.222	.021		2.304
H4: Contemporary market demand → WNBA Consumption Intentions	No	.013	.888		.141
H5: Satisfaction → WNBA Consumption Intentions	Yes	.540	.000		14.033

Table 4.5. A Summary of Gender MICOM Results

MICOM Step 1: Configural invariance: Established					
MICOM Step 2: Compositional invariance: Men vs. Women					
Constructs	Original correlation	Correlation permutation mean	5% Quantile	Permutation <i>p</i> -values	Compositional invariance
Contemporary	.968	.950	.876	.876	Yes
Satisfaction	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.00	Yes
Traditional	.968	.983	.857	.857	Yes
WNBA Consumption Intention	1.000	1.000	1.000	.136	Yes

Table 4.6. MGA Results for Male-Female

Invariance Permutation Significant Path Coefficients				
Constructs	Coefficients (Male)	Coefficients(Female)	Difference	Permutation p-values
Satisfaction→ WNBA Consumption Intentions	.617	.303	.314	.000
Economic→ Traditional	.185	.225	-.040	.003
Schedule→ Traditional	.190	.221	-.031	.011
Mediated Interactive Activity → Contemporary	.204	2.36	-.032	.019
On-Court Interactive Activity→ Contemporary	.324	.350	-.026	.076

Table 4.7. A Summary of Ticket Type MICOM Results

MICOM Step 1: Configural invariance: Established					
MICOM Step 2: Compositional invariance: Full Season Tickets vs. Single Game/Half Season Tickets					
Constructs	Original correlation	Correlation permutation mean	5% Quantile	Permutation <i>p</i> -values	Compositional invariance
Contemporary	.851	.912	.731	.179	Yes
Satisfaction	1.000	1.000	1.000	.000	Yes
Traditional	.950	.870	.629	.748	Yes
WNBA Consumption Intention	1.000	1.000	1.000	.280	Yes

Table 4.8. MGA Results - Full Season Tickets vs. Single Game/Multi Game Tickets

Invariance Permutation Significant Path Coefficients: Full Season Tickets vs. Single Game/Half Season Tickets				
Constructs	Coefficients (Full)	Coefficients(Single-Half)	Difference	Permutation p-values
General Advocating Programming→ Contemporary	.331	-.058	-.004	.044
Home Team→ Traditional	.159	.055	.004	.033
Issue-Specific Advocating Programming→Contemporary	.222	.046	.006	.089
Satisfaction→WNBA Consumption Intentions	.297	.290	.011	.057
Schedule→Traditional Factors	.261	-.063	.002	.019

Table 4.9. IMPA Consumption Intentions Results Full Data Set

Latent Variables	WNBA Consumption Intentions	
	Total Effect (Importance)	Index Value (Performance)
Contemporary	.133	58.854
Satisfaction	.540	78.352
Traditional	.394	58.784
WNBA Consumption Intentions		65.462

Figure 4.3a. IMPA Full Dataset Consumption Intentions Constructs

Importance-Performance Map [WNBA Consumption Intention] (constructs, standardized effects)

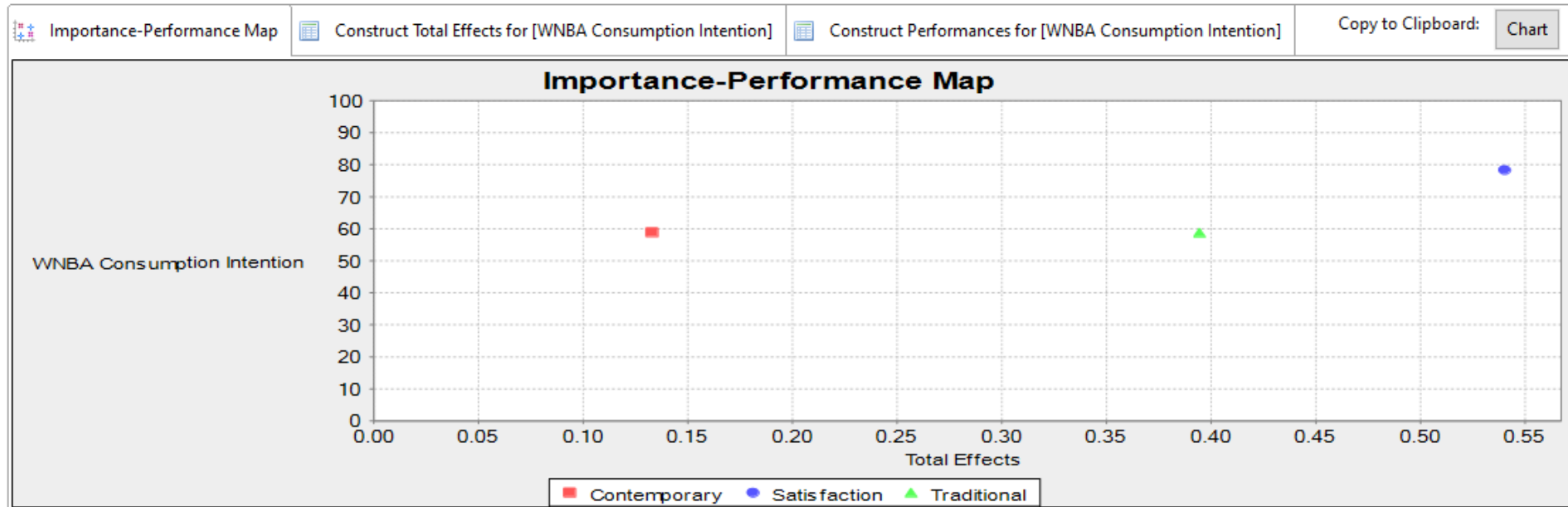


Figure 4.3b. IMPA Full Dataset Consumption Intentions Indicators

Importance-Performance Map [WNBA Consumption Intention] (indicators, standardized effects)

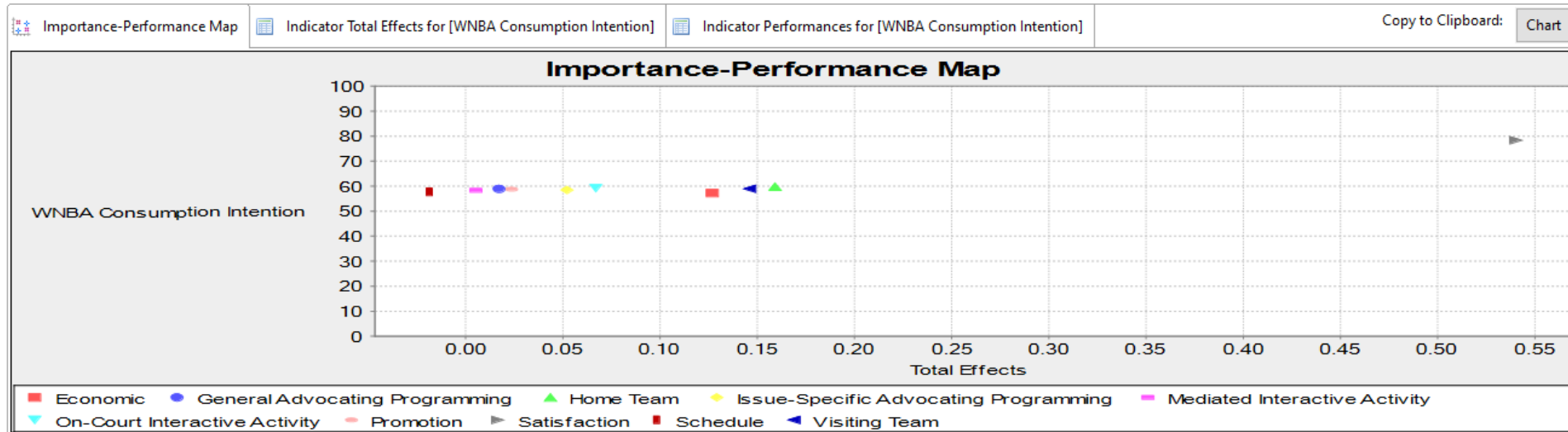


Figure 4.3C. IMPA Satisfaction Total Sample Constructs

Importance-Performance Map [Satisfaction] (constructs, standardized effects)

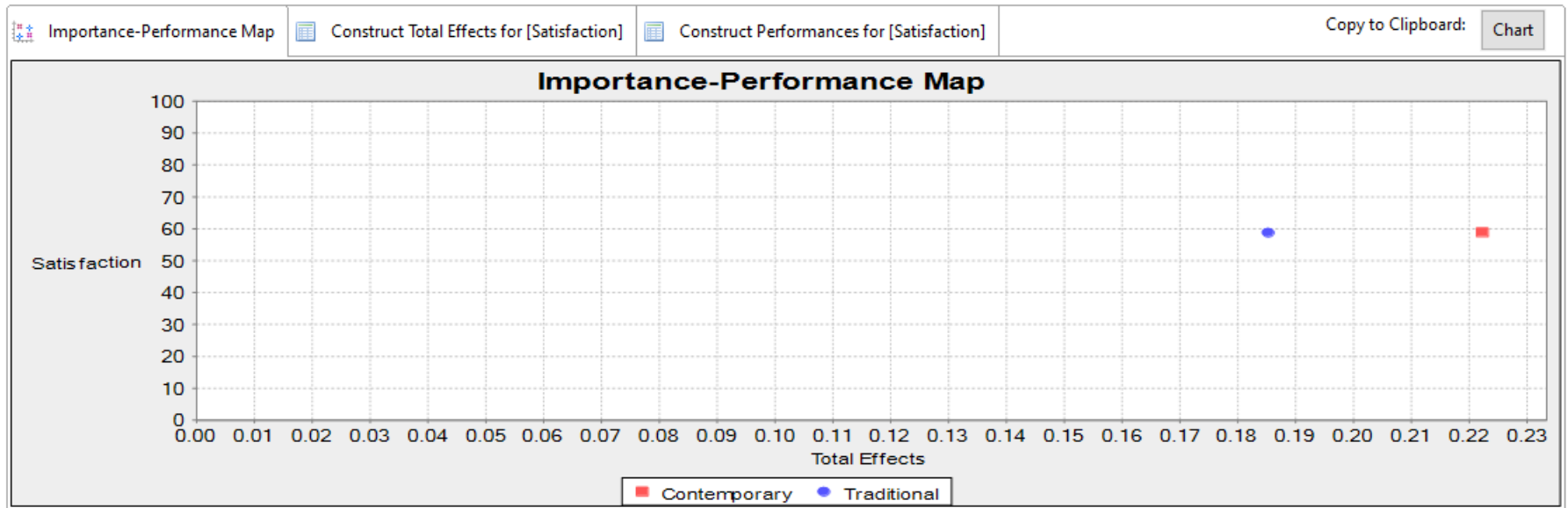


Figure 4.3D. IMPA Satisfaction Total Sample Indicators

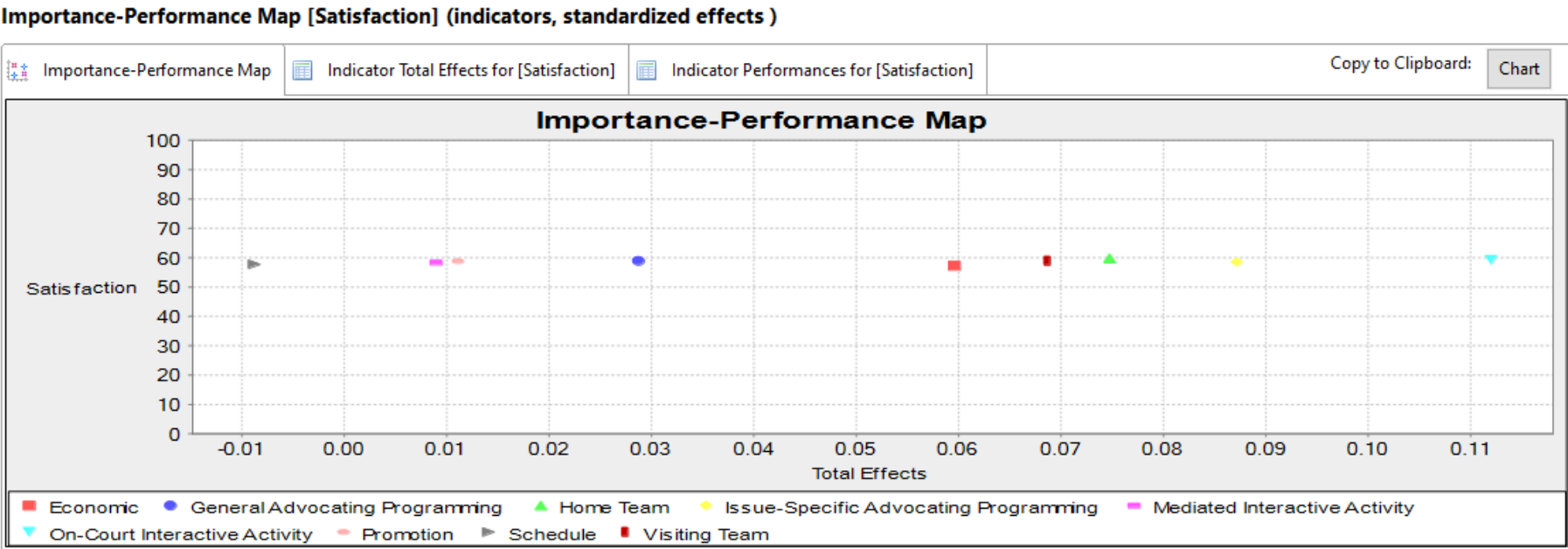


Table 4.10. Gender Importance-Performance Consumption Scores

Latent Variables	WNBA Consumption Intentions			
	Total Effect (Importance)	Index Value (Performance)	Total Effect (Importance)	Index Value (Performance)
	Male	Male	Female	Female
Contemporary	.162	54.455	.308	66.086
Satisfaction	.607	78.053	.281	80.135
Traditional	.286	54.412	.421	65.962
WNBA Consumption- Intention		63.614		69.264

Table 4.11. Gender Importance-Performance Satisfaction Scores

Latent Variables	Satisfaction			
	Total Effect (Importance)	Index Value (Performance)	Total Effect (Importance)	Index Value (Performance)
	Male	Male	Female	Female
Contemporary	.235	54.455	.333	66.086
Satisfaction	.607	78.053	.281	80.135
Traditional	.086	54.412	.294	65.962
WNBA Consumption- Intention		63.614		69.264

Figure 4.4a. IMPA Male Consumption Intentions Constructs

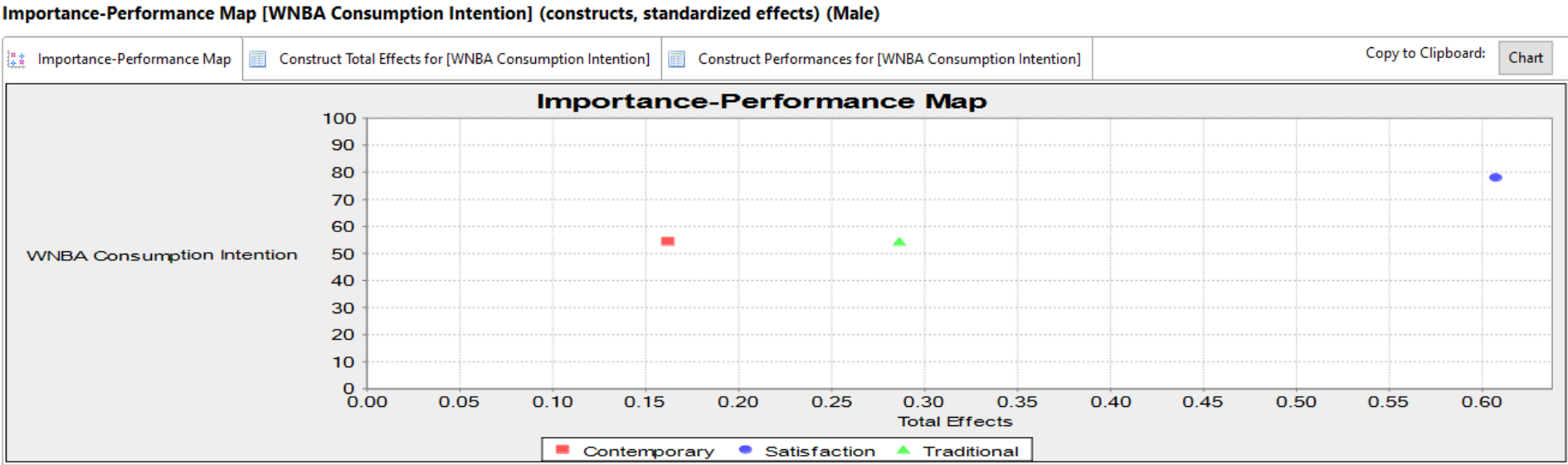
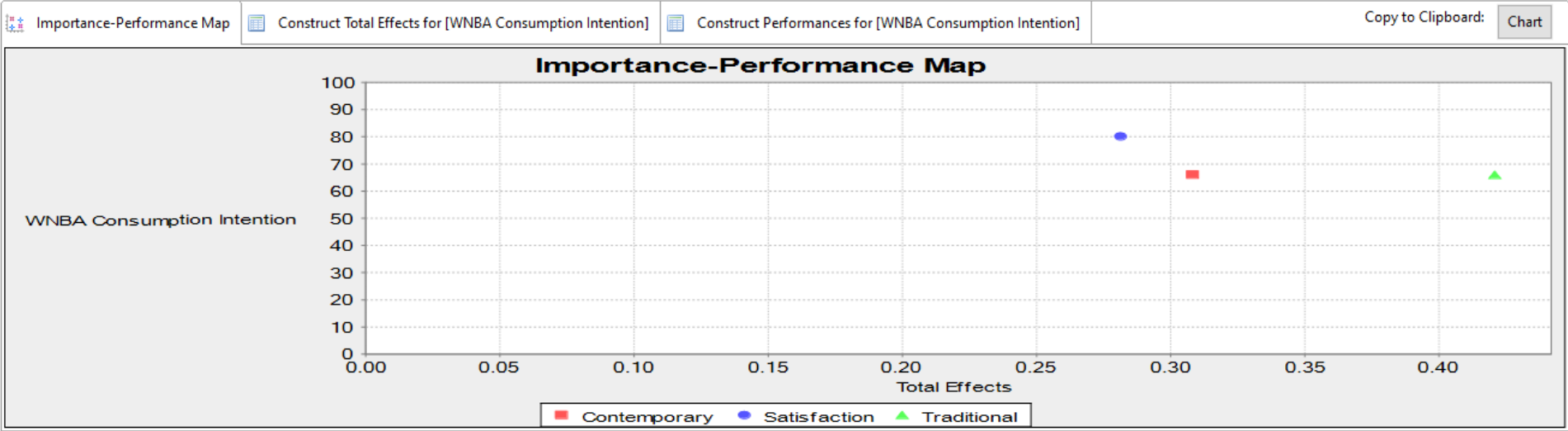


Figure 4.4b. IMPA Female Consumption Intentions Constructs

Importance-Performance Map [WNBA Consumption Intention] (constructs, standardized effects) (Female)



Insert 4.4c. IMPA Male Consumption Intentions Indicators

Importance-Performance Map [WNBA Consumption Intention] (indicators, standardized effects) (Male)

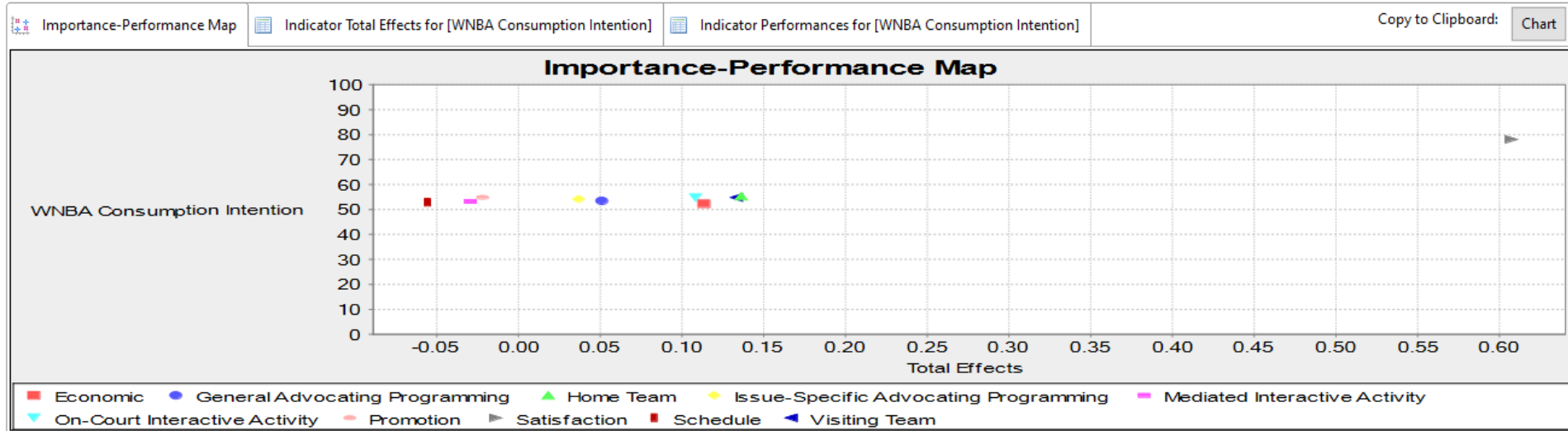


Figure 4.4d. IMPA Female Consumption Intentions Indicators

Importance-Performance Map [WNBA Consumption Intention] (indicators, standardized effects) (Female)

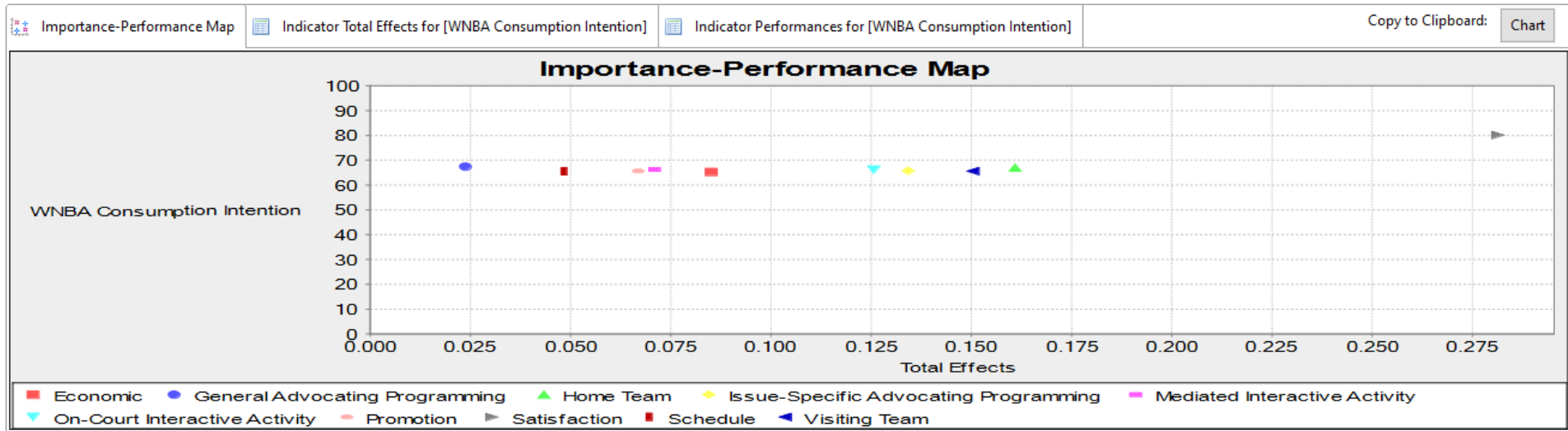


Figure 4.5a. IMPA Male Satisfaction Constructs

Importance-Performance Map [Satisfaction] (constructs, standardized effects) (Male)

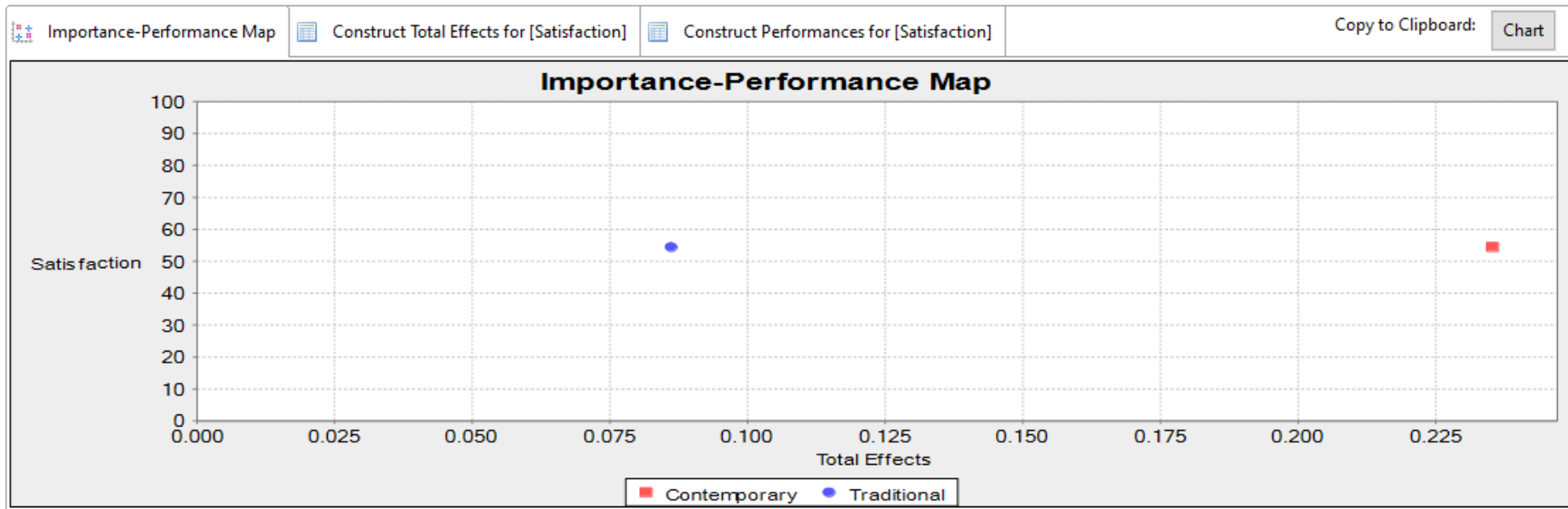


Figure 4.5b. IMPA Female Satisfaction Constructs

Importance-Performance Map [Satisfaction] (constructs, standardized effects) (Female)

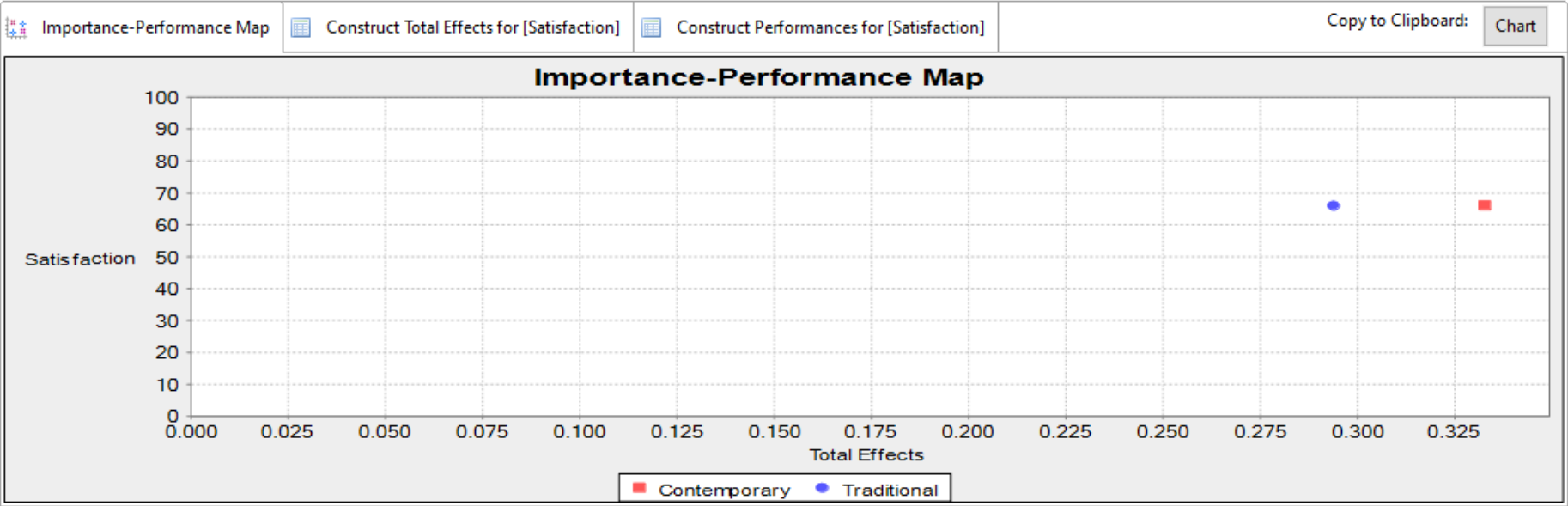


Figure 4.5c. IMPA Male Satisfaction Indicators

Importance-Performance Map [Satisfaction] (indicators, standardized effects) (Male)

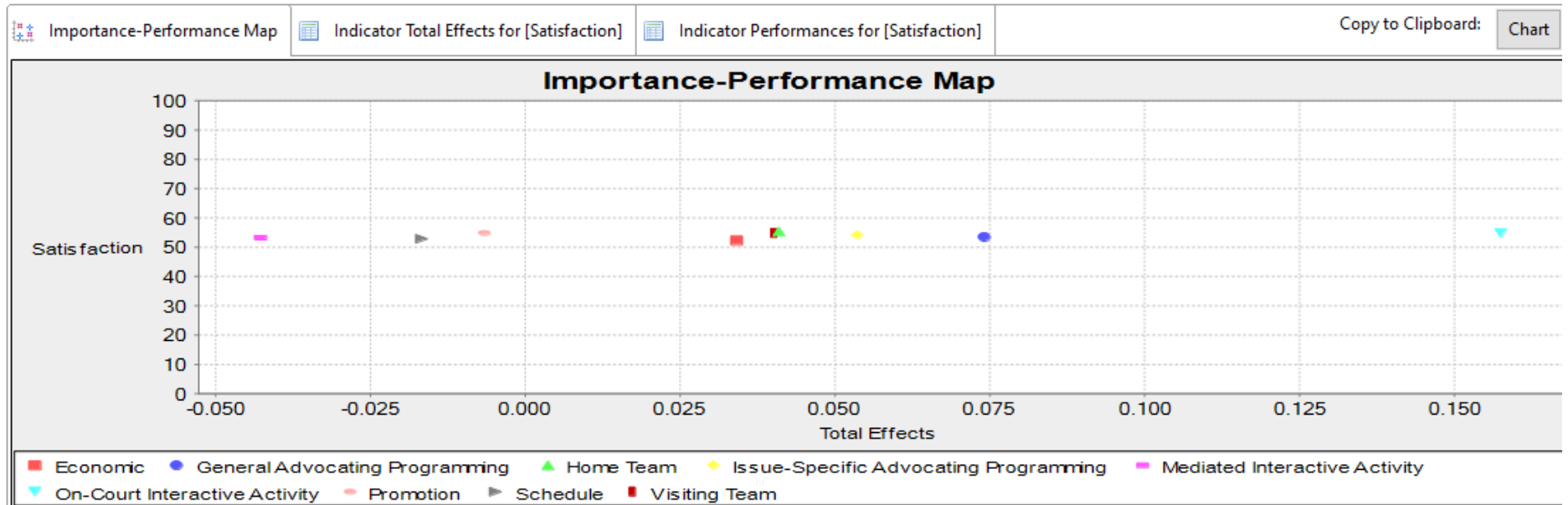


Figure 4.5d. IMPA Female Satisfaction Indicators

Importance-Performance Map [Satisfaction] (indicators, standardized effects) (Female)

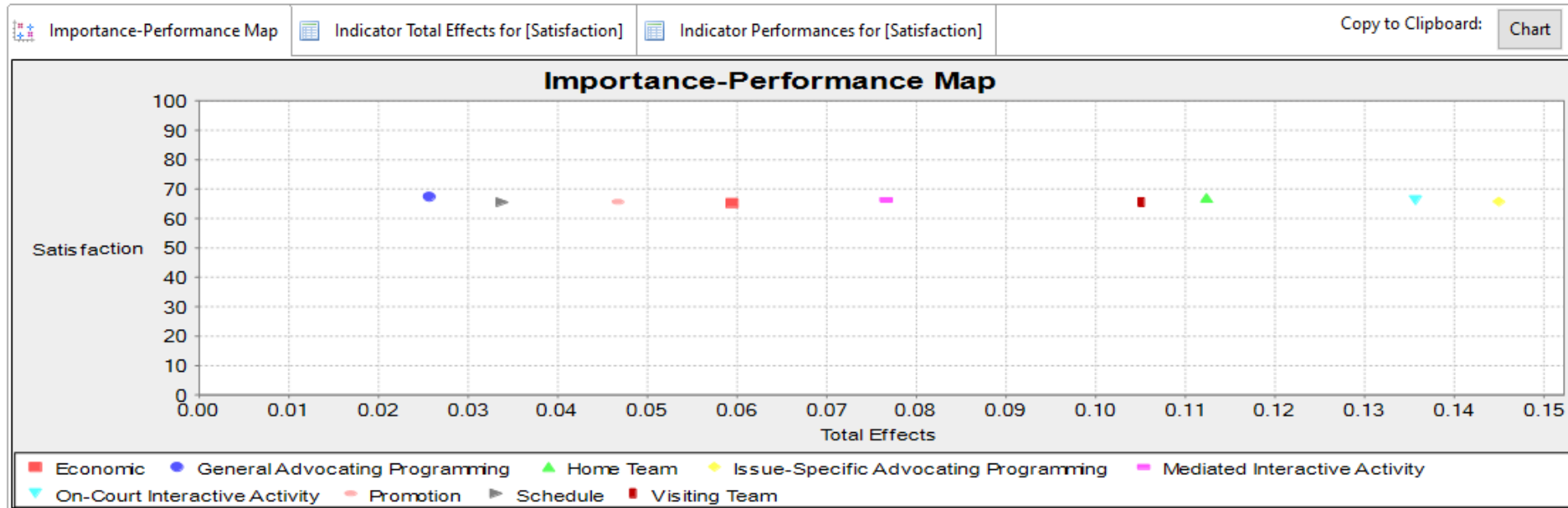


Table 4.12. Ticket Type Importance-Performance Consumption Scores

Latent Variables	WNBA Consumption Intentions			
	Total Effect (Importance)	Index Value (Performance)	Total Effect (Importance)	Index Value (Performance)
	Full	Full	Single-Half	Single-Half
Contemporary	.235	61.424	.216	55.931
Satisfaction	.574	82.101	.449	73.350
Traditional	.268	61.289	.350	55.681
WNBA Consumption- Intention		70.461		59.007

Table. 4.13 Ticket Type Importance-Performance Satisfaction Scores

Latent Variables	Satisfaction			
	Total Effect (Importance)	Index Value (Performance)	Total Effect (Importance)	Index Value (Performance)
	Full	Full	Single-Half	Single-Half
Contemporary	.248	61.424	.333	55.931
Satisfaction	.574	82.101	.281	73.350
Traditional	.168	61.289	.294	55.681
WNBA Consumption- Intention		70.461		59.007

Figure 4.6a. IMPA Full Season Tickets Consumption Intentions Constructs

Importance-Performance Map [WNBA Consumption Intention] (constructs, standardized effects) (FullSeasonTickets)

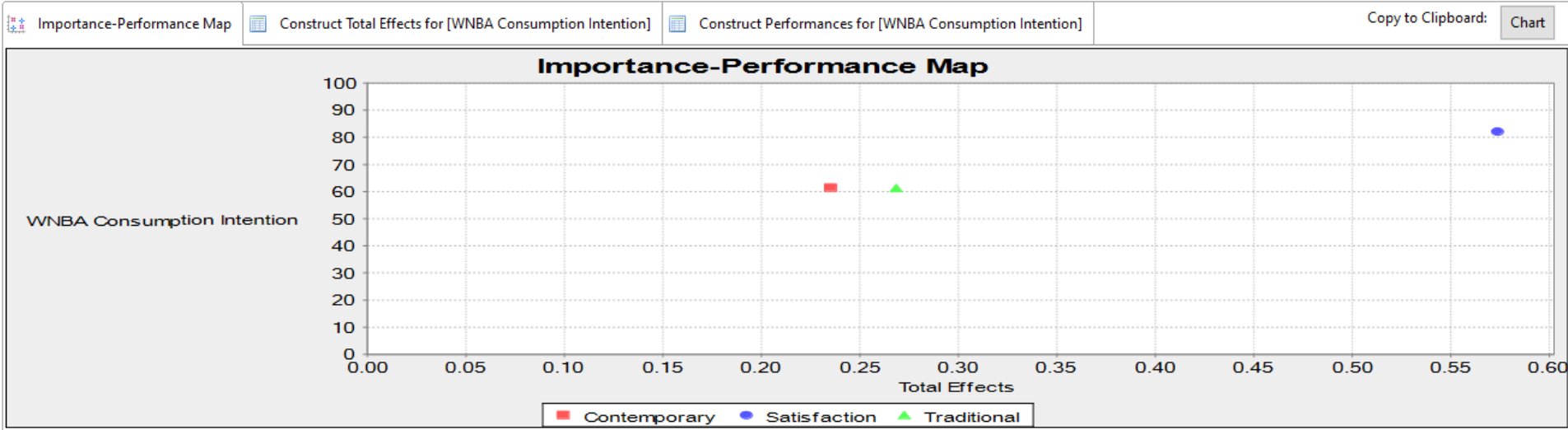


Figure 4.6b. IMPA Single/Half Season Tickets Consumption Intentions Constructs

Importance-Performance Map [WNBA Consumption Intention] (constructs, standardized effects) (SingleHalfSeasonTicket)

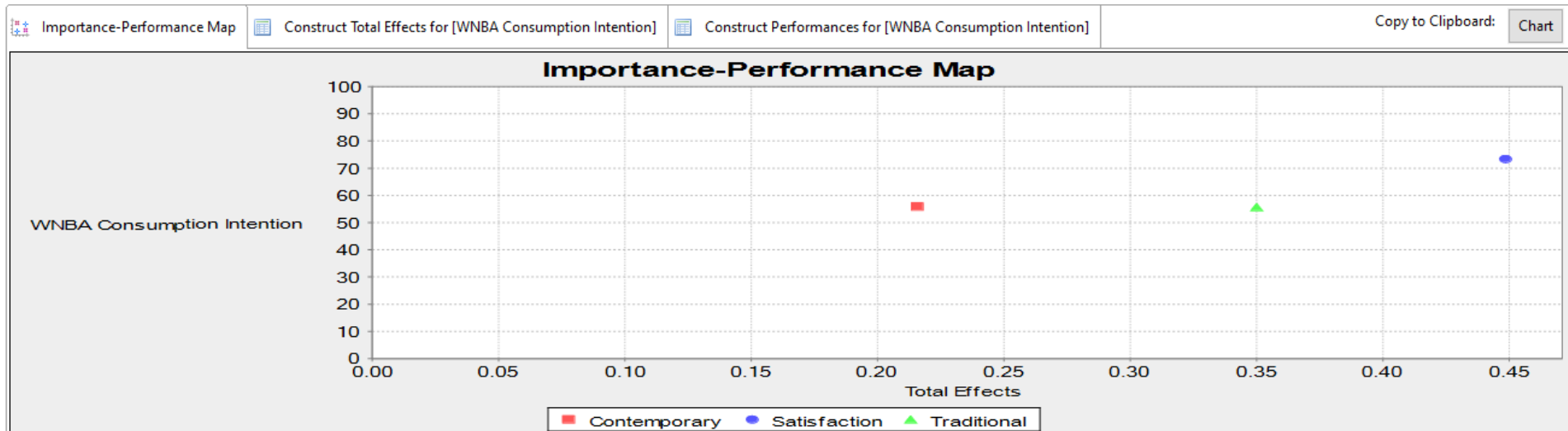
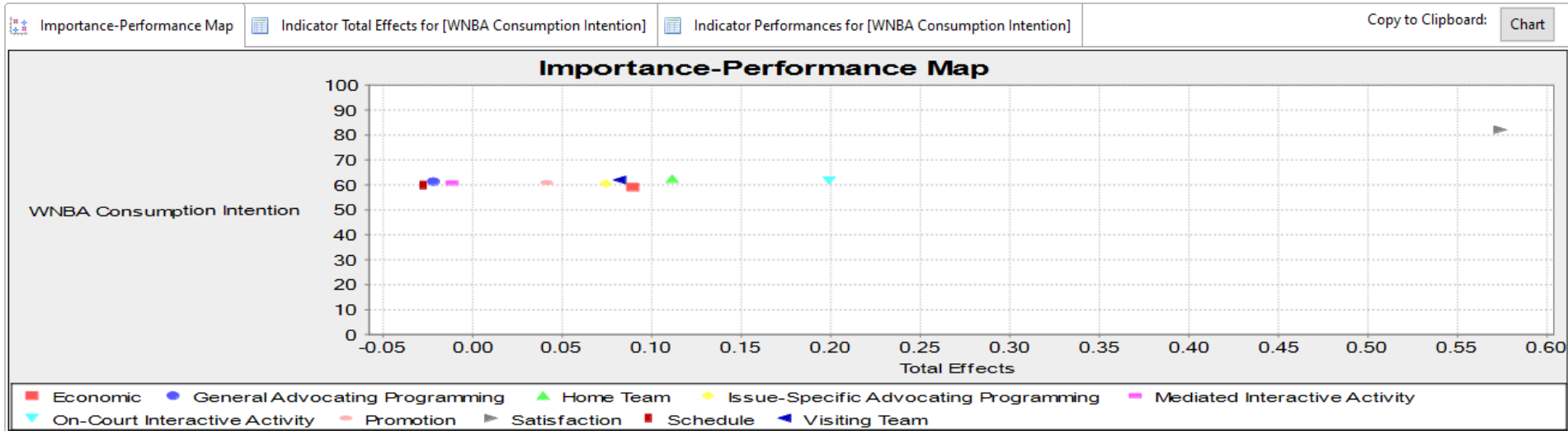


Figure 4.6c. IMPA Full Season Tickets Consumption Intentions Indicators

Importance-Performance Map [WNBA Consumption Intention] (indicators, standardized effects) (FullSeasonTickets)



4.6d. IMPA Single/Half Season Ticket Consumption Intentions Indicators

Importance-Performance Map [WNBA Consumption Intention] (indicators, standardized effects) (SingleHalfSeasonTicket)

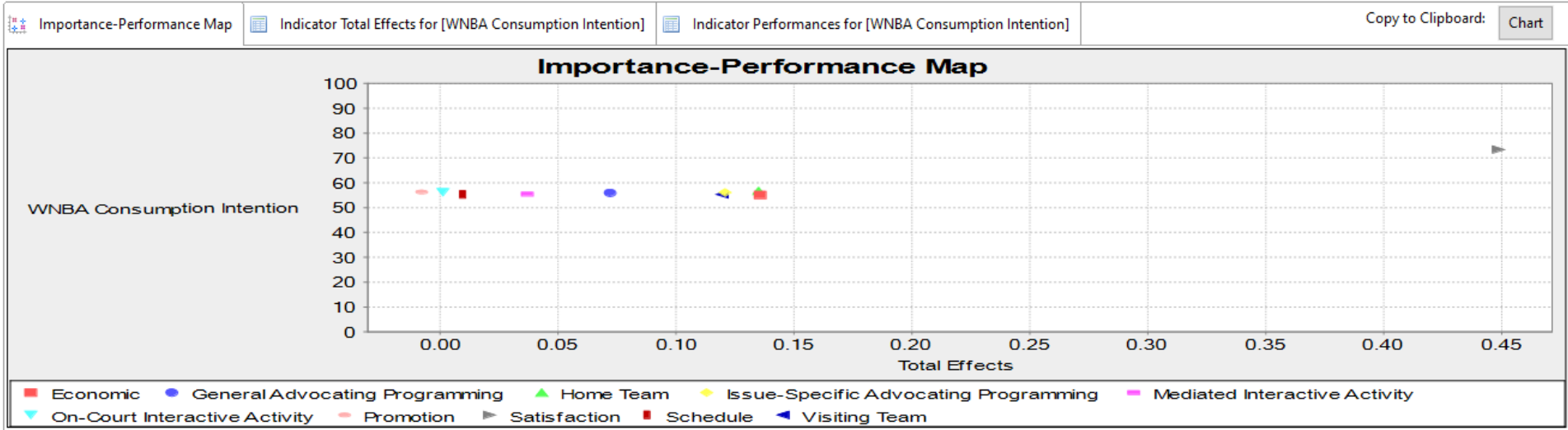


Figure 4.7a. IMPA Full Season Satisfaction Constructs

Importance-Performance Map [Satisfaction] (constructs, standardized effects) (FullSeasonTickets)

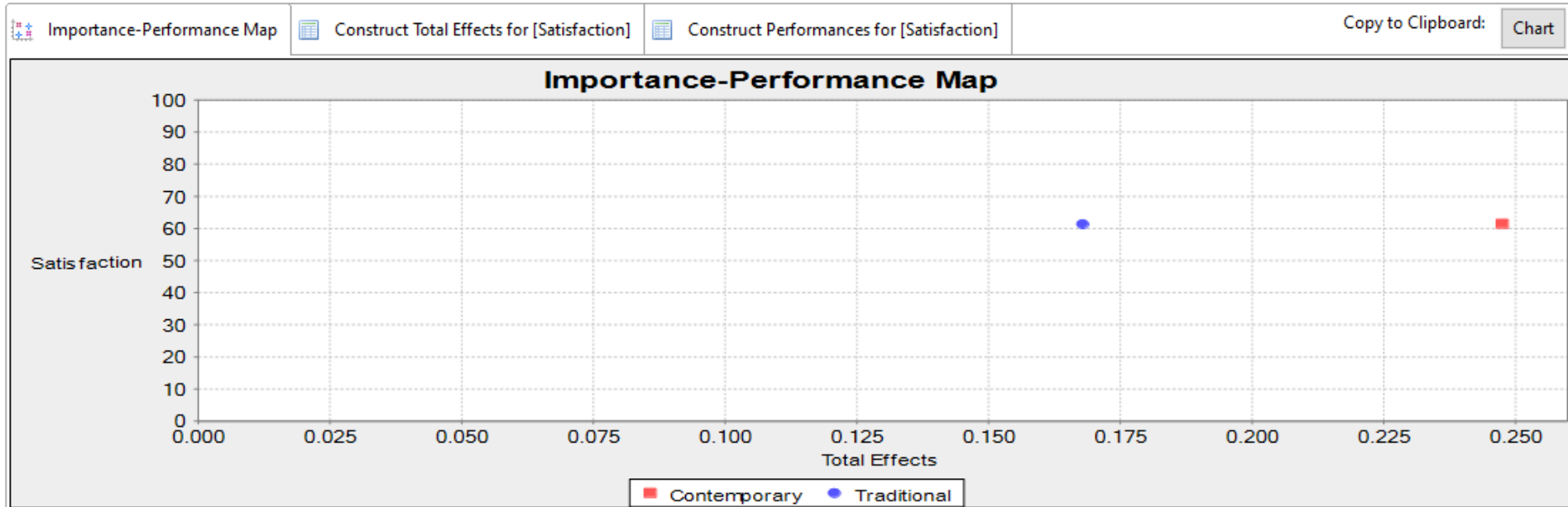
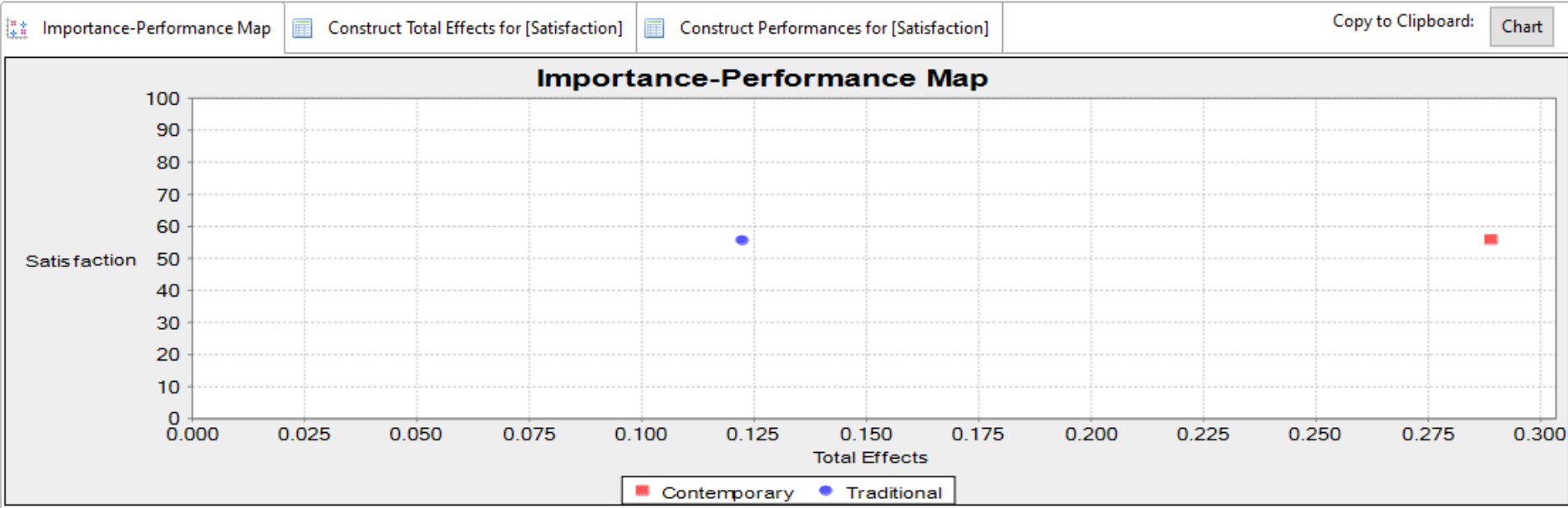


Figure 4.7b.IMPA Single/Half Season Tickets Satisfaction Constructs

Importance-Performance Map [Satisfaction] (constructs, standardized effects) (SingleHalfSeasonTicket)



4.7c. IMPA Full Season Tickets Satisfaction Indicators

Importance-Performance Map [Satisfaction] (indicators, standardized effects) (FullSeasonTickets)

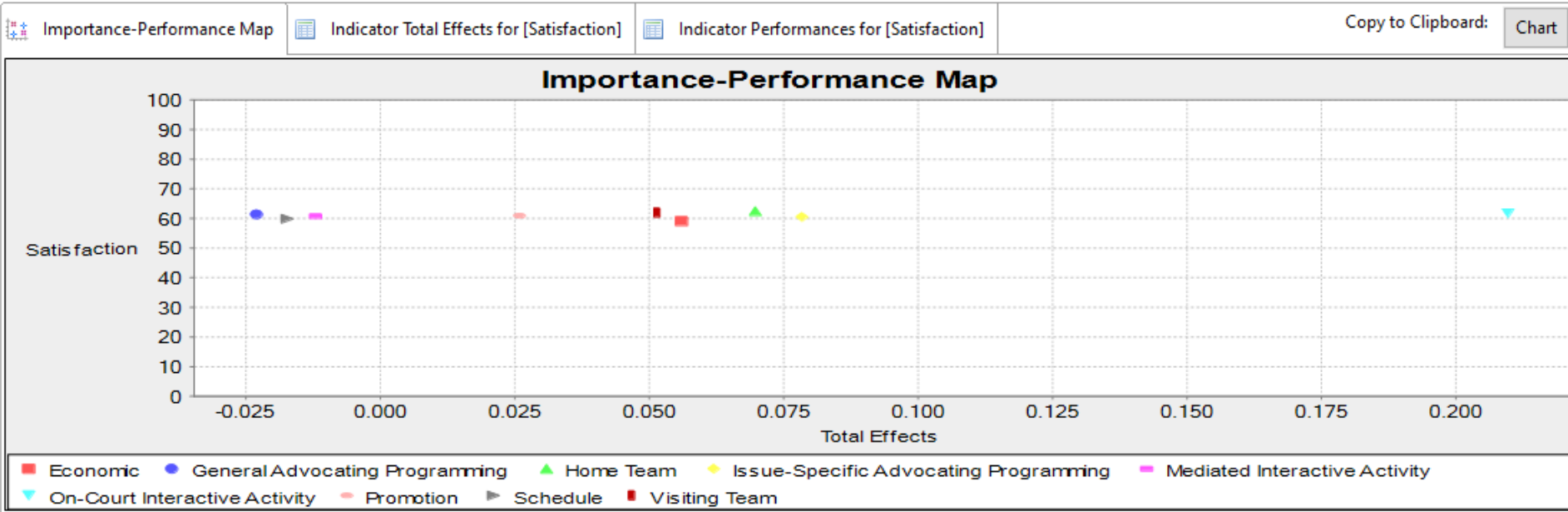


Figure 4.7d. IMPA Single/Half Season Tickets Satisfaction Indicators

Importance-Performance Map [Satisfaction] (indicators, standardized effects) (SingleHalfSeasonTicket)

