Attachment, Allegiance and a Convergent Application of Stakeholder Theory: Assessing the Impact of Winning on Athletic Donations in the Ivy League

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Abstract
This study investigates how an Ivy League school’s football season ticket holders demonstrate their attachment and allegiance to the intercollegiate athletic product through the application of stakeholder theory as a marketing-based construct. This paper merges the tenets of stakeholder theory and the theoretical constructs of attachment and allegiance initially investigated in Covell (2004) to understand the interests and values of these stakeholders, how they demonstrate attachment and allegiance to the sport property, and how they perceive the importance of winning in relation to their proclivities toward charitable donations to the school’s athletic funds. Despite numerous assessments, the true impact of athletics on donations across all of intercollegiate athletics remains at best unclear. However, the findings indicate that from an assessment of self-reported athletic giving histories, the stakeholders studied here demonstrated attachment and allegiance to the property by not altering athletic fund donations based on the team’s on-field performance.

Introduction
Stakeholder theory and intercollegiate athletics
In Covell (2004), the author investigates how consumers demonstrate their attachment and allegiance to an intercollegiate athletic product, and suggests how the interests of this group impact the management of intercollegiate athletic policy and the policies for all athletic programs at schools seeking to maintain high academic profiles. This research sought to investigate how intercollegiate athletics factors into what former Harvard president Derek Bok (1985, p. 124) called the “constituency-oriented system of higher education.” The system to which Bok refers is identified by Covell as “a stakeholder-oriented system, where schools use athletics to foster a sense of community with students, alumni, and the general public” (Covell, 2004, p. 15).

The application of the tenets of stakeholder theory is particularly useful in understanding the role and importance of intercollegiate athletics in American higher education. In addition, the work of Goff (2000) notes the assessment of athletic programs must collect and assess empirical data to formulate new strategies for intercollegiate athletic programs. Goff defines success for these programs in several ways, including athletic participation, direct financial gain, increased exposure, increased financial contributions, and increased student applications and enrollment—all measures directly related to establishing and maintaining positive relationships with stakeholders. Toma (2003) makes the case for stakeholder inquiry as well, noting that college football specifically is used “in defining institutions and drawing people toward them in ways that serve the related ends of expanding resources and enhancing prestige” (p. 13).

As noted in Covell (2004), Jones and Wickes (1999) state that one challenge of stakeholder theory is “to develop and evaluate a broad array of narrative accounts regarding the nature and purposes of the firm and the activities of the people who work for it” (p. 209). This paper will address this challenge by furthering the convergence of the tenets of stakeholder theory and the marketing theoretical constructs of attachment and allegiance to understand the interests of a significant intercollegiate athletics stakeholder group first established by Covell (2004). The findings from that research suggest that season ticket holders for men’s ice hockey at one
Ivy League institution demonstrated strong allegiance to the stated definition of success of Ivy League athletics. This paper is intended to follow up on the future research directions outlined in that study, and will investigate the responses of another stakeholder group at an Ivy League institution—football season ticket holders—to investigate additional patterns of demonstrated allegiance, specifically the annual athletic fund giving patterns of these stakeholders. This complementary research stream seeks to build on the findings in Covell (2004) to bolster practitioner understandings of the tenets of stakeholder theory and the specific organizational characteristics of the Ivy League. This research investigates the interests and values of this stakeholder group, how they demonstrate attachment and allegiance to the sport property, and how they perceive the importance of winning in relation to their proclivities toward charitable donations to the school's athletic funds. The assessment of giving will measure how strongly stakeholders demonstrate allegiance to the school and its stated philosophies. The findings from this research are meant to inform intercollegiate athletics managers of the expressed values of stakeholders, and of the importance of applying the lessons dictated by stakeholder theory for predicting organizational success.

The theoretical constructs of stakeholder theory

As noted in Covell (2004), stakeholder theory suggests that an organization has relationships with many constituent groups, or “stakeholders,” that affect and are affected by its decisions (Freeman, 1984). Related theory also suggests that stakeholders are defined as those individuals that have a “stake” in the performance of an organization, that the interests of all legitimate stakeholders have intrinsic value, and that no set of interests is assumed to dominate the others (Clarkson, 1995; Donaldson & Preston, 1995). Brenner and Cochran comment that “the stakeholder theory of the firm posits that the nature of an organization’s stakeholders, their values, their relative influence on decisions and the nature of the situation are all relevant information for predicting organizational behavior” (1991, p. 462). Mitchell et al. (1997) note that stakeholder theory has managerial importance because it can determine to what and to whom managers need to listen and give attention. They identify important stakeholder groups based on three factors: possession of power, legitimacy, and urgency of claim. Jones (1995) asserts that those organizations whose managers develop trusting and cooperative relationships with stakeholders will have a competitive advantage over other organizations. Theorists also suggest that all stakeholder interests must be attended to for the organization to be successful.

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The Ivy League: An overview

Covell (2004) notes that Hansen and Hallack, and O'Leary (as cited by Quarterman, 1994), suggest that intercollegiate athletic conferences were originally developed for, among other reasons, the formulation and enforcement of rules governing student-athlete eligibility, ease and convenience of travel and scheduling, and “lifting some of the political burden away from the individual member institutions” (p. 129). Bowen and Levin describe the result of these formalized agreements as the creation of “orbits of competition” (2003, p. 173). Thelin (1996) states that:

the conference is the crucial unit in shaping and regulating intercollegiate athletics because it can have more impact on shaping athletic policies than the NCAA ... (and) is the locus where a small group of institutions in voluntary association agree to work together, to compete while showing some sign of mutual respect and comparable academic standards (p. 129).

This assessment conforms with the observations of Mullin et al. (2000), who note that part of the uniqueness of the sport product is that organizations, unlike most mainstream product or service organizations, must simultaneously cooperate and compete to produce a specific sport product or service.

Covell (2004) provides an overview of the formation and characteristics of the Ivy League, or more precisely, the Council of Ivy Group Presidents, the league’s official title. Covell argues that the league has evolved to the point where it is perceived by many as the Division I antidote to the real and perceived estrangement between athletics and academics in higher education. League membership includes institutions of higher education perceived as among America’s finest: Brown University, Columbia University, Cornell University, Dartmouth College, Harvard University, Princeton University, the University of Pennsylvania, and Yale University. Individually and collectively, these schools have had a significant impact on the genesis, growth and development of American intercollegiate athletics. Covell stakes his above claim on the fact that as intercollegiate athletic programs quickly shifted from the health and physical fitness benefits of the participants (although often cited as the justification for such programs) and developed into entertainment offerings for both on- and off-campus stakeholders, “the Ivies elected to eschew this course to focus instead on fostering intercollegiate athletics on a scale targeted neither
Attachment and allegiance from athletics stakeholders

Many researchers have sought to investigate how and why fans attach and align themselves with sport properties. Ashforth and Mael (1989) define social identity as the self-categorization of an individual in relation to a group. Trail et al. (2000) aver that identification, "an orientation of the self in regard to other objects, including a person or group, that results in feeling or sentiments of close attachment" (pp. 165-166) is an important early factor in this process, and posit that identification influences fan expectancies concerning sport properties. Sutton et al. (1997) established a conceptual model for fan identification in professional sports, suggesting that fan identification can be divided into three discernable levels, the highest defined as "vested fans" whose loyalty is "unwavering and long-term" and view the team "as an extension of the community (and) have strong emotional attachments to the team" (p. 17). Funk et al. (1999) suggest that sport fans develop allegiance as a part of a progression, which begins with awareness, proceeds through attraction and attachment, concluding with allegiance. Attachment, level three of this progression, represents the degree or strength of an association with a sport property based on the perceived attributes, benefits, attitudes, and values (Funk, 1998; Gladden et al., 1997; Kahle, 1983; Nakazawa et al., 1998; Wann & Branscombe, 1990, 1993). Fans demonstrate allegiance by exhibiting consistently loyal behavior and resistant, persistent, and influential attitudes (Funk, 1998; Mahony et al., 1998).

The implications of convergent stakeholder theory on attachment and allegiance

The Ivy League’s stated goals of concomitant athletic success and academic excellence serve as an adaptable measure of organizational success. This definition of organizational success provides a significant challenge for member schools’ student-athletes, coaches, and athletic managers. They are charged with uniting these two aspects to the degree that Ivy League teams are competitive not only within their group of peer schools, but with other Division I schools nationally. In essence, they are also charged with uniting the two facets of American higher education (athletic success and academic excellence) seen by many critics of the enterprise to be patently irreconcilable. What this research endeavors to uncover is whether a key stakeholder group for one institution demonstrates an acceptance of this determination of organizational success by indicting allegiance to the organization.

"The main conclusion to be drawn from this body of research is that the correlation between winning and giving can be accurately measured only on an institution by institution basis."

A convergent approach to theoretical constructs and its importance to practitioners

The intent of this research is to highlight the importance of stakeholder theory to sport marketing practitioners. In essence, it is reasonable to posit that stakeholder theory is a marketing-based construct, because as stated by Mullin et al. (2000), a fundamental canon of sport marketing is that an organization must understand the needs and wants of consumers to succeed. It then stands to reason that an in-depth analysis of sport consumers using the tenets of stakeholder theory, which seeks to understand attitudes and motivations of those affiliated with an organization, serves to verify the premise of Mullin et al. and to provide a managerial application for sport marketing practitioners. In addition, attachment and allegiance are critical factors in determining sport consumer behavior. Since these factors are basic components of what constitutes stakeholder perceptions, then investigating the connection between sport marketing practice (knowing consumer needs and wants), consumer attachment and allegiance (measures of consumer interest), and stakeholder theory (understanding behavior to inform organizational practices and decision-making) can aid practitioners in crafting products and services. This form of inquiry is also reconciled with recent studies of relationship marketing, which seeks to establish and maintain methods to integrate customers (stakeholders) into an organization and to sustain relationships between the customer (stakeholder) and the organization (McKenna, 1991; Shani, 1997).

An overview of athletic donations research

The presence of successful intercollegiate athletic programs is often cited as a boost for generating increased applications and alumni donations. Borland et al. (1992) note that while the athletic department at Western Kentucky University loses well over a million dollars per year, the department "is a net contributor to university revenues once enrollment impacts of athletics are taken into account" (p. 215). Frederick (1984) cites that schools with unsuccessful football programs had the lowest percentage of alumni participation in the
annual fund, but the highest average gift. Frey (1982) suggests that as resources for athletic departments become scarcer, the programs that will survive are those that are supported by boosters and alumni.

Despite numerous assessments, the true impact of athletics on donations across all of intercollegiate athletics remains unclear at best. McCormick and Tinsley (1990) found that at Clemson University, athletic fundraising does not impinge on academic contributions, and conclude that a symbiotic relationship exists where the elimination of athletics could hurt academic gifts. Grimes and Chressanthis (1994) analyzed the effect of intercollegiate athletics on alumni contributions to the academic endowment of Mississippi State University. The results indicate that contributions are positively related to overall team winning percentages, and that post-season play is more important to athletic revenues than to academic contributions. Brooker and Klastorin (1981) identified the positive influence of football success at small, private universities, including those in the Ivy League. Mahony et al. (2003) note that giving in their study of donors at three Division I institutions was impacted by “success factors” such as improving the quality of the school’s athletic programs.

“Those stakeholders who had fewer years of giving were more likely than those who had longer giving records to allow wins and losses to negatively impact their giving, and were also less interested in using giving to develop closer bonds with others in the stakeholder group.”

These conclusions are disputed by Sack and Watkins (1985), Gaski and Etzel (1984), and Sigelman and Bookheimer (1983). These studies detected no significant correlation between athletic success and monetary donations at Division I institutions. Said Sigelman and Carter (1979): “Even if there was a strong relationship between athletic success and alumni giving, this would probably be of little practical consequence, because most schools obtain only a small portion of their support from alumni” (p. 292). However, while Turner et al. (2001) agree in general, they report that some Division III schools show a positive correlation between football success and alumni giving at selective colleges and universities, but that at Division I-AA and four Ivy institutions (Columbia, Pennsylvania, Princeton, Yale), winning in football did not impact athletic giving. The main conclusion to be drawn from this body of research is that the correlation between winning and giving can be accurately measured only on an institution by institution basis. However, it must be noted here that all of this research is derived from nonspecific stakeholder data. These researchers have not sought to inquire directly of stakeholders, but have drawn inferences from generalized data. It is through direct inquiries of athletic donators that this research seeks to build on the earlier work in this field.

Method

Football season ticket holder stakeholders were chosen as the focus of this study, as it is one of the sports at this institution (along with men’s ice hockey, men’s basketball, women’s basketball, and women’s ice hockey) for which individual game or season tickets are sold, thus allowing for an accessible database of stakeholders. Football success is identified by many researchers and practitioners as a crucial factor in cultivating athletic donations. Recent work by Toma (2003) portrays this in citing his research and that of others that indicates that higher education institutions need to activate alumni donations to meet institutional fundraising objectives, and to cultivate positive relationships with legislators, civic and business leaders, and other stakeholder groups to secure valued resources. Many of the efforts and events focused on establishing and improving these relationships are centered around intercollegiate athletic events. For example, at Louisiana State University (2004 Division I-A football national champions), meetings of alumni boards (comprised of the most active alumni) are organized around Tiger home football games. At these events and “crawfish boils” held by alumni association chapters, coaches “work the room … to then shift to our message, and have them go away feeling good … Satisfying athletic thirst helps contributions” (p. 221). It is noteworthy that the season ticket holders in this study are not required to make donations to the department funds to secure tickets. All such donations are completely voluntary. Each season ticket holder received a survey via mail, with a self-addressed stamped envelope for return. Of the 700 surveys mailed (one to each of the season ticket holder accounts), 273 completed, usable surveys were returned, a rate of 39 percent.

Survey instrument

The questions posed to this stakeholder group sought to measure how strongly these stakeholders associated with the specific nature of an Ivy League sport property, and how this stakeholder group exhibits loyalty through its giving trends. A preliminary in-stadium survey instrument was administered to selected season tickets holders at a game at the institution earlier in the season to identify basic motivations for attending games and to determine whether levels of identity and allegiance were evident. A selected number of fans were also interviewed informally to gather information concerning these questions, as well as perceptions of the property, the school, and the Ivy League. Stakeholders interviewed were asked
whether they could articulate the league’s stated goals, how important it was to them that the football team win games, and their overall impressions of attending games and spending time on campus. The result of the preliminary in-stadium survey and these interviews indicated that levels of identity and allegiance were present in this stakeholder subset, and that respondents could articulate an impression of the school’s and league’s stated organizational goals.

These preliminary research efforts served as the basis for the survey administered to the entire season ticket holder stakeholder group. Section A of the survey sought to establish how stakeholders were connected to the sport organization (the school) and the specific sport property (the team), along with relevant demographic information such as year of graduation and area of employment. These factors can be coordinated with the awareness and attraction levels of fan alignment as defined by Funk et al. (1999). These questions sought to determine the distinct type of stakeholders (alumni, institutional employees, otherwise institutionally non-affiliated college football fans). This distinction is deemed important as the stakeholder theory posits that firms have a variety of stakeholder groups, so it needed to be determined what specifically defined this particular group as stakeholders.

The first set of questions in Section B focused on divining basic salubrious effect motivations (recreation and diversion activities as defined by Zhang et al., [2001]), from those motivations such as spending time with friends, family, and business clients. The remainder of the questions sought to measure to determine how strongly stakeholders associated with the specific nature of the organization and the property, as well as demonstrated levels of attachment and allegiance. The questions in this section of the survey employed a seven-point Likert scale (“1” indicating “not at all important;” “7” indicating “extremely important”). Stakeholders were asked to rate their support of the property, the school’s athletics in general, Ivy League athletics, intercollegiate athletics in general, and the degree of importance placed on team wins.

In Section C, respondents indicated their history of giving to the athletic department’s former letterwinners club or to individual team booster clubs, with a particular focus given to questions that assess whether giving is connected to team performance. Section D sought to collect basic sociodemographic information, including age, gender, zip code, ethnicity, and annual household income.

Data analysis

All demographic characteristics were analyzed using descriptive statistics in the SPSS statistical analysis package. A t-test was performed with the means to determine how the mean scores from the respondents differed from a hypothesized mean of 4, which would assume that the group was neutral in response to each question. The results indicate that the group list as important those questions where the means less than or equal to 3, is neutral to those questions where the mean scores are greater than 3 but less than 5, and finds not important the issues to which the response means are greater than 5. To further assess giving motivations, multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was used to compare the differences in motives for giving based on the number of years of reported department giving.

Results

The responses in Section A of the survey produced a clear picture of the nature of attachment for the respondents. Nearly 88 percent (239) attended as undergraduates, 124 were former student-athletes (54 football), and 97 attended as graduate students. These stakeholders had established connections with the property through school attendance and intercollegiate athletic participation.

Understanding attendance motivations

The questions in Section B of the survey sought to understand what motivated stakeholders to attend games, to measure how strongly stakeholders associated with the specific nature of the organization and the property, and to uncover demonstrated levels of attachment and allegiance.

Discerning giving tendencies

The questions in Section C sought to define the giving records of respondents and whether football wins and losses impacted the frequency or amount of athletic gifts. Of the response group, 141 indicated they had given to athletic department fundraising groups within the last year. The average number of years respondents have been contributing is nearly 15 years. The associated t-test results are contained in Table 2.

The above mean scores indicate that winning and giving are not closely linked for these stakeholders. Stakeholders give to support the efforts of student-athletes, but do not expect these donations to automatically turn into wins, especially in the short term of one single recent season or several recent seasons. Respondents do not necessarily support football because they played on the team, and demonstrate no clear predilection to develop closer bonds with the department through their giving.

Table 3 outlines a MANOVA comparison of giving tendencies by reported years of giving. This analysis measures whether differences existed in the giving...
motivations based on number of years of reported giving. This analysis attempted to discern whether those who gave over a longer period of time demonstrated greater affiliation to the sport property and less impact of property wins and losses. Using the Wilks’s criterion, the results suggested that those who had given for more than 25 years were less likely to have their giving impacted by program wins and losses, and that respondents that have given for fewer years are somewhat more likely to have short-term results impact their giving negatively.

Table 3 indicates the existence of difference between giving longevity and the overall group means. Those stakeholders who had fewer years of giving were more likely than those who had longer giving records to allow wins and losses to negatively impact their giving, and were also less interested in using giving to develop closer bonds with others in the stakeholder group. Stakeholders with the longest giving histories were the least likely to have wins and losses negatively impact giving. Respondents in the 11-20 year giving group demonstrated a tendency to have short-term wins positively impact giving, and were more likely to give to support the efforts of a current student-athlete.

Discussion

The intent of this research is to highlight the importance of stakeholder theory to sport marketing practitioners. As noted above, attachment and allegiance are critical factors in determining sport consumer behavior. Since these factors are basic components of what constitutes stakeholder perceptions, the connection between sport marketing practice (knowing consumer needs and wants), consumer attachment and allegiance (measures of consumer interest), and stakeholder theory (understanding behavior to inform organizational practices and decision-making) can be a highly valu-
Table 3
Comparing Giving Longevity with Impact of Program Wins

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Mean 1-10 years</th>
<th>11-20 years</th>
<th>21-30 years</th>
<th>Over 30 years</th>
<th>F statistic</th>
<th>p value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Give to see the team win more games</td>
<td>4.47 (1.88)</td>
<td>4.77 (1.22)</td>
<td>4.65 (1.19)</td>
<td>4.02b (1.77)</td>
<td>4.08</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Losing record last year, gave less</td>
<td>1.57 (1.57)</td>
<td>2.02 (1.39)</td>
<td>1.49 (1.47)</td>
<td>1.33 (1.77)</td>
<td>3.99</td>
<td>&lt; .001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winning record last year, gave more</td>
<td>1.92 (1.48)</td>
<td>1.97 (1.44)</td>
<td>1.90 (1.47)</td>
<td>1.85 (1.55)</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Losing record over last few years, gave less</td>
<td>1.76 (1.37)</td>
<td>1.89 (1.45)</td>
<td>1.77 (1.37)</td>
<td>1.67 (1.45)</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winning record over last few years, gave more</td>
<td>2.07 (1.66)</td>
<td>2.44a (1.53)</td>
<td>2.12 (1.53)</td>
<td>1.93 (1.77)</td>
<td>7.03</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team records do not impact my giving</td>
<td>5.24 (2.21)</td>
<td>5.10 (2.15)</td>
<td>5.33 (2.27)</td>
<td>5.44a (2.44)</td>
<td>8.35</td>
<td>&lt;.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Give to support the team played on</td>
<td>3.81 (2.52)</td>
<td>3.77 (2.11)</td>
<td>3.83 (2.44)</td>
<td>3.65 (2.14)</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Give to support the team of a current student-athlete</td>
<td>1.81 (1.52)</td>
<td>3.15a (1.22)</td>
<td>1.77 (1.58)</td>
<td>2.05 (1.47)</td>
<td>7.77</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Give to develop a closer bond with the program</td>
<td>4.17 (2.12)</td>
<td>4.21 (2.22)</td>
<td>4.18 (2.13)</td>
<td>4.22 (2.25)</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Give to develop a closer bond with other fans</td>
<td>2.98 (1.78)</td>
<td>2.97 (1.75)</td>
<td>2.90 (1.72)</td>
<td>2.99 (1.77)</td>
<td>4.01</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

able tool for sport marketing practitioners to employ to meet customer needs and wants. In terms of how these responses reflect stakeholder attachment to the sport property, the perceived attributes, benefits, attitudes, and values of the property are not how the stakeholders can use the event to further business pursuits, but rather valuing the athletic experience as demonstrated by the attributes and benefits of game atmosphere (pep bands, cheering students, small arena, low cost tickets). Respondents were generally neutral on the attendance factors of spending time with family (given that the mean age of the group is 63, this cohort is quite different than typical demographic segments targeted by spectator sport properties). Respondents are above all fans of the football program, but also indicate support of the school’s other programs. This would indicate a level of allegiance that encompasses more than just their main program of interest.

In general, respondents did not indicate that their decisions to give to athletic department funds were impacted by on-field outcomes. Respondents indicated that they did not expect their donations to translate into more team victories. This points to a greater allegiance to the program that would seem to indicate that their choice to be part of this stakeholder group is not predicated on an assessment of on-field outcomes. These fans have not become part of this group because they have been attracted to a winning program, and neither do they measure giving decisions in these terms. They do value wins, but not at all costs.

Implications and Conclusions
The author has endeavored to show that the application of the tenets of stakeholder theory is not only useful in understanding the role and importance of intercollegiate athletics in American higher education, but also in suggesting how an implementation of these theories can aid in the successful management of intercollegiate athletics. The stakeholder group of study here, Ivy League institution’s football season ticket holders, fit the theoretical definition of a group that has a “stake” in the performance of an organization. Relevant theory indicates that the interests of these stakeholders have intrinsic
value, and that they are of equal importance to those of other groups. Relevant theory also suggests that the study of this and other groups has managerial importance because it can determine to what and to whom managers need to listen and give attention, and that those organizations whose managers develop trusting and cooperative relationships with stakeholders will have a competitive advantage over other organizations. This research has also attempted to define how these stakeholders develop and demonstrate allegiance through the exhibition of consistently loyal behavior and resistant, persistent and influential attitudes.

The ultimate managerial importance of stakeholder theory is in the application of its tenets to predict organizational success. This research has sought to create a convergent approach to stakeholder theory, which is posited as highly adaptable as a marketing construct, to bolster the validity of the extensive amount of research performed in the areas of customer service management for both researchers and practitioners. The data above indicate that these stakeholders had a clearly established connection with the institution as an undergraduate, and in many cases, as a student-athlete. Respondents did want to see their team win, but did not demonstrate a lack of allegiance to losses with a negative change in athletic giving.

An additional contribution of this research is as a complement to the body of work dedicated to assessing connections between athletic success and increased institutional donations, and to bring together marketing and management research theory. In the context of the works cited above, this research provides a more specific picture of the giving actions of a highly vested stakeholder group. Most of the current research in this area traces a direct connection between athletic giving and athletic success, and little connection between general donations and athletic success. While this research does not seek to measure the latter, it does conclude that at this specific institution with these specific stakeholders, on-field outcomes do not impact athletic giving. These stakeholders have established and demonstrated a level of allegiance in terms of athletic giving, an activity highly valued by department managers. The Ivy League’s stated goals of concomitant athletic success and academic excellence serve of organizational success seem to be supported by the demonstrated actions of this school’s football season ticket holders. This group, through its established connections with the athletic property as undergraduates (and in many cases, as student-athletes), seems to demonstrate an acceptance of this determination of organizational success by indicting allegiance to the organization, as evidenced by giving patterns that are not influenced by on-field outcomes.

However, this is not to say that managers can expect this level of allegiance to continue without departmental cultivation efforts. Since this cohort is nearing retirement age, the attraction of new fans is imperative. For this sport property to continue to maintain the allegiance of this stakeholder group, managers should focus efforts on attracting new fans and donors from those stakeholders who share the same characteristics as those identified in this research. As indicated above, many developed their attachment through attending, and playing for, the school. Managers should seek to develop new consumers by targeting more recent graduates who demonstrated a connection with the athletic department while at the school. One promising factor here is that the last three decades has seen an increase in intercollegiate athletics participation rates (although much of this growth has come in women’s sports, a segment virtually absent - three respondents - in this cohort). Additional efforts can focus on attracting female consumers as well. To attract female fans, managers could enlist efforts similar to those utilized by professional leagues, where fans unfamiliar with the sport are given tutorials in game rules and strategy.

In terms of continuing to foster greater allegiance from the current stakeholder cohort, the research above indicates that these stakeholders enjoy the atmosphere of intercollegiate athletics, and supports the institution’s athletics in general. One way to reaffirm these connections with the group is by organizing gatherings with players and coaches. These could consist of invitations to practices and on-ice clinic sessions, opportunities to gather before and after games with players and coaches, web chats, and group trips to selected away games. Since these stakeholders established their attachment and allegiance to the program through experiences as undergraduates, interactions with individuals on each team could serve to maintain levels of allegiance with current stakeholders, and to establish allegiance with those whom attraction efforts newly attach.

Study limitations
While this research has indicated that at this specific Ivy institution, season ticket holders are not impacted in their giving patterns by on-field outcomes, these findings cannot be immediately generalized to other Division I-A, I-AA, II, or III football institutions. Since the premise of this study is an analysis based on the direct responses of institutional stakeholders, other institutions must perform similar studies with their own stakeholders to divine accurately the impact of winning and giving at their institutions. Given this caveat, it must also be stated that the effects of winning and giving are likely to vary based on the sport in question. It cannot be inferred here that football season...
ticket holders at a specific institution will act in similar ways unless direct research is undertaken. While other intercollegiate athletics sport marketing practitioners might find this research not to be immediately generalizable to their organizations, this research does verify a fundamental sport marketing canon established by Mullin et al. (2000), that the sport product is a highly uncontrollable entity, and as such, that relying on wins and losses to take care of organizational performance is a slender reed on which to lean.

References


