'Fan publics': An interdisciplinary conceptualisation of external supportive stakeholders

Melissa D. Dodd and William Kinnally
University of Central Florida

Abstract

More than ever before, individuals are empowered and encouraged to consistently communicate and engage in a variety of ways with organisations via social media. The revolutionary power of social media necessitates the re-imagining of existing stakeholder-public theoretical models of identification, segmentation, and analysis. This research takes an interdisciplinary approach that integrates the sport team identification, marketing, and public relations scholarship in a conceptualisation of the supportive stakeholder-public. A typology of the supportive stakeholder (or 'fan') is posed as well as five major propositions that integrate existing scholarship and theory for guiding future research in this area.

Introduction

The evolution of social media has enabled individuals to engage with all types of organisations in new and powerful ways (Sedereviciute & Valentini, 2011). Technorati's (2013) 'Digital influence report' found that across different platforms, 19-27% of consumers follow brands on social media to join a community of brand fans. Merriam-Webster (n.d.) defines 'fan' as "an enthusiastic devotee". Indeed, a majority of these fans are communicating and engaging with (and on behalf of) organisations in a supportive manner. Burns (2014) demonstrated that fan-focused campaigns on behalf of public relations professionals are pervasive in practice, often involving millions of individuals. For example, PepsiCo brands continue to be at the forefront of crowdsourcing, allowing fans to produce Dorito's Super Bowl ads and to create the next flavours of Mountain Dew and Lay's potato chips. Lay's recently executed its second 'Do us a flavor' contest based on the great success of the first campaign in 2012. The campaign allowed users to create and share their flavour ideas on the Lay's Facebook page via a dedicated app. Users could engage with other users' content using a special 'like' button on Facebook that read "I'd eat that". And, fans could vote for the finalists via Twitter hash tags (e.g., #SaveSriracha). There were nearly 4 million fan submissions and millions of votes were cast for the three finalists (Mitchell, 2013).

Public relations professionals have long been identified as those most capable of effectively communicating on behalf of organisations in these interactive environments that necessitate an emphasis on two-way communication (Wright & Hinson, 2014). However, the emergence of supportive audiences represents a significant shift from the types of stakeholder-publics identified in existing public relations and relevant literature. Well-regarded scholarship poses systematic criteria aimed at segmenting, prioritising, and predicting the behaviours of organisational stakeholders and publics. Seminal pieces focus on segmentation strategies surrounding linkages with the organisation (Grunig & Hunt, 1984); prioritisation strategies focused on stakeholder resources (Mitchell, Agle, & Wood, 1997); and problem situations that allow for the prediction of communicative behaviours (Kim & Grunig, 2011; Grunig, 1997). Yet, this scholarship has been narrowly focused (Kim, Ni, & Sha, 2008) and tends to overlook stakeholders who exhibit a supportive role for organisations (Bowen, Rawlins, & Martin, 2010; Rawlins, 2006). Given that the new media environment enables organisations to have greater engagement with external supportive stakeholders, it is important

to elaborate on the attributes of supportive stakeholders. It is advantageous to develop an understanding of the (1) antecedent variables that predict organisational support and (2) the communicative behaviours that result. This knowledge can be integrated into existing public relations models so that relationships with these individuals can be strategically developed.

The concept of organisational fans has been explored broadly in other disciplines such as sports and music as well as in marketing where they recognise 'brand champions'. Of particular interest is the literature surrounding sport team identification, which relies on the influence of social identity and self-categorisation theories. Much of that research focuses on the antecedents and consequences of fandom (Wann, 1997). Specifically, team identification research explains how fandom develops, identifies motives behind forming and maintaining fan associations, and describes gratifications that fans seek as a result of their involvement with a team.

Thus, the purpose of this paper is to employ an interdisciplinary approach to develop a conceptualisation of external supportive stakeholders. This research merges the public relations literature on stakeholder theory (Mitchell, Agle & Wood, 1997) and situational theories of publics and problem solving (Kim & Grunig, 2011; Grunig, 1997) with research involving sport team identification to develop a typology of the fan public. The resulting conceptualisation has implications for public relations theory and strategic practice, particularly in a social media context, which has given rise to a particular category of supportive stakeholder – the fan public. Integrating this literature is valuable because organisations regularly communicate with supportive individuals via ongoing dialogue and interactions on social media. Establishing a typology and model that addresses the interactions between organisations and their fans will provide a framework that can guide decisions about message content, prioritisation, modes of messaging, and the potential effects on fan publics.

A lack of identification for supportive stakeholders

Current theorising scarcely accounts for positive, supportive behaviours in the production and circulation of organisational information that is prevalent in the modern media landscape. Social media is used to facilitate organisational fandom and positive behaviours such as friending, following, liking, commenting, re-pinning, re-blogging, re-tweeting, and a whole host of other communicative actions wherein individuals engage with organisations and/or share organisational messages within their own social networks. Sedereviciute and Valentini (2011) explain that gauging how effectively an organisation is using social media to build relationships with stakeholders will require a better understanding of who the stakeholders are, what their needs are, and what are the best ways to communicate with them. Organisational fans (or fan publics) are supportive stakeholders who typically exist outside the organisation. Although there is literature that addresses the communication between supportive (and unsupportive) stakeholders (such as employees) and customers (e.g. Kim & Rhee, 2011), it is increasingly crucial to offer theory to practice for understanding how to develop, manage, and capitalise on the connections between organisations and their fan publics.

A foundation for fan publics

An understanding of fan publics can be built upon established public relations theories. One view of stakeholders and their relationship to organisations is evident in Mitchell et al.'s (1997) typology of stakeholders. This typology highlights three key attributes: power (ability of individuals to impose their will), legitimacy (perceptions of individuals regarding the appropriateness of the organisation's actions), and urgency (extent to which individuals require immediate attention). The more attributes a stakeholder group has, the more salient the relationship with those individuals should be for organisations. Mitchell et al. (1997) present classes and subclasses of stakeholders based on the salience organisational managers will afford them.

However, Rawlins (2006) notes that Mitchell et al.'s (1997) typology lacks identification with regard to stakeholder support.

Another perspective is evident in Grunig's situational theory of publics. The situational theory defined different types of publics based on their potential for active or passive communicative behaviours (Grunig & Hunt, 1984) and distinguished between stakeholders and active publics using a three-stage model (Grunig & Repper, 1992). From this perspective, groups of individuals move from the stakeholder stage to the public stage when they "organize around issues and seek out organizations that create those issues—to gain information, seek redress of grievances, pressure the organizations, or ask governments to regulate them" (p. 128). Grunig's (1997) model is focused on a notion of publics as being issue-oriented (namely, a problematic issue). More recently, Kim and Grunig's (2011) situational theory of problem solving (STOPS) refines the variables for analysis and expands the communicative variables in the model. Kim and Grunig (2011) proposed three communicative action categories, each of which has an active and passive dimension: (1) information acquisition; (2) information selection; and (3) information transmission.

In spite of these developments, scholarship in public relations surrounding the identification and analysis of supportive stakeholders and publics has been narrowly focused (Kim et al., 2008; Kim & Rhee, 2011), although exceptions do exist (Rawlins, 2006; Kim, et al., 2008; Sedereviciute & Valentini, 2011). Neither the stakeholder nor situational theories adequately articulate the role of a supportive or 'fan' public in public relations strategy. As Kim and Ni (2013b) state, "It is important to build a theoretical understanding of who engages in positive and negative information behaviors and produces and circulates information in and around organizations, and how and why they do so" (p. 139).

Stakeholder theory and the situational theories of publics and problem solving do recognise the role of a public's connection to the organisation (either through resource salience or issues involvement). However, our understanding of these theories can be enhanced by examining the literature focusing on supportive, fan relationships. There is a rich history of fandom research in the sport team identification literature that can provide insight into the antecedents that influence involvement (how and why) and identifies some ways in which the connection to an organisation relates to positive (or negative) information behaviour. Integrating this literature into current public relations theorising is important because organisations are regularly communicating with fans, namely via social media, wherein no typology exists and there is little guidance as to the prioritisation they should be afforded. And, perhaps most importantly, a conceptualisation of the fan public alongside existing theorising has the potential to offer predictive insight into the communicative actions these individuals may take. Thus, the concept of organisational fans as explored in other disciplines bodes well for forwarding current stakeholder-public theorising in public relations.

Sport team identification

Sport team identification is defined generally as the extent to which a fan feels a connection to a team and the team's performances are perceived as self-relevant (Wann, 1997). The comprehensive body of literature surrounding team identification focuses on the antecedents to (i.e., psychological, environmental, and team-related) and consequences of (i.e., affective, psychological, and behavioural) sport team identification.

There are several distinguishing characteristics important to defining 'sport fans'. First, they have a vested interest in a team or athlete (Wann, 1995, 1997). Of course, this may appear obvious. However, it is valuable to contrast sport fans with sport spectators. Whereas the spectator's primary reason for engaging with the sport (e.g., attending an event or experiencing them via the media) is the experience itself, the sport fan's primary reason for engagement is the actual game or match. Sport fans are invested and involved in the sporting environment and, therefore, have an impact on the event (Kenyon, 1969; McPherson, 1975). Last, sport

fans are highly identified, that is, they feel psychologically connected to a team (e.g. Hirt, Zillmann, Erickson, & Kennedy, 1992).

Team identification is a central attribute of the sport fan, and it is important to understand how people become identified with teams/players and how that relationship is managed and measured. Identification with teams is malleable and dynamic (Branscombe & Wann, 1991; Spears, Doosje, Ellemers, 1999). Researchers have posed seven primary motives to team identification that predict the propensity to become engaged (i.e. attend games, read news stories, etc.) with the team: entertainment, eustress, escape, aesthetics, self-esteem, social interaction, and group affiliation (Wann, Tucker, & Schrader, 1996; Wann, Melnick, Russell & Pease, 2001).

The antecedent motives for fanship can be organised into three, broader or more abstract, categories (e.g. Hirt & Clarkson, 2011) that can serve as a foundation for understanding how team identification might inform the current conceptualisation of a supportive stakeholder. These categories include: validation, pleasure, and arousal. Validation can be used to describe the benefits that stem from social interaction, group affiliation, and boosts in self-esteem that have been observed with team identification. For example, team identification has been linked to a personal sense of self-esteem (i.e. feeling of self-worth), which is important to our daily lives (e.g. Baumeister, Heatherton, & Tice, 1993; Rosenberg, 1979). Sporting events also provide an opportunity to socialise with friends and family in arenas, bars, restaurants, etc. (e.g. Dietz-Uhler, Harrick, End & Jacquemotte, 2000). A desire to spend time and build connections with others is attractive to many who identify with sports teams. Additionally, the shared group affiliation also implies shared cognitive schemas that reflect an intersection of shared knowledge around which conversation can ensue. These affiliations help establish a sense of uniqueness, a way of distinguishing oneself from others (Wann & Branscombe, 1995). The team affiliation satisfies an innate need to belong while providing separation from others – a balance that is suggested by the optimal distinctiveness theory (Brewer, 2003).

Pleasure encompasses the entertainment and aesthetics motives. The entertainment motive is the most widely examined (e.g. Gantz, 1981; Gantz & Wenner, 1991, 1995; Wann, 1995). It also is the most common reason fans give for watching the contests. The entertainment or enjoyment they receive from the contests is strongly linked to their dispositions toward the teams in the contest and the outcomes of the competition. Further, the motive of aesthetics focuses on appreciation of the performance observed in the contests (e.g. Smith, 1988; Wann, 1995). Fans of both genders are attentive to the skill and quality of play exhibited in the course of a contest (Wann & Wilson, 1999). This motive category also includes recognition that the unexpected is a part of the aesthetic attraction. Fans appreciate risk-taking and novelty in the performance (Zillmann, Bryant, & Sapolsky, 1989).

Finally, arousal can be used to refer to benefits associated with eustress and escape. Eustress (often described as the 'thrill of victory') describes the physiological arousal and excitement the fan feels while watching a contest (Wann, et al., 2001). For example, male fans experience an increase in testosterone after their favourite team wins (Bernhardt, Dabbs, Fielden, & Lutter, 1998), and highly identified fans can experience more physiological arousal while viewing news reports compared with those who are moderately identified (Potter & Keene, 2012). The escape motive is similar, yet has distinct characteristics. Fans commonly report that engaging in the team-related activities enables them to get away from the monotony of their lives (e.g. Gantz, 1981, Wenner & Gantz, 1998).

Team identification motivations and fan publics

Of the three categories of motives, validation perhaps has the greatest potential for application beyond the sports arena. It encompasses the notion of self-esteem and addresses how engagement with an organisation that leads to vicarious experience of success can enhance a person's involvement with an organisation and influence behaviour such as sharing positive news among their

various social networks. This category also incorporates social interaction/ companionship and suggests that identification is a path to developing or strengthening social networks. Engaging in these networks provides opportunity for sharing information and enthusiasm. Participating in such networks provides ongoing opportunity to develop and broaden cognitive schemas associated with the team or organisation. As important, yet often overlooked, the social networks are venues for building and expressing affective associations with the team or organisation. Group affiliation also appears within the envelope of validation because it is a determination of the need for belonging as well as the extent to which belonging to the group helps establish a sense of distinctiveness between the group and 'others'. Stakeholders can publicly affiliate themselves with a variety of organisations via social media (for example, Facebook page likes or the re-posting of organisational content as a sign of support).

The category of pleasure encompasses the appreciation of aesthetics associated with the team and performance. Of course, the thrill of watching and encouraging an athletic performance is a source of entertainment. The performance is the primary output of a team and the quality of that output factors into the sense of entertainment or enjoyment. But enjoyment can be derived from elements that take place 'off the field'. Organisations that take some risks and generate novel, surprising, and interactive online experiences also entertain and inspire their fans. Of course, ancillary or representative products like logos and colours are also part of the aesthetic appeal and inspire affective reactions. Coca-Cola, for example, realises a high identification through aesthetic appeal wherein stakeholders purchase merchandise and collectibles.

Last, arousal (including eustress and escape) describes how the physiological experience of witnessing a performance and experiencing the surprise that is a natural part of the sports experience motivates fans. Engagement with the organisation also offers the opportunity to immerse oneself in another world, if for a brief period, adopt different (less mundane) routines in preparation for, and participation in, a campaign initiative or event. PepsiCo uses crowdsourcing to immerse stakeholders in their online crowdsourcing initiatives and social media campaigns.

Typology of brand support

Sport team identification research dovetails nicely with stakeholder-public theories because it offers insight into the antecedent motivations for why external public stakeholders may develop bonds with organisations and demonstrate supportive attributes. It clearly identifies how validation, pleasure, and arousal play a role in developing and maintaining organisational identification. This connection is more valuable if it is possible to articulate how these fan publics are likely to engage in positive (or negative) information behaviours. One way to connect organisational identification with communication behaviours is by borrowing a typology associated with the concept of the brand champion that appears in marketing literature (Ind, 2001; Ind, 2013; Wallace & de Chernatony, 2009). Although, the term 'brand champion' is commonly used in reference to employees of an organisation, the typology is well suited for application to external publics.

The brand champion literature proposes there are four categories of individuals (i.e., employees) based on the extent of their brand support. The typology is presented as a continuum from most-to-least supportive. *Brand champions* are individuals who are the most supportive of the organisation and are active 'storytellers of brand ideas'. On the opposite end of the continuum, *brand saboteurs* are active, however, in a non-supportive manner (Ind, 2001). The middle-range consists of two categories that are more passive in nature: brand agnostics and brand cynics. *Brand agnostics* are interested in the organisation, but not committed to it, while *brand cynics* represent those who are not involved with the organisation (Ind, 2001; Wallace & de Chernatony, 2009).

This typology can be adapted for broad use in public relations in such a way that helps to organise and clarify the variety of external publics who might identify with an

organisation. Such a typology provides a bridge between our understanding of the bonds between organisations and publics and the potential information activities they may engage in. Given that the term 'brand champion' is commonly used to describe employees, we will adopt the term 'organisational champion' to be applied to a wider range of stakeholders including fan publics.

Theoretical integration and propositions for future research

Based on this review of the literature, it is evident that existing theory in public relations can be adapted to account for the fan public or organisational fan. We have proposed that existing interdisciplinary scholarship can inform our understanding of the supportive 'fan' public or stakeholder, particularly in a social media context. Thus, we offer five major propositions as a framework for our conceptualisation and future research.

Proposition 1: Validation, pleasure, and arousal serve as antecedent motivation variables. The more validation, pleasure, and arousal a person derives from their association with an organisation, the stronger the organisational identification and the greater the stakeholder support. In contrast, less validation, pleasure, and/or arousal corresponds with less organisational identification and less stakeholder support.

Strong evidence for this proposition is evident in the sport team identification literature. We propose that organisational champions perceive a strong connection to the organisation and are invested in the performance of the organisation (whether their connection is formal or informal). Organisational champions create and share content on behalf of organisations via social media. For organisational champions, the antecedent motivations detailed in the team identification literature are high. In the category of validation, organisational champions receive a boost in self-esteem by vicariously experiencing the public successes of the organisation. They display their affiliation with the organisation publicly (including through social media). They are aware of an affiliated organisation's opponents and revel in the marginalising of the 'others' whenever possible. In the category of pleasure, the champions recognise the quality, skill, and/or beauty associated with the organisation's output. In the category of arousal, the champions may forge a connection to an organisation that plays a role in their ability to escape from their daily routines (perhaps through the organisation's product, marketing devices like contests, or engagement with the organisation). They may also experience a sense of excitement in response to new products or initiatives.

Next, organisational agnostics are generally supportive of the organisation, but not committed to it. In a social media context, these individuals likely represent the majority of fans, followers, and subscribers of organisational sites. They may engage with the organisation on a regular basis, but are more opportunistic in their relationship. In other words, these individuals serve a supportive role, but with the expectation that they will receive something in return. In terms of the categories associated with fan motives, agnostics are likely to experience moderate levels of validation in association with the organisation. They may interact for social purposes but not experience increases in self-esteem via the company's successes. They may display their associations with the company in a visible fashion but in a manner that requires few resources like time or effort. They may engage in contests and entertaining content via organisation's social media sites and experience pleasure and/or arousal from the activity.

Organisational cynics are not involved with the organisation. They represent the most passive stakeholders and are unlikely to experience any of the antecedent motivations. These stakeholders are not motivated to engage with the organisation. We would expect no social pressures to engage with the organisation, no sense of affiliation with others who are engaged with the organisation, and no deriving of self-esteem benefits. They are generally not connected to the organisation via

6

social media, but if they do interact with the organisation, they experience weak or no sense of validation through those interactions.

Last, organisational saboteurs pose a challenge in that they are active, however, in a non-supportive manner. The team identification literature may identify these stakeholders as fans of the organisation's rivals. The saboteurs may identify with an opposing organisation or simply oppose the organisation. One outgrowth of a strong identification with an opponent is the potential to experience in-group bias and derogate out-group members. Such bias can result in negative or harsh communication behaviour like 'flaming' in social media. These activities can be manifestations of the need to maintain a positive self-image and are more likely to occur under conditions where there are perceived threats such as when organisations that the saboteurs dislike are promoting successes.

Empirical testing of Proposition 1 in a social media context can be performed by adapting validated team identification measures and using them alongside relational measures from the public relations literature (cf. Kim & Ni, 2013a; Hon & Grunig, 1999). Other antecedent variables that may offer guidance in segmentation are well discussed across disciplines (e.g., demographics and psychographics), and it's worth noting that social media analytics facilitate the ease of use of these variables.

To this point, we have relied on the marketing and team identification literature to present a typology of the fan public along a continuum from supportive to non-supportive. Organisational champions were conceptualised as the most supportive stakeholder group, and saboteurs were the least supportive. Agnostics and cynics are in the mid-range of support along the continuum. The following proposition moves our conceptualisation into communicative behaviours on behalf of this typology of stakeholders: active and passive. Notably, this conceptualisation does not include a problem or issue (situational consideration), yet draws on the existing situational theoretical scholarship in its conceptualisation of active and passive communicative action. This extension contributes to the utility of the situational theories in public relations.

> **Proposition 2**: There is a U-shaped curvilinear relationship between the extent of the stakeholder's support and their level of communicative activity. Both the champions and saboteurs are the most active communicators. The agnostics and cynics are the most passive.

Situational theories offer a 'typology' of stakeholders that includes non-publics, latent publics, aware publics, and active publics regarding a specific issue (Grunig & Hunt, 1984). Using a summation method, Kim (2011) explains how researchers may categorise stakeholders according to the work of Grunig and Hunt (1984) across three problems/issues and based on their communicative activity. We propose that stakeholders have a range of prior experiences with the organisation that influence their knowledge of and feelings toward an organisation, reflecting the referent criteria component of Grunig's early configuration of the situational theory (see Sha, 2006; Sriramesh, Mohan, & Wei, 2007; and Illia, Lurati, & Casalaz, 2013). A majority of these experiences are occurring today through social media engagement. This typology of the supportive stakeholder articulates the important antecedents that inform their point of reference regarding the organisation. Therefore a summation method can be used to determine who falls in the mid-range as opposed to the poles on the continuum of support. The individuals at the poles are likely to process information about the organisation differently from those in the mid-range (e.g. Potter & Keene, 2012) and engage in active or passive communicative actions, as informed by situational theories (most notably, Kim & Grunig, 2011). Thus,

> **Proposition 3**: Most and least supportive stakeholders (organisational champions and saboteurs) are more likely to engage in active communicative actions: information seeking (3a), information forwarding (3b), and information forefending (3c).

Proposition 4: Mid-range stakeholders (organisational agnostics and cynics) are more likely to engage in passive communicative actions: information attending (4a), information sharing (4b), and information permitting (4c).

As related to the extent of stakeholder support, research is still needed to inform communicative behaviours described in the situational and stakeholder theoretical literature. Specifically, future conceptualisation in this area may focus on the integration of power and legitimacy constructs from Mitchell et al. (1997) because it informs the perceived criticalness of stakeholders' relationship with the organisation. However, in a social media context, there is limited research that may provide evidence for these propositions. Kim and Lee (2014) examined 'cybercoping' via blogs (that is, online coping strategies) as related to the communicative actions (information seeking and information forwarding) of patients with chronic diseases. Thus, measures contextualised in social media do exist and can be used to provide further empirical evidence for these propositions.

Finally, Mitchell et al. (1997) argue that criticality is a necessary component of the stakeholder's claim to the organisation. And, stakeholders may assess their relationship with the organisation as critical for a variety of reasons. These reasons may include real or perceived benefits on behalf of the stakeholder as part of serving a supportive role for the organisation. Thus, we argue for a feedback loop resulting from communicative actions that impact antecedent motivations for support (or non-support) of organisations.

Proposition 5: Communicative actions (active or passive) impact the antecedent motivations for supporting an organisation.

This may be considered a particularly necessary area for examination as existing scholarship connects communicative actions to specific outcomes (e.g., coping outcomes in Kim & Lee, 2014); however, the outcomes of communicative behaviours may very well serve as a feedback mechanism that informs the antecedent motivational variables that precede communicative action in the current conceptualisation. There is a dearth of literature that examines communicative actions as predictor versus outcome.
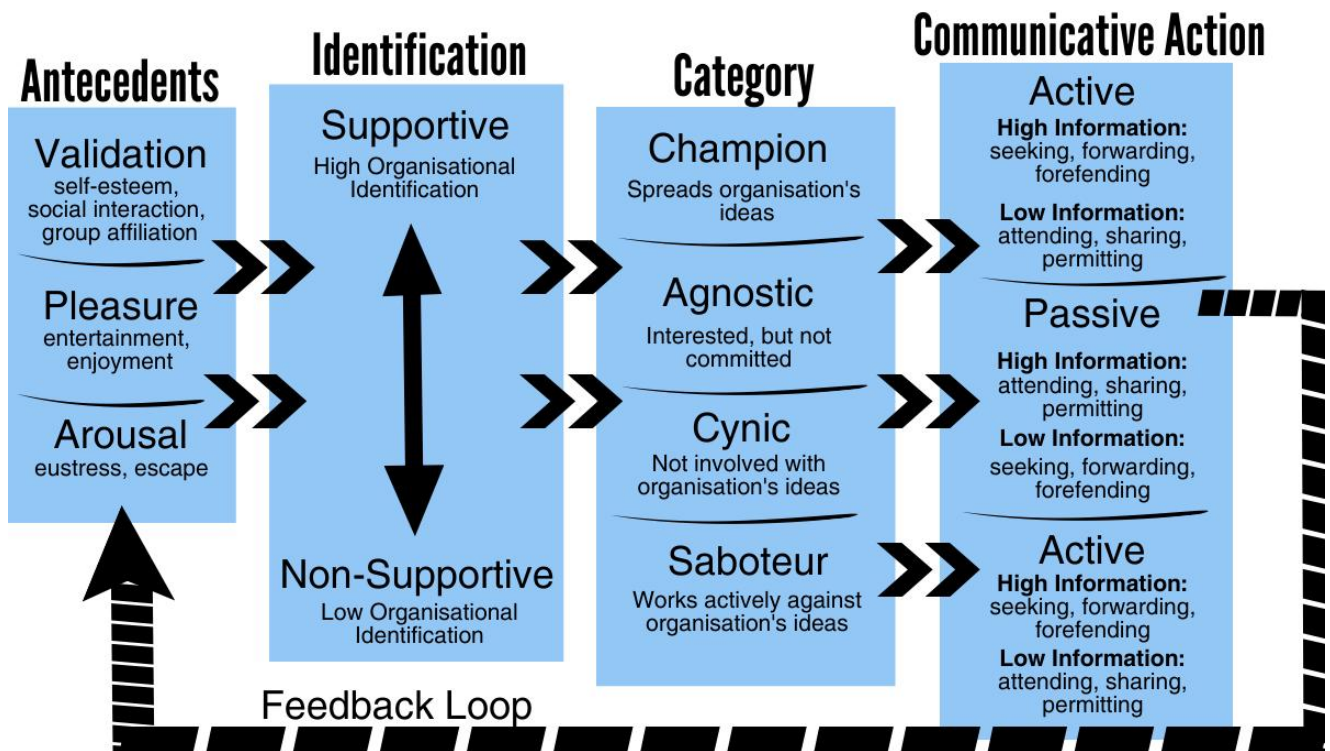
A model of fan publics

In addition to the propositions posed through an interdisciplinary integration of research, we offer a visual representation of our proposed framework for the fan public. **Figure 1** (see over page) details how the antecedents and motivations derived from the sport team identification literature overlap with the marketing literature surrounding brand champions. As projected in the first proposition, the greater the extent of validation, pleasure, and arousal, the greater the extent of stakeholder support (and vice versa). The attributes continuum arrow depicts how high- versus low-team identification should demonstrate supportive versus non-supportive stakeholder behaviours, respectively.

Likewise, the attributes continuum coincides with the marketing literature in order that supportive versus non-supportive stakeholder behaviours are typified with organisational champions as the most supportive and organisational saboteurs as the least supportive stakeholders. These typological categories should likewise demonstrate the highest and lowest levels of antecedents and motivations, respectively. Organisational agnostics and cynics are passive stakeholder categories, falling in the mid-range of both organisational support and antecedent-motivational behaviours.

Next, the situational theories of publics are used to predict the communicative actions of these active and passive stakeholder-publics. At opposite ends of the support continuum, organisational champions and organisational saboteurs are the most active stakeholders. We propose that individuals in these roles are engaged in high levels of information seeking, information forwarding, and information forefending. Similarly, individuals in these active roles are engaged in low levels of information attending, information sharing, and information permitting communicative actions.

Figure 1: A typology and conceptualisation of supportive stakeholders

Antecedents

Validation
self-esteem, social interaction, group affiliation

Pleasure
entertainment, enjoyment

Arousal
eustress, escape

Identification

Supportive
High Organisational Identification

Non-Supportive
Low Organisational Identification

Feedback Loop

Category

Champion
Spreads organisation's ideas

Agnostic
Interested, but not committed

Cynic
Not involved with organisation's ideas

Saboteur
Works actively against organisation's ideas

Communicative Action

Active
High Information: seeking, forwarding, forefending
Low Information: attending, sharing, permitting

Passive
High Information: attending, sharing, permitting
Low Information: seeking, forwarding, forefending

Active
High Information: seeking, forwarding, forefending
Low Information: attending, sharing, permitting

For passive individuals falling in the mid-range – organisational agnostics and cynics – the opposite is true. We propose that as passive stakeholders, according to the situational theories, individuals in these roles are engaged in low levels of information seeking, information forwarding, and information forefending. And, these passive individuals are engaged in high levels of information attending, information sharing, and information permitting communicative actions. In short, these propositions and the proposed model allow us to move from the antecedents and motivations level to predict communicative actions among stakeholder-publics, namely supportive stakeholders who have been neglected in the existing literature.

Last, it is important to note as referenced in Proposition 5 that our conceptualisation and model proposes a feedback loop that moves from communicative actions back to the antecedents and motivations level. This means that we predict communicative actions, whether active or passive, will reinforce or introduce new incentives such as validation, pleasure, and arousal (or a lack thereof) that influence the extent of stakeholder support. For example, if

in their active support of Pepsi on social media, stakeholders continue to derive benefits in the form of entertainment by participating and being rewarded for participation in the organisation's latest online campaign, this reinforces supportive organisational behaviour. Thus, these individuals are likely to continue that behaviour. Likewise, it is worth considering that negative reinforcement of active supportive behaviour would likely result in a decline in such behaviour by individuals.

Conclusion

The goal of this conceptual work was to explicate the external supportive stakeholder (fan publics) using an interdisciplinary approach to integrate these individuals into existing stakeholder-public theories. This research merges the available public relations literature with the sport team identification and marketing labels to propose a typology of the organisational fan. Taking this kind of interdisciplinary approach helped identify several important antecedents of sport fans that appear to have some value when integrated into an existing marketing typology and stakeholder-public theories. The typology of a

fan that is proposed herein suggests the core foundations of fan motives influence the strength and valence of the individual's association with the organisation (identification). The strength and valence of the organisational identification can loosely align with the marketing designations of stakeholders ranging from the organisational champions to saboteurs. These designations appear to join effectively with the various active and passive communicative behaviours described in the situational theory of problem solving. Finally, these activities, as described in the fandom literature, can subsequently feed back into the motives to maintain and even strengthen the identification with the organisation. The resulting model of stakeholder interaction has strategic implications for public relations theory and practice, particularly in a social media context.

Social media are powerful tools for the public relations professional. They offer convenient, generally inexpensive, and engaging opportunities for organisations to interact with and foster relationships with stakeholders at a time when people feel empowered to and have the desire to communicate and engage organisations. Public relations is a strategic communication process that builds mutually beneficial relationships between organisations and their publics. This model of fan publics helps frame relationships with these emergent audiences via a more thorough understanding of their motivations for engagement and potential resultant behaviours, namely via communicative actions.

References

Baumeister, R. F., Heatherton, T., & Tice, D. (1993). When ego threats lead to self-regulation failure: Negative consequences of high self-esteem. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 64, 141-156.

Bernhardt, P. C., Dabbs, J. M., Fielden, J. A., & Lutter, C. D. (1998). Testosterone changes during vicarious experiences of winning and losing among fans at sporting events. *Psychological Behavior*, *65*(1) 59-62.

Branscombe, N. R., & Wann, D. (1991). The positive social and self-concept consequences of sport team identification. *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*, *15*, 115-127.

Bowen, S. A., Rawlins, B., & Martin, E. (2010). *An overview of the public relations function.* New York, NY: Business Expert Press, LLC.

Burns, K. S. (2014, March). *Embracing advocates and influencers: Practices of top social media brands.* Paper presented at the International Public Relations Research Conference, Miami, FL.

Brewer, M. B. (2003). Optimal distinctiveness, social identity, and the self. In M. R. Leary & J. P. Tangney (Eds.). *Handbook of self and identify* (pp. 480-491). New York, NY: Guilford.

Dietz-Uhler, B., Harrick, E. A., End, C., & Jacquemotte, L. (2000). Sex differences in sport fan behavior and reasons for being a sport fan. *Journal of Sport Behavior*, *23*, 219-231.

Digital influence report. (2013). Retrieved from Technorati Media, http://technoratimedia.com/report/2013-dir/brand-digital-messaging-going-social/

Fan [Def. 3]. (n.d.). In *Merriam-Webster Online,* Retrieved from http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/fan.

Gantz, W. (1981). An exploration of viewing motives and behaviors associated with television sports. *Journal of Broadcasting*, 25, 263-275.

Gantz, W., & Wenner, L. A. (1991). Men, women, and sports: Audience experiences and effects. *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media*, 35, 233-243.

Gantz, W., & Wenner, L. A. (1995). Fanship and the television viewing experience. *Sociology of Sport*, 12, 56-74.

Grunig, J. E. (1997). A situational theory of publics: Conceptual history, recent challenges and new research. In D. Moss, T. MacManus, & D. Vercic (Eds.), *Public relations research: An international perspective* (pp. 3–48). London: International Thomson Business Press.

Grunig, J. E., & Hunt, T. (1984). *Managing public relations*. New York, NY: Holt, Rinehart & Winston.

Grunig, J. E. & Repper, F. C. (1992). Strategic management, publics, and issues. In J. E. Grunig (Ed.), *Excellence in public relations and communication* (pp. 31-64). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.

Hirt, E. R., & Clarkson, J. J. (2011). The psychology of fandom: Understanding the etiology, motives, and implications of fanship. In L. R. Kahle & A. G. Close (Eds.). *Consumer behavior knowledge for effective sports and event marketing* (pp. 59-85.) New York, NY: Routledge.

Hirt, E. R., Zillmann, D., Erickson, G. A., & Kennedy, C. (1992). Costs and benefits of allegiance: Changes in fans' self-ascribed competencies after team victory versus defeat. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 63, 724-738.

Hon, L. C. & Grunig, J. E. (1999). *Guidelines for measuring relationships in public relations.* Gainesville, FL: Institute for Public Relations.

Illia, L., Lurati, F. & Casalaz, R. (2013). Situational theory of publics: Exploring a cultural ethnocentric bias. *Journal of Public Relations Research, 25,* 93-122.

Ind, N. (2001). *Living the brand: How to transform every member of your organization into a brand ambassador.* New York, NY: Kogan Page.

Ind, N. (2013). The organic view of the brand: A brand value co-creation model. *Journal of Brand Management, 20*(8), 670-688.

Kenyon, G. S. (1969). Sport involvement: A conceptual go and some consequences thereof. In G. S. Kenyon (Ed.), *Sociology of sport* (pp. 77-99), Chicago, IL: The Athletic Institute.

Kim, J.-N. (2011). Public segmentation using situational theory of problem solving: Illustrating summation method and testing segmented public profiles. *PRism, 8*(2).

Kim, J.-N., & Grunig, J. E. (2011). Problem solving and communicative action: A

situational theory of problem solving. *Journal of Communication*, 61, 120–149.

Kim, J.-N. & Lee, S. (2014). Communication and cybercoping: Coping with chronic illness through communicative action in online support networks. *Journal of Health Communication: International Perspectives, 1,* 1-20.

Kim, J.-N. & Ni, L. (2013a). Two types of public relations problems and integrating formative and evaluative research: A review of research programs within the behavioral, strategic management paradigm. *Journal of Public Relations Research, 25*(1), 1-29.

Kim, J.-N., & Ni, L. (2013b). Conceptualizing publics and constructing public relations theory: The situational theory of problem solving and its new research. In K. Sriramesh, A. Zerfass, & J.-N. Kim (Eds.). *Public relations and communication management* (pp. 126-142.) New York, NY: Routledge.

Kim, J.-N., Ni, L. & Sha, B.-L. (2008). Breaking down the stakeholder environment: Explicating approaches to the segmentation of publics for public relations research. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly, 85*(4), 751-768.

Kim, J.-N., & Rhee, Y. (2011). Strategic thinking about employee communication behavior (ECB) in public relations: Testing the models of megaphoning and scouting effects in Korea. *Journal of Public Relations Research, 23*(3), 243-268.

McPherson, B. (1975). Sport consumption and the economics of sport consumerism. In D. W. Ball & J. W. Loy (Eds.). *Sport and social order: Contributions to the sociology of sport* (pp. 243-275). Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.

Mitchell, E. S. (2013, February 19). Lay's 'Do Us a Flavor' contest: Customers vote for their favorite chips. *PRNewser.* Retrieved from https://www.mediabistro.com/prnewser/lays-do-us-a-flavor-contest-customers-vote-for-their-favorite-chips_b57844

Mitchell, R. K., Agle, B. R. & Wood, D. J. (1997). Toward a theory of stakeholder identification and salience: Defining the principle of who and what really counts. *The Academy of Management Review, 22*(4), 853-886.

Potter, R. F., & Keene, J. R. (2012). The effect of sports fan identification on the cognitive processing of sports news. *International Journal of Sport Communication*, 5, 348-367.

Rawlins, B. (2006). *Prioritizing stakeholders for public relations.* Gainesville, FL: Institute for Public Relations.

Rosenberg, M. (1979). *Conceiving the self.* New York, NY: Basic Books.

Sedereviciute, K. & Valentini, C. (2011). Towards a more holistic stakeholder analysis approach. Mapping known and undiscovered stakeholders from social media. *International Journal of Strategic Communication, 5*(4), 221-239.

Sha, B.-L. (2006). Cultural identity in the segmentation of publics: An emerging theory of intercultural public relations. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, *18*, 45–65.

Smith, G. J. (1988). The noble sports fan. *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*, *12*, 54-65.

Spears, R., Doosje, B., & Ellemers, N. (1999). Commitment and the context of social perception. In Ellemers, R. Spears, & B. Doosje (Eds.), *Social identity* (pp. 59-83). Oxford, UK: Blackwell.

Sriramesh, K., Mohan, S., & Wei, D. L. K. (2007). The situational theory of publics in a different cultural setting: Consumer publics in Singapore. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, *19*(4), 307–332.

Wallace, E. & de Chernatony, L. (2009). Exploring brand sabotage in retail banking. *Journal of Product and Brand Management, 18*(3), 198-211.

Wann, D. (1995). Preliminary validation of the sport fan motivational scale. *Journal of Sport & Social Issues*, *19*, 377-396.

Wann, D. (1997). *Sport psychology*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Wann, D., & Branscombe, N. R. (1995). Influence of level of identification with a group and objective knowledge and subjective beliefs. *International Journal of Sport Psychology*, 34, 223-235.

Wann, D. L., Melnick, M. J., Russell, G. W., & Pease, D. G. (2001). *Sport fans: The psychology and social impact of spectators*. New York, NY: Routledge Press.

Wann, D. Tucker, K. B., & Schrader, M. P. (1996). An exploratory examination of the factors influencing the origination, continuation, and cessation of identification with sports teams. *Perceptual and Motor Skills*, *82*(3), 995-1001.

Wann, D. & Wilson, A. M. (1999). The relationship between aesthetic fan motivation and preferences for aggressive and nonaggressive sports. *Perceptual and Motor Skills*, *89*, 931-934.

Wenner, L. A., & Gantz, W. (1998). Watching sports on television: Audience experience, gender, fanship, and marriage. In L. A. Wenner (Ed.), *Mediasport* (pp. 233-251). London: Routledge.

Wright, D. K., & Hinson, M. D. (2014). An updated examination of social and emerging media use in public relations practice: A longitudinal analysis between 2006 and 2013. *Public Relations Journal*, *8*(2).

Zillmann, D., Bryant, J., & Sapolsky, B. (1989). Enjoyment from sports spectatorship. In J. Goldstein (Ed.), *Sports, games, and play* (pp. 241-278). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.

Author contact details:

melissa.dodd@ucf.edu, #407-823-5570