

AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

Aleece D. Kopczenski for the degree of Master of Science in Design and Human Environment presented on April 27, 2011.

Title: University Alumni's Purchase of University Licensed Merchandise: Exploring the Reasoning Behind Purchase Decisions

Abstract approved:

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Generating annual revenue of over \$4 billion dollars (The Collegiate Licensing Company, n.d.), the collegiate licensing presents a potential market that both apparel companies and universities can benefit from. While the collegiate licensing business is expected to increase financial resources for the participating universities and textiles and apparel companies, little is known as to why people buy university licensed merchandise. Recently university alumni have been recognized as a substantial source of financial support for university (McAlexander, Koenig, & Schouten, 2006).

In order to fill a gap in the current literature on collegiate licensing, the purpose of this study was to determine key factors influencing university alumni's purchase decisions of university licensed merchandise. Using the theoretical framework of Social Identity Theory (Hogg, 2006) as well as the Theory of Reasoned Action (Fishbein, 1975), this study aimed to examine the relationships among level of identification with a university, integration with brand community, attitude toward purchasing university licensed merchandise, subjective norm, fan loyalty, and purchase behavior of university licensed merchandise.

Online survey methods were used to examine the university alumni's purchasing behavior of university licensed merchandise. Recruitment emails containing the survey information and the link to the survey were sent to approximately 3,000 randomly selected Oregon State University alumni from the Alumni Association.

A total of 189 university alumni of Oregon State University participated in the online survey. The results showed that level of identification was positively related to brand community and also to attitude toward purchasing university licensed merchandise. Integration with brand community was positively related to subjective norm and attitude. Furthermore, brand community was a significant mediator of the relationship between level of identification and attitude. As hypothesized, fan loyalty was positively correlated with attitude. Attitude and subjective norm were found to be significant predictors of purchase behavior.

These findings provide empirical evidence to support the importance of understanding why university alumni purchase university licensed merchandise. Level of identification university alumni have towards the university they attended affected their integration into a brand community and their attitude toward purchasing university licensed merchandise. Integration into a brand community was also found to be a mediator between level of identification and attitude. Results also showed that brand community has an effect on attitude and subjective norm. Purchase behavior was found to be influenced by attitude and subjective norm. Results showed that fan loyalty was influenced by subjective norm. Both retailers and those in charge of

licensing at universities will benefit from this information. Understanding why university alumni purchase university licensed merchandise will help to target a market with a large amount of buying power, benefitting both the retailers and the universities financially. Future research in these areas will add to the currently growing research regarding university licensed merchandise.

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University Alumni's Purchase of University Licensed Merchandise:  
Exploring the Reasoning Behind Purchase Decisions

by  
Aleece D. Kopczenski

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I understand that my thesis will become part of the permanent collection of Oregon State University libraries. My signature below authorizes release of my thesis to any reader upon request.

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Aleece D. Kopczenski, Author

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTERS	Page
INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1 Overview .....	1
1.2 Problem Statement .....	2
1.3 Purpose of Study .....	3
1.4 Hypotheses .....	4
1.5 Definition of Terms.....	6
REVIEW OF LITERATURE .....	7
2.1 Overview .....	7
2.2 University Licensing .....	7
2.3 University Alumni.....	12
2.4 Fan Loyalty .....	13
2.5 Social Identity Theory.....	16
2.5.1. Social Identity .....	17
2.5.2 Social Categorization .....	17
2.5.3. Social Comparison .....	18
2.6 Fishbein’s Theory of Reasoned Action.....	20
2.6.1 Attitude.....	21
2.6.2 Subjective Norm.....	21
2.6.3 Brand Community .....	23
2.7 Hypothesis Development .....	25
METHODS .....	33
3.1 Overview .....	33
3.2 Research Design.....	33
3.3 Sample Selection.....	33
3.4 Instrument Development.....	34
3.5 Procedure.....	40
RESULTS .....	41
4.1 Overview .....	41
4.2 Demographic Characteristics .....	41



## TABLE OF CONTENTS (Continued)

	Page
4.2.1. Participants University Licensed Merchandise Experience .....	45
4.2.2. Participants Athletic Event Attendance .....	47
4.3 Exploratory Factor Analysis .....	48
4.4 Inter-Item Reliability.....	48
4.5 Hypothesis Testing.....	49
DISCUSSION .....	57
5.1 Overview .....	57
5.2 General Discussion.....	58
5.3 Implications for Retailers and Collegiate Institutions.....	64
CONCLUSION .....	67
6.1 General Conclusions .....	67
6.2 Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research .....	68
References .....	70
Appendices.....	74
Appendix A IRB Approval Page.....	75
Appendix B Recruitment Email.....	78
Appendix C Survey Questionnaire.....	80

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure	Page
Figure 2.1 Theory of Reasoned Action .....	32
Figure 2.2 Conceptual Model.....	41
Figure 4.7 Model with Significant Relationships .....	66

## LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
Table 3.1 Summary of Variables .....	46
Table 4.1: Demographic Profile of the Sample.....	52
Table 4.2: Participants University Licensed Merchandise Experience.....	54
Table 4.3: Participants Athletic Event Attendance .....	56
Table 4.4: Descriptive Statistics for Dependent Variables .....	58
Table 4.5 Correlation Matrix of the Variables .....	61
Table 4.6: Regression Analyses .....	65

# University Alumni's Purchase of University Licensed Merchandise: Exploring the Reasoning behind Purchase Decisions

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Overview

With retail sales topping 4.4 trillion dollars in 2008 (US Census Bureau, 2010), companies are continually looking for ways to make their products stand out among other products on the market. One of the ways in which textiles and apparel companies do this is by using licensing strategies such as university licensing (Park & Park, 2007). University licensing identifies a collegiate institution by using trademarks which can be defined as “any word, name, symbol, or device, or any combination thereof, used to identify and distinguish the goods or services of one entity from those of others” (Siegal, 2008, p. 6). Generating an annual revenue of over \$4 billion dollars (The Collegiate Licensing Company, n.d.), university licensing presents a large market that both retail companies and collegiate institutions can benefit from.

As education costs continue to swell, college administrators have begun to search out other sources of revenue for universities (McAlexander & Koenig, 2001). One of the revenue streams universities attempt to tap into is university alumni. According to McAlexander, Koenig, and Schouten (2006) many universities look to alumni loyal to the university as a substantial source of financial support. Alumni donations accounted for 30 percent of the \$27.85 billion given to colleges and

universities in 2009 (Council for Aid to Education, 2010). Therefore, university alumni exhibit a strong area of wealth waiting to be researched.

This study looked at a potentially important market segment (university alumni) for university licensed merchandise. The enhanced understanding of university licensed merchandise business in terms of who is purchasing and why those items are being purchased is expected to provide useful insights for universities, retailers, and manufacturers of university licensed merchandise. Gaps regarding this research area will be discussed next.

## 1.2 Problem Statement

Collegiate institutions involved in trademark licensing agreements have grown from a few in the mid-1970's to nearly 300 today (Siegal, 2008). Although the university licensed merchandise industry produces more than 4 billion dollars annually (The Collegiate Licensing Company, n.d.), there is surprisingly very little research done on university licensed merchandise. In their study about university alumni, McAlexander and Koenig (2001) found that when alumni have an enjoyable experience at the university they attended, they are more likely to wear university licensed apparel. McAlexander et al. (2006) further suggested that purchase of university licensed merchandise may be related to integration within a university brand community. Yet literature on university trademark licensing is short and reasons for alumni's purchasing university licensed merchandise have not been examined by empirical research (Park & Park, 2007). Despite a potential importance of university alumni as a valuable target market for university licensed merchandise, research gaps

exist regarding key factors for purchasing university licensed merchandise by alumni. Thus, research is needed to fill these gaps regarding shopping motivations for university licensed merchandise.

### 1.3 Purpose of Study

University alumni are a prime target for companies selling university licensed merchandise due to the large amount of buying power they possess. Universities also benefit from the licensing agreements when consumers purchase university licensed merchandise (Roush, 2005). Understanding the purchase behaviors of university alumni will benefit both companies and universities as they will be able to market specific logos and merchandise that will produce the most profit.

Therefore, the purpose of this study was to investigate primary factors influencing university alumni's purchase decision of university licensed merchandise. Using the theoretical framework of Social Identity Theory (Hogg, 2006) as well as the Theory of Reasoned Action (Fishbein, 1975), this study aimed to examine (1) how level of identification with a university influences integration with brand community and attitude toward purchasing university licensed merchandise, (2) how integration with brand community influences attitude toward purchasing university licensed merchandise and subjective norm related to purchase of university licensed merchandise, (3) how integration with brand community mediates the relationship between the level of identification toward a university and the attitude toward purchasing university licensed merchandise, (4) how attitude is related to fan loyalty,

(5) how attitude, fan loyalty, and subjective norm influence purchase behavior of university licensed merchandise, and (6) how subjective norm influences fan loyalty.

Social Identity Theory (SIT) analyzes how people perceive themselves as belonging to part of a social group (Hogg, 2006). Understanding how university alumni perceive themselves as belonging to a university alumni group will begin to help explain the motivations behind the purchase of university licensed merchandise by university alumni.

Developed by Icek Ajzen and Martin Fishbein (1975), the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) explains how behaviors are influenced. This theory discusses how a behavior can be predicted by the individual's intention to perform that particular behavior (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). Two constructs are used in this theory to establish an individual's intention: attitude and subjective norm. A third construct, brand community, was added to TRA to explain why alumni purchase university licensed merchandise.

#### 1.4 Hypotheses

##### *H1-2: Level of identification to a university*

**H1:** Level of identification toward a university will be positively related to university alumni's integration into the brand community of the university attended.

**H2:** Level of identification toward a university will be positively related to the university alumni's attitude of purchasing university licensed merchandise.

*H3-5: Integration in a Brand Community*

**H3:** University alumni's integration into the brand community of the university attended will be positively related to subjective norm.

**H4:** University alumni's integration into the brand community of the university attended will be positively related to the university alumni's attitude of purchasing university licensed merchandise.

**H5:** University alumni's integration into the brand community of the university attended will be a mediator between level of identification toward a university and attitude toward purchasing university licensed merchandise.

*H6: Fan loyalty and attitude toward purchasing university licensed merchandise.*

**H6:** Attitude toward purchasing university licensed merchandise will be positively correlated with fan loyalty.

*H7-9: Attitude, Fan Loyalty, and Subjective Norm related to the purchase behavior of university licensed merchandise*

**H7:** Attitude toward purchasing university licensed merchandise will be positively related to purchase behavior of university licensed merchandise (a: purchase frequency, b: purchase amount).

**H8:** Fan loyalty will be positively related to the purchase behavior of university licensed merchandise (a: purchase frequency, b: purchase amount).

**H9:** Subjective norm will be positively related to the purchase behavior of university licensed merchandise (a: purchase frequency, b: purchase amount).



*H10: Subjective Norm*

**H10:** Subjective norm will be positively related to fan loyalty.

1.5 Definition of Terms

The following terms will be used throughout the study:

Attitude: the way an individual views a behavior preformed, whether positive or negative (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980).

Brand Community: “group of consumers with a shared enthusiasm for the brand and a well-developed social identity, whose members engage jointly in group actions to accomplish collective goals and/or express mutual sentiments and commitments” (Bagozzi & Dholakia, 2006, p. 45).

Collegiate/University Licensed Merchandise: a product with a trademark or logo representing a college or university. The terms, collegiate licensed and university licensed merchandise are used interchangeably in this project.

Social Categorization: how individuals combined into a group represent characteristics which are similar within the group and characteristics that are different between the group and other groups or those individuals who are not in the group (Hogg, 2006).

Social Comparison: how groups are compared to each other (Hogg, 2006).

Social Identity: “the individual’s knowledge that he belongs to certain social groups together with some emotional and value significance to him of this group membership” (Tajfel, 1972, p. 292).

Subjective Norm: the way an individual perceives social pressures applied to him to perform or not perform the behavior in question (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980).

## CHAPTER 2

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

#### 2.1 Overview

The purpose of this study was to research why university alumni purchase university licensed merchandise. A review of previous literature regarding the subject area and theoretical frameworks have been discussed to provide justification for the conceptual model and hypothesis development. A summary of this review will be discussed in this chapter.

#### 2.2 University Licensing

With a revenue of \$185 billion dollars in 2009, the sports marketplace (including spectator sports, marquee sports events, major league sports franchises, etc.) is no small business (Expanded Reporting, 2009). Within the sports marketplace is one of the highest revenue producers in the licensing world- the sport licensing industry (Moorman & Hambrick, 2009). Global licensed sports merchandise brought in \$19.9 billion dollars in 2008 (Johnson, 2008). Even in a tight economy the licensing market has shown to be profitable when other retail markets are not (Facenda, 2003) and universities and colleges have taken notice of this. Over 300 universities and colleges in the United States market their rights to apparel and novelties markets (Johnson, 2008). University licensing brought in approximately \$250 million dollars in 1984 (Freifeld, 2006) and has grown to a \$4 billion dollar industry annually (The Collegiate Licensing Company, n.d.). The oldest and largest collegiate licensing company in the United States is The Collegiate Licensing Company (The Collegiate

Licensing Company, n.d.). Founded in 1981, they represent nearly 200 colleges, universities, bowl games, athletic conferences, the Heisman Trophy and the NCAA. Since its beginning the CLC has created more than \$725 million in royalties for scholarships on college campuses.

When universities license their “brand” they usually earn around 8.5% of the wholesale cost of the item and can earn around 15% for bowl game or championship merchandise (Levy, 2007). In 2003-2004 Carolina merchandise made \$90 million dollars, of which the school profited around \$3.7 million dollars in royalties (Roush, 2005). At that time they were the No. 1 school for the fourth straight year. The success of university athletic teams drives the sales of university licensed merchandise. Accomplishments such as winning national championships have a large impact on sales. For example when Louisiana State University won the 2003-2004 national championship they jumped from No. 21 to No. 5 in Collegiate Licensing’s rankings. In the 2008-2009 fiscal year The University of Texas at Austin ranked No. 1 in the College Licensing Companies (CLC) rankings for the fourth year in a row.

Many retailers benefit from selling university licensed merchandise (Kennedy, 2007, p. 93) because “It crosses all demographics and all levels of retail as well,” remarks Dave Kirpatrick, vice president of non-apparel marketing for The Collegiate Licensing Company. “You’ve got a new set of alums every year, and a new freshman class, too.” With the freshman class come key customers for collegiate merchandise: alumni and parents.

Collegiate licensed merchandise sells well year round but its strongest sales are during the holiday and football seasons (Kennedy, 2007). Mother's Day, Father's Day and Graduation are also big university sales occasions. University licensing began to take off in the 1990s when colleges recognized that they could tap in to a large revenue stream by licensing their "brand." In the 2008-2009 fiscal year t-shirts, fleece, headwear, women's apparel, and fashion apparel were the items that generated top royalty sales in the product category of apparel. Items generating top sales for the non-apparel product category were video games, domestics, home furnishings, housewares, and gift & novelties. Some of the largest growing areas in university licensed merchandise is home décor and home furnishings. "Whereas years ago you had mostly novelty gifts [in the collegiate market], now you have classic product that customers feel comfortable putting in a bedroom, kitchen or office," remarks Kirkpatrick. Since Alumni have a more disposable income than students they are willing to spend more money on quality items such as home décor. Other companies are also trying to grab part of the university licensing world too. Sports magazines such as Sports Illustrated for Kids partnered with Integrated Sports International to join the world of merchandise licensing and offer kids sporting goods, toys and accessories (Bronson, 1999). One of those toys is a video game made by Sega titled "The Road to the Rose Bowl" (Underwood, 2001). In July 2008 Victoria's Secret began their Collegiate Collection which places licensed college logos on items such as tank tops, sweats, and even underwear (Moser, 2008). The university licensing trend is hitting everything, even car tires. In 2004 All Sports Tire Co. started selling branded tires with college

teams on them (Halliday, 2004). Companies such as Chain Reaction in Gainesville Florida have started selling bicycles with college teams on them as well (Tompkins, 2007).

One concern of the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) licensed business is cultivating growth without over saturating the market (Griffin, 2007, p.12). “So many programs, with various licensees and retailers, are working well right now that there is a temptation for all involved to simply continue to expand distribution, volume, product, styles, et cetera,” says Kit Walsh, SVP of marketing at The Collegiate Licensing Company. “While that is great business in short-term, the college industry has to force itself to make decisions today that take long term brand health and sustainability in mind.” They are seeing growth in unexpected areas of merchandise. “The infant/toddler accessories category experienced over a 100 percent growth over last year’s record year, and both the tailgate and home furnishings categories saw record years for the third consecutive year.” Other categories that are growing include pet products and outdoor items.

In communities where there are no local pro teams individuals tend to support their local college team (Kennedy, 2007, p.88). “We have found that the fans are not only [students and] alums of the campuses, but also people who are kind of ‘subway’ fans, or underground fans who don’t go to the school but have always followed it,” observes Lisa Galavin, vice president of sales at OneCoast. Consumers’ passion for the college is affecting the trend. “For example, USC and Florida have top-rated teams, and Ohio State does too. However, [the University of] Georgia appeals to

Atlanta and the whole state; they have a grassroots interest in the school. The Florida Gators are huge because Florida has a great base of enthusiastic students regardless of whether or not the team is doing well,” comments Chris Herrington, president of Herrington Teed Bears. With so many different types of fans, the regional market for university licenses is large.

In a study done by Park and Park (2007), the purchase intentions of students toward university licensed merchandise was investigated. They used Social Identity Theory (SIT) and the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) to help explain why students purchase university licensed merchandise. Research from their study showed that perceived university prestige mediated the relationship between identification to the university and the attitude students feel toward purchasing university licensed apparel. While college students represent an important target market for university licensed merchandise, another important target market that has been overlooked is university alumni.

Since university alumni are potentially important market for university licensed merchandise perhaps with higher potentials for profits considering their bigger spending powers, research is warranted to why alumni purchase university licensed merchandise. While college students may possess a strong level of identification to the university they attend, the level of identification is likely to change over time once they leave the school. Thus how the level of identification to the university influence alumni's purchase decision of university licensed merchandise needs further investigation. Additionally, the concept of brand community may

provide additional insights as to why alumni purchase university licensed merchandise.

### 2.3 University Alumni

As state funding for universities decreases, administrators are increasingly looking to other resources such as alumni to help fill the financial gap (Weerts & Ronca, 2007). In 2009 alumni donations accounted for 30 percent of the \$27.85 billion dollars given to colleges and universities (Council for Aid to Education, 2010). Therefore, university alumni are a good target market for the collegiate licensed market as they have buying power. In order to reach university alumni strategically it is important to understand why they donate money and how they identify themselves as belonging to the university they attended.

Mann (2007) discusses that there are three motivations for donations to a university. The first motivation is that the donor has altruistic preference to give to the university they attended. The second motivation of giving is the idea that the individual donating may receive a benefit in exchange. The last motivation comes from the belief that by donating money they will help to improve the brand value and reputation of the university they attended and positive results will be attributed to the donor. Alumni are more likely to give if they believe the university needs their gift money or that their gift makes a difference (Weerts & Ronca, 2007).

The feeling alumni receive from an enjoyable experience at the university and institutional ties strongly impact wearing university-logo apparel, alumni function participation, and monetary donations to the university they attended (McAlexander &

Koenig, 2001). The higher the degree of alumni satisfaction with the undergraduate academic experience the more significant increases in alumni giving (Gair, 2005).

McAlexander and Koenig (2001) found that alumni relationships with the university and experiences while there, have a significant impact on the current level of association with the university. However, they noted that there is some decay over time. Gair (2005, p. 280) found that alumni participation was highly correlated with the academic variables that accentuate interpersonal relationships and interactions during college such as “relationships with faculty and staff.” Alumni participation was also found to increase as alumni satisfaction increased. In research done by Gair, alumni who partook in at least one formal student activity while they were an undergrad were 87% more likely to give and 154% more likely to participate (the level of involvement as alumni) compared to those alumni that did not partake in any formal student activity.

Alumni are more likely to give or participate more with the university when they reside in the same state as the university compared to those alumni that live out of state (Gair, 2005). Those alumni who reside in the same state view the university as an important part of the state and can make a trip to the university in a short amount of time.

#### 2.4 Fan Loyalty

University licensed merchandise is often purchased to wear at athletic events (Quick, 2007). Analyzing fan loyalty to athletic teams will help to understand why university licensed merchandise is purchased to wear to athletic sporting events. The



higher loyalty an alum feels towards their university, the more likely they may be to purchase university licensed merchandise.

One of the most important issues in spectator sport industry is increasing the number of fans that attend games as well as developing a loyal fan base (Kwak & Kang, 2007). Being able to draw people to sports events is vital to the success of an athletic program (Funk, Filo, Beaton, & Pritchard, 2009). Putting on university sports events is becoming more and more expensive (Koo & Hardin, 2008). In fact many collegiate athletic departments do not make enough money to support their programs, forcing them to use events as a revenue source. Therefore, it is crucial to understand why individuals consume sports in order to bring in the most revenue possible.

Sports fans come together to cheer for their favorite teams to succeed and enemies to be defeated (Quick, 2007, p. D1). Fans will do a mirage of things such as wear licensed apparel, paint their bodies, or decorate their cars and then watch as athletes compete. Quick calls this a “great escape from reality in modern times.” He claims that it does not matter what sport is being played, fans will flock to them. According to Dr. Josh Brown, a psychologist at the Medical University of South Carolina’s Institute of Psychiatry, being loyal to a team is about “being part of something larger than yourself.” Win or lose, an individual who is loyal to a sports team or political party will stand by their group.

The aspect of being part of a larger group is important to sports fans. Murrell and Dietz (1992) found that individuals view sports teams positively and even in some cases attend more games when they have high levels of collective self-esteem and

group differentiation. Sports fans will make an effort to strengthen their relationship with university aspects, such as athletic teams of that university, by performing behaviors and formulating attitudes if they feel that others view their university as high in status.

Fans identify the most with college and professional football, then college basketball and professional baseball, with professional basketball being the lowest sport identified with (Wann, Dolan, McGeorge, & Allison, 1994). Individuals perceiving that they are able to influence the outcome of an athletic event are positively related to the level of identification. If fans feel that they are able to affect the game then they are more likely to attend. Wann et al. also found that respondents believed they had a higher influence on college teams compared to professional teams. Sports spectators have negative reactions when their team loses and positive reactions when their team wins. However, the level of identification moderated these effects. If identity to the team was low then negative postgame emotions were less intense if their team lost. If their team won the reactions still remained less intense. Those with high team identity to the team experienced emotions such as sadness, anger, and discouragement if their team lost. Overall Wann et al. found that successful teams had fans that reported higher levels of identification. However, the level of identification was not influenced by the outcome of the game.

The BIRG (basking in reflected glory) effect has an effect on self-image and self-presentation (Fisher & Wakefield, 1998). When an individual is connected to a successful group they are able to project distinctive and positive information about

themselves: they are winners because they associate themselves with a winning team. In contrast individuals who belong to an unsuccessful group may deemphasize or avoid group performance as the platform for identifying with that group. For example fans may downplay their team's amount of wins and losses or their school's ranking if poor. Individuals who belong to these unsuccessful groups place less importance on other's performance perceptions of the group. Individuals may also indentify with a sports team if they feel like they have a connection with key players of the team, regardless of how well the team performs. Individuals will identify with a team if the group characteristics project a positive self-image. Fisher and Wakefield also found that identification with a group leads to behaviors that also correspond to those with a group-based identity for both groups that are successful and unsuccessful. Individuals who highly identify with a group also performed behaviors to establish or maintain their connection with the group such as wearing t-shirts, jackets, or being vocal in a game setting.

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The following two theoretical frameworks are used to identify potential factors that influence university alumni's purchase behaviors of university licensed merchandise.

### 2.5 Social Identity Theory

Social Identity Theory (SIT) is the analysis of how people perceive themselves as belonging to part of a social group (Hogg, 2006). Stets and Burke (2000, p. 225) define a social group as "a set of individuals who hold a common social identification or view themselves as members of the same social category." In order to be considered

a group there should be three or more people who view themselves as having shared attributes that set them apart from other people (Hogg, 2006).

SIT was first introduced by Henri Tajfel (Hogg and Terry, 2000) who defined the concept of social identity as “the individual’s knowledge that he belongs to certain social groups together with some emotional and value significance to him of this group membership” (Tajfel, 1972, p. 292). He then went on to consider how self concept is related to intergroup relations (Hogg & Terry, 2000). When members of a group (individually or collectively) interact with another group or members in another group relating to their group identification, intergroup behavior exists (Sherif, 1966). The study of this intergroup behavior led to the creation of SIT as a formally stated theory. (Tajfel & Turner, 1986).

There are three basic and interconnected concepts to SIT-social identity, social categorization, and social comparison (Bennett & Sani, 2004).

#### *2.5.1. Social Identity*

Social identity, as earlier defined, relates to the knowledge a person possesses regarding their placement in a social category or group (Hogg & Abrams, 1988). Identifying oneself within a group, and therefore acquiring a social identity, is simultaneous with the process of social categorization (Bennett & Sani, 2004).

#### *2.5.2 Social Categorization*

Social categorization moves from the social identity of an individual to how those individuals combined into a group represent characteristics which are similar within the group and characteristics that are different between the group and other

groups or those individuals who are not in the group (Hogg, 2006). Bennett and Sani (2004) describe it as taking the social environment and placing it in to different social categories. These social categories create a system so that an individual can determine their place in society. Categorizing a person as part of a group changes how they are seen (Hogg, 2006). Instead of seeing them as an individual, they are now seen as part of a group and are therefore perceptually depersonalized. This means the individual is now viewed as having the characteristics of a category. Stets and Burke (2000) claim that there is a consequence to social categorization in that it accentuates the perceived similarities between the group members themselves and the differences between the members of the group and out-group members. Viewing out-group members as having similarities and belonging to the same group is referred to as stereotyping (Hogg, 2006). Self-stereotyping can also exist when an individual views themselves in terms of characteristics of the in-group. Self-categorization in turn creates conformity, trust, and solidarity within a group.

### *2.5.3. Social Comparison*

The last concept to SIT, social comparison, relates to how comparisons are made among groups (Hogg, 2006). The social group that the individuals belong to are part of a structured society that can only exist when there are other contrasting groups (Hogg & Abrams, 1988). Tajfel argues that “the characteristics of one’s group as a whole (such as its status, its richness or poverty, its skin color or its ability to reach its aims) achieve most of their significance in relation to perceived differences from other groups and the value connotations of these differences” (Tajfel, 1981, p.45).

Thus, because social identity evaluates who one is (Hogg, 2006), in-group members strive to have differences or distinctions from out-groups that are positive (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Hogg (2006, p. 122) claims that this is “why groups compete to be both different and better-why they struggle over status, prestige, and distinctiveness.” Members of larger, more powerful groups typically have a positive social identity while a negative social identity may be bestowed upon members of a group that is subordinate (Bennett & Sani, 2004). This is especially true if the dominant group’s principles are accepted. Thus, the powerful groups attempt to maintain their positive identity while the subordinate groups must either accept the dominance of the larger group or work to improve their social identity.

Group identity is important in human behavior (Brewer, 1991). From these research findings we can surmise that SIT is useful when researching individuals’ social identities and or social groups such as belonging to a university alumni group. SIT can help to explain how alumni identify themselves with other alumni from the same university. It also can help to explain how individuals arrive at a social identity (Stets & Burke, 2000) as well as how groups relate with each other (Sherif, 1966).

Combining the concepts of social identity, social categorization, and social comparison resulted in a sound theory to describe the different steps involved in belonging to a group (Bennett & Sani, 2004). A person should be examined on an individual basis in order to understand their self-conception in relation to belonging to a group as well as their motives of associating themselves with a particular group. A consumer who has graduated from a university should first be looked at individually in

an effort to understand their association with other university alumni. Social categorization is beneficial as it helps individuals decide which group they may wish to belong to (Bennett and Sani, 2004) by exposing the similarities and differences of those belonging to the group (Hogg, 2006). An individual can then look at a group and assess their own personal characteristics to align themselves with the best fitting group. As Tajfel (1981) discussed, members feel significant when they perceive that they are different from other groups and find value in those differences.

This study aimed to look at the perceived value of being integrated into a brand community (i.e. belonging to a university alumni group). University alumni may align themselves with other alumni from the same university in an effort to distinguish themselves from other alumni at another university.

## 2.6 Fishbein's Theory of Reasoned Action

The Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) was originally introduced by Icek Fishbein in 1967 (Fishbein, 1967) and was later developed farther by Icek Ajzen and Martin Fishbein (1975) in an effort to predict and understand the behavior of an individual (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). The TRA assumes that individuals are rational and logically use the information that is available to them. This theory also assumes that individuals perform behaviors under volitional control, or that an individual performs a behavior because they choose to do so. The TRA states that behaviors are not difficult to predict but in fact are quite simple. Fishbein and Ajzen argue that an individual's intention to perform a particular behavior is the best predictor as to whether or not they will. According to Ajzen (1991, p. 181) "intentions are assumed to

capture the motivational factors that influence a behavior; they are indications of how hard people are willing to try, of how much of an effort they are planning to exert, in order to perform the behavior.” He also states that when the intention is stronger to participate in the behavior, the performance is more likely. Ajzen and Fishbein (1980) use two constructs to establish an individual’s intention: attitude and subjective norm (A model of the Theory of Reasoned Action is provided, Figure 2.1).

#### *2.6.1 Attitude*

Attitude is the way an individual views the behavior preformed, whether positive or negative (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). Park and Park (2007) explain two indicators of attitude: (a) perceived results of a particular behavior define behavioral beliefs and (b) the personal outcome evaluation of these results. An individual will decide that performing the behavior is positive or negative, that they approve or disapprove of performing the behavior (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). For example, the behavior of purchasing a university licensed t-shirt maybe be evaluated as favorable to some university alumni while other university alumni may have an unfavorable attitude toward this behavior. They will then decide whether or not purchase the t-shirt.

#### *2.6.2 Subjective Norm*

Ajzen and Fishbein (1980, p. 14) define subjective norm as “the person’s perception of the social pressures put on him to perform or not perform the behavior in question.” They note that subjective norm is the person’s perception of what others think about the performance or nonperformance of a specific behavior but does not



necessarily reflect what others actually think the individual should do. However, when the individual perceives that those who are important to him feel they should perform the behavior, the intention of the individual to perform the behavior is more likely. The same holds true to the opposite effect, if the individual feels that those important to them do not think they should perform the behavior, they will usually not intend to do so. Therefore, if a university alum feels that others important to him think that he should purchase university licensed merchandise then he will be more likely to have the intention to purchase the merchandise. On the other hand if he feels that those important to him do not think that he should purchase university licensed merchandise, he will be less likely to have the intention to purchase the merchandise.

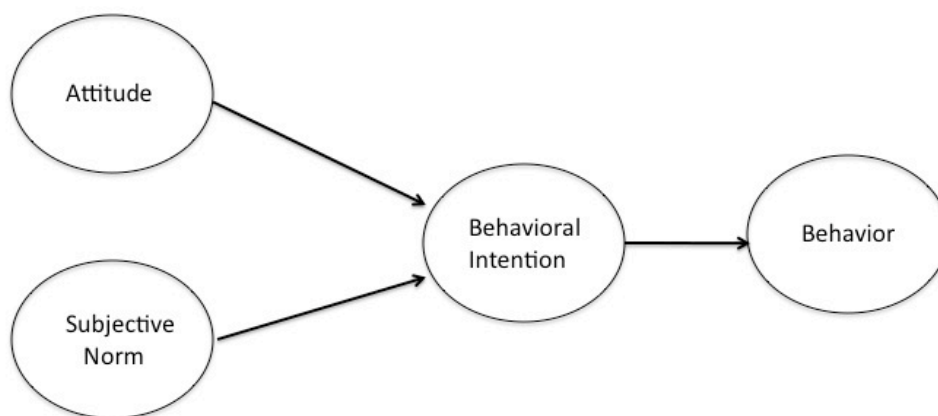


Figure 2.1. Theory of Reasoned Action

While the TRA has supported a wide variety of research, it also attracts a good amount of criticism as well (Sparks & Shepherd, 1992). One of the critiques of the TRA lies in the assumption that the theory encompasses all close predictors of behavior regarding human social behavior (Langdridge, Sheeran, & Connolly, 2007).

However, Langdrige et al. (2007) argue that behavior can be affected by extraneous variables. In a specified behavior, a preference of an individual's attitude or subjective norm may be affected by these extraneous variables, or when the behavior is formed the variables may affect the corresponding weight attached to attitude versus subjective norm. Over the past 10 to 15 years researchers have added additional variables to the TRA to improve the predictive validity of the theory. An example of this is brand community. In the context of the study examining university alumni's purchase behaviors related to university licensed merchandise, the concept of brand community is expected to help explain the effect of how individuals make decisions when integrated in a brand community.

### *2.6.3 Brand Community*

A brand community is a collective group of people that are not geographically bound but are specialized based on their constructed set of social relationships among one another brought together in admiration of a brand (Muniz Jr. & O'Guinn, 2001). Specialization occurs due to the group being centered around a branded good or service. A university is a branded institution due to the fact that universities maintain an array of different services and products that exhibit their name (McAlexander, Schouten, & Koenig, 2004).

Behaviors such as donations, referrals to colleges, alumni group engagement, and continuing education participation can be aided by an individual's association in a brand community (McAlexander et al. 2006). Bagozzi and Dholakia (2006) looked at social identity of the brand community as a variable to explain participation in brand

communities by members. They found that group behavior can be influenced by three parts of social identity in regards to brand community: the individual being able to identify themselves as belonging to the brand community, feeling that they belong to the brand community, and perceiving their significance in belonging to the brand community. An individual's identification with the brand can be aided by their level of social identification with the brand community. However, they also found that an individual's participation and association with the community can be a predecessor to their identification with the brand.

In a study discussing how brand community is built, McAlexander et al. (2002) performed ethnographic research on the community of Jeep and Harley Davidson owners. They noted that consumers usually purchase a branded product with the help of other users. Therefore an individual may consume the product and the brand due to the influence of social support from these connections. Consumers place high importance on brand communities as a place to look for information about the brand and discuss it with other members of the community (Muniz Jr., & O'Guinn, 2001). Exit barriers to communities can be a reason for members to stay (McAlexander, Schouten, & Koenig, 2002). In the case of a Jeep or Harley Davidson owner, the individual's relationship with other Jeep or Harley Davidson owners might be affected if they were to choose another brand.

## HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

### ***H1-2: Level of identification to a university***

Social Identity Theory (SIT) can help to explain how university alumni perceive themselves as belonging to the group of other university alumni. Since social identity evaluates who one is (Hogg, 2006), identification with a group will help an individual evaluate who they are. As discussed above, Bagozzi and Dholakia (2006) found that group behavior can be influenced by three parts of social identity in regards to brand community. An individual needs to be able to identify themselves as belonging to the brand community, feel that they belong to the brand community, and feel that belonging to the brand community gives them significance. It is reasonable to expect that an individual will feel as though they belong to the brand community (i.e. university alumni) when they have a high level of identification to the university they attended. As they attended the same university as other university alumni, they will feel as though it is important for them to belong to the brand community. Therefore, the following hypothesis was developed:

***H1: Level of identification toward a university will be positively related to university alumni's integration into the brand community of the university attended.***

Park and Park (2007) found that attitude toward university licensed apparel purchases was influenced by identification to a university indirectly through perceived university prestige. As SIT explains, an individual's social identity is how the individual perceives himself belonging to a social group, and belonging to that group

has emotional and value of significance to him (Tajfel, 1972). If they view the university as prestigious then they may have more desire to highly identify with the university. In order to show their level of identification to the university they need some kind of identifier such as wearing a university licensed sweatshirt or placing a university licensed bumper sticker on their car. Individuals may be more likely to purchase a product or membership that will show their affiliation to the group when they highly identify with the group (Bhattacharya, Rao, & Glynn, 1995). Therefore, the following hypothesis was developed:

***H2:** Level of identification toward a university will be positively related to the university alumni's attitude toward purchasing university licensed merchandise.*

### ***H3-5: Integration in a Brand Community***

Brand community has been added as a variable to the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA). This variable focuses on how individuals may associate themselves as belonging to part of a community. Brand community has been defined as a “group of consumers with a shared enthusiasm for the brand and a well-developed social identity, whose members engage jointly in group actions to accomplish collective goals and/or express mutual sentiments and commitments” (Bagozzi & Dholakia, 2006, p. 45). As McAlexander et al. (2002) noted, consumers seek help from other members of the brand community when making a purchase. It is reasonable to expect that when an individual belongs to a group, they will feel certain pressures of belonging to that group. A university alum may feel that in order to belong in the

group with other university alumni they will need to perform certain behaviors. These may be such behaviors as donating money to the university, attending university events, or purchasing university licensed merchandise. An alum may purchase university licensed merchandise such as a t-shirt to wear because he knows that other members of the group would view him positively. Therefore, the following hypothesis was developed:

***H3:** University alumni's integration into the brand community of the university attended will be positively related to subjective norm.*

As stated earlier McAlexander et al. (2006) found that behaviors such as the purchase of university licensed merchandise can be explained by the integration an alum experiences within university brand community. Cultivating a personal association to the university brand and its personality is an important aspect of integrating into the brand community. One of the ways an alum can be associated with other university alumni is by purchasing university licensed merchandise. When they purchase a university licensed t-shirt and wear it around other members of the brand community they may have a sense of pride that they can be identified to the university and the brand community of university alumni. An individual that feels a high level of association with the brand community (i.e. university alumni) may purchase more merchandise to identify with that brand community. It is logical to expect that the more a university alum feels integrated with the university they attended, the more likely they are to have a positive attitude toward purchasing university licensed merchandise.

It is also posited that integration with brand community is a mediator of the relationship between identification with the university and attitude towards purchasing university licensed merchandise. When an alum identifies with the university, he or she is more likely to be integrated with university community, and this brand community integration with the university may lead to positive attitude toward purchasing university licensed merchandise. Therefore, the following hypotheses were developed:

***H4: University alumni's integration into the brand community of the university attended will be positively related to the university alumni's attitude toward purchasing university licensed merchandise.***

***H5: University alumni's integration into the brand community of the university attended will be a mediator between level of identification toward a university and attitude toward purchasing university licensed merchandise.***

***H6: Fan loyalty and attitude toward purchasing university licensed merchandise***

Kwak and Kang (2007) found that consumers attended more games each season, followed their team more in the media, and were more loyal to their team when they highly related with their team followers' image. Those who identified more with their team had significantly higher team loyalty. They had a higher intention to re-attend athletic events, and were more price resistant than those who identified less with their team. It is logical to think that if a fan has a high loyalty to their team then they will also have a positive attitude toward purchasing team licensed merchandise. If a university alum attends university athletic events they also may have a more positive

attitude toward purchasing university licensed merchandise. For instance if a university alum has a positive experience purchasing a university licensed t-shirt and then wears it to a university athletic sporting event and also has an enjoyable time at the event, he or she may have a more positive attitude toward purchasing university licensed merchandise. Therefore, the following hypothesis was developed:

***H6:** Attitude toward purchasing university licensed merchandise will be positively correlated with fan loyalty.*

***H7-9: Attitude, Fan Loyalty and Subjective Norm related to the purchase behavior of university licensed merchandise***

When university alumni are looking at merchandise in a store, online or in a catalog they will perform one of two behaviors, they will either purchase the item or not purchase the item. Attitude is the way the individual views purchasing the item, whether positively or negatively (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). According to the TRA, attitudes are a function of beliefs. When an individual believes that a positive outcome will come from performing a given behavior (i.e. purchasing university licensed merchandise), they will have a favorable attitude toward performing the behavior. Park and Park (2007) found that purchase intention via the internet or retail store was positively affected by attitude toward university licensed merchandise. Given that behavioral intention is a reliable predictor of actual behavior (Bagozzi, 1982), it is reasonable to expect that attitude toward purchasing university licensed merchandise is positively related to purchase behavior. Purchase behavior in this study was



operationalized as the purchase frequency and purchase amount of university licensed merchandise in the last twelve months.

Since university licensed merchandise is often purchased to wear at athletic events (Quick, 2007), looking at fan loyalty will help to explain why university alumni purchase university licensed merchandise. If a university alum purchases a t-shirt and wears it to a university athletic event and has a positive experience at the event, he or she may be more likely to purchase more university licensed merchandise as well as have a higher level of fan loyalty. As they purchase more merchandise and have a positive experience with their purchase they may develop a strong fan loyalty.

Even if the university alum feels that purchasing an item would make themselves happy, they may be influenced by what they perceive others will think about them purchasing an item. Subjective norm is how the individuals feel others will think about them performing or not performing a behavior (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). When an individual feels that others who are important to him or her think they should perform the behavior then the intention of the individual to perform the behavior is more likely. If the individual feels that others who are important to him or her think they should not perform the behavior then they will usually not intend to perform the behavior. If a university alum feels that others important to him or her think that he or she should purchase university licensed merchandise then they may be more likely to have the intention to purchase university licensed merchandise. Therefore, the following hypotheses were developed:

**H7:** *Attitude toward purchasing university licensed merchandise will be positively related to purchase behavior of university licensed merchandise (a: purchase frequency, b: purchase amount).*

**H8:** *Fan loyalty will be positively related to purchase behavior of university licensed merchandise (a: purchase frequency, b: purchase amount).*

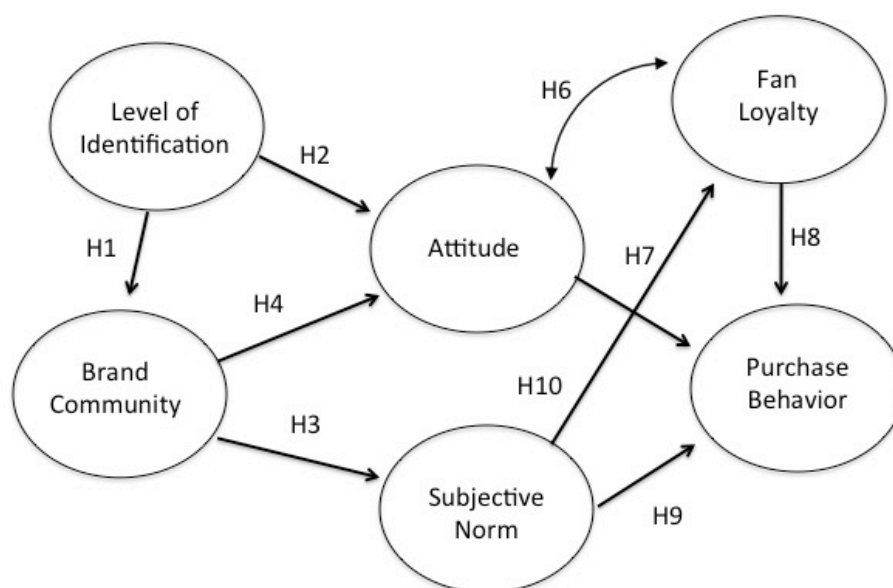
**H9:** *Subjective norm will be positively related to purchase behavior of university licensed merchandise (a: purchase frequency, b: purchase amount).*

**H10: Subjective Norm**

As discussed above subjective norm is how the individuals feel others will think about them performing or not performing a behavior (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). Often university alumni watch university athletic events with others who may feel strongly one way or the other about a particular university athletic team. If a university alum feels that others important to him or her think that he or she should have a strong fan loyalty then they may be more likely to have a stronger fan loyalty. Therefore, the following hypothesis was developed:

**H10:** *Subjective norm will be positively related to fan loyalty.*

Figure 2.2 Conceptual Model



H5: Predicting Brand Community as a mediator between Level of Identification and Attitude

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODS

#### 3.1 Overview

The purpose of this study was to investigate why university alumni purchase university licensed merchandise. More specifically, this study used Social Identity Theory (SIT) (Tajfel, 1972) and the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) (Fishbein, 1967) to explain university licensed purchasing by university alumni. Hypotheses were tested based on data collected through a survey administered to university alumni. The specific methods used for this study will be explained in this chapter.

#### 3.2 Research Design

Online survey methods were used to examine the university alumni's purchasing behavior of university licensed merchandise. The survey measured their level of identification with the university, integration in brand community, attitude toward purchasing university licensed merchandise, the level of subjective norm they feel, their loyalty to the university's sports team, and actual purchasing behavior of university licensed merchandise.

#### 3.3 Sample Selection

An email containing the survey information and the link to the survey was sent to approximately 3,000 randomly selected Oregon State University alumni from the Alumni Association on behalf of the researcher. Participants did not receive compensation for their participation.

University alumni were chosen for the study because they are current purchasers of university licensed merchandise and are already a source of revenue for universities with potentials for the further growth (McAlexander & Koenig, 2001). In 2009 they donated \$8.3 million to universities (Council for Aid to Education, 2010), making the way they spend their money worth studying. Researching university alumni will provide insight for both retailers and universities on how to better market university licensed merchandise.

### 3.4 Instrument Development

The survey questionnaire consisted of seven sections measuring university identification, integration with a brand community, attitudes toward purchasing university licensed merchandise, subjective norm, fan loyalty, purchasing behavior of university licensed merchandise, and demographic questions.

#### *Integration within a Brand Community*

The university alumni's integration within a brand community was measured using fourteen items with a 7-point Likert-type scale (1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree). The scale consists of five sub-dimensions measuring relationships between customers and products, customers and brands, customers and company, customers and customers (feelings owners have about other owners). This scale was adopted from Schouten, McAlexander, and Koenig (2007); McAlexander et al. (2006); and Belk (1988). The reliability for this scale for customer/product was .90, customer/brand was .88, customer/company was .88, and customer/customer was .94.

### University Identification

University identification was measured using six items adopted from Park and Park (2007), and Mael and Ashforth (1992). The scale used a 7-point Likert-type scale (1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree). The reliability for this scale was .87 (Park & Park, 2007).

### Subjective Norm

Subjective norm was measured using five items with a 7-point Likert-type scale (1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree) adopted from Park and Park (2007) and Taylor and Todd (1995). The reliability for this scale was .85 (Park & Park, 2007; Taylor & Todd, 1995).

### Attitude toward Purchasing University licensed Merchandise

Attitude toward purchasing university licensed merchandise was measured using six 7-point semantic differential scale items developed by Stayman and Batra (1991) (e.g., disagreeable-agreeable, unpleasant-pleasant, negative-positive). The reliability for this scale was .96 (Stayman & Batra, 1991).

### Fan Loyalty

Fan loyalty was measured using four items with a 7-point Likert-type scale (1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree) adopted from James (2001), McPherson (1976), and Smith, Patterson, Williams, and Hogg (1981).

### Purchasing Behaviors

In order to assess university alumni's actual purchasing behaviors of university licensed merchandise, three items were developed. These items measured monetary

spending on university licensed merchandise, frequency of purchases, and type of merchandise they had purchased. For example, the question for how often they purchase university licensed merchandise was “within the last twelve months, how often have you purchased Oregon State University licensed merchandise?” The question for what type of merchandise they purchase was “Please list any Oregon State University licensed you have purchased in the last twelve months (i.e. t-shirt, sweatshirt, bumper sticker)?

Additionally, three items using a 7-point Likert-type scale (1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree) were developed to measure alumni perception of their own purchasing behavior of university licensed merchandise. For example, the statements included “I consider myself a heavy purchaser of Oregon State University” “I frequently buy Oregon State University merchandise” “I am likely to buy Oregon State University licensed merchandise”

#### Demographic Questions

Finally, the following demographic information was collected in the last section of the questionnaire: age, gender, ethnicity, year they graduated from college, at what age they graduated from college, and the college they graduated from within the college.

Questions about participants’ attendance to university sporting events were also developed. For example, the questions asked how often they attend sporting events and what kinds of sporting events they attended in the past 12 months.

Table 3.1 Summary of Variables

Variables	Items	Alpha
<i>Brand Community</i> :Schouten, McAlexander, & Koenig (2007),* McAlexander, J. H., Koenig, H. F., & Schouten, J. W. (2006).* Belk (1998)	<p>Product</p> <p>1. I would not be where I am today without my degree from Oregon State University.</p> <p>2. My degree from Oregon State University gives me a sense of accomplishment.</p> <p>3. I am proud of my degree from Oregon State University</p> <p>4. I learned many new skills at Oregon State University</p> <p>5. The abilities I have from Oregon State University are important to me</p> <p>Brand</p> <p>6. I do not value the Oregon State University heritage</p> <p>7. I would recommend Oregon State University to my friends</p> <p>8. Oregon State University is of the highest quality</p> <p>9. I am part of BEAVER NATION</p> <p>Company</p> <p>10. Oregon State University does not understand my needs</p> <p>11. Oregon State University cares about my opinions</p> <p>Other Owners</p> <p>12. I have met wonderful people because of Oregon State University</p> <p>13. I feel a sense of kinship with other Oregon State University alumni</p> <p>14. I do not enjoy spending time with other Oregon State University alumni</p>	<p>.90</p> <p>.88</p> <p>.88</p> <p>.94</p>



Variables	Items	Alpha
<i>University Identification</i> :Park & Park (2007)*, Mael & Ashforth (1992)	1. I am very interested in what others think about Oregon State University 2. Oregon State University's successes are my successes 3. When someone criticizes Oregon State University it feels like a personal insult 4. When I talk about Oregon State University I usually say "we" rather than "they" 5. When someone praises Oregon State University, it feels like a personal compliment 6. If a story in the media criticized Oregon State University, I would feel embarrassed	.87
<i>Subjective Norm</i> :Park & Park (2007)* Taylor & Todd (1995)*	1. People important to me think I should purchase Oregon State University licensed apparel 2. People who influence my behavior think I should purchase Oregon State University licensed apparel 3. People whose opinions I value prefer me to purchase Oregon State University licensed apparel 4. Almost all of my friends think purchasing Oregon State University licensed apparel is a good idea 5. Some of my friends recommended I should try on Oregon State University licensed merchandise	.85
<i>Attitude</i> :Stayman & Batra (2007)*	1. Bad/Good 2. Unfavorable/Favorable 3. Disagreeable/Agreeable 4. Unpleasant/Pleasant 5. Negative/Positive 6. Dislike/Like	.96
<i>Fan Loyalty</i> :James (2001), McPherson (1976), Smith, Patterson,	1. I attend Oregon State University athletic games. 2. I watch Oregon State University athletic games on television.	

Variables	Items	Alpha
Williams, Hogg (1981)	3. I read about Oregon State University athletic games. 4. I talk with others about Oregon State University athletic games.	
<i>Purchase Behavior</i>	1. Within the last twelve months, how frequently have you purchased Oregon State University licensed merchandise? 2. Within the last twelve months, how much have you spent on Oregon State University licensed merchandise?	

\* represents orientation of reliability for scales

### 3.5 Procedure

This research was reviewed and approved by the Behavior and Social Science Human Subjects Institutional Review Board at Oregon State University (Appendix A). The data were collected during Winter Term 2011, over a three week period of time. Approximately three thousand Oregon State University alumni email addresses were used by the Alumni Association at Oregon State University. An invitation email was first sent to prospective participants by the Alumni Association on behalf of the researcher. The invitation email gave the introduction and contact information of the researcher, explained the purpose of study and gave directions to complete the study with an URL to the online survey site. When participants click on the survey URL, they viewed a cover page, informed consent, and survey questionnaire. There was no compensation for the participation in the survey. A reminder email was sent out after the invitation email.

## CHAPTER 4

### RESULTS

#### 4.1 Overview

The purpose of this study was to investigate why university alumni purchase university licensed merchandise. This study examined the relationships among level of identification to a university attended, integration with university brand community, attitude toward purchasing university licensed merchandise, subjective norm, fan loyalty and purchase behavior of university licensed merchandise. The mediating role of brand community between level of identification and attitude was also examined. In this chapter, the demographic information of the participants was discussed first. Then, the inter-item reliability for the scales used was reported. The hypothesis testing were presented using simple regressions and correlation analysis. All statistical analyses were conducted using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS version 18).

#### 4.2 Demographic Characteristics

The demographic profile of the sample can be seen in Table 4.1 The invitation email was sent to approximately 3,000 university alumni followed by a reminder email. Of those asked to participate, 193 responded to the online questionnaire, resulting in a response rate of 6.4%. After deleting 4 unusable responses, a total of 189 responses were used for data analysis.

Among the 189 usable responses, ages ranged from 22-89 years old ( $M = 47.62$ ,  $SD = 16.23$ ). While age was fairly equally distributed among respondents, over

80% of participants were over the age of 50. Gender was fairly equally distributed among respondents with 82 being female (43.4%) and 107 being male (56.6%). In regards to ethnicity the respondents were predominately white, European American (88.4%), with other respondents being 4.2% Asian, Asian American, 1.6% Hispanic/Latino, .5% American Indian or Alaskan Native, .5 % black or African American, 4.2% being other and none being Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander. The year respondents graduated from college ranged from 1950 to 2011 with a larger percent graduating between 2000-2011 (32.8%), 1970-1979 (22.2%), and 1980-1989 (18.5%). Of the respondents 140 graduated from Oregon State University with an undergraduate degree (74%), 31 with a graduate degree (16.4%), and 11 with both a undergraduate and graduate degree (5.8%). The majors of the participants varied and were classified into 14 colleges such as Health and Human Sciences (11.1%), Business (16.9%), Science (15.9%), Veterinary Medicine (1.1%), and Liberal Arts (14.8%). See Table 4.1 for further descriptions.

Table 4.1: Demographic Profile of the Sample ( $N = 189$ )

Descriptions		Frequency	Percentage*
<i>Age</i>	20-29	34	18.0
	30-39	29	15.3
	40-49	32	16.9
	50-59	45	23.8
	60-69	33	17.5
	70-79	7	3.7
	80-89	6	3.12
<i>Gender</i>	Male	107	56.61
	Female	82	43.39
<i>Ethnicity</i>	White European American	167	88.4
	Asian, Asian American	8	4.2
	Hispanic / Latino	3	1.2
	American Indian or Alaskan Native	1	.5
	Black or African American	1	.5
	Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	0	0
	Other	8	4.2
<i>Year Graduated from College</i>	1950-1959	12	6.4
	1960-1969	14	7.4
	1970-1979	42	22.2
	1980-1989	35	18.5
	1990-1999	20	10.6
	2000-2011	62	32.8
<i>Age Graduated from College</i>	19-29	161	85.2
	30-39	14	7.4
	40-49	7	3.7
	50-59	1	.5
	60-69	0	0
	70-79	0	0
	80-89	0	0
<i>Degrees Received from OSU</i>	Undergraduate	140	74.0
	Graduate	31	16.4
	Both	11	5.8

Descriptions		Frequency	Percentage*
<i>College**</i>	Agriculture	13	6.9
	Business	32	16.9
	Education	8	4.2
	Engineering	34	18.0
	Forestry	9	4.8
	Graduate	4	2.1
	Health & Human Sci.	21	11.1
	Honors	2	1.1
	Liberal Arts	28	14.9
	Oceanic & Atmos. Sci.	2	1.1
	Pharmacy	7	3.7
	Science	30	15.9
	Vet. Med.	2	1.1
	Other	10	5.3

Note: \* Some percentages may not be equal to 100 due to missing data

\*\* Some respondents identified with more than one College

#### 4.2.1. Participants University Licensed Merchandise Experience

In the last twelve months respondents main university licensed purchase items were shirts (23.8%), sweatshirts (15.3%) and hats (12.7%). Locations of purchases included the OSU bookstore (51.9%), athletic events (32.2%), and online retailers (16.4%). In the last twelve months 42.9% of respondents had not purchased any merchandise while 29.6% purchased items two to three times and 14.3% purchased an item once. The amount spent on merchandise within the last twelve months ranged from less than \$50 (55.0%) to more than \$800 (.5%). See Table 4.2 for further descriptions.

Table 4.2: Participants University Licensed Merchandise Experience ( $N = 189$ )

Descriptions		Frequency	Percentage*
<i>Merchandise Purchased Within Twelve Months</i>	Clothing and Accessories (448)	82	43.3
	Shirts	45	23.8
	Sweatshirts	29	15.3
	Jackets, Vests	17	9.0
	Hats	24	12.7
	Children's Apparel	7	3.7
	Scarves, Socks, Gloves	11	5.8
	Shorts, Pants	12	6.3
	Auto Accessories (4413)	9	4.8
	Books (451)	3	1.6
	Kitchenware (4539)	3	1.6
	Home Décor (422)	4	2.1
	Sports Equipment (451)	2	1.1
	Novelties/Gifts (4532)	12	6.4
<i>Location of Purchase **</i>	Thrift Stores (4533)	5	2.7
	Athletic Events	28	14.8
	OSU Bookstore	98	51.9
	Online Retailers (4541)	31	16.4
	Department Stores (4511, 4529)	21	11.1
	Mass Merchandiser 4529	61	32.3
	Other	29	15.3



Descriptions		Frequency	Percentage*
<i>Frequency of Merchandise Purchases within Twelve Months</i>	None	81	42.9
	Once	27	14.3
	2-3 times	56	29.6
	4-5 times	12	6.4
	6-7 times	7	3.7
	8-9 times	2	1.1
	10-12 times	2	1.1
	13 + times	0	0.0
	Less than \$50	104	55.0
<i>Amount spent on Merchandise within Twelve Months</i>	\$51-\$100	18	9.5
	\$101-\$200	34	18.0
	\$201-\$400	18	9.5
	\$401-\$600	1	.5
	\$601-\$800	0	0
	More than \$800	1	.5

\* Some percentages may not be equal to 100 due to missing data

\*\* Four digit numbers in parenthesis represent North American Industry Classification System (NAICS).

#### 4.2.2. Participants Athletic Event Attendance

Respondents attended a variety of athletic events including football (32.8%), basketball (14.3%), Gymnastics (6.9%), and Baseball/softball (7.4%). Respondents attended these events 2-3 times (9.0%), 6-7 times (5.3%), and 4-5 times (4.8%) in the last twelve months. See Table 4.3 for further descriptions.

Table 4.3: Participants Athletic Event Attendance ( $N = 189$ )

Descriptions		Frequency	Percentage*
<i>Events Attended</i>	Football	62	32.8
	Basketball	27	14.3
	Gymnastics	13	6.9
	Baseball/Softball	14	7.4
	Volleyball	3	1.6
	Wrestling	1	.5
	Soccer	5	2.7
	Cage Fight	2	1.1
	Homecoming	1	.5
<i>Frequency of Attendance within Twelve Months</i>	None	31	16.4
	2-3 times	17	9.0
	4-5 times	9	4.8
	6-7 times	10	5.3
	8-9 times	5	2.7
	10-12 times	4	2.1
	13 + times	6	3.2

\* Some percentages may not be equal to 100 due to missing data

### 4.3 Exploratory Factor Analysis

The concept of brand community was measured using 14 items developed by Schouten et al. (2007); McAlexander et al. (2006); and Belk (1998). In order to determine dimensions of the brand community used in this study, an exploratory factor analysis was conducted by employing maximum likelihood estimation and varimax rotation. Based on the Scree plot, a one-factor solution was deemed most appropriate. One factor of brand community explained 45.13% of the variance and had an eigenvalue of 6.31. All 14 items were kept based on all loadings being .50 or greater for each item. Therefore one factor with 14 items were identified.

### 4.4 Inter-Item Reliability

To test the reliability of the scales used in the questionnaire, Cronbach's Alphas were calculated (Table 4.4). For Brand Community the items were reliable with an alpha score of .90. The six level of identification items were found to be reliable with an alpha of .82. Subjective norm items were found to be reliable with an alpha of .95. For attitude, the six items were reliable with an alpha of .97. Finally, the four fan loyalty items resulted in a reliability alpha of .83. As a result of these inter-item reliabilities, the scales were combined and averaged to form five individual variables.

Table 4.4: Descriptive Statistics for Dependent Variables ( $N = 189$ )

Variable	Cronbach's <i>alpha</i>	Min.	Max	Mean	<i>SD</i>
Brand Community	.90	2.36	6.00	4.96	.58
Level of Identification	.82	2.50	6.00	4.37	.65
Subjective Norm	.95	1.00	7.00	3.07	1.58
Attitude	.97	2.00	7.00	5.64	1.10
Fan Loyalty	.83	1.00	7.00	5.03	1.09

#### 4.5 Hypothesis Testing

##### *H1-2: Level of identification to a university*

Hypotheses 1-2 were tested using simple regressions. In this analysis the independent variable was level of identification and the dependent variables were brand community and attitude. The first hypothesis stated that level of identification toward a university will be positively related to university alumni's integration into the brand community of the university attended. The regression model for level of identification as a predictor of brand community is significant,  $F(1,187) = 73.67$ ,  $p < .001$ . The  $R^2$  value for this relationship is .283, which means that level of identification toward a university explains 28.3 % of the variance in their integration in a brand community. This means that alumni that have a higher level of identification to a university have a higher level of integration in a brand community. See Table 4.6 for results. The positive beta also indicates the positive nature of the relationship between the two variables, level of identification and brand community,  $\beta = .53$ ,  $p < .001$ . Thus, Hypothesis 1 is supported.

The second hypothesis stated that level of identification toward a university will be positively related to university alumni's attitude toward purchasing university licensed merchandise. The regression model for level of identification as a predictor of attitude is significant,  $F(1,187) = 31.94, p < .001$ . The  $R^2$  value for this relationship is .146, which means that level of identification toward a university explains 14.6 % of the variance in their attitude toward purchasing university licensed merchandise. This means that alumni that have a higher level of identification to a university have a more positive attitude toward purchasing university licensed merchandise. See Table 4.6 for results. The positive beta also indicates the positive nature of the relationship between the two variables, level of identification and attitude,  $\beta = .38, p < .001$ . As a result, Hypothesis 2 is supported.

### *H3-5: Integration in a Brand Community*

Hypotheses 3-4 were tested using simple regressions. In this analysis the independent variable was brand community and the dependent variables were subjective norm and attitude. The third hypothesis stated that integration in a brand community will be positively related to subjective norm. The regression model for brand community as a predictor of subjective norm is significant,  $F(1,187) = 29.03, p < .001$ . The  $R^2$  value for this relationship is .134, which means that integration in a brand community explains 13.4 % of the variance in subjective norm. This means that alumni that have a higher integration in a brand community to a university have a higher level of subjective norm. See Table 4.6 for results. The positive beta also indicates the positive nature of the relationship between the two variables, brand

community and subjective norm,  $\beta = .37, p < .001$ . As a result, Hypothesis 3 is supported.

The fourth hypothesis stated that integration in a brand community will be positively related to university alumni's attitude toward purchasing university licensed merchandise. The regression model for brand community as a predictor of attitude is significant,  $F(1,187) = 42.35, p < .001$ . The  $R^2$  value for this relationship is .185, which means that integration in a brand community explains 18.5 % of the variance in attitude. This means that alumni that have a higher integration in a brand community to a university have a more positive attitude toward purchasing university licensed merchandise. See Table 4.6 for results. The positive beta also indicates the positive nature of the relationship between the two variables, brand community and attitude,  $\beta = .43, p < .001$ . Thus, Hypothesis 4 is supported.

The fifth hypothesis stated that university alumni's integration into the brand community of the university attended will be a mediator between level of identification toward a university and attitude toward purchasing university licensed merchandise. A variable may be said to be a mediator "to the extent that it accounts for the relation between the predictor and the criterion" (Baron & Kenny, 1986, p. 1176). Baron and Kenny's (1986) 3-step procedure was used to determine if brand community is a mediator of level of identification and attitude. The three steps are: (a) regressing brand community on level of identification, (b) regressing attitude on level of identification, and (c) regressing attitude on level of identification and brand community. Mediation holds if the results of the first two steps are significant and if

only brand community affects attitude in the third step. Results of H1 demonstrated that level of identification was positively related to brand community, satisfying the first of the three steps. Results of H2 demonstrated that level of identification was positively related to attitude, satisfying the second of the three steps. Multiple regression analysis of level of identification and brand community on attitude (third step) revealed that level of identification [ $t(188) = 2.79, p < .01, \beta = .21$ ] and brand community [ $t(188) = 4.13, p < .0001, \beta = .32$ ] had positive effects on attitude. Note that the standardized coefficient for level of identification from the multiple regression ( $\beta = .21$ ) was less than one from the simple regression ( $\beta = .38$ ), but still remained significant. This demonstrates that brand community was a partial mediator of the effects of level of identification on attitude. Thus, level of identification influences attitude indirectly through brand community.

*H6: Fan loyalty and attitude toward purchasing university licensed merchandise*

Hypothesis six states that attitude toward purchasing university licensed merchandise will be positively correlated with fan loyalty. A simple correlation was performed to test the relationship between fan loyalty and attitude toward purchasing university licensed merchandise. Results indicated a positive correlation between fan loyalty and attitude,  $r(1,187) = .41, n=189, p < .01$ . The higher the level of fan loyalty the more positive attitude university alumni have towards purchasing university licensed merchandise. See Table 4.5 for a correlation matrix of the variables.

Table 4.5 Correlation Matrix of the Variables

	Attitude
Fan Loyalty	.413 0.000***
*** $p < 0.001$	

*H7-9: Attitude, Fan Loyalty, and Subjective Norm related to the purchase behavior of university licensed merchandise*

Hypotheses 7-9 were tested using stepwise multiple regressions. In this analysis the dependent variable was purchase behavior and the independent variables were attitude, fan loyalty and subjective norm. The seventh, eighth, and ninth hypothesis stated that attitude toward purchasing university licensed merchandise, fan loyalty, and subjective norm will be positively related to purchase behavior (a: purchase frequency, b: purchase amount). As hypothesized, attitude was positively related to (a) purchase frequency [ $F(3,181) = 18.81, p < .05, \beta = .22$ ] and (b) purchase amount [ $F(3,173) = 14.33, p < .05, \beta = .19$ ]. Subjective norm was also positively related to (a) purchase frequency [ $F(3,181) = 18.81, p < .001, \beta = .31$ ] and (b) purchase amount [ $F(3,173) = 14.33, p < .01, \beta = .30$ ]. However fan loyalty was not found to be significantly related to purchase behavior ( $p = .67$  and  $.65$  respectively). This means that university alumni that have a more positive attitude toward purchasing university licensed merchandise and have a higher level of subjective norm



have a higher level of purchase behavior. See Table 4.6 for results. Thus, Hypothesis 7 and 9 is supported.

*H10: Subjective Norm*

Hypothesis 10 was tested using a simple regression. In this analysis the independent variable was subjective norm and the dependent variable was fan loyalty. The tenth hypothesis stated that subjective norm will be positively related to fan loyalty. The regression model for subjective norm as a predictor of fan loyalty is significant,  $F(1,187) = 16.68, p < .001$ . The  $R^2$  value for this relationship is .082, which means that subjective norm explains 8.2% of the variance in fan loyalty. This means that alumni that have a higher level of subjective norm have a higher level of fan loyalty. See Table 4.6 for results. The positive beta also indicates the positive nature of the relationship between the two variables, subjective norm and fan loyalty,  $\beta = .29, p < .001$ . Thus, Hypothesis 10 is supported.

Table 4.6: Regression Analyses ( $N = 189$ )

Variable	b	Std. error	$\beta$	t-value	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	Sig.
Level of Identification on Brand Community	.47	.06	.53	8.58	.53	.28	.28	0.000***
Level of Identification on Attitude	.65	.11	.38	5.65	.38	.15	.14	0.000***
Brand Community on Subjective Norm	.1	.19	.37	5.39	.37	.13	.13	0.000***
Brand Community on Attitude	.82	.13	.43	6.51	.43	.19	.18	0.000***
Attitude on Purchase Behavior								
(a) frequency	.26	.10	.22	2.60				0.010*
(b) amount	.20	.10	.19	2.03				0.043*
Fan Loyalty on Purchase Behavior								
(a) frequency	.04	.08	.03	.436				0.663
(b) amount	.04	.08	.03	.459				0.646
Subjective Norm on Purchase Behavior								
(a) frequency	.25	.06	.31	3.74				0.000***
(b) amount	.22	.06	.30	3.50				0.001**
Subjective Norm Fan Loyalty	.2	.05	.29	4.08	.29	.08	.08	0.000***

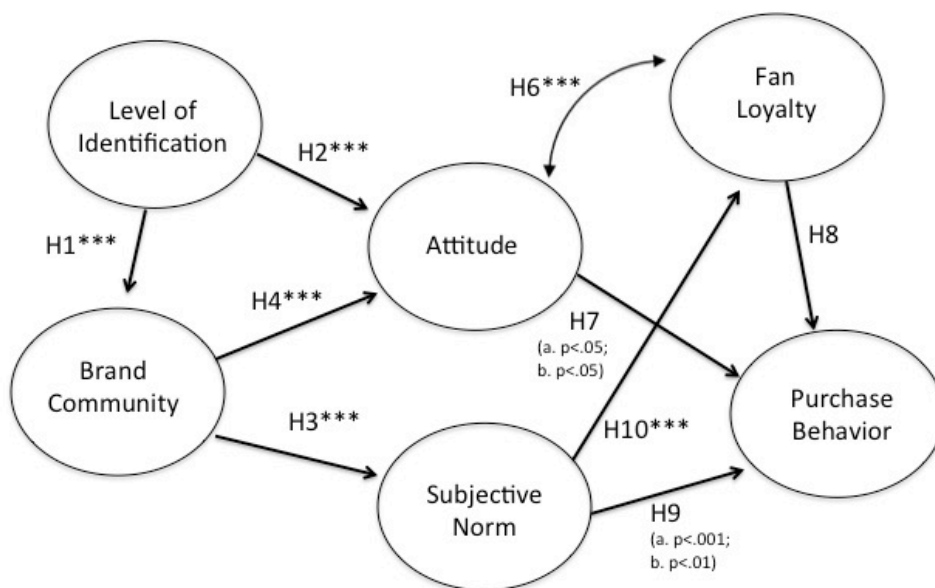
Note: b= Unstandardized coefficients,  $\beta$  = standardized coefficients

\*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

\*\*  $p < 0.01$

\*  $p < 0.05$

Figure 4.7 Model With Significant Relationships



H5: Predicting Brand Community as a mediator between Level of Identification and Attitude

Note: a. Purchase Frequency  
b. Purchase Amount

\*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

## CHAPTER 5

### DISCUSSION

#### 5.1 Overview

The purpose of this study was to investigate primary factors influencing university alumni's purchase decision of university licensed merchandise. Using the theoretical framework of Social Identity Theory (Hogg, 2006) as well as the Theory of Reasoned Action (Fishbein, 1975), this study examined (1) how level of identification with a university influences integration with brand community and attitude toward purchasing university licensed merchandise, (2) how integration with brand community influences attitude toward purchasing university licensed merchandise and subjective norm related to purchase of university licensed merchandise, (3) how integration with brand community mediates the relationship between the level of identification toward a university and the attitude toward purchasing university licensed merchandise, (4) how attitude is related to fan loyalty, (5) how attitude, fan loyalty, and subjective norm influence purchase behavior of university licensed merchandise, and (6) how subjective norm influences fan loyalty. This chapter discussed the empirical findings of this thesis research and implications for both the retail industry and collegiate institutions.

## 5.2 General Discussion

### *H1-2: Level of identification to a university*

As hypothesized, the relationship between level of identification to a university and brand community and attitude was significant and positive. University alumni that have a higher level of identification to a university have a higher level of integration in a brand community as well as a more positive attitude toward purchasing university licensed merchandise. Hogg (2006) explains Social Identity Theory as the analysis of how people perceive themselves as belonging to part of a social group. Stets and Burke (2000, p. 225) define a social group as “a set of individuals who hold a common social identification or view themselves as members of the same social category.” Therefore, these findings support Social Identity Theory as university alumni perceive themselves as belonging to part of a social group and are a set of individuals who hold the common social identification of the university they attended.

As previously discussed, Bagozzi and Dholakia (2006) found that group behavior can be influenced by three parts of social identity in regards to brand community. An individual needs to be able to identify themselves as belonging to the brand community, feel that they belong to the brand community, and feel that belonging to the brand community gives them significance. The findings of this study support that individuals have a higher sense of belonging in the brand community when they have a higher level of identification with the university. Alumni may feel that they can identify strongly to a university because they graduated from there and have invested time and possibly finances into their school. University alumni may

highly identify to the university if they were involved with campus activities, programs, and/or were on an athletic team as McAlexander and Koenig (2001) found that alumni relationships with the university and experiences while there have a significant impact on the current level of association with the university. Being able to identify with the university they attended may give them significance as well. As university alumni can identify with the university they attended they feel as though they belong to the brand community (i.e university alumni).

Findings also support the previous study by Park and Park (2007) which found that attitude toward university licensed apparel purchases was influenced by identification to a university. University alumni may have a higher opinion of the university they attended if they have a higher level of identification to the university. Findings also support a previous study by Bhattacharay, Rao, and Glynn (1995) which found that individuals may be more likely to purchase a product or membership that will show their affiliation to the group when they highly identify with the group. A higher level of identification led to university alumni having a more positive attitude toward purchasing university licensed merchandise. University alumni may want to express their level of identification through purchasing university licensed items like t-shirts and bumper stickers to show their affiliation to the university they attended.

### *H3-5: Integration in a Brand Community*

As hypothesized, brand community was positively related to subjective norm and attitude. This means that alumni that have a higher integration in a brand community have a higher level of subjective norm and more positive attitude toward

purchasing university licensed merchandise. We have defined brand community as a “group of consumers with a shared enthusiasm for the brand and a well-developed social identity, whose members engage jointly in group actions to accomplish collective goals and/or express mutual sentiments and commitments” (Bagozzi & Dholakia, 2006, p. 45). When university alumni engage with other university alumni they hear the opinions of those in the same brand community, those who they share an enthusiasm for the university with and whose opinions they value. The higher their integration into the brand community the more they may care about their current value in the group. In order to be integrated into the brand community they may feel pressure to conform to the opinions of others in the group. Therefore university alumni purchase university licensed merchandise because they know that others in the brand community will view them positively.

Findings also support a study done by McAlexander et al. (2006) which found that behaviors such as the purchase of university licensed merchandise can be explained by the integration an alum experiences within the university brand community. An alum that is highly integrated into the brand community (i.e. university alumni) will want to show association to the brand community. They may buy items such as t-shirts and sweatshirts that they can wear to show their association to the brand community.

The current study further found that integration into the brand community of the university was a mediator between level of identification toward a university and attitude toward purchasing university licensed merchandise. An alum that highly

identifies with the university they attended is more integrated into the university brand community and a higher identification into the brand community was found to be positively related to the university alumni's attitude toward purchasing university licensed merchandise. The identification with a university led to a positive attitude toward purchasing university licensed merchandise by making alums more integrated with the university brand community. It is logical that an alum that highly identifies with the university will also believe it is important to be integrated into the brand community which means showing their association to the brand community through purchasing items. For example, a university alum may purchase a university licensed t-shirt that shows he both identifies with the university and is also active in the brand community. He or she may want to prove they belong in the brand community because they highly identify with the university and therefore purchase items that showcase this.

*H6: Fan loyalty and attitude toward purchasing university licensed merchandise*

As hypothesized, attitude was found to be correlated with fan loyalty. As stated earlier, it is logical that if a university alum has a high fan loyalty to the university athletic team then they will also have a more positive attitude toward purchasing university licensed merchandise. Since university licensed merchandise is often purchased to wear at athletic events (Quick, 2007), university alumni may purchase items such as t-shirts or hats to wear in support of the university athletic team when they attend or watch athletic events. If the university alum purchases university licensed merchandise to wear to the athletic event and has a positive experience at the



game then he or she may have a more positive attitude toward purchasing university licensed merchandise. If the university alum has high fan loyalty they may attend or watch several different types of athletic events during the year, multiple times.

*H7-9: Attitude, Fan Loyalty and Subjective Norm related to the purchase behavior of university licensed merchandise*

As hypothesized, attitude and subjective norm was positively related to purchase behavior. Supporting the Theory of Reasoned Action (Fishbein, 1975), university alumni with a more positive attitude toward purchasing university licensed merchandise and a higher level of subjective norm had a higher level of purchase behavior. These findings extend research findings from Park and Park (2007) which found that purchase intention via the internet or retail store was positively affected by attitude toward university licensed merchandise. In the current study, actual purchase behavior of university licensed merchandise was measured in comparison to purchase intention for university licensed merchandise as used in Park and Park (2007).

We have defined subjective norm as the way an individual perceives social pressures applied to him to perform or not perform the behavior in question (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). When university alumni feel that those who are important to him or her think they should perform the behavior then the intention of them to perform the behavior is more likely. University alumni may be encouraged by others to attend university athletic events. In most cases people do not attend athletic events by themselves but go with others. University alumni may even be more likely to purchase season tickets to different university athletic events so that they can attend multiple

games with others for a particular sport. As discussed earlier, university licensed merchandise is often purchased to wear at athletic events (Quick, 2007) and alumni may need different items to wear to the game. When attending these athletic events university alumni may feel that they should purchase university licensed merchandise to wear because others they attend the games with are wearing university licensed merchandise. In a stadium full of people wearing the colors of the university, it would be hard not to feel pressured to wear university licensed merchandise. For events such as football, participants may have a tailgating party for those attending the game as well or have a viewing party at their house for the game. Those important to them will gather together, all most likely wearing university licensed merchandise to wear in support of their team.

#### *H10: Subjective Norm*

As hypothesized, subjective norm was positively related to fan loyalty. Supporting the Theory of Reasoned Action (Fishbein, 1975), university alumni that have a higher level of subjective norm have a higher fan loyalty. As previously discussed most people attend or watch sporting events with others. An alum may not start out with high fan loyalty towards a team but could develop a high fan loyalty over time if those who are important to them have a high fan loyalty for a particular team. In this case when university alumni felt that others who are important to them think that they should be fans of the university athletic teams they were more likely to do so.

### 5.3 Implications for Retailers and Collegiate Institutions

The findings of the study provide useful information for retailers of university licensed merchandise and collegiate institution. Attitude was found to affect purchase behavior and level of identification and brand community were found to affect attitude. Retailers should focus on creating products that reinforce university alumni's ability to identify with the university and showcase their integration into the brand community. As defined, attitude is the way an individual views a behavior preformed, whether positive or negative (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). University alumni will perform one of two behaviors when looking at university licensed merchandise, they will either purchase the item or not purchase the item. If they feel that the item helps show their level of identification to the university and their integration into the brand community then their attitude toward purchasing the item will be more positive, which is expected to lead to a higher purchase behavior. Therefore, retailers should create products that are highly representative of the university. Collegiate institutions should focus on producing strong logos as well as colors that are consistent and represent the university. Retailers are often limited in the type of merchandise they can create as they are bound to the universities licensing requirements. It is therefore the job of the university licensing department to make sure they are producing logos and colors that are appealing to the university alumni.

As attitude was found to be affected by level of identification and integration into a brand community, universities should focus on how to strengthen university alumni's level of identification to the university and integration into the brand

community. This can be done by university alumni associations. Sponsoring events where alumni can come together and interact with each other is important. They can also send out newsletters about university alumni in order to strengthen identification. Universities should bring together alumni and current students in order to help alumni feel more involved with the university. In exchange, current students may also feel more involved with the college which may encourage future identification to the university.

Retailers and college institutions should also make sure that the merchandise is available to those that wish to purchase it. Almost fifty two percent of those surveyed claimed to purchase university licensed merchandise at the university bookstore and 32.28% claimed to purchase merchandise at a mass merchandiser such as Fred Meyer or Target (Table 4.6). With the university licensing industry generating an annual revenue of over \$4 billion dollars (The Collegiate Licensing Company, n.d.), it would be a good idea for those mass merchandisers that do not sell university licensed merchandise to look into selling it. They can attract customers looking for university licensed merchandise into the store and then the customers may end up buying other items the store sells that they were not planning on buying. Those retailers already selling university licensed merchandise should continue providing the type and amount of university licensed merchandise that customers want. With a larger percentage of university alumni purchasing university licensed merchandise at the university bookstore, the university should continue to maintain the right assortment of merchandise in their bookstore to increase sales and promote the university.

Collegiate institutions may also be able to increase purchasing of university licensed merchandise by promoting the school itself. Results showed that university alumni who had a higher level of identification to the university had a more positive attitude toward purchasing university licensed merchandise. Therefore if the university does a good job of being a school that alumni will be proud of attending, the level of identification of alumni may increase, leading to a more positive attitude toward purchasing university licensed merchandise, which was found to lead to higher level of purchase behavior.

## CHAPTER 6

### CONCLUSION

#### 6.1 General Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to investigate why university alumni purchase university licensed merchandise. This study examined the relationships among level of identification, integration with brand community, attitude toward purchasing university licensed merchandise, subjective norm, fan loyalty and purchase behavior. The mediating role of brand community between level of identification and attitude was also examined.

The results of this study showed that level of identification toward a university is a significant predictor of their integration into a brand community as well as their attitude toward purchasing university licensed merchandise. Integration into a brand community was positively related to attitude toward purchasing university licensed merchandise and subjective norm. Integration into a brand community was also found to be a mediating variable on the relationship between level of identification to a university and attitude towards purchasing university licensed merchandise. Attitude toward purchasing university licensed merchandise was found to be positively correlated with fan loyalty. Attitude toward purchasing university licensed merchandise and subjective norm were found to be significant predictors of purchase behavior. Subjective norm was significant and positively related to fan loyalty. The implications of this study were applied and discussed to both retail and university licensing situations.

Overall the study suggests that encouraging identification with a university and promoting integration with university brand community can lead to more positive attitude toward purchasing university licensed merchandise and subjective norm, which in turn lead to more purchase behaviors of university licensed merchandise. In addition to providing supports for Social Identity Theory and Theory of Reasoned Action, the study provided empirical evidence that the concept of brand community is important in explaining why alumni purchase university licensed merchandise.

## 6.2 Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

As in any study, limitations in this study are present. First, as with any study using a convenience sample, the findings may not be generalizable to other alumni population. A second limitation to this study is the university alumni that were surveyed. Only those university alumni who are signed up to receive emails from the Alumni Association at the university were able to be randomly selected to take part in the survey. Also alumni who were surveyed were not restricted to the state where the university resides. Gair (2005) found that alumni are more likely to give or participate more with the university when they reside in the same state as the university compared to those alumni that live out of state. University alumni who live in a different state than the university may not be able to attend as many athletic games or participate in other university events as those who reside in the same state. They also may not be able to watch as many athletic games as they are often broadcasted on local stations. As retail locations often only sell university licensed merchandise of local universities,

university alumni who reside in another state are limited to purchasing merchandise online.

Future research is needed to continue this line of inquiry. As stated in the introduction, literature on university trademark licensing is short and reasons for purchasing university licensed merchandise have not been explained by theoretical or empirical research (Park & Park, 2007). It would be interesting to repeat this study on those individuals who purchase university licensed merchandise who have not attended the university. Individuals who have not attended the university may have different reasons for purchasing university licensed merchandise than those who have attended the university. For example, they may identify differently with the university as they did not have the same experience as an individual who attended the university.

It would also be interesting to see if results changed depending on which degree university alumni received at the university being surveyed. McAlexander and Koenig (2001) found that when alumni have an enjoyable experience at the university they attended, they are more likely to wear university licensed apparel. Students experience at the school they attended will vary depending on a multitude of different variables. If a student receives a bachelor's degree at one university and then attends a different university for their graduate degree then all the variables looked at in this study may differ depending on their experience. Future research in these areas will add to the currently growing research regarding university licensed merchandise.



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## APPENDICES

## APPENDIX A

IRB Informed Consent  
Approval Page

Principal Investigator:	Minjeong Kim	Department:	Design and Human Environment
Study Team Members:	N/A		
Student Researcher:	Aleece Kopczenski		
Study Number:	4865		
Study Title:	University Alumni's Purchase of University Licensed Apparel: Exploring the Reasoning Behind Purchase Decisions		
Funding Source:	None		
Funding Proposal #:	N/A		
PI on Grant/Contract:	N/A		
Submission Type:	Initial Application received 12/30/10		
Review Category:	Exempt	Category Number:	2

The above referenced study was reviewed by the OSU Institutional Review Board (IRB) and determined to be exempt from full board review.

**Expiration Date:** 01/26/16

*The exemption is valid for 5 years from the date of approval.*

Annual renewals will not be required. If the research extends beyond the expiration date, the Investigator must request a new exemption. Investigators should submit a final report to the IRB if the project is completed prior to the 5 year term.

**Documents included in this review:**

- |   |  |   |
|---|--|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Protocol      | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Recruiting tools   | <input type="checkbox"/> External IRB approvals |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Consent forms | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Test instruments   | <input type="checkbox"/> Translated documents   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Assent forms materials   | <input type="checkbox"/> Attachment A: Radiation       | <input type="checkbox"/> Attachment B: Human    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Grant/contract           | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Letters of support | <input type="checkbox"/> Project revision(s)    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other:                   |  |   |

**Comments:****Principal Investigator responsibilities:**

- Amendments to this study must be submitted to the IRB for review prior to initiating the change. Amendments may include, but are not limited to, changes in funding, personnel, target enrollment, study population, study instruments, consent documents, recruitment material, sites of research, etc.
- All study team members should be kept informed of the status of the research.
- Reports of unanticipated problems involving risks to participants or others must be submitted to the IRB within three calendar days.
- The Principal Investigator is required to securely store all study related documents on the OSU campus for a minimum of three years post study termination.

If you have any questions, please contact the IRB Office at [IRB@oregonstate.edu](mailto:IRB@oregonstate.edu) or by phone at (541) 737-8008.



## APPENDIX B

### Recruitment Email

This email is being sent by the OSU Alumni Association on behalf of Aleece Kopczenski, a graduate student at OSU. We hope you will consider helping Ms. Kopczenski with her project.

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Hello,

My name is Aleece Kopczenski. I am currently a graduate student in Design and Human Environment.

I am conducting research to meet my graduation requirement of completing my master's thesis. I would like to invite you to participate in a short questionnaire on the purchasing of collegiate licensed merchandise by university alumni. Participation in this questionnaire will take approximately 15 minutes to complete. The survey will be available to complete for two weeks. After 500 surveys have been completed we will close the survey.

To participate, please click on the link provided below, which will direct you to the questionnaire.

[https://surveys.bus.oregonstate.edu/BsgSurvey2\\_0/main.aspx?SurveyID=4033](https://surveys.bus.oregonstate.edu/BsgSurvey2_0/main.aspx?SurveyID=4033)

Upon clicking this link, you will be shown the informed consent document. Please read through this document as it explains your rights as a participant. If you chose to continue to the questionnaire, you will have given your informed consent to participate.

Thank you for your participation!

Sincerely,  
Aleece Kopczenski

## APPENDIX C

### Survey Questionnaire







22) People who influence my behavior think I should purchase Oregon State University licensed apparel

Strongly Disagree                      Strongly Agree

○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

23) People whose opinions I value prefer me to purchase Oregon State University licensed apparel

[illegible]

24) Almost all of my friends think purchasing Oregon State University licensed apparel is a good idea

Strongly Disagree							Strongly Agree
○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

25) Some of my friends recommended I should try on Oregon State University licensed merchandise

Strongly Disagree                      Strongly Agree





**PLEASE EXPRESS TO WHAT LEVEL YOU AGREE/  
DISAGREE WITH THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS**

**32) I do not attend Oregon State University athletic games**

Strongly Disagree							Strongly Agree
○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

**33) I watch Oregon State University athletic games on television**

Strongly Disagree							Strongly Agree
○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

**34) I read about Oregon State University athletic games**

Strongly Disagree							Strongly Agree
○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

**35) I talk with others about Oregon State University athletic games**

Strongly Disagree							Strongly Agree
○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

**PLEASE EXPRESS HOW YOU FEEL REGARDING THE  
FOLLOWING STATEMENTS**

**36) The likelihood that I will purchase Oregon State University licensed merchandise is:**

Very Low ○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Very High ○
------------------	---	---	---	---	---	---	-------------------

**37) The probability that I would consider buying Oregon State University licensed merchandise is:**

Very Low ○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Very High ○
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**38) My willingness to buy Oregon State University licensed merchandise is:**

Very Low ○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Very High ○
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**39) Please list any Oregon State University licensed merchandise you have purchased in the last twelve months (e.g., OSU t-shirt, OSU sweatshirt, OSU bumper sticker, OSU home décor, etc.)?**

**40) At which locations have you purchased Oregon State University licensed merchandise? (please check all that apply)**

- ☐ Thrift Stores
- ☐ Athletic Events (i.e. football game, basketball game, etc.)
- ☐ Oregon State University bookstore location (Corvallis, Keizer, Portland)
- ☐ Online retailers
- ☐ Department Stores (i.e. Macy's, JCPenny, Khol's, etc.)
- ☐ Mass Merchandiser (i.e. Fred Meyer, Target, Dick's Sporting Goods, etc.)
- ☐ Other (please write) \_\_\_\_\_

**41) Within the last twelve months, how frequently have you purchased Oregon State University licensed merchandise?**

- ☐ No purchase made in the last twelve months
- ☐ Once
- ☐ 2-3 times
- ☐ 4-5 times
- ☐ 6-7 times
- ☐ 8-9 times
- ☐ 10-12 times
- ☐ More than 13 times

**42) Within the last twelve months, how much have you spent on Oregon State University licensed merchandise?**

- ☐ Less than \$50
- ☐ \$51-\$100
- ☐ \$101-\$200
- ☐ \$201-\$400
- ☐ \$401-\$600
- ☐ \$601-\$800
- ☐ More than \$801

**43) I consider myself heavy purchaser of Oregon State University licensed merchandise**

Strongly Disagree	○	○	○	○	○	○	Strongly Agree
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**PLEASE TELL US MORE ABOUT YOURSELF.**

**44) Age**

**45) Gender**

- ☐ MALE
- ☐ FEMALE

**46) Ethnicity**

- ☐ WHITE , EUROPEAN AMERICAN
- ☐ ASIAN, ASIAN AMERICAN
- ☐ HISPANIC / LATINO
- ☐ AMERICAN INDIAN or ALASKAN NATIVE
- ☐ BLACK or AFRICAN AMERICAN
- ☐ NATIVE HAWAIIAN or PACIFIC ISLANDER
- ☐ OTHER

**47) Year graduated from college**

**48) At what age did you graduate from college?**

**49) What degrees have you received from Oregon State University?**

- ☐ Undergraduate
- ☐ Graduate
- ☐ Both

**50) What college did you graduate from within Oregon State University?**

**51) In the last twelve months what Oregon State University athletic events have you attended? List all athletic events you have attended.**

**52) In the last twelve months how often have you attended Oregon State University athletic events?**

- ☐ Once
- ☐ 2-3 times
- ☐ 4-5 times
- ☐ 6-7 times
- ☐ 8-9 times
- ☐ 10-12 times
- ☐ More than 13 times