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The Perception of Athletes in Local and Neutral Media Markets

Gregory Stine
University of Arkansas, Fayetteville

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of the requirements for the degree of
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By

Gregory David Stine
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University of Arkansas

Abstract

This study examined the perception of professional athletes in local and neutral media markets. The purpose of the study was to determine how people in Philadelphia and people in Arkansas feel toward the Philadelphia Eagles' Nnamdi Asomugha. It was expected that the study's participants in Philadelphia would feel more positively toward Asomugha and would be more aware of his off-the-field contributions. Additionally, it was expected that there would be a positive relationship between team identification level and both positive feelings toward Asomugha and awareness of his efforts away from the field. Finally, it was anticipated that participants near Philadelphia would be more likely to support the Eagles in the future because of Asomugha. The study was conducted using a questionnaire that measures team identification, awareness, positive feelings and future behavior.

The present study's findings supported each of the hypotheses. Overall, the local market participants were more aware of Asomugha's off-the-field contributions (mean=2.9756) and felt more positively toward him as a person (mean=3.6341) than the neutral market participants (means of 1.8734 and 2.4684, respectively). There were significant correlations between team identification and positive feelings toward Asomugha as a person (r=.621)and between team identification and awareness of his contributions off the field (r=.633). Additionally, there was a significant correlation between awareness and positive feelings (r=.846). The local market participants also scored higher than the neutral market participants on each of the future behavior items (means of 2.78, 2.46, 2.35 & 2.51 vs. means of 1.82, 1.47, 1.46 & 1.91).

Because these hypotheses were supported by statistical data, sports teams and leagues could use the present study to justify promoting their athletes' charitable contributions on a more national level.

This thesis is approved for recommendation to the Graduate Council.

Thesis Director:

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Dr. Steve Dittmore

Thesis Committee:

_____
Dr. Gregory Benton

_____
Dr. Merry Moiseichik

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Chapter 1 – Introduction

In today's world of information and technology, the number of sports media outlets is at an all-time high. The emergence of social media has been the industry's most recent development. Though the Internet allows people to access information from all over the world, there are still sports media outlets that are considered to be either local or national. Many radio stations and newspapers cover sports within a certain region, whereas entities such as ESPN and Sports Illustrated cover sports from all parts of the United States through the use of Web sites, magazines, and – in ESPN's case – television channels.

Because these local and national sports media outlets cater to different audiences, the content of their programming is different. Local radio stations and newspapers cover different teams and sports than do national outlets. For instance, while ESPN may post an article about an Arkansas Razorbacks football game on a given weekend, newspapers such as the <u>Arkansas Democrat-Gazette</u> and the <u>Northwest Arkansas Times</u> provide multiple articles about the team each day. Also, since local media outlets cover fewer individual athletes than national outlets do, they provide stories about these athletes that allow readers to better relate to them; the local coverage goes beyond on-field performance.

There are some similarities in the coverage of athletes by local media and by national media. Provided that these athletes participate at the NCAA Division I or professional levels, both local and national media outlets provide relevant on-the-field or on-the-court information. This information includes statistics, game previews, game recaps, suspensions and injury reports. As an example, one need not seek out a media outlet based in Minneapolis to find the Minnesota Vikings' upcoming schedule or current injury report; that information is just as likely to be provided by ESPN.com or SportsIllustrated.com. Legal information is another aspect of athletes

that is addressed by both local and national media outlets. If a collegiate or professional athlete is arrested, the news can be found in both the athlete's local market and in markets throughout the country.

Though there are similarities between local media coverage of athletes and national media coverage of athletes, there are also differences. One difference involves the prominence of information. Schultz and Sheffer (2008) indicate that local media coverage is currently lagging behind national media coverage in the world of sports, especially in the context of television. They point out that "television sports content within the local newscast has evolved into a mix of national and local coverage," although the news directors of these television stations "believe the emphasis should be on local sports" (Schultz & Sheffer, 2008, p.181). Though local sports segments in newscasts have been around for years, "consumers are now getting the same content through new outlets, such as the Internet, or creating and sharing their own material" (Schultz & Sheffer, 2008, p.192). Ultimately, according to Schultz and Sheffer, local television sports programming is at an "evolutionary crossroads," meaning it could be "headed for obsolescence like the telegraph or for rebirth like the radio" (Schultz & Sheffer, 2008, p.192). The authors seem to suggest that, despite the presence of local media outlets such as television stations, national coverage of sports is becoming increasingly prominent while local coverage is threatened by technology and the lack of communication barriers today.

A major difference between the actual coverage provided by local media outlets and national media outlets is the variety of coverage dedicated to individual athletes. As mentioned previously, local and national media outlets dedicate different amounts of coverage to a given sports team. Though Web sites such as ESPN.com and SportsIllustrated.com provide previews and recaps of NFL games, local newspapers provide multiple daily stories about a given NFL

team. This allows fans who subscribe to these local newspapers to regularly read about the players on their local market's team, and therefore provides them with a better understanding of the players than what fans in a neutral market may have.

Another aspect of athletes that is addressed by local media outlets and not as prevalent in national media coverage is charity work. Because charity work does not get as much national attention as local attention, some members of the professional sports world feel that sports media coverage comes across as negative. Jack Bechta, an NFL agent who also writes for National Football Post, believes that "most sports writers and bloggers don't spend the time and energy to research and investigate what charitable activities NFL players are doing off the field" (Bechta, 2011, para.4). He goes on to say that while legal issues among professional athletes make for popular stories, "there is room for more effort towards positive reports as well…It just takes a few phone calls to the agents and/or marketing/PR people who work for the players to find out what's going on" (Bechta, 2011, para.5).

One NFL player who is involved in community outreach is the Philadelphia Eagles' Nnamdi Asomugha. Asomugha signed with the Eagles as a free agent in the summer of 2011; he was considered to be one of the best acquisitions of the NFL offseason, as he had previously participated in multiple Pro Bowls. He had spent his first seven NFL seasons as a member of the Oakland Raiders. While a member of the Raiders, he became involved in a number of community service endeavors. As stated by Vittorio Tafur of the San Francisco Chronicle, "Whether it's taking disadvantaged students on educational trips cross-country, raising money for orphans in Nigeria, or helping out pal Bill Clinton with his Global Initiative University, Asomugha has everybody covered" (Tafur, 2010, para.1).

In the above quote, Tafur references two of Asomugha's most prominent efforts. One such effort is ACTS, or the Asomugha College Tour for Scholars, which Asomugha founded in 2007. ACTS is "an annual college tour and mentoring program that provided high-achieving high school students of color with the opportunity to visit college campuses across the country" (Tafur, 2010, para.8). Asomugha also is the chairman for Orphans and Widows in Need (OWIN), which is his family's foundation. OWIN "provides food, shelter, medicine, vocational and literacy training, and scholarships to widows and orphans in Nigeria" (Tafur, 2010, para.9).

For Asomugha's efforts in the community, he was one of 15 Jefferson Award recipients in the summer of 2010. The Jefferson Award, according to Tafur, "is known as the 'Nobel Prize for public service'" (Tafur, 2010, para.3). Asomugha was also a finalist for the 2010 Walter Payton Man of the Year Award. Overall, his efforts have not gone unnoticed by the NFL and other official entities.

It remains to be seen, though, just how much sports fans across the country recognize Asomugha's efforts in the community. Though he is widely regarded for his performance in the NFL, it is possible that he is not as widely recognized for his community service. If this is the case, it could be the result of the differences in local media coverage and national media coverage.

Statement of the Problem

Given that local media outlets cover certain athletes more closely than national media outlets do, how do fans in local markets and neutral markets feel about these athletes? The purpose of this study is to determine the difference in how local fans and neutral fans feel about athletes as people. More specifically, this study attempts to identify the attitudes of sports fans in Philadelphia and sports fans in Arkansas toward Nnamdi Asomugha.

Hypotheses

H1: Because of the differences in local media coverage and national media coverage in the

sports world, participants within the local region of the given athlete, Nnamdi Asomugha,

will show higher awareness of his off-the-field contributions than participants in a neutral

region will show. They will also have stronger opinions than neutral region participants

about Asomugha as a player and as a person.

H2: There will be a positive correlation between fan identification level and both the

participants' feelings toward Asomugha and their awareness of his off-the-field

contributions.

H3: The participants who are within Asomugha's local region will be more likely than the

neutral region participants to engage in future behavior supporting the Eagles based on what

they know about Asomugha.

Definitions

- Local regions – Local regions are the markets that receive regular local coverage of a

  given sports team. For the purposes of this study, students at Philadelphia's Temple

  University represent the local region of the specific athlete involved, Nnamdi Asomugha

  of the Philadelphia Eagles.

- Neutral regions – Neutral regions are areas that do not receive local coverage of a given

  sports team. Since the team in this study is located in Philadelphia, a class at the

  University of Arkansas represents a neutral region in the study.

- Fan identification level – Fan identification level refers to the extent to which a fan of a

  team is invested in the team, either emotionally or financially. Each participant's fan

identification level will be determined by the Sport Spectator Identification Scale (Wann & Branscombe, 1993, as cited in Theodorakis, Wann, Carvalho, & Sarmento, 2010).

Delimitations

This study was conducted over the course of the University of Arkansas' spring 2012 semester, and it involves college students aged 18 and above. Also, the samples that represent local and neutral regions are not truly random: they consist of students at both the University of Arkansas and Temple University.

Limitations

The only limitation of the study was that there were 82 completed questionnaires returned from Temple University (instead of the anticipated 100). This could have been due to a limited number of students at the university that are both undergraduate students and are academically focused on sports management.

Assumptions

One assumption in this study is that the students in both samples (local and neutral regions) pay attention to sports media coverage. More specifically, the study assumes that the students recognize Nnamdi Asomugha as a Pro Bowl-caliber player in the NFL. The study also assumes a normal distribution of scores in both the neutral market and local market samples.

Significance of Study

If the study's hypotheses are supported by the findings, the study could show that sports fans in neutral media markets are unaware of how a player in another market has contributed to his or her community. Also, the study could show that fans who identify strongly with a given

team tend to have a stronger positive attitude toward their favorite team's players than do fans with lower levels of identification. The first hypothesis is significant in that, if supported, it may encourage sports leagues to promote their players' off-the-field contributions on a national level. Increased promotion would allow fans across the country to learn about different players' community contributions, whether or not they play in the fans' local media markets, and thus change the overall image of sports leagues and the players who are affiliated with them. Although there will still be headlines written about players getting into trouble, there would ideally be many headlines showcasing players' good deeds off the field.

Chapter 2 – Review of Literature

The relevant literature for this study covers several different topics. One such topic is the perception of professional athletes. A related topic is the media representation of professional athletes. Another topic is fan identification.

Perception of Professional Athletes

This study measures, in part, how sports fans feel about a certain professional athlete. Therefore, it is important to assess the existing literature regarding the perception of professional athletes.

In professional sports today, certain stereotypes exist. Within an article that discusses the global impact of former NBA player Yao Ming, Oates and Polumbaum (2004) address the prominent stereotype that existed in the NBA following Michael Jordan's retirement in 1998. In the context of marketing, Oates and Polumbaum write, "The search for Jordan's successor…produced a campaign revolving around younger African-American players with a more raucous bad-boy image, associated with hip hop and ghetto playground 'streetball'" (Oates & Polumbaum, 2004, p.187). They go on to add, "Like the larger hip-hop commercial culture, streetball provided an important public site for the enactment of the 'cool pose' – tough, confrontational, ostentatiously macho" (Oates & Polumbaum, 2004, p.198).

In a 1996 article, Farrell addresses proposed legislation "that calls for a national campaign against domestic violence that would be spear-headed by athletes" (Farrell, 1996, para.1). He points out that those associated with sports organizations are against such legislation because of the negative connotations it applies to athletes. Farrell quotes then-Senior Vice President of the NCAA, Dan Boggan, who says, "It is unfair to link this to sports…Sports are not

the leading producer of violence. However, with sports stars, there is a lot [more] emphasis on their behavior than [on that of] an individual who does not have some personal notoriety or fame" (Farrell, 1996, para.13).

On the subject of stereotypes and athletes, Lapchick (2000) cites an exercise that he conducted "at an elite academic institution" (Lapchick, 2000, p.14). During this exercise, Lapchick "asked members of the audience to write down five words they would use to describe American athletes" (Lapchick, 2000, p.14). All members included at least one of the following in their responses: "dumb, violent, rapist, or drug-user" (Lapchick, 2000, p.14). While Lapchick makes no mention of how many audience members participated in the exercise, the fact that each member included at least one of the above terms shows that there is a semblance of negative perception associated with athletes in America.

Media Representation of Professional Athletes

This study also considers how various media outlets represent professional athletes. Given the general public's lack of direct access to professional athletes, most people obtain their information about these athletes – both on and off the field – through media sources. Television programs, Web sites, magazines and radio stations are some of the most popular sports media outlets today. Though sports media outlets offer plenty of information and insight regarding athletes' on-field performance, they can be very influential in regards to peoples' feelings toward these athletes as people.

Klinetobe and Bullock (2009) examine the media's portrayal of baseball great Ty Cobb in an article written for *Nine*. Cobb's playing career took place shortly after the turn of the 20th century. Klinetobe and Bullock contend that because Cobb was "the antithesis of the egalitarian virtues that American society has come to profess," he is now thought of as "an unredeemed

madman who was able to channel his near psychotic rage into dominance on the baseball

diamond" (Klinetobe & Bullock, 2009, p.21). According to the authors, the popular view of

Cobb "too often separates Cobb from the context of his time and has served to inflate this deeply

troubled figure into a monster despite the justification for a more objective examination of

Cobb's actions on and off the field" (Klinetobe & Bullock, 2009, p.21). Journalist Furman

Bisher is quoted in the following excerpt from the article:

> Similarly, Furman Bisher reacted with sadness to the attention recently paid to Cobb.
> "He never had any peace in his life," said Bisher, "Now they won't let him have any
> peace in death…I know all the stories and references about Cobb and what a terrible man
> he was. He wasn't to me. He gave me his time. Maybe I just have an affection for
> scoundrels." (Klinetobe & Bullock, 2009, p.22)

Klinetobe and Bullock then go on to write that, despite how those who directly interacted

with Cobb felt about him, popular media sources continue to demonize him.

> Nevertheless, three decades after his death, the *Philadelphia Inquirer* asserted that Cobb
> was 'one of the most offensive human beings ever called upon to play the role of sports
> hero.' *Chicago Sun-Times* film critic Roger Ebert said that Cobb was 'a mean-tempered,
> vicious, drunken, wife beating, racist SOB who was impossible to spend any time with.'
> Ebert then memorably compared enduring the two-hour biopic *Cobb* to being seated next
> to the notorious gonzo journalist Hunter S. Thompson on a three-day bus trip. (Klinetobe
> & Bullock, 2009, p.22)

The authors add that while current scholarly depictions of Cobb are "reasonably

accurate," the "nearly demonic image of Cobb which currently inhabits the popular imagination

is, to a large degree, a modern conception built to suit modern sensibilities" (Klinetobe & Bullock, 2009, p.22). This article is an example of how popular media sources can influence public opinion about an athlete, regardless of the circumstances; in this case, the difference between the turn of the 20th century and present day is rarely considered when portraying Ty Cobb.

Another athlete who has had great success in his sport and is a lightning rod for media attention is Mike Tyson. In a 2004 article for *Columbia Journalism Review*, Shari Waxman addresses the media coverage regarding Tyson throughout his eventful boxing career. Specifically, Waxman points out that media coverage of Tyson has been inconsistent. "Since his pro debut in 1985," Waxman writes, "reporters have rolled with the former heavyweight champ through numerous cycles of vilification and glorification" (Waxman, 2004, p.61).

Waxman references a 1999 article from *The New York Times*' Robert Lipsyte, in which "Lipsyte…contrasted our simplistic condemnation of Tyson with our absolute deification of the other Mike ('Jordan the Good')" (Waxman, 2004, p.62). He also includes an excerpt from an article written by the *Voice*'s Tony Sewell in February 1999:

> The recent condemning of Mike Tyson by most of these [sports] writers after his jail sentence is just hypocritical. These were the same writers who waxed lyrical about Tyson as the greatest athlete on earth and gushed orgasmically at the power of his punches. Now, like scorned lovers, they rail against him… (Sewell, 1999, as cited in Waxman, 2004)

Waxman also suggests that, at the time, media coverage and public opinion of Tyson may have impacted his decision on whether or not to come out of retirement: "The discrepancy in

press coverage suggests that our growing intolerance for Tyson may be linked more than we realize to his chances for a professional comeback" (Waxman, 2004, p.62).

In a special piece for ESPN.com, Doug Glanville offers a former player's perspective on how professional athletes are perceived. Glanville writes "no big leaguer is untouchable," and that all it takes for an athlete to receive criticism is "to be on the wrong side of a story" (Glanville, 2012). He continues, "It can be unfair, a word easy to roll off the tongue of a 21-year-old star, but he has a bull's-eye on his back – fair or not – and what he does is noticeable and scrutinized" (Glanville, 2012).

Social Responsibility of Athletes

Another aspect of the present study is social responsibility of athletes. In the world of professional sports, many athletes give back to their respective communities in different ways. Carter (2009) writes that the desire among athletes to give back "is a true grassroots movement" (Carter, 2009). Additionally, because this movement appears to be a "bottom-up" approach, it is "fundamentally different" from the movement toward social responsibility in the corporate world, which "has been criticized for being too managerially contrived, top-down imposed, and reductionist in nature" (Carter, 2009).

On the collegiate level, some institutions promote the contributions that their athletes have made in their communities. On the Web site of Western Illinois University, there is an article that describes what its athletes did between the 2003-2004 and 2005-2006 school years. In this time frame, "Western's 20 Division I sports teams spent 5,191 hours serving their community and raised $42,751 for charity-based organizations" (GoLeathernecks.com, 2007).

Though there are prevalent negative stereotypes regarding professional athletes, many people have high expectations for them to contribute to their communities. According to a study

conducted by Roy and Graeff regarding sports and social responsibility, "90 percent of the respondents expressed some level of agreement that businesses should support community charities or causes," and "87 percent indicated that professional athletes should support similar activities" (Roy & Graeff, 2001). The participants in this 2001 study had higher expectations for the NFL team that was located in their region. Roy and Graeff report, "90 percent agreed that the local team's players should support local charities or causes and 92 percent agreed that the local team's organization should do the same" (Roy & Graeff, 2001).

While social responsibility is not as widely discussed as other aspects of athletes, there is a movement to increase community efforts. Some institutions, such as Western Illinois University, have promoted their athletes' contributions on their Web pages; however, this promotion should be more prevalent than it appears to be at this point. The study conducted by Roy and Graeff shows that there is an expectation among the general public for athletes and teams to give back to their respective communities.

Fan Identification

The present study also utilizes a metric that is designed to measure fan identification. Fan identification is a popular subject in sports marketing, because it measures how closely sports fans associate with various aspects of sports such as teams, players, and coaches.

In a 2002 article, Daniel L. Wann explains fan identification as follows: "In general, highly identified fans, relative to less identified fans, exhibit more intense reactions to their team's performances (i.e., they report higher levels of anxiety and arousal, more intense positive and negative emotions, are more likely to use the self-serving bias, etc.)" (Wann, 2002, p.104). Because Wann's article is primarily related to sport fandom rather than team identification, he distinguishes between the two: "sport fandom identification involves one's self-perceptions as a

sport fan," whereas "team identification involves one's psychological connection to a team or player" (Wann, 2002, p.104). Wann goes on to say the following: "Although the two are most likely correlated, it is also likely that there are many individuals possessing a high level of fan identification (i.e., they are self-perceived sports fans) who do not strongly identify with a particular team or player" (Wann, 2002, p.104).

While Wann's article focuses on sport fandom, a 2003 article focuses on points of attachment in regard to fan identification. Citing previous research from Sutton, McDonald, Milne and Cimperman (1997), Trail, Robinson, Dick and Gillentine (2003) distinguish between three types of fans:

> The first level of fandom consists of those who are social fans, are low in identification, enjoy socialization, and care little about outcome of game. The second level consists of focused fans: those who are moderate in level of identification and are attracted to some aspect of the sport. The third level consists of vested fans; those who have a high emotional attachment to a team that lasts a long time and who make a major financial investment and time commitment. (Trail, Robinson, Dick & Gillentine, 2003, p.217)

The authors of this article also distinguish between fans and spectators. They contend that when a sports marketer promotes a product to fans, "one is preaching to the choir," because these fans have high levels of identification with various aspects of a given sports team (Trail et al, 2003, p.218). Therefore, according to the article, marketing campaigns directed toward fans must capitalize on these high identification levels or connections. As an example, the authors point out that team managers and administrators "often provide times for fans to interact with the team or coach and to develop these connections" (Trail et al, 2003, p.218). In contrast, the authors write that similar marketing plans "will not work well for those who merely spectate and

have no identification with the team…if there is no connection, then marketers must devise a different strategy" (Trail et al, 2003, p.218).

Trail et al, suggest that perhaps fans and spectators should be approached differently because of "different motives for consumption behavior" (Trail et al, 2003, p.218). Referencing Trail and James (2001), the authors identify the motives "that are purported to fulfill social and/or psychological needs" (Trail et al, 2003, p.218). These motives include: "vicarious achievement, acquisition of knowledge, aesthetics, social interaction, drama/eustress, escape, family, physical attractiveness of participants and physical skill of participants" (Trail et al, 2003, p.218). In one model presented in the article, the authors indicate that these motives contribute to the seven different types of fan identification. These types of identification are as follows: team, coach, community, university, players, level and sport (Trail et al, 2003, p.218).

In a June 2011 article, Rainey, Yost and Larsen discuss fan identification in the context of Disappointment Theory. Crediting Bell (1985) and Loomes & Sugden (1986), the authors write, "According to this theory, when individuals develop expectations in the context of uncertain outcomes, they experience disappointment if the actual outcome is worse than the expected outcome" (Rainey, Yost & Larsen, 2011, p.176-177). In the article, Rainey, Yost and Larsen discuss a 2008 test in which they attempted to assess how Disappointment Theory can be used to predict sports fans' disappointment at the end of a season. In order to predict disappointment, the authors first had to measure the identification level of these fans. This was done using Sport Spectator Identification Scale, which was developed by Wann and Branscombe in 1993. The authors note that Wann, Dolan, McGeorge and Allison (1994) "assessed the level of team identification of home spectators at men's basketball games" using this scale shortly after it was developed (Rainey et al, 2011, p.176). In this 1994 study, Wann, Dolan, McGeorge

and Allison also "assessed the spectators' feelings before and after the games" (Rainey et al, 2011, p.176). According to the study, "Highly identified fans reported significantly greater increases in negative feelings, such as sadness, frustration and discouragement, after a loss than did lowly identified fans" (Rainey et al, 2011, p.176).

Because of these findings, Rainey, Yost and Larsen chose to implement Disappointment Theory and the Sport Spectator Identification Scale and conduct a study of their own. The study measured fans' disappointment levels regarding the Cleveland Browns' 2008 season. The study's participants were given a preseason questionnaire, on which "participants reported their gender and the number of years they had been a Browns fan…Expectations for the Browns' performance were measured by having participants indicate how many of the 16 regular season games they thought the Browns would win" (Rainey et al, 2011, p.178). Additionally, the Sport Spectator Identification Scale was used to measure the participants' levels of identification. Following the season, the participants filled out a second questionnaire, in which they indicated both their "investment in the Browns" throughout the season and their disappointment in the team's performance (Rainey et al, 2011, p.179).

The findings of the 2008 study were consistent with those from the 1994 study, as "the level of fan identification with the Browns, as measured by the SSIS, was also positively related to fan disappointment" (Rainey et al, 2011, p.184). The authors go on to write, "The more fans identified with the team, the more disappointed they were with the team's poor performance" (Rainey et al, 2011, p.184).

Summary

The pieces of literature regarding the perception of athletes discuss stereotypes that exist or have existed in the world of sports. The articles referenced here address the "streetball" image of the NBA following the retirement of Michael Jordan and the perception that athletes in the 1990s engaged in domestic abuse. The articles that discuss media representation of athletes refer to the inconsistency that sometimes permeates sports coverage, as well as the ability of media attention to shape public opinion. These pieces discuss the rollercoaster that has been the coverage of Mike Tyson's career and the modern view of Ty Cobb, whose heyday came near the turn of the 20th century. Though less prevalent than articles regarding the perception of athletes, the articles that discuss the social responsibility of athletes touch on a number of different aspects. The topics covered by the literature used in this study include the recent increase in social responsibility among athletes, the promotion of athletic community service by academic institutions, and the expectations that the general public has regarding athletes and teams helping off the field. The literature regarding fan identification establishes that there are various types of identification, and also speaks to the reputation of the Sport Spectator Identification Scale. This scale ultimately composes a portion of the instrument used in this study.

Chapter 3 – Methodology

The purpose of this study is to determine the difference in how local fans and neutral fans feel about athletes as people. This chapter discusses the methodology used to obtain this information. The specific elements addressed are subjects and sampling frame; the instrument used for collecting data; administration of instrument and collection of data; and data analysis.

Subjects and Sampling Frame

The subjects of this study compose two distinct groups: students at Temple University and students at the University of Arkansas. These students have the following characteristics in common: they are taking at least one class related to sports management, and they are undergraduate-level students. The students at Temple University represent the local fans in the study. Because these students reside – or at least attend classes – in Philadelphia, they are most likely exposed to the area's local media coverage. Also, given their interest in sports management, the coverage they pay attention to likely involves Philadelphia sports teams such as the Eagles. The students from the University of Arkansas represent the neutral fans in the study. These students likely pay attention to local sports media coverage, which does not include programming related to Philadelphia sports teams. Therefore, these students are not expected to exhibit high levels of identification with the Eagles.

The two samples used in this study are not truly random. Rather than the subjects being selected from a sampling frame such as a telephone book, they were selected from university classes. These students were specifically chosen for the study because of their participation in sports management coursework and because of their respective locations. Therefore, these samples are convenience samples.

Instrument for Data Collection

The instrument used for data collection is a questionnaire that uses the items from the Sport Spectator Identification Scale (Wann & Branscombe, 1993, as cited in Theodorakis, Wann, Carvalho, & Sarmento, 2010) in addition to items regarding the Philadelphia Eagles' Nnamdi Asomugha. According to Theodorakis, Wann, Carvalho and Sarmento, the Sport Spectator Identification Scale – or SSIS – is a "uni-dimensional seven-item Likert scale with response options ranging from 1 (*low identification*) to 8 (*high identification*)" (Theodorakis et al, 2010, para.9). Though the SSIS is referred to as a seven-item scale, the article actually lists six items when detailing the scale: "How strongly do you see yourself as a fan of [named team]?", "How strongly do your friends see you as a fan of [named team]?", "During the season, how closely do you follow [named team] via *any* of the following: in person, by television, by radio, by televised news, or by newspaper?", "How important is being a fan of [named team]?", "How much do you dislike the greatest rivals of [named team]?", and "How often do you display [named team's] name or insignia at your place of work, where you live, or on your clothing?" (Theodorakis et al, 2010, para.9).

In a 2011 article, Rainey, Yost and Larsen advocate the validity of the SSIS. According to the article, "Wann and Branscombe (1993) demonstrated that SSIS scores are related to relevant variables like team involvement, time and money invested in the team, and positive expectations for the team's future performance" (Rainey, Yost & Larsen, 2011, p.179). Also, perhaps more relevant to this study is the following statement regarding the SSIS: "Wann and Branscombe (1995) demonstrated that fans' levels of identification with a basketball team predicts their general knowledge about basketball and knowledge about the players on their team" (Rainey et al, 2011, p.179).

Another 2011 study shows that the SSIS is a reliable tool for measuring fan identification. The instrument was recently used to measure "spectators' identification with a university team and personal involvement in celebratory violence" (Lanter, 2011, p.268). The participants in Lanter's study were college students, as is the case with the current study. According to Lanter, the SSIS items "were found to be reliable" with a Cronbach's alpha score of .89 (p.272). Given the demographic similarities in the populations between Lanter's study and the current study, this score seems to be more relevant to the current study than a reliability score derived from a study involving middle-aged or elderly adults, for example.

The Sport Spectator Identification Scale has also gained notoriety on an international level. According to Wann, the SSIS "has been used successfully in approximately 100 studies of sport fans and has been translated into several languages" (Wann & Pierce, 2003). Since its inception in 1993, the SSIS has "gained wide spread use in the sport psychology literature" (Wann & Pierce, 2003).

In addition to the items from the SSIS, the questionnaire given to each of the study's participants includes items regarding Nnamdi Asomugha. Two of these items are intended to measure the participants' awareness of Asomugha as a player and their awareness of his off-the-field contributions. These items were developed specifically for this study. They are scored on a Likert scale like the SSIS items, but the scale is composed of five options instead of seven. Also, the anchors are different: rather than "Not at all" and "Very," the anchors for these items are "Strongly Disagree" (1) and "Strongly Agree" (5).

The two additional items that pertain to Asomugha are designed to measure participants' feelings toward him as a player and as a person. These items, like the aforementioned awareness

items, are measured on a 5-point Likert scale with anchors of "Strongly Disagree" (1) and "Strongly Agree" (5). These two items were also developed specifically for this study.

Lastly, the questionnaire is designed to measure future behavior of the participants. A portion of a model developed by Trail in 2003 was used to determine this. The relevant section of this model consists of four team-specific items that assess what participants are likely to do in the future with regards to the team. These items are as follows: "I am more likely to attend future games," "I am more likely to purchase the team's merchandise," "I am more likely to buy (team name) clothing," and "I am more likely to support the (team name)" (Trail, Fink & Anderson, 2003). For this study, "team name" was replaced with "Eagles." Also, the items were modified to pertain to Asomugha: each item was amended with the phrase "because of Nnamdi Asomugha."

Prior to the 2003 study in which these items were first used, the model that contains them had not been empirically tested. However, the model was "derived from a review of previous research" (Trail, Fink & Anderson, 2003). Trail had previously developed the Theoretical Model of Sport Spectator Consumption Behavior in 2000. This model "hypothesized a sequence of relationships for the six general factors that would influence intended sport spectator consumption behavior" (Trail, Fink & Anderson, 2003). One of these factors is labeled as individual motives. Trail writes that "most of these motives are based on social and psychological needs: vicarious achievement, acquisition of knowledge, aesthetics, social interaction, drama/excitement, escape (relation), family, physical attractiveness of participants, and quality of physical skill of the participants" (Trail, Fink & Anderson, 2003). According to Trail, Fink & Anderson, "Substantial evidence supports the idea that most of the above sport spectator motives are correlated" (2003). Therefore, while the four specific items used in the

current study had not been tested by Trail prior to 2003, Trail has developed reliable models and theories in the past. The future behavior items could thus be viewed as having expert validity.

The customized instrument for this study can be found in the appendix following the reference pages at the end of the study.

Administration of Instrument and Data Collection

In February and March of 2012, the questionnaire was given to both groups in the study: undergraduate students enrolled in a sports-related class at the University of Arkansas, and undergraduate students enrolled in a similar course at Temple University. The initial estimated number of participants in each group was 100, meaning that the total number of participants in the study should have been close to 200. In February, 120 copies of the questionnaire were mailed to Dr. Jeremy Jordan at Temple University; there were several "extras" included in order to achieve a sample size as close to 100 as possible. Dr. Jordan was instructed to distribute the questionnaires to undergraduate students who were enrolled in classes related to sports management.

While the materials intended for the Temple students were in transit, the questionnaires intended for the Arkansas students were delivered. These questionnaires were distributed to three different classes; students who were enrolled in two of these classes were advised to only complete the questionnaire once. The questionnaires were hand-delivered to students individually, starting from the front of the classroom and moving toward the back. Upon finishing the questionnaires, the students approached the front of the classroom and placed the completed questionnaires in a stack on a table. The classes completed 22, 26, and 31 questionnaires, respectively, combining for a sample size of 79 students.

After these 79 completed questionnaires were collected from Arkansas students, the completed questionnaires from Temple arrived in the mail. In all, 82 Temple students participated in the study. Because this sample size was very close to the sample size obtained from classes at Arkansas, it was determined that no more questionnaires would need to be distributed to Arkansas students. It would make more sense to compare 79 neutral questionnaires with 82 local questionnaires than to increase the neutral sample size to 100 without increasing the local sample size.

Following the collection of all completed questionnaires – 161 in all – the answers provided by the students were compiled in a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. The items of the questionnaire composed the columns of the spreadsheet, while the students and their answers composed the rows. For each student, there was a maximum of 18 pieces of information collected (market, demographic information, responses to 14 questionnaire items). Some students chose to leave certain items blank. After each student's information was compiled in this spreadsheet, the content was exported to SPSS for data analysis.

Data Analysis

The data collected from the students who participated in the study were analyzed in SPSS 19.0. To test H1 – which states that participants within Asomugha's local region will show higher awareness of his off-the field contributions than participants in a neutral region, and that these local participants will have stronger opinions than the neutral participants about Asomugha as a player and a person – the scores of the awareness and positive feelings items on the questionnaire (Awr1, Awr2, Pos1, Pos2) were considered for each group. It was anticipated that the mean of each of these scores would be higher for the local market participants.

For H2, which states that there will be a positive correlation between identification level and the participants' feelings toward Asomugha and their awareness of his off-the-field contributions, the mean answers to Awr2 and the TeamID items were considered together. If there is a correlation here, it can be said that those who identify with the Eagles more know more about what Asomugha does off the field.

To test H3, which states that the local market participants will be more likely than the neutral region participants to engage in future behavior supporting the Eagles based on what they know about Asomugha, the mean scores of the future behavior items (FB1-FB4) were calculated. It was expected that the scores on each item would be higher for those in the local market.

Chapter 4 – Findings

During data analysis, SPSS was used to interpret and illustrate the feedback provided by the study's participants. The data were assessed with respect to the study's hypotheses, which state that local participants will feel more positively toward and be more aware of Asomugha both on and off the field; identification will be positively related to the participants' feelings toward Asomugha and awareness of his off-the-field contributions; and local participants will be more likely than neutral market participants to support the Eagles knowing about Asomugha. A normal distribution was assumed for both the neutral and local samples.

Descriptive Statistics

The first data that were analyzed were the descriptive statistics, or demographic information for the study's participants. Overall, 161 students completed the questionnaire. Included in this group of 161 students were 115 males (71.4%) and 46 females (28.6%). 59 of these students identified themselves as seniors (36.6%), while 76 were classified as juniors (47.2%). Underclassmen were not as widely represented, as there were 25 sophomores (15.5%) and just one freshman (0.6%) who participated in the study. The maximum age of all the participants in the study was 33 years, while the mean age was 21.09 years.

Cross tabulations of demographic information were also computed in SPSS. This made it possible to see how many students of each class and gender composed each sample. In the 79-student sample from the University of Arkansas, 51 of the participants were males (64.6%). The remaining 28 students were females (35.4%). In regards to class, 37 of the 79 students were seniors (46.8%). There were also 27 juniors (34.2%), 14 sophomores (17.7%), and one freshman (1.3%).

In the sample from Temple University, there was a greater relative percentage of male students than the Arkansas sample: 64 of the 82 students, or 78%, were males. Just 18 students were females (22%). The class that was represented the most in the Temple sample was the junior class: 49 of the 82 respondents (59.8%) were juniors. 22 students were seniors (26.8%), while 11 were sophomores (13.4%). There were no freshman respondents from Temple.

Overall, there were no surprises in the demographic information provided by the study's participants. It was expected that most of the students would be upperclassmen, given that most undergraduate students take classes to meet general education requirements in their first few semesters. Also, it was anticipated that the majority of the participants would be males. Males generally outnumber females within collegiate sports management programs. According to the "Women in Sport Management" club at the University of Massachusetts, "at the undergraduate level, women account for only 17.5% of the Sport Management majors at UMASS" (2002). Though this data from the University of Massachusetts is somewhat dated, the distribution of male and female participants in the current study shows that the field is still primarily composed of male students. The descriptive statistics from the study are detailed in Tables 1-4.

Table 1

Frequency and Percentage of Participants by Class

Class	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative percent
Freshman	1	.6	.6
Sophomore	25	15.5	16.1
Junior	76	47.2	63.4
Senior	59	36.6	100.0
Total	161	100.0	

Table 2

Frequency and Percentage of Participants by Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative percent
Male	115	71.4	71.4
Female	46	28.6	100.0
Total	161	100.0	

Table 3

Cross Tabulations of Class and Market

Class		Market Neutral	Local	Total
Freshman	Count	1	0	1
	% in market	1.3%	.0%	.6%
Sophomore	Count	14	11	25
	% in market	17.7%	13.4%	15.5%
Junior	Count	27	49	76
	% in market	34.2%	59.8%	47.2%
Senior	Count	37	22	59
	% in market	46.8%	26.8%	36.6%
Total	Count	79	82	161
	% in market	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Table 4

Cross Tabulations of Gender and Market

Gender		Market Neutral	Local	Total
Male	Count	51	64	115
	% in market	64.6%	78.0%	71.4%
Female	Count	28	18	46
	% in market	35.4%	22.0%	28.6%
Total	Count	79	82	161
	% in market	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Team Identification

Following the analysis of the descriptive statistics, the team identification data were analyzed. As stated in one of the hypotheses earlier, it was expected that the participants from Temple University would exhibit higher levels of identification with the Philadelphia Eagles due to their proximity to the city. In the questionnaire, the six items that compose the Sport Spectator Identification Scale (SSIS) determined the participants' team identification levels.

The team identification answers were also totaled and averaged for each market. The neutral market participants averaged a total of 10.89 on the 6 team identification items, whereas the local market participants averaged a total of 28.55. The standard deviation among the neutral market participants was 6.27, while the local market participants had a standard deviation of 14.70. The results indicated a significant negative effect for market, $t(159) = -9.847$, $p < .001$.

The first item that determined participants' level of identification with the Eagles (TeamID1) was: "How strongly do you see yourself as a fan of the Eagles?" For each SSIS item, respondents were to indicate their answer by selecting a number on an 8-point Likert scale. For this particular question, a response of 1 would indicate that the participant does not see himself or herself as a fan of the Eagles at all; a response of 8 would indicate that the participant very strongly sees himself or herself as a fan of the team. Among students in the neutral market, the responses to this question yielded a mean score of 2.06 and a standard deviation of 1.68. Among students in the local market, the mean score was 5.02 with a standard deviation of 2.84. As expected, the mean of the local market scores was much higher than the mean of the neutral market scores.

The second item from the SSIS that determined team identification in the study (TeamID2) was: "How strongly do your friends see you as a fan of the Eagles?" For this

question, the mean scores for both groups were lower than the mean scores for the first question. The mean score for the neutral market was 1.78, while mean score for the local market was 4.84. The standard deviations were 1.39 and 2.75, respectively.

The next item from the SSIS used in the study (TeamID3) was: "During the season, how closely do you follow the Eagles via *any* of the following: in person, by television, by radio, by televised news, or by newspaper?" This question turned out to be quite polarizing, as it yielded the neutral market's second lowest mean score (1.39) and the local market's highest mean score (5.59). Interestingly, the responses to this question also yielded each group's second lowest standard deviation (.92 and 2.49, respectively).

The fourth item from the SSIS used in the study (TeamID4) was: "How important is being a fan of the Eagles?" The mean score of the neutral market participants was 1.92. Among the local market participants, the mean score was 4.40. The standard deviation among the neutral market scores was 1.62, while the standard deviation among local market scores was 2.78.

The next item on the questionnaire from the SSIS (TeamID5) was: "How much do you dislike the greatest rivals of the Eagles?" This question yielded the highest mean score for the neutral market participants (2.44). For the local market participants, the mean score was 5.06. The standard deviations for the samples were 1.74 and 2.90, respectively; the standard deviation for the local market was the highest of all the standard deviations associated with the questionnaire's team identification items.

The final item from the SSIS on the questionnaire (TeamID6) was: "How often do you display the Eagles' name or insignia at your place of work, where you live, or on your clothing?" This question yielded the lowest mean scores for both the neutral market and local market

participants. The mean score for the neutral market students was 1.28, while the mean score for the local market students was 3.63. The standard deviations for this question were also the lowest for both groups: .83 and 2.41, respectively.

The data associated with team identification are presented in Table 5.

Table 5

Composite Team Identification Data by Market

Variable	Market	N	Mean	Std. deviation	Std. error of mean
TeamIDComp	Neutral	79	10.89	6.27	.71
	Local	82	28.55	14.70	1.62

Awareness

In addition to demographic information and team identification levels, the study's questionnaire also measured participants' awareness of Asomugha's on-the-field success and off-the-field contributions. There were two items that measured this, and each was scored on a 5-point Likert scale. An answer of 1 would indicate that the participant strongly disagreed with the statement, while an answer of 5 would indicate that he or she strongly agreed with the statement.

The first item that measured awareness of Asomugha (Awr1) was: "I am aware of Nnamdi Asomugha's individual success in the NFL." The mean score for neutral market participants was 2.56, and the standard deviation was 1.58. The mean score for the local market participants was much higher at 4.05, while the standard deviation was smaller at 1.19.

The other item on the questionnaire that measured awareness of Asomugha (Awr2) was: "I am aware of Nnamdi Asomugha's charitable contributions off the field." Both the mean scores were lower than on the first awareness item: the neutral market participants' mean score

was 1.87, while the local participants' mean score was 2.98. The standard deviations were 1.16

and 1.47, respectively. The awareness data derived from the participants' answers are presented

in Table.

Table 6

Awareness Data by Market

Item	Market	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error of Mean
Awr1	Neutral	79	2.56	1.58	.18
	Local	82	4.05	1.19	.13
Awr2	Neutral	79	1.87	1.16	.13
	Local	82	2.98	1.47	.16

Positive Feelings

Participants in the study were also asked to assess their levels of positive feelings toward

Asomugha as a player and as a person. As was the case with awareness, there were two items on

the questionnaire designed to gauge how the students felt about Asomugha. These items were

also measured on the same 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree).

The first item that was designed to measure the participants' positive feelings toward

Asomugha (Pos1) was: "I feel positively toward Nnamdi Asomugha as a player." Among the

neutral market participants, the mean score was 2.56; the standard deviation was 1.36. The mean

score for the local market participants was 3.72, while the standard deviation was 1.14.

The second item that was intended to measure how participants felt toward Asomugha

(Pos2) was: "I feel positively toward Nnamdi Asomugha as a person." Each market's score for

this item was similar to the score of the previous item: the neutral market mean score was 2.47,

and the local market mean score was 3.63. The standard deviations were 1.32 and 1.21, respectively.

The participants' scores on these items are shown in Table 7.

Table 7

Positive Feelings Data by Market

Item	Market	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pos1	Neutral	79	2.5570	1.35634	.15260
	Local	82	3.7195	1.13610	.12546
Pos2	Neutral	79	2.4684	1.31885	.14838
	Local	82	3.6341	1.21220	.13387

Future Behavior

The last concept assessed by the questionnaire was future behavior. This was measured with four items developed by Trail in 2003. Each item designed to measure future behavior was scored on a 7-point Likert scale. A response of 1 would indicate that the participant strongly disagrees with the statement, while a response of 7 would indicate that he or she strongly agrees with the statement.

The first item that measured future behavior (FB1) was: "I am more likely to attend future Eagles games because of Nnamdi Asomugha." The mean score for the neutral market participants was 1.82, while the mean score for the local market participants was 2.78. The respective standard deviations were 1.50 and 1.60.

The second item designed to measure future behavior (FB2) was: "I am more likely to purchase Eagles merchandise because of Nnamdi Asomugha." Among neutral market participants, the mean score was 1.47 with a standard deviation of 1.15. In the local market, the responses yielded a mean score of 2.46 and a standard deviation of 1.51.

The next item that measured future behavior (FB3) was: "I am more likely to buy Eagles clothing because of Nnamdi Asomugha." The neutral market participants' mean score was 1.46 with a standard deviation of 1.08. The local market participants' mean score was 2.35 with a standard deviation of 1.45.

The last item that was designed to measure future behavior (FB4) was: "I am more likely to support the Eagles because of Nnamdi Asomugha." The mean score for the neutral market participants was 1.91, and the mean score for the local market participants was 2.51. The standard deviations were 1.61 and 1.59, respectively.

The data for future behavior are shown in Table 8.

Table 8

Future Behavior Data for Neutral and Local Market Participants

Item	Market	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. error of the mean
FB1	Neutral	79	1.82	1.50	.17
	Local	81	2.78	1.60	.18
FB2	Neutral	79	1.47	1.15	.13
	Local	81	2.46	1.51	.17
FB3	Neutral	79	1.46	1.08	.12
	Local	81	2.35	1.45	.16
FB4	Neutral	79	1.91	1.61	.18
	Local	81	2.51	1.59	.18

Correlations

After the above data were gathered, correlations between certain variables were analyzed. Specifically, the relationships between team identification and awareness, between team identification and positive feelings, and between awareness and positive feelings were assessed. Prior to analyzing these correlations, composite scores of team identification, awareness and positive feelings were determined for each participant.

The mean composite score for team identification (n=161) was 19.88 (maximum possible: 48) with a standard deviation of 14.39. The mean composite score for awareness (n=161) was 5.76 (maximum of 10) with a standard deviation of 2.70. The mean composite score for positive feelings (n=161) was 6.21 (maximum of 10) with a standard deviation of 2.67.

Correlations between these variables were calculated using the aforementioned composite scores. The correlation between team identification and awareness was found to be significant at the 0.01 level (r=.621). The relationship between team identification and positive feelings was also significant at the same level (r=.633). Additionally, there was a significant relationship between awareness and positive feelings at the 0.01 level (r=.846). These correlations and the composite scores of each variable are detailed in Tables 9 and 10.

Table 9

Composite Scores of Team Identification, Awareness and Positive Feelings

Variable	Mean	Std. deviation	N
TeamIDComp	19.88	14.39	161
AwrComp	5.75	2.70	161
PosComp	6.21	2.67	161

Table 10

Correlations Between Team Identification, Awareness and Positive Feelings – Population

		TeamIDComp	AwrComp	PosComp
TeamIDComp	Correlation	1	.621**	.633**
	Significance	--	.000	.000
	N	161	161	161
AwrComp	Correlation	.621**	1	.846**
	Significance	.000	--	.000
	N	161	161	161
PosComp	Correlation	.633**	.846**	1
	Significance	.000	.000	--
	N	161	161	161

Note: ** indicates significance at the .05 level

Correlations by Market

Correlations between team identification, awareness and positive feelings were also analyzed by market. For the neutral market sample (n=79), team identification and awareness were significantly related at the 0.01 level (r=.493). Team identification and positive feelings were also significantly related in this sample at the 0.01 level (r=.482). Finally, there was a significant relationship between awareness and positive feelings at the 0.01 level (r=.827).

In the local market sample (n=82), there was a significant correlation between team identification and awareness at the 0.01 level (r=.517). There was also a significant relationship between team identification and positive feelings at the same level (r=.621). Additionally, awareness and positive feelings were significantly related at the 0.01 level (r=.786). The correlations between these variables are shown in Tables 11 and 12.

Table 11

Correlations Between Team Identification, Awareness and Positive Feelings – Neutral Market

		TeamIDComp	AwrComp	PosComp
TeamIDComp	Correlation	1	.493**	.482**
	Significance	--	.000	.000
	N	79	79	79
AwrComp	Correlation	.493**	1	.827**
	Significance	.000	--	.000
	N	79	79	79
PosComp	Correlation	.482**	.827**	1
	Significance	.000	.000	--
	N	79	79	79

Note: ** indicates significance at the .05 level

Table 12

Correlations Between Team Identification, Awareness and Positive Feelings – Local Market

		TeamIDComp	AwrComp	PosComp
TeamIDComp	Correlation	1	.517**	.621**
	Significance	--	.000	.000
	N	82	82	82
AwrComp	Correlation	.517**	1	.786**
	Significance	.000	--	.000
	N	82	82	82
PosComp	Correlation	.621**	.786**	1
	Significance	.000	.000	--
	N	82	82	82

Note: ** indicates significance at the .05 level

Conclusion

The results of the present study support the three hypotheses: that local region participants are more aware of Asomugha's off-the-field contributions – and feel more positively toward him as a person – than neutral region participants; that there is a positive correlation between identification level and both participants' awareness of Asomugha's off-the-field contributions and their feelings toward him; and that participants within Asomugha's local region are more likely than those in neutral regions to support the Eagles based on what they know about Asomugha. All of these hypotheses were supported by statistically significant mean differences and correlations.

Chapter 5 – Discussion and Implications

The statistical findings of this study were consistent with preliminary expectations. The items on the questionnaire that were derived from the Sport Spectator Identification Scale revealed that the students in Asomugha's local market were much more highly identified with the Eagles than students at the University of Arkansas were. This was expected, given the Temple students' proximity to the city of Philadelphia. The neutral market participants' highest mean score on the team identification items (2.44) was in response to the following question: "How much do you dislike the greatest rivals of the Eagles?" This could be because there is a decent representation of Dallas Cowboys fans in the state of Arkansas, and the Cowboys and Eagles share rivals such as the New York Giants and Washington Redskins. In contrast, the lowest mean score for the local market participants (3.63) came on question six: "How often do you display the Eagles' name or insignia at your place of work, where you live, or on your clothing?" This is not particularly surprising, as this item seems to be less associated with actually being an Eagles fan and more associated with how expressive these people are in regards to their fandom.

Hypotheses Results

The study's findings support the first hypothesis, which predicted that the local market participants would have higher mean scores than the neutral market participants in regards to both awareness of and positive feelings toward Asomugha. Out of a maximum score of 5, the neutral market participants' scores on the questionnaire's items measuring awareness were 2.56 (on the field) and 1.87 (off the field). The local market participants' scores for these same items were 4.05 and 2.98, respectively. On the items regarding positive feelings, the neutral market

participants' scores were 2.56 ("I feel positively toward Nnamdi Asomugha as a player") and 2.47 ("I feel positively toward Nnamdi Asomugha as a person"). The local market participants' scores on these items were 3.72 and 3.63, respectively.

Though no exact numbers were predicted, it was expected that both local market scores would be higher than those from the neutral market, and that the "on the field" awareness scores would be higher than the "off the field" awareness scores. The local market participants' overall awareness was expected to be higher because of their location and subsequent media exposure. They are presumably subject to more coverage of Asomugha and the Eagles than the neutral market participants, and their awareness scores reflect this. It is likely that the local market participants scored higher on the items regarding positive feelings for similar reasons. An additional factor that may have influenced the local market participants' answers to these items is team identification. If the local market participants are highly identified with the Eagles, they most likely feel positively toward Asomugha because he is a member of the team. This idea is supported by the significant correlation discovered between team identification and positive feelings within the local market sample (r=.621).

The study's second hypothesis, which predicted that there would be a positive correlation between team identification level and both the participants' feelings toward Asomugha and their awareness of his off-the-field contributions, was also supported by the data gathered during the study. With a population of 161 (both samples together), team identification and awareness showed a significant positive relationship of .621; team identification and positive feelings were also significantly related with a correlation of .633. Interestingly, these correlations were within just .12 of each other. Since the aspect of positive feelings is more subjective than awareness, it makes sense that it would be more related with team identification, even if the difference were

minimal. Both variables, however, fit with team identification in that they come about via

exposure to a team and its players. If one chooses to identify with the Eagles, he or she is likely

well versed in team's happenings and circumstances. Likewise, one who identifies with the

Eagles may have a natural tendency to favor the team's players and develop attachments to

certain ones, as many fans do.

This hypothesis is also supported by market-specific correlations. In the neutral market

sample (n=79), team identification and awareness were significantly related with a correlation of

.493. Team identification was also significantly related to positive feelings with a correlation of

.482. While both correlations are significant, the small difference between awareness and

positive feelings may be explained by these students staying up to date on professional sports

without a rooting interest in teams outside of their market. For instance, a student at the

University of Arkansas may recognize that the Eagles have talented playmakers like Michael

Vick and LeSean McCoy without feeling anything particularly positive toward them

individually. This appears to be the case with Asomugha, as well, although the difference in

scores is not very large; most participants who were aware of Asomugha exhibited positive

feelings toward him. This is supported by the significant correlation between awareness and

positive feelings (r=.827).

In the local market (n=82), team identification was significantly related to awareness with

a correlation of .517. Team identification and positive feelings were also significantly related

with a correlation of .621. Though the team identification and awareness correlation exceeded

the team identification and positive feelings correlation in the neutral market, the opposite was

true in the local market. Given that there were many participants in this market who were highly

identified with the Eagles, it makes sense that the positive feelings score would be higher in the

local market than in the neutral market. However, it was unexpected that this score would exceed the awareness score within the local market. This could be explained by the difference in scores of the two "off the field" questions. On the item gauging the participants' awareness of Asomugha's charitable contributions, the local market participants responded with an average score of 2.98. On the item that measured how these participants felt about Asomugha as a person, the average score in the local market was 3.63. This shows that several participants felt positively toward Asomugha as a person without having prior knowledge of his contributions in the community. Because many of the participants in this market indicated that they identified with the Eagles, they could have felt this way simply because Asomugha is a member of the team. Nonetheless, Asomugha was well known and well liked among the local market participants, as the correlation between awareness and positive feelings was .786.

The study's third hypothesis was supported by the data, as well. The participants in the local region scored consistently higher than the neutral region participants on the future behavior items. The respective means for the local region participants were 2.78, 2.46, 2.35 and 2.51, while the neutral region participants showed means of 1.82, 1.47, 1.46 and 1.91. Not surprisingly, this shows that participants in Philadelphia are more likely than participants from a neutral region to support the Eagles based on what they know about Asomugha, as H3 predicted.

Overall, the study's hypotheses were supported by the data. The students at Temple were more aware of Asomugha and felt more positively toward him than the students at Arkansas. Also, there was a positive correlation between team identification level and both the participants' feelings toward Asomugha and their awareness of his off-the-field contributions. Finally, local participants showed that they were more likely than neutral participants to support the Eagles based on their knowledge of Asomugha.

Data Interpretation and Implications

The results of this study support the idea that those in the Eagles' local region are subject to more inclusive and in-depth media coverage regarding the team's players, while the media coverage in neutral regions is more diluted and limited to on-the-field performance. These findings were expected, but the statistical support could make them useful to professional sports teams and leagues in the future. The findings could assist these entities in the context of image. As discussed in the literature review, there are prevalent stereotypes regarding athletes today. When people understand what certain athletes contribute away from the field, however, they feel more positively toward these athletes as people; this was the case with Asomugha in this study. Theoretically, then, increased awareness of professional athletes' charitable contributions on a more widespread level would make the overall image of athletes and sports leagues more positive.

These potential implications should inspire sports teams and leagues to actively promote the community efforts of their players on a national level. Many players have Web sites for their foundations and charities. However, much of the awareness of these sites comes from local coverage (ex. newspaper). Unless people are actively seeking stories that detail players' charitable contributions, they are rarely exposed to such content. One possible remedy for this is the placement of such stories among the top stories on league pages such as NFL.com. The site is a reliable source of information for many NFL fans, and it gets more traffic than any of the individual NFL team Web sites. If this were done, people could find out about Asomugha's efforts without having to browse the Eagles' Web site. Another similar option involves the promotion of these off-the-field stories on major sports media Web sites such as ESPN.com and SportsIllustrated.com. If someone is a fan of many professional sports, he or she may not

navigate the individual league pages; a one-stop site like the aforementioned ones would be a more convenient destination for gathering information. This option would give fans opportunities to learn about athletes from multiple sports who contribute to their communities. The Internet is not the only outlet through which the promotion of these stories would be effective. ESPN's SportsCenter is one of television's most popular programs; devoting a segment to charitable deeds during each show would greatly increase fans' awareness of the efforts that athletes are making away from their respective sports.

Another potential implication of the data is more support for players' individual charities. It has been shown here that if fans are more aware of what a player does off the field, they feel more positively toward him. In addition to just liking this player, perhaps these fans will help his cause by choosing to donate money to his charity. This is especially true for fans within a given local region, as they showed to be more likely to engage in future team-related behavior than fans located outside of the region.

In summary, the primary takeaway that sports teams and leagues could use from this study's findings is that an extended reach – and subsequent promotion of charitable deeds – through various media could improve their image among the general public. In the cases of the NFL and NBA, the recent labor disagreements disillusioned some fans as players and owners struggled to come to a financial agreement in each instance. Promoting charitable actions of players would appear to be a timely move for these leagues. If done on a national level, the images of the athletes, teams and sports as a whole would become more positive. As Walker and Kent (2009) observed in their study of two NFL teams, corporate social responsibility (CSR), including charitable activities, was an important predictor of corporate reputation as well as two types of patronage intentions, word of mouth and merchandise consumption. The results of this

study suggest similar results might be achieved based on the charitable activities of an individual athlete affiliated with a team, as awareness and positive feelings (r=.846) were highly correlated for the population. Future studies might examine the relationship between future behavior intentions and the variables in the present study.

Future Research

In future research, perhaps researchers could assess the effectiveness of a given team's push to promote its players' off-the-field contributions. The researchers could find the fan base's collective levels of awareness and positive feelings, and then find these levels again after a team such as the Eagles launches a campaign designed to increase both of these. This would help to show whether or not such a campaign would be successful throughout the NFL or another sports league.

If a team employs such a campaign in the future, researchers could also test the levels of donations given to the team's players' charities. This would give more concrete evidence of fans being positively affected by knowledge of players doing good deeds away from the field.

There are a number of ways to test whether or not a campaign promoting charitable deeds would work; two possibilities are as follows: conducting pretests and posttests on fans' awareness and positive feelings levels, and conducting pretests and posttests on the level of donations given to players' charities. There is still plenty of work to be done in this field, and if teams decide to better promote their players' good deeds, the effectiveness of such campaigns can be tested and perhaps strongly supported.

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Appendix – Instrument

Please indicate your current age.	
Please indicate your classification:	Freshman Sophomore Junior Senior
Please indicate your gender.	Male Female

	Not at all							Very
How strongly do you see yourself as a fan of the Philadelphia Eagles?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
How strongly do your friends see you as a fan of the Eagles?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
During the season, how closely do you follow the Eagles via *any* of the following: in person, by television, by radio, by televised news, or by newspaper?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
How important is being a fan of the Eagles?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
How much do you dislike the greatest rivals of the Eagles?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
How often do you display the Eagles' name or insignia at your place of work, where you live, or on your clothing?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8

	Strongly Disagree				Strongly Agree
I am aware of Nnamdi Asomugha's individual success in the NFL.	1	2	3	4	5
I feel positively toward Nnamdi Asomugha as a player.	1	2	3	4	5
I am aware of Nnamdi Asomugha's charitable contributions off the field.	1	2	3	4	5
I feel positively toward Nnamdi Asomugha as a person.	1	2	3	4	5

	Strongly Disagree						Strongly Agree
I am more likely to attend future Eagles games because of Nnamdi Asomugha.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I am more likely to purchase Eagles merchandise because of Nnamdi Asomugha.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I am more likely to buy Eagles clothing because of Nnamdi Asomugha.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I am more likely to support the Eagles because of Nnamdi Asomugha.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7