OUTLINE OF THE STUDY

1 Recruiting nine fans with high loyalty who represent different fan styles by a Web survey followed by a group interview

2 Observing their behavior in the stadium, 3 games in July, August, and September

3 Conducting depth interview for understanding how they have come to show their current behavior

4 Creating fan-loyalty evolution diagram for each participant, or fan-history

5 Integrating the nine fan histories to understand common paths to evolve fan loyalty

STEP 1 RECRUITING

- Recruiting nine fans who represent different fan styles by a Web survey followed by a group interview
  - Recruiting high-loyalty fans from the members of the Fighters’ fan club who have different attitudes towards professional baseball, cheering, and merchandising, and having visited the Sapporo dome more than a few times since the Fighters moved to Sapporo by conducting a Web survey.
  - There were 73,386 Fighters fan club members as of 20 June 2014, of whom approximately 30,000 can access the Internet by PC. The study focused on this population of fans. The nine selected fans were supposed to represent different “fan styles” and have different histories in reaching the current fan status, i.e., loyalty status.

STEP 2 OBSERVATION

- Have the selected participants visit the Sapporo dome three times to watch designated Fighters-hosted games.
  - DVID camera recorder located three fans in front of the participants’ seats to capture their game-viewing behavior.
  - Small ear-mounted ODC camera to record the scene they are viewing.
  - Phono-microphone to record their vocalizations
  - Electrocardiograph and accelerometer to capture their physiological responses to the events of the game.

STEP 3 DEPTH INTERVIEW

- Conduct structured interviews after each visit to the Sapporo dome
  - Replaying the behavior records, the viewing-scene records, and the broadcast TV video of the game for the characteristic events
  - Including scoring scenes, field events between innings, and events for which the participants exhibited remarkable changes in physiological data.
  - Each participant was interviewed three times with different purposes
    - First interview for understanding how the participant currently enjoys the game (July)
    - Second interview for understanding how the participant developed his/her loyalty from the pre-fan stage several years ago, to the fan stage a few years ago, and then to the current responding stage (August)
    - Third interview for understanding what triggers the state changes and what factors help them retain each fan stage (September)

STEP 4 DIAGRAM

STEP 5 FAN LOYALTY EVOLUTION MODEL

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

NOBODY KNOWS WHY

Nobody knows accurately why the Fighters have achieved such a great success. This is a long-standing problem in the service industry that blocks the increase of its productivity.

PART OF JAPAN’S NATIONAL PROJECT TO SUPPORT SERVICE INDUSTRIES

As such, the Japanese government, the Ministry of Economy, Trade, and Industry (METI), has decided to fund research and development projects that support service providers implement services more efficiently by understanding the successful practices based on scientific and technological underpinnings.

THE FIGHTERS PROJECT IS...

The Fight project scientifically examines the understanding of why the fans respectively come to the Sapporo dome to watch the Fighters’ games and how they enjoy these experiences of fan loyalty, and maturing forth understanding with the web that the Fighters provided.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

This paper reports a cognitive-chronistic ethno-ography study that analyzed sociability to understand the situations of fans and fans’ experiences and changes from the pre-fan stage to the fan stage, and ultimately to the loyal fan stage.