EXPLORING THE IMPORTANCE OF CONSUMER ENGAGEMENT FOR SUCCESSFUL SPORTS CLUB PROJECTS

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Abstract: A sport management project refers to a venture or an initiative undertaken by a sports organization, team, or club to improve the overall performance and success of their operations. These projects can include a different range of activities, such as developing and implementing new strategies, launching new programs, creating a new fan engagement program to increase support and loyalty, and more. This study examines the influence of sport's fan engagement on trust, satisfaction, and loyalty in sports club social networks. Our findings suggest that both fan identification with the sports club's brand and motivation play significant roles in determining the level of engagement. Specifically, we have found that consumers who have a strong identification with the club and are extrinsically motivated to engage with the club's social network exhibit higher levels of trust, satisfaction, and loyalty. These results underscore the importance of fostering a strong sense of identification and motivation among fans in order to promote positive consumer attitudes towards sports club social networks. The paper provides recommendations for sports club marketing managers on how to use social networks to improve project's success.

Keywords: Consumer engagement; Project needs; Sports marketing; Loyalty.

1. INTRODUCTION

A sport club project refers to a venture or initiative undertaken by a sports club, organization, or a team. These projects can include a wide array of activities, such as building new facilities, launching new programs or teams, improving existing teams or facilities, and more (Gammelsaeter & Anagnostopoulos, 2022). The goal of a sport club project is typically to improve the overall performance and success of the club, as well as to increase engagement and support from fans, members, and the community (De Knop, Hoecke & De Bosscher, 2004).

There are various factors that can influence the success of a sport club project, including funding, resources, planning, and execution. It is important for sport clubs to conduct thorough research and planning before launching a project, with the aim of ensuring that it is well-designed, well-executed, and able to achieve its goals. Additionally, clubs should be mindful of the factors that influence consumer engagement and take steps to build strong relationships with fans and the community in order to secure their support for the project (Dessart, 2015; Gammelsaeter & Anagnostopoulos, 2022; Heinonen, 2011).

In the project field of sport industry, the unique characteristics of sports have been determined, which indicate the importance of applying specific management techniques to sports organizations (Stewart & Smith, 1999). A

unique feature of sports is the presence of a large number of consumers who show an irrational passion for a sports club, competition or athlete (Trkulja, Stojanović & Jelić, 2018). Stewart and Smith (1999) suggest that sports hold a symbolic meaning for consumers that is unique compared to other economic and social activities. This is because sports performance results and the celebration of team achievements evoke distinct reactions from consumers (Stewart & Smith, 1999). The desire to understand consumer behavior in sports has been in the center of attention of sports club employees for a long time. The key to successful business in modern conditions is related to satisfying consumers by stimulating their desire to buy tickets for a sports event, purchase sports props, and reward loyal fans of a sports club (Wann et al., 2001). Also, the application of business mindset and using different management practices can help maintain tradition and connection with sentimental aspects of sports consumption and consumer engagement, but it is not necessarily a requirement. Other factors such as the target audience, industry trends, and external factors may also influence the approach to maintaining tradition and connection. Ultimately, it depends on the specific goals and values of the organization and its stakeholders. Consumer engagement refers to the level of interaction and involvement that a consumer has with a product or a brand (ARF, 2006). Project management, conversely, is the process of planning, organizing, and executing a specific short-term project to achieve a specific goal or objective (Obradović, 2022).

To achieve a successful business, it is important to not only attract new customers, but also retain current ones (Dibb, Farhangmehr & Simkin, 2001). This is where consumer engagement, loyalty, and satisfaction come into play, as they form the cornerstone for creating a positive brand image and establishing a loyal customer base. Hence, the purpose of this paper is to examine the impact of consumer engagement on trust, satisfaction, and loyalty in sports club social networks to create successful sport club projects. In terms of a product or brand, consumer engagement can be thought of as one aspect of the overall project. The project manager would be responsible for ensuring that

the project is on track to meet the goals and objectives related to consumer engagement, such as increasing brand awareness or improving customer satisfaction. Conducting market research, developing a marketing strategy, and implementing tactics to increase consumer engagement are all important tasks that can help businesses maintain tradition and connection with nostalgic aspects of sports consumption. By understanding the target audience's preferences and interests, businesses can develop strategies that resonate with consumers and foster a sense of tradition and a connection with the sport. Implementing tactics such as social media campaigns, fan experiences, and merchandise can also help increase engagement and maintain the sport's traditions (Brodie et al., 2013; Dessart, Veloutsou and Morgan-Thomas, 2015).

This paper aims to explore the impact of consumer engagement on trust, satisfaction, and loyalty within sports club social networks. Consumer engagement is a key factor in fostering trust, satisfaction, and loyalty among fans and customers, and this study will specifically examine its influence within the context of sports clubs and their social networks.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

In order to successfully manage a sport management project, it is important to have a clear understanding of the goals, objectives, and key performance indicators for the project. Additionally, effective communication, collaboration and leadership are crucial to align all stakeholders and to achieve the project's goals (De Knop, Hoecke & De Bosscher, 2004).

The project manager would be responsible for ensuring that the project is on track to meet the goals and objectives related to consumer engagement, such as increasing brand awareness or improving customer satisfaction. This can include tasks such as conducting market research, developing a marketing strategy, and implementing tactics to increase consumer engagement.

Social media has become an essential tool for sport clubs to engage with their fans and

followers. Social media provides a platform for sport clubs to create meaningful relationships with their consumers, as well as promoting their brand and products (Annamalai et al., 2021). By engaging with consumers through social media, sport clubs can gather valuable feedback, and offer personalized content to meet the needs of their followers (Ferreira, Crespo & Mendes, 2022). Consumer engagement occurs in both online and offline settings, but the growth of social media has led to a rise in virtually engaged consumers (Vale & Fernandes, 2018). Several studies have examined the impact of motivation theory in the context of the online environment (Bailey, Bonifield & Elhai, 2021; Muntinga, Moorman & Smit, 2011; van Doorn, 2011; Vale & Fernandes, 2018). The theory of motivation assumes that consumers are actively engaged and interactive when using social networks (Machado et al., 2020; Santos et al., 2022). Thus, it is important to tailor the theory of motivation to better understand consumer engagement on digital platforms.

Consumer engagement can be formed and directed by the consumer's decision oriented towards the object of engagement, such as a brand, product, or a company (Brodie et al., 2011). Analysis of existing research on consumer engagement (Brodie et al., 2011; Dlačić & Primorac, 2022; Gambetti & Graffigna, 2010; Hollebeek, 2011; Marčinko Trkulja, Santos et al., 2022; Vivek, Beatty & Morgan, 2012).

It is visible that the concept of consumer engagement is a multi-faceted construct that has been the subject of extensive research in the marketing field (Bolton, 2011; Hollebeek, 2011; Hollebeek & Chen, 2014; Kuvykaitė & Tarutė, 2015). The research has focused on defining and understanding the dimensions of consumer engagement; behavioural, cognitive and emotional being the most commonly recognized dimensions.

The behavioral dimension focuses on the state of consumer behavior in relation to the object of engagement and the effort and energy put into the interaction. The emotional dimension is concerned with the emotional state and feelings associated with the object of engagement. And finally, the cognitive dimension refers to the level of thought and concentration that a consumer invests in an object of engagement, such as a brand, product, or service (Hollebeek et al., 2014; Hollebeek, 2011).

It is important to note that these dimensions are interrelated, and that research has shown that emotional engagement can have an influence on the level of intensity of the behavioral and cognitive dimensions (Brodie et al., 2013). This highlights the importance of considering the multidimensional nature of consumer engagement when designing marketing strategies or conducting research in the field.

It is important to consider the different sub-dimensions of consumer engagement when conducting research or designing marketing strategies. These sub-dimensions provide a more nuanced understanding of the concept and help to paint a complete picture of the consumer's engagement with a particular object, such as a sports club (Dessart, 2015; Marčinko Trkulja, Dlačić & Primorac, 2022; Marčinko Trkulja, 2021).

The consumer engagement can be seen as consisting of seven sub-dimensions identified by Dessart (2015). They are identified as, attention, absorption, acceptance, enjoyment, enthusiasm, learning, and sharing. These sub-dimensions capture various forms of consumer behaviour that contribute to developing deeper relationship between the consumer and the sports club, surpassing the often-used loyalty metrics such as frequency of visits and purchase behaviour (Dessart, 2015).

While some authors support a one-dimensional perspective of consumer engagement (Catteeuw, Flynn & Vonderhorst, 2007; Pomerantz, 2006), others emphasize the importance of considering other dimensions as well (Gambetti & Graffigna, 2010). This highlights the ongoing debate in the field of consumer engagement research and the need for further research to arrive at a consensus on the most appropriate perspective to take. Nevertheless, it is important to keep in mind the multidimensional nature of consumer engagement when conducting research and designing marketing strategies.

3. RESEARCH HYPOTHESES AND CONCEPTUAL MODEL

The Internet and digital platforms have fundamentally reshaped the way companies and consumers communicate, act, and do business with each other virtually (Acar & Puntoni, 2016; Annamalai et al., 2021). Digital marketing has become part of the marketing strategy. Marketers need to explore and understand how consumers use digital technologies to make decisions, how they choose brands, and how they do business with businesses using digital services (Bailey, Bonifield & Elhai, 2021; Dolan et al., 2016). With the development of the use of the Internet and social networks, the number of consumers participating and doing business in the virtual world is increasing. Activities that take place on the Internet can be grouped according to the meaning that digital platforms have for consumers as a significant source of information, as a means of communication, a place of consumption, or as a place where consumers use digital platforms as a means of social inclusion (Hollebeek, Glynn & Brodie, 2014; Machado et al., 2020). The consumer's behavioral manifestations towards the brand, analyzed outside of the purchase framework, are triggered by motivational factors, and the consumer's engagement is seen as a psychological state that is valued through the degree of the consumer's determination, commitment, absorption, and interaction (Hollebeek, Glynn & Brodie, 2014).

Research has shown that there is a direct correlation among consumer engagement and positive outcomes in the association between customers and a brand or product, including increased satisfaction, trust, and affective loyalty (Brodie et al., 2011; Dessart, Veloutsou & Morgan-Thomas, 2015; Santos et al., 2022). Consumers are more inclined to join the virtual community of a sports club because of a sense of loyalty to the sports club. It is clear that consumers, who are members of the virtual community of a sports brand, already have an established fundamental relationship with the sports brand, which is further stimulated by participating in the virtual community of the brand (Algesheimer, Dholakia & Herrmann, 2005; Marčinko Trkulja, Dlačić & Primorac, 2022). Consumer loyalty has been characterized as a fundamental driver for participation in a virtual community, and consumers join sports club social networks because of a sense of belonging and brand love (McAlexander, Schouten & Koenig, 2002). Thus, increasing consumer engagement can affect increasing consumer satisfaction, trust, and loyalty.

A hypothesis is proposed:
Engaging with sports club fans on social networks can positively influence their motivation and identification with the brand, leading to increased levels of trust, satisfaction, and loyalty among consumers who participate in these networks.

Based on the study of the relevant literature, the following conceptual research model was proposed, shown in Figure 1.
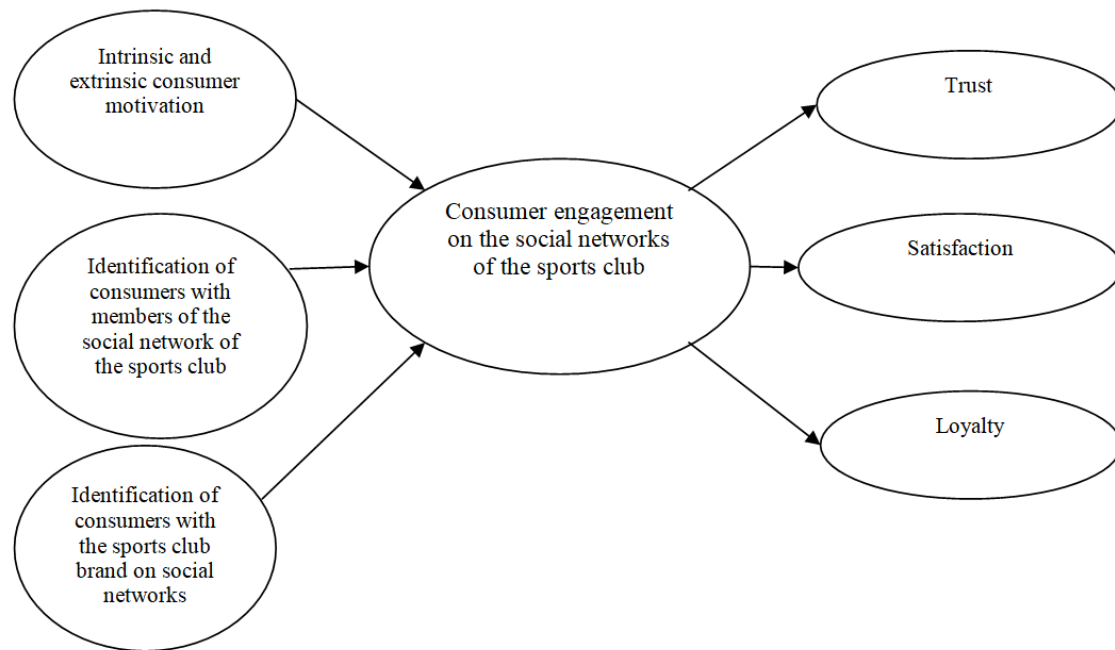
Figure 1: A conceptual model of drivers and outcomes of consumer engagement with sports clubs on social networks

4. EMPIRICAL RESEARCH
4.1 Research methodology

The empirical portion of the research involved administering a survey to both consumers and fans of team sports like football, basketball, and handball sports clubs. The sports groups selected for this study were chosen based on their overall popularity in society, as well as the size of their social media followings. Data was collected through a written questionnaire and an online form that was distributed through www.1ka.si in the period from June to December 2019. The questionnaire used constructs from previous research applied to the study context i.e., group spots. So, intrinsic and extrinsic motivation used a scale developed by (Vale & Fernandes, 2018). Intrinsic motivation integrates four dimensions: information, entertainment, personal identity, and brand love. Extrinsic motivation contains three dimensions: reward, empowerment, integration, and social interaction.

Identification of consumers with members of the social network of the sports club used scale from (Algesheimer, Dholakia & Herrmann, 2005) and Identification of consumers with the sports club brand on social networks used scale from (Popp et al., 2016). Consumer engagement on the social networks of the sports club was measured with scale developed by (Dessart, Veloutsou & Morgan-Thomas, 2016). According to this scale, consumer engagement consists of emotional, behavioral, and cognitive dimensions divided into 7 sub-dimensions: attention and absorption (cognitive dimension), enthusiasm and pleasure (emotional dimension), and sharing, learning and acceptance (behavioural dimension). Trust used a scale developed by (So et al., 2016), Satisfaction was measured with scale developed by (Gummerus et al., 2012) and Loyalty used a scale developed by (Apenes Solem, 2016). All the scales used a seven-point Likert-type scale (from "1 - strongly disagree" to "7 - strongly agree"). Data was analysed using IBM SPSS version 20 and R statistical programs.

4.2 Research results

The research sample includes respondents (322) who follow team sport's social networks of sports clubs (football basketball, and handball). The typical respondent is male (52%), resides in the area of the City of Zagreb (67%, By analysing the age structure, it was determined that half of the respondents (50%), are under 35 years old (63%), have a high school diploma (50.3%), is a student (48%) or

are employed (46%) and play sports recreationally (46%).

To test the proposed research hypothesis a mediation analysis was performed. Hence, 162 separate mediation analyses were carried out, whereby the independent (predictor) variables represented the motivators of engagement on social networks of sports clubs *(Fun, Personal identity, Reward, Empowerment, Information, Integration and social interaction, Brand love)* and both dimensions of identification (*Consumer identification with the members* and *Consumer identification with brand of the social network of the sports club*), the mediator (intervening) variables represented the structure (dimensions) of consumer engagement in the social networks of sports clubs (*Attention, Approval, Absorption, Enjoyment, Enthusiasm and Sharing*). The engagement outcomes of consumers on social

networks of sports clubs (*Trust, Satisfaction and Loyalty*) represented dependent (criterion) variables. In other words, the influence of each individual consumer motivator for participation in social networks of sports clubs and both types of identification, through each individual dimension of consumer engagement in social networks of sports clubs, was tested on each individual outcome of consumer engagement in social networks of sports clubs (*Trust, Satisfaction and Loyalty*).

Within this work, the PROCESS Procedure for SPSS Version 3.5.3 macro was used to assess the indirect effect and test its statistical significance. In the following tables (Table 1, Table 2 and Table 3), the summarized results obtained by running the macro command PROCESS Procedure (Hays, 2018) are presented.

Table 1: The influence of consumer motivators for participating in social networks of sports clubs and both dimensions of identification on consumer trust through the consumer engagement in social networks of sports clubs

Dependent variable	Mediator variable	Independent variable	Indirect effect		95% confidence interval	
			b	Standardized indirect effect	Lower	Top
Trust						
	Enjoyment	Identification with members	0.12	0.12	0.05	0.19
		Brand identification	0.25	0.25	0.16	0.36
		Fun	0.18	0.17	0.12	0.26
		Personal identity	0.24	0.23	0.17	0.32
		Reward	0.13	0.12	0.08	0.18
		Empowerment [a]	-0.17	-0.17	-0.24	-0.10
		Informing	0.07	0.06	0.03	0.11
		Social integration and interaction [a]	-0.12	-0.11	-0.18	-0.06
		Love for the brand	0.10	0.09	0.04	0.16
	Enthusiasm	Identification with members	0.24	0.24	0.17	0.32
		Brand identification	0.21	0.21	0.15	0.28
		Fun	0.29	0.27	0.21	0.39
		Personal identity	0.16	0.16	0.10	0.23
		Reward	0.13	0.12	0.05	0.21
		Empowerment [a]	-0.22	-0.22	-0.30	-0.15
		Informing	0.34	0.31	0.24	0.44
		Social integration and interaction [a]	-0.37	-0.36	-0.48	-0.27
		Love for the brand	0.40	0.39	0.29	0.52
	Sharing	Brand identification	0.19	0.18	0.11	0.27
		Fun	0.11	0.10	0.06	0.16
		Personal identity	0.13	0.13	0.08	0.19
		Reward	0.09	0.09	0.05	0.14
		Empowerment [a]	-0.12	-0.12	-0.20	-0.05

		Social integration and interaction [a]	-0.07	-0.07	-0.11	-0.03
		Love for the brand	0.06	0.06	0.01	0.11
	Attention	Identification with members	0.08	0.08	0.02	0.14
		Brand identification	0.18	0.17	0.08	0.28
		Fun	0.12	0.12	0.07	0.19
		Personal identity	0.14	0.13	0.08	0.20
		Reward	0.05	0.05	0.01	0.09
		Empowerment [a]	-0.10	-0.09	-0.16	-0.04
		Social integration and interaction [a]	-0.07	-0.06	-0.12	-0.02
	Approval	Identification with members	0.18	0.17	0.09	0.26
		Brand identification	0.25	0.24	0.17	0.34
		Fun	0.18	0.16	0.11	0.24
		Personal identity	0.17	0.16	0.11	0.24
		Reward	0.11	0.10	0.05	0.17
		Empowerment [a]	-0.18	-0.17	-0.26	-0.11
		Social integration and interaction [a]	-0.14	-0.14	-0.21	-0.08
		Love for the brand	0.12	0.12	0.05	0.20
	Absorption	Identification with members	0.07	0.07	0.01	0.13
		Brand identification	0.19	0.18	0.09	0.29
		Fun	0.12	0.11	0.07	0.18
		Personal identity	0.19	0.18	0.12	0.26
		Reward	0.10	0.10	0.06	0.16
		Empowerment [a]	-0.11	-0.11	-0.17	-0.04
		Social integration and interaction [a]	-0.07	-0.06	-0.11	-0.02
		Love for the brand	0.05	0.05	0.01	0.10

Note: [a] The saturations of all items on the reference dimension in the exploratory factor analysis are negative. As the factor loadings are negative, in the further analysis it will be considered in accordance with the suggestions of De Vaus (2002) as if this negative sign is only an indication that the items in the factor are related to the factor in the reverse direction and that the negative sign does not indicate a lower strength of connection.
Source: Research results

Table 2: The influence of consumer motivators for participating in social networks of sports clubs and both dimensions of identification on consumer satisfaction through the consumer engagement in social networks of sports clubs

Dependent variable	Mediator variable	Independent variable	Indirect effect		95% confidence interval	
Satisfaction			b	Standardized indirect effect	Lower	Top
	Enjoyment	Identification with members	0.09	0.08	0.02	0.15
		Brand identification	0.21	0.20	0.12	0.31
		Fun	0.11	0.10	0.05	0.18
		Personal identity	0.22	0.21	0.15	0.31
		Reward	0.10	0.10	0.06	0.16
		Empowerment [a]	-0.15	-0.15	-0.23	-0.08
		Informing	0.05	0.05	0.02	0.09
		Social integration and interaction [a]	-0.07	-0.07	-0.13	-0.01
	Enthusiasm	Identification with members	0.27	0.26	0.19	0.35

		Brand identification	0.24	0.23	0.16	0.32
		Fun	0.30	0.27	0.20	0.40
		Personal identity	0.18	0.17	0.11	0.26
		Reward	0.14	0.13	0.05	0.22
		Empowerment [a]	-0.26	-0.25	-0.35	-0.17
		Informing	0.36	0.32	0.25	0.48
		Social integration and interaction [a]	-0.42	-0.40	-0.53	-0.31
		Love for the brand	0.35	0.33	0.24	0.46
	Sharing	Brand identification	0.16	0.16	0.09	0.25
		Fun	0.07	0.07	0.03	0.12
		Personal identity	0.13	0.13	0.08	0.19
		Reward	0.08	0.08	0.04	0.13
		Empowerment [a]	-0.13	-0.13	-0.21	-0.06
		Social integration and interaction [a]	-0.05	-0.05	-0.09	-0.01
	Attention	Identification with members	0.09	0.09	0.04	0.14
		Brand identification	0.20	0.19	0.12	0.29
		Fun	0.11	0.10	0.05	0.17
		Personal identity	0.16	0.16	0.11	0.24
		Reward	0.05	0.05	0.01	0.10
		Empowerment [a]	-0.12	-0.12	-0.18	-0.07
		Social integration and interaction [a]	-0.07	-0.07	-0.12	-0.03
	Approval	Identification with members	0.25	0.24	0.16	0.34
		Brand identification	0.32	0.30	0.23	0.42
		Fun	0.19	0.17	0.12	0.26
		Personal identity	0.21	0.20	0.14	0.29
		Reward	0.12	0.12	0.06	0.19
		Empowerment [a]	-0.24	-0.23	-0.33	-0.16
		Social integration and interaction [a]	-0.18	-0.17	-0.25	-0.11
		Love for the brand	0.11	0.11	0.04	0.18
	Absorption	Identification with members	0.06	0.05	0.0020	0.11
		Brand identification	0.16	0.16	0.08	0.26
		Fun	0.07	0.07	0.02	0.13
		Personal identity	0.19	0.18	0.12	0.27
		Reward	0.09	0.09	0.05	0.14
		Empowerment [a]	-0.11	-0.11	-0.17	-0.05
		Informing	0.03	0.03	0.0007	0.06
		Social integration and interaction [a]	-0.05	-0.04	-0.09	-0.01

Note: [a] The saturations of all items on the reference dimension in the exploratory factor analysis are negative. As the factor loadings are negative, in the further analysis it will be considered in accordance with the suggestions of De Vaus (2002) as if this negative sign is only an indication that the items in the factor are related to the factor in the reverse direction and that the negative sign does not indicate a lower strength of connection.
Source: Research results

Table 3: The influence of consumer motivators for participating in social networks of sports clubs and both dimensions of identification on consumer loyalty through the consumer engagement in social networks of sports clubs

Dependent variable	Mediator variable	Independent variable	Indirect effect		95% confidence interval	
Loyalty			b	Standardized indirect effect	Lower	Top

Enjoyment	Identification with members	0.12	0.15	0.15	0.09
	Brand identification	0.25	0.21	0.21	0.12
	Fun	0.18	0.23	0.22	0.16
	Personal identity	0.24	0.30	0.30	0.22
	Reward	0.13	0.16	0.17	0.10
	Empowerment [a]	-0.17	-0.22	-0.22	-0.29
	Informing	0.07	0.10	0.10	0.04
	Social integration and interaction [a]	-0.12	-0.21	-0.21	-0.27
	Love for the brand	0.10	0.17	0.17	0.11
Enthusiasm	Identification with members	0.14	0.15	0.10	0.19
	Brand identification	0.14	0.14	0.09	0.19
	Fun	0.20	0.20	0.14	0.27
	Personal identity	0.12	0.13	0.07	018
	Reward	0.10	0.10	0.04	0.16
	Empowerment [a]	-0.16	-0.16	-0.21	-0.11
	Informing	0.31	0.29	0.22	0.41
	Social integration and interaction [a]	-0.26	-0.26	-0.35	-0.18
	Love for the brand	0.19	0.19	0.10	0.29
Sharing	Identification with members	0.26	0.27	0.19	0.33
	Brand identification	0.34	0.34	0.27	0.42
	Fun	0.22	0.21	0.16	0.28
	Personal identity	0.26	0.26	0.19	0.34
	Reward	0.18	0.18	0.11	0.26
	Empowerment [a]	-0.33	-0.34	-0.41	-0.27
	Social integration and interaction [a]	-0.22	-0.22	-0.27	-0.16
	Love for the brand	0.21	0.22	0.10	0.29
Attention	Identification with members	0.10	0.11	0.05	0.16
	Brand identification	0.14	0.14	0.06	0.22
	Fun	0.17	0.16	0.11	0.23
	Personal identity	0.18	0.18	0.13	0.25
	Reward	0.07	0.07	0.02	0.12
	Empowerment [a]	-0.14	-0.14	-0.19	-0.09
	Social integration and interaction [a]	-0.15	-0.15	-0.20	-0.10
	Love for the brand	0.12	0.12	0.07	0.17
Approval	Identification with members	0.14	0.34	0.35	0.27
	Brand identification	0.14	0.37	0.37	0.29
	Fun	0.20	0.30	0.29	0.22
	Personal identity	0.12	0.28	0.28	0.20
	Reward	0.10	0.17	0.18	0.09
	Empowerment [a]	-0.16	-0.32	-0.32	-0.40
	Social integration and interaction [a]	-0.26	-0.33	-0.33	-0.40
	Love for the brand	0.19	0.33	0.34	0.27
Absorption	Identification with members	0.14	0.34	0.35	0.27
	Brand identification	0.14	0.11	0.12	0.06
	Fun	0.20	0.14	0.15	0.05
	Personal identity	0.12	0.18	0.18	0.12
	Reward	0.10	0.26	0.27	0.19

		Empowerment [a]	-0.16	0.15	0.16	0.10
		Social integration and interaction [a]	-0.15	-0.16	-0.21	-0.11
		Love for the brand	0.13	0.13	0.08	0.17

Note: [a] The saturations of all items on the reference dimension in the exploratory factor analysis are negative. As the factor loadings are negative, in the further analysis it will be considered in accordance with the suggestions of De Vaus (2002) as if this negative sign is only an indication that the items in the factor are related to the factor in the reverse direction and that the negative sign does not indicate a lower strength of connection.
Source: Research results

The results of the study show that the relationship between consumer motivators for participating in sports club social networks and the outcomes of consumer identification, trust, satisfaction, and loyalty is not direct. Instead, it is mediated by consumer engagement on sports club social networks. The study found that consumer motivators, including entertainment, personal identity, reward, empowerment, information, integration, and social interaction, as well as consumer identification with both the members and brand of a sports club social network, influence consumer engagement on the network. This engagement is in turn linked to outcomes of trust, satisfaction, and loyalty. Based on these findings, the study's hypothesis is supported.

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

This study contributes to the advancement of motivation theory within the context of customer engagement on sports club social networks. Our research indicates that both motivation and identification with the sports club's social network members/brand are statistically significant predictors of consumer attitudes towards the sports club's social network, as mediated by consumer engagement. Specifically, we find that engagement on the sports club's social network plays a crucial role in fostering identification, trust, satisfaction, and loyalty among consumers. Our findings are consistent with earlier work by Brodie et al. (2011) and Annamalai et al. (2021) which suggested that customer engagement is a key driver of trust and loyalty. We further note that the rise of virtually engaged consumers (Vale & Fernandes, 2018; Machado et al., 2020) underscores the importance of investigating customer engagement on sports club social networks in contributing to the broader literature on this topic.

Managerial implications for sports club marketing managers are seen in the possibility to use social networks more effectively with aim to improve project's success. Therefore, enhancing identification with other members/brand of the social network could include offering socialization events exclusively for social network members prior to the sport match to support sport club on stadium during the game or after to discuss the game, also could include live matches on social networks, interviews with sportsman or a contest that fans post their pictures on social network how they cheer their team. This consequently contributes to the realization and secures their support for the project to succeed.

The research on consumer engagement in sports clubs might be limited by a small sample size, which could limit the generalizability of the findings. Cultural differences among the participants might not have been adequately accounted for and could impact their engagement with sports clubs. The studies might have only focused on a specific type of sport or geographic region, limiting their generalizability. A lack of a standardized definition of consumer engagement could lead to different interpretations and misunderstandings among researchers and practitioners. The findings of the studies might only hold for a specific point in time and might not be representative over a longer period. Selection bias in the studies could result in a skewed representation of the population. Self-reported data used in the studies could be subject to biases such as social desirability bias or recall bias, which could impact the accuracy of the findings. Overall, these limitations highlight the need for further research to address these gaps and to provide a more comprehensive understanding of consumer engagement in sports clubs.

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