

MOTIVATIONS FOR PURCHASING AND SATISFACTION FROM SPORTS TEAM MERCHANDISE AMONG YOUNG FANS: A CASE STUDY OF REAL SPORTING DE GIJÓN

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Resumen:

Esta investigación explora las motivaciones para comprar merchandising deportivo de los fans del deporte jóvenes y su consecuente satisfacción, enfocándose en el caso del Real Sporting de Gijón. Para su realización, se implementó una encuesta basada en el Athletic Team Merchandise Model de Lee y Trail (2012) en la que participaron 178 fans del equipo de fútbol. Los resultados revelan un perfil de fan e identifican un conjunto de motivaciones para comprar merchandising: Imagen de Marca, Ser Fan, Orientación por Resultados, Calidad de Producto, y Conservadurismo. A través de un análisis causal, se puede concluir que el Ser Fan, la Imagen de Marca y la Orientación a Resultados son las variables más importantes para explicar su intención de compra y, sin embargo, en lo que respecta a la satisfacción con los productos comprados, tan sólo la Imagen de Marca es un factor relevante, teniendo implicaciones para los equipos en cuanto a sus estrategias en el retail de su merchandising.

Palabras clave: Fans del deporte, motivaciones del consumidor, compra de merchandising, intención de compra, satisfacción.

JEL classification: M31



MOTIVATIONS FOR PURCHASING AND SATISFACTION FROM SPORTS TEAM MERCHANDISE AMONG YOUNG FANS: A CASE STUDY OF REAL SPORTING DE GIJÓN

Abstract:

This research explores the motivations of young sports fans to purchase merchandise and the subsequent satisfaction, focusing on the case of Real Sporting de Gijón. The study implemented a survey based on the Athletic Team Merchandise Model by Lee and Trail (2012), in which 178 fans of the football team participated. The results reveal a fan profile and identify a set of motivations for purchasing merchandising: Brand Image, Fan Factor, Results Orientation, Product Quality, and Conservatism. By means of a causal analysis, it can be concluded that the Fan Factor, Brand Image and Results Orientation are the most important variables to explain purchase intention and, however, concerning satisfaction with the products purchased, only Brand Image is a relevant factor. This bears interesting implications both in terms of the management of clubs' fan bases and specifically to retail their merchandising.

Keywords:

Sports fandom, consumer motivations, merchandise purchase, purchase intention, satisfaction.



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1. INTRODUCTION

Sport, as a fervently embraced cultural phenomenon, has secured a special place in the hearts of people worldwide. The Merriam-Webster dictionary (n.d.) contends that the definition of sport is “a physical activity engaged in for pleasure” and “a particular activity (such as an athletic game) so engaged in”. However, some authors, like Barbu et al. (2020), propose a social dimension of sports that relies on the experience of its consumers, encompassing both the active and passive gratifications consumers partake in when playing or watching a sport. In this sense, people can connect with sports so intensely that they have transformed into an outlet for socialisation, and undoubtedly allowing people to reap more benefits than just personal enjoyment like opportunities for personal growth, social integration and mobility (Wankel and Berger, 1990).

On this basis, Sports Fan Consumption represents the nexus between material culture's "person-thing" relationship—including items such as tickets and merchandise—and the products of "person-person" relationships, spanning media content, online group discussions, and in-person interactions at sporting venues (Crawford, 2004). This intersection often leads to the lucrative sales of merchandise at retail, forging deeper connections between fans and their beloved teams.

Sport has stepped into areas that impact everyone like sponsored events, films, print media, or videogames, besides the traditional TV and radio coverage, making its following available to all irrespective of self-identifying as fans or not. Currently, the increasing investment in advertisement and sponsorship opportunities, as well as in the sales of live-streaming rights, trace back to how numerous sports are impacted by business and profit maximisation goals (Mickle et al., 2022; Nielsen, 2022). The sports arena has turned into an economic playground for other professional sectors to enhance their image while providing sports consumers with services that complement the experience, thus the social setting and interactions.

Studying the touchpoints between fans and brands, in this particular context, sports teams, in the merchandise arena is of great importance when the sports industry is placed on the top 10 most-selling categories of licenced products (License Global, 2022), accruing around \$5.7 thousand million worth of revenue out of a total of \$260.8 thousand million reported by the 88 participating brands in said study. Not only does this reflect the growth potential of sports team licenced merchandise, but also the receptiveness of consumers to purchase said products, hence

the emphasis on understanding fan motivations to eventually build significant team-fan relationships.

The present investigation outlines the basics of the Sports Fandom, Fan Consumption, and the Fan Economy in the next section, placing special emphasis on their motivations both to consume sports and to purchase sports team merchandise in the following part. Additionally, it will be differentiated between transactional and non-transactional engagement behaviours that affect the purchasing process. Lastly, the case of Real Sporting de Gijón fans is used to build a young fan profile and understand the effect of their motivations and income on their intention to purchase team merchandise at retail and their overall satisfaction with the process.

2. UNDERSTANDING FANS AND FAN CULTURE

Fans are generally conceived as enthusiastic, intense, and loyal individuals whose interests revolve around specific films, music, sports, etc. (Crawford, 2004; Tague et al., 2019). Crawford (2004) further elaborates that being a fan is often not “just a label or category, it is also an identity and a performance” (p.20) with its own accepted behaviours and nuances legitimised by social factors like the context and timing of being a fan, relativizing the conditions of being a fan. This is to say, for instance, that a person might not be seen as a fan if they do not stand out next to other known fans, or if it seems like they have not been one for a lengthy period of time.

Linden and Linden (2017) add that the democratisation of media and technology has led to a broader concept of fans that is assisted by the implications of the Third Industrial Revolution¹: less resistance to media exposure and a larger spread of information. The ever-growing Internet culture has set the scene for the emergence of fans who are no longer typecasted as a geeky or connoisseur character, and instead are seen as early adopters or instigators of change that take part in the social construction of a brand through their loyalty and consumer power. With this concept, the scholars introduce a secondary layer to the term that includes the individual ability to impact others in the activity of being a fan —the influenced are now able to influence as well—.

¹ The Third Industrial Revolution, or the Digital Revolution, refers to the increased application and implementation of information technology—computers and communications—in most advanced societies for industrial and personal purposes (Khan, 1987).

In business and marketing literature, the term fan is easily interchangeable with brand advocate to distinguish die-hard fans from more casual, trivial fans who are less committed to the subject, and highlight the different levels of support (Crawford, 2004). In the flow of influence within a group of fans—or fandom²— this takes place under “person-person” consumption, brand advocates would not only be linked with “talking up” the brand but also constitute the “ideal” consumers that serve corporate interests given their co-producer nature.

Fans can hold a certain power over the organisation through demonstrated loyalty and Word-of-Mouth³, and because they are framed in a society that encourages finding a fuller life through material consumption they are constituted as “good consumers”. Companies should hence strive for their creation rather than solely maximising customer conversion (Linden and Linden, 2017). In line with this idea, fandom could be understood as the result of finding passion in personal interests and belonging to a group, both deep human desires that fit into Maslow’s (1943) theory of motivations, and that possibly explain Fan Consumption.

In alignment with the central focus of this study, the previously delineated concept of fervent enthusiasts can be seamlessly transposed into the realm of sports. Here, consumers, beyond merely harbouring enthusiasm or affinity for a particular sport, also harbour a deep emotional investment contingent upon the outcome of a match—an emotional stake that renders them far from indifferent to the proceedings (Smith, 1988).

Sports fan culture entails a socialisation process around cues, social regulations and forms of authority of the sport. Learning about its elements and rules is a substantial part of a process that is based both on direct and indirect social interactions. Dixon (2012) contends that in the sports arena, this process is effectively assisted by the influence of significant others (i.e., family or peers) already in the group, self-perpetuating the propagation of the interest, and Crawford (2004) states that socialisation into the sports fandom is indirectly supported by the group as a whole:

[...] it is through observing the spectacles and consumer patterns around the sports venue, and by learning and replicating these, which fans learn (and adopt) the norms

² The term *fandom* can also refer to the state or condition of being a fan (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.).

³ Word-of-Mouth, or WOM, is “any oral, person-to-person communication between a receiver and a communicator whom the receiver perceives as non-commercial, regarding a brand, product, or service” (Arndt, 1967, p.193).

of that particular habitus; allowing progression along the career path (that of being a fan) [...] (Crawford, 2004, p.46).

Historically, the idea of a sports fan is mostly wedded to a male person from either middle or upper class who consumes sports as a means to achieve greater social pursuits like status, power, and security, resulting in today's misconceived notion of sports fans. Despite this, Smith (1988) poses that an individual's predisposition to become a sports supporter is not only influenced by gender or socioeconomic status but also by ethnicity, past experiences as a sports participant, family values and customs, opportunity, etc.

To provide a better grasp on the prerequisites to become a sports fan, Wann and James (2019) lay out the relationship between fandom and gender, age, race, involvement in the sport as a fan, socioeconomic status, and personality from previous literature:

- **Fandom-gender relationship:** men are consistently reported to be more involved in sports fandom than women and are more likely to be considered sports fans. Additionally, male fans experience higher team identification, but in the case of local or newly founded teams, female fans may be more involved in joining the fan base as it would feel like a natural extension of residency, in a first case, or like it has not developed the male-dominated nature of historical clubs which could hinder their progression into being a fan (Crawford, 2004), in a second one. Nevertheless, there is an indication of the bridging of the gender gap in sports spectatorship as seen in Nielsen Sport et al. (2021) Global F1 Fan Survey, where one of the key findings and differences from the previous survey of 2017 was a dramatic 83% jump in female participation, constituting 18.3% of the surveyed sample and paving the way for more female fans to join.
- **Fandom-age relationship:** there are mixed reviews on this relationship, as some researchers conclude that age and fandom are positively correlated, whilst others believe that younger persons are more interested in sports (Lee and Zeiss, 1980; Lock et al., 2009; James et al., 2002). In fact, others have not found a relationship at all between age and belonging to a fan group. However, there have been findings about the different behavioural responses in fandom depending on age, being able to highlight how younger fans experience more pre- and post-match mood swings, while older fans focused on the enjoyment of the viewing environment.

- **Fandom-race relationship:** this has been an understudied topic that has been met with inconclusive remarks indicating that some races might expose higher levels of fandom than others, as well as the alternative or no differences at all. Nonetheless, studies find that there are sport-specific differences and motivational profiles by race due to members of different races reporting different reasons for their preference and consumption of certain sports (Groeneman, 2017).
- **Fandom-athletic involvement relationship:** practising the sport may be one of the best predictors of sports fandom, exposing a positive relationship and suggesting that spectating might lead to athletic participation.
- **Fandom-socioeconomic status relationship:** supporting a sport is a costly activity that accounts for transportation, accommodation, food, and merchandising expenses besides ticket or annual membership prices, resulting in most studies pointing toward a highly positive relationship between socioeconomic status and participation in sports fandom and consumption (Crawford, 2001; Lieberman, 1991; White and Wilson, 1999).
- **Fandom-personality relationship:** it would take an arduous job to try and study the complex relationship between thousands of available personality traits and fandom. McCrae and Costa (1987) proposed a model of five core personality traits that considers dimensions of extraversion, neuroticism, openness to new experiences, agreeableness, and conscientiousness. However, some authors (e.g., Appelbaum et al., 2012, and Sun, 2010) have found that there is no direct association between them and pertaining to a fan group and that when there is, the effect is limited.

An important nuance behind fandom is to understand the different segments of fans in terms of consumption. Segmentation provides important insight into fan behaviour and attitudes that sports marketing and team management could use to improve their relationship and strategies with fans. In this sense, Wann and James (2019) propose the following three distinctions while accentuating how fans can move from one classification to another citing Crawford's (2004) idea of progression —and possible regression— in fandom:

- **Sport Fans vs Sports Spectators:** they are not the same —thus not interchangeable— and the almost obvious answer as to why they differ relies on the action: fans are enthusiastic and interested in a sport, while spectators are merely witnesses of a sporting event through some kind of media. This separation is important because being a fan is

not equivalent to watching an event in person or through media, and spectators lack an emotional connection with the sport (Wann and James, 2019).

- **Direct vs Indirect Sport Consumers:** directly consuming a sporting event consists of personally attending it, whilst indirect consumption involves one's exposure to it through mechanical means like TV, radio, or the Internet. The relevance of this difference is supported by the influence of the situational context on one's behaviour e.g., an individual might feel inclined to buy a piece of merchandise in-situ that they otherwise would not have purchased if it were not for the clash of causalities in the situation like peer pressure to support, excitement, or the result of the event.
- **Levels of Team Identification:** Wann and James (2019) explain that there could be fans with either low or high levels of team identification in terms of sport as a part of their self-concept and identity, pointing out that a low level does not prompt the extremely affective, cognitive, and behavioural —how they feel, what they think, and what they do— reactions that a high level of connection with a team might bring. Furthermore, sports researchers have found that this attachment does not only happen with teams, but also with coaches, players, the fan community, and other levels of competition, etc.

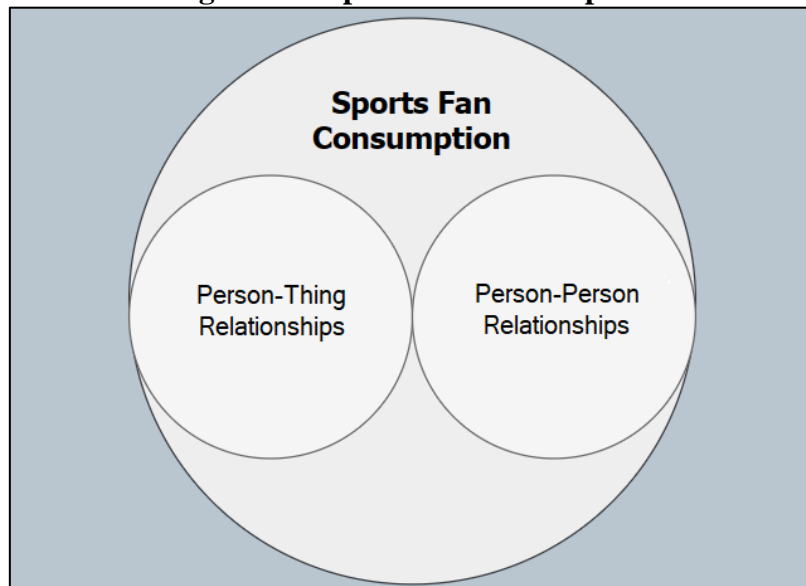
Building and understanding a sports team or club's fanbase profile is relevant to develop effective marketing strategies mediated by identification that offer true value to the consumer, given that fans hold a greater stake over the organisations than recognised: Tapp and Clowes (2000) detected in their study that fans of a club were capable of stop watching the sport if their team ceased to exist, and were not interested in transferring their allegiance to another. The extent of their power goes further in cases like that of the Aston Martin Aramco Cognizant Formula 1 Team: after fans spotted one of their drivers wearing a merchandise prototype, it gained such liking that it evolved into a prominent fan campaign to make the team sell said garment, gaining a lot of traction and eventually leading to them commercialising it and having to continuously restock it after announcing "You asked, we delivered" on social media (Aston Martin Aramco Cognizant F1 Team, 2022).

2.1 Sports fans as consumers

Wann and James (2019) expanded the idea of consumer behaviour to reach a sports fandom scope, stating that it entails the selection, securing, usage, and disposal processes of sport-based

products, services, experiences and ideas by fans and studying both the types of actions, as well as the frequency or intensity of them. Sports Fan Consumption is not constricted or restricted to licenced or fan-made merchandise and apparel. It also encompasses watching a sporting event live (direct consumption) or broadcasted (indirect consumption), reading about sports-related themes, and the resulting social interactions from it. This is supported by Smith (1988) who says that this particular type of fan spends considerable time, effort, and money as part of their involvement in fandom. In this sense and drawing back to Crawford's (2004) distinction of sports Fan Consumption mentioned in the introductory section, a diagram to simplify the understanding of the concept can be seen below (Figure 2.1).

Figure 2.1. Sport Fan Consumption



Source: Adapted from Crawford (2004).

The association between fandom and “person-thing” acts of consumption is explained by Crawford (2004) as a result of turning the sport experience into a place of conspicuous consumption, providing fans with a large range of merchandise to display their support that could change from match to match. Furthermore, attendants are showered with advertising and sponsorships incorporated in the location of the match —or broadcast— with the sole purpose of enhancing sales and sponsor recognition, even naming sports venues and teams after their main financial partner e.g., FC Barcelona’s Spotify Camp Nou, or the Movistar Estudiantes basketball team.

The following part of this investigation will review the effect of sports merchandise consumption i.e., sports equipment, accessories, toys, video games, and apparel, on the Fan Economy, a relatively new term used to describe the economic relationship between fans—its core—and the people or organisations that they follow, as well as their participation in the construction of brand image.

2.1.1 Fan Economy

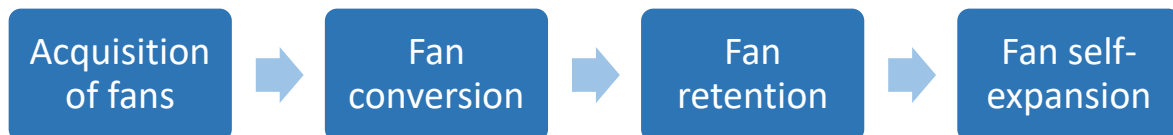
Launched by the widespread reach of the Internet and its media platforms, the Fan Economy is an exclusive product of fan culture in that the fans become both producers and consumers, using and exchanging value at a rate that converts fan communities and their categories of support into a new business model that leads to excessive consumption and unpaid, unofficial labour (Liu, 2022). Xu (2022) notes that some scholars believe that the Fan Economy uses fans' emotions and loyalty as currency and the fan community as a marketing instrument, taking advantage of a "social capital platform and trade marketing behaviour" based on the fans' participation. Fans who actively participate in this process are often referred to in the literature as Fansumers, a combination between fan and consumer to reflect their nature of co-creating and enjoyment nature (Sinclair Communications, 2022).

Extrapolating this definition to the sports industry, the Sports Fan Economy is a place where participants exchange emotional capital that leads to continuous and stable consumption behaviour of interactions in online forums, creation of microblogs, fan art, videos, events, and direct economic support of sports stars through merchandising, or even sponsor products (Li, 2022; Xu, 2022). Li (2022) manifests that under this structure, sports organisations can provide goods and services to fans attractive enough to transform those emotions into profits, indicating the fans' ability to reshape commercialisation processes through the value that they grant to their interests and likings. This remains true in the scope of the sports industry as its particular growth during the last few decades have been accompanied by the growth in fan community members due to the increased availability of competitions and the latent prominence of the online channels used to interact with forums, message boards, chats, video essays, etc. (Nielsen and LaLiga Tech, 2022).

In this context, fans sustain a role based on the value from shared subjective interpretations and recreations of a brand's meaning and value proposition and it is to this extent that fans act as adaptors, authenticators and assimilators (Kolyperas et al., 2018), proving that the Fan

Economy has an important group concentration effect which eases the involvement of organisations in it (Liu, 2022). Duan (2022) explains that it lies in its operating model, identifying four different segments of operations based on the flow of the relationship between fans and the Target of Attention, forming a matrix to explain the processes of acquisition, conversion, retention, and self-expansion in the Fan Economy (see Figure 2.2 below).

Figure 2.2. The operating model of the Fan Economy.



Source: Duan (2022).

With this, the author explains that fan acquisition consists of expanding the number of fans by exposing the Target of Attention—in the case of this investigation, a sports team—on media to consequently convert them into forming an emotional and admiration relationship that promotes the fan’s participation in fandom, whether it is through consuming online content, producing it themselves, or buying from team endorsers. Fan retention would comprise all the strategies to stabilise and maintain the quality of fans, to eventually reach a point of self-propagation of fandom to non-fans mediated by Word-of-Mouth, thus increasing brand recognition and reducing the costs of investment for mass exposure of the Target.

3. THE PSYCHOLOGY BEHIND SPORTS FAN CONSUMPTION

Building upon the concept of sports fans as consumers, the purpose of this section is to understand Fan Consumption behaviour in terms of motivation and type of manifestation, whether it is material or immaterial—also referred to as transactional and non-transactional by Yoshida et al. (2014) and in the following section—. Such patterns of behaviour are not stationary, the level of involvement and interest of a sports fan can change over time (Crawford, 2004) and make of their study a process full of complexities and subjective factors that hinder the explanation of the fan experience.

3.1 Drivers of Sports Fan Consumption

Wann and James (2019) explain Sports Fan Consumption behaviour using the Personal Investment Theory (PIT) developed by Maehr and Braskamp (1986). The PIT outlines that

individual decisions to attend a match, purchase merchandise, or merely engaging with a sport, are a result of perceived options of behaviour, personal incentives, and beliefs regarding oneself.

The first dimension refers to the weighing of options when presented with the opportunity to attend a sports event such as the financial cost or one's availability. For example, a fan might consume sports after a positive and personalised benefit-cost analysis and taking account of the likeliness of occurrence of the event, i.e., attending an Olympic event, or purchasing a limited-edition jersey of their favourite team.

The dimension of personal incentives refers to prizes or gains from consuming sports. Wann and James (2019) apply PIT to explain that a person might consume a specific sport for enjoyment reasons (task incentive), the desire to watch their favourite team succeed (ego incentive), to spend time with family members, or acquaintances for business or social status purposes (social incentive), as well as to receive direct benefits from participating such as giveaways, free entertainment, or opportunities to interact with the players (extrinsic rewards). All subjective incentives that differ from person to person.

Whilst rewards are an excellent motivation to engage in sports consumption, they might not be enough to drive a fan's behaviour. The meaning that the fan attaches to a sport or team has a higher influence on consumption, and the more it takes part in their self-concept, the larger their drive to consume. At a secondary level, specific fan motives play a key role in consumption.

There are countless, specific motivations that drive Fan Consumption and support in general. For this reason, some academics have developed different scales in an attempt to describe sports fans' motivations: the Sport Fan Motivation Scale (SFMS), and the Motivation Scale for Sport Consumption (MSSC).

The SFMS was developed by Wann (1995) to assess the decision-making process of fans. It concluded that most drivers fell under factors of eustress, self-esteem, entertainment, escape, economic value, aesthetics, group affiliation and family bonding.

However, for methodical reasons, Trail and James (2001) improved Wann's (1995) approach with the MSSC by adding motives such as vicarious achievement, acquisition of knowledge, aesthetics, drama/eustress, escape, physical attractiveness of the athletes, physical skills of the

participants, and social interaction. Wann and James (2019) find the overlaps within both scales to determine a common set of motives as the most observable: group affiliation (in terms of socialisation opportunities), family (as a quality time provider), aesthetics, self-esteem (through vicarious achievement), eustress (excitement resulting from uncertainty), acquisition of sports knowledge, escape, and entertainment.

In a previous investigation, Wann et al. (2000) observed that the fan motivational profile varies depending on the sport, meaning that a fan might rank differently if we consider a stylistic sport like figure skating versus a non-stylistic sport like hockey, for example. Hence why Wann and James (2019) continue to summarize these motives into a more manageable and narrower set of drivers: the “Big 5”, comprising (1) escape, (2) vicarious achievement, (3) social interaction, (4) aesthetics and (5) drama items to open the framework to the possibility of describing all-sports fan motivations and facilitating the identification of motives pertaining to a specific behaviour.

The PIT applied to sports also supports identifying with a team as a result of shared values. Several studies have linked direct and indirect consumption, purchases of merchandise and apparel, and consumption of sponsors’ products to team identification, making it a significant predictor of fan affective, behavioural, and cognitive responses (Wang et al., 2012; Wann and James, 2019).

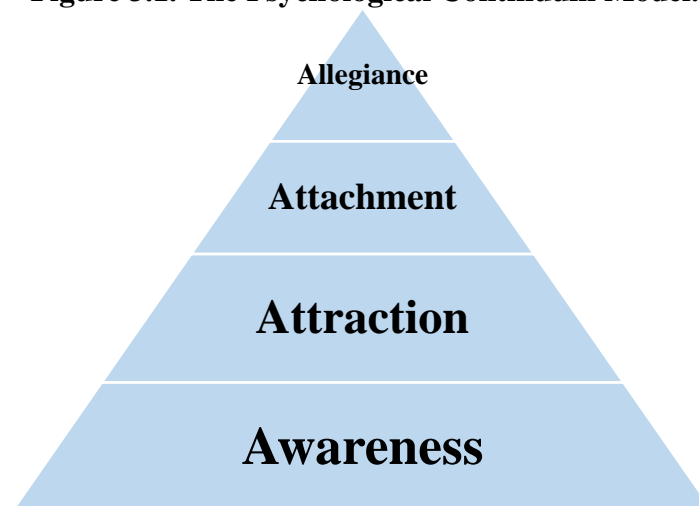
It is now clear that fans can initiate industry changes through consumption and hold consumer power settled in the social identity of belonging to a fandom. In fact, Hao (2020) explains that Word-of-Mouth practices are positive indicators of customer conversion by the opinion leaders within the fan community. Understanding the relationship between motivation and sports consumption would improve sports marketing, allowing the development of effective strategies that reach the right audiences, i.e., incorporating knowledge about its fans into a team’s marketing strategy will ultimately drive consumption if it resonates with them.

3.2 Transactional Engagement Behaviour

In the context of the Fan Economy and to dig deeper into “person-thing” relationships, this section will consist of understanding fan transactional behaviour, or the act of consuming material sports goods such as merchandise and tickets.

To understand the psychological process behind fans' connection to sport objects, Funk and James (2001) introduced a hierarchical Psychological Continuum Model (PCM) comprising four stages of material connection to sports fandom: Awareness, Attraction, Attachment, and Allegiance (see Figure 3.1 below). At an Awareness stage, the sport consumer experiences a cognitive effect that does not unchain material consumption or interest in a team, they are merely knowledgeable of it and are not necessarily a fan. The second stage of Attraction is reached when the person starts making the conscious decision of preferring the team, developing positive feelings toward it and meeting self-indulgent needs through its consumption in any fashion. At this point, the individual is not necessarily a fan, either. The Attachment stage is characterized by an established and significant bond between the individual and the team, becoming a part of their self-concept and deriving value from considering themselves as a fan of the team. Individuals in this stage are likely to be transactional consumers, whilst fans in the final stage, Allegiance, show consistent and enduring merchandise purchasing behaviours. They are strongly invested in the team in terms of emotional, monetary, and temporal resources, persistently purchasing team merchandise, attending or watching games, and engaging in positive Word-of-Mouth about the team. Their feelings toward the team and their fan-related identity are so strong that they will not turn their loyalty away in the face of any obstacle to protect themselves and their beliefs.

Figure 3.1. The Psychological Continuum Model.



Source: Funk and James (2001).

As mentioned in the previous section, there are particular fan motives that drive their consumption of sports. Specifically, within this transactional engagement process, features like personal values, team identification, brand and product attitude, previous purchases, perceived

product attributes, expectancy, and satisfaction are significant indicators and measurements of purchase intentions of Athletic Team Merchandise (ATM) (Lee and Trail, 2012; Lee et al., 2013). Lee et al. (2013) applied a model to explain the factors that affect ATM purchasing behaviour and found, for instance, that sports consumers who buy merchandise tend to be patriotic, ambitious, conservative, and hedonistic, and that these personal values hold great power over their ability to identify with and stay loyal to the team.

Kwon and Kwak (2014) give special importance to the relationship between a fan and their preferred team in that it is a main predictor of the consumption of ATM. They analysed the relationship between perceived consumer values⁴, attitude toward the product, and purchase intention mediated by team identification, considering a variation across product categories (i.e., hedonic or utilitarian products). The authors concluded that team identification strongly affects perceived consumer values for hedonic products, as opposed to utilitarian pieces, for which the relationship with attitude was stronger. The emotional value of the product was also found to play the most dominant role in the purchasing process, explaining the purchase of both hedonic and utilitarian products. In any case, the consumption of hedonic merchandise articles like apparel or jewellery, for instance, which are more self-expressive rather than functional, is stemmed from positive perceived values; the evaluation process of team merchandise with functional purposes is normally approached from the attitude toward it, displaying different cognitive processes of purchasing behaviour depending on the product's category and characteristics.

Tracing back to the idea of sports consumption as engaging with it transactionally, ticket demand is also the subject of the fans' purchasing behaviour. Matchday attendance can be affected by factors like outcome uncertainty: in theory, a game may be more interesting and raise attendance as competition rises (Neale, 1964), but empirical research counterargues this idea and instead relegates the reasons to attend a match to the quality of the teams involved (whether it is balanced or not), as well as the presence of star players (Forrest and Simmons, 2002; Wills et al., 2020). Fans prefer to see their team win, especially in a less competitive scenario where the outcome can be predicted easily (Buraimo and Simmons, 2009; Wills et al., 2020). So, if a game is expected to be close in contest —highly competitive— or have low

⁴ Kwon and Kwak (2014) propose functional, emotional, and social values as perceived consumer values that encourage the consumption of ATM. Functional values of a product concern its effectiveness, efficiency, and utility; emotional values comprise the emotions and feelings that the article provokes in the consumer; social value depends on the association of the product to a social group, in a way that defines its identity.

relative win probabilities, gate attendance will suffer. Conversely, in digression, television audiences respond much better to matches in which the outcome is more unpredictable or closed (Buraimo and Simmons, 2009; Forrest and Simmons, 2002).

3.3 Non-Transactional Engagement and its Effect On Merchandise Consumption

Non-transactional engagement refers to “person-person” relationships, going beyond purchase transactions and comprising social interactions between fans, fan-produced content, or online discussions, for instance. It is also known as Fan Engagement, a type of customer engagement that entails extra-role actions and exchanges with the team and other fans that lead to the transactional behaviours explained in the previous section, or to non-tangible benefits like improving the atmosphere of the match or engaging on social media content (Huettermann and Kunkel, 2022). In this sense, the fan is the ultimate sports customer and the object of customer relationships in sports marketing.

Fan engagement reflects a fan’s involvement with a team and is an indicator of sports merchandise consumption in some dimensions according to the literature. Word-of-Mouth, socialisation⁵, management cooperation⁶, knowledge generation⁷, and emotional engagement⁸ have been identified as predictors for the purchase of merchandise, and in general, non-transactional behaviours benefit organisations as a whole through the profitability of engaged fans (Yoshida et al., 2014). However, in the context of merchandise consumption, Huettermann and Kunkel (2022) find that fans are mostly driven by individual fan engagement dimensions, as is the case of management cooperation and knowledge generation, as opposed to those that require interaction with other fans, such as Word-of-Mouth and socialisation. Emotional engagement, despite being an individual dimension that has a positive effect on the merchandise consumption of the average sports fan, does not predict a seasonal ticket holder’s purchasing

⁵ Socialisation in sports is the dimension where fans discuss with others about the match, team, or other sport-related topics, increasing identification and deepening loyalty through the sense of belonging that it provides (Huettermann and Kunkel, 2022).

⁶ Management cooperation is the willingness of fans to contribute to the administrative management of the team by means of feedback or behaving in a way that is consistent with its image (Auh et al., 2007).

⁷ Knowledge generation refers to the fan’s development of team insight, thus, their involvement with the team, increased by statistics or general information available (Huettermann et al., 2019).

⁸ This dimension entails a fan’s affective commitment and attachment toward a team based on feelings of identification, loyalty, and affiliation (Gundlach et al., 1995). Emotional engagement plays an important role in sports marketing as Capella (2002) explains that “avid sports fans who are emotionally attached to their teams will likely make many purchases as a result of their team affiliations” (p. 35).

behaviour, possibly explained by the specific fan motives that were mentioned in regard to transactional engagement.

4. SPORTS FAN MOTIVATIONS TO PURCHASE MERCHANDISE: THE CASE OF REAL SPORTING DE GIJÓN

To bridge the theoretical underpinnings of Sports Fan Consumption with practical insights, our study delves into a real-world case study, examining the motivational drivers that influence purchase intentions and satisfaction, as well as the impact of sociodemographic factors, notably income, on purchasing behaviour. In pursuit of these objectives, we conducted an empirical investigation among fans of Real Sporting de Gijón.

Real Sporting de Gijón is the local football team of Gijón, a city in the Principality of Asturias, in the north of Spain. Founded in 1905 and whose home games are hosted in the oldest football stadium in the country, it is clearly characterised by having a strong and historic local fanbase, known as the “Mareona”. The team’s fandom is not restricted to Gijón’s geographical delimitations —Asturias holds the second-highest emigration rate in Spain (Muñiz, 2022)—, despite constant promotions and relegations to and from the Spanish First Division throughout its history, as it counts with over 135 fan clubs around the region and country, showing elevated signs of loyalty and team identification (Conejo et al., 2007; Real Sporting Official Web).

The following section will be focused on explaining a survey that was conducted on Real Sporting de Gijón fans with the purpose of studying their motivations to purchase team merchandise.

4.1 Research questions

Given the various motivations behind sports merchandise consumption that were exposed in a previous section, the aim of this survey was to study how these factors held up in the case of Real Sporting de Gijón fans. In this sense, this project has the following list of research questions to respond to throughout its making:

- Posing a general profile of Real Sporting de Gijón young fans based on demographic and economic factors.

- Analysing the effect of motivational variables on their intention to purchase team merchandise and their satisfaction with past purchases.
- Identifying the influence of the level of expenditure on team merchandise as well as income levels on both intentions to purchase and satisfaction with past purchases.

4.2 Methodology

To assess these research questions, the Athletic Team Merchandise Model (Lee and Trail, 2012; Lee et al., 2013) was adapted and applied to the purchase of a Second Spanish League professional football team: Real Sporting de Gijón. The final questionnaire contains seven-point Likert-type scales to measure various statements concerning personal values, team identification, attitude toward the brand of Real Sporting de Gijón and the article of merchandise that the fan had purchased in the last two years, attributes of the product, expectancy, satisfaction, and intention for future purchase of the brand and the product. The technical data sheet of this study can be found below in Figure 4.1.

Figure 4.1. Technical data sheet.

Universe	Real Sporting de Gijón fans who have purchased team merchandise in the past two years
Sampling method	Non-probability convenience ⁹ and snowball ¹⁰ sampling
Sample size (<i>n</i>)	143 fans
Confidence level	95%
Sampling error	±8.20%
Information collection instrument	Online survey
Data collection period	From May 8 th to May 12 th of 2023

The sample unit for this investigation was Real Sporting de Gijón fans, and an infinite population was considered given the difficulty to appraise the exact number of followers of the team. However, seeing as the team accumulates at least 150k followers on each of their most

⁹ In convenience sampling, fans are selected based on their availability and predisposition to participate in the survey, likely risking volunteer bias from the participation of people who might be different from those who do not participate, showing inaccurate results (Bhardwaj, 2019).

¹⁰ Snowball sampling is dependent on referrals, as the participants identify the next respondent (Bhardwaj, 2019). In the case of this study, fans sharing the survey with their friends, relatives, or other members of the fandom is similar to this type of sampling.

relevant social media platforms (Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook), an infinite population sample (>100.000 units) can be estimated.

The survey was carried out through Google Forms and distributed on social media to obtain further reach, therefore, the sampling method consisted of a mix of non-probability convenience and snowball approaches due to the willingness of the surveyed fans to participate and share it with other fans. It was open for answers from May 8th to May 12th of 2023. The results were obtained using descriptive and inferential statistics from SPSS 29.0.1.0.

4.3 Results and discussion

Out of the total number of surveyed fans ($n = 178$), only 143 of them had bought at least one item of Real Sporting de Gijón merchandise in the last two years—a requirement to fill out the questionnaire—, representing 80.3% of the sample and meaning that 35 of the fans did not comply with the condition. For this reason, to answer the research questions posed previously, the sample size that will be considered will be $n = 143$.

4.3.1. Real Sporting de Gijón Young Fan Profile

To understand the fans' motivations to purchase Real Sporting de Gijón merchandise, it is important to be aware of the most basic information about them. Building a fan profile comprising general aspects like their age, gender, location, income, attendance to home matches, and the place from where they usually follow the matches would facilitate their understanding as well as decision-making processes in the marketing of the team.

The sample was made up by male fans in its majority, with around 76.92% men and 22.38% women (see Figure 4.2 below). This makes sense with the fandom-gender relationship exposed by Wann and James (2019) that was mentioned previously in this investigation.

The fandom-age relationship can also explain the predominance of younger Real Sporting de Gijón fans with 47.55% of them being between 18 and 24 years old and over 75% of the sample falling under the category of people younger than 35 years old (see Figure 4.2). Given that the questionnaire was introduced to the sample through social media, with its prevalent audience being mostly young people, this is probably not a perfect picture of the Real Sporting de Gijón fan.

Figure 4.2. Description of the sample.

Gender composition of the sample						
Male		Female		Prefer not to say		
76.92%		22.38%		0.70%		
Age distribution in the sample						
$17 \leq X$	$18 \leq X \leq 24$	$25 \leq X \leq 34$	$35 \leq X \leq 44$	$45 \leq X \leq 54$	$55 \leq X \leq 64$	$65 \geq X$
6.99%	47.55%	20.98%	11.19%	10.49%	2.80%	0.00%
Medium where fans follow the matches						
Home		Stadium		Radio		
23.78%		75.52%		0.70%		
Monthly earnings of the fans in the sample						
$499 \leq X$	$500 \leq X \leq 999$	$1,000 \leq X \leq 1,499$	$1,500 \leq X \leq 1,999$	$2,000 \leq X \leq 2,499$	$2,500 \leq X \leq 2,999$	$3,000 \geq X$
43.36%	9.79%	18.88%	12.59%	9.09%	1.40%	4.90%
Annual expenditure on general sports merchandise						
$50 < X$	$50 < X < 100$	$100 < X < 150$	$150 < X < 200$	$200 < X < 250$	$250 < X < 300$	$300 > X$
18.88%	35.66%	17.48%	18.18%	3.50%	2.80%	3.50%
Annual expenditure on Real Sporting de Gijón merchandise						
$50 < X$	$50 < X < 100$	$100 < X < 150$	$150 < X < 200$	$200 < X < 250$	$250 < X < 300$	$300 > X$
22.38%	50.35%	14.69%	7.70%	2.10%	1.40%	1.40%

The vast majority of fans were located away from Gijón (53.15%), especially in other cities or towns of the Principality like Oviedo and Avilés, but also in other Spanish Communities like Castilla and León or the Community of Madrid, whilst fans residing in town represented 46.85% of the sample. Foreign fans (from outside of the Principality) could be considered exceptional given that the Real Sporting de Gijón fandom is shaped by the sense of belonging that comes from supporting a team with such specific, cultural and essentially local background. Under this assumption, said fans might have had a local upbringing or a familiar link to the city.

The average young Real Sporting de Gijón fan attends regularly to home matches at “El Molinón”, with 79.02% of the sample indicating so. Additionally, 75.52% of the fans follow the matches from the stadium, as opposed to the rest of fans that follow them from home or listen to them on the radio (shown in Figure 4.2). None of the surveyed followed the matches from a different establishment like bars, cafeterías, or restaurants, which is interesting given the bar culture of the country, and how many people usually get together at these places to watch football matches.

More than half of the sample earns less than the Spanish minimum wage (1,080.00 euros at the time of research), with most of the surveyed fans indicating that they earn up to 499 euros each month. Figure 4.2 shows a distribution of the respondents’ monthly salary ranges. It was found that the average young fan of Real Sporting de Gijón spends between 50 and 100 euros yearly on sports merchandise (see Figure 4.2), with 35.7% of the sample indicating so.

As for their expenditure on Real Sporting de Gijón merchandise, it appears to be a similar amount, probably indicating that it is the only team they purchase merchandise from (which seems reasonable since the sampling units were RSG's fans). The average fan allocates between 50 and 100 euros annually to the purchase of Real Sporting de Gijón merchandise and 50.35% of the surveyed fans indicate so (see Figure 4.2). The following section will inquire into their buying behaviour of Real Sporting de Gijón merchandise, analysing their purchase drivers more specifically.

4.3.2. *Set of factors: principal components factor analysis*

The Athletic Team Merchandise Model was applied to measure the effect of identified factors on purchase intention and satisfaction. The original authors explained that merchandise purchase behaviour was associated with the personal values of the fan, team identification, brand/product attitude, product attributes, expectancy, and satisfaction (Lee and Trail, 2012). However, in the analysis process of this survey, the results showed a different, but similar set of factors that explain the motivations of Real Sporting de Gijón young fans.

To obtain said factors, a Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin test of sampling adequacy and a Bartlett Sphericity test were run to analyse whether it was possible to reduce the variables of model into principal components. The first attempts to reduce the variables provided outputs that were difficult to interpret, especially due to the close relationship between Intention to Purchase and Satisfaction. These variables showed factor loadings that fell under the same factor as others and were not according to each other. For this reason, it was necessary to find a different approach without taking into account said variables, resulting in a higher KMO value (.905) and a small significance level (.000) that indicated that the data that was finally chosen was suitable to perform Principal Components Factor Analysis.

Using the Varimax with Kaiser Normalization rotation method, a total of five factors were able to be identified, as opposed to the seven factors that were proposed in the original model (see Figure 4.3). These underlying factors explain 76.31% of the variance in the original set of twenty-seven variables after the elimination of those with low communalities (less than .6). This was the case of the Satisfaction and Intention to Purchase factors, probably due to them being corollary while the rest could be considered as antecedents. These variables will be analysed separately in the following pages.

Figure 4.3. Factor Analysis I: The Athletic Merchandise Model
Rotated Component Matrix^a

	Component				
	Brand Image	Fan Factor	Results Orientation	Product Quality	Conservatism
In general, compared to other products, the Real Sporting de Gijón licenced merchandise article is a good value for the money	.884				
My feelings toward the Real Sporting de Gijón licenced merchandise are positive	.850				
I think that the team licenced merchandise article that I purchased is good	.846				
In general, the article I purchased is worth the cost	.838				
In general, the Real Sporting de Gijón licenced merchandise article consistently performs better than other products	.801				
I think that the team licenced merchandise article I purchased is desirable	.789				
I like the article of team licenced merchandise I purchased	.788				
In general, the Real Sporting de Gijón licenced merchandise article is aesthetically pleasing	.780				
In general, compared to other products, the Real Sporting de Gijón article is of very high quality	.757				
I think that the Real Sporting de Gijón brand is good	.692				
My feelings toward the Real Sporting de Gijón brand are positive	.643				
Devotion is an important value to me		.766			
I would experience a loss if I had to stop being a fan of Real Sporting de Gijón		.739			
Loyalty to my country is an important value to me		.737			
I consider myself to be a “real” fan of Real Sporting de Gijón		.717			
Being a fan of Real Sporting de Gijón is very important to me		.690			
Aspiring to greatness is an important value to me			.860		
Ambition is an important value to me			.814		
Competition is an important value to me			.795		
Aggressively pursuing my goals is an important value to me			.646		
The benefits of the article were				.895	
The overall performance of the Real Sporting de Gijón article was				.893	
The attributes of the article were				.866	
The overall quality of the Real Sporting de Gijón article were				.838	
Conformity is an important value to me					.810
Social norm is an important value to me					.788
Conventionality is an important value to me					.685

a. Rotation converged in 8 iterations.

The lack of coincidence between the factors of the original model and the ones identified in practice might also be due to the student sample used by the researchers to confirm the model (Lee and Trail, 2012), or the ambiguity of some statements that might have led to distinction difficulties.

The first identified factor includes variables of product and brand perception, constituting **Brand Image**. The second factor will be referred to as the **Fan Factor**, given that it comprises attitudes of devotion, loyalty and team identification that are important in the self-perception of an individual as a fan. The third component, **Results Orientation**, is constructed by values that are especially present in sports: aspiration, ambition, competitiveness, and achievements. **Product Quality** constitutes the fourth factor, clearly influenced by variables of performance,

product attributes and benefits. The last factor that could be identified was **Conservatism**. Fans could be considered as conservative given their strict support for only one team, usually, and their willingness to stop following a sport if their favourite team were to disappear, for example (Tapp and Clowes, 2000).

For the Satisfaction and Intention to Purchase factors, a different factor analysis was run after their elimination from the initial set. The available data was proven to be appropriate to reduce the variables into two components, according to the KMO and Bartlett's test (.875 and .000, respectively). Repeating the same rotation method, it was possible to identify—as expected—the variables that constitute each factor, the first one being **Intention to Purchase**, and the second one, **Satisfaction** (see Figure 4.4).

Figure 4.4. Factor Analysis II: Satisfaction and Intention to Purchase
Rotated Component Matrix^a

	Component	
	Intention to Purchase	Satisfaction
In the future, I intend to purchase more Real Sporting de Gijón licenced merchandise representing the team	.922	
In the future, I am likely to purchase more of the Real Sporting de Gijón merchandise	.920	
In the future, I am likely to purchase more of Real Sporting de Gijón merchandise	.883	
In the future, I intend to purchase more of the Real Sporting de Gijón merchandise	.860	
I was satisfied with my decision to buy the Real Sporting de Gijón article		.924
I think that I did the right thing when I decided to buy the article		.857

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalisation^a

a. Rotation converged in 3 iterations.

4.3.3 Determinants of Purchase Intention and Satisfaction

To determine the most influential factors over the intention to purchase Real Sporting de Gijón merchandise, a linear regression analysis was used. In accordance with our third research question, both income and the level of purchases of sports merchandise in the past were introduced as well in order to detract that information from the effects of the five main factors.

Results (see Figure 4.5) show that the Fan Factor ($\beta = 0.507$) and Brand Image ($\beta = 0.446$) have the highest effect with Results Orientation ($\beta = 0.157$) being a somewhat distant third. As expected, the fan's Income ($\beta = 0.147$) is also found to be statistically significant while the level or past purchases of sports merchandise ($\beta = 0.034$) is not. The remaining two factors, Product Quality ($\beta = 0.108$) and Conservatism ($\beta = -0.107$) have a weaker statistical significance, although still below the 0.10 threshold. Adjusted R^2 for the linear regression was 0.488.

These results make sense when considering that team identification can be such a central part of a fan's identity, eventually infiltrating their purchasing decisions, in addition to the importance of a brand's image on an individual's purchase process in terms of value and risk perception. Moreover, fans with a high orientation for achievements and results might tend to purchase team merchandise, but in a lesser extent. For instance, in a scenario where the team ends up in the top places at the end of the national league, merchandise sales might rise.

Product Quality and Conservatism were not found to be statistically significant and, therefore are not determinant factors of Intention to Purchase. In fact, Conservatism does have a negative influence (if non-significant) meaning that conservative fans would buy less merchandise instead of more.

Figure 4.5. Linear Regression Analysis of the five factors on Intention to Purchase.

Model	Coefficients ^a					Collinearity Statistics		
	Unstandardised B	Coefficients Std. Error	Standardised Coefficients Beta	t	Sig.	Tolerance	VIF	
1	(Constant)	-.243	.140		-1.741	.084		
	Brand Image	.446	.061	.446	7.343	< .001	.976	1.024
	Fan Factor	.507	.061	.507	8.376	< .001	.984	1.016
	Results Orientation	.153	.060	.153	2.538	.012	.986	1.014
	Product Quality	.108	.060	.108	1.800	.074	.994	1.006
	Conservatism	-.107	.061	-.107	-1.766	.080	.978	1.023
	Salary in Euros	.000	.000	.143	2.274	.025	.914	1.094
	Annual expenditure on sports merchandise	.023	.042	.034	.557	.579	.943	1.060

a. Dependent Variable: Intention to Purchase.

The analysis was repeated to examine the effect of the factors on Satisfaction, finding (Adjusted R²=0.177) that Brand Image is the only influential factor ($\beta = 0.427$ with a $< .001$ significance level) (see Figure 4.6) or, at least, is the only statistically significant effect. The Fan Factor, Results Orientation, and Conservatism appear to not have a significant effect on satisfaction.

5. DISCUSSION

Thanks to the application of the Athletic Team Merchandise (ATM) Model, it was found that the average Real Sporting de Gijón young fan identified as a man, in his late teens or early twenties, living outside of Gijón, who attends regularly to home matches, and has a monthly income of less than 500 euros.

Analysing the results of the survey through Principal Components Factor Analysis helped determine that Brand Image, the Fan Factor, Results Orientation, Product Quality, and

Conservatism, are all motivations behind the purchase of team merchandise by Real Sporting de Gijón young fans and this result fits within the framework of the ATM Model.

Figure 4.6. Linear Regression Analysis of the five factors on Satisfaction.

Model	Coefficients ^a					Collinearity Statistics		
	Unstandardised B	Coefficients Std. Error	Standardised Coefficients Beta	t	Sig.	Tolerance	VIF	
1	(Constant)	.178	.178		1.002	.318		
	Brand Image	.427	.077	.427	5.518	< .001	.976	1.024
	Fan Factor	.081	.077	.081	1.049	.296	.984	1.016
	Results Orientation	.072	.077	.072	.942	.348	.986	1.014
	Product Quality	-.003	.077	-.033	-.033	.974	.994	1.006
	Conservatism	.062	.077	.062	.803	.423	.978	1.023
	Salary in Euros	-1.485E-5	.000	-.013	-.162	.872	.914	1.094
	Annual expenditure on sports merchandise	-.059	.053	-.088	-1.113	.268	.943	1.060

a. Dependent Variable: Satisfaction with past purchases.

The analysis of the factors influencing the purchase intention and satisfaction of sports merchandise of fans reveals several results of great interest. Firstly, it appears clear based on the analysed data that the Fan Factor and Brand Image are the two determining factors in purchase intention once the effects of fan income and their annual spending on sports merchandise are controlled, similar to the findings of Lee et al. (2013), where team identification and the fans' attitude toward the brand and the products were significantly associated with their intention to purchase. At a certain distance, but still statistically significant is the Fans' Results Orientation, likely due to the strong identification with the team that this factor implies (End et al., 2002). Other factors such as Product Quality or the degree of Conservatism have a less significant effect on purchase intention, although the direction of the effects is reasonable. For example, the more conservative the fan, the lower the probability of making a purchase of Real Sporting de Gijón merchandise.

The difference between these results and those related to satisfaction with previously purchased items is very interesting. In practice, it is only the Brand Image that has the ability to influence satisfaction, with the rest of the factors not statistically significant. Furthermore, the R^2 of this analysis is substantially lower (0.177) than that of the first regression (on Intention to Purchase, 0.488), indicating that the factors have a much lower capacity to explain satisfaction variance, and there must be other factors that better explain satisfaction with purchased items. Personal preferences in style and design are possible indicators left to ponder on, as the fans' expectations of the products' adherence to their lifestyle and likings might associate positively with satisfaction, regardless of their fondness for the team. As a matter of fact, several survey

participants expressed that they would have bought more RSG merchandise if it were not for the unrelatable design choices, specifically in clothing and outwear.

There are several implications that arise from our study. First, that the Athletic Team Merchandise Model is a solid, reliable and useful framework for a football or sports club to track in order to increase merchandise sales.

Practical implications can be framed in three stages of the customer journey. During the prepurchase stage, sports clubs aiming to maximise the monetisation of the admiration it generates among fans can (a) try to focus their efforts towards the segment of fans who feel the team's colours most intensely, as those who are bigger fans have a much higher propensity to make purchases and (b) try to gain traction by building a desirable brand image through advertising and public relations is equally important.

During the purchase stage of the customer journey, actions at the point of sale can then be geared towards reinforcing both the connection with the club, increasing the consumer's degree of fandom (raising their Fan Factor score), and emphasising how merchandise represents the club's values. Designing the in-store experience can be a valid tool that goes beyond investments in product quality. This is something many of the world's major sports clubs already practice, as they create retail experiences that transcend the club's sporting achievements and add their own value to the fan, increasing their connection with the club. Our data suggests that this strategy would work in increasing the purchase intention of fans.

But it is not only on the pre-purchase and purchase stages of the customer journey that our results have implications. On the post-purchase stage, once the fan has purchased the product, it is also possible to influence satisfaction. It does not appear to be a matter of increasing the Fan Factor at that point; rather, clubs should work on the brand image, perhaps to reduce cognitive dissonance and, consequently, increase satisfaction. Advertising, as well as public relations campaigns will play an important role then.

5.1 Limitations and Ideas for Future Research

This study has potential limitations. The sampling method that was used might have produced results that are not representative of all the fans, especially given the algorithm-controlled online context where the survey was shared, thus it might not have reached all types of fans.

Additionally, the number of responses gathered is not large enough to construe moderated cause-effect relationships that could prove interesting as well.

When it comes to potential paths for further development of the insights of this research, some are related to validating the results to a larger number of clubs and the consideration of other variables that could have both a direct or a moderating effect on the intent of purchase and the satisfaction of fans after the purchase of clubs merchandising. Extending the analysis to a larger number of clubs would help isolate some specific causal effects that might be particular for the football club considered in our study.

Throughout this research, we could not help but notice that the proportion of variance of the satisfaction with the purchased merchandise was rather low when using the ATM Model factors, and this makes us think that there may be other variables and factors that influence that. Future research should try to include these variables and factors as well as propose mediating and moderating relationships. Amongst these factors we could name apparel's design, ethical practices and corporate social responsibility as well as sales promotions at the point of sale.

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