(Research/Review) Article

The Influence of Club Image, Sponsorship Factors, and Fan Loyalty on Football Merchandise Purchase Intention

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Abstract: This study examines the influence of club image, sponsor factors, and fan loyalty on the purchase intention of official merchandise among Bali United supporters. The focus of the research is to understand how these three factors contribute to driving merchandise sales in sports marketing, with the aim of providing insights that can improve the club's revenue strategies. By adopting a quantitative approach, primary data were collected from 87 respondents who are active supporters of Bali United, using an online questionnaire. The data were analyzed using multiple linear regression to evaluate the significance and direction of the relationships between the variables. The results reveal that each of the factors, sponsor factors and fan loyalty has a positive and significant effect, meanwhile club image has no significant effect on the intention to purchase official merchandise. This indicates that a stronger perception of the relevant and reputable sponsorships, and higher levels of fan commitment all contribute to an increased likelihood of supporters purchasing merchandise. The findings highlight the synergistic role of branding, partnerships, and community engagement in influencing consumer behavior within the sports fandom context. A positive impact from sponsor factors, such as the alignment of brands with the club's values, enhance the overall appeal of the merchandise. Moreover, fan loyalty acts as a significant driver, as loyal fans are more likely to invest in merchandise as a way to support their club. This study concludes that while Bali United's club image does not significantly influence fans' intention to buy merchandise, sponsor factors and fan loyalty have a positive and significant effect on purchase intention; therefore, strengthening fan loyalty and effectively managing sponsorship partnerships are key drivers in maximizing merchandise sales potential, while club image plays an indirect role.

Keywords: Club Image; Sponsorship; Fan Loyalty; Purchase Intention; Bali United.

1. Introduction

Football has evolved into one of the most dynamic and profitable sports industries globally, driven by globalization that expands fan bases and markets, making it both entertainment and a symbol of cultural identity and economic power [1]. Governed by international and regional bodies such as FIFA, established in 1904 to oversee and promote global competitions, football generates significant revenue from diverse sources. In Indonesia, Bali United, a professional club based in Gianyar and rebranded from Putra Samarinda in 2015, has rapidly emerged as one of the nation's most successful teams, winning the Liga 1 title in 2019 and 2021/2022. Known as "Serdadu Tridatu" and supported by the loyal fan base Semeton Dewata, Bali United made history as the first Southeast Asian club to go public on the Indonesia Stock Exchange in 2019, further enhancing its reputation in Asia through AFC Cup participation.

Bali United merchandise plays a crucial role for tighting the bond between the club and its supporters. The club offers a wide range of official products, also jerseys, jackets, scarves, and other accessories, available through the Bali United Megastore and official online store. These items serve not only as an additional revenue stream but also as symbols of identity and pride for fans. The psychological impact of owning authentic club merchandise fosters a stronger sense of belonging, a concept known as brand attachment. Prior research indicates

that the quality and exclusivity of merchandise can significantly influence purchase intentions and fan loyalty [2].

Club image, built on brand identity (name, logo, colors, slogan, core values) plays a critical role in influencing consumer behavior and attracting supporters [2], [3]. A positive image enhances consumer trust, fosters deep loyalty, and provides a competitive advantage. Research shows that a strong club image can boost fan engagement and encourage purchasing behaviors, including merchandise acquisition [4]. Key elements such as on-field success and community relations further strengthen fan loyalty, with supporters showing greater commitment to clubs that actively promote positive values beyond sports, such as environmental initiatives and community involvement [5].

Sponsorship factors serve as a strategic element supporting the success of sports, arts, education, and commercial events by providing financial resources and fostering mutually beneficial partnerships. In football, it is vital for funding player salaries, facility maintenance, youth development, and marketing activities, while also enhancing club image and emotional bonds with fans [6], [7]. This study focuses on sportswear sponsorship, which not only offers financial backing but also supplies apparel worn by players, thereby strengthening brand awareness and emotional connections between fans and their favorite clubs [8]. Positive perceptions of socially responsible sportswear brands can further boost consumer loyalty, ultimately driving merchandise purchase intentions [6].

Fan loyalty in the sports industry is a complex construct shaped by various psychological and social factors, significantly influencing consumer behavior and business sustainability. It can be categorized into attitudinal and behavioral loyalty, with subgroups such as loyal, latent, spurious, and indifferent fans, based on psychological attachment and consumption behavior [9]. Strong team identification, rooted in social identity theory, predicts attendance and merchandise purchases [10], [11]. Emotional attachment to a team is directly linked to merchandise purchase intention [12], [13], while community attachment serves as a strong predictor of loyal behaviors, including merchandise buying [14]. Fans often derive the belonging, pride, and meaningful identity from their team and its merchandise, reinforcing long-term consumer engagement [15].

Purchase intention is a critical aspect of understanding consumer behavior, reflecting the willingness to buy a product by needs, preferences, and environmental influences. Factors such as perceived quality, price, and promotion significantly affect purchase decisions [16]. In the context of football club merchandise, purchase intention is strongly shaped by fan loyalty, emotional attachment, and perceived product quality. Merchandise items such as jerseys, scarves, and accessories not only generate additional revenue but also serve as symbols of identity and support for fans. Positive emotional engagement and favorable experiences with the club can further enhance fans' willingness to purchase merchandise [6].

Guided by the Theory of Planned Behavior [17], this study examines how club image, sponsorship, and fan loyalty collectively influence the purchase intention of Bali United merchandise. This framework integrates attitudes, norms, perceived behavioral control to explain the psychological pathways behind consumer purchasing decisions in sports. Despite the growing interest in sports marketing, prior research has not specifically addressed the combined impact of these three variables on merchandise purchase intention. This gap highlights the novelty and relevance of investigating how club image, sportswear sponsorship, and fan loyalty jointly shape consumer behavior in the football merchandise market.

2. Preliminaries or Related Work or Literature Review

A. Club Image

Brand or Club image, defined as the result of consumer perceptions linking various attributes and values to a club, reflects the associations stored in consumers' memory [18], [19]. In professional sports, it encompasses fans' perceptions shaped by their experiences, interactions, and communication with the team [2].A positive brand image can be built through effective marketing strategies, strong performance, and positive relationships with fans and the community.

Research by [20] highlights that a strong club image (covering elements such as reputation, team performance, and fan engagement) plays a vital role in enhancing season ticket holders' satisfaction, increasing fan loyalty, attracting larger audiences, and creating a competitive market advantage.

B. Sponsorship Factors

Sponsorship factors refer to financial contributions, resource provision, or relational access offered by individuals or organizations to support the planning, execution, and success of an event, project, or organization, often aiming to build positive relationships and enhance brand image [21], [22]. In a business context, sponsorship serves as a promotional activity that can influence purchase intention by increasing brand awareness, fostering positive associations, enhancing trust, providing positive consumer experiences, and differentiating the brand from competitors [23]. In the realm of sports marketing, [24] showed brand equity is the most influential factor driving purchase intention.

C. Fan Loyalty

Fan loyalty, as defined in sports marketing literature, is a long-term emotional commitment rooted in deep identification with a football club, shaped by intense emotional experiences, cognitive evaluations of the club's values and identity, and consistent supportive behaviors over time [25] This attachment forms an authentic bond that strengthens active engagement and increases the likelihood of consistently purchasing official merchandise as a manifestation of commitment, shared identity, and appreciation of club values. Within the Psychological Continuum Model (PCM), fan club relationships progress through awareness, attraction, attachment, also allegiance reflecting increasing connection intensity [25]. Positive experiences, whether from direct stadium attendance or mediated interactions, enhance fans' sense of belonging and collective identity [26], which in turn drives emotional loyalty into purchase intentions for official merchandise such as jerseys and other club-related items.

D. Purchase Intention

Purchase intention reflects the likelihood of a consumer making a future purchase, influenced by their perceptions of a product or brand [18]. It may arise from product awareness, evaluation of alternatives, and the belief that the product can meet consumer needs or desires [27]. As part of the purchasing decision process (beginning with need recognition, information search, and alternative evaluation, followed by the purchase decision and post-purchase behavior) purchase intention is shaped by psychological factors such as motivation, attitude, and perceived risk, as well as social factors like recommendations or customer reviews [16].

E. Hypothesis

Club image plays a crucial role in shaping emotional bonds between football clubs and their supporters, influencing consumer behavior and merchandise purchase intention. A positive image strengthens emotional attachment and fan identity, making supporters more inclined to buy official products such as jerseys, jackets, and accessories [2], [27], [28]. It also reduces competitor influence and enhances financial stability through consistent brand association. **H1:** Club image has a positive significant effect on merchandise purchase intention among Bali United fans.

Sponsorship serves as both financial support and a strategic marketing tool that enhances a club's image, strengthens emotional ties with fans, and boosts merchandise appeal. Sponsors, particularly in sports apparel, increase professionalism and desirability by placing their logos on merchandise, which fans often view as symbols of loyalty and pride [6], [7], [29]. Such partnerships not only improve brand perception but also stimulate purchase intention for both club merchandise and sponsor products. **H2:** Sponsorship has a positive significant effect on merchandise purchase intention among Bali United fans.

Fan loyalty, characterized by deep emotional attachment and consistent support, is a key determinant of merchandise purchase intention, as it transforms affective commitment into

tangible buying behavior [25], [26].Loyal fans express their identity and pride through official merchandise while contributing to the club's financial stability and brand growth. Higher levels of loyalty have been shown to significantly increase purchasing behavior, making it an essential driver for sustained revenue generation[30]. **H3:** Club image has a positive significant effect on merchandise purchase intention among Bali United fans.

3. Proposed Method
A. Research Deisgn

The research employs a causal research method to examine the cause-effect relationship between club image, sponsorship factors, and fan loyalty on the purchase intention of football club merchandise [31]. The data sources consist of primary data, collected from respondents (questionnaires), and secondary data obtained from books, scientific journals, and online references relevant to the research topic. A Likert scale was used to measure respondents' attitudes regarding the studied variables, with the results analyzed quantitatively using descriptive statistics to present frequency distributions, mean values, and response percentages [31].

B. Operational Definition

Operational definition refers to the process of specifying variables in clear, measurable terms [31]. This process allows the concepts to be systematically assessed and implemented in research. As a result, each variable is given detailed dimensions and measurement scales to ensure the accuracy, also consistency of the data.

Table 1. Operational Definition.

No	Variable	Definition	Dimention	Scale
1	Club Image (X1)	Club image is the perception formed in consumers' minds about a particular football club (Beccarini & Ferrand, 2006).	1. Major club 2. Efficient management 3. Disappointment referring to club's resources (Beccarini & Ferrand, 2006)	Likert
2	Sponsorship Factors (X2)	Sponsorship factors are the dimensions that influence consumers' perceptions and responses toward sponsors in the context of sports sponsorship (Speed & Thompson, 2000).	1. Attitude toward the sponsor 2. Perceived ubiquity 3. Perceived sincerity (Speed & Thompson, 2000)	Likert
3	Fan Loyalty (X3)	Fan loyalty is the emotional attachment and long-term commitment that fans have toward a professional team (Bauer et al., 2008).	1. Psychological commitment 2. Behavioral loyalty (Bauer et al., 2008)	Likert
4	Purchase Intention (Y)	Purchase intention is a process that reflects consumers' desire to buy a product based on various considerations and evaluations they have made (Ferdinand, 2002).	1.Transactional Interest 2. Referential Interest 3. Preferential Interest 4. Exploratory Interest (Ferdinand, 2002)	Likert

C. Sampel

The population is the generalization domain made up of items or people with particular attributes and traits chosen by the researcher for investigation and conclusion-making [31]. In this study, the population comprises Bali United football club fans, including official supporter members (Sementon Dewata and North Side Boys), community members, stadium match attendees, and followers of Bali United's official social media, residing both in Bali and outside. Because of fans is unknown, the population is treated as infinite, and purposive sampling is applied. A sample, representing part of the population, was selected using non-probability purposive sampling, where respondents must be Bali United fans, intend to purchase official merchandise, and be at least 17 years old [31]. Following [32], a sample size of 87 was determined by multiplying the 36 research indicators by a factor of 5, ensuring parameter estimate stability, multivariate analysis reliability, and sufficient statistical power for generalizing results to the Bali United fan population.

D. Instrument Testing

According to [33], research instrument testing includes validity, reliability, and normality tests. Validity measures whether a questionnaire accurately captures what it intends to measure, assessed through factor analysis using SPSS, with a KMO MSA value above 0.5 and factor loading above 0.5 indicating validity. Reliability assesses the consistency of measurement, evaluated with Cronbach's Alpha where a value >0.6, and If item deleted >0.5, indicates reliability. Normality testing, using the One Sample KS test, determines whether residuals are normally distributed, with Sig > 0.05 indicating normal distribution.

E. Data Analysis Technique

This study employs multiple linear regression to quantitatively assess the simultaneous influence of Club Image (X1), Sponsorship (X2), and Fan Loyalty (X3) on Purchase Intention (Y), using the model [31].

$$Y = \alpha + \beta X1 + \beta X2 + \beta X3 + \varepsilon \tag{1}$$

Partial testing determines whether each independent variable significantly affects the dependent variable, with significance levels < 0.05 indicating rejection of H0 and acceptance of Ha [31]. Simultaneous testing evaluates whether all independent variables influence the dependent, where F-statistics exceeding the critical value or significance levels below 0.05 indicate a significant joint effect [31].

4. Results and Discussion

A. Result

According to [33], a questionnaire is considered valid if all its items accurately measure the intended construct. In this study on the influence of club image, sponsorship, and fan loyalty on Bali United merchandise purchase intention, validity was tested using the KMO-MSA and anti-image MSA values in SPSS version 26. Results showed KMO-MSA values above 0.50 and all diagonal anti-image MSA values exceeding 0.50, indicating that the questionnaire items met the validity criteria [33].

Table 2. Validity Test.

Variable	Items	KMO	Anti-Image Correlation	Result
Club Image (X1)	X1.1	0,766	0,715	Valid
	X1.2		0,830	
	X1.3		0,748	
	X1.4		0,810	

Variable	Items	KMO	Anti-Image Correlation	Result
	X1.5		0,842	
	X1.6		0,809	
	X1.7		0,722	
	X1.8		0,556	
Sponsorship Factors (X2)	X2.1	0,894	0,931	Valid
	X2.2		0,882	
	X2.3		0,893	
	X2.4		0,934	
	X2.5		0,878	
	X2.6		0,883	
	X2.7		0,899	
	X2.8		0,909	
	X2.9		0,857	
	X2.10		0,866	
Fan Loyalty (X3)	X3.1	0,874	0,886	Valid
	X3.2		0,779	
	X3.3		0,904	
	X3.4		0,848	
	X3.5		0,845	
	X3.6		0,875	
	X3.7		0,925	
	X3.8		0,881	
	X3.9		0,902	
	X3.10		0,883	
Purchase Intention (Y)	Y.1	0,901	0,857	Valid
	Y.2		0,917	
	Y.3		0,900	
	Y.4		0,937	
	Y.5		0,875	
	Y.6		0,911	
	Y.7		0,893	
	Y.8		0,919	

According to [33],reliability testing assesses whether a questionnaire consistently measures a variable, with this study using Cronbach's Alpha in SPSS and considering instruments reliable when the alpha coefficient is ≥ 0.60.

Table 3. Reliability Test.

Variable	Cronbach Alpha	Result
Club Image	0,775	Reliable
Sponsorship Factors	0,900	Reliable
Fan Loyalty	0,888	Reliable
Purchase Intention	0,901	Reliable

According to [33], normality testing evaluates how closely data distributions approach normality, a key assumption for valid t- and F-tests in linear regression. This study used the One-Sample KS test, considering data normal if Sig > 0.05.

Table 4. Normality Test.

One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test		
		Unstd Resid
N		87
Normal Parameters[a,b]	Mean	0
	Std. Dev	2.32473157
Most Extreme Dif	Abs	.053
	+	.053
	-	-.039
Test Stat		.053
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)[c]		.200[d]

According to [31],multiple linear regression models the simultaneous influence of variables on one dependent variable. This study found the regression equation:

$$Y = 1.839 + 0.160X_1 + 0.171X_2 + 0.466X_3 + e \tag{2}$$

Indicating that club image, sponsorship factors, and fan loyalty positively affect purchase intention, with all coefficients showing an increase in purchase intention when each independent variable rises by one unit, assuming others remain constant.

Table 5. Multiple Regression.

	Coefficients[a]							
	Unstd Coef		Std Coef				Collinearity Stat	
Model	B	Std. Error	B	t	Sig.		Tol	VIF
1 (Constant)	1.839	2.826		0.651	.517			
Club Image	.160	.098	.132	1.630	.107		.608	1.645
Sponsorship Factors	.171	.078	.203	2.189	.031		.465	2.150
Fan Loyalty	.466	.072	.577	6.451	.000		.502	1.992
a. Dependent Variable: Purchase Intention								

The t-test in this study assessed the partial effect of club image (X1), sponsorship factors (X2), and fan loyalty (X3) on purchase intention (Y) at a 5% significance level. With 87 samples, the degree of freedom was 84, and the two-tailed significance level was 0.025, resulting in a t-table value of 1.988. A variable is significant if its t-value is equal to or greater than 1.988; otherwise, it is not significant.

Table 6. T-Test.

No	Hypothesis	Sig.	T Stat	T Tab	Result
1	Club image has no significant effect on merchandise purchase intention among Bali United fans.	0,10	1.630		No Sig.
2	Sponsorhip factors has a positive significant effect on merchandise purchase intention among Bali United fans.	0,03	2.189	1,988	Sig.
3	Fan loyalty has a positive significant effect on merchandise purchase intention among Bali United fans.	0,00	6,451		Sig.

The simultaneous F-test showed an F-value of 55.446, exceeding the F-table 2.71 (α = 0.05), with a significance of 0.000. This indicates that club image (X1), sponsorship factors (X2), and fan loyalty (X3) jointly have a significant effect on Y.

Table 7. F-Test.

ANOVA[a]						
Model		Sum	df	Mean	F	Sig.
1	Regression	931.453	3	310.484	55.446	.000[b]
	Residual	464.776	83	5.600		
	Total	1396.230	86			

B. Discussion

Effect of Club Image on Purchase Intention

This study examines that the club image of Bali United does not have a significant effect on fans' intention to buy merchandise, leading to the rejection of the first hypothesis. Although Bali United's club image is generally perceived as positive, with an average score of 4.30, this perception does not directly translate into actual purchase intention. The lowest-rated indicator relates to the perception that Bali United is free from scandals, suggesting that transparency and reputation still need improvement, while the highest-rated indicator reflects fans' appreciation of the team's quality and on-field performance. These findings indicate that fans may admire the club and its performance without necessarily being motivated to buy official merchandise. Unlike [4], [20],who found that club image encourages consumer behavior, this difference may be explained by the local Indonesian, where merchandise consumption is still developing. Therefore, while a positive club image is important, Bali United's management should also focus on more attractive and relevant merchandise marketing strategies, such as design innovation, brand collaborations, and campaigns that strengthen fans' sense of ownership.

Effect of Sponsorship Factors on Purchase Intention

This study finds that the sponsorship factor has a positive and significant effect on fans' intention to purchase Bali United merchandise, supporting the second hypothesis, and indicating that favorable perceptions of the sponsor enhance buying interest. Consistent with the sport sponsorship framework of [23],fans generally perceive Specs as a credible and sincere sponsor with strong brand presence and genuine commitment to the club, reflected in a high mean score of 4.28. The highest-rated indicator shows that fans believe Specs sponsors Bali United out of trust in the club's quality rather than purely commercial motives, strengthening

positive brand associations and purchase intention, in line with [35] argument that image congruence between sponsor and club fosters emotional attachment. However, slightly lower scores suggest some doubt about long-term sponsor commitment if club performance declines, highlighting the pragmatic nature of sponsorship perceptions. Therefore, strengthening long-term partnership communication and collaborative fan-oriented programs is essential, as prior studies confirm that sponsor, club image fit significantly enhances brand loyalty and purchase intention [29], [36].

Effect of Fan Loyalty on Purchase Intention

Fan loyalty, as the third independent variable in this study, has a positive and significant effect on Bali United fans' intention to purchase merchandise, leading to the acceptance of the third hypothesis. Consistent with [2], fan loyalty reflects strong emotional attachment and long-term commitment, which in this study is rated at a high level, indicating good psychological commitment and behavioral loyalty among respondents. The highest mean score (4.45) appears on the indicator of watching Bali United matches on television, showing that fans tend to express their loyalty through media and digital engagement rather than stadium attendance, which reflects an adaptive form of support that still strengthens emotional bonds and purchase intention [36]. In contrast, the lower mean score (3.84) for frequent stadium attendance suggests practical constraints rather than weak loyalty. Overall, these findings align with previous studies confirming that high fan loyalty significantly enhances merchandise purchasing behavior and consumer engagement [30], [40].

5. Conclusions

This study concludes that the club image of Bali United does not have a significant effect on fans' intention to purchase merchandise, indicating that a positive perception of the club alone is not sufficient to directly encourage buying behavior. In contrast, sponsor factors and fan loyalty have a positive and significant influence on purchase intention, meaning that favorable perceptions of sponsors and strong emotional attachment and commitment to the club increase fans' willingness to buy merchandise. However, this study is limited by its focus on a single football club and a specific group of respondents, which may restrict the generalizability of the findings, as well as by the use of self-reported data that may not fully reflect actual purchasing behavior. Therefore, future research is recommended to include multiple clubs, broader samples, and additional variables such as merchandise design, price, and distribution channels, as well as to consider qualitative approaches to gain deeper insights into fans' motivations for purchasing club merchandise.

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