

(Research/Review) Article

The Influence of Club Image, Sponsorship, 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 200 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 three factors—club image, sponsor factors, and fan loyalty—has a positive and significant effect on the intention to purchase official merchandise. This indicates that a stronger perception of the club's brand, 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 image of the club helps build trust and emotional connection, while 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. In conclusion, the study emphasizes that effective brand management, strategic alignment of sponsorships, and nurturing fan loyalty are crucial for maximizing merchandise sales potential. Sports teams can leverage these factors to enhance fan engagement and improve their revenue generation strategies, making merchandise sales a valuable part of their business model.

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. 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 tightening 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.

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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.

Club image, built on brand identity (name, logo, colors, slogan, core values) plays a critical role in influencing consumer behavior and attracting supporters. 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. 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.

Sponsorship serves 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. 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. Positive perceptions of socially responsible sportswear brands can further boost consumer loyalty, ultimately driving merchandise purchase intentions.

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. Strong team identification, rooted in social identity theory, predicts attendance and merchandise purchases. Emotional attachment to a team is directly linked to merchandise purchase intention, while community attachment serves as a strong predictor of loyal behaviors, including merchandise buying. Fans often derive the belonging, pride, and meaningful identity from their team and its merchandise, reinforcing long-term consumer engagement.

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. 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.

Guided by the Theory of Planned Behavior, 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. In professional sports, it encompasses fans' perceptions shaped by their experiences, interactions, and communication with the team. A positive brand image can be built through effective marketing strategies, strong performance, and positive relationships with fans and the community.

Research by 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

Sponsorship refers 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. 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. In the realm of sports marketing, 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. 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. Positive experiences, whether from direct stadium attendance or mediated interactions, enhance fans' sense of belonging and collective identity, 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. It may arise from product awareness, evaluation of alternatives, and the belief that the product can meet consumer needs or desires. 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.

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. 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. 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 Design

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. 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.

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	Dimension	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 (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, actively engage in supporter activities, and be at least 17 years old [31]. Following [32], a sample size of 200 was determined by multiplying the 38 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].

$$Y = \alpha + \beta X1 + \beta X2 + \beta X3 + \varepsilon \quad (1)$$

Partial testing determines whether each independent variable significantly affects the dependent variable, with significance levels < 0.05 indicating rejection of H_0 and acceptance of H_a [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 31. 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	Item	KMO	Anti-Image Correlation	Result
Club Image (X1)	X1.1	0,879	0,966	Valid
	X1.2		0,949	
	X1.3		0,852	
	X1.4		0,806	
	X1.5		0,805	
	X1.6		0,958	

Variable	Item	KMO	Anti-Image Correlation	Result
Sponsorship (X2)	X1.7	0,911	0,981	Valid
	X1.8		0,864	
	X1.9		0,822	
	X1.10		0,819	
	X2.1		0,959	
	X2.2		0,959	
	X2.3		0,883	
	X2.4		0,854	
	X2.5		0,888	
	X2.6		0,961	
	X2.7		0,954	
	X2.8		0,898	
	X2.9		0,836	
	X2.10		0,910	
Fan Loyalty (X3)	X3.1	0,920	0,895	Valid
	X3.2		0,865	
	X3.3		0,944	
	X3.4		0,899	
	X3.5		0,966	
	X3.6		0,950	
	X3.7		0,940	
	X3.8		0,945	
	X3.9		0,879	
	X3.10		0,936	
Purchase Intention (Y)	Y.1	0,896	0,890	Valid
	Y.2		0,839	
	Y.3		0,862	
	Y.4		0,907	
	Y.5		0,897	
	Y.6		0,933	
	Y.7		0,923	
	Y.8		0,921	

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	0,949	Reliable
Sponsorship	0,952	Reliable
Fan Loyalty	0,923	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			200
Normal	Mean		
Parameters ^{a,b}	Std. Dev		
	Abs		
Most Extreme	+		
Dif	-		
Test Stat			0.053
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) ^c			0.04
	Sig.		
Monte Carlo Sig	99%	Lower Bound	-0.053
	Confidence Interval		
		Upper Bound	0.204

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

$$Y = 3.412 + 0.232X_1 + 0.259X_2 + 0.242X_3 + e$$

(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			
		Std. Error	B	t	Sig.	Tol	VIF
Model							
1	(Constant)	3.412	1.198	2.849	.005		
	Club Image	.232	.039	.317	5.986	<.001	.397
	Sponsorship	.259	.041	.333	6.248	<.001	.392
	Fan Loyalty	.242	.037	.335	6.618	<.001	.435

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 200 samples, the degree of freedom was 196, and the two-tailed significance level was 0.025, resulting in a t-table value of 1.972. A variable is significant if its t-value is equal to or greater than 1.972; otherwise, it is not significant.

Table 6. T-Test.

No	Hypothesis	Sig.	T Stat	T Tab	Result
1	Club image has a positive significant effect on merchandise purchase intention among Bali United fans.	0,01	5,986		
2	Sponsorship has a positive significant effect on merchandise purchase intention among Bali United fans.	0,01	6,248	1,972	Significant
3	Fan loyalty has a positive significant effect on merchandise purchase intention among Bali United fans.	0,01	6,618		

The simultaneous F-test showed an F-value of 243.176, exceeding the F-table 2.65 ($\alpha = 0.05$), 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	2069.501	3	689.834	234.176	<.001 ^b
	Residual	577.374	196	2.946		
	Total	2646.875	199			

B. Discussion

Effect of Club Image on Purchase Intention

The finding indicate that club image (X1) has a positive significant effect on Bali United fans' purchase intention for club merchandise, thus supporting the first hypothesis. This finding aligns with [20], who describe club image as the fans' perception of the football club, and is consistent with prior research [2], [28], [30] showing that a strong and positive club image can deepen emotional attachment and motivate purchasing behavior. A well-established club image not only builds trust but also reinforces fans' sense of pride and belonging, which in turn increases the likelihood of buying official merchandise. To maximize this effect, the club can enhance its brand narrative through integrated storytelling strategies [34], such as creating digital timelines of the club's achievements, organizing heritage-themed matches that highlight historical moments, and running fan-generated content campaigns to foster a sense of community. By implementing these initiatives, the club can strengthen its "big club" identity, nurture stronger emotional connections with supporters, and translate positive perceptions into sustained merchandise purchases.

Effect of Sponsorship on Purchase Intention

The results reveal that sponsorship factors (X2) have a positive significant impact on Bali United fans' purchase intention for club merchandise, confirming the second hypothesis. This finding supports [23] view that sponsorship influences consumer perception and response in sports contexts, and aligns with [35] concept that brand club image congruence strengthens emotional bonds and boosts purchase behavior. Fans perceive Specs, Bali United's primary sponsor, as a credible, sincere, and integral part of the club's identity, which fosters stronger loyalty and increases the likelihood of buying official merchandise, consistent with prior studies linking sponsorship awareness to higher purchase intentions [29], [36]. However, limited awareness of Specs' involvement in other sports suggests a need for broader, integrated campaigns to highlight the brand's multi-sport presence, such as community tournaments, cross-sport collaborations with players, and digital storytelling featuring

diverse athletic events. By diversifying sponsorship touchpoints [37] and deepening emotional engagement, Bali United and Specs can strengthen brand recall, enhance fan sponsor relationships, and convert positive sentiment into sustained merchandise purchases.

Effect of Fan Loyalty on Purchase Intention

The findings indicate that fan loyalty (X3) exerts a positive significant effect on Bali United supporters' merchandise purchase intentions, confirming the third hypothesis. In line with [2], fan loyalty (characterized by strong emotional attachment and long-term commitment) emerged at a high level among respondents, reflecting both psychological commitment and behavioral loyalty. This loyalty acts as a key driver of merchandise sales, as emotionally invested fans are more likely to make official purchases, a conclusion consistent with prior studies [11], [30], [38]. Nevertheless, lower scores on indicators such as attending matches regularly and identifying as a "true fan" suggest barriers related to physical access, travel costs, and self-perception. To address these gaps, Bali United could implement relational marketing strategies [39] by bundling official transportation and family ticket promotions, enriching matchday experiences with pre-game entertainment, and reinforcing emotional ties through fan club activities, limited-edition merchandise, and digital storytelling. Further, integrating exclusive online content, interactive Q&A sessions with players, and "fan zones" at the stadium could deepen psychological engagement, enhance live attendance, and strengthen identity as loyal supporters, ultimately sustaining merchandise demand through long-term fan club bonds.

5. Conclusions

This study concludes that club image, sponsorship factors, and fan loyalty each exert a positive significant influence on Bali United supporters' intention to purchase official merchandise. A stronger club image (marked by reputation, community engagement, and branding quality) enhances fans' purchasing interest, while reputable and value-aligned sponsors further reinforce buying intentions. Similarly, higher fan loyalty, reflected in emotional attachment, consistent club engagement, and active community participation, drives merchandise demand. However, the study is limited by its focus on a single football club, survey data, and a cross-sectional design that cannot capture changes over time. Future research could broaden the scope to include multiple clubs for comparative analysis, incorporate longitudinal data to observe evolving fan behavior, and explore additional variables such as digital engagement or matchday experience to deepen the understanding of merchandise purchase intentions in the sports industry.

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