

Spectators: The 12th Player in Indonesian Football Team, The Crucial Branding Resonance

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Abstract

At the recent FIFA U-17 World Cup event held in Indonesia, spectators played an essential role. This study examines their influence on attitudinal attachment, sense of community and active engagement on spectator behavioral loyalty. We used a mixed-method methodology to collect quantitative data from 350 observers while gathering qualitative insights through in-depth interviews. SPSS studies revealed that attachment and a sense of community positively affected brand loyalty significantly, while active participation decreased it significantly. Our results underscore the criticality of emotional bonds and cohesion for building lasting brand loyalty, providing valuable strategic knowledge for sports marketing.

Keywords: branding, behavioral loyalty, Indonesian football, spectators.

Introduction

Football is more than just a sport; it is a captivating spectacle that engages millions of individuals globally. Professional sports organizations' bottom line and long-term viability heavily rely on their capacity to attract and retain many fans. (Doyle et al., 2017). The evolution of broadcasting and the impact of football on shaping national identities demonstrate the significant influence spectators have on the achievements and image of a football team. (Leite Júnior & Rodrigues, 2017). Fans demonstrate their support for teams and leagues by engaging in direct and indirect consumption activities. These actions include attending games, buying products, and increasing the organisation's attractiveness to advertisers. (McDonald et al., 2013).

Spectators in Indonesian football matches do not merely observe but actively participate, contributing to the game's ambience, energy, and overall atmosphere. Their presence is crucial in creating a solid branding impact beyond the sport. As the most popular sports industry in the world, football is attracting interest not only because it is a global sport but also because of its positive impact on society or commercial resources. (U. K. Wijaya & Rofii, 2022). The fervent support displayed by football enthusiasts,

often organised into passionate supporter groups, can have significant implications for a nation's overall resilience and unity. (F. A. Wijaya & Sugiharto, 2015).

The enthusiasm and support demonstrated by these spectators during matches serve as a potent marketing asset for the Indonesian football team. They visually embody the team's identity and principles with passionate chants, vibrant banners, and electrifying energy. Spectators in the pre-competition international context identified less closely than fans directly attending games of a sports club that competes every week in the regular season. (Hautbois & Bouchet, 2015). Additionally, these spectators advocate for the team by fostering positive word-of-mouth while cultivating a sense of community among fans. (Lim, 2019).

It is more than just an outlet for fan violence; it highlights the meaningful traditions and emotions fans feel. These rituals and emotions, along with the collective energy and emotional impact created within the spectator group, contribute to the overall game experience and significantly affect the team's reputation. Additionally, spectators' involvement extends beyond physical stadiums due to social media platforms, allowing them to interact with the team globally. By sharing their experiences online through photos and videos and participating in digital conversations, spectators become content creators who help digitally promote the team's brand. This chapter offers insights into how spectators actively engaging with Indonesian football contribute to its branding resonance. The enthusiasm spectators show during these matches is a potent marketing tool for promoting a sense of community among fans while generating positive word-of-mouth that enhances its market appeal. (Von Scheve et al., 2017). Spectators play a crucial role as the team's "12th player," boosting their performance on and off the field. (Lim, 2019).

Fans' involvement in physical and digital spaces fosters a feeling of togetherness and shared identity, enhancing the team's image and connecting with spectators and stakeholders. In Indonesian football, spectators are regarded as the 12th player due to their significant impact on the team's branding appeal and market value. Beyond fostering community spirit and positive word-of-mouth, fans generate digital content, actively participating in social media platforms to promote the team brand. This engagement increases visibility, drawing a larger audience and potential sponsors. In summary, spectators play a crucial part in influencing the branding resonance of the Indonesian football team. (Elden et al., 2018).

From November 10th to December 2nd, Indonesia hosted the FIFA World Cup U-17 in 2023, which is considered an essential landmark for young footballers globally. The tournament was massive since it involved 24 national teams that played 52 matches, and Germany won it for the first time in this age group (FIFA, 2023). Thus, Jakarta, Bandung, Surakarta, and Surabaya were selected by Indonesia as venues to stage their U-17 World Cup debut. There was strong local and international support for this event from the people, with an average attendance rate of about thirty thousand fans per game based on growing Indonesian enthusiasm for football (FIFA, 2023). The tournament also economically succeeded because it brought nearly fifty million dollars worth of business

activity to hotels and other businesses within the country. At least, the FIFA U-17 World Cup proved that Indonesia could organize major global sporting events while revealing its international sports tourism potential, sparking more future opportunities for this industry (FIFA, 2023). The historic FIFA U-17 World Cup held in Indonesia in 2023 brought budding soccer talent together while significantly boosting the local economy, fostering a sense of belonging among Indonesian football spectators.

Indonesia encounters distinctive obstacles and advantages related to football marketing due to the sport's swift worldwide expansion. Although Indonesian football supporters are passionate about the sport, there is a lack of research on the impact of brand resonance on fan loyalty. Therefore, Indonesia's FIFA U-17 World Cup is a perfect opportunity to examine this phenomenon. While there is a significant amount of literature on the impact of brand resonance on customer loyalty, including behavioural loyalty, attitudinal attachment, sense of community, and active involvement, there is still a need for more understanding of these processes in a broader context.

Indonesia is an example of an emerging market that needs to be included, as significant research on brand resonance focuses more on developed markets. This gap is central because consumer behaviour and cultural contexts differ among emerging markets, thus affecting the extent to which brand resonance influences customer loyalty. (Kotler & Keller. K.L, 2012) Previous studies only focused on the four components, behavioural loyalty, attitudinal attachment, sense of community, and active engagement, without considering their combined effects on customers' loyalty. Understanding these relationships is necessary for building complete marketing programs that generate strong customer loyalty. (U. K. Wijaya et al., 2023). There are unique challenges and opportunities in sports marketing, especially within Indonesia's rapidly expanding football spectators base. Researchers have yet to thoroughly investigate the particular context of how brand resonance can be optimized to improve viewer loyalty. These dynamics may best be examined through the FIFA U-17 World Cup held in Indonesia due to its high economic significance and growing interest in football spectatorship in the region. (Amri et al., 2022).

Method

Research Design

This study employs a mixed-method research design, combining quantitative and qualitative methodologies to thoroughly investigate the impact of behavioural loyalty, attitudinal attachment, sense of community, and active engagement on fostering strong customer loyalty in the context of spectator sports during the FIFA World Cup U-17 event in Indonesia. The decision to employ a mixed-method approach is motivated by the need to comprehensively understand the phenomenon by integrating quantitative data with meticulous contextual observations. The quantitative analysis was conducted using

SPSS 26, while the qualitative analysis employed phenomenology through in-depth interviews.

Subjects

The research involves 350 individuals who watched matches at Si Jalak Harupat Stadium in Bandung. A stratified random sampling method was adopted to ensure an inclusive representation of the people within the spectator population. The demographic profile comprises people between 17 and 55, men and women, and occupations such as students and professionals—the frequency of match attendance where regular or occasional spectators.

Points of view

The quantitative perspective measures the strength and direction of interactions between variables. It produces conclusions that can be statistically tested for significance and applied to a broader population. A qualitative perspective enables a comprehensive and intricate examination of viewers' experiences, effectively capturing the profound and elaborate nature of their emotional and social attachments to the football event.

By combining quantitative and qualitative approaches, a study's credibility is enhanced as it provides a deeper understanding of how various elements of brand resonance impact customer loyalty. Quantitative data offers concrete evidence of relationships between variables, whereas qualitative information provides additional context and depth, improving understanding of statistical findings. By implementing an inclusive research design strategy, this hybrid methodology guarantees a comprehensive yet detailed exploration of various aspects of spectator experiences. This delivers crucial insights for effectively managing sports marketing brands.

Result and Discussion

The results are for both quantitative and qualitative approaches.

Table 1. ANOVA

ANOVA ^a						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	3980.292	3	1326.764	548.850	.000 ^b
	Residual	836.405	346	2.417		
	Total	4816.697	349			

a. Dependent Variable: Spectator Loyalty

b. Predictors: (Constant), Active Engagement, Sense of Community, Attitudinal Attachment

Table 2. Coefficients

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	2.878	.859		3.348	.001
Attitudinal Attachment	.081	.037	.056	2.177	.030
Sense of Community	.960	.026	.895	36.677	.000
Active Engagement	-.207	.043	-.116	-4.851	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Spectator Loyalty

From the table above, Attitudinal attachment significantly and positively affects spectator loyalty ($p = 0.030$). Devoted fans often exhibit loyalty to the club by attending matches, purchasing goods, and advocating for the team. This discovery aligns with prior research conducted by (Ian Norris et al., 2015), highlighting the significance of emotional bonding in cultivating loyalty among sports enthusiasts.

The existence of a sense of community has a substantial and positive impact on spectators' loyalty ($p = 0.000$). Individuals with a strong sense of connection with those who watch sports events are likelier to remain loyal to the team, underscoring the importance of fostering a robust fan community. This outcome is consistent with the research conducted by (Clopton, 2008), which emphasized social identity and community's influence on fans' loyalty. This aligns with the results of other research studies that indicate a strong fan community has the potential to enhance loyalty and boost engagement. (D. J. Lock & Funk, 2016).

Active engagement is actively contributing or being involved in a task or activity. Active involvement negatively affects spectators' loyalty ($p = 0.000$). This finding suggests that specific forms of active engagement may not lead to loyalty or that excessive engagement could lead to negative experiences or spectator weariness. The study conducted by (Byon et al., 2011) Provides evidence that excessive participation might result in burnout and reduced loyalty.

The qualitative data from in-depth interviews were examined using phenomenology in-depth interviews to uncover themes and patterns that align with the quantitative results.

Whereas Identified Themes:

1. Emotional Connection:

Narrative: Numerous interviewees conveyed a profound emotional connection with the team, which compelled them to remain steadfast in their loyalty despite swings in team performance.

Supporting Quote: "I have been a devoted fan of this team since childhood, and regardless of any circumstances, I consistently experience a profound emotional bond with them."

2. Participation in the community:

The participants repeatedly emphasized the camaraderie and shared experiences that strengthened their allegiance, indicating a solid feeling of community among fans.

Supporting Quote: "Being a member of this fan community instils in me a sense of belonging to a larger entity. The games have a compelling allure that consistently draws me back.

3. Activities to foster engagement:

Narrative: Although most fans had a favourable experience participating in team events, a few reported feeling overwhelmed by the continuous calls for interaction.

Supporting Quote: "I derive great satisfaction from being actively engaged, but occasionally it can become overwhelming." It can become tiring.

Attitudinal Attachment

Attitudinal attachment pertains to the affective and cognitive bond that fans experience toward a sports team. The FIFA World Cup U-17 Indonesia event had a significant turnout, with an average of 30,000 spectators for each match. The substantial voter participation signifies a robust emotional connection among Indonesian football supporters who are deeply committed to the sport. The emotional stories of fans frequently demonstrate enduring allegiance and a profound attachment to the sport, consistent with the research indicating that emotional connections foster loyalty. (Bee & Havitz, 2010). This form of connection exerts a favourable influence on the allegiance of spectators for various reasons:

1. Affective Bond

Fans with a strong attitudinal commitment form a profound emotional connection with their team. This linkage enhances the likelihood of their loyalty, as their support is intricately linked to their identity and feelings. For instance, according to a study by (Filo et al., 2015), individuals who experience a strong emotional bond with a sports team are more inclined to attend games, buy team-related products, and engage in positive word-of-mouth advertising.

2. Dedication

Emotional attachment results in an increased level of dedication. Dedicated enthusiasts will likely keep their loyalties, even when their team performs poorly. (Funk & James, 2001) Showed that spectators with a strong emotional connection to a team are likelier to engage in loyal behaviours, such as renewing season tickets and actively following the team through different media platforms.

3. Uniformity in assistance:

Fans with solid emotional connections remain loyal and supportive regardless of external circumstances. Maintaining this consistency is essential for fostering long-term loyalty. (Bauer et al., 2008) Conducted research that demonstrated how attitudinal attachment plays a significant role in promoting long-term loyalty among fans. This loyalty is evident as fans continue to support their team regardless of the team's performance.

A significant factor in encouraging spectator loyalty is attitude or the sense of personal identification and emotional bond that spectators have with a sports team. There are various reasons why this emotional connection plays a significant role in fostering spectator loyalty. First, spectators with a strong attitude towards the team are likelier to show out to games, buy apparel, and interact with team-related content, all of which are signs of sustained support. For example, spectators' emotional connections with their teams frequently increase loyalty and steadfast support, even when the team performs poorly (softjurn.com).

Sense of community

A sense of community pertains to enthusiasts' sensation of inclusion and reciprocal assistance. The primary determinant of spectator loyalty is its capacity to foster a communal identity and facilitate shared experiences.

1. Interpersonal Connections

The presence of a robust communal spirit among fans fosters the development of social connections and networks. These interpersonal ties augment the entire experience of supporting the team and cultivating loyalty. According to a study by (McDonald & Karg, 2014), fans who experienced a strong sense of community expressed greater happiness and loyalty. The social component of being a fan played a vital role in shaping their overall experience.

2. Collective Experiences

Shared experiences, such as participating in games and commemorating triumphs collectively, enhance the connection between spectators and the team. This shared sense of identity strengthens allegiance by fostering a commitment to common objectives and shared recollections. The study conducted by (D. Lock et al., 2012) They have demonstrated that individuals with a strong sense of community exhibit greater resilience towards changes in team performance and sustain loyalty due to their shared experiences.

3. Assistance systems

Strong community cohesion fosters emotional and social assistance for spectators, intensifying their bond with the club. This support system is essential during difficult periods, such as a series of losses, as it plays a vital role in preserving the spectator's loyalty. (Byon et al., 2011) It discovered that spectators who experienced a sense of belonging within a supportive community were more inclined to maintain their loyalty, even during poor team performance.

The strongest predictor of spectator loyalty was developing a sense of community. This idea refers to spectators' collective sense of identity and fraternity when they support their team. Being part of a fan community strengthens loyalty by reinforcing fans' emotional engagement and devotion to the team. Individuals with a profound camaraderie are more inclined to participate in benevolent actions, such as championing the team and enlisting new spectators. The football culture in Indonesia is predominantly centered around the community, with fans establishing robust local support organizations. (Akbar et al., 2017). The event's ability to create a sense of community aligns with research indicating that communal experiences are crucial in cultivating loyalty.

The data analysis from this study unveiled an unexpected discovery: active engagement negatively influences spectator loyalty. This outcome is paradoxical, as active involvement is commonly regarded as a crucial element in cultivating robust fan allegiance. Nevertheless, various potential justifications and concrete instances from the real world can help elucidate the reasons behind this adverse influence. Interviews and surveys revealed that fans acknowledged and valued the attempts to keep them connected. However, there was a threshold beyond which their ability to handle the engagement without impacting their enjoyment and devotion could have been improved. (Brodie et al., 2011).

Excessive or frequent expectations for interaction result in burnout among followers. Enthusiasts experience a sense of obligation to consistently engage in various activities, resulting in exhaustion and reduced pleasure. A study conducted by Pons, Giroux, and Mourali (2014) emphasized that excessive involvement in promotional endeavours of professional sports teams might result in fan burnout, which in turn has a detrimental effect on their enduring devotion. Engagement activities are significant in their quality rather than their quantity. They can result in unhappiness if they lack significance or do not satisfy the fans' expectations. Engagement activities seen as monotonous or superficial can reduce fans' overall experience. An example of this is frequent interactions on social media that need more genuine value or connection, which can annoy fans instead of engaging them. (Thompson et al., 2014).

Various fans have distinct tastes in interaction. The effectiveness of a particular approach varies among different groups, potentially resulting in disinterest or unfavourable responses from specific sectors of the fan community. An analysis of sports marketing tactics revealed that older spectators favour conventional modes of involvement, such as attending live events. However, younger fans tend to lean towards

digital connections. An excessive focus on a particular interaction can cause a considerable segment of the fan base to feel excluded. (Beech & Chadwick, 2007). In (Ian Norris et al., 2015), Maximizers exhibited a more vital identification with their preferred NFL team when their preferred club was unsuccessful. In Study 2, individuals who tend to maximize their choices showed a higher level of identification with their college basketball team after reading a negative preview of the team's forthcoming season compared to reading a positive assessment of the same season.

Conclusions

The quantitative research revealed that attitudes and loyalty immediately and positively affected spectators. This discovery corroborates qualitative findings suggesting that supporters displayed intense emotional connections with their teams, which enhanced their loyalty irrespective of variations in performance. Wijaya et al. (2023) research provides further evidence supporting these assertions. Spectators play a crucial role in supporting their favourite clubs and generating revenue. Establishing and nurturing emotional connections between fans and teams is crucial for maintaining long-term support. Advocates discovered that the primary factor determining spectator loyalty was establishing an atmosphere that encouraged a sense of belonging among spectators. This was achieved by cultivating camaraderie and shared experiences, which created a feeling of inclusion and ultimately led to a strong sense of connection and belongingness among spectators. The qualitative narratives unveiled this finding as participants emphasized the significance of fan groups in enhancing loyalty. Surprisingly, excessive participation might diminish spectator loyalty. Excessive engagement causes tiredness and reduced enthusiasm, resulting in decreased allegiance from viewers. An in-depth examination revealed that fans acknowledged and valued interaction activities. However, excessive communication has the potential to become tiresome or fatiguing in the future.

Theoretical implications suggest that the findings of this study enhance our understanding by demonstrating the complex connections among many elements of brand resonance and spectator loyalty. The findings emphasize the need to efficiently oversee engagement initiatives to prevent fan exhaustion and sustain enduring devotion. The study offers a unique perspective on how several components of brand resonance jointly impact fan loyalty in sports. Integrating quantitative and qualitative methodologies enables a thorough comprehension of fan behavior, enhancing the efficacy of strategic brand management in sports marketing.

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