

Mediating the sport consumer behaviour model: Analysis in non-sporting brand

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Abstract In the Philippines, sports sponsorship has already found its way, as companies invest in sponsoring a team or creating their brand of league. In volleyball, a pizza chain created an entire volleyball league, even though its products are not connected with sports nor even a healthy option food. This study was conducted in a Philippines private university whose total population was 2,200 during the time of the study. Slovin's Formula was used to select 338 respondents. Mediation analysis was done to explore the direct and indirect effects between the independent and dependent variables. Regression analysis was also conducted to test the prediction of the latent variables. Based on the result, constructs of sports consumer behaviour (Involvement, Sport Attachment, Brand Image, Word of Mouth, and Purchase Intentions) in sports sponsorship activity could be effective in the Philippine setting. It can be lauded that, sports attachment, brand image, income and educational attainment could profoundly influence word of mouth and purchase intention separately. This means that respondents who have sports attachments, perspectives on brand image, certain educational attainment levels, and middle and upper disposable income can be useful whether they are exposed to the brand as long as the sports sponsor can turn into a brand ambassador who can provide testimonials to the brand or people who can contribute to brand sales.

Keywords: sports sponsorship; consumer behaviour; non-sporting brand; mediating

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INTRODUCTION

Sponsorship is one of the most popular marketing communication instruments (Peluso et al., 2019). Brands of various types and categories engage in sponsorship, particularly in sports sponsorship – whether they sell sporting goods or not. Over the past 30 years, sponsorship has steadily evolved as a standard marketing tool. The main advantage of sponsorship is that it makes customers have a conscious mind where it attracts individuals to have an attachment to brand products and services through image recognition. Thus, these brands can increase sales and corporate value (Hino and Takeda, 2019). The most popular sponsorship strategy is sports sponsorship.

International sponsorship spending has gradually increased in the last five years. Its annual growth rate is higher than 4% in which total spending has exceeded USD 65 billion in 2018 (Peluso et al., 2019: International Events Group, 2018). Barroilhet (2016) highlighted that marketers find sports sponsorship a great opportunity in reaching new customers and in increasing brand awareness due to the enhanced corporate brand images. Because of this, the company's brand equity may also increase.

Clarity of communication is characterised as a lack of attention to vague, inadequate, or misleading customer data as the leading middle person of the correspondence purchase interface due to two reasons. Firstly, communication clearness adds to purchaser's mindfulness, validity, and information about essential items, permitting buyers to settle on all around educated natural nourishment decisions. On the other hand, the absence of communication lucidity prompts purchaser perplexity with negative monetary results; for example, doubt and choice delay (Anisimova, Mavondo, & Weiss, 2017).

Recent research by Zhou et al. (2020) examined the Global Consumer Culture (GCC) hypothesis with the self-extension hypothesis into a model that illustrates a rational way for customers to mark love for the sports business and test the prescient intensity of individual brand quality on sports stars in clarifying love for brands. This research stated that belief in global brand citizenship plays a full mediation effect between attractiveness and brand love. Zhou et al. (2020) underlined their finding that the use of sports stars' brand (attractiveness, expertise, and congruence) was positively related to global brand equity and brand love.

Zaharia et al. (2016) stated that purchase behaviour concerning sponsorship has different measurements. However, there is uncertainty towards sponsorship on purchase behaviour of football fans from the sponsorship of Samsung on Chelsea Football Club through their jersey. In the Philippines, sports sponsorship has already found its way, as companies invest in sponsoring a team or creating their brand of league. In basketball, for instance, companies and brand such as Alaska, Red Bull, Talk n Text, Genebra, and many others sponsors and even create

a basketball team of their own in the Philippine Basketball Association. In volleyball, for example, a pizza chain did not just sponsor an event but created an entire volleyball league, even though its products are not connected with sports nor even a healthy option food. In such a manner, other companies have benchmarked in this practice, creating and engaging in sports sponsorship across different sporting events or even by sponsoring some famous sports celebrities.

The history of sports sponsorship dated back to the ancient Greek and Roman civilisation. During those times, the wealthy members of the Greek society were sponsoring athletic and art festivals to enhance their social standing. For the same reason, the Roman aristocrats supported the gladiators (Wai, 2018). In the past, the sponsorship is primarily for altruism. Eventually, sports sponsorship turned into a commercial endeavour. Due to the lucrateness of sponsoring athletes, companies have started to engage in such activity (Wai, 2018).

The first form of commercial sports sponsorship was by Kodak in the year 1886 in which Kodak sponsored the Olympic Games. Subsequent sponsorship activities included the sports sponsorship by Spiers and Pond for the Australian Cricket Team in 1891. Other records of early sports sponsorship included the sports sponsorship of Bovril to the Nottingham Forest, a UK football team, in 1898. Other types of sports sponsorship came after and have been continuously being observed for several years. From enhancing the image of the wealthy Greeks and Roman aristocrats in the past, the concept of sports sponsorship has morphed into a tool for improving business profits (Wai, 2018).

Sports sponsorship has grown exponentially wherein the sports area has become a growing platform where sponsoring is becoming an essential foundation of the sports industry (Hoye et al., 2012). Despite being widely accepted that sports sponsorship provides increases in revenue among the sponsors, views on sports sponsorship have not been documented (Wai, 2018).

The term 'sports marketing' originated from a 1978 Advertising Age issue. In that paper, according to Gray and McEvoy (2005), sports marketing was considered industrial as well as consumer products and services marketers' activities who by then had started using sports for promotion. According to Farrelly et al. (2006), sports sponsorship has been increasingly used as an image and brand-positioning mechanism by many companies. According to Brassington and Pettitt (2000), through sports sponsorship, businesses can reach a larger audience and even communicate with potential customers that could not be reached when only using conventional advertising tools.

Study of Ko et al. (2016) aims to examine the activities of the sponsoring company in forming an optimistic mental outlook of the customer. This depends on the category of the sporting event (whether it generates profit or if it is not motivated by profit), which becomes an intermediary factor in their work. They asked 303 respondents who were

fans of university sports activities and 202 respondents who were fans of the World-Cup finals by FIFA. The results showed that ownership of the sponsoring company was considered as an essential part in shaping the customer's mental outlook. Therefore, it can be concluded that corporate decision-makers should think about learning the mental views of the nature of the company to customers before they decide to sponsor.

A critical issue in research on sponsorship and ads is to determine whether their operation achieves the desired results. Effectiveness of sponsorship and advertising contains several similar and varied functions. Both the effectiveness of sponsorship and the effectiveness of ads may lead to increased awareness, interest and purchasing intentions of consumers. Nevertheless, previous studies had also illustrated the similarities between the two (Cornwell & Coote, 2005; Meenaghan, 2005): (a) Customers believe that sports sponsorship benefits the general public whereas advertisement benefits only companies; (b) Customers consider sponsors as part of the program but advertise as an attempt to persuade the attitude and emotion of the consumer to buy their products and services; and (c) there are numerous roles and aspects between sponsorship and advertisement, such as encouragement, purpose, relationship, etc. (Bloxham, 1998; Crompton, 2004; O'Reilly et al., 2008).

Sponsorship is different from advertising. The corporation regards it as a sports marketing strategy from the perspective of a sponsor that integrates a healthy perspective from corporate management operations. Sponsors and sports facilities need to take care of each other because this collaboration helps both parties. From the sponsor's perspective, sponsorship is aimed at shaping customer perceptions about sponsors and generating benefits on both sides. Sponsorship is usually a two-way investment; Communication strategies rely heavily on the digital, as well as word of mouth interactions. The sponsor hopes that people understand that they are trying to help the sport or the team. They do not want the sponsorship form to be too commercial. Therefore, sponsorship exposure is not as commercial as advertising (Crompton, 2004; Meenaghan, 2001).

Sport attachment and team recognition play significant roles in sponsorship effectiveness. Gwinner and Swanson (2003) found that fans not only create identification with the teams they support, but they also give their identity to advertisers promoting their favourite teams. This situation was also expressed in the consumers' appreciation, disposition, and willingness to buy from the sponsors. Therefore, sporting properties such as the Super Bowl provide enticing strategies to companies which allow them to build a relationship through sponsorship with sports and sports stars. They can then take advantage of these opportunities to enter niche markets and gain significant marketing opportunities such as licensing and merchandising (Cornwell & Coote, 2005; Quester & Thompson, 2001).

The study aimed to analyse the mediating variables in the sports consumer behaviour model (Chen et al., 2014) through sports sponsorship in a non-sporting brand. The following research questions were intended for this study: 1) To what extent does sports attachment mediate the relationship between involvement and brand images? 2) To what extent does sports attachment mediate the relationship between involvement and word of mouth? 3) To what extent does sports attachment mediate the relationship between involvement and purchase intention? 4) To what extent does brand image mediate the relationship between sports attachment and word of mouth? 5) To what extent does the brand image mediate the relationship between sports attachment and purchase intention? 6) To what extent does word of mouth mediate the relationship between sports attachment and purchase intention?

METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted in a Philippines private university with a total population of 2,200 during the study. Slovin's Formula was used to select the 338 respondents. The research design used online survey method by utilising questions from Chen et al. (2014). The research was conducted from June to August 2019.

The analysis was done through mediation tests for sports attachment between engagement and brand image, sports attachment that mediated the relationship between involvement and word of mouth, sports attachment mediated the relationship between involvement and purchase intention, brand image mediated the relationship between sports attachments and word of mouth, brand image mediates the relationship between sports attachment and purchase intention, and word of mouth mediates the relationship between sports attachment and purchase intention. Mediation analysis was carried out to explore the direct and indirect effects between the independent and dependent variables. Regression analysis was also conducted to test the prediction of latent variables.

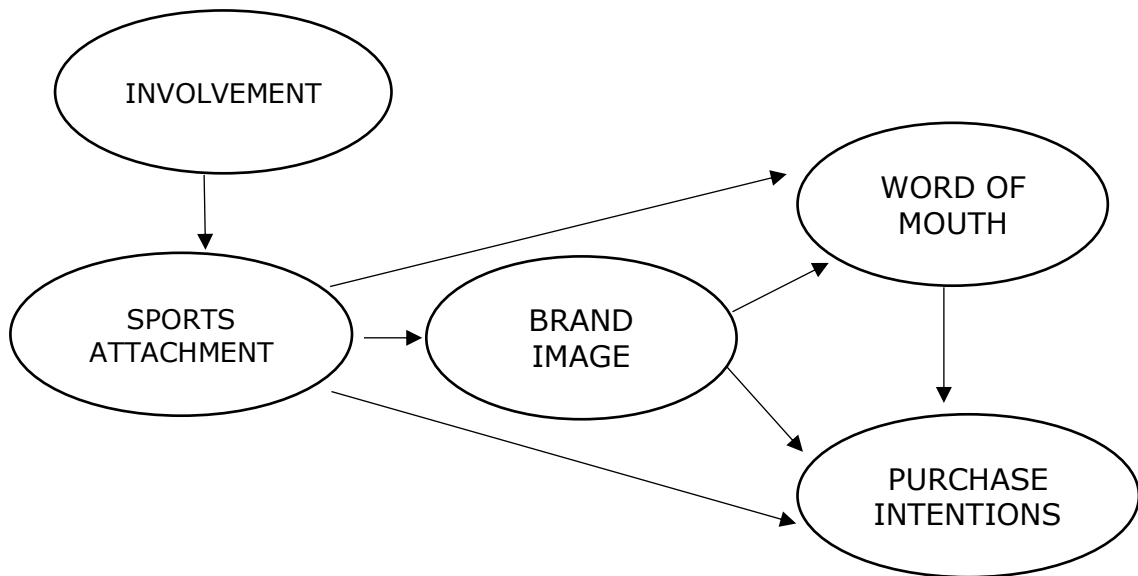
RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Sport consumer behaviour model

Researchers studied how the sponsorship and advertisement effect could be enhanced. Recent studies linked scientific models on the impact of attitude and behavioural constructs on sponsorship outcomes (Alexandris et al., 2007). The relationships between the constructs proposed as a background and the result of sport consumer behaviour programs are complicated and diverse. Tsiotsou and Alexandris (2009) integrated previous sponsorship variables (involvement-centrality and involvement-attraction) and sponsorship outcome variables (word of mouth and purchasing intentions) with mediators, including group attachment and sponsor image. Although the sponsorship model was suggested, research by Tsiotsou and Alexandris (2009), revealed three weaknesses of the model. The three weaknesses include wrong product,

inadequate literature support between the word of mouth and purchase intentions, the problem of multicollinearity between involvement-centrality and friction-involvement, and the uncertain direction between the word of mouth and purchase intention (Chen et al., 2014).

Figure 1. Sport consumer behaviour model



Source: Chen et al. (2014)

The Sport Consumer Behaviour Model (Chen, Stotlar, & Reams, 2014) was adopted for this study. The variables used in this study were involvement (centrality and attraction), sports attachment, sponsor (brand) image, word-of-mouth, and purchase intentions.

Kyle et al. (2004), defined involvement-centrality as positioning an activity (for example, with the sponsor) into the middle point or centre of an individual's lifestyle, while involvement-attraction refers to the importance, interest, and enjoyment that a person gets from an activity. Sport attachment, on the other hand, deals with the intensity of attachment or psychological engagement that a person gets from an activity (Funk, 2008). Sponsor's image refers to the perceived traits or helpfulness of the sponsor's products to customers (Alexandris et al., 2007). Finally, word-of-mouth is defined as "*interpersonal communication concerning marketing or a product that denigrates and praises the object of the communication*" (Laczniak et al. 2001, p. 58). This study postulated the following hypothesis:

H_{o1}: Sports Attachment does not mediate the relationship between Involvement and Brand Image.

H_{o2}: Sports Attachment does not mediate the relationship between involvement and word of mouth.

H_{o3}: Sports Attachment does not mediate the relationship between Involvement and purchase intention.

H_{o4}: Brand Image does not mediate the relationship between Sports attachment and word of mouth.

H_{o5}: Brand Image does not mediate the relationship between Sports attachment and purchase intention.

H_{o6}: Word of Mouth does not mediate the relationship between Sports attachment and purchase intention.

The research instrument was based on the scales made by Chen et al. (2014). The instrument has a total of 23 questions, of which 18 items were answered using a five-point Likert scale. Since the research instrument was used in the Philippines and had a different target respondent, reliability analysis was done using Cronbach's alpha (Table 1). The result showed that the latent variables (involvement, sports attachment, brand image, word of mouth, and purchase intentions) were above the recommended .70 cut-off point (Devellis, 1991) making the research instrument highly reliable.

Table 1. Cronbach Alpha (Construct)

	mean	Sd	Cronbach's α
Involvement	3.02	0.581	0.943
Sports Attachment	3.14	0.688	0.952
Brand Image	2.98	0.626	0.948
Word of Mouth	3.17	0.878	0.962
Purchase Intention	3.07	0.725	0.952

Source: Data Process by Author (2020)

Table 2 shows that the study obtained 338 respondents. The average age of the respondents was 25.03. Majority of the respondents were single Female, most of which had finished their college degree and belonged to the lower-middle-income.

Table 2. Frequency Tat

Profile	Frequency	Percentage
Sex		
Male	134	40%
Female	204	61%
Income Group		
Low income (PHP15,780 and below)	131	39%
Lower Middle income (PHP15,781 to PHP 31,560)	155	46%
Middle income (PHP 31,561 to PHP 78,901)	49	15%
Upper Middle income (PHP 78,901 to PHP 118,350)	3	1%
Marital Status		
Single	283	84%
Married	55	16%
Highest Educational Level		
Elementary	3	1%
High School	160	47%
College	175	52%

Source: Data Process by Author (2020)

Table 3 presents variables with average mean scores. The mean score revealed that respondents independently considered the construct. They had a high tendency towards sports attachment, while involvement had the lowest average score. The Shapiro-Wilk normality test revealed that all variables were not normally distributed ($p > .05$).

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics of Construct and Control Variables

	Involvement	Sports Attachment	Brand Image	Word of Mouth	Purchase Intention	Age
N	338	338	338	338	338	338
Mean	4.32	4.36	4.35	4.34	4.35	25.0
Shapiro-Wilk p	< .001	< .001	< .001	< .001	< .001	< .001
SD	0.749	0.760	0.773	0.783	0.755	7.19

Source: Data Process by Author (2020)

Table 4 shows the multiple regression analysis of the sports consumer behaviour model.

Model 1. Multiple Linear Regression analysis was done to predict the Word of Mouth by Sports Attachment, Brand Image, Age, Sex, Income, Highest Educational Level and Marital Status. The result indicated that Word of Mouth explained 87% of the variance ($R^2 = .87$, $p < .001$). Word of Mouth significantly predicted Sports Attachment ($p < .001$), Brand Image ($p < .001$), Income (Middle) ($p < .001$), Income (Upper Middle) ($p < .001$) and Highest Educational Level (High School).

Model 2. Multiple Linear Regression analysis was done to predict the Purchase Intention by Sports Attachment, Brand Image and Word of Mouth. The result indicated that Purchase Intention explained 91% of the variance ($R^2 = .90$, $p < .001$). Word of Mouth significantly predicted

Sports Attachment ($p < .001$), Brand Image ($p < .001$), Word of Mouth ($p < .001$), Income (middle) ($p < .001$) and Highest Educational Level (Elementary) ($p < .001$).

Table 4. Multiple Linear Regression

	(1) Word of Mouth	(2) Purchase Intention
<i>Intercept</i>	0.091 (0.121)	0.142 (0.099)
<i>Sports Attachment</i>	0.227*** (0.044)	0.140*** (0.037)
<i>Brand Image</i>	0.736*** (0.043)	0.445*** (0.048)
<i>Word of Mouth</i>		0.373*** (0.045)
<i>Age</i>	0.002 (0.002)	0.003 (0.001)
<i>Sex (Male)</i>	0.033 (0.038)	0.039 (0.032)
<i>Marital Status (Single)</i>	0.062 (0.043)	0.039 (0.032)
<i>Income (Lower Middle)</i>	0.037 (0.040)	0.039 (0.033)
<i>Income (Middle)</i>	0.159** (0.055)	0.167*** (0.045)
<i>Income (Upper Middle)</i>	0.782*** (0.172)	0.144 (0.144)
<i>Highest Educational Level (Elementary)</i>	0.137 (0.169)	0.031* (0.137)
<i>Highest Educational Level (High School)</i>	0.097** (0.034)	0.031 (0.028)
R-squared	0.871	0.908
Adjusted R-squared	0.866	0.905
No. of observations	338	338

Standard errors are reported in parentheses.

*, **, *** indicated significance at the 90%, 95%, and 99% level, respectively.

Source: Data Process by Author (2020)

Multiple regression analysis (Table 4) on sports attachment, brand image, income (middle and upper-middle), and the highest educational attainment (secondary school) showed a significant relationship with word of mouth. Meanwhile, sports attachment, brand image, word of mouth, income (middle and upper secondary), and the highest educational attainment (basic) had a significant relationship with purchase intention.

Table 5 presents the mediation table of the variables. Based on the $P < .001$ of indirect effect, the variables presented has partial mediation.

Table 5. Mediation Table

Variables	Effect	Estimate	SE	Z	P	Decision
Sports Attachment, Involvement and Brand Image	Indirect	0.156	0.044	3.53	< .001	Sports attachment partially mediate involvement and brand image
	Direct	0.806	0.048	16.70	< .001	
	Total	0.961	0.021	46.99	< .001	
Sports Attachment, Involvement and word of mouth	Indirect	0.132	0.050	2.65	0.008	Sports attachment partially mediate involvement and word of mouth
	Direct	0.824	0.055	15.07	< .001	
	Total	0.956	0.023	41.57	< .001	
Sports Attachment, Involvement and purchase intention	Indirect	0.189	0.047	3.99	< .001	Sports attachment between involvement and purchase intention
	Direct	0.734	0.052	14.18	< .001	
	Total	0.923	0.022	41.82	< .001	
Brand Image, Sports attachment and word of mouth	Indirect	0.648	0.044	14.88	< .001	Brand Image partially mediate Sports Attachment and word of mouth
	Direct	0.233	0.045	5.25	< .001	
	Total	0.881	0.029	30.39	< .001	
Brand Image, Sports attachment and purchase intention	Indirect	0.650	0.039	16.81	< .001	Brand Image partially mediate Sports Attachment and purchase intention
	Direct	0.213	0.038	5.58	< .001	
	Total	0.862	0.027	32.14	< .001	
Word of Mouth, Sports attachment and purchase intention	Indirect	0.564	0.037	15.24	< .001	Word of Mouth partially mediate Sports Attachment and purchase intention
	Direct	0.298	0.037	7.97	< .001	
	Total	0.862	0.027	32.14	< .001	

Source: Data Process by Author (2020)

The test of mediation (Table 5) was conducted, from which all of the mediation models generated partial mediation result. This means that the constructs, when mediated, did not sufficiently influence the decision from one construct to another. Therefore, linear regression or multiple regression analysis would still be the best fit model to determine the causality using the sports consumer behaviour model.

The researcher concluded that based on the mean score of constructs of sports consumer behaviour (involvement, sports attachment, brand image, word of mouth, and purchase intentions) that the sports sponsorship activity of a non-sporting brand may be very effective in the Philippine setting. It was assumed that spending for a sports event is worth the price since the company generated involvement, attachment, good brand image, word of mouth, and the possibility of achieving purchase intention from the sports fans.

It must be underlined that using sports consumer behaviour models, sports attachments, brand image, income, and educational attainment could greatly influence word of mouth. As such, these findings must be considered by marketing experts in creating a profile of a target market in the Philippines.

On the other hand, sports attachment, brand image, word of mouth, income and educational attainment could influence purchase intention. It is evident in the result that word of mouth did not influence purchase intention directly; the same variables definitely influenced both words of mouth and purchase intention. Thus, it can be assumed that respondents who have sports attachments, perspectives on brand image, have a certain level of educational attainment and have a middle and upper disposable income can be useful whether they are exposed to the brand during sports sponsorship. They can turn into brand ambassadors who can provide testimonials to brands or people who can contribute to brand sales. Furthermore, the result of the study can also consider the following: a) More sports sponsorship from existing sponsors. The study revealed that sports sponsorship is an effective marketing tool. It is recommended that brands should consider more sports sponsorship activities as these benefits them through media exposure because most of the leagues in the Philippines are televised. b) Encourage other non-sporting brands to sponsor sports leagues. It is suggested that non-sporting brands should explore sports sponsorship as the subject in this study which is a non-sporting brand was able to make their brand associated with the sports even if the brand is considered as one of the biggest pizza restaurant chains in the Philippines. c) More studies on sports sponsorship other than a sports league. Although the focus of this research is only on sports leagues, future researchers are advised to explore other types of sports sponsors such as sponsoring sports teams, patenting or licensing sports venues, sponsoring sports media because they are venues and channels where brands can be used to make their presence felt by the general public and can communicate their brand in specific target audiences.

CONCLUSION

This research aimed to explore the use of sport consumer behaviour model offered and the instrument developed by Chen et al. (2014) in the Philippine setting through the examination of a volleyball league established and organised by a pizza chain. As recommended by Chen et al. (2014), it is encouraged that a replication study can be conducted for different sports and sporting events or other industry categories, such as car industry and the food industry.

Chen et al. (2014) study showed that sports attachment has no significant direct, indirect or total effects towards word of mouth amongst the variables tested. However, in the current research, it provided another perspective. The result revealed that sports attachment, brand image, income (middle and upper-middle), and

highest educational attainment (high school) had a significant relationship with word of mouth. Furthermore, sports attachment, brand image, word of mouth, income (middle and upper-middle) and highest educational attainment (elementary) had a significant relationship with Purchase intention.

This means that the result varies, depending on the sports and culture of the respondents. The original study was conducted in the United States of America with Superbowl XLVI as its primary subject since it is the most popular sports event in the USA. The current study was conducted in the Philippines with college students' respondents and a volleyball league organised by a pizza chain as the main subject.

Based on the outcome of the study, the researcher gave the following recommendations: Companies with a market base of educated young women are encouraged to do sports sponsorship to increase the promotion of their products. The researcher recommends that the existing sponsors should do more sports sponsorship activities in order to maximise the benefits that they can get from sponsoring sports leagues. The researcher also suggests that other non-sporting brands explore sponsoring sports league to gain the attention of the targeted audience and to generate possible consumer. Finally, since the focus of the study was only on a sports league, to be specific in the volleyball league, it is recommended that future researchers study other types of sports sponsorship such as sponsoring a sports team, sports venue patenting or licensing, sports media sponsorship, or co-branding.

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