

The Role of Brand and Fan Personalities in Building Fan-Brand Relationships

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ABSTRACT

Football fans are consumers with special relationships with their favourite teams. Consumer-brand relationship is unique and ultimate in a football context. However, the absence of these relationships is mainly due to a lack of communication and interaction. This research aims to investigate the impact of brand personality and fan personality on fan-brand relationships. Mixed methods were conducted that employed in-depth personal interviews with football professionals and fans to gain better insights regarding consumer-brand relationships and to develop a conceptual framework and research hypotheses. Then, a quantitative phase has been followed to test these hypotheses. Four hundred seventy-one valid questionnaires were collected through a non-probability convenience sampling technique from Egyptian football fans. The findings have shown that brand personality and fan personality have a positive impact on interdependence, commitment, partner quality, self-connection, nostalgic attachment, intimacy as consumer-brand relationship dimensions in the football context.

KEYWORDS

Brand Personality, Egypt, Fan Personality, Fan-Brand Relationship, Football, Qualitative Data Analysis, Quantitative Data Analysis, Sports Industry

1. INTRODUCTION

The consumer and brand relationships have increasingly got the attention of academics and practitioners, particularly in the marketing field (e.g. Elsharnouby, et al., 2021). Companies work hard and pay wealth to identify how consumers relate to their brands and why some brands are preferred and even loved. Consumers feel emotions, bear sacrifice and commitment, engage with brands, and develop loyalty (Cirillo and Cantone 2015). Sport- entertainment is currently considered to be an industry and one of the most important factors in the growth of the national economy in many developed countries (Asadollahi et al. 2015). The popularity of sports events has made it possible to reach wide audiences. Branding and customer relationship management (CRM) together with the commercialization and professionalization of the sports industry are key elements in the achievement of sports teams and their brands (Karjaluo et al. 2016).

Consumer (e.g. fan) and brand (e.g. club) relationship in the football sector is one of the most critical and unique research areas since the relationship between football fans and their favorite teams is special and long-lasting. The key issues of the sports brand are fan attraction, developing loyal relationships with its fans, inspiring them to become more attached to the brand. Therefore, many sports clubs act as commercial brands and obtain marketing practices and competencies to develop a

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well-established relationship with their fans (Cirillo and Cantone 2015). Sports executives increasingly see their clubs as brands to be managed. Therefore, their goal is to create a strong brand that can affect the behavior of external target groups, irrespective of sports success. According to Keller (2001), there are four steps to build a strong brand. 1) To ensure that the brand is identified with its consumers and that the brand is associated with a particular product class or customer need. 2) To firmly establish the meaning of the brand in the minds of customers by strategically linking several tangible and intangible brand associations. 3) To obtain the precise customer response to this brand identity and brand meaning. 4) To convert brand responses to establish consumer brand relationship.

The brand personality as a part of the brand image affects the behavior of target groups (Schade et al., 2014). In other words, brand personality can help sports managers to establish a brand image, which strongly influences the fans' behaviors. Therefore, it is important to examine the brand personality in the sports industry. Well established brand personality can serve as an important source of emotional bonding between consumer and brand, a helpful tool to develop a lasting long term relationship with consumers (Ahmad and Thyagaraj 2014), and a strategic tool for differentiating and creating a consumer-brand relationship (Guèvremont and Grohmann 2013). The successful consumer-brand relationship depends not only on relationship marketing practices but also on consumer personality. In other words, the consumer-brand relationship is developed through consumers' and brands' interactions (Fournier 1998).

The sports industry is an important individual, organizational, and national economic sector and a major contributor to economic activity and the creation of wealth (Goldman and Johns 2009). Major sports events can deliver significant benefits—both tangible impacts such as additional visitor expenditure and intangible effects such as national pride, the profile of sports, and participation (Deloitte 2008). The expenditure of global corporate sponsorship in 2007 was estimated at \$ 37.7 billion and about 66% of all sponsorship expenditures were allocated to sporting events (Lee and Cho, 2009). According to the IEG Sponsorship Report (2018), North American companies increased spending on sporting events to \$ 16.2 billion in 2017, up about 3.6% from \$ 15.7 billion in 2016 (IEG, 2018). The sports industry has become one of the most important sectors for many countries worldwide because it produces and promotes numerous products and services, affects many consumers and supporters and even affects the national security. Although the importance of fan-brand relations in sport industry, few studies have investigated this concept in the sports context, especially in the developing countries. Therefore, this research aims to investigate the impact of the personality of both parties (fan and brand) on fan-brand relationship in the sports context in order to fill the gap in the literature.

Based on reviewing the literature, there is a lack of academic research related to sport brand relationships (e.g. Kunkel and Biscaia 2020). Specifically, there is a lack in exploring and examining the impact of different aspects such as brand personality and consumer personality on the relationship between football fans and their favorite teams. Since there was much attention on consumer-brand relationships, it is valuable to highlight and examine these types of relationships in different contexts such as sports. The relationship between sports fans and their favorite teams in a sports context is unique, important, and special. Therefore, it is considered as a special context in which the subject can be explored more because of the deep connection of emotions and the strong relationship stability between fan and their teams (Cirillo and Cantone 2015). Besides, it is worth noting that a little attention had investigated this relationship in the sports context in developing countries. Therefore, the current study fills these gaps by answering the following research questions; 1) does team personality play a role in the relationship between football fans and their favorite teams? 2) Do fan personality traits play a role in the relationship between football fans and their favorite teams? Thus, the current study aims to investigate the impact of team personality and fan personality on each of the fan-brand relationship dimensions (brand interdependence, brand commitment, partner quality, self-connection, nostalgic attachment, intimacy. The current research uses the word “brand” to refer to a sports club.

2. BRAND PERSONALITY

The concept of brand personality is widely used by marketers as a differentiation tool and to build a competitive advantage (Ahmad and Thyagaraj 2014). Advertisers and marketers were the first to coincide with the term “brand personality” long before the academics studied and accepted the concept (Azoulay and Kapferer 2003). The term of brand personality was first mentioned by Ogilvy (1955) when he was giving a lecture to the American Associate of Advertising Agencies. Since Martineau (1958) has introduced the concept of store image and store personality, researchers have started to investigate more into the concept of brand personality (Hartman and Spiro 2005).

2.1. Brand Personality Definition And Importance

Similar to people, products have their unique personalities that they can make them or break them in the marketplace (Ogilvy, 1983). Several brands are thought to have personalities that are not determined solely by the actual physical attributes of the product but by a variety of other factors such as advertising, the firm’s image, the image of users, the origin of the product, etc. (Yoon 2004). Although the concept of brand personality is familiar and accepted by both practitioners and academics, researchers do not agree on what brand personality is (Aaker and Fournier 1995). For example, Kapferer (1997) believes that brand personality is one of the elements of brand identity that together with physique, culture, relationship, reflection and self-image represent the ultimate vision and goal of a brand. Giving the brand a spokesman or a figurehead is the easiest way to create brand personality. Gordon (1996) suggests that brand personality is a metaphor for the emotional relationship that exists between a brand and consumer, while it is the emotional response of the consumer to a brand that embodies attributes. Brand personality is also a set of human characteristics linked to a brand (Aaker, 1997) that is followed by the current research because of its acceptance.

Traditionally, brand strategies focussed on the functional or utilitarian benefits of products and services. However, increased competition in industries over recent decades has caused more problems in the differentiation of brands, based solely on functional features. Products or services become more functionally similar to each other and easy to copy based on their attributes (Yoon, 2004). Therefore, researchers and branding practitioners started to use brand personality as a helpful tool to differentiate brands from its competitors, develop a lasting long term consumer-brand relationship (Ahmad and Thyagaraj 2014), develop emotional features of a brand, and increase the personal benefits of a brand to consumers (Aaker and Fournier 1995).

2.2. Dimensions Of Brand Personality

While the considerable investigation has been done in personality psychology to conceptualize the human personality, to identify the “Big Five” dimensions, and to explore the meaning of each dimension, in consumer behavior on the brand personality, there has been no parallel investigation (e.g. Aaker 1997; Ghantous, 2016; Seimiene, 2012). Inspired by the Big Five model, Aaker (1997) suggested that brand personality dimensions could be defined by extending human characteristic dimensions to those of brands. From the 309 personality traits generated through an assembly of the list of traits used in psychology and marketing studies to describe and measure the human personality, Aaker (1997) conducted several studies using different brands from various product and service categories. As a result, the dimensions were labeled as competence, sincerity, excitement, sophistication, and ruggedness. Although the scale of Aaker (1997) is widely accepted and used by researchers, some studies criticized the scale’s generalizability and validity. For example, Geuens et al. (2009) summarized these criticisms as follow: The first criticism refers to the loose definition of brand personality which leads to construct validity problem. The second criticism refers to the non-generalizability of the factor structure. The third criticism refers to the non-cross culture validity. Ross (2008) and Schade et al. (2014) believe that Aaker’s scale cannot be applied to sports brands. Researchers, therefore, began to apply that scale to different categories of products and services,

leading to various scales of brand personality such as Geuens et al.' (2009) brand personality scale (Responsible, active, aggressive, simple, and emotionally attractive), and Bosnjak et al.' (2007) scale (drive, conscientiousness, emotion, and superficiality). However, in professional sports clubs, this scale was not developed and validated. Therefore, Tsotsou (2012) developed the first valid and reliable scale (competitiveness, prestige, morality, authenticity, and credibility). Later, Mitsis and Leckie (2016) validated and extended Tsotsou's (2012) scale.

2.3. Brand Personality In The Sports Industry

In recent years, there has been an increasing amount of literature on the personality of sports brands (i.e. organizations, teams, and events) (e.g. Kim et al. 2019; Schade et al. 2014; Tsotsou, 2012). People usually refer to professional sports teams as human beings. For example, teams are commonly described as being 'successful, 'ambitious, 'or 'uncompromising' (Tsotsou 2012). Such associations can help professional teams in attracting more fans and sponsors (Blank and Baumgartner 2018). The symbolic, experiential, and hedonic characteristics of sports brands make the study of their personalities appealing and imperative. Furthermore, it has been important for team managers and marketing practitioners to understand how consumers perceive the personality of sports brands (Tsotsou 2012).

Therefore, researchers started to investigate more in this field of research. For example, Karjaluoto et al. (2016) examined the direct and indirect effects of the personality of a sports team, the identification of sports fans with the team, and the impact of the long relationship between fans and a team on their loyalty to the team. As a result, they found out that: First, the identification with a team mediates the effects of brand personality on attitudinal loyalty and behavioral loyalty; second, brand personality is a stronger driver of identification among new fans; and third, brand personality has a stronger influence on attitudinal and behavioral loyalty among new fans. Furthermore, Aiken et al. (2013) investigated the dimensions of brand personality associated with professional sports teams and the dimensions of the personality of the cities they call home. They found out that similar personality traits are attributed to both the team and their city.

3. FAN PERSONALITY

Understanding consumer behavior is the ultimate goal for marketers because it helps managers to better determine the appropriate target segment and better design and deliver the ultimate value for consumers (Bray 2008). In consumer behavior, consumers are influenced by a multitude of environmental, cultural, personal, and psychological factors in searching, buying, using, and disposing of products and services. One psychological element documented in the literature is the personality of the consumer (Solomon 2011). Personality is an abstract concept and therefore presenting an accurate description of personality is quite difficult. Scientists also frequently describe personality in the context of the subject or field being analyzed, which is why there are many descriptions of personality concepts (Seimiene 2012). The difficulty in defining this concept because the personality is something difficult to describe in one sentence due to its vast and dynamic (Udo-Imeh et al. 2015). Mayer (2007) compared definitions of personality from four different textbooks on personality. Although the definitions of personality from these textbooks were worded differently, its central idea remains the same. These definitions share in common the view that (a) personality is a psychological system, (b) composed of a group of parts (c) that interact, (d) and develop, and (e) that impact a person's behavioral expression (Mayer, 2007). Therefore, investigating consumer personality in the context of sport is needed to provide better insights into how the personality of football fans can shape their relations and behaviors toward their favorite teams.

4. FAN-BRAND RELATIONSHIP

Fan as a consumer relationship with brands has become a topic of growing interest and attention in the marketing literature (e.g. Bryan et al. 2006). Blackston's (1993) book chapter beyond brand personality: Building brand Relationships, followed by Fajer and Schouten's (1995) article Breakdown and Dissolution of person-brand relationships, and finally Fournier's (1998) paper on consumers and their Brands: Developing relationship theory in consumer research are considered as the pioneers in the field of consumer-brand relationship (Fetscherin and Heinrich, 2015).

4.1. Consumer-Brand Relationship Theory

Fournier (1998) developed the brand relationship theory. This theory was developed based on the idea that consumers humanize objects and think of brands as if they have human personalities. Brands cannot act, feel or think themselves, but can live and evolve through the practices of their managers (Loureiro 2013). Based on the interpersonal interaction metaphor, Fournier (1998) developed a brand relationship quality model that was the starting point for a huge amount of research in consumer-brand relationships (Loureiro 2013). The brand relationship quality model consists of six facets: Love and passion, self-connection, brand partner quality, intimacy, commitment, and interdependence (Fournier, 1998). Considerable studies have been carried out in brand management to conceptualize the relationship between consumers and brands by establishing the anthropomorphic characteristics of the brand (Sreejesh and Mohapatra 2013). The original development of the concept of a consumer-brand relation returns to Blackstone's (1992) study. It conceptualized consumer-brand relationship as the concept of an association with a brand that includes a complex of cognitive, affective, and behavioral processes, which constitute a relationship between two parties (Sreejesh and Mohapatra, 2013).

There are four conditions to satisfy consumer-brand relationship (Fournier 1998): 1) consumer-brand relationship exists when there is a beneficial exchange between consumers and brands; 2) the interaction between consumers and brands is for a purpose; 3) the consumer-brand relationship takes different forms, and 4) the consumer-brand relationship is a process. Based on the four conditions, the consumer-brand relationship is conceptualized as the voluntary or imposed interdependence between a consumer and brand, which characterized by a unique history of interactions and anticipation of future occurrences to facilitate socio-emotional and instrumental goals of the consumers and that involves some types consolidating relations (Sreejesh and Mohapatra 2013).

4.2. Fan-Brand Relationship In The Sports Industry

Relationship marketing has attracted considerable attention among marketing practitioners because researchers and sports marketers generally believe that relationship marketing efforts can enhance relationships with sport consumers (Kim et al. 2011). These improved customer relationships can lead to higher team performance results, such as ticket sales, sports media use, and licensed goods sales (Kim et al. 2011). Transposing the close relationship between a consumer and a brand to the dyadic relationship and building a strong tie leads us to the sport context, especially football. In the relationship between consumers and their brands, loyalty is an important element (e.g. Elbedweihy, et al., 2016), but it is a must in football (Cayolla and Loureiro, 2014). Football fans have strong emotions toward their football brands (Cirillo and Cantone, 2015). They always have the passion and motivation to sacrifice for their favorite teams. For example, they have the desire to spend money and time to support their team in a stadium and even fight to attend a match for their favorite club (Cayolla and Loureiro, 2014). Thus, sport managers started to view their teams as the international brand to be managed. The goal of professional sports teams is to build a strong brand, which attracts and affects actual and potential fans, creates opportunities for the extension of the brand merchandising categories and geographic boundaries (Cirillo and Cantone 2015).

5. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study used a mixed research approach in nature where both qualitative and quantitative methods have been deployed. Qualitative research was conducted to gain better insights regarding the consumer-brand relationship in the Egyptian sports industry and to develop the research hypotheses. Then, a quantitative phase has been followed to test these hypotheses. A sequential type of mixed methods was chosen that first preliminary exploratory interviews with Egyptian football fans to gain further insight about their view of the subject area and to develop the research hypothesis. Then, the research subsequently lies primarily in the quantitative approach. The qualitative phase includes a list of questions in line with the interview protocol (Yeong et al. 2018). Football fans were asked in general about the personality of their favorite football teams and how the team's personality may affect their relationship with their teams. The quantitative phase involves gathering and analyzing data for testing hypotheses and using statistical testing.

5.1. Data Collection Instruments

We collected data using two instruments. In-depth interviews with target audiences were the first instrument used. Ten interviews were conducted, using the output from these interviews in conjunction with the literature review to gain insight into the topic at hand and develop the research model and hypotheses. A questionnaire was the second instrument in this research to collect the quantitative data. It was a structured, conclusive phase that provides quantitative data for testing the specific hypotheses and examining the relationships between the variables previously outlined. We translated the questionnaire into Arabic for ease of understanding. To reach an equivalent Arabic version of the questionnaire, this English version was subjected to a backward translation process (Brislin, 1986).

5.2. Measurements

The scale of Tsiotsou (2012) has been used to measure brand personality including five dimensions: competitiveness, prestige, morality, authenticity, and credibility through 24 items in total. Consumer personality has been measured by the scale developed by Mowen (2000). The measurement consists of five dimensions: agreeableness, openness to experiences, introversion, consciousness, and need for arousal. This measurement consists of twenty items (four items for each dimension). Consumer brand relationship has been measured by six dimensions (Fournier 2009). These dimensions are interdependence, commitment, partner quality, self-connection, nostalgic attachment, and intimacy. The scale consists of 30 items.

5.3. Research Sampling Methods, Types, and Size

The research population included all fans of Egyptian football teams (premier league and Egypt cup). Egyptian football fans have been chosen as the population of the current study for the following reasons: 1) Fans of football are consumers who have extraordinary behavior with their football brand. Also, football is considered the most popular sport in the world (Cayolla and Loureiro 2014). 2) Consumer-brand relationship (CBR) or fan-team relationship is unique in football. CBR motivates football fans to leave their homes to go to the stadium, travel, and pay a lot of money to watch and support their favorite teams, and even start a quarrel with brothers, sisters, and friends who support different teams. 3) The huge numbers of revenues, brand value, sponsorship of football teams.

The preliminary exploratory interviews were conducted using a judgmental sampling technique, a sample of two football experts and eight football fans were interviewed during that stage. They were selected from various universities and residential areas. For the quantitative phase, a non-probability convenience sample was considered appropriate because the sample frame was not accessible. The focus of the study was on greater Cairo as it incubates people from different backgrounds and different education levels representing the Egyptian culture. The sample size of 471 units was chosen for the study.

6. QUALITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

This section first addresses the findings of exploratory research carried out, followed by the research theoretical framework as well as related research hypotheses.

6.1. Preliminary Interviews And Data Analysis

Two in-depth personal interviews were conducted with football experts. They have been selected for the interviews because of their experience on the football field and their close contact with football fans. In addition to the personal interviews with experts, eight in-depth interviews were conducted with football fans from different education levels and, different ages (ranging from 19 to 35). The interviewees were selected through a convenient sampling basis. A series of open-ended questions have been used to point out and reveal the different predictors of consumer-brand relationships in the sports industry. Thematic analysis of the interviews illustrated that football experts, as well as all fans, agreed that the personality of a football club affects the relationship between the club and its fans.

6.1.1 Brand Personality As Fan-Brand Relationship Driver

Some participants emphasized that the team personality help in forming the relationships between the team and its fans. The following quotes are extracted from the responses of the football fans and experts interviewed, which outline the most significant predictors of the fan-team relationship. For instance, participants showed that the teams must have some characteristics to build strong relationships with their teams such as enthusiasm, following the team-based principles, working hard, having high levels of credibility, so on. In other words, the answers support the fact that the personality of a football team (such as credibility, hardworking, braveness, and the team's ability to fulfill its promises) affects the relationship between the football team and its fans.

"My team should be organized, ambitious, enthusiastic, and follow the principles." (Fan 3)

"My team should be hardworking, brave, never surrender, and play to spread joy and happiness." (Fan 5)

"The credibility of my favorite team increases my commitment toward it." (Fan 6)

"The policies of the football team affect the relationship between the football team and its fans." (Expert 1)

"My relationship with my favorite team improves when my team achieves its promised goals and promises." (Fan 7).

The participants were also asked about their feelings toward their favorite teams and why they have these feelings. The following quotes were extracted from the responses to support that the fan-team relationship is predicted by the personality and behaviors of the football teams toward their fans. For example, when the team takes care of its fans, it enhances the relationships with them. Besides, the teams, which do their best to win in their matches make their fans happy in turn strengthen the relationships with them.

"I adore my team because it takes care of me." (Fan 1)

"I am in love with my team because it wins Fan 7)

"I love my team because it makes me happy." (Fan 2)

"I love my team because it respects its fans." (Fan 6)

The participants were also asked to tell a story or event that shows their attachment to their football teams. The following quotes were extracted from the responses that showing the fans' attachment to

their football teams. For example, some of fans, particularly who are students, delay their commitments to watch their teams' matches and/or follow their news via different media.

"I used to postpone my assignments to watch my team." (Fan 5)

"When I was at prep school my favorite team was playing in Japan (The FIFA Club World Cup) so I decided not to go to school to watch my team." (Fan 7)

"I cried when my team lost in CAF Champions league." (Fan 2)

6.1.2. Fan Personality As Fan-Brand Relationship Driver

The second theme that was emerged from the qualitative data is the fan personality as the driver of building the fan-brand relationship. The participants' answers showed that the consumer-brand relationship in the football industry is unique. They have been asked about their personalities and their relationships with their favorite teams. The following quotes are extracted from the responses to show that the fan-brand relationship is predicted by the fan personality.

"I have the enthusiastic, principles, and do everything to make everyone happy." (Fan 2)

"I share the same ambitious personality." (Fan 1)

"I seek improvement." (Fan 7)

"I never change our principles." (Fan 3)

"My commitment toward my team increases when we share the same personality" (Fan 4)

The participants described some aspects of their personalities, which help in enhancing their relationships with their teams. For example, enthusiasm, having personal principles, making everyone happy, and improving a person's skills are examples of values and personalities that help to build the fan-team relationship or its dimensions such as commitment.

Conclusively, we explored the fan and team personalities, showing their relations with the fan-brand relationship and/or its dimension(s). The following section discusses the research framework and hypotheses to confirm/disconfirm the qualitative results.

6.2. Research Framework And Hypotheses Development

Based on the previous research and qualitative findings, the proposed research framework and some research hypotheses were developed. In other words, the research framework was adapted from different studies such as McCrae et al. (1986), Aaker (1997), and Fournier (1998), and supported by the qualitative phase. Figure 1 shows that both brand personality and consumer personality impact each of the consumer-brand relationship dimensions, which include interdependence, commitment, partner quality, self-connection, nostalgic attachment, and intimacy.

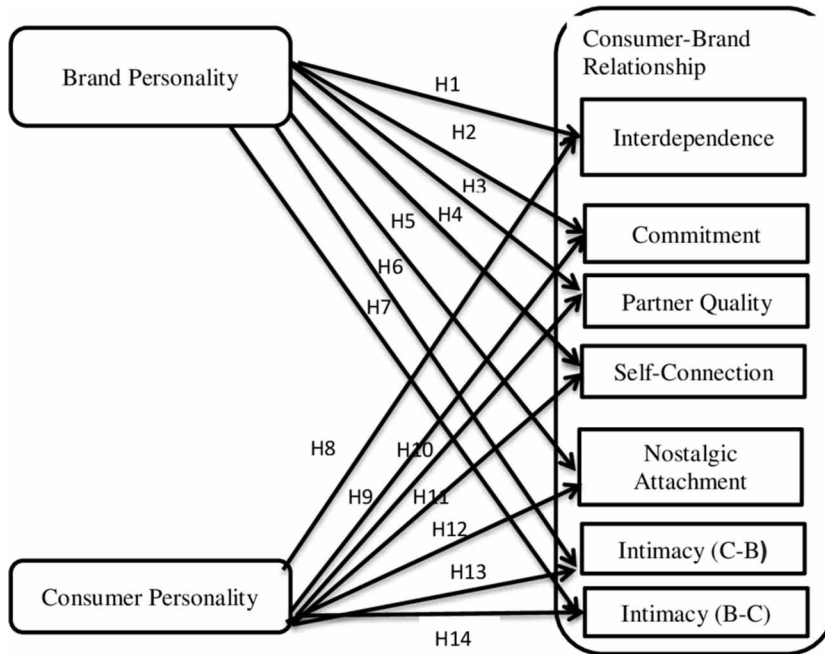
6.2.1. Brand personality and fan-brand relationship dimensions

Previous research suggested that brand personality positively affects consumer-brand relationships (e.g. Barnes and Pressey 2008; During 2012). Brand interdependence is considered as one of the consumer-brand relationship dimensions (Fournier, 2009). In addition, brand personality affects brand trust, attachment, and commitment positively and directly (Fallahi 2013; Tong et al. 2018). Louis and Lombar (2010) pointed out that the personality traits of the Coca-Cola brand affect brand commitment. Personality positively and significantly affects consumer brand relationship dimensions (Self-Connection, Partner Quality, and Affective Commitment) (Rezaei, Hamidzadeh, and Foroughi 2016). Therefore, we postulate that:

H1: Brand personality has a positive impact on brand interdependence.

H 2: Brand personality has a positive impact on brand commitment.

Figure 1. Model of brand and consumer personality affecting each other



Tho et al. (2016) argued that brand personality appeal positively affects relationship quality and WOM. Respondents perceived brand personality influenced their desirability of the brand as a relationship partner (Bryan et al. 2006). Rezaei et al. (2016) pointed out that personality positively and significantly affects partner quality as one of the consumer-brand relationship dimensions. Besides, Self-connection is related to unique and exited brands (Smit et al, 2007). Paper and Siksha (2017) argued that brand personality directly affects self-connection. Personality positively and significantly affects Self-connection as one of the consumer-brand relationship dimensions. Therefore,

H 3: Brand personality has a positive impact on partner quality.

H 4: Brand personality has a positive impact on self-connection

Previous studies confirmed the relationships between brand personality and attachment. For example, brand personality influences consumers' attachment (e.g. Fournier, 1998; Parker, 2009; Yao, et al., 2015). Specifically, Paper and Siksha (2017) argued that brand personality directly affected nostalgic attachment. Thus,

H 5: Brand personality has a positive impact on nostalgic attachment.

Proceeding studies showed that brand intimacy represents the consumer-brand relationship (e.g. Wang, and Lee, 2020). Brand intimacy refers to the feeling of closeness derived from a favorable consumer-brand relationship (Almubarak, et al., 2018). It was measured, in some previous studies, based on two dimensions; consumer-brand intimacy, and brand-consumer intimacy. The former dimension refers to the feeling of consumers' closeness to the brand by knowing and understanding the brand well. While the latter dimension refers to the feeling of a brand's closeness to its consumers

by knowing and understanding them well (e.g. Jana and Das 2017). Brand personality had a positive and direct impact on both dimensions of intimacy (Jana and Das 2017). Thus,

H 6: Brand personality has a positive impact on brand intimacy (fan-brand).

H 7: Brand personality has a positive impact on brand intimacy (brand-fan).

6.2.2. *Fan personality and fan-brand relationship*

The successful consumer-brand relationship depends not only on relationship marketing practices but also on consumer personality (e.g. Ahmad, and Thyagaraj, 2015; Odekerken et al. 2003). In other words, brand interdependence, as a consumer-brand relationship dimension that means the brand plays an important role in consumer's life is normally linked to strong relations between consumers and which suggest how brand-customer relationships should be conceived (Ahmad, and Thyagaraj, 2015). In addition, Rezaei et al. (2016) pointed out that consumer personality positively and significantly affects brand commitment as one of the consumer-brand relationship dimensions. Therefore, we postulate

H8: Fan personality has a positive impact on brand interdependence.

H 9: Fan personality has a positive impact on brand commitment.

The consumer personality positively and significantly affects customer-brand relationship dimensions such as partner quality, and self-connection (e.g. Rezaei et al. 2016). Consumer as a relationship partner plays a critical role build strong relationships (e.g. Papista, and Dimitriadis, 2012). For example, the consumer can evaluate the brand's attitude toward him or her (Ahmad, and Thyagaraj, 2015). Besides, consumers play a vital role in enhancing the relationship with a brand when encreases the self-connection, in which he and the brand share common interests, activities, and opinions (e.g. Ahmad, and Thyagaraj, 2015; Yao, et al., 2015). Thus, we postulate that fan personality positively and significantly affects fan-brand relationship dimensions (self-connection, and partner quality).

H10: Consumer personality has a positive impact on partner quality.

H11: Consumer personality has a positive impact on self-connection.

Preceding research confirmed that consumer personality has a direct effect on brand attachment (e.g. Yao et al. 2015; Mann and Rawat 2016). Therefore, we postulate

H12: Fan personality has a positive impact on nostalgic attachment.

In personality research, the agreeableness traits are most concerned with interpersonal relationships (Graziano et al. 1996). De Raad (2000) argued that consumers with agreeableness traits strive for intimacy. As mentioned that intimacy was measured, in some previous studies, based on two dimensions; consumer-brand intimacy, and brand-consumer intimacy (e.g. Jana and Das 2017), thus,

H 13: Fan personality has a positive impact on brand intimacy (fan-brand).

H 14: Fan personality has a positive impact on brand intimacy (brand-fan).

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of the sample

Category	Frequency	%	Category	Frequency	%
Gender			Favourite Team		
Male	365	77.5%	Al Ahly	370	78.6%
Female	106	22.5%	Zamalek	92	19.5%
Total	471	100%	Al Masry	1	.2%
Age			Ismaily	3	.6%
21 or less	102	21.7%	Wadi Degla	1	.2%
21 to 30	259	55.0%	Other	4	.8%
31 to 40	84	17.8%	Total	471	100%
41 to 50	18	3.8%			
51 or more	8	1.7%			
Total	471	100%			

7. QUANTITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

7.1. Descriptive Analysis

Table 1 presents the sample characteristics for the 471 surveys collected for the study. Of the 471 respondents, 365 (77.5%) were males. The results somehow represent the fact that football is a male sport (McDowell and Schaffner 2011). 55% of the respondents are between 21 and 30 years old. It's worth noting that almost 79% of the respondents support Al-Ahly club and 20% support Al-Zamalek club. The results are somehow close to a study conducted by The Egyptian Centre for Public Opinion Research (Mohamed, 2014). The research found out that 72% of Egyptian support Al Ahly, while 21% support Al Zamalek. It has been found out that 53% of the respondents have a university degree.

7.2. Inferential Statistics

Smart PLS has been used to assess the measurement and structural model. Smart PLS is one of the prominent software applications for Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (Wong, 2013). To evaluate internal consistency, composite reliability and Cronbach's alpha have been examined. Individual indicator reliability and average variance extracted (AVE) have also been examined to evaluate convergent validity. Cross loadings and variable correlation have been examined to evaluate discriminant validity. Table 2 summarizes the reliability test results for the study variables. It's worth noting that the reliability scores for all variables and dimensions are above 0.7 which means that all scales show a satisfactorily level of internal consistency.

Results showed that three items were eliminated. As shown in Table 3, the AVE value for items is above 0.5 with factor loadings above 0.7 (Hair et al., 2017). Discriminant validity ensures that a structural measure is empirically unique and represents phenomena of interest that are not captured by other measures in the structural equation model (Henseler et al. 2015). According to Hair et al. (2017), cross-loadings and the Fornell-Larcker criterion have been estimated to assess the discriminant validity of the measurement model. Table 4 illustrates the cross-loading analysis. The results show that each item loads high on its corresponding dimension which means that the discriminant validity has been confirmed. The Fornell-Larcker criterion is the second discriminant validity assessment approach. In particular, the square root of the AVE of each construct should be greater than its maximum correlation with any other construct (Hair et al., 2017). Based on the analysis, the square root of AVE in bold for each construct was higher than its total value in the extreme horizontal and

Table 2. Composite reliability and cronbach's alpha

Variables	Composite Reliability			Cronbach's Alpha	
Brand personality	0.964			0.961	
Consumer personality	0.864			0.840	
Consumer brand relationship	Interdependence	0.897	0.968	0.828	0.965
	Commitment	0.912		0.883	
	Partner Quality	0.931		0.906	
	Self-connection	0.936		0.918	
	Nostalgic attachment	0.911		0.853	
	Intimacy (fan–brand)	0.931		0.889	
	Intimacy (brand-fan)	0.904		0.841	

vertical column. Values in bold represent the AVE's square root and the non-bold values represent the inter-correlation between the constructs. The square root of the AVE of each construct was greater than its maximum correlation with any other construct. Consequently, the discriminant criteria of Fornell and Larcker validity were met.

7.3. Assessment Of Structural Model

After confirming the reliability and validity of the measurement model, the following step is to assess the structural model results.

7.3.1. Testing for Multicollinearity, Coefficient of Determination (R^2), and Effect Size (F^2)

The assumption of no multicollinearity between the independent variables is supported with VIF values far below 10 and tolerance values of more than 0.1. The results showed that the R^2 of all the endogenous latent variables of the study are equal and greater than 0.10. The values of the effect size of brand personality on the dependent variables were between 0.02 and 0.15 which indicates a small effect size, except for nostalgic attachment (0.019) which is considered as no effect size. According to consumer personality, the values of effect size are between 0.02 and 0.15.

7.3.2. Predictive Relevance (Q^2) and Goodness of Fit (GoF)

The results showed that all Q^2 values are above zero which means that the model has predictive relevance. According to Tenenhaus et al. (2005), the goodness of fit can be defined as the global fit measure. It is geometric of AVE and the average of R^2 of the endogenous variables. Regarding the research model, the GoF value is 0.30 which is between 0.25 and 0.36. It means that the GoF of the research model is medium.

8. HYPOTHESES TESTING AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

Table 5 shows the results of hypothesis testing. Results of the analysis showed that brand personality has a strong positive impact on interdependence ($\beta = 0.216$, $p < 0.001$), supporting H1. The results also showed that brand personality has a strong positive impact on brand commitment ($\beta = 0.191$, $p = 0.001$), supporting H2. This result is following what was presented in the literature by previous research (e.g. Fallahi, 2013; Tong et al. 2018).

The results showed that brand personality has a strong positive impact on partner quality ($\beta = 0.260$, $p < 0.001$), supporting H3. This result is following what was presented in the literature (e.g.

Table 3. Convergent validity statistics

AVE	Loadings	Items	Dimensions	Construct
0.661	0.852	My team is able to attain the desired results in sport competitions	Competitiveness	Brand Personality
	0.885	My team is overconfident about its abilities and inspires pride to its fans		
	0.880	My team is determined to accomplish its goals		
	0.745	My team is self-motivated		
	0.723	My team has gained many championships and cups		
	0.771	My team is unbeatable, with a very good winning record		
	0.817	My team excels in competitions		
0.675	0.850	My team is recognized for its accomplishments and superiority	Prestige	
	0.875	My team is supported by countless fans		
	0.783	My team is celebrate		
	0.750	My team is super		
	0.810	My team is superior over its rivals		
	0.856	My team has received awards of distinction		
0.718	0.899	My team espouses an acceptable code of conduct and conforms to rules and regulations	Morality	
	0.895	My team is imbued with acceptable rules of conduct		
	0.723	My team develops and promotes the growth of culture (e.g. educational, art and science programs)		
	0.861	My team behaves in accordance with standards for right practice		
0.676	0.843	My team is unique, faithful to internal rather than external ideas, and retains its spirit and character despite external forces	Authenticity	
	0.773	My team has been around for many years and handed down legends (e.g. players) and customs (e.g.team anthem)		
	0.868	My team adheres to principal positions		
	0.802	My team is open to changes and new ideas		
0.683	0.879	My team is trustworthy and reliable	Credibility	
	0.850	My team is rich and financially independent		
	0.745	My team has the capacity and power to exert effects on others and their decisions (e.g. on the administration of the national league)		
0.642	0.859	Feel bashful more than others	Introversion	
	0.768	Introverted		
	0.730	Quite when with people		
	0.842	Shy		
0.651	0.816	Frequently feel highly creative	Openness to Experience	
	0.706	Imaginative		
	0.826	Find novel solutions		
0.620	0.772	Tender hearted with others	Agreeableness	
	0.867	Kind to others		
	0.802	Soft-hearted		
0.675	0.747	Precise	Conscientiousness	
	0.776	Efficient		
	0.889	Organized		
	0.865	Orderly		
0.726	0.837	Drawn to experience with an element of danger	Need for Arousal	
	0.898	Seek an adrenaline rush		
	0.822	Actively seek out new experiences		
	0.849	Enjoy taking more risks than others		

continued on following page

Table 3. Continued

AVE	Loadings	Items	Dimensions	Construct
0.744	0.855	I need my team and rely on its benefits	Interdependence	Consumer brand relationship
	0.853	My team is an integral part of my daily life		
	0.879	I dependent on my team.		
0.668	0.723	My team and I are perfect for each other	Commitment	
	0.812	I really love my team.		
	0.839	Thought of not being able to support my team disturbs me		
	0.855	I am very loyal to my team		
	0.852	I am willing to make sacrifices to keep supporting my team.		
	0.868	I have unique feelings for my team.		
0.733	0.888	My team takes care of me.	Partner Quality	
	0.899	My team listens to me		
	0.695	My team makes up for mistakes.		
	0.878	I can count on my team to do what’s best for me.		
	0.901	My team is responsive to my concerns		
0.709	0.839	My team is part of me	Self-connection	
	0.845	My team makes statement about what’s important to me.		
	0.857	My team connects with part of me that makes me tick.		
	0.862	My team and I fit with life goals or problems.		
	0.819	By Supporting my team, I’m part of a shared community.		
	0.830	My team helps me develop relationship with others who support the same team.		
0.773	0.839	I have sentimental feelings for my team	Nostalgic attachment	
	0.902	My team reminds me of phase of my life.		
	0.896	Thoughts of my team contain personal memories		
0.818	0.914	I know my team’s history/background	Intimacy (fan-brand)	
	0.910	I know what my team stands for		
	0.889	I know more about my team than average supporter.		
0.758	0.915	My team understands my needs	Intimacy (brand-fan)	
	0.881	My team knows me so well, could win champions for me.		
	0.812	My team knows a lot about me as person.		

Bryan Hayes et al., 2006; Tho et al. 2016). Results of the analysis of the collected sample showed that brand personality has a strong positive impact on self-connection ($\beta = 0.208$, $p < 0.001$), supporting H4. This result is following what was presented in the literature by Smit et al. (2007). The results also showed that brand personality has a strong positive impact on nostalgic attachment ($\beta = 0.139$, $p < 0.05$), supporting H5. This result is following what was presented in the literature (e.g. Paper and Siksha 2017). The results showed that brand personality has a strong positive impact on intimacy (fan-brand) ($\beta = 0.163$, $p < 0.05$), supporting H6. This result is following what was presented in the literature by (e.g. Jana and Das 2017). The results also showed that brand personality has a strong positive impact on intimacy (brand-fan) ($\beta = 0.227$, $p < 0.001$), supporting H7. This result supports what was presented in the literature by (e.g. Jana and Das 2017).

The results showed that consumer personality has a strong positive impact on interdependence ($\beta = 0.241$, $p < 0.001$), supporting H8. This result is following what was presented in the literature by (e.g. Odekerken, et al., 2003). The results also showed that consumer personality has a strong positive impact on brand commitment ($\beta = 0.316$, $p < 0.001$), supporting H9. This result is following what was presented in the literature (e.g. Srivastava and Owens 2010). The results showed that consumer personality has a strong positive impact on partner quality ($\beta = 0.172$, $p < 0.001$), supporting H10. This result is following what was presented in the literature (e.g. Rezaei et al. 2016). The results also showed that

Table 4. Latent variable correlations

	Competitive-ness	Prestige	Morality	Authenticity	Credibility	Introversion	Openness	Agreeable-ness	Conscientiousness	Arousal	Interdependence	Commitment	Partner	Self-connection	Nostalgic		Intimacy (fan-brand)	Intimacy (Brand-fan)
Competitiveness	.813																	
Prestige	.786	.822																
Morality	.643	.645	.847															
Authenticity	.757	.768	.749	.822														
Credibility	.728	.664	.715	.810	.827													
Introversion	-.005	-.006	.073	.046	.020	.804												
Openness	.074	.173	.137	.143	.137	-.001	.807											
Agreeableness	.245	.348	.337	.339	.275	.122	.395	.842										
Conscientiousness	.172	.236	.337	.264	.243	.098	.348	.458	.822									
Arousal	.118	.205	.337	.184	.138	.000	.467	.244	.215	.852								
Interdependence	.237	.195	.366	.270	.266	.096	.158	.219	.239	.239	.862							
Commitment	.195	.245	.371	.281	.245	.079	.193	.312	.308	.241	.728	.828						
Partner	.319	.167	.344	.279	.308	.156	.096	.165	.254	.153	.703	.565	.856					
Self-connection	.239	.172	.351	.284	.274	.1	.177	.177	.275	.225	.738	.710	.833	.842				
Nostalgic	.138	.165	.265	.224	.220	.035	.096	.182	.348	.200	.578	.711	.493	.652	.879			
Intimacy (F-CB)	.164	.193	.309	.252	.207	-.060	.209	.230	.348	.185	.096	.712	.427	.567	0.699		0.904	
Intimacy (CB-F)	.251	.127	.338	.046	.308	.113	.088	.100	.240	.165	.540	.551	.788	.788	0.549	0.521		0.871

Table 5. Path coefficient of the research hypotheses

Hypothesis	Relationship	Std. Beta	T- Value	P- value	Decision
H1	Brand Personality > Interdependence	0.216	4.412	0.000	Supported**
H2	Brand Personality > Commitment	0.191	3.410	0.001	Supported**
H3	Brand Personality > Partner quality	0.260	4.350	0.000	Supported**
H4	Brand Personality > Self-connection	0.208	3.652	0.000	Supported**
H5	Brand Personality > Nostalgic	0.139	2.528	0.012	Supported*
H6	Brand Personality > Intimacy (C–B)	0.163	2.850	0.005	Supported**
H7	Brand Personality > Intimacy (B-C)	0.227	3.654	0.000	Supported**
H8	Consumer Personality > Interdependence	0.241	5.487	0.000	Supported**
H9	Consumer Personality > Commitment	0.316	7.797	0.000	Supported**
H10	Consumer Personality > Partner quality	0.172	3.796	0.000	Supported**
H11	Consumer Personality > Self-connection	0.250	5.659	0.000	Supported**
H12	Consumer Personality > Nostalgic	0.242	5.469	0.000	Supported**
H13	Consumer Personality > Intimacy (C–B)	0.254	5.709	0.000	Supported**
H14	Consumer Personality > Intimacy (B-C)	0.155	3.163	0.002	Supported**

* Significant at $p < 0.05$ ** Significant at $p < 0.001$

consumer personality has a strong positive impact on self-connection ($\beta = 0.250$, $p < 0.001$), supporting H11. This result supports what was presented in the literature (e.g. Ye et al. 2015).

The results showed that consumer personality has a strong positive impact on nostalgic attachment ($\beta = 0.242$, $p < 0.001$), supporting H12. The results showed that consumer personality has a strong positive impact on intimacy (fan–brand) ($\beta = 0.254$, $p < 0.001$), supporting H13. This result is following what was presented in the literature (e.g. Myers et al. 2010). Finally, the results showed that consumer personality has a strong positive impact on Intimacy (brand–brand) ($\beta = 0.155$, $p < 0.001$), supporting H14. This result is following what was presented in the literature by (e.g. Myers et al. 2010).

9. THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS

This study provides insights into the consumer-brand relationships to decrease the lack of knowledge in the sport brand relationships context (e.g. Kunkel and Biscaia 2020). It also supports using of brand personality and consumer personality in developing the consumer-brand relationship in the sports industry (i.e. football field). The use of consumer-brand relationship theory (Fournier 1998) is effective in the explanation of the relationships between football teams and their fans. This theory was developed based on the idea that consumers humanize objects and think of brands as if they have human personalities. Brands cannot act, feel or think themselves, but can live and evolve through the practices of their managers (Loureiro 2013). Football teams, which have a well-established brand personality, have a strong relationship with their fans. It also illustrates that the personality of football fans has a positive impact on the shaping and developing process of fan-team relationships. The study contributes to services marketing literature by providing an overarching model that presents significant antecedents to consumer-brand relationships in the sports industry.

10. MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

The personality of the football team seems to have a strong impact on the relationship between football teams and their fans, resulting in fans spending more time and retail on the team and their related products. Teams should work to enhance the competitiveness, prestige, morality, authenticity, and credibility of the team. Based on the results of the current study, focusing some marketing efforts on communicating the unique facets of the personality of the team may be beneficial. To improve the perception of the competitiveness of the team, the football team should promote the success of the team and its players, the championship, the cups, and the rewards the team has gained. The football team should hire well-experienced football managers and acquire high-performance football players to enhance their competitiveness leading to a better personality of the team. The results of the study suggest that the prestige of the football team may be enhanced through communicating the team's accomplishments and superiority. For instance, advertisements that promote the team include images for the team and its players celebrating their awards, best matches, and best records.

To enhance the perception of the morality of the team, the football team should behave following standards for right practice; have a code of conduct, and respect regulations. The team should also develop and promote the growth of culture (e.g. educational, art, science programs). Football teams, for example, can launch a publicity campaign to encourage and call for compliance with regulations and right practices. In other words, promoting the team's involvement and supporting educational, art, and science programs via different advertising tools. The study results suggest that the team's authenticity can be improved by conveying the uniqueness, originality, and legendary features of the team. For example, the unique records of the team in different championships and the team's oldness compared to other competitors can be promoted. To enhance the perception of the team's credibility, the football team should behave following standards and pay great attention to their promises, and do their best to fulfill these promises to increase their trustworthiness and reliability.

11. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH FRONTIERS

Although the research has provided some insights, some research limitations need to be addressed. The cross-sectional research design sets limitations on the generalization of the current study findings. Future research might address this issue with the adoption of a longitudinal research design to emphasize and illustrate the causality in the hypothesized relationships of the study. The study has been conducted in only one sports industry (Football only). Accordingly, the results cannot be generalized to other service settings. Future research needs to re-test the proposed conceptual framework in other service contexts (e.g. health clubs, telecommunication, education) to compare the results of both service contexts. Because it was very difficult to obtain a sampling frame, the research relied on a non-probability judgmental sample that considered distributing the questionnaires in only limited places in Greater Cairo. Accordingly, generalization is to be made with great caution. Further research could apply the current research model to a more representative sample for more validation.

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