

# **Investigating Motivation Drivers of Attitudinal and Behavioural Fan Loyalty in Brazil: Football versus Other Sports**

## **ABSTRACT**

Sports have a fundamental role in the life of Brazilians, with football being the predominant sport. These other sports live in football's shadow and seek to thrive and grow, but a better understanding of what motivates their fans compared to football fans could be beneficial. To this end, this study seeks to improve our understanding how motivations differ in driving attitudinal and behavioural loyalty for fans of football and other sports, which may yield insights that can assist in the positioning of non-football sports against, and competing with, the juggernaut that football is in Brazil. A theoretically developed conceptual model is empirically tested of the effects of six motivational drivers—Interest in Team, Socialisation, Aesthetics, Sport Knowledge, Interest in Sport, Vicarious Achievement—on both attitudinal and behavioural fan loyalty using survey data collected from 483 sports fans from Brazil (337 football fans and 146 non-football fans). The findings show that: (a) the motivational drivers for attitudinal fan loyalty of football fans were Interest in Team, Socialisation, Vicarious Achievement, Sport Knowledge and Aesthetics; (b) the motivational drivers for behavioural fan loyalty of football fans were Socialisation, Interest in Sport and Vicarious Achievement; (c) the motivational drivers for attitudinal fan loyalty of non-football fans were Vicarious Achievement and Aesthetics; (d) the motivational driver for behavioural fan loyalty of non-football fans was Sport Knowledge; and (e) that motivational differences exist between the two groups of fans for Aesthetics, Socialisation and Sport Knowledge. This study offers new insights into advancing the discourse in the area of fan-loyalty research in the Brazilian context. Managerial implications and recommendations for future research are also presented.

## INTRODUCTION

Sports are a fundamental role in the life of Brazilians and are present in the routine of more than 90% of the population, either through their practice, monitoring of TV broadcasts and radio games or going to the stadium (Miranda, 2013). There is no question that football, or *futebol*, is the most popular sport in Brazil (Gaffney, 2014). The media define Brazil as ‘the soccer country’ (Gastaldo, 2013), where it is the preferred sport (Kasznar & Graça Filho, 2012). Football is a social phenomenon in Brazil, forms a key part of the national identity and can also give meaning to the power of wishes of many Brazilians. This relationship is so strong, that it is seen as part of the very nature of the country. Football, if read correctly, can explain Brazil (Guterman, 2013).

This relationship with football in Brazil can be explained by the numbers, which are impressive. Brazil has 29,208 football clubs, 2.1 million registered players, 11.2 million unregistered players, 27 state championships and four divisions (series A, B, C, D). Each year, 5000 professional games are played in more than 100 competitions (Portal 2014, 2015). The Brazilian Championship was established in 1971 and has featured 45 editions, 16,772 games and 40,864 goals (<http://futpedia.globo.com>).

The cultural importance of football in Brazil is undisputed, where any Brazilian becomes a ‘subject matter expert’ on football (Drummond, Araújo, & Shikida, 2010). Specifically, in Brazil, economic growth resulting from sport and the activities, trade and services related to sports in general reached about \$US 15.6 billion dollars in 2005, equivalent to 1.95% of the Brazilian GDP for that year. From 1995 to 2005, Brazil’s GDP grew on average 3.2% per year, while the national sport GDP grew 10.9% annually (Azevêdo, 2009). The typical patron of football matches in Brazil cuts across all social groups, unlike

other sports, such as tennis or polo, which feature predominantly the economic elite (Bruhns, 2000).

However, whilst the predominant sport in Brazil, other sports also live in football's shadow and seek to thrive and grow. For example, volleyball have made great performance because of special culture, geography, climate and good management system (Zhang, Zhang & Guo, 2011). To this end, by understanding how motivations differ in driving attitudinal and behavioural loyalty for fans of football and other sports may yield insights that can assist in the positioning of non-football sports against, and competing with, the juggernaut that football is in Brazil.

Despite the growing literature of fan-loyalty studies (e.g. Bauer, Stokburger-Sauer & Exler, 2008; Dwyer, 2011; Wu, Tsai & Hung, 2012), little or no research has attempted to investigate the motivational antecedents of Brazilian fan loyalty, especially capturing both attitudinal and behavioural aspects, and comparing fans of football with fans of other sports. Thus, a theoretical gap exists as to understanding the unique motivations for Brazilian fan loyalty (Wang, Zhang & Tsuji, 2011) and what drives Brazilian fans to attitudinally commit to a team and exhibit fan-related behaviours, such as attending matches and buying team merchandise. To address this deficiency, in the remainder of this paper, the literature is reviewed regarding the nature of fan loyalty and the motivation dimensions posited as factors influencing Brazilian fan loyalty (both attitudinal and behavioural). Next, we present the methodology followed by the analysis of data. Finally, we discuss the results and offer conclusions and future research directions.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### *Fan Loyalty*

Loyal consumers exhibit strong, positive attitudes and more intense, frequent behaviours towards a specific product (Jacoby, 1971). There is broad agreement in the extant literature on conceptualising loyalty into attitudinal and behavioural aspects (Andreassen & Lindestad, 1998; Gladden & Funk, 2001; Doyle et al., 2013). Many sports-fan studies focus on behavioural loyalty only (e.g. Theodorakis et al., 2013; Yoshida et al., 2014). However, fan loyalty requires an examination beyond behavioural traits (i.e. behavioural loyalty) by involving the attitudinal component of loyalty (Stevens & Rosenberger, 2012), which reflects the psychological commitment of a fan to a team (Funk & James, 2001, 2006; Mahony et al., 2000). On this basis, fan loyalty is conceptualised for this study as comprising two distinct aspects: attitudinal loyalty and behavioural loyalty.

### *Motivation*

Motivation refers to an activated state within a person, which represents internal factors that arouse, lead and provoke goal-direct behaviour (Funk, Filo, Beaton & Pritchard 2009; Pritchard, Funk & Alexandris, 2009), such as sports fans watching and attending matches (Madrigal, 2006; Mahony, Nakazawa, Funk, James & Gladden, 2002; Trail & James, 2001; Wann, 1995). Previous studies have suggested that motives for attending games are related to fan identification (Fink, Trail & Anderson, 2002; Trail, Anderson & Fink, 2000; Trail & James, 2001; Wann, 1995). An individual's personal characteristics, which include motivations, also shape and exhibit affective states, such as the enjoyment and satisfaction derived from watching a sporting event (Hung, Lee & Hou, 2011; Madrigal, 1995; Thien & Van Mu, 2012). Despite the importance of motivating factors that stimulate fan-related behaviour (Beccarini & Ferrand, 2006), little research that investigates the influence of motivation has been linked to both attitudinal and behavioural fan loyalty in the Brazilian context.

A range of sports-fan motivations has been linked to fan loyalty, including aesthetics, celebrity attraction, flow and vicarious achievement (Mahony et al., 2002; Pritchard et al., 2009; Tokuyama & Greenwell, 2011; Wann & Branscombe, 1993; Wang et al., 2011), which are this paper's focus. Aesthetics represents consumers' gratitude towards the mastery displayed by the athletes (Boxill, 1985). Celebrity attraction is appreciated by consumers for displaying the performers' personalities, including their notoriety, reputation and fame (Madrigal, 2006). Flow is an optimal psychological state exhibiting a loss of time track and self-consciousness derived by intense events (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). Vicarious achievement is a sense of personal achievement when the team performs well, and is as an important predictor of fan loyalty (Mahony et al., 2002; Pritchard et al., 2009; Wu et al., 2012). In relation to soccer, Mahony et al. (2002) identified seven motives that positively influenced the length of time as a fan and frequency of attendance of J-League (Japanese) spectators: drama; vicarious achievement; aesthetics; team attachment; player attachment; sport attachment and community pride. Having established that motivations are vital to understanding fan loyalty, it is argued that stronger motivations will have an influence on fan loyalty. Thus,

*Each motivation dimension will influence attitudinal fan loyalty.*

*Each motivation dimension will influence behavioural fan loyalty.*

## **METHODOLOGY**

The questionnaire items were translated into Portuguese using a professional translation agency. The resulting translation was reviewed by a panel of researchers to ensure the original meaning of the items had been maintained in the Portuguese version, with minor changes made as required. The resulting version of the survey was pretested and modified as required before distributing to participants.

Regarding the measured items, 18 items (Funk, Ridinger, & Moorman, 2003; Wang et al. 2011) tapped six motivation dimensions (three items each): interest in team, socialisation, aesthetics, sport knowledge, interest in football and vicarious achievement. These were rated on a 7-point, Likert-type scale (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree). Attitudinal loyalty was measured using four items drawn from Wang et al. (2011) measured on a 7-point Likert-type scale (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree). Behavioural loyalty used four items to measure the frequency of current and future attendance of both home and away games on a 6-point scale (Gladden & Funk, 2001; Stevens & Rosenberger, 2012).

This study used a convenience sample of university undergraduate and graduate students from Brazil. Data collection involved an online survey in Portuguese conducted by the researchers. The students were randomly invited by means of student e-mails, mobile phones along with social media outlets to 18 years and over in Brazil who followed football or other sports. Several variables are included in the research model to ensure that the empirical results are not due to covariance with other variables. As such, gender and age were included to control for fan heterogeneity.

In total, 483 valid responses were received: 337 football fans and 146 fans of other sports. The sample comprised 56% male respondents and 44% female respondents. The average age of respondent was 22.1 years of age. A wide range of thirty sports was identified by non-football fans, including volleyball, basketball, handball, motor sports and American football.

Analysis was conducted using Partial Least Squares structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) employing SmartPLS v3 (Ringle, Wende, & Becker, 2015). Adopting a two-step analytical procedure, the measurement model was first assessed and then the structural model was assessed. Measurement model analysis indicated that the reflective items of all constructs had component loadings > 0.70 benchmark except one behavioural-loyalty item (= .698).

Composite reliability analysis indicated all values exceeded 0.86, indicating good reliability of all scales with an average extracted variance of all constructs greater than 0.60. Discriminant validity was also established using the Fornell-Larcker criterion. The analyses of significance of all outer loadings yielded very good results with all *t*-values, which were calculated with the bootstrapping procedure of 5000 cases, greater than the 1.96 benchmark ( $\alpha$  level < .05). The recommended settings for conducting the MGA (multiple-group analysis) were followed.

## RESULTS

To test the structural model, we analyzed the size and the significance of the path-coefficients. The variance explained by the model ( $R^2$ ) is a key criterion for evaluating the structural model's quality in PLS-SEM (Hair et al. 2012). The model explains 64% of attitudinal fan loyalty for both football and non-football fans and 24% (football) and 20% (non-football) of behavioural fan loyalty, exceeding the .10 criterion. In sum, all the results substantiate the conceptualised model.

For the *combined* sample, as presented in Table 1, Interest in Team, Socialisation, Vicarious Achievement and Sport Knowledge were found to significantly influence attitudinal fan loyalty for the combined sample. Next, Socialisation, Interest in Sport and Vicarious Achievement were found to significantly influence behavioural fan loyalty for football fans, with Aesthetics having a marginally significant effect.

**Table 1 Results**

Structural Paths	Total Sample ( <i>n</i> = 483)	Football ( <i>n</i> = 337)	Other Sports ( <i>n</i> = 146)	Significant Pairwise Differences <sup>#</sup>
<b>Control variables to Attitudinal Loyalty</b>				
Age	.054 <sup>+</sup>	.075 <sup>+</sup>	.011	N/A
Gender	-.017	-.02	.012	N/A
<b>Control variables to Behavioural Loyalty</b>				
Age	-.054	-.041	-.074	N/A

Gender	-.012	-.011	.185*	N/A
Interest in Team → Attitudinal Loyalty	.199***	.197***	.156	<i>ns</i>
Interest in Team → Behavioural Loyalty	.054	.023	-.06	<i>ns</i>
Socialisation → Attitudinal Loyalty	.112**	.148**	-.018	$p = .069$
Socialisation → Behavioural Loyalty	.203***	.202**	.171	<i>ns</i>
Aesthetics → Attitudinal Loyalty	-.026	-.082 <sup>+</sup>	.239 <sup>+</sup>	$p < .05$
Aesthetics → Behavioural Loyalty	-.124 <sup>+</sup>	-.112	.174	$p < .05$
Sport Knowledge → Attitudinal Loyalty	.196***	.203***	.128	<i>ns</i>
Sport Knowledge → Behavioural Loyalty	-.033	-.017	-.241 <sup>+</sup>	$p = .077$
Interest in Sport → Attitudinal Loyalty	.039	.038	.055	<i>ns</i>
Interest in Sport → Behavioural Loyalty	.243**	.212**	.255	<i>ns</i>
Vicarious Achievement → Attitudinal Loyalty	.415***	.424***	.350*	<i>ns</i>
Vicarious Achievement → Behavioural Loyalty	.257***	.246**	.132	<i>ns</i>
<i>R<sup>2</sup> of Attitudinal Loyalty</i>	.690 <sup>^</sup>	.641 <sup>^</sup>	.644 <sup>^</sup>	
<i>R<sup>2</sup> of Behavioural Loyalty</i>	.293 <sup>^</sup>	.244 <sup>^</sup>	.204 <sup>^</sup>	

<sup>+</sup>  $p < .10$ , \*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$ ; <sup>^</sup> Exceeds criterion of .10; *ns* = non-significant ( $p > .10$ ); # SmartPLS v3 MGA results reported for Football compared with Fans of Other Sports

Turning to the subgroups, as presented in Table 1, Interest in Team, Socialisation, Vicarious Achievement and Sport Knowledge were found to significantly influence attitudinal fan loyalty for *football fans* ( $p < .01$ ), with Aesthetics having a marginally significant effect ( $p < .10$ ). Next, Socialisation, Interest in Sport and Vicarious Achievement were found to significantly influence behavioural fan loyalty for football fans ( $p < .01$ ).

As presented in Table 1, Vicarious Achievement was found to significantly influence attitudinal fan loyalty for *fans of other sports* ( $p < .05$ ), with Aesthetics having a marginally significant influence ( $p < .10$ ). Next, Sport Knowledge was found to have a marginally significant influence on behavioural fan loyalty for fans of other sports ( $p < .10$ ).

Finally, in the multiple-group analysis, the influence of Aesthetics was found differ significantly between the two groups of fans for both attitudinal and behavioural loyalty ( $p < .05$ ). Marginally significant differences ( $p < .10$ ) were found for the influence of Socialisation and Sport Knowledge on behavioural loyalty.

## DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH



Results from this study support previous research into the influence of motivations on attitudinal loyalty and behavioural loyalty (e.g. Mahony et al., 2002; Pritchard et al., 2009; Tokuyama & Greenwell, 2011; Wann & Branscombe, 1993; Wang et al., 2011), and offer insights into the direct influence of different motivations on attitudinal loyalty and behavioural loyalty. The results also contribute to theory development in the specific context of fan-loyalty research in a Brazilian context.

Firstly, the six motivations had strong explanatory effect on attitudinal loyalty, explaining 64% of the variation in attitudinal loyalty for football fans and 64% for fans of other sports. Of the six motivation dimensions examined in this study, Interest in Team, Socialisation, Vicarious Achievement and Sport Knowledge were found to significantly influence attitudinal fan loyalty for football fans, with Aesthetics having a marginally significant effect. However, the number of influential motivation dimensions was smaller for fans of other sports, with only Vicarious Achievement having a significant influence on attitudinal fan loyalty and Aesthetics having a marginally significant influence.

Secondly, the six motivations had weaker explanatory effect on behavioural loyalty, explaining 24% of the variation in behavioural loyalty for football fans and 20% for fans of other sports. Of the six motivation dimensions examined in this study, Socialisation, Interest in Sport and Vicarious Achievement were found to significantly influence behavioural fan loyalty for football fans. However, the number of influential motivation dimensions was smaller for fans of other sports, with only Sport Knowledge having a marginally significant influence.

Thirdly, the results suggest that similarities and differences exist in the pattern of influence of the motivation drivers for attitudinal and behavioural loyalty across the two fan groups. Specifically, the multiple-group analysis identified that similarities exist in the influence of Interest in Team, Interest in Sport and Vicarious Achievement for both

attitudinal and behavioural loyalty, as well as for Socialisation (behavioural loyalty) and Sport Knowledge (attitudinal loyalty). Next, differences were found for the influence of Aesthetics for both attitudinal and behavioural loyalty and for Socialisation (attitudinal loyalty) and Sport Knowledge (behavioural loyalty).

Collectively, these findings indicate that fans of both football and other sports in Brazil share some underlying motivational drivers of attitudinal loyalty and behavioural loyalty. They also indicate that some differences exist across the motivational drivers of attitudinal and behavioural fan loyalty.

On a practical level, these findings will assist sports-marketing practitioners of sports competing with football to formulate more effective, fan-centric marketing-communication strategies leading to a larger loyal fan base. For example, they could consider focusing on the aesthetics and sport knowledge of their respective games in their marketing communications. Equally, marketers of sports other than football still need to consider the motivational drivers shared with football fans and tap into these in developing and executing their promotional campaigns. Similar insights can also be garnered by marketers for football in Brazil.

There are research limitations that should be kept in mind when seeking to compare and generalise these findings and open avenues for further research. A cross-sectional, Brazilian student sample was used. Next, the results for the non-football fans may have been attenuated by the diversity of sports, which may have also affected the cross-group comparisons with football fans. Finally, other factors may also play a role in explaining fan loyalty, such as involvement, fan identification, brand image and constraints.

In conclusion, this study has increased our understanding of the motivational drivers of attitudinal loyalty and behavioural loyalty for fans of football and other sports in Brazil. Practitioners can also use these findings to formulate more effective marketing strategies. Through the improved understanding of sports fans in Brazil that these results contribute to,

sports marketers can gain insights that could help in developing and maintaining a stable fan base. Having a stable fans base implies that practitioners can increase their revenue by extending core products into such income generators and charging a price premium (Mahony, Madrigal & Howard, 2000).

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