

# **‘A REPUTATION TO PROTECT’: SPORT-TEAM REPUTATION AS A STRATEGIC SOURCE OF BRAND EQUITY**

## **ABSTRACT**

This study investigates how sports-team reputation shapes brand equity through consumers’ relationship satisfaction, life satisfaction, and commitment. Data were collected from India in two stages, with 523 responses used to test relationships among constructs via structural equation modelling. Barring the effects of social responsibility and financial soundness on relationship satisfaction and the effect of life satisfaction on team brand equity, all hypothesised relationships were significant. Self-congruity also positively moderated relationship satisfaction outcomes, including sport-team heritage, spectator orientation, and management style dimensions. The study's findings provide important insights for managers, highlighting the crucial role of a strong reputation in building consumer team loyalty. Our research suggests that marketing strategies should focus on enhancing consumer self-identification by involving fans in on-field and off-field successes to foster meaningful connections.

**Keywords:** *sport-team reputation; relationship satisfaction; brand equity; commitment; life satisfaction*

## **Introduction**

The unique nature of the sports industry means that, for organisations operating therein, brand equity development is often contingent upon strong team-fan relationships (Kim and Manoli, 2022). Accordingly, the commercial valuation of sports teams is partly underpinned by their strong consumer-based brand equity, through which they can develop strong and lasting associations and imagery that can stimulate trust and loyalty (Baker et al., 2022; Wear and Heere, 2020). As such, while on-field success continues to stimulate the strongest team-consumer connections, building brand equity remains an ongoing concern for industry managers, with contemporary sporting fandom increasingly characterised by split loyalties (i.e., following two or more sports/teams) which necessitate innovative outreach efforts. Such evolving consumers are largely young, loyal to two and sometimes three teams and embedded in the virtual world of social media, they are key to a sport's survival and determine the future course of a sports team or a league, and hence, need special marketing efforts from sport teams to develop their brand-equity and retain their loyalty (Maese, 2020).

Of all the factors that enable brand equity, reputation is an important requisite that helps differentiate a brand (Aggarwal & Saxena, 2023; Wang & Tang, 2018). Corporate reputation captures the overall perception of an organization's 'character' by stakeholders, acting as a signal for consumers to either strengthen or weaken their association with the company (Mariutti & Giraldi, 2019). Positive corporate reputations not only foster strong consumer commitment, loyalty, and advocacy (De Leaniz and del Bosque Rodríguez, 2016; Walsh and Beatty, 2007) but also play a crucial role in influencing brand equity (Yousaf et al., 2020). The concept of reputation is unique, given that it has greater embeddedness in the overall organizational personality, backed by cognitive and behavioural stakeholder experiences (Verčič, Verčič, & Žnidar, 2016).

Reputation, a key to building strong consumer-brand relationships in the form of positive satisfaction with the relationship, commitment, and attachment, can create positive behavioural intentions of consumers towards the brand (Veloutsou & Moutinho, 2009).

These relationship-driven behaviours, like live-spectating of the team's matches, can also serve as a source of life satisfaction for the consumer (Biscaia et al., 2018; Inoue et al., 2017). It is, thus, implied that brand reputation can serve as the source of rewarding consumer-brand relationships that not only enhance consumer commitment but also help consumers add meaning to their lives, who identify the brand's achievements as their own (Biscaia et al., 2018; Chang et al., 2018; Inoue et al., 2017; Su et al., 2018). While most studies suggest a direct link between reputation and brand equity (e.g., Heinberg et al., 2018; Mariutti & Giraldi, 2019), it's conceivable that this relationship has intricate dynamics, unexplored in extant research. Interestingly, the mechanism of development of brand equity from reputation mediated by the consumer-brand relationship and life satisfaction remains a prominent research gap (Joshi & Yadav, 2018). Further investigation is crucial to unravel these nuances and provide a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamics at play in the interconnection.

Another gap that the current study aims to fill is that extant literature contains both generic unidimensional scales (e.g. Wang et al., 2006) and specific multi-dimensional scales (e.g., Verčič, Verčič, & Žnidar, 2016). Since, corporate reputation, reflects the organization's personality, with deep stakeholder cognitive, emotional and behavioural experiences as the reference for the same, the unidimensional scales would be inefficient in examining such context-specific stakeholder experiences (Narteh and Braimah, 2019). This research gap is apparent across various fields, including sports management and marketing, indicating a need for more comprehensive investigations in these areas. Furthermore, the conventional method of operationalizing corporate

reputation as a one-dimensional construct, as seen in studies like Wang et al. (2006), faces limitations. Despite the existence of some multi-dimensional reputation scales tailored to specific contexts such as those developed by Verčič et al. (2016), Walsh et al. (2015) contend that these measures fall short of capturing the full conceptual richness of corporate reputation. Reputation, shaped by stakeholders' cognitive, emotional, and behavioural experiences, proves challenging to accurately assess with one-dimensional measurements alone (Yousaf et al., 2020). Therefore, there is a compelling argument for the adoption of a multi-dimensional scale to measure reputation.

Rooted in the extant literature, our proposed framework delves into the impact of different dimensions of sport-team reputation on consumer relationship satisfaction, exploring how this satisfaction influences consumer commitment, life satisfaction, and, ultimately, a team's brand equity (Inoue et al., 2017). Additionally, we examine the moderating role of consumers' self-congruity as highlighted by Wang and Tang (2018). To accomplish this, we adopt the multi-dimensional sport-team reputation scale developed by Jang et al. (2015), which includes performance, heritage, social responsibility, spectator orientation, management style, and financial soundness. Drawing data from the Indian sports consumer market, characterized by strong and sustained growth, our findings contribute to the field of sport-branding literature (Baker et al., 2022). This research extends the investigation of the relationship between reputation and brand equity beyond the geographical contexts covered in existing studies (Delia et al., 2022). As such, this work serves as a contribution by exploring the richness of the relationship, both through mediators and moderators, between the six dimensions of sports team reputation and brand equity, serving new knowledge to the existing sports management and corporate reputation literature. Additionally, the findings of the work are expected to help teams, as corporate entities, leverage

their reputation to develop a strong consumer commitment, consumers' self-perceived life quality, and team brand equity.

## **Literature Review**

### ***Operationalization of Corporate Reputation***

Corporate reputation is operationalised differently across strategy, marketing, sociology, and public relations disciplines (Verčič et al., 2016). Corporate reputation is more embedded in an organisation's overall personality when supported by cognitive/behavioural stakeholder experiences (Verčič et al., 2016). Measurement of corporate reputation, via either generic unidimensional or specific multi-dimensional measures, remains contentious. Unidimensional measures examine stakeholder perceptions of a firm via one statement (please see Wang et al., 2006; Verčič et al., 2016). However, sports industry literature is less endowed with the only multi-dimensional team reputation scale being that of Jang et al. (2015) who propose six dimensions: performance, heritage, social responsibility, spectator orientation, management style and financial soundness. Yet, some of these dimensions resonate with the Ross's (2006) *sport-team brand association scale*, which draws upon brand mark, rivalry, food concessions, social interaction, team history, commitment, organizational attributes, non-player personnel, stadium community, team success, and team play as distinct dimensions capable of shaping consumer perceptions. However, given that brand associations are antecedents of reputation, we argue that Ross's (2006) brand association dimensions ultimately shape Jang et al.'s (2015) reputation measures (i.e., rivalry/success/play>performance; history>heritage; non-player personnel>management style; organizational attributes>social responsibility; social interaction/concessions/stadium community>spectator orientation; organizational attributes/brand mark>financial soundness). Hence, Jang et al.'s (2015) reputation scale is adopted.

## Conceptualization

The concept of corporate reputation and its influence on consumer-brand relationship dynamics is under-investigated within the sport management context, with literature typically overlooking the intricacies of the mechanism. There is, however, evidence that corporate reputation is a key to building strong consumer-brand relationships, thereafter shaping consumer satisfaction with - and commitment to - the brand and developing strong behavioural intentions to buy/consume the brand's offerings going forward (Biscaia et al., 2018). Accordingly, our proposed model is depicted in Figure 1.

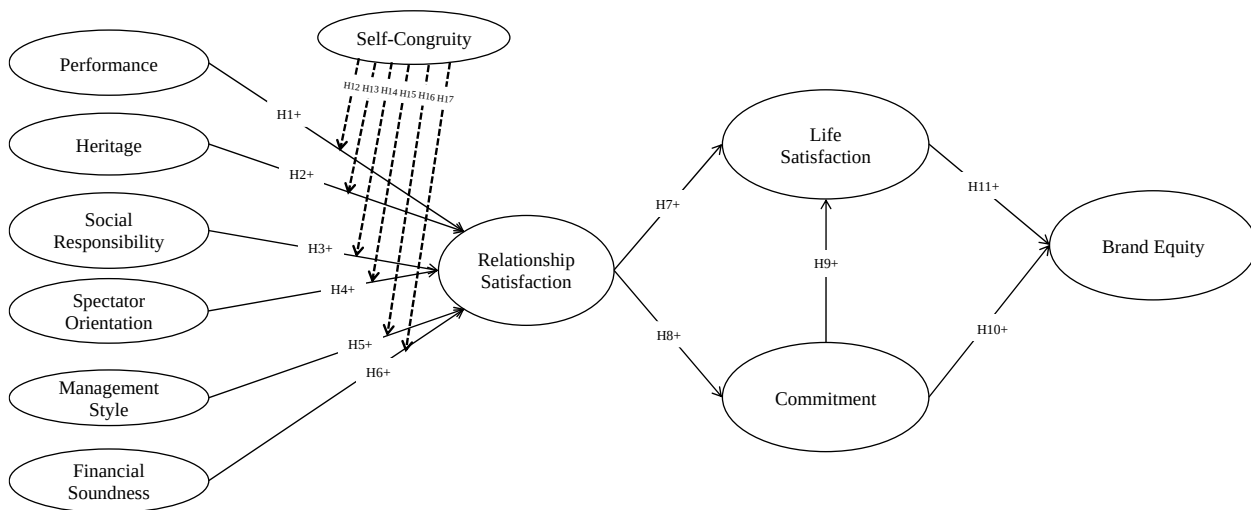


Figure 1: Conceptual Model

### ***Team Reputation and Relationship Satisfaction***

Team performance instils a sense of achievement and pride in consumers (Chang et al., 2018, 2019). Such pride enhances consumer self-esteem and provides "bragging rights". Some studies indicate that consumer pride, enhanced through a brand's excellent product/service performance, leads to them cherishing relationships with that brand. This is validated within organizational research, whereby a firm's achievements can enhance employees' pride and that

they, in turn, feel elated with being associated with the firm (Gordon et al., 2019). Research in the sport domain also indicates that positive team performance creates positive consumer satisfaction and resultant pride of association (e.g., Lee & Hur, 2019; Gordon et al., 2019). The outcomes of these studies indicate that a team's excellent on-field performance evokes pride in its consumers, who derive satisfaction from their association with the team (Chang et al., 2018; Gillooly et al., 2020). Thus:

**H1:** Performance reputation would have a positive effect on relationship satisfaction.

Heritage reputation includes the cumulative history and traditions that define an organization (Rose et al., 2020). The influence of a sports team's heritage on fan satisfaction in the relationship is significant, rooted in its ability to cultivate a sense of tradition, identity, and ongoing connection. A team's heritage, encompassing past achievements, memorable moments, and enduring traditions, plays a crucial role in strengthening the emotional bond fans share with the team. This shared history nurtures a deep sense of belonging and pride among fans, reinforcing their connection with the team (Rose et al., 2020). The heritage acts as a unifying factor, providing fans with a shared identity and narrative that binds them together. When fans perceive a strong and positive heritage associated with their team, it enhances their overall satisfaction with the team-fan relationship (Biscaia et al., 2016; Beccarini and Ferrand, 2006). This is because of the sense of being part of a meaningful tradition that extends beyond individual games or seasons. Consequently, a team's heritage emerges as a powerful force in shaping fan relationship satisfaction, fostering a profound and enduring connection that goes beyond the transient nature of on-field performance (Rose et al., 2020).

**H2:** Heritage reputation would have a positive effect on relationship satisfaction.

The concept of social responsibility is important in sports which can leverage the status of teams and athletes to create strong consumer relationships (Heere et al., 2011; Walker & Kent, 2009). Brands usually engage in social-support causes with the expectation that consumers will be positively dispositioned towards the brand. However, the outcome can be counterintuitive if the consumers distrust the campaign's veracity. In the extant cause-related marketing literature, the consumer-based outcomes of the brand's supporting specific social causes are mixed. In the sports literature, Joo, Koo, & Fink (2016) indicate that consumers' overt involvement with a team, more common in sports, makes a sports team's social initiatives appealing and the consumers would feel satisfied with the relationship (Heere & James, 2007; Kunkel et al., 2021). The social identity theory may shed light on this. Social identity theory (Tajfel, 1978) holds that people get a feeling of identity and belonging from the groups they are a part of, such as sports teams (Kural & Özbek, 2023). Participating in socially responsible activities by a sports team enhances the team's positive perception in the community (Heere & James, 2007). Consequently, fans who identify with the team experience an increased sense of pride and connection (Heere et al., 2011). This strengthened sense of social identity encourages a more profound emotional bond with the team, which raises (relationship) satisfaction. Hence, such altruistic initiatives are expected to have a significant impact on overall consumer attitudes, leading to satisfaction with the relationship (Walker et al., 2017; Morrison et al., 2020). Therefore:

**H3:** Social responsibility would have a positive effect on relationship satisfaction.

Consumer orientation represents a firm's commitment to recognizing current and future consumer requirements, expectations, and preferences (Zhang & Yang, 2018) while deploying suitable marketing strategies and offerings to enable a rewarding consumer-brand relationship (Bamford et al., 2018). Sports team business performance is largely dependent on its focus on the

spectators, with many factors beyond direct control (e.g., on-field performance). A clear focus on the consumer reflected as spectator orientation, can help a team manage the outcome of such factors better in the consumer-team relationship (Bamford et al., 2018). Such spectator orientation measures may involve providing group tickets, merchandise offers, and high-quality venue infrastructure to meet various consumer needs (Köse, Argan, & Hedlund, 2020). Therefore, teams need to develop spectator orientation as an organizational value which is expected to enhance the team's respect for its consumers and vice-versa and ensure the consumer's relationship satisfaction (Ross, 2006; Walsh & Beatty, 2007). Thus:

**H4:** Spectator orientation would have a positive effect on relationship satisfaction.

Consumers evaluate firm management styles through firm performance and customer-facing employees (Pantouvakis and Patsiouras, 2016). At firms possessing a transformative, participative, or entrepreneurial management style, competent and visionary managers are perceived as those who adapt to emerging challenges, execute necessary evolutions, and motivate customer-facing employees to achieve firm goals (Gordon et al., 2019; Pantouvakis and Patsiouras, 2016). Beyond spectating firm performance, customers also interact with the firm through its customer-facing frontline employees. Motivated employees, as an outcome of an efficient management style, are expected to display positive emotions, towards the customers. Further, customers satisfied with the team's performance possess positive affect which primes to evaluate the employees in a trusting manner. Customers display positive emotions, recall more positive associations of the firm, invoke their truth bias, and evaluate frontline employees as more authentic, which in turn, creates satisfactory customer-employee interactions (Gordon et al., 2019). This relationship satisfaction is manifested as both fulfilled expectations and enjoyable firm-

customer interaction experiences, driven by the management style of the firm (Lechner & Paul, 2019). Hence:

**H5:** Management style reputation would have a positive effect on relationship satisfaction.

Financial soundness assures consumers of firm longevity (Walsh and Beatty, 2007). When firms are perceived to possess robust financial assets, they are expected to spend their resources on activities that signal their financial health, like aggressive advertising, developing products/services, streamlining distribution channels, and displaying socially responsible behaviours (Fischer and Himme, 2017; Jang et al., 2015). In sports, such signals include hiring quality coaches/players, charitable activities, or investing in campaigns during the off-season. However, when firms are financially constrained, they are likely to reduce their strategic and tactical investments in brand building. On the contrary, evidence of these investments, in the form of customer-based equity-building initiatives, like advertisements, promotions, product/service innovations, and efficient distribution channels, signal the possession of superior financial resources by the firm (Fischer & Himme, 2017). Such proof of financial soundness has a significant effect on the customer's satisfaction with the firm (Malshe & Agarwal, 2015). Therefore:

**H6:** Financial soundness reputation would have a positive effect on relationship satisfaction.

### ***Relationship Satisfaction, Commitment and Life Satisfaction***

Diener et al. (1995) define life satisfaction as an individual's attitude based on their cognitive evaluations of overall satisfaction with their life. While discussing life satisfaction, recent research indicates an individual's psychological satisfaction with life can be an outcome of

their association with a sports team and related activities, for example, attending match events, buying merchandise, and collecting memorabilia of their favourite team(s) (Inoue et al., 2017; Kesler & Wann, 2020). Being a consumer of a well-regarded team enables consumers to add meaning to their lives, through the achievement of personal objectives seen through the lens of the team's success (Chang et al., 2018). Trail et al. (2005) demonstrate that the psychological mechanism invoked by being a team's consumer has the potential to generate intrinsic interest which helps individuals gain positive self-esteem. There is some evidence of consumption experiences contributing to individual-level meanings-to-life through sporting events (e.g. Sato et al., 2016; Inoue et al., 2015), and how team/event support can contribute to an individual's social-psychological well-being (Doyle et al., 2016). Thus:

**H7:** Relationship satisfaction would have a positive effect on life satisfaction.

Relationship satisfaction measures the benefits that accrue to related parties driven either through egoism or altruism norms (Chien et al., 2016) and is fundamentally different from commitment, which represents a long-term focus on continuing a relationship (Candel and Turliuc, 2019). Commitment is the extent of psychological attachment that consumers feel towards a brand. Relationships driven through altruism norms create the perception that the partner is exhibiting relationship-maintenance behaviours, which, in turn, positively impacts one's relationship commitment (Nascimento and Little, 2020). Sustained relationships can lead to individuals developing enduring psychological commitments to the brands with stable attitudes and behaviours (e.g., Funk & James, 2006; Lock et al., 2011; 2014; Lock & Heere, 2017). Thus, spectators who have positive experiences and relationships with a team tend to increase their commitment, which ensures that the consumer supports the team even if it is in a poor performance phase (Doyle et al., 2017). Thus:

**H8:** Relationship satisfaction would have a positive effect on commitment.

### ***Commitment, Life Satisfaction and Brand Equity***

As highlighted prior, committed consumer-brand relationship, the consumer develops positive behaviours like spectating the matches of a team, buying its merchandise, collecting memorabilia, and spreading positive word-of-mouth (Kim, et al., 2013). Such engagement with the sport team provides an individual with scope of psychological gratifications and personality enhancement (Doerrenberg & Siegloch, 2014; Inoue et al., 2017). This is because committed consumers identify with the brand socially as it is critical for their identity and provides them with psychological benefits and self-esteem, which helps enhance their life satisfaction (Haslam et al., 2009; Inoue et al., 2017). Hence:

**H9:** Commitment would have a positive effect on life satisfaction.

Brand equity, the value consumers attach to a brand, leads to high purchase intentions of brand merchandise, and increases consumer loyalty and economic success (Biscaia et al., 2016; Kunkel and Biscaia, 2020). Consequently, sports industry executives strategically develop, manage, and leverage the team's brand equity through both on-field and off-field activities to ensure long-term financial growth (Ross, 2006). Commitment, an emotional construct, can generate affect-laden memories that enhance the prominence of specific brand associations (Fedorikhin et al., 2008), and in turn, the brand equity (Dwiwedi et al., 2019). Commitment reflects a consumer's attachment to a brand, with higher commitment resulting in behaviours reflecting consumer-brand proximity, as well as consumer intention to invest cognitive/financial resources in the brand (Fedorikhin et al., 2008). Such consumers avoid alternatives and become brand loyal, a reflection of enhanced brand equity (Norris et al., 2015). Thus,

**H10:** Commitment would have a positive effect on team brand equity.

Perceptions of life quality, a measure of life satisfaction, encourage individuals to buy products/services that help improve self-esteem (Bhardwaj et al., 2011; Leelakuhlthanit, 2017). Acquisition of products/services from such brands not only reflects subjective well-being but also enhances respect for such brands. Such brands symbolise higher individual satisfaction with life and such satisfaction feeds back into the equity of the brand (Levy, 1959). Based on the understanding that increased life satisfaction fosters emotional attachment and loyalty among fans, resulting in more positive perceptions of the team's brand. Individuals who are more satisfied with their life tend to have higher levels of positive emotions and a more optimistic outlook, which can lead to more favourable attitudes toward brands with which they are emotionally connected (Heere & James, 2007). Fans often have a strong emotional connection to their team and positive brand associations (Kural & Özbek, 2023). Furthermore, as fans' life satisfaction increases, they may be more likely to see their sports team as a reflection of their positive emotions and well-being, resulting in higher perceptions of the team's brand equity. This alignment between fans' increased life satisfaction and positive perceptions of the team's brand has the potential to strengthen the bond between fans and the team, ultimately increasing the team's brand equity (Bhardwaj et al. 2011). Thus:

**H11:** Life satisfaction would have a positive effect on team brand equity.

### ***Moderating Role: Self-Congruity***

Sirgy et al. (2008) define self-congruity with a team as the degree to which consumers think that the reputation of the sports brand matches the consumers' self-image. Individuals compare their self-perceived image with that of the brand which enables them to preserve their

need of preservation of self-concept (Helgeson & Supphellen, 2004; Wang & Tang, 2018). To achieve this, individuals get associated with brands that possess an image similar to themselves, and such synchronous association enhances the consumer's satisfaction with the relationship (Wang & Tang, 2018). However, when individuals associate with entities that have a reputation that compensates for their lower self-image, such relationships are highly opportunistic with lower relationship satisfaction (Helgeson & Supphellen, 2004; Roy & Rabbanee, 2015). Thus, consumers may support teams/leagues that have symbolic meanings, reflected in their reputations, by wearing and/or purchasing team/league apparel, though the reason for the association may be high self-congruity or lack of it. Thus:

**H12-17:** Self-congruity positively moderates the relationship between performance/heritage/social responsibility/spectator orientation/management style/financial soundness *and* relationship satisfaction (i.e., higher self-congruity increases relationship strength)

## **Research Methodology**

### ***Measures and Data Collection***

The population for the study was individuals aged 18+ who watch a specified sport (and associated league), either at the venue or on television (Bansal, 2017) in India. The study considered three major leagues of high relevance within the Indian context: Indian Premier League (IPL; cricket), Pro-Kabaddi League (PKL; kabaddi) and English Premier League (EPL; football); the first two being the most-watched local leagues, while EPL is the most popular international sporting league (Azad, 2019). These three leagues represent different sports with varying levels of publicity in India. All respondents were aware of these three leagues.

An English-language survey instrument was developed from extant literature, with measurement items adapted to the Indian context. Two professors with established backgrounds in sports management research were consulted to ensure the adapted measures were context appropriate. Items comprising team reputation (6-items) were adapted from Jang et al. (2015); self-congruity from Sirgy et al. (2008); relationship satisfaction from Sreejesh et al. (2019); life satisfaction from Inoue et al. (2017); commitment from Ball and Tasaki (1992); and brand equity from Watkins (2014). Item details are presented in Appendix A1. Responses were captured on a 7-point Likert scale, with 1 ‘completely disagree’ and 7 ‘completely agree’. Pre-testing was conducted with fifteen respondents (post-graduate students at a business school) to check for comprehension issues or embedded biases. All items were considered easily understandable and without bias.

Data were collected from consumers for a specific team in one of the three leagues, with each respondent answering for a team/league. Teams in each league were divided into three tiers (top, middle, bottom), each containing an equal number of teams. The team's rank in the league in the 2018-19 season was considered for its categorization. Qualified respondents were randomly assigned a league and tier, from which they picked a team they knew about. This process was followed to ensure that respondents did not gravitate towards specific teams/leagues. As an a-priori procedure to minimise common method variance (CMV), questionnaire items were randomised (Chang et al., 2010).

An online survey was conducted with the help of a marketing research firm, RNI. The sampling frame consisted of 24,673 qualified members of a panel who were approached via email, incentivised by a coffee chain gift card (INR50). 12,569 members showed interest, with 600 randomly selected. Data collection was conducted in two stages, three months apart (June and

September 2019). The two-stage approach ensured that different datasets were used for testing the psychometric properties of measures and their interrelationships, providing greater statistical robustness (Bagozzi and Yi, 1988). Of the 600 respondents, 300 completed the questionnaire in the first stage and 300 in the second. After screening and omitting outliers, 523 responses were retained for analysis (259 stage 1; 264 stage 2). Of these, 199 were IPL, 193 EPL and 131 PKL. Sample characteristics are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Sample Profile

| Variable |           | N   | %    | Variable                            |             | N    | %    |
|----------|-----------|-----|------|-------------------------------------|-------------|------|------|
| Gender   | Male      | 340 | 65.0 | Household Income<br>(Monthly - INR) | Below 25000 | 85   | 16.3 |
|          | Female    | 183 | 35.0 |                                     | 25000-50000 | 251  | 48.0 |
| Age      | 18-20     | 73  | 14.0 |                                     | Above 50000 | 187  | 35.8 |
|          | 21-25     | 85  | 16.3 | Travelled to watch sport            | Yes         | 105  | 20.1 |
|          | 26-30     | 120 | 22.9 |                                     | No          | 418  | 79.9 |
| Group    | 31-35     | 128 | 24.5 | Sport likeability*                  | Cricket     | 6.05 | 1.50 |
|          | 36-40     | 76  | 14.5 |                                     | Football    | 5.84 | 1.45 |
|          | 41+       | 41  | 7.8  |                                     | Kabaddi     | 5.43 | 1.60 |
| City     | Mumbai    | 98  | 18.7 |                                     | IPL         | 6.99 | 1.40 |
|          | Delhi/NCR | 87  | 16.6 | League likeability*                 | EPL         | 6.12 | 1.75 |
|          | Kolkata   | 72  | 13.8 |                                     | PKL         | 5.36 | 1.88 |
|          | Bengaluru | 85  | 16.3 |                                     |             |      |      |
|          | Lucknow   | 22  | 4.2  |                                     |             |      |      |
|          | Ahmedabad | 39  | 7.5  |                                     |             |      |      |
|          | Chennai   | 66  | 12.6 |                                     |             |      |      |
|          | Hyderabad | 54  | 10.3 |                                     |             |      |      |

*N*=frequency, *S.D.*=standard deviation, *IPL*=Indian Premier League, *EPL*=English Premier League, *PKL*=Pro-Kabaddi League; \*Scale: 1 (Not liked at all) – 7 (Liked a lot)

## **Data Analysis**

Stage 1 data (259 responses) were used to evaluate the psychometric properties of the deployed measures; Stage 2 data (264 responses) evaluated the hypotheses after the measurement properties were revalidated (Bagozzi and Yi, 1988). The psychometric properties of measures for both samples were established by examining their reliability and validity through confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). Covariance-based structural equation modelling was undertaken via AMOS21 software.

## **Results**

A post-hoc check for CMV was conducted via Harman's one-factor test, complemented by the marker variable test, due to criticism of the former (Hulland et al., 2018). The single largest factor accounted for 34% of the variance during exploratory factor analysis. A theoretically unrelated marker variable, 'environmentally responsible behaviour' (Cheng & Wu, 2015), for which data were also collected, was found to be uncorrelated to extant constructs (highest inter-construct correlation=.08). The CMV-adjusted correlations for all constructs were not significantly different from the original correlations, implying no CMV (Malhotra et al., 2006). CFA results for Stage1 are depicted in Table 2.

Table 2: Measurement Model

| Measure               | Item | Mean | S.D. | FL  | CR  | AVE | MSC |
|-----------------------|------|------|------|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Performance           | TP1  | 5.67 | 1.01 | .78 | .84 | .65 | .55 |
|                       | TP2  | 5.54 | 1.02 | .85 |     |     |     |
|                       | TP3  | 5.91 | .94  | .78 |     |     |     |
| Heritage              | TH1  | 5.44 | 1.11 | .68 | .76 | .51 | .49 |
|                       | TH2  | 5.62 | 1.04 | .68 |     |     |     |
|                       | TH3  | 5.67 | 1.07 | .77 |     |     |     |
| Social Responsibility | TSR1 | 5.34 | 1.04 | .84 | .87 | .62 | .55 |
|                       | TSR2 | 5.45 | 1.08 | .81 |     |     |     |

|                           |      |      |      |     |     |     |     |
|---------------------------|------|------|------|-----|-----|-----|-----|
|                           | TSR3 | 5.66 | 1.08 | .71 |     |     |     |
|                           | TSR4 | 5.53 | 1.07 | .78 |     |     |     |
|                           | SO1  | 5.44 | 1.02 | .73 |     |     |     |
| Spectator Orientation     | SO2  | 5.47 | 1.03 | .88 | .85 | .66 | .49 |
|                           | SO3  | 5.69 | 1.04 | .81 |     |     |     |
|                           | MS1  | 5.48 | 1.03 | .89 |     |     |     |
| Management Style          | MS2  | 5.46 | 1.02 | .77 | .84 | .65 | .51 |
|                           | MS3  | 5.87 | 1.01 | .75 |     |     |     |
|                           | FS1  | 5.55 | 1.00 | .80 |     |     |     |
| Financial Soundness       | FS2  | 5.67 | .99  | .76 | .83 | .63 | .52 |
|                           | FS3  | 5.64 | .98  | .82 |     |     |     |
|                           | FRS1 | 5.76 | 1.12 | .89 |     |     |     |
| Relationship Satisfaction | FRS2 | 5.63 | 1.11 | .86 | .87 | .71 | .57 |
|                           | FRS3 | 5.64 | 1.09 | .76 |     |     |     |
|                           | LS1  | 5.98 | 1.08 | .76 |     |     |     |
| Life Satisfaction         | LS2  | 5.87 | 1.09 | .76 | .81 | .58 | .51 |
|                           | LS3  | 5.80 | 1.07 | .76 |     |     |     |
|                           | COM1 | 5.78 | 1.06 | .76 |     |     |     |
|                           | COM2 | 5.69 | 1.09 | .75 |     |     |     |
|                           | COM3 | 5.93 | 1.08 | .84 |     |     |     |
| Commitment                | COM4 | 5.81 | 1.10 | .81 | .93 | .64 | .57 |
|                           | COM5 | 5.88 | 1.12 | .88 |     |     |     |
|                           | COM6 | 5.84 | 1.07 | .81 |     |     |     |
|                           | COM7 | 5.86 | 1.05 | .77 |     |     |     |
|                           | COM8 | 5.90 | 1.04 | .76 |     |     |     |
|                           | BE1  | 5.91 | 1.08 | .81 |     |     |     |
|                           | BE2  | 5.87 | 1.09 | .84 |     |     |     |
|                           | BE3  | 5.78 | 1.08 | .84 |     |     |     |
| Brand Equity              | BE4  | 5.69 | 1.06 | .81 | .9  | .65 | .51 |
|                           | BE5  | 5.70 | 1.10 | .74 |     |     |     |
|                           | BE6  | 5.93 | 1.11 | .82 |     |     |     |
|                           | BE7  | 5.89 | 1.09 | .77 |     |     |     |
|                           | BE8  | 5.88 | 1.07 | .78 |     |     |     |

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FL: Factor Loading; CR: Composite Reliability; AVE: Average Variance Extracted; MSC: Maximum Squared Correlation; S.D.: Standard Deviation

Composite reliability scores for each construct demonstrated internal consistency (i.e., all were above the recommended 0.70 threshold). Convergent validity was established: all average

variance extracted (AVE) values exceeded the recommended cut-off (0.5). AVE values were also above the corresponding maximum squared correlation (MSC) values for each first-order construct, indicating discriminant validity (Fornell and Larcker, 1981; Table 3). Overall CFA model fit was also satisfactory:  $\chi^2=1471.813$ ;  $df=119$ ;  $\chi^2/df=2.52$ ; IFI=.90; TLI=.90; CFI=.90; RMSEA=.08.

Table 3: Correlations and Discriminant Validity

| MEASUREMENT MODEL               |             |             |             |             |             |             |             |             |             |             |
|---------------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
|                                 | TP          | TH          | TSR         | SO          | MS          | FS          | FRS         | LS          | COM         | BE          |
| Performance (TP)                | <b>.806</b> |             |             |             |             |             |             |             |             |             |
| Heritage (TH)                   | .668        | <b>.717</b> |             |             |             |             |             |             |             |             |
| Social Responsibility (TSR)     | .741        | .699        | <b>.791</b> |             |             |             |             |             |             |             |
| Spectator Orientation (SO)      | .693        | .702        | .593        | <b>.818</b> |             |             |             |             |             |             |
| Management Style (MS)           | .712        | .587        | .622        | .667        | <b>.806</b> |             |             |             |             |             |
| Financial Soundness (FS)        | .643        | .538        | .722        | .598        | .700        | <b>.796</b> |             |             |             |             |
| Relationship Satisfaction (FRS) | .662        | .651        | .574        | .497        | .675        | .644        | <b>.841</b> |             |             |             |
| Life Satisfaction (LS)          | .691        | .671        | .693        | .634        | .719        | .575        | .512        | <b>.765</b> |             |             |
| Commitment (COM)                | .585        | .700        | .668        | .668        | .702        | .638        | .760        | .674        | <b>.804</b> |             |
| Brand Equity (BE)               | .672        | .665        | .654        | .695        | .716        | .651        | .579        | .666        | .702        | <b>.806</b> |
| STRUCTURAL MODEL                |             |             |             |             |             |             |             |             |             |             |
| Performance (TP)                | <b>.810</b> |             |             |             |             |             |             |             |             |             |
| Heritage (TH)                   | .669        | <b>.768</b> |             |             |             |             |             |             |             |             |
| Social Responsibility (TSR)     | .614        | .715        | <b>.775</b> |             |             |             |             |             |             |             |
| Spectator Orientation (SO)      | .651        | .667        | .675        | <b>.793</b> |             |             |             |             |             |             |
| Management Style (MS)           | .596        | .691        | .666        | .682        | <b>.777</b> |             |             |             |             |             |
| Financial Soundness (FS)        | .654        | .576        | .703        | .718        | .658        | <b>.812</b> |             |             |             |             |
| Relationship Satisfaction (FRS) | .629        | .597        | .659        | .711        | .700        | .678        | <b>.756</b> |             |             |             |
| Life Satisfaction (LS)          | .617        | .715        | .660        | .712        | .584        | .667        | .675        | <b>.756</b> |             |             |
| Commitment (COM)                | .583        | .554        | .671        | .724        | .562        | .691        | .685        | .666        | <b>.802</b> |             |
| Brand Equity (BE)               | .555        | .614        | .594        | .600        | .663        | .559        | .751        | .755        | .745        | <b>.803</b> |

*Note: The square-root of AVE is on the diagonal; lower-diagonal values are inter-construct correlations*

For hypotheses testing, the structural model was introduced to the Stage 2 dataset (n=264) after psychometric properties were re-established; CR, AVE and MSC values re-validated the reliability and validity of the measurement model. Structural model fit was satisfactory:  $\chi^2=1632.887$ ;  $df=603$ ;  $\chi^2/df=2.707$ ; IFI=.90; TLI=.90; CFI=.90; RMSEA=.08. Paths from performance and heritage to relationship satisfaction were significant ( $\beta_{H1}=.603$ ,  $t=9.081$ ;  $p=.000$ ;  $\beta_{H2}=.312$ ,  $t=2.554$ ,  $p=.000$ ); hence, H1 and H2 are supported. Interestingly, the path from social responsibility to relationship satisfaction was not significant ( $\beta_{H3}=.041$ ,  $t=.032$ ;  $p=.974$ ) and thus, H3 was not supported. Paths from spectator orientation and management style to relationship satisfaction were significant ( $\beta_{H4}=.301$ ,  $t=2.318$ ;  $p=.024$ ;  $\beta_{H5}=.287$ ,  $t=2.114$ ,  $p=.032$ ), supporting H4 and H5. Within reputation, the path from financial soundness to relationship satisfaction is not significant ( $\beta_{H6}=-.002$ ,  $t=-.004$ ,  $p=.997$ ); H6 was not supported. The influence of relationship satisfaction on life satisfaction and commitment was significant ( $\beta_{H7}=.716$ ,  $t=9.875$ ;  $p=.000$ ;  $\beta_{H8}=.724$ ,  $t=9.967$ ,  $p=.000$ ) supporting H7 and H8. Similarly, the influence of commitment on life satisfaction and brand equity was significant ( $\beta_{H9}=.224$ ,  $t=1.984$ ;  $p=.047$ ;  $\beta_{H10}=.541$ ,  $t=8.412$ ,  $p=.000$ ), ratifying H9 and H10. Finally, the influence of life satisfaction on team brand equity was not significant ( $\beta_{H11}=-.072$ ,  $t=-.759$ ;  $p=.450$ ), rejecting H11. Results are summarised in [Table 4](#).

**Table 4:** Structural model

| Hypothesis                                           | Path Value | t-value | p-value | Result               |
|------------------------------------------------------|------------|---------|---------|----------------------|
| H1 (Performance→Relationship Satisfaction)           | .603       | 9.081   | .000    | Supported            |
| H2 (Heritage→Relationship Satisfaction)              | .312       | 2.554   | .000    | Supported            |
| H3 (Social Responsibility→Relationship Satisfaction) | .041       | .032    | .974    | <i>Not Supported</i> |
| H4 (Spectator Orientation→Relationship Satisfaction) | .301       | 2.318   | .024    | Supported            |
| H5 (Management Style→Relationship Satisfaction)      | .287       | 2.114   | .032    | Supported            |
| H6 (Financial Soundness→Relationship Satisfaction)   | -.002      | -.004   | .997    | <i>Not Supported</i> |
| H7 (Relationship Satisfaction→Life Satisfaction)     | .716       | 9.875   | .000    | Supported            |
| H8 (Relationship Satisfaction→Commitment)            | .724       | 9.967   | .000    | Supported            |
| H9 ( Commitment→Life Satisfaction)                   | .224       | 1.984   | .047    | Supported            |

|                                      |       |       |      |                      |
|--------------------------------------|-------|-------|------|----------------------|
| H10 (Commitment→Brand Equity)        | .541  | 8.412 | .000 | Supported            |
| H11 (Life Satisfaction→Brand Equity) | -.072 | .759  | .450 | <i>Not Supported</i> |

Moderation was conducted using Hayes' method. Variables were mean-centred, and moderation effects were classified based on the significance of the coefficient of the interaction term. Moderation effects for paths from social responsibility and financial soundness to relationship satisfaction were not examined as main paths were non-significant. Table 5 reveals that the influence of heritage, spectator orientation and management style reputations on relationship satisfaction is moderated by self-congruity, implying that (of H12-H17), only H13, H15 and H16 were supported. Hence, self-congruity only moderates three proposed paths.

Table 5: Moderation test

| Independent Variables |                             | Relationship Satisfaction |                |                 |
|-----------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------|----------------|-----------------|
|                       |                             | Unstandardized $\beta$    | Standard Error | t-value/p-value |
| <b>Main Effects</b>   | Performance (TP)            | .652                      | .113           | 5.731/.00       |
|                       | Heritage (TH)               | .302                      | .064           | 3.212/.00       |
|                       | Social Responsibility (TSR) | NT                        | NT             | NT              |
|                       | Spectator Orientation (SO)  | .299                      | .076           | 2.917/.00       |
| <b>Interaction</b>    | TPxSelf-Congruity           | .113                      | .064           | 1.765/.079      |
|                       | THxSelf-Congruity           | .248*                     | .087           | 1.995/.039      |
|                       | TSRxSelf-Congruity          | NT                        | NT             | NT              |
|                       | SOxSelf-Congruity           | .229*                     | .102           | 1.964/.047      |
|                       | MSxSelf-Congruity           | .312*                     | .105           | 2.105/.031      |
|                       | FSxSelf-Congruity           | NT                        | NT             | NT              |

The direct effects of moderators on relationship satisfaction were found to be non-significant at  $p < .05$ ; \*interaction significant at  $p < .05$ ; NT: Not tested

## General Discussion

The study results confirm that team performance, heritage, spectator orientation and management style reputations are important drivers for building consumers' relationship satisfaction with the results supporting hypotheses H1, H2, H4, and H5, respectively. Interestingly, the team's socially responsible activities and financial soundness reputations, do not enable such satisfaction, findings which are not aligned to theoretical expectations as elucidated in hypotheses H3 and H6. This may be because while most research suggests that a firm's support of social causes impacts consumer-firm relationship quality (e.g., Joo et al., 2016), few others indicate that cause-related marketing can foster negative consumer perceptions, citing over-commercialization. Walker and Kent (2009) indicate that while sport-team CSR generates positive consumer impact, most fans are largely unaware of such initiatives. Even if they are, they may term such initiatives as 'irresponsible/coverup' if they share negative feelings about those initiatives (Giannoulakis and Drayer, 2009).

Further, a team's financial soundness can be exhaustively evaluated only after examining past financial statements, monitoring strategic/tactical deals, or examining management/employee remunerations. A team's consumer may not perform this due diligence, rather he/she evaluates a team's perceived financial health largely through the lens of its on-field performance, brand-building, or altruistic activities (Galariotis et al., 2018). Huth (2020) argues that consumers who invest in team-related financial instruments consider it as a pro-social altruistic behaviour with no expected returns. Thus, it may be possible that the consumer either does not have the financial status of the team, in terms of indebtedness, ownership concentration, profitability, payroll costs and assets, in cognizance or does not consider it important to shape his/her relationship till the team performs well on-field.

Next, relationship satisfaction also leads to strong consumer commitment as well as higher perceived life quality, which is based on the support for hypotheses H7 and H8 and provides empirical support to the works which propose this connections (e.g. Candel and Turliuc, 2019; Doyle et al., 2016). Commitment is also found to influence life satisfaction, a support for hypothesis H9. This implies that a satisfactory and commitment-based relationship has positive effects on people's self-appreciation of their lives and that sport-teams help them be happy with their lives (Inoue et al., 2017).

Interestingly, life satisfaction does not contribute to the team's brand equity, a lack of support for hypothesis H11, which is an unexpected result and counteracts the extant literature suggesting this outcome (e.g., Bhardwaj et al., 2011; Ju et al., 2017). As per Cockrill (2012), life satisfaction is a multifaceted concept and has multiple causes as well as outcomes. Such causes are generally categorized into top-down and bottom-up sources (Sirgy et al. 2008). The top-down causes are personality factors, while the bottom-up causes, prescribed in this work, are situational/environmental factors, including sport-related events (Ju et al., 2017). A possible reason to explain the lack of the effect is that people may derive life satisfaction, an accumulated cognitive judgment of one's life, from both top-down, like individual values, self-esteem, materialism, power-in-personal relationships (Brick et al., 2018) and bottom-up sources, like playing/following sport, sense of ownership of various brands/products/services, travel, social/social media activities and on-job performance. This subjective well-being cannot be appropriated only to the sport-team. Since the sources of life satisfaction are multiple and deeply psychological, an individual may find it tough to apportion such life satisfaction only to the rewarding relationship shared with a sport team, which in turn translates to a non-significant association between the two variables. Overall,

it is apparent that if people are committed to the sport-team shaped through the team's reputation and relationship satisfaction, the commitment itself serves well to enhance the team's brand equity.

A consumer's self-congruity with the team for its heritage, spectator orientation and management style reputations influence his/her satisfaction with the relationship, [indicating support for hypotheses H12, H13, and H15](#). But this does not apply to self-congruity with the team's performance. There is some evidence that consumers' perceived self-congruence with the team may be an outcome of the team's performance and not exogenously determined (e.g., Lee and Hur, 2019). Consumers may perceive a real-ideal image discrepancy, where the team's image is incongruent with the consumer's ideal self-image, due to the team's recent performances. Alternately, certain individuals may tend to form a transactional relationship with low self-congruity with a team that is performing on-field, while not identifying with other reputation components.

## **Theoretical Contributions**

[This study supports extant literature in demonstrating that strong sport-team reputation helps to develop consumer-team allegiance, beyond that developed opportunistically \(Funk and James, 2006; Gillooly et al., 2020; Joo et al., 2016\). Such consumers maintain relationships with the team even in instances when the team is unsuccessful on-field \(Jensen et al., 2016\). Adding value to reputation literature, findings reiterate that carefully cultivated dimensions of performance like performance, heritage, spectator orientation, and management style reputations are instrumental for strong consumer-team relationships \(Doyle et al., 2017\). Our work extends this relationship to the sporting context, indicating that consumers resonate with teams/leagues that hold symbolic meaning, reflected by their heritage, spectator orientation, and management style](#)

reputations. It is suggested that self-concept identification can result in people forming robust and long-lasting psychological bonds with sports teams (Funk and James, 2006), which makes it easier for team-related attitudes and behaviors to be established, maintained, and strengthened.

The social identity theory (e.g., Laverie and Arnett, 2000) supports the positive association between consumer-brand relationships, resulting emotions, and identity salience. Customers who have a close bond with a brand are more likely to be committed to it because the brand can instill positive meanings that support the development of a desired self-image or concept (Escalas, 2004). This work supports the notion that such commitment influences consumers' perceptions of the brand's equity. The result also validate the research by Sirgy et al. (2008) and Wang and Tang (2018), who suggested that people seek balance and consistency in how they perceive their personalities, which can be found by contrasting their perception of themselves with that of a brand. This relationship is extended to the context of sports by our work, which shows that consumers associate, in the same way as they do with regular brands, with teams or leagues that have symbolic meanings reflected in their history, reputation as spectators, and management style.

Another contribution herein is centred on showcasing the mechanism through which sport-team reputation components interact to shape a team's brand equity. Further, the findings demonstrate that this process is mediated by strong consumer-team relationships, consumer commitment, and life satisfaction. Doing so, we contribute to broader understanding of how consumers evaluate sport-teams reputation, how these evaluations contribute to life satisfaction (Sato et al., 2016), and the factors influencing the overall commitment that exists between consumer and team (Funk and James, 2006; Wear and Heere, 2020). One of the finding highlighting the absence of financial soundness and social responsibility reputations in determining relationship satisfaction contradicts existing research (e.g., Fischer and Himme, 2017;

Joo et al., 2016) makes another important theoretical contribution to the literature. This finding challenges prevailing assumptions and provides a novel perspective on the factors influencing consumer-brand relationships in sports by revealing the lower importance of these reputations in determining relationship satisfaction within the sports context. This departure from conventional wisdom sheds new light on the unique dynamics of reputation and consumer behaviour, emphasizing the importance of context-specific research into relationship satisfaction determinants.

The study also integrates two streams of literature, per Delia et al., (2022), – one, where sport branding researchers have examined the relationship consumers develop toward teams, with positive behavioural outcomes, like brand loyalty (Bauer et al., 2008; Kunkel et al., 2020; Ross, 2006) and two, where researchers focused on consumers, their identity, social well-being and life satisfaction through their relationship with sport teams (Katz et al., 2020). Further, Baker et al. (2022) argue that sport brands need to create shared for both fans and the wider society. The discussion of sport-team reputation, in this work, with various facets ranging from performance to social responsibility, affecting team-fan relationship as well as their life satisfaction adds value to this call as well as extant knowledge of sports-related branding more generally. Our research gives existing theories of relationship satisfaction and life satisfaction more context by emphasizing the important role of sport-teams reputation have in influencing people's overall well-being.

## **Managerial Implications**

Findings also provide insight for practitioners. Sport-teams should focus on building their reputation through performance, heritage, spectator orientation and management style. While showcasing past performance (i.e., notable victories, matches, and players) is important, teams

must also demonstrate a rich heritage (e.g., established/historic nature; notable events they participated in/won; moments that define the team). Meanwhile, spectator-oriented activities should be prioritized, including transparent communication, prompt courteous responses, unique offers for match attendance/access, and real/virtual interaction opportunities with team management/players.

Additionally, they need to inform consumers about their team management, invite discussion on the management's vision and showcase the quality of people in the team's management, their hard work and their contribution to the team. Sport teams should also monitor and enhance the satisfaction of the relationship with consumers to promote a higher-level relationship in the form of commitment to the team, which, in turn, enhances the team's brand equity. Through regular market research, teams may be able to manage these relationships. Further, they must work hard to provide instances in the relationship which become conduits to life satisfaction for fans, even though this does not enhance brand equity therein. For example, a team may discover that despite doing well on the field, individuals are not satisfied with their lack of a communications strategy, which is making them feel less attached to the club. This can be avoided by regularly being in touch with their consumers through various media. It will, however, stimulate stronger fan commitment.

To enhance consumers' self-congruity, sport-teams should develop marketing materials that communicate both on- and off-field achievements and enable consumers to be part of those achievements (e.g., being in the team's commercials or attending training sessions), further integrating team-consumer identity through meaningful relationship development. This may be a positive way for the team to make consumers part of their own team identity. For example, sport teams can create areas in their stadiums, or elsewhere in a location, where select consumers can

interact with the management and players, before, during and after a match. By closely aligning with consumers' feelings and aspirations, teams may enable consumers to identify themselves better with the team's reputation and create a stronger relationship.

### **Limitations and Future Research**

The current research has a few limitations that provide opportunities for future research. First, the context of this work was India. Though India presents an interesting country for this work with a fast-growing sports industry, the framework also needs to be validated across other countries – both developing and developed. It would be interesting for future researchers to consider countries in their sample that have native leagues and compare the findings across countries that do not have such leagues. Additionally, a comparison could be drawn of the framework for a consumer who belongs to the same country as the team to that of another consumer belonging to another country.

Another limitation lies in the contextual sports that this study covers. While cricket, football, and kabaddi are popular in India in that order, many other team-sports have their leagues, like hockey and volleyball. All these sports, though not as publicised as the first three, have reasonable audiences in India and abroad. For the framework to be truly universal, it needs to be validated with consumers across all such sports.

Additionally, the history and heritage of a sport may also have a role to play in the way in which consumers share their identity with it or teams in that sport. For example, sports like American football, basketball, ice hockey, and baseball have a great history in the USA, with a limited audience across other parts of the world. This is also applicable to cricket in India. Such leagues/sports have a rich heritage and draw consumers in large numbers at their flagship events

like the Super Bowl or the Indy 500. The dynamics of such leagues/sports and their consumers compared to other “more global” sports and their consumers may be an interesting investigation.

As a final limitation, the study mandated a respondent to choose their favourite team from any one of the leagues mentioned. There may be people who are consumers of two or more unique teams across the same sport, but different leagues or a different sport altogether. For example, one individual may be a consumer of Real Madrid and Inter Milan, both football clubs in two different leagues, and another individual may be a fan of Ferrari in Formula 1 and Manchester United in the English Premier League. When an individual shows divided loyalty across two different teams across different leagues for the same/different sports, the unique effects of each team’s reputation on the individual’s self-concept, and the resultant commitment and life satisfaction, could offer interesting scope for future investigation.

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## Appendix

### Appendix A1: Questionnaire Items

| Construct                 | Items (Code)                                                                            | Source                 |
|---------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------|
| Performance               | The performance of the team is excellent (TP1)                                          | Jang et al. (2015)     |
|                           | The team has high-quality players (TP2)                                                 |                        |
|                           | The performance of the team is first class (TP3)                                        |                        |
| Heritage                  | The team is a long-established sport-team (TT1)                                         |                        |
|                           | The team has a rich history (TT2)                                                       |                        |
|                           | The past of the team is something special (TT3)                                         |                        |
| Social Responsibility     | The team contributes towards bettering society (TSR1)                                   |                        |
|                           | The team contributes to charitable foundations (TSR2)                                   |                        |
|                           | The team regularly makes donations to the local community (TSR3)                        |                        |
|                           | The team has programs to recognize players for their volunteer or community work (TSR4) |                        |
| Spectator Orientation     | The team is concerned about its followers (SO1)                                         |                        |
|                           | The team takes consumer rights seriously (SO2)                                          |                        |
|                           | The team treats consumers courteously (SO3)                                             |                        |
| Management Style          | The team's management has a clear vision of its future (MS1)                            |                        |
|                           | The management of the team is outstanding (MS2)                                         |                        |
|                           | The team's management does a great job of running the team (MS3)                        |                        |
| Financial Soundness       | The team is doing well financially (FS1)                                                |                        |
|                           | The team has a strong record of profitability (FS2)                                     |                        |
|                           | The team financially outperforms competitors (FS3)                                      |                        |
| Self-Congruity            | The image of the team is consistent with how I see myself (SC1)                         | Sirgy et al. (2008)    |
|                           | Supporting this team reflects who I am (SC2)                                            |                        |
|                           | People like me support this team (SC3)                                                  |                        |
|                           | Supporting this team is consistent with my self-image (SC4)                             |                        |
| Relationship Satisfaction | I am satisfied with my decision to follow this team (FRS1)                              | Sreejesh et al. (2019) |
|                           | I am content by deciding to follow this team (FRS2)                                     |                        |
|                           | I am happy that I watch the matches of this team (FRS3)                                 |                        |
| Life Satisfaction         | Due to this team's successes, in most ways, my life is close to ideal (LS1)             | Inoue et al. (2017)    |
|                           | The conditions of my life are excellent due to the team's performance (LS2)             |                        |
|                           | Overall, I am satisfied with my life and this team has a role to play (LS3)             |                        |
| Commitment                | If someone makes fun of this team, I feel irritated (COM1)                              |                        |

If I were describing myself, this team would likely be something I would mention (COM2)

If someone verbally attacks this team, I would feel personally attacked (COM3)

If I abandoned this team, I would feel like I had lost a bit of myself (COM4)

Ball & Tasaki (1992)

I have too many positive feelings about this team (COM5)

If someone praises this team, I would feel praised myself (COM6)

Probably, people who know me might sometimes think of this team (COM7)

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Some characteristics of this team come to mind quickly (BE1)

This team is my first choice over other teams (BE2)

I believe that, overall, this team is a high-quality sports team (BE3)

This team is competitive with other teams in the league (BE4)

Watkins (2014)

Brand Equity

I can recognize the name of the team among other teams (BE5)

I consider myself to be loyal to this team (BE6)

I can easily recall the name of this team after seeing its logo (BE7)

I am happy that I watched the matches of this team (BE8)

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