

THE DYNAMICS OF FAN LOYALTIES FROM THE TEAM TO THE SUPERSTAR

BARBU MIHAI CONSTANTIN RĂZVAN

Professor Ph.D. UNIVERSITY OF CRAIOVA, ROMÂNIA

e-mail: mihai.barbu@edu.ucv.ro

DUMITRU ROXANA

Lecturer Ph.D. UNIVERSITY OF CRAIOVA, ROMÂNIA

e-mail: roxana.dumitru@edu.ucv.ro

SANDU VLAD ANTONIUS

Ph.D. Student UNIVERSITY OF CRAIOVA, ROMANIA

e-mail: sandu.vlad.z5m@student.ucv.ro

ȚIU ROBERTO NICUȘOR

Ph.D. Student UNIVERSITY OF CRAIOVA, ROMANIA

e-mail: tiu_roberto@yahoo.com

POPA MARIAN GABRIEL

Lecturer Ph.D. UNIVERSITY OF CRAIOVA, ROMÂNIA

e-mail: gabriel.popa@edu.ucv.ro

DIACONESCU DRAGOȘ LAURENȚIU

Lecturer Ph.D. UNIVERSITY OF CRAIOVA, ROMÂNIA

e-mail: dragos.diaconescu@eud.ucv.ro

PĂȘĂRIN LEONARDO DANIEL

Lecturer Ph.D. UNIVERSITY OF CRAIOVA, ROMÂNIA

e-mail: daniel.pasarin@edu.ucv.ro

COSTIN DAN EUGEN

Associate Professor Ph.D. DUNĂREA DE JOS UNIVERSITY OF GALAȚI, ROMÂNIA

e-mail: dan.costin@ugal.ro

POPESCU MARIUS CĂTĂLIN

Lecturer Ph.D. UNIVERSITY OF CRAIOVA, ROMÂNIA

e-mail: catalin.popescu@edu.ucv.ro

Abstract

This study investigates the dynamics of fan loyalty in professional football, with a specific focus on Universitatea Craiova. Drawing on 150 valid survey responses, the research explores how supporter loyalty shifts along a continuum from team-based identification to superstar-oriented commitment. The conceptual framework integrates symbolic, emotional, and behavioral dimensions, highlighting how loyalty is simultaneously resilient and fragile.

The findings reveal that team-based loyalty remains strongly anchored in history, community identity, and the atmosphere of the stadium. These collective elements provide stability and continuity, reinforcing the argument that clubs function as cultural institutions as well as sporting organizations. At the same time, the survey highlights the growing influence of individual players, particularly among younger supporters. Performance and professionalism emerged as decisive factors, while charisma and media visibility added further appeal, confirming the prominence of the superstar effect in contemporary fandom.

Generational differences were especially evident. Younger respondents demonstrated greater responsiveness to digital engagement and player visibility, while older fans valued professionalism and direct interaction. Periods of poor sporting performance tested loyalty, with nearly half of respondents acknowledging potential disengagement. However, communication, transparency, and reinforcement of local identity were identified as effective strategies to mitigate these risks.

The study contributes to the literature by demonstrating that fan loyalty is best understood as a dynamic process situated between collective and individual orientations. For sport managers, the results suggest that sustainable engagement requires balancing heritage and tradition with digital innovation and player branding, ensuring that superstars enhance rather than erode collective identity.

Keywords: Fan experience management; Official store; Online and offline retail; Fan loyalty, Community identity

JEL classification: M30, M31, M37

1. Introduction

Loyalty has always represented one of the central pillars of the relationship between sports organizations and their fans. In football, in particular, loyalty extends beyond transactional consumption and enters the symbolic domain, where it is closely tied to cultural identity, collective memory, and social belonging. Supporters perceive their connection with the club as an extension of their own identity, embedding the team in community narratives that persist even in moments of failure [12]. For decades, this form of loyalty was predominantly collective, rooted in attachment to the team, its traditions, and its geographical community. However, recent transformations in the global sports industry have complicated this relationship. The rise of the “superstar phenomenon,” fueled by commercialization and media visibility, has created new forms of loyalty directed not towards the club as an institution but towards individual players whose charisma and achievements elevate them to iconic status [15]-[26]. This attachment is also documented in Romanian scholarship, where the history of physical education and sport emphasizes the importance of tradition and community in consolidating fan loyalty [5].

The globalization of football has intensified these dynamics. On one side, clubs remain deeply embedded in local communities, symbolizing tradition, identity, and pride. They embody ‘brands with roots,’ institutions that retain their symbolic capital even in highly commercialized environments [24]. On the other side, the same globalization has transformed certain athletes into transnational icons, whose personal brands often rival those of their clubs [3]. Media exposure, sponsorship agreements, and digital platforms have amplified the visibility of individual players, allowing them to cultivate fan communities that extend beyond traditional club boundaries. The coexistence of these two logics - loyalty to the club and loyalty to individual athletes - has become a central theme in contemporary discussions on fan engagement and retention.

Scholars have long attempted to conceptualize loyalty in ways that capture this complexity. The Psychological Continuum Model outlines how individuals move from simple awareness to full allegiance, highlighting the psychological depth that characterizes fan loyalty [11]. Loyalty encompasses both attitudinal and behavioral dimensions, indicating that commitment cannot be reduced merely to repeated attendance or merchandise purchases [7]. More recently, loyalty has been linked to symbolic consumption, showing that fans attach meaning to their choices beyond rational calculations [8]. Within this framework, engagement is understood as multidimensional, often directed simultaneously at teams and individual athletes [32]. Their research points to the duality of modern fandom, where identification is neither static nor exclusively collective but oscillates according to performance, communication, and cultural context.

The distinction between team-based and player-based loyalty is more than academic. It has concrete implications for how clubs manage their supporters. Team-based loyalty is typically more stable, grounded in the heritage of the club, its achievements, and its symbolic connection with the community. This form of loyalty provides resilience during periods of poor performance, as supporters remain attached to the collective identity rather than immediate results [23]-[25]. By contrast, player-based loyalty is more volatile, centered on the performance, professionalism, and charisma of individual athletes. Global fans often follow star players across clubs, creating shifting allegiances that can weaken institutional identification [19]. When a player leaves, the emotional commitment of part of the fan base may follow him, illustrating the fragility of superstar-centered loyalty. This duality creates a strategic dilemma for managers: while superstars attract attention and generate revenues, they may also destabilize the long-term cohesion of the fan community.

Digital media has reinforced these dynamics by granting athletes direct access to their audiences. Social platforms allow players to curate their own brands, bypassing the club as an intermediary and establishing personal connections with millions of followers worldwide [2]. The emotional authenticity projected through platforms such as Instagram or TikTok creates new forms of intimacy and engagement, which strengthen player-centered loyalty [22]]. Younger generations of fans tend to follow athletes rather than clubs, perceiving them as relatable role models [9]. At the

same time, clubs continue to invest in their own digital strategies, attempting to integrate both team branding and the visibility of players into coherent narratives [20]. The result is often a tension between institutional branding and individual stardom, with consequences for fan attachment and identity. The changes brought about by the sharing economy and new consumption models demonstrate that digitalization has transformed the way sports organizations interact with their audiences [6].

Examples from global sport illustrate the power of this shift. In basketball, figures such as Michael Jordan or LeBron James generated transnational loyalty communities whose attachment to the athlete often superseded team affiliation [26]. In contemporary football, the emergence of global superstars has generated fan communities that sometimes transcend traditional club loyalties. Loyalty, therefore, is not fixed but fluid, negotiated between the collective identity of the club and the personal appeal of the individual. For sports organizations, this fluidity brings both advantages and vulnerabilities: while star players can broaden the fan base, attract sponsors, and enhance international visibility, dependence on them leaves clubs exposed when such figures depart or their influence declines.

The dynamics of fan loyalty in Central and Eastern Europe illustrate both continuity and change. Clubs in this region remain powerful symbols of regional identity, maintaining deep cultural resonance even during periods of sporting difficulty. Universitatea Craiova exemplifies this pattern. Known for its historical legacy and passionate fan base, the club represents more than a sports entity; it symbolizes regional pride and cultural belonging. At the same time, it is not immune to the pressures of globalization and the rise of superstar-driven fandom. In moments of poor performance, supporters may fragment, with some maintaining unconditional loyalty to the club, others adopting conditional loyalty, and a portion shifting their admiration toward individual players perceived as embodying professionalism or sacrifice. This duality makes Craiova a fertile case for examining how loyalty oscillates between collective and individual orientations.

Despite the growing body of literature on fan behavior, several important gaps persist. First, existing research has focused predominantly on Western European and North American contexts, leaving Central and Eastern Europe significantly underexplored. Second, most studies analyze loyalty either toward the team or toward individual athletes, without examining how fans shift dynamically along a continuum connecting these orientations. Third, the role of poor performance in triggering transitions from team-based to player-based loyalty has been insufficiently addressed, particularly in culturally embedded football communities. Finally, few empirical investigations integrate digital engagement, community identity, and the superstar phenomenon into a unified framework capable of capturing the complexity of contemporary fandom.

In response to these gaps, the present study aims to examine how fan loyalty evolves between collective loyalty to the team and individual loyalty to star players, using Universitatea Craiova as a representative case of a traditional Eastern European club. The research seeks to understand both the stability of historical, community-driven loyalty and the growing influence of player-centered identification—especially in an increasingly digital and globalized sports environment.

This study is guided by the following research questions:

RQ1: What are the main drivers of team-based loyalty in the context of a traditional football club?

RQ2: Under what conditions does loyalty shift from the collective identity of the team to the charisma, performance, or visibility of individual superstars?

RQ3: What are the managerial implications of these loyalty dynamics for sustaining long-term fan engagement?

This article offers an original contribution by documenting, for the first time in an Eastern European football context, how fan loyalty shifts between collective identity and the appeal of individual players. At the same time, it puts forward a practical conceptual model that explains these movements during periods of sporting pressure.

This study makes several contributions:

Theoretical contributions

- It conceptualizes fan loyalty as a dynamic continuum rather than a static, binary category.
- It extends the literature on symbolic consumption by demonstrating that loyalty migrates not only across contexts but also across identities (team vs. player).
- It adds empirical evidence from an underexplored geographical area—Eastern Europe—highlighting the cultural specificity of loyalty dynamics.

Practical contributions

- It provides club managers with actionable insights on how to balance institutional identity with the visibility and branding of star players.
- It identifies strategies that maintain fan engagement during periods of poor performance, including transparency, communication, and reinforcement of local identity.
- It highlights generational differences that can inform segmentation and targeted fan engagement strategies.

The remainder of this article is structured as follows: Section 2 reviews the literature; Section 3 describes the methodology; Section 4 presents and discusses the findings; Section 5 offers the conclusions and managerial implications.

2. Literature review

2.1 Conceptualizing fan loyalty

Fan loyalty has been widely studied in the sport management literature, where it is generally understood as a multidimensional construct that combines psychological commitment with behavioral consistency. The Psychological Continuum Model (PCM) describes the progression of sport consumers from awareness to attraction, attachment, and ultimately allegiance [11]. This model shows that loyalty extends beyond repeated purchases or attendance, encompassing deep psychological and symbolic bonds, while lasting commitment requires the alignment of beliefs and actions [7].

Recent studies highlight that loyalty is not static but highly contextual. Fans often consume sports as symbolic goods, attaching meaning to their identification with teams or athletes [8]. In this sense, loyalty is shaped not only by the sporting outcomes but also by identity, rituals, and cultural narratives. Fan engagement should be understood as a dynamic and multidimensional construct, directed simultaneously at organizations and individual athletes [32]. This duality has become increasingly visible in the contemporary sport industry, where team identity coexists with individualized loyalty toward superstars.

Another important theoretical strand is rooted in Social Identity Theory, which explains how individuals define themselves through group membership [27]. In the context of sport, loyalty emerges from the alignment between personal identity and the social identity represented by the club. This distinction helps clarify the coexistence of two complementary mechanisms: affective loyalty, driven by emotional attachment and symbolic meaning, and calculative loyalty, driven by expectations, performance, and perceived benefits [10]. Recent research suggests that these mechanisms operate simultaneously, shaping how fans navigate between stable, tradition-based identification and more flexible, performance-based orientations. Understanding loyalty as both an emotional and evaluative process adds nuance to the traditional behavioral approach and reinforces the need to view fandom as identity-centered rather than consumption-centered.

The reviewed literature shows that fan loyalty is less a fixed state and more a process shaped by context, experience, and personal identification. What seems to matter most is the way supporters give meaning to their connection with the club and the role they assign themselves within its wider narrative. Seen from this angle, loyalty extends beyond observable behaviour and includes the symbolic layers through which fans position themselves in relation to both teams and individual players.

2.2 Team-based loyalty

The traditional form of loyalty in football is rooted in community, history, and collective identity. Fandom in football is deeply embedded in cultural traditions and local attachments, where

supporters see their clubs as symbolic extensions of their communities. Even in moments of poor performance, this connection persists, showing that loyalty is rooted less in results on the field and more in enduring identities that tie individuals to place and history [12]. This form of loyalty is often reinforced by stadium rituals, chants, and the collective atmosphere of match days, which act as social practices that generate solidarity among fans.

Football clubs can be conceptualized as ‘brands with roots,’ whose symbolic capital derives from historical and geographical associations rather than solely from marketing activities [24]. Fan-to-fan interactions at matches and within supporter communities play an important role in strengthening collective loyalty, as the shared experience creates added value that deepens identification with the club [30]. Team-based loyalty is therefore seen as relatively stable, anchored in tradition and cultural belonging rather than immediate sporting success.

The strength of team-based loyalty also derives from what tourism and urban sociology describe as place attachment, the emotional bond individuals form with meaningful locations such as the home city or stadium [18]. Match-day rituals, the symbolic geography of the club, and shared spatial experiences generate a strong sense of community, which reinforces continuity even during periods of instability [31]. This perspective positions the club as a geographical and social anchor, where supporters interpret belonging not only through sport but through the cultural landscape that surrounds it. Such bonds help explain why team-based loyalty remains remarkably resilient despite fluctuations in sporting performance.

The literature indicates that team-based loyalty draws its strength from a sense of continuity that exceeds match outcomes. Supporters remain attached because the club embodies memories, rituals, and shared meanings that hold their community together. In this perspective, loyalty becomes a social anchor, sustained by the feeling that the club represents a familiar and stable point of reference even when performance fluctuates.

2.3 Superstar-based loyalty

While team-based loyalty remains important, the rise of the superstar phenomenon has shifted attention toward individual athletes. Brands become iconic when they resonate with cultural myths and embody aspirational identities, a dynamic that has become increasingly relevant for superstar athletes [15]. The celebrity culture in sport has elevated players into global icons whose personal brands rival or even surpass those of their clubs [26].

International fans often attach themselves to individual players rather than teams, with loyalty transferring with the athlete across different clubs [19]. This creates shifting allegiances that undermine the stability of institutional loyalty. The commercialization of sport has transformed athletes into media figures whose influence extends beyond the field [3]. Superstar-based loyalty tends to be more volatile, as it depends heavily on performance, professionalism, and charisma. While such loyalty can expand the fan base and create new commercial opportunities, it also carries risks, particularly when athletes leave the club or experience a decline in performance.

The emergence of superstar-centered fandom is closely linked to the development of Athlete Brand Equity (ABE), a framework that conceptualizes the athlete as a brand shaped by awareness, associations, perceived quality, and loyalty [4]. Studies show that fans evaluate players in a manner similar to consumer brands, attributing symbolic meaning and aspirational value to individual athletes [4]. In digital environments, this process is reinforced through parasocial relationships, the one-sided emotional bonds that supporters form through mediated exposure to athletes on social platforms [28], originally conceptualized as “intimacy at a distance” [16]. Contemporary research further demonstrates that such parasocial attachment strengthens feelings of connection and authenticity, amplifying the appeal of superstars and facilitating loyalty transfers across clubs [28]. Together, these mechanisms underscore the volatility and mobility of player-centered identification in contemporary sport fandom.

The literature makes clear that loyalty directed toward individual players follows a different rhythm from team-based identification, one that depends heavily on performance, visibility, and personal appeal. For many supporters, the athlete becomes the gateway through which they

experience the sport, especially in digital environments where players communicate directly with their audiences. This type of loyalty can expand a club's reach, but it also exposes supporters to sudden shifts when a player leaves or his influence fades, showing that attachment built around superstars carries both opportunity and vulnerability.

2.4 Digitalization and the new fan experience

The digital revolution has further complicated the dynamics of fan loyalty by reshaping how supporters interact with both clubs and athletes. Social media platforms allow athletes to bypass traditional intermediaries and engage directly with fans, creating a sense of intimacy and authenticity [1]-[2]. Clubs increasingly use social media to manage fan engagement, but fans often perceive greater authenticity in direct interactions with players [22]].

Generational differences are evident, with younger fans showing a stronger tendency to follow athletes rather than clubs, as they view players as relatable figures [9]. In the same context, research on UK football clubs shows that digital branding strategies must integrate institutional identity with the visibility of individual players to ensure coherence [20]. Digitalization, therefore, enhances the visibility of superstars while challenging clubs to balance their narrative with player-centered engagement.

Alongside these developments, digitalization has facilitated the emergence of more advanced forms of Social Customer Relationship Management (S-CRM) and Fan Relationship Management (FRM), through which clubs are able to gather, interpret, and utilize fan data with greater precision [Abeza, G., O'Reilly, N., & Seguin, B. (2013)]. These tools support personalized communication strategies, targeted content dissemination, and timely interaction, allowing organizations to strengthen relational ties with supporters while responding more effectively to their expectations [Abeza, G., O'Reilly, N., & Seguin, B. (2019).]. At the same time, maintaining coherence between institutional branding and the growing prominence of individual athletes requires a unified digital strategy, particularly on social media platforms where visibility and messaging can easily diverge [Parganas, P., Anagnostopoulos, C., & Chadwick, S. (2017).]. Taken together, these developments illustrate a broader managerial transition in which fan loyalty is increasingly shaped not only by emotional identification, but also by digitally mediated experiences that emphasize personalization, consistency, and ongoing engagement.

This shift reflects a broader transformation of fan experience. The immediacy and personalization of digital communication have elevated the status of athletes, making them accessible as role models and influencers. For clubs, this means that managing loyalty now requires navigating between institutional branding and player branding, a task complicated by the unpredictability of digital discourse.

Viewed in light of these developments, digitalization emerges not merely as a new layer of communication but as a force that redefines how supporters distribute their attention and loyalty. The direct and often informal contact offered by social platforms draws many fans closer to individual players, while clubs work to preserve a coherent identity in an environment dominated by personal branding. This tension gives loyalty a more fluid shape, since digital experiences can reinforce identification with the club yet can just as easily shift the emotional center of gravity toward the athlete.

2.5 Loyalty under conditions of poor performance

Periods of poor performance test the stability of fan loyalty and often reveal the fragility of collective identification. Negative emotions associated with performance failures can destabilize loyalty and even lead some fans to disengage. Spectator rage demonstrates that negative emotions associated with performance failures can destabilize loyalty, leading some fans to disengage [13].

These dynamics can be further understood through Hirschman's Exit-Voice-Loyalty framework, which explains how individuals respond to dissatisfaction by choosing between withdrawal, expression, or continued commitment [14]. In a sport context, these responses translate into distinct patterns of fan behavior: exit, reflected in reduced engagement, lower attendance, or

emotional withdrawal—a reaction also documented in studies on disengagement during periods of poor performance [23]; voice, which includes criticism, public protest, or expressions of frustration, often visible in episodes of spectator rage triggered by unmet expectations [13]; and loyalty, expressed through continued support despite disappointment. This framework helps clarify why periods of poor performance generate heterogeneous reactions among supporters and why conditional loyalty becomes more prominent when the perceived gap between expected and actual performance widens. Integrating this perspective sheds light on the psychological tension between patience and disillusionment and helps explain the circumstances under which loyalty shifts toward individual players perceived as embodying effort, authenticity, or professionalism in moments of collective decline.

These studies suggest that loyalty is conditional for many fans: while some maintain unconditional support for the team, others remain committed only when performance standards are met. Conditional loyalty creates an environment in which superstar athletes can capture greater attention, as supporters search for individual figures who embody effort, charisma, or professionalism despite team struggles. This pattern aligns with the view that global fans often identify more with athletes than with clubs, particularly when the latter underperform [19].

The interplay between performance, conditional loyalty, and superstar attraction demonstrates that loyalty is not uniform but distributed across multiple orientations. Understanding this dynamic is essential for clubs aiming to retain a stable fan base in volatile sporting environments.

Taken as a whole, these observations suggest that loyalty in periods of poor performance becomes a space where patience, frustration, and the search for credible anchors intersect. For some supporters, tradition and belonging remain strong enough to sustain collective identity regardless of results. For others, however, decline creates room for a shift toward players who convey effort, authenticity, or professionalism, turning loyalty into a conditional process shaped by how both the club and its athletes respond to these expectations.

2.6 Gaps and conceptual framework

Despite extensive research on fan loyalty, several gaps remain. First, much of the literature has focused on Western European or North American contexts, leaving Central and Eastern European cases relatively underexplored. The importance of cultural and regional identity in shaping fandom has been emphasized, but few empirical studies have explored how these dynamics intersect with the rise of superstar-oriented loyalty in Eastern Europe [12]. Second, research often treats loyalty as a unidirectional attachment, overlooking its dynamic oscillation between team-based and player-based forms. Third, while digital media has been widely studied, less attention has been paid to how it mediates the coexistence of institutional branding and individual stardom.

Another gap concerns the absence of longitudinal research that follows fans over time to observe how loyalty transitions occur in response to performance cycles, player transfers, or digital engagement trends. Although a small number of studies have examined temporal dynamics in sport consumption—such as the longitudinal analysis of team-fan role identity and attendance intentions [29] and the longitudinal validation of season ticket holder satisfaction [21]—the broader literature continues to capture loyalty as a largely static phenomenon. As a result, the temporal evolution of loyalty and the shifting balance between collective identification and superstar appeal remain insufficiently understood. Addressing this gap requires conceptual frameworks capable of capturing both stability and change within supporter behavior.

This study seeks to address these gaps by proposing a conceptual framework that positions loyalty as a dynamic continuum. At one end lies unconditional team-based loyalty, grounded in tradition, brand, and community identity. At the other lies superstar-based loyalty, characterized by conditional attachment dependent on player performance and charisma. Between the two lies conditional loyalty, where fans maintain support for the club but are increasingly vulnerable to shifting allegiance toward individual athletes. This framework will guide the empirical analysis of Universitatea Craiova, a club that exemplifies the tension between collective identity and the attraction of individual players.

Seen from this perspective, the framework does more than organize the existing concepts; it offers a way to read loyalty as a shifting relationship shaped by context, expectation, and the competing forces that act upon supporters. It provides a structure through which the empirical case can be interpreted, but also a lens that helps clarify why the balance between collective identity and individual appeal varies so much across situations and generations. In doing so, it sets the stage for a more nuanced examination of how these forms of loyalty coexist and influence one another within a single club environment.

3. Research methodology

3.1 Research design

The present study employs a quantitative survey-based approach to investigate the dynamics of fan loyalty in professional football. A structured questionnaire was designed to capture both team-based and player-based dimensions of loyalty, with particular attention to conditional loyalty that emerges during periods of weak performance. The focus on Universitatea Craiova was motivated by its strong cultural significance in Romanian football and by the relative lack of empirical studies from Central and Eastern Europe. This single-club case study allows for in-depth analysis of community-specific dynamics, while still offering insights of broader relevance to the literature on sport marketing and fan behavior. This approach is consistent with recent perspectives on marketing and collaborative consumption, which highlight the importance of new digital practices in managing the relationship with fans [6].

3.2 Sample and data collection

Data were collected from 150 supporters of Universitatea Craiova between March and May 2024. The sample was obtained through a combination of online distribution via fan forums and social media groups, as well as face-to-face administration outside the club's stadium. Respondents were required to be at least 18 years old and to self-identify as supporters of the club. The final sample comprised a diverse demographic profile in terms of age, gender, education, and income, ensuring a broad representation of the supporter base. While the sample size is modest, it is sufficient for descriptive statistical analysis and for identifying patterns of loyalty orientation.

3.3 Research instrument

The questionnaire consisted of 25 items structured into four sections:

1. Demographics (age, gender, education, income);
2. Team-based loyalty (attachment to the club, history, stadium atmosphere, identity);
3. Player-based loyalty (admiration for star players, influence of charisma, performance, and professionalism);
4. Conditional loyalty and responses to poor performance (continuity of support, potential disengagement, or transfer of loyalty).

Most items were measured on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree.” In addition, open-ended questions were included to capture fans' qualitative perceptions of loyalty, sources of discontent, and suggestions for improving engagement.

Cronbach's alpha was not calculated, as the study employs a descriptive design; however, all items were adapted from validated scales used in prior sport marketing research, ensuring conceptual consistency.

3.4 Data analysis

Responses were coded and analyzed using descriptive statistics, mean comparisons, and cross-tabulations. The analysis aimed to identify:

- the distribution of loyalty types across demographic groups;
- differences between team-based and player-based orientations;
- the conditions under which loyalty weakens or shifts.

Although the study does not employ advanced inferential techniques such as structural equation modeling due to sample size limitations, the results provide meaningful insights into patterns of fan loyalty. Figures and tables summarize the main findings, offering a clear visualization of differences across groups and loyalty types

3.5 Ethical considerations

Participation in the survey was voluntary, and all respondents were informed about the purpose of the study. No personal identifying information was collected, ensuring confidentiality and anonymity. Ethical standards consistent with academic practice in social sciences were observed.

3.6 Limitations

The study has several inherent limitations that shape how the findings should be interpreted. Most of these constraints relate to the single-club design and the descriptive nature of the analysis. While the study identifies descriptive differences across age groups and fan segments, no inferential statistical tests (e.g., t-test or ANOVA) were conducted due to the limited sample size. Future research should validate these tendencies using larger and statistically powered samples.

The study is guided by a conceptual framework that integrates the literature on fan engagement, satisfaction, and loyalty, while extending it to account for the superstar effect. As illustrated in Figure 1, fan engagement leads to satisfaction with both team-based and player-based experiences. Satisfaction in turn fosters loyalty, which may be directed either toward the collective identity of the club or toward individual players. Ultimately, loyalty generates two major outcomes: economic value (through merchandise sales, ticket purchases, and brand equity) and community identity (through symbolic belonging and collective pride). This research is limited by its modest sample size and geographic concentration, but its descriptive strengths offer a solid foundation for future comparative and multi-club studies.

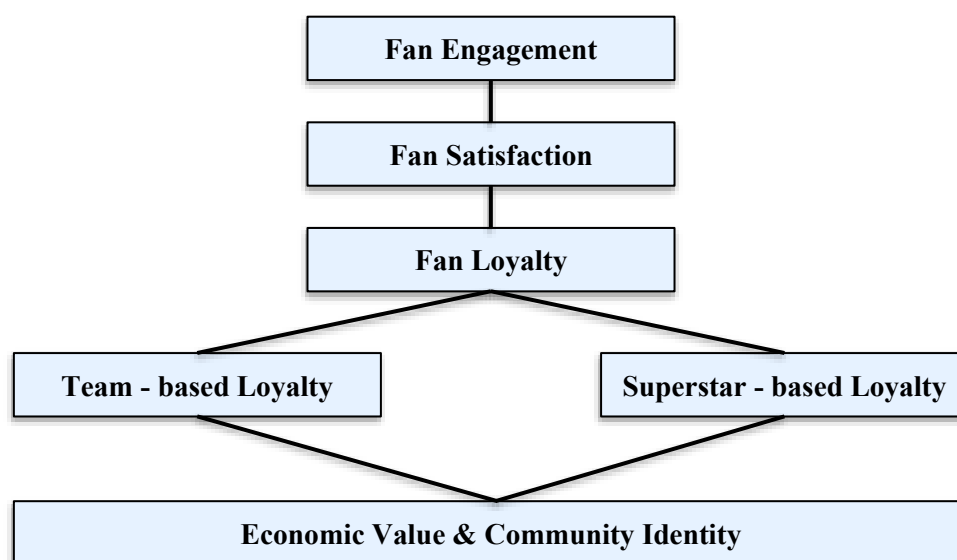


Figure 1. Overall conceptual framework: From engagement to loyalty and outcomes

Source: Authors' elaboration based on Funk & James (2001), Bee & Havitz (2010), Biscaia et al. (2023), and Maderer et al. (2016).

This framework highlights that loyalty is not a uniform construct but a dynamic process situated along a continuum between team-based and player-based orientations. By empirically

examining these dynamics, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of how loyalty operates in contexts characterized by both strong traditions and the rising influence of global superstars.

4. Findings and Discussions

4.1 Demographic profile of respondents

The survey generated 150 valid responses, covering a diverse spectrum of Universitatea Craiova supporters. As shown in Table 1, the majority of respondents were male (62%), while female supporters represented a significant minority (38%). Age distribution was concentrated in the 18–34 group (63%), which reflects the younger, digitally active fan base. At the same time, almost one fifth of respondents were above 45 years of age, indicating the continued presence of traditional supporters within the community.

Variable	Category	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	93	62.0
	Female	57	38.0
Age	18–24	44	29.3
	25–34	51	34.0
	35–44	27	18.0
	45 and above	28	18.7
Education	High school	39	26.0
	Bachelor’s degree	72	48.0
	Postgraduate	39	26.0
Monthly income	Low (< 3000 RON)	33	22.0
	Medium (3000–6000)	80	53.3
	High (> 6000 RON)	37	24.7

Table 1. Demographic profile of respondents

Source: Authors’ survey.

This demographic profile suggests that the fan base of Universitatea Craiova combines both modern and traditional characteristics. Younger and more educated supporters are more inclined to engage with the club through digital channels and online platforms, while older and lower-income fans remain more strongly attached to the physical experience of the stadium and face-to-face interactions. This heterogeneity aligns with previous research emphasizing the need for differentiated marketing strategies to address diverse fan segments [17].

4.2 Team-based loyalty

Team-based loyalty emerged as one of the strongest dimensions in the responses. Supporters consistently highlighted the importance of the club’s history, the atmosphere of the stadium, and the symbolic connection to community identity. These factors demonstrate the resilience of traditional loyalty, which remains a central pillar of Universitatea Craiova’s supporter culture.

Factor	Strongly disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Neutral (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly agree (%)	Mean score
Club history and tradition	1.3	2.7	6.0	48.0	42.0	4.3
Stadium atmosphere	2.0	3.3	10.0	50.0	34.7	4.1
Community identity	1.3	4.0	12.0	47.3	35.4	4.1
Emotional attachment to the club	0.7	3.3	8.0	49.3	38.7	4.2

Table 2. Factors of team-based loyalty

Source: Authors' survey.

The results reveal that loyalty to Universitatea Craiova is primarily anchored in symbolic and collective dimensions. Respondents consistently rated history, stadium atmosphere, and community identity at high levels, indicating that these elements remain the strongest foundations of team-based attachment. The high mean scores across all four indicators confirm that supporters view the club not only as a sporting institution but also as an essential component of their cultural belonging.

These findings resonate with the concept of 'brands with roots,' which suggests that clubs derive value from cultural and geographical embeddedness, and they confirm that football loyalty is often grounded in social practices and symbolic belonging rather than immediate outcomes [12]-[24]. For club managers, this underlines the importance of maintaining and promoting narratives around history and community as strategic assets that reinforce resilience during periods of underperformance.

4.3 Superstar-based loyalty

Alongside attachment to the club, many respondents emphasized the influence of individual players in shaping their loyalty. Performance, professionalism, and charisma were the main drivers of player-based loyalty, reflecting the growing prominence of the superstar effect in contemporary football.

Factor	Strongly disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Neutral (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly agree (%)	Mean score
Player performance	0.7	2.0	8.0	51.3	38.0	4.2
Professionalism and effort	0.7	2.7	10.7	50.0	36.0	4.2
Player charisma	2.0	6.7	18.0	47.3	26.0	3.9
Media visibility	3.3	8.0	20.0	45.3	23.4	3.8

Table 3. Factors of player-based loyalty

Source: Authors' survey.

The table shows that performance and professionalism achieved the highest average ratings (4.2), indicating that fans place strong value on effort and commitment, even when results are inconsistent. Charisma and media visibility were moderately important, suggesting that while personal appeal contributes to loyalty, it is not sufficient without demonstrable professionalism.

Generational differences further nuance this picture. As illustrated in Figure 2, younger respondents (18–24 years old) reported higher satisfaction with the online presence and charisma of players, while older fans (45+) placed greater emphasis on professionalism and personal interactions in the stadium.

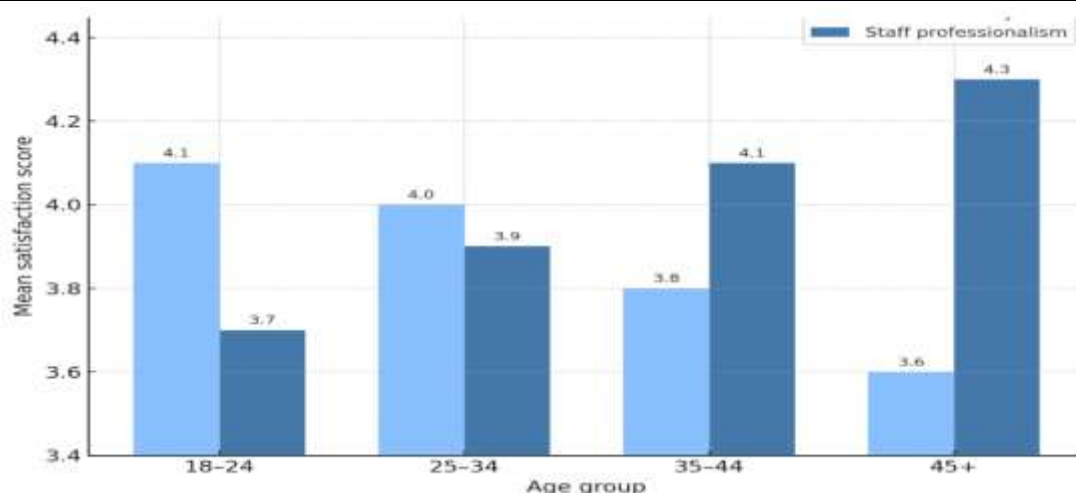


Figure 2. Differences in satisfaction by age group

Source: Authors' survey.

These results confirm that younger supporters are more likely to follow individual players, while older segments remain attached to collective dimensions [19]. The evidence also reflects the argument that the commercialization of sport elevates athletes into media figures, creating multiple forms of loyalty [3]. For Universitatea Craiova, this suggests that engaging younger fans requires strategic use of digital platforms and player visibility, while preserving personal authenticity and professionalism to sustain traditional supporters.

4.4 Fan loyalty under poor performance

Periods of weak sporting performance represent a critical test for fan loyalty. The survey explored how supporters react when the team fails to meet expectations and what factors contribute to weakened identification.

Cause	Percentage of respondents (%)
Continuous poor performance	46.0
Lack of professionalism among players	28.0
Poor management/administration	17.3
External distractions (media, politics)	8.7

Table 4. Causes of weakened loyalty

Source: Authors' survey.

Nearly half of the respondents (46%) indicated that persistent poor performance was the most significant factor undermining their loyalty. Another 28% highlighted a lack of professionalism among players, suggesting that attitudes and effort matter almost as much as results. Administrative failures and external distractions were less frequently cited, though they still play a role in shaping perceptions.

To complement these findings, respondents were asked to identify solutions that could strengthen loyalty during challenging periods.

Suggested solution	Percentage of respondents (%)
Improved communication with fans	32.0
Greater transparency in management	25.3
Emphasis on local identity and tradition	23.4
Enhanced fan engagement initiatives	19.3

Table 5. Suggested solutions for maintaining loyalty

Fans emphasized the need for stronger communication (32%) and transparency (25.3%), indicating that trust in the club's leadership is essential for sustaining loyalty. Equally important is reinforcing local identity (23.4%), which reflects the concept of 'brands with roots' [24]. Engagement initiatives, though cited by fewer respondents, also play a role in mitigating discontent.

These findings show that performance-related frustrations can destabilize loyalty, but they also demonstrate that clubs have tools to counteract disengagement [13]. By reinforcing authenticity, communication, and identity, management can transform fragile loyalty into resilient commitment, even in periods of sporting decline.

4.5 Dynamics from team to superstar

The results confirm that loyalty among Universitatea Craiova supporters is not a static construct but a dynamic process situated along a continuum between attachment to the club and admiration for individual players. The coexistence of these orientations was particularly visible in the responses to open-ended questions, where many fans emphasized that while they remain emotionally tied to the team, their enthusiasm and identification are increasingly influenced by the efforts and charisma of specific athletes.

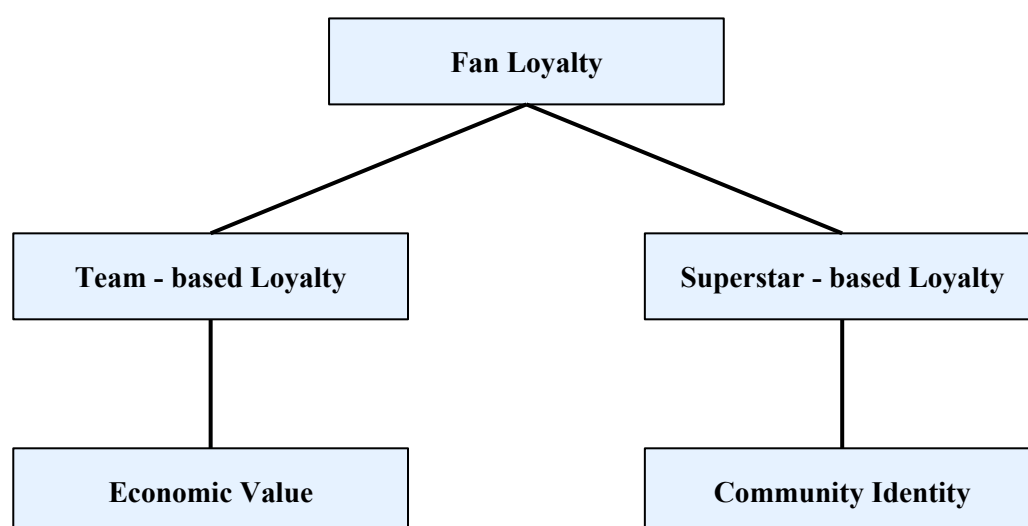


Figure 3. Dynamics of loyalty: Shifts between team-based and superstar-based orientations
Source: Authors' elaboration based on survey data.

The figure illustrates how loyalty can shift from team-based attachment toward superstar-oriented identification, particularly in periods of poor performance. At the center of this process lies conditional loyalty, where commitment to the club is maintained only as long as certain expectations - such as professionalism, effort, and results - are met. When these conditions are not fulfilled, fans are more likely to redirect their loyalty toward individual players who are perceived as embodying resilience, charisma, or authenticity.

While Figure 1 presents the overall conceptual path from engagement to outcomes, Figure 3 zooms in on the internal dynamics of loyalty, highlighting how support can shift between team-based and player-centered orientations, especially under conditions of poor performance.

At the same time, the process is not unidirectional. Star players can also reinforce collective loyalty by becoming symbols of the club's identity, showing how the two orientations can complement each other. This dynamic confirms that iconic figures can serve as carriers of brand identity and that loyalty can migrate with athletes [15]-[19]. For Universitatea Craiova, it underscores the importance of balancing the promotion of individual athletes with the preservation of collective narratives, ensuring that superstars reinforce rather than fragment the community.

4.6 Comparative interpretation

The findings of this study confirm and extend previous international research on the dynamics of fan loyalty. First, the strength of team-based loyalty observed among Universitatea Craiova supporters aligns with the view that clubs function as ‘brands with roots,’ deeply embedded in local culture and community identity [24]. The importance of history, stadium atmosphere, and collective rituals reflects fandom as a cultural practice and confirms that local identity remains a cornerstone of football attachment [12].

At the same time, the survey revealed substantial evidence of superstar-based loyalty, particularly among younger fans. This finding aligns with studies showing that global supporters often follow athletes across clubs and with analyses of iconic brands, while the importance of performance and professionalism in sustaining loyalty reflects the dual model of attitudinal and behavioral commitment, demonstrating that perceptions of effort and authenticity are integral to fan allegiance [7]-[15]-[19].

The generational differences captured in Figure 2 highlight a broader transformation, as younger fans raised in digital environments are more likely to engage with players directly through online platforms [9]. This trend reflects the growing autonomy of athlete branding, a phenomenon examined in recent studies [2]-[22]]. In this sense, the results show that although collective identification remains strong, digitalization amplifies the superstar effect and contributes to the fragmentation of loyalty across different age groups.

The analysis of loyalty under poor performance (Tables 4 and 5) provides additional nuance. Persistent failures undermine loyalty by triggering frustration and dissatisfaction [13]. Yet, the responses also indicate that fans value communication, transparency, and community identity as buffers against disengagement. These results echo the finding that engagement is context-dependent and can be sustained through effective management practices even during periods of decline [17].

Finally, the dynamic relationship illustrated in Figure 3 reflects the dual nature of loyalty. While unconditional supporters remain tied to the club, conditional fans oscillate between team and player orientations. This finding expands earlier work on symbolic consumption by showing that meaning is not attached exclusively to the club but can also migrate to individual [8]. At the same time, the study confirms that star players can reinforce collective loyalty when they embody professionalism and align with the club’s values [15].

Taken together, these findings underscore that fan loyalty is both resilient and fragile: resilient when anchored in tradition and identity, fragile when exposed to prolonged underperformance or excessive reliance on superstars. For football clubs, especially in Central and Eastern Europe, the challenge is to maintain balance. The evidence suggests that cultivating heritage, community values, and transparency in management provides stability, while leveraging superstars and digital platforms ensures relevance among younger audiences. Integrating these two dimensions is essential for sustaining both economic value and community identity in an increasingly globalized sport industry.

Seen from a broader perspective, the evidence reveals how loyalty moves between different forms and generations, preparing the ground for the conclusions that follow.

5. Conclusions

This study examined the dynamics of fan loyalty in professional football, focusing on the case of Universitatea Craiova. By analyzing survey responses from 150 supporters, it explored how loyalty oscillates between collective attachment to the team and admiration for individual players. The findings demonstrate that loyalty is not a uniform or static construct but a dynamic process influenced by tradition, performance, professionalism, and media visibility.

The study contributes to the advancement of sport marketing theory by clarifying the dual pathways of modern fan loyalty—team-based and superstar-based—within a Central and Eastern European context, a region underrepresented in existing research. It further enhances the literature by conceptualizing loyalty as a dynamic continuum shaped by conditional loyalty, performance expectations, and digital engagement.

From a managerial perspective, the findings support football clubs in designing differentiated engagement strategies aligned with fan profiles, ranging from traditional supporters anchored in history and community identity to younger, digitally oriented fans drawn to individual players. The study provides actionable guidance for communication, transparency, and branding practices that stabilize loyalty during periods of poor performance.

The analysis of team-based loyalty showed that history, community identity, and the atmosphere of the stadium remain central anchors of attachment. These findings are consistent with studies that emphasize the cultural and geographical roots of fandom [12]-[24]. The fact that tradition and community scored highest in the survey indicates that even in an era of commercialization, collective loyalty continues to provide resilience.

At the same time, the results revealed the strength of superstar-based loyalty, especially among younger segments. Performance and professionalism appeared as decisive factors, while charisma and media visibility, although less dominant, still played a meaningful role. This observation echoes earlier discussions about the growing influence of the superstar phenomenon in football [15]-[26]. Moreover, Figure 2 underlines the existence of generational differences: younger fans proved more receptive to player-centered branding and online interaction, whereas older supporters tended to value professionalism and the personal qualities of athletes.

The section on loyalty under poor performance reinforced the fragility of commitment when results fall below expectations. Nearly half of respondents indicated that persistent underperformance would weaken their loyalty, while professionalism and effort emerged as critical mitigating factors. Importantly, respondents also highlighted the role of communication, transparency, and local identity in maintaining trust. This suggests that loyalty is conditional for a substantial segment of fans, but can be stabilized through effective management.

The conceptual framework proposed in this study (Figure 3) illustrates the dynamic interplay between team-based and superstar-based loyalty. Conditional loyalty represents the pivot point where shifts occur, influenced by external factors such as results, professionalism, and media visibility. This model expands existing literature by demonstrating that loyalty operates along a continuum and that clubs must actively manage the balance between collective and individual dimensions.

From a managerial standpoint, several implications emerge:

1. Preserve and promote tradition. The evidence shows that history and community identity are the strongest anchors of loyalty. Clubs must therefore invest in storytelling, heritage branding, and cultural events that reinforce collective belonging.
2. Leverage superstars strategically. Individual players attract younger audiences and enhance visibility, but reliance on them must be carefully managed. Clubs should promote athletes who embody professionalism and align with club values, ensuring that stars reinforce rather than undermine collective identity.
3. Enhance communication and transparency. Fans identified openness and dialogue as critical solutions during times of poor performance. Regular communication, transparent governance, and responsiveness to supporters' concerns are essential for maintaining trust.
4. Segment fan engagement strategies. Generational differences indicate the need for differentiated approaches. Younger fans respond to digital campaigns and player visibility, while older fans value authenticity and personal interaction. Marketing strategies should therefore be tailored accordingly.
5. Balance economic and social objectives. Loyalty generates both financial revenues (through merchandise, tickets, and sponsorships) and cultural legitimacy (through identity and community pride). Sustainable management requires integrating these objectives rather than privileging short-term commercial gains.
6. Invest in fan engagement initiatives. Beyond performance, initiatives that involve fans in decision-making or provide interactive experiences can strengthen bonds. These initiatives transform passive supporters into active participants in the club's identity.

The limitations of the study must also be acknowledged. The focus on a single club restricts generalizability, although it provides depth in capturing community-specific dynamics. The sample

size, while sufficient for descriptive analysis, does not allow for advanced statistical modeling. Future research could expand by comparing multiple clubs, analyzing longitudinal changes in loyalty, or employing experimental designs to test how fans respond to specific managerial interventions.

In conclusion, the findings suggest that loyalty in football is best understood as a dynamic continuum between team and superstar orientations. For Universitatea Craiova and similar clubs, the challenge is to integrate both dimensions: preserving collective heritage while adapting to the realities of digital media and global celebrity culture. By striking this balance, clubs can ensure not only short-term engagement but also the long-term sustainability of fan loyalty, which remains the cornerstone of their cultural and economic vitality. Beyond its local significance, the analysis offers insights that resonate with broader international debates on how football clubs navigate the tension between collective identity and the global appeal of individual stars.

Acknowledgment

All authors contributed equally to this research.

6. Bibliography

- [1] Abeza, G., O'Reilly, N., & Seguin, B. (2013). Relationship marketing and social media in professional sport. *International Journal of Sport Communication*, 6(2), 120–142. <https://doi.org/10.1123/ijsc.6.2.120>
- [2] Abeza, G., O'Reilly, N., & Seguin, B. (2019). Social media in relationship marketing: The perspective of professional sport managers in the MLB, NBA, NFL, and NHL. *Communication & Sport*, 7(1), 80–109. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2167479517740343>
- [3] Andrews, D. L., & Jackson, S. J. (2001). *Sports stars: The cultural politics of sporting celebrity*. London: Routledge.
- [4] Arai, A., Ko, Y. J., & Ross, S. (2014). *Branding athletes: Exploration and conceptualization of athlete brand image*. *Journal of Sport Management*, 28(2), 98–109. <https://doi.org/10.1123/jsm.2012-0082>
- [5] Barbu, M. (2004). *Istoria educației fizice și sportului*. Craiova: Editura Universitaria.
- [6] Barbu, M. C. R., Barbu, C. M., & Diaconescu, D. L. (2020). Marketing developments in the sharing economy. In: R. Pamfilie, V. Dinu, L. Tăchiciu, D. Pleșea, C. Vasiliu (Eds.): *6th BASIQ International Conference on New Trends in Sustainable Business and Consumption*, Messina, Italy, 4-6 June 2020. Bucharest: ASE, pp. 97-104. (international databases: Web of Science™ Core Collection) http://conference.ase.ro/pdf/BASIQ_2020_Conference_proceedings.pdf
- [7] Bee, C. C., & Havitz, M. E. (2010). Exploring the relationship between involvement, fan attraction, psychological commitment and behavioural loyalty in a sports spectator context. *International Journal of Sports Marketing & Sponsorship*, 11(2), 140–157. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJSMS-11-02-2010-B005>
- [8] Biscaia, R., Yoshida, M., & Kim, Y. (2023). Service quality and its effects on consumer outcomes: A meta-analytic review in spectator sport. *European Sport Management Quarterly*, 23(1), 65–92. <https://doi.org/10.1080/16184742.2021.1997037>
- [9] Clavio, G., & Walsh, P. (2014). Dimensions of social media utilization among college sport fans. *Communication & Sport*, 2(3), 261–281. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2167479513480355>
- [10] Dick, A. S., & Basu, K. (1994). Customer loyalty: Toward an integrated conceptual framework. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 22(2), 99–113.
- [11] Funk, D. C., & James, J. (2001). *The Psychological Continuum Model: A conceptual framework for understanding an individual's psychological connection to sport*. *Sport Management Review*, 4(2), 119–150. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S1441-3523\(01\)70072-1](https://doi.org/10.1016/S1441-3523(01)70072-1)
- [12] Giulianotti, R. (2015). *Sport: A critical sociology* (2nd ed.). Cambridge: Polity Press.

- [13] Grove, S. J., Pickett, G. M., Jones, S. A., & Dorsch, M. J. (2012). Spectator Rage as the Dark Side of Engaging Sport Fans: Implications for Services Marketers. *Journal of Service Research*, 15(1), 3-20. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1094670511428166>
- [14] Hirschman, A. O. (1970). *Exit, voice, and loyalty: Responses to decline in firms, organizations, and states*. Harvard University Press.
- [15] Holt, D. B. (2004). *How brands become icons: The principles of cultural branding*. Boston: Harvard Business School Press.
- [16] Horton, D., & Richard Wohl, R. (1956). Mass Communication and Para-Social Interaction: Observations on Intimacy at a Distance. *Psychiatry*, 19(3), 215–229. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00332747.1956.11023049>
- [17] Koenig-Lewis, N., Asaad, Y., & Palmer, A. (2018). *Sports fan engagement: Investigating antecedents and consequences*. *Journal of Strategic Marketing*, 26(1), 1–17. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0965254X.2017.1293130>
- [18] Kyle, G., Graefe, A., Manning, R., & Bacon, J. (2004). Effect of Activity Involvement and Place Attachment on Recreationists' Perceptions of Setting Density. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 36(2), 209–231. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00222216.2004.11950020>
- [19] Maderer, D., Holtbrügge, D., & Schuster, T. (2016). *Professional football players as brand endorsers: An empirical analysis of the German market*. *International Journal of Sports Marketing and Sponsorship*, 17(2), 147–163. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJSMS-02-2016-005>
- [20] McCarthy, J., Rowley, J., Ashworth, C. J., & Pioch, E. (2014). *Managing brand presence through social media: The case of UK football clubs*. *Internet Research*, 24(2), 181–204. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IntR-08-2012-0154>
- [21] McDonald, H., Karg, A. J., & Vocino, A. (2012). Measuring season ticket holder satisfaction: Rationale, scale development and longitudinal validation. *Sport Management Review*, 16(1), 41–53. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.smr.2012.05.003>
- [22] Parganas, P., Anagnostopoulos, C., & Chadwick, S. (2017). “You’ll never tweet alone”: *Managing sports brands through social media*. *Journal of Brand Management*, 24(2), 123–138. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41262-016-0001-5>
- [23] Popescu, M.C., Costin, D.E., Păsărin, L.D., Popa, M.G., Filip, D., Sandu, V.A., & Barbu, M.C.R. (2024). Maintaining Fan Engagement in Cases of Low Sports Performance. *Annals of the „Constantin Brâncuși” University of Târgu Jiu, Economy Series*, 5, 175-183.
- [24] Richelieu, A., & Desbordes, M. (2009). *Football teams going international – The strategic leverage of branding*. *Journal of Sponsorship*, 2(4), 317–330.
- [25] Sandu, V.A., Popescu, M.C., Costin, D.E., Păsărin, L.D., & Popa, M.G. (2024). Exploring the factors that can stimulate fan engagement in conditions of low sports performance. *Annals of the „Constantin Brâncuși” University of Târgu Jiu, Economy Series*, 6, 282-290.
- [26] Smart, B. (2005). *The sport star: Modern sport and the cultural economy of sporting celebrity*. London: Sage.
- [27] Tajfel, H., & Turner, J. C. (1979). *An integrative theory of intergroup conflict*. In W. G. Austin & S. Worchel (Eds.), *The social psychology of intergroup relations* (pp. 33–47). Monterey, CA: Brooks/Cole.
- [28] Thomson, M. (2006). Human Brands: Investigating Antecedents to Consumers' Strong Attachments to Celebrities. *Journal of Marketing*, 70(3), 104-119. <https://doi.org/10.1509/jmkg.70.3.104>
- [29] Trail, G. T., Anderson, D. F., & Lee, D. (2017). A longitudinal study of team-fan role identity on self-reported attendance behavior and future intentions. *Journal of Amateur Sport*, 3(1). <https://doi.org/10.17161/jas.v0i0.5712>
- [30] Uhrich, S. (2014). *Exploring customer-to-customer value co-creation platforms in retailing*. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 21(4), 554–560. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2014.04.002>

- [31] Warner, S., Kerwin, S., & Walker, M. (2013). Examining Sense of Community in Sport: Developing the Multidimensional ‘SCS’ Scale. *Journal of Sport Management*, 27(5), 349-362. Retrieved Nov 18, 2025, from <https://doi.org/10.1123/jsm.27.5.349>
- [32] Yoshida, M., Gordon, B., Nakazawa, M., & Biscaia, R. (2014). *Conceptualization and measurement of fan engagement: Empirical evidence from a professional sport context*. *Journal of Sport Management*, 28(4), 399–417. <https://doi.org/10.1123/jsm.2013-0199>