Antecedents of satisfaction and loyalty in different spectator tribes in a football context

Abstract

Purpose: This study focuses on spectator tribes extending existing research in a football context, exploring how image and service quality influence satisfaction and loyalty and whether behaviors differ depending on age, gender, and emotional involvement..

Design/methodology/approach: Spectators who attended Barcelona Football Club home La Liga matches in Camp Nou stadium during the 2017-2018 season were sampled and surveyed. Partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) was used to fit our model, and pathmox analysis was used to explore the simultaneous effects of age, gender, and involvement, and to identify key determinants shaping differences between spectators.

Findings: Image and service quality both influence spectator satisfaction and loyalty, indicating that a service quality–image–satisfaction–loyalty chain may be operational in the football setting. Satisfaction and loyalty are associated differently with three tribes: a non-passionate tribe characterized by low involvement, and younger and older passionate tribes composed of involved spectators aged <30 and >30 years old, respectively.

Originality: Our findings underline that image and service quality are both crucial to football spectator satisfaction and loyalty, and that involvement and age define different consumer tribes as potential targets for marketing purposes.

Keywords: sport management; spectator satisfaction; PLS-SEM; involvement; consumer tribes; heterogeneity

1. Introduction

Customer loyalty and satisfaction have been identified as key determinants in retaining spectators, improving profitability, and guaranteeing the sustainability of sport events (Ahrholdt *et al.,* 2017). The importance of enhancing satisfaction and loyalty has been emphasized in the sports literature (Duan and Liu, 2020; Howat and Assaker, 2016), with several studies investigating their possible antecedents and outcomes (Duan and Liu, 2020; Yun *et al.,*2020; Ahrholdt et al., 2017).

Research evidence indicates service quality (Ahrholdt *et al.*, 2017; Çevik and Simsek 2019) and club image (Yun *et al.*, 2020; Beccarini and Ferrand, 2006) to be important motivational factors to attend football games that ultimately enhance satisfaction and therefore loyalty. These are, in fact, among the few constants in spectator perceptions that sports marketers can directly influence in terms of building a stable and loyal spectator base (Alonso-Dos-Santos *et al.*, 2018; Ashraf *et al.*, 2018; Biscaia *et al.*, 2016).

Satisfaction and loyalty are likely to vary according to different sources of heterogeneity, e.g., who accompanies someone to the event (Alexandris and Tsiotsou, 2012; Trail et al., 2016), the fan category (Pick and Gillet, 2019), sociodemographic differences (age and gender) (Lee et al., 2011; Schirmer et al., 2018), and differences in affective variables such as emotional involvement with the team (i.e., more/less passionate fans who attend matches regularly/sporadically) (Beaton et al., 2011; Alexandris and Tsiotsou, 2012). While the impact of heterogeneity factors on satisfaction and loyalty has been investigated in the sport literature (Lock et al., 2012; McDonald et al., 2018; Koo and Lee, 2019), virtually no studies consider their simultaneous impact on the relationship between quality, image, satisfaction, and loyalty, nor identify the most important determinants shaping differences between spectators.

In sports contexts, the combination of different sources of heterogeneity may result in heterogenous groups emotionally connected by similar consumption values and usages, who express their identity using the social linking value of a product or a service. While such groups are commonly defined as 'consumer tribes', we will refer to 'spectator tribes' given that our analysis investigates spectators.

We contribute both to the customer satisfaction and loyalty and the marketing literature by extending existing research on the well-established quality–satisfaction–loyalty chain by demonstrating, for a football club setting, that (1) image and quality both influence satisfaction and loyalty and that (2) behaviors differ according to consumer tribes, differentiated by age, gender and degree of emotional involvement. Thus, we introduce a novel heterogeneity and tribal approach to the sports spectator behavior field.

2. Literature review and hypotheses development

2.1. Relationship between service quality, image, satisfaction, and loyalty in the sports context

Since customer satisfaction is a significant predictor of the intention to attend future sports events, it acts as a key antecedent of loyalty (Ahrholdt et al., 2017). One of the main models at the national level to understand the relationships among these constructs is the Customer Satisfaction Index (CSI), ECSI in Europe (European Union, ECSI Technical Committee, 1998). The structure of the CSI model was created upon well-recognized theories on consumer behaviour, customer satisfaction and product and service quality (Fornell et al., 1996). The model is used to understand the cause and effects that stretch

from the antecedents of customer satisfaction - expectations, image, perceived quality and value – to the effects of customer satisfaction – customer loyalty and customer complaints. The evident power of this method is that it goes away from the direct consumption experience and enables the analysis of the sources and outcomes of consumer satisfaction. In fact, the central purpose of the model is to explain customer loyalty.

In the sports context, service quality has been identified as a vital antecedent of customer satisfactionand, while numerous studies support this relationship (Ahrholdt *et al.*, 2017; Çevik and Simsek 2019), little empirical research has been conducted aimed at understanding the relationship between service quality, image and satisfaction as joint antecedents of loyalty. Supporting these relationships, a recent empirical study by Jeong and Kim (2019) conclude that it is meaningful to include quality in image-satisfaction-loyalty models of sports events. Accordingly, we propose the following hypotheses:

> *H1: Greater perceived quality of stadium services will enhance a football club's image.*

> *H2: Greater perceived quality of stadium services will enhance football spectator satisfaction.*

Although customer satisfaction is a main goal of all organizations, merely satisfied customers might not necessarily be loyal (Dolnicar *et al.*, 2015). While club perceived image might be a critical antecedent of loyalty, along with satisfaction, the combination of both has not been sufficiently investigated (Prayag *et al.*, 2017). Following Yun *et al.* (2020), team brand image in sports can be defined as "the cumulative product of brand associations in the sport consumer's mind" that includes a multitude of attributes product and no product related (e.g. coach, success, star players, logo and colors, club history and

tradition). Image is certainly becoming a major concern for many clubs, as documented by various authors (Alhaddad, 2015; Ghani *et al.*, 2018; Nishio *et al.*, 2016).

Indeed, it has been recognized that stakeholders (fans, season ticketholders, sporadic spectators, journalists, sponsors, etc.) may change their behavior depending on their perceived image of a sports club. Following this line of reasoning, some authors believe that image has the potential to impact on consumer behavior, satisfaction, and thus, on loyalty (Alonso-Dos-Santos *et al.*, 2018; Ashraf *et al.*, 2018). We therefore propose the following hypotheses:

H3: An enhanced image of a football club will lead to greater spectator satisfaction.

H4: An enhanced image of a football club will lead to greater spectator loyalty.

Findings that relate satisfaction and post-consumption behaviors like loyalty have also been consistently reported for sporting contexts (Yoshida and James, 2010); in particular, a significant positive relationship has been found between customer satisfaction, service quality perceptions, and loyalty (Ahrholdt *et al.*, 2017; 2019; Woratschek *et al.* 2020). Loyalty as an outcome means that a customer is likely to speak positively about an organization and recommend its products or services to other potential customers (Akamavi *et al.*, 2015). Here we understand loyalty to be the outcome of customer satisfaction with a sports organization. Accordingly, we hypothesize that:

H5: Spectator satisfaction with a sports event will enhance their loyalty.

2.2. Spectator tribes

Studies of the impact of consumer tribes in the development of marketing theory remain underdeveloped in the field of sports marketing (Cova and Cova, 2002; Cova and Salle, 2008; Gronroos, 2006). Consumer tribes differ from historical tribes in that

membership is based on emotional rather than rational factors (Cova and Cova, 2002). Connections in a tribe of consumers are between individuals sharing the same passion and with similar beliefs, values, or customs (Schiffman *et al.*, 2008; Goulding *et al.*, 2013). Because the tribal approach focuses on social groups as opposed to individual consumers (Diaz *et al.*, 2020), goods and services are considered to be valuable only if they enable connections between consumers sharing passions or interests; as Cova (1997, p. 307) wrote, "the link is more important than the thing". Consumer tribes are therefore self-formed groups that have meaning and relevance for their members. Involvement with a tribe is an expression of self-identity, so consumer tribe members share not only moral values and opinions, but also values and preferences. Like market segmentation, this represents a targeting opportunity for marketers.

 Note that the term 'brand community' is not synonymous with consumer tribe; as point out by Mitchell and Imrie (2011, p. 41), a brand community is established around a particular brand or product (Brownlie et *al.*, 2007; Burgh-Woodman and Brace-Govan, 2007). The consumer tribe may, in fact, actually diminish brand equity, in a similar way to a consumer activist placing themselves in opposition to mainstream consumers (Kozinets and Handelman, 2004).

From a marketing perspective, the main benefit of considering consumer tribes is recognition of the important impact of social influences on individual consumption decisions (Bagozzi, 2000). Theoretical developments in tribal marketing use Bagozzi's (2000) concept of intentional social action to link social context and consumption in order to understand 'real' consumers.

In recent years, researchers into sports consumer behavior have argued that the relationship between customer satisfaction and loyalty is moderated by several variables, including sociodemographic, psychological, and relational characteristics (Schirmer *et al.*,

2018). However, despite recent progress, there is a surprising lack of research into the more passional or emotional effects that moderate pathways from other customer-related constructs to loyalty. To the best of our knowledge, our study is among the first to simultaneously examine demographic and emotional factors that may strengthen or weaken the relationship between constructs in relation to sports events.

We relate key demographic characteristics traditionally used to group consumers (gender and age) with a more emotional aspect (emotional involvement) constituting the base of tribe connectivity.

2.3. Heterogeneity factors shaping tribes

According to Beaton *at al.* (2011), involvement is a complex construct that includes multiples attributes, such as commitment, engagement, and attachment (Funk and James 2001), or measurable facets, including (for the sports context) enjoyment in attending events, the centrality of a team or player to an individual's lifestyle (Stevens and Rosenberger, 2012), and event attendance frequency (Arnett and Dennis, 2000). Involvement can be defined as identification, reflecting perceived psychological connectedness between individuals and their team (Ashforth and Mael, 1989).

Different measures of involvement have been proposed in the literature, including scales, e.g., the Psychological Continuum Model (PCM) developed by Funk and James (2001), and spectator classifications in groups (e.g., McDonald *et al.*, 2015; Trail *et al.*, 2016).

We classify involvement considering spectator attachment to the team combined with frequency of attendance at team sports events, labelled in terms of intensity. Thus, strong,

moderate, and slight involvement reflect greater to lesser passionate attachment to the team, and greater to lesser frequency of attendance at sports events. Strong involvement, for instance, is reflected in season ticketholders who unfailingly attend all team events, whereas for slight involvement is reflected in individuals for whom the team is far less central to their lives.

Concerning the effect of involvement on service quality, image, satisfaction, and loyalty, sports research shows that service quality and customer satisfaction are key drivers behind customer involvement and loyalty (Avourdiadou and Theodorakis, 2014; Biscaia *et al.*, 2016). Thakur (2019) further shows that the effect of satisfaction on loyalty is stronger among more involved customers. It has also been suggested that fans and season ticketholders identify more with their club than sporadic supporters like tourists (Lock *et al.*, 2012).

Research also suggests that the relationship between quality, image, satisfaction, and loyalty is moderated by age (Avuourdiadou and Theodorakis, 2014; Yoshida and Gordon, 2012), although the few studies that have tried to untangle the direction of the relationships have yielded mixed findings. Younger spectators are reported by Yoshida and Gordon (2012) to be more image-oriented and more sensitive to team loyalty programs than older customers; in contrast, other authors suggest that, for young consumers of sport centers, loyalty and, ultimately, the likelihood of repurchase is enhanced less by image-focused services and more by perceived value and customer satisfaction elements (Avuourdiadou and Theodorakis, 2014).

Empirical evidence indicates that the relationship between satisfaction and loyalty is moderated by gender and is stronger for men than for women (Schirmer *et al.*, 2018). Yoshida and Gordon (2012) also found that the relationship between satisfaction and loyalty was stronger for male spectators than for female spectators, while Lee *et al.* (2011)

found gender differences in the influence of service quality perceptions on satisfaction and revisit intentions for golf clubs.

We consider involvement with the club and gender and age (demographic variables related to consumption habits) as heterogeneity factors in defining spectator tribes, proposing the following hypothesis:

H6: The spectator's tribe characteristics (involvement with the club, gender and age) will moderate the relationship between service quality, club image, satisfaction, and loyalty in a sports environment.

Considering the hypotheses described above, Figure 1 represents the theoretical model to be considered in this research.

[**Figure 1.** Theoretical model near here.]

3. Methodology

3.1. Sample

The sample consisted of spectators aged 18 years and older who attended Barcelona Football Club La Liga home matches in Camp Nou stadium during the 2017/2018 season. Three hours before matches started, randomly selected spectators were approached with a questionnaire (in different languages) by seven researchers. The spectators were informed of the purpose of the research and, if they agreed to participate, they were asked to supply an email address so they could receive an online version of the questionnaire to be completed directly after the match.

As population proportions were unknown, to determine sample size we considered a conservative 50/50 response format (i.e., 50% each of respondents would have negative

and positive perceptions); this resulted in 384 spectators, which we rounded up to 400 spectators.

A total of 944 visitors were invited to take part; the response rate of 38.45% meant that 363 usable questionnaires were collected, generating a statistical error of 5.21%. Mean represented almost three-quarters (71.27%) of the respondents (women 28.72%), and nearly half the respondents (48.34%) were aged <30 years (34.52%, 30-45 years, and 16.71% >45 years). Involvement was strong, moderate, and slight in 32.50%, 48.76%, and 18.45% of the respondents, respectively.

3.2. Measurements

The questionnaire was designed with closed questions answered on a 5-point Likert scale (1=absolutely disagree to 5=absolutely agree, for image, satisfaction, and loyalty, and 1=not satisfied to 5=extremely satisfied, for the quality of each attribute contributing to service quality). The 30 variables were divided into a groups of 3 categorical variables – gender, age (<30, 30-45, >45 years), and involvement (strong, moderate, slight) – and a group of 27 indicator variables (i.e., manifest variables) for the measurement model (Table I), with items as follows:16 service quality, 4 image (adapted from Beccarini and Ferrand, 2006), 2 loyalty (adapted from Ahrholdt *et al.*, 2019; 2017), and 5 satisfaction (adapted from Ahrholdt *et al.*, 2019 and Tenenhaus *et al.*, 2005).

[**Table I.** Latent variable categories and descriptors near here.]

3.3. Data analysis

Partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) was used to fit the model. PLS-SEM is a commonly used method for sports management research (Alonso

Dos Santos *et al.*, 2020; Cepeda-Carrión and Cepeda-Carrion, 2018). Unlike covariance-based SEM, PLS-SEM assumes the latent variables to be modeled as composites, and directly allows latent variable proxies to be obtained as linear combinations of the manifest variables. Several scholars indicate that PLS-SEM is especially useful for model testing when research objectives are exploratory (as in our analysis) and when assumptions required for covariance-based SEM (including data multivariate normality) cannot be fulfilled (Hair *et al.*, 2019). The second-order construct of service quality was estimated using a two-step procedure based on a formative-formative type model and repetition of indicators in the first step (Sarstedt *et al.*, 2019; Schuberth *et al.*, 2020). Four second-order construct items were first estimated using the manifest variables of the first-order latent variables (i.e., tickets, accessibility, facilities, and stadium). The entire model was then estimated using these second-order construct items and the classical PLS-SEM algorithm.

Pathmox analysis (Lamberti *et al.*, 2016; 2017) has been proposed to analyze heterogeneity in the PLS-SEM environment as it identifies different segments with different relationships regarding constructs. This method is particularly appropriate when the research is exploratory and the objective is to simultaneously analyze different sources of observed heterogeneity and identify the most important determinants in shaping difference between model coefficients.

The model estimates and the pathmox analysis were performed using smart-pls 3.3 (Sarstedt and Cheah, 2019) and the R software genpathmox package V.0.5 (Lamberti, 2014), respectively.

4. Results

4.1. Measurement model results

Service quality was a formative measurement, whereas image, satisfaction, and loyalty were reflective measurements. The first step in service quality estimation and validation are reported in Appendix A and model validation details are reported in Tables II to V.

We validated the service quality construct following the procedure described by Hair *et al.* (2019). Table II shows weights and their significance (bootstrapping with K=500 replicates). Multicollinearity was verified by calculating the variance inflator factor (VIF).

[**Table II.** Weights, VIF, and bootstrap intervals near here.]

The most important quality aspects were 'stadium' (0.580), followed by 'tickets' (0.368). While 'accessibility' and 'facilities' were of lesser importance and non-significant, they were retained as potentially interesting, from a management perspective, in understanding the importance of different service quality aspects. VIF values, all under 5, indicated the non-presence of multicollinearity.

Concerning the reflective constructs of image, satisfaction, and loyalty, the model was evaluated using common quality criteria (Hair *et al.*, 2019). Common reliability (CR) indexes were computed for each latent variable, and, in line with Henseler *et al.* (2016), constructs were considered reliable if CR, Cronbach's α and ρ_A (Dijkstra and Henseler, 2015) values were greater than 0.7. Table 3 confirms reliability for all the constructs, as CR values were 0.856-0.900, Cronbach's α values were 0.788-0.860, and ρ_A values were 0.767-0.854. Internal consistency for all the indicator blocks was supported by the average variance extracted (AVE) values reported in Table IV, with the smallest AVE value (0.541) exceeding the 0.50 threshold. Convergent validity was also confirmed by Table IV results, as all loadings were close to or greater than the 0.7 threshold. Loading

significance was calculated using bootstrapping with K=500 replicates. Finally, discriminant validity (see Table V) was confirmed by heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) ratio of correlations (Henseler *et al.* 2015), resulting in all values lower than the conservative threshold 0.85, except for satisfaction on loyalty (0.87), but still lower than the 0.90 threshold for conceptually similar constructs.

Common method bias (CMB) was tested after computing the full collinearity test (Kock, 2015), consisting of calculating VIF values for all latent variables in the model, which were confirmed to be lower than 3.3 (Table VI).

[**Table III.** Reliability measures near here.]

[**Table IV:** Measurement model results near here.]

[**Table V.** HTMT results near here.]

[**Table VI.** Full collinearity test for CMB]

4.2. Structural model results

According to Table VII and Figure 2, the effect of image on satisfaction was significant and positive (β=0.489, p<0.001), supporting H3. H1 and H2 were also confirmed, as service quality had a significant and positive effect on both satisfaction (β=0.263, p<0.001) and image (β=0.448, p<0.001). Image did not have a significant effect on loyalty (β=0.094, p=0.211), so H4 was rejected. As anticipated, satisfaction had a strong effect on loyalty (β=0.646, p<0.001), verifying H5.

Model predictability was confirmed by R^2=0.423 for satisfaction and R^2=0.500 for loyalty. The Stone-Geisser test of predictive relevance was also positive for all the predicted variables, with values of Q^2=0.270 for satisfaction and Q^2=0.370 for loyalty.

[**Table VII.** Structural model results near here.]

[**Figure 2.** Path diagram of the survey model near here.]

4.3. Pathmox analysis

The pathmox analysis was carried out using all categorical variables as inputs to the segmentation procedure. Due to the small sample size and model complexity, the segmentation tree was limited to a maximum depth of two levels, with the final number of tribes bounded to a maximum of four. The minimum admissible node size was set to n=70 (around 20% of n=362), and the threshold significance for the algorithm split criterion was set to 0.05. The pathmox tree (Figure 3) shows a root node estimated for the entire sample and three local models (LMs) each defining a tribe. Involvement had the highest discriminant power (F=9.296, p<0.001), and strongly and moderately involved spectators were further differentiated by age (F= 4.496, p=0.008), thus identifying three LMs: LM1, non-involved spectators; LM2, involved spectators aged <30 years; and LM3, involved spectators aged >30 years, labelled non-passionate, younger passionate and older passionate tribes, respectively.

[**Figure 3.** Pathmox tree analysis near here.]

Table VIII shows the path coefficients calculated for the groups defined by the pathmox analysis. In defining satisfaction, the non-passionate tribe (LM1) equally valued image (β=0.444, p<0.001) and service quality (β=0.404, p<0.001). In contrast, the younger passionate tribe (LM2) valued service quality (β=0.327, p<0.001) more than image, although the difference was not significant (β=0.140, p<0.112), while the older

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passionate tribe (LM3) valued image (β=0.570, p<0.001) more than service quality (β=0.184, p<0.05). The importance of service quality in defining satisfaction decreased as involvement increased, while the effect of satisfaction on loyalty was higher for non-involved spectators (β=0.828, p<0.001).

[**Table VIII.** Local model comparison near here.]

5. Discussion

Our findings for football spectators indicate that service quality and image are positively related to satisfaction, and thus, to loyalty, according to the formulated hypotheses and the literature (Ahrholdt *et al.*, 2017; Alonso-Dos-Santos *et al.*, 2018; Ashraf *et al.*, 2018; Çevik and Simsek 2019;; Jeong and Kim, 2019; Nishio *et al.*, 2016; Rohman, 2019; Woratschek *et al.* 2019). Like Ahrholdt et al. (2017) and Çevik and Simsek (2019),, we found that service quality improves satisfaction levels. Image also had a positive effect on satisfaction, likewise in line with previous studies (Alonso-Dos-Santos *et al.*, 2018; Ashraf *et al.*, 2018). Finally, as anticipated, satisfaction increased loyalty and intentions to repeat the experience, corroborating the literature (Ahrholdt *et al.*, 2017; Lai, *et al.*, 2018). In our models, all effects were significant except for image on loyalty, indicating that image had no immediate or direct effect on loyalty.

Regarding whether stadium service quality or club image increased spectator satisfaction and loyalty more, we found that both were relevant, as indicated by high and significant path coefficients. This suggests that the spectator experience is not only strongly related to the services provided by a stadium, but also to the club image as reflected in the team's quality and performance.

Regarding our hypothesis regarding heterogeneity effects on the causal relationship between model constructs, the pathmox analysis indicated that the most important source

of heterogeneity in defining spectator tribes was involvement, reported as a crucial aspect of spectator behavior (Beaton *at al.*, 2011), although its effects were further moderated by age. The importance of image and service quality varied significantly between the three identified tribes: non-passionate, younger passionate and older passionate spectators. The non-passionate tribe equally valued image and service quality, the younger passionate tribe valued service quality more than image, and the older passionate tribe valued image more than service quality. This finding is corroborated by reported findings that high-quality services for young sports center users is less image-oriented (Avuourdiadou and Theodorakis, 2014); it also confirms the idea that younger spectators are influenced more by outcome-based quality (Yoshida and Gordon, 2012), while older spectators tend to value more their connection with a club (Lock *et al.*, 2012). Interestingly, the non-involved spectators attach equal importance to service quality and image, and is also the group for which satisfaction has the strongest effect on loyalty – contradicting the findings of Biscaia *et al.* (2016).

Finally, our results do not provide clear evidence to indicate that the model causal relationships vary according to gender, possibly indicating that gender is not primordial in defining tribes. In line with the evidence that women are a marginalized fan group in football (Lagaert and Roose, 2016), the percentage of females was low in all three tribes.

5.1. Theoretical implications

From a theoretical point of view, we make contributions to the literature regarding the role of football stadium service quality and club image, and to the literature on consumer tribes.

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Our findings indicate that image and service quality are relevant to identifying the underpinnings of satisfaction and loyalty. A football club that delivers tangible services associated with its stadium will evoke satisfaction in spectators that will likely result in repeat experiences. Furthermore, since club image is linked to satisfaction and repeat experience intentions, a chain is created that links service quality and image with satisfaction and loyalty.

A novel contribution of this paper is that it analyze simultaneous effect of age, gender, and emotional involvement on the relationship between quality, image, satisfaction, and loyalty and it identifies three differently profiled spectator tribes, with differing decision-making processes underpinning satisfaction and loyalty. Involvement is the primary factor in explaining relationships between the studied constructs, while age moderates involvement in defining differing impacts of image and service quality.

5.2. Marketing implications

Football spectator satisfaction and loyalty appear to be influenced by stadium service quality and club image, suggesting these issues to be crucial to marketing strategies. Our spectator tribe analysis, however, would suggest that spectators may not perceive satisfaction and loyalty in the same way. Identifying quality and image perception differences between spectator tribes, and determining how those differences influence behavior (repeating experiences and loyalty), may be useful in designing marketing strategies that communicate effectively with different spectator tribes and so enhance engagement (Biscaia *et al.*, 2016). The tribal approach to analyzing consumer behavior goes beyond conventional marketing theories that massify consumers (Addis and Podesta, 2005) to identify consumer groups based on emotional characteristics and shared identities. Identifying emotional bonds between tribe members represents an opportunity

to foster meaningful and symbiotic relationships with consumers, going beyond mere repeat purchases to focus on affective ties of loyalty and options for collective actions to benefit tribe members (Cova and Salle, 2008). Tribes as a source of loyal customers and enthusiastic advocates drive innovation (Badrinarayanan *et al.* 2014). Consumer tribalism in the form of collective consumption is, in fact, a rich source of value co-creation for both consumers and the businesses they patronize (Lee and Kim, 2019).

We suggest that football club management could (in line with Figure 4) adopt approaches adapted to different tribes, as follows:

1. For older passionate spectators, the focus should be on aspects related to the club's image as the target of evoked sentiments, e.g., team performance, team quality, coaches and players.

2. For younger passionate and non-passionate spectators, the focus should be on service quality as a core driver of satisfaction, e.g., ticketing, facilities, and stadium-related logistics, since improving these aspects will not only induce a positive affective response, but will also enhance involvement with the club.

Figure 4 depicts total effects on loyalty for the different tribes.

[**Figure 4.** Total effects for loyalty near here.]

5.3. Limitations and further research

The main limitation of our study is that data refer to a single football club, so even though the response rate was high, the sample was small. This does not affect the technical validity of the PLS-SEM or pathmox results, but does mean that results may not be generalizable. This first attempt to relate loyalty to spectator tribes for a specific football club requires further validation in a broader context (e.g., for another football club).

Nonetheless, the subject of our research, Barcelona Football Club, can be considered a benchmark for top clubs in main national football leagues worldwide.

Future studies could analyze other aspects affecting satisfaction and loyalty (complaints, expectations, emotions), and could introduce pleasure or delight to further refine satisfaction. Other approaches to analyzing unobserved heterogeneity could also be used to define tribes, e.g., FIMIX-PLS (Sarstedt and Ringle, 2010), and to compare results with the pathmox approach.

6. Conclusion

We have demonstrated, for a football club setting, the impact on satisfaction and loyalty of club image and stadium service quality, using PLS-SEM to investigate the relationship between drivers and constructs, and enabling conclusions to be drawn regarding spectator loyalty and repeat intentions. Accordingly, we suggest that, in terms of management strategies, both image and service quality are important elements in enhancing satisfaction, and consequently, loyalty.

We have also demonstrated the importance of considering potential heterogeneity, using pathmox analysis to identify different spectator tribes and determine differences in drivers of satisfaction and loyalty that could help sports managers establish more effective marketing strategies. The importance given to particular constructs by different tribes strongly suggests that the level of emotional involvement affects how satisfaction and loyalty are defined.

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