



Background of Purchase Intention of Brazilian Soccer Club Fans

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Keywords : *perceived advertising spending, price promotion, public relations, corporate reputation, brand equity.*

GJMBR-E Classification : *JEL Code: D71, D69*



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Background of Purchase Intention of Brazilian Soccer Club Fans

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Abstract - Studies about purchase intention have grown in the marketing area. This is so especially for those seeking to associate loyalty and brand image. Within this context, this paper has sought to analyze the background of purchase intention of soccer club sport products. Then, to apply a descriptive research with 1056 respondents who are fans. The data collected were analyzed using a set of techniques from Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). The results of this research show that the intention of buying is more directly associated to loyalty to the brand rather than the actual image of the soccer club. It was evident the psychological commitment, the emotional attachment and the recognition or association to the brand antecede the purchase intention of sports articles made available by the soccer clubs. In conclusion, the final consideration and academic and managerial recommendations were expounded upon.

Keywords : purchase intention, brand loyalty and image.

I. INTRODUCTION

Purchase intention is one of the subjects currently most explored among marketing academics and professionals. There is plenty of scientific production but many debates, without answers regarding this subject (Mandhachiatra & Poolthong, 2011). One of the debates is regarding loyalty and brand image and how it can cause direct impact upon purchase intention of a consumer (Bauer, Sauer & Exler, 2008; Abosag, Roper & Hind, 2012). It is this debate this paper intends to explore, bringing as object of study Brazilian soccer club fans. In other words, the purchase intention of these fans in connection to the products associated to soccer clubs such as: T-shirts, shorts, caps, key-chains, etc.

Brazilian soccer has gained projection and distinction. Proof of this are the millionaire contracts made by clubs all over the country. Also, the high salaries paid to athletes and trainers and the building of high standard stadiums. Accompanying this, the revenue of these clubs has grown vertiginously through sponsorship, media coverage and royalties paid for sale of the brand products. A news release in 2011 announced that a main television station in Brazil had invested approximately 230, 90 million dollars to buy the media rights for coverage of the main club matches of

the A and B Series in Brazilian Soccer championships. The following year, 2012, the investment went up to 440 million. For licensing of products, the sum of revenues from royalties in 2011 was of 26 million for the following clubs: São Paulo Futebol Clube, Clube de Regatas do Flamengo, Sport Club Internacional, Grêmio Football Porto Alegre, Sociedade Esportiva Palmeiras e Fluminense Football Club (BDO Consultoria, 2012).

With the data presented, it stands out the academic and managerial importance of the subject this paper will deal with. Academically, there is a lack of discussion and understanding about indicators that might contribute to the consolidation of studies geared towards sports marketing (Kang, 2002; Filo, Funk & O'Brien, 2010). With this goal, the present research seeks to aid in generating theoretical discussion and has the objective of analyzing the antecedents of purchase intention of soccer club sports products by the fans. For this, a theoretical model was created, then, a descriptive research applied with 1056 questionnaires among fans. The collected data was analyzed with the set of techniques from the Structural Equation Modeling (SEM).

II. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND HYPOTHESES

Purchase intention is one of the main topics of study in the area of contemporary consumer behavior. It is common to find in marketing, models that analyze the influence of constructs such as loyalty and brand image in the purchase intention of consumers. This paper intends to test this influence, within the context of fans of Brazilian soccer clubs, using still other constructs such as: psychological attachment, emotional attachment, brand extension and awareness and associations. According to the Figure 01, which represents the hypothetical model in this paper; the purchase intention could be mediated by the loyalty construct, which receives direct influence from psychological attachment and emotional attachment. Paired to this, purchase intention could be mediated by the image of the club, receiving direct influence from brand extension and awareness and associations.

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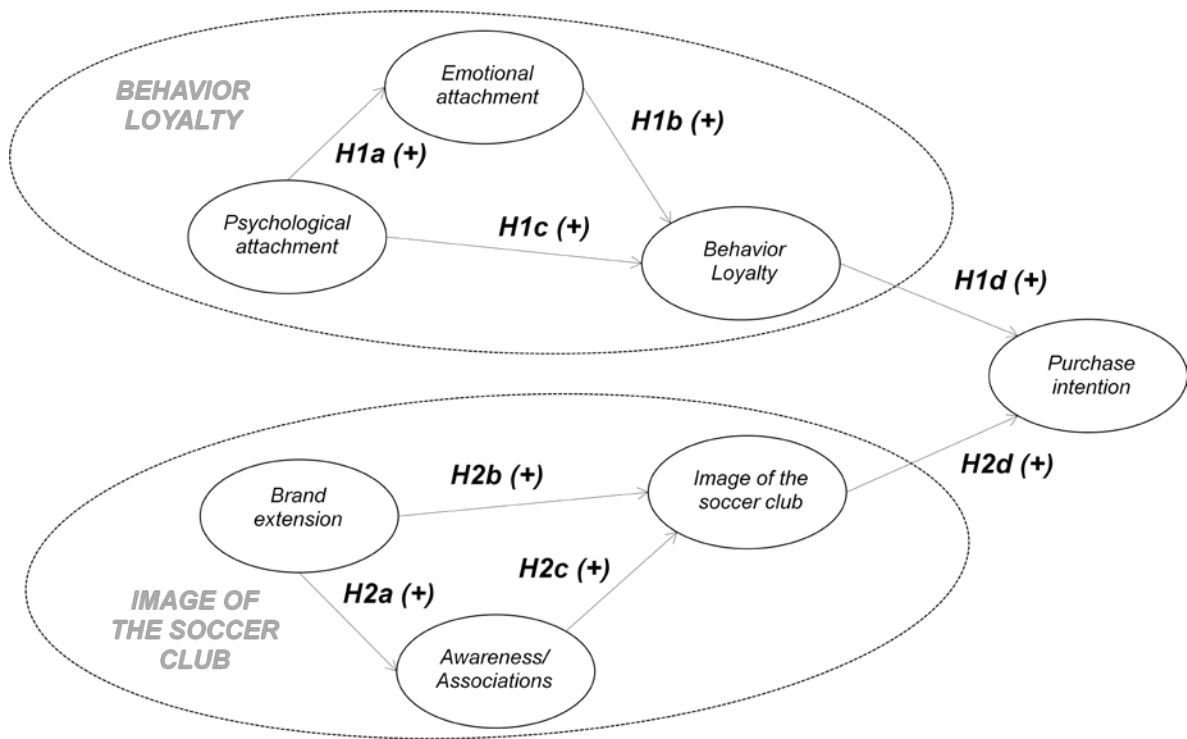


Figure 1: Hypothetical Model

a) *Brand loyalty and influence upon purchase intention of fans*

In the dynamics of the contemporary market, loyalty of a consumer is an important behavior for the survival of an organization (Dick & Basu, 1994; Mandhachitria & Poolthong, 2011); and it is directly associated with psychological attachment and emotional attachment.

Studies suggest that psychological behavior is one of the pillars that sustain a relationship (Berry & Parasumaran, 1991; Morgan & Hunt, 1994). Reinforcing this thought Bauer *et al.* (2008) detected that the level of psychological attachment of fans is correlated to the level of loyalty.

As to the emotional attachment, Kapferer (2001) suggests this feeling to be linked to a strong confidence and loyalty created by beliefs that are influenced by people who are highly involved with the consumer, for example, the parents. For this reason, many consumers prefer regional brands (Kpafere, 2001). This same reasoning can be applied towards a sport, since many children are influenced by parents and sibling as to the practice of a sport, a choice of becoming a fan and a sport club (Hunt, Bristol & Bashaw, 1999). With this basis, the belief is strengthened that the symbolism of supporting a specific team should go from one generation to another (Abosag *et al.* 2012). This shows that the brand name of a sports club carries with it an enormous possibility of a permanent bond (loyalty), which is a distinct factor from conventional brands.

Reflecting upon the previously mentioned constructs, it is observed that both dimensions are surrounded by emotional aspects (Mahony & Madrigal, 2000; Kpafere, 2001; Abosag *et al.* 2012) giving support to suggest the brand of a sport club is a promoter of that relationship. For this reason, a first hypothesis is suggested to be tested:

H1a – The psychological attachment positively affects the connections of the emotional attachment of the Brazilian soccer sport club fan.

The constructs related to the loyalty behavior is connected to the tendency of repeated purchase behavior when there is a strong connection to a determined product/service to the point that some clients feel a member of the organization (Bowen & Shoemaker, 1998). Extending this reasoning to sports, it is observed that fans of a soccer club are characterized strongly as fans of the sport itself and mainly of the club association, its directors, trainers and athletes (Bauer, *et al.* 2008). Reflecting beyond, it is possible to notice that this strong connection can be materialized the moment a fan becomes a member of the club. This influences the internal decisions of the institution, as well as, the manifestations of support or inquiry about events held by the associations (Mahony & Madrigal, 2000).

This fact has the potential of a strong emotional attachment being created with the brand (Chernatony, 2003), which in this case can be applied to a soccer club. Sports in general, are typically characterized by a high level of commitment and emotional involvement of

the consumer (Abosag *et al.*, 2012). Emotional attachment in sports is shown by Underwood, Bond and Baer. (2001) when they say that it is an activity where consumers easily forget their problems; produce common symbols, have a collective identity and even more, a reason for solidarity towards their peers. Such characteristics are connected to behavioral loyalty, as was shown already, and for this reason brings to the second hypothesis to be tested:

H1b – Emotional attachment positively affects the behavioral loyalty of the Brazilian soccer club fan.

The next topic of study suggests a positive connection between psychological attachment and behavioral loyalty. It has already been shown through research done by Iwasaki and Havitz (2004). Studies show that the existing connection between commitment and loyalty is proportional to the commitment of the fan (Beatty & Kahle, 1988; Bauer *et al.*, 2008). Other research has been added within the business context in other segments showing the existing positive relation between psychological attachment and the consumer's behavioral loyalty (Larán & Espinoza, 2004; Prado, 2006; Lee, Graefe & Bruns, 2007), this reinforces the supposition within the sports ambit (Mahony & Madrigal, 2000; Bauer *et al.*, 2005; 2008; Borges & Añaña, 2009). Based on this, it is possible to suppose that:

H1c – Psychological attachment positively affects behavioral loyalty of the Brazilian soccer club fan.

Behavioral loyalty is connected with a deep commitment in buying or using a product or service in a consistent way, for, in the future, this causes repeated buying of the same brand or company. This will continue even with situational influences and marketing efforts capable of causing a change of behavior (Oliver, 1994; Bowen & Shoemaker, 1998).

Under the sports optics and as already mentioned, the fan is a member of a club and with high indicators of emotional ties due to their choice of club. Deep rooted emotions with the sport and the club (Bauer *et al.*, 2008) suggest the connection between the fans with the behavioral loyalty traits that result in buying the products and services of these teams. For this motive, a fourth hypothesis is proposed to be tested:

H1d – Behavioral loyalty positively affects the purchase intention of the Brazilian soccer club fans.

b) The image of the club and the influence it causes upon a fan's purchase intention.

Another dimension studied in this research is brand extension. In a wide concept the image of the club will directly affect purchase intention. Within the sports world this perspective gained strength when organizations perceived the opportunity for increasing their profits by strengthening their connection with their fans. This has been done by introducing new products or services that have the name of the sports clubs,

athletes and trainers (Abosag *et al.*, 2012). The research by Abosag *et al.* (2012) shows that all the products considered within a sports segment can be used as an extension of the brand. Along these lines it is possible to visualize players and trainers; the equipment used for the practice of the sport and the rules of the game. These in turn, can be used as *merchandising* actions; food, game programs, reception of fans or any other activity that might help bring about experiences the fan has with a club.

Maintenance and growth of a brand is done by the extension of such (Keller, 2003). This is due to the value of said extension not only being limited to the profits but also giving the client the opportunity to be more familiar with the brand and consequently more involved with it (Abosag *et al.*, 2012). Following this reasoning suggests a positive connection between recognition and association of the brand. The awareness/association of the brand has the purpose of evaluating how much the client can ability to perceive and remember the brand of a category of products and services (Yoo & Donthu, 2001). It is possible to suggest that increased publicity of the brand will bring greater recognition of a diversity of products/services. For this reason the next hypothesis emerges to be tested:

H2a – Brand extension positively affects the awareness/association of the brand for the Brazilian soccer club fan.

With regards to the brand extension and image of the, it is possible to propose that it is positive once the image serves as a critical factor within the role of the communication in the companies. (Dirchter, 1985) and it can be used to increase the perception of the value of the products and services attracting and maintaining their clients (Howard, 1998). In the sports environment there it is known that the image differentiates and positions the sports organization due to the fact that people associate each club to a different image. Making a connection with what was explored about the brand extension, the diversification of products and services using the names of the clubs will be effective if these have an image built with their clients. This is very characteristic of sports fans where the choice of a club and a sport will be started in the early years of their life (Mahony & Madrigal, 2000; Kpafere, 2001; Abosag *et al.*, 2012). As such, the next hypothesis is:

H2b – Brand extension positively affects the Brazilian fan's image of the soccer club.

Analyzing the proposed lines of study, as to the dimension of the awareness/association of the brand and image of the club, positive recognition and association of a fan is created by a high degree of emotional involvement (Mahony & Madrigal, 2000; Kpafere, 2001; Abosag *et al.*, 2012). This fact will end up causing an impact when shaping the image of the club;

this concept is characterized by the attitudes and impressions the consumers have about a determined product and service (Barich & Kotler, 1991). In this case the image of a club is formed by several dimensions within a soccer club, for example: personality of the fans, success of the team, historical happenings of the club, stadium of the team, characteristics of the players and the brand, organizational attributes, social interaction and rivalry (Ross, James & Vargas, 2006). So, the following hypothesis is suggested:

H2c – The awareness/association with the brand positively affects the image of a club for a Brazilian fan.

As a final conclusion many studies show that image is a critical factor for the success of a business indicating that the image of the club will have a positive influence towards purchase intention of the soccer fan (Dichter, 1985; Keller & Aaker, 1992; Howard, 1998). Howard's study (1998) proposed that the image is a mechanism to attract and maintain clients. Confirming this thought,

Keller and Aaker (1992) suggest that this construct impacts the positive judgment and responses for a purchase. Based on this a last hypothesis is proposed which is:

H2d – The image of a club positively affects the purchase intention of the Brazilian soccer club fan.

III. RESEARCH METHOD

This chapter will present the procedures adopted for the development of field research. After this, the criteria used for the development and validation of the questionnaires applied for the public interviewed are presented; then the technique of statistical analysis for the interpretation of the results. The method used for this research was the quantitative descriptive method which has as a basic characteristic the search for the solution of problems by means of data collection using applied structural questionnaires with a considerable sample (Malhotra, 2012).

a) Development and Validation of the Instrument of Data Collection

The means by which applied data was collected in this research were made up of measures already used in previous researches. With the purpose of measuring the feelings associated with the "psychological attachment" and "loyalty behavior" the scale was adapted from Bauer *et al.* (2008). From Beccarini and Ferrand (2006) a measurement for "club image" was taken. From Bruner and Hensel (1998) the purchase intention scale was used. The measurement for "awareness/association of the brand" was based on the research of Yoo and Donthu (2001). The other measures-emotional attachment; brand extension- was taken from Abosag *et al.* (2012).

Before the final application of the research instrument, it was pre-tested and validated by specialists. The pre-test was applied to 30 fans with the same characteristics of the target public of this research. The validation was done by the means of analysis of validity of content with the purpose of verifying if the construct questions represent that which the scales propose to measure (Kinner & Taylor, 1996). Even though subjective, it is common in the marketing field and brings greater credibility to the instrument that will be applied (Malhotra, 2012). This validity was confirmed by two academic specialists (Two Doctors Administration). The referred phases brought some adjustments to the format of the questionnaire.

This phase once overcome, the final version of the instrument was applied to the final sample. The affirmations were inserted of the *Likert* type with five points "1" meaning total disagreement and "5" total agreement. Besides the affirmation the questionnaire contained socio-demographical data to be answered (monthly income; schooling; age; sex; marital status).

b) Data Collection and Data Analysis Technique

This research was applied to soccer fans in the state of Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil. This state is characterized by a strong rivalry between two clubs, the Grêmio Football Portoalegrense and the Sport Clube Internacional, both with their headquarters in the state capital of Porto Alegre. Both teams have received a world title, two continental ones and several regional awards. The Grêmio team has two titles of the Brazilian Soccer Championship and four Brazilian Cup titles. The Sport Club Internacional team has three Brazilian Championship titles won in the decade of the 70's and one Brazilian Cup award.

The questionnaires were applied personally during the year of 2012, with a total of 1056 respondents. The technique of non-probabilistic sample was used due to convenience which is characterized by the judgment and accessibility of the researcher (Malhotra, 2012).

In terms of analysis of data, the Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was used in which technique examines the connections relations through a set of methods that identifies the latent variables using multi-varying techniques, examining the simultaneous multiple dependency connections between these variables (Schumacker & Lomax, 1996; Hair, Anderson, Tathan & Black, 2005).

For the final adjustments of the model and the hypothesis, the following indicators were used: Chi-square, degrees of liberty, level of probability, Comparative Fit Index (CFI), Normed Fit Index (NFI), Root Mean Squared Error of Approximation (RMSEA), Variance Extracted, composite reliability and Crombach alpha. The criteria for the adjustment of the models are suggested by Mulaik, James, Van Alstine, Bennet, Lind

& Stilwell (1989), Byrne (1998), Hair et al. (2005) and Arbuckle (2008).

IV. ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

This chapter has four parts to better test the hypothesis raised in the theoretical reference. Primarily the descriptive analysis was done, with the sample characteristics, the missing values and outliers evaluated. In sequence, the validation of the measurement models were presented; followed by the validation of the integrated model. Finally, a discussion and analysis of the final integrated model was raised the analysis of the hypothesis.

a) *Descriptive statistics and verification of the missing values and outlier cases*

Based on the total universe of the questionnaires applied, a descriptive analysis was accomplished in order to understand the characteristics of the samples used in the research. In summary, the monthly income of a greater concentration was from US\$ 500 to US\$ 1.500 (32.2%), with a greater participation being that of university students (45%), males (54.1%) and single males (64.5%).

As to verifying the quality of the data, this was done evaluating the missing values and outliers. As to the matter of evaluating the missing values, an analysis was accomplished as to the frequency of all the questions contained in the research instrument. This process has as its objective verifying whether some question was badly interpreted or not. This analysis did not detect any questions that made the interpretation more difficult, since there was no question that had more than five possibilities of omission of answers.

The next step was to analyze each questionnaire, one at a time, and evaluate the index of answers not given for suggested questions (greater than 10%). At this point, 162 respondents were excluded from the final sample.

In continuation, the analysis of unvaried outliers cases was done by Z- scores. For the cases with values over |3| were analyzed for each variable (Hair et al., 2005). In this analysis, 28 questionnaires were eliminated. Finally, the multivariate outliers were evaluated using Mahalanobis method of analysis, where a large distance between an individual value and the sample average obtained are verified (Kline, 1998; Jöreskog, 1993). For the analysis, no element that needed to be excluded was identified.

b) *Validation of measurement model*

Having made a primary cleansing of the data base, then there was the analysis of presuppositions of normality in the variables observed. For this a calculation of the indicators of Kurtosis was carried out by means of the Mardia's Coefficient having detected values of less than 5, these being significant. In this

manner, the presence of normality in the distributions was detected (Mardia, 1970; Bentler, 1995). As to the analysis of asymmetry, the variables observed showed a moderate symmetry, since the coefficients of asymmetry of Pearson were close to zero.

In continuation, the analysis of mere reliability was verified (Cronbach Alpha), with the objective of evaluating the internal consistency of degrees of measurement used, with tolerable index which should be superior to 0.6 (Hair, et al., 2005). In this analysis, fragility was observed in relation to the constructor which measures "brand extension" of the soccer club, for the result obtained was way below the tolerable level (0.137). Except for this, all others presented adequate indexes: "emotional attachment" (0.721), "brand awareness/association" (0.796), "loyalty behavior" (0.800), "psychological attachment" (0.787), "image the soccer club" (0.868) e "purchase intention" (0.941).

After the mere reliability, a Confirmatory Factorial Analysis was undertaken seeking to ratify the model originally proposed in the theory. In this way, a convergent, discriminatory analysis was developed, permitting the analysis of the reliability of each construct, as well as the discrimination between them.

The results of the factorial weight of the items as to each latent variable showed significant loadings at 0.01. The indicators of compound reliability and of Average Variance Extracted (AVE), were considered significant, with the exception, once again, of the "brand extension." For this reason we chose to modify the original model that had been proposed, removing the "brand extension" construct from the initial theoretical model, and promoting alterations for the adjustment of the same. This procedure is in agreement with the proposition that sample variables should be removed if their coefficients are less or are not significant that is, those whose values are less than 0.5 (KLINE, 1998).

Continuing with the analysis, without the above mentioned construct, it can be observed that the results of the AVE of each construct, in the table of the matrix of correlation between the construct, these are always greater than the correlation between the constructs, since these are all significant, which characterizes multicollinearity (Schumacker & Lomax, 1996; Hair et al., 2005). This criterion is important for analysis, for, according to Fornell and Larcker (1982), these results serve to verify the convergent validity of each construct, due to the fact that the AVE is greater than the shared variance. The table 01 shows the results.

Table 1 : Convergent and discriminatory validity

Constructs	Emotional attachment	Psych. attachment	Brand awareness/ association	Loyalty Behaviour	Image of the soccer Club	Purchase Intention
Emotional attachment	0.71**	-	-	-	-	-
Psych. attachment	0.29*	0.85**	-	-	-	-
Brand awareness/ association	0.28*	0.26*	0.83**	-	-	-
Loyalty Behaviour	0.45*	0.43*	0.34*	0.78**	-	-
Image of de soccer Club	0.33*	0.24*	0.29*	0.30*	0.92**	-
Purchase Intention	0.38*	0.31*	0.30*	0.52*	0.29*	0.97**

Note : Convergent validity; Variance Extracted

As shown in Table 01, the confirmation of the convergent and discriminatory validity between the constructs can be observed. The compound reliability of each factor and Crombach Alpha is also analyzed. The results were within a satisfactory level (emotional attachment = 0.79; brand awareness/association = 0.85; loyalty behavior = 0.88; psychological attachment = 0.88; image of the soccer club = 0.91; purchase intention = 0.96). Finalizing the reflection as to the discussion of models of measurement, the choice was made to exclude the construct “brand extension” and the respective hypothesis linked to the same, for values fund therein would affect the quality of the measurement of the final integrated model.

c) Evaluation of the integrated model

The final model proposed for testing, according to what is presented in Figure 01, was taken from a bibliographical review and form the mentioned scales besides the preliminary analysis of presuppositions of validity. In this way, six dimensions were arrived at (emotional attachment; psychological attachment; loyalty behavior; brand awareness/association, image of the soccer club and purchase intention). Each construct was formed from four or five variables as described earlier.

Analyzing the results, it can be observed that the degree of significance of all coefficients has an index less than 0.1, that is, this indicates that they are significant for the model. The exception noted is in the link between the “attachment” construct and “loyalty behavior”, with a level of significance of 0.78.

In the original model, it was possible to observe that the test of “chi-square” is significant, indicating there is a significant difference between the observed matrix and the estimated matrix. The absolute measurements of adjustment that determine the degree

in which the model can predict the observed covariance matrix, presented some problems due to the measures of NFI, IFI, TLI and CFI were below the desirable level (0.9), as was the relation of the Chi-square/degrees of freedom – below 5 (Hair et al. 2005; Tanaka, 1993). In relation to the levels of reliability, the dimensions presented satisfactory indexes.

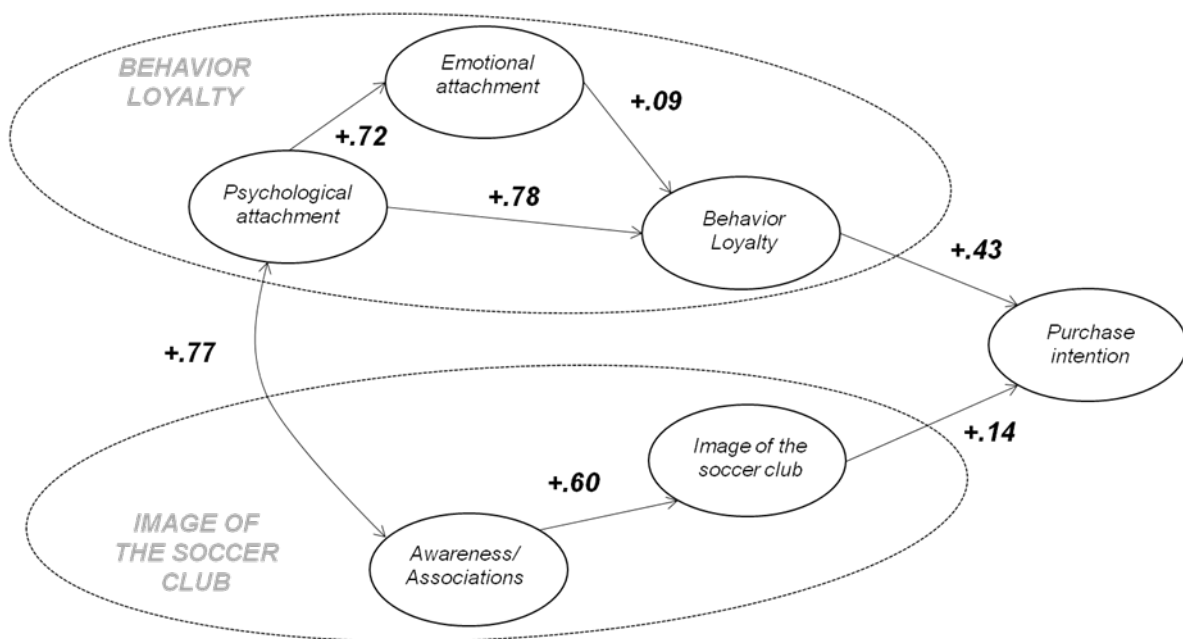


Figure 2 : Final model and purchase intention

Table 2 : Index of model adjustment – Initial and Final

Index	Final Analysis	
	Initial	Final
Chi-square	1577.368	1088.77
Degrees freedom	293	292
Probability Level	0.00	0.00
Chi-square/Degrees of freedom	5.28	3.72
CFI - Comparative Fit Index	0.895	0.935
IFI - Incremental Fit Index	0.896	0.935
TLI - Tucker-Lewis Coefficient	0.874	0.922
NFI - Normed Fit Index	0.875	0.914
RMSEA - Root Mean Squared Error of Aproximation	0.071	0.056
Extracted Variance	0.856	0.856
Composite Reliability	0.980	0.980
Crombach Alpha	0.924	0.924

From the situation exposed above, the choice was made to make adaptations in the model. Taking literature that studies structural equations for a base, the suggestions available on AMOS™ to adjust the model. This initiative was justified by giving a better understanding as well as better explanation of the phenomena being studied. It is worth pointing out that, the relation was only accepted if there was some logical/theoretical argument for them. The relationship made was the following: brand awareness/association and psychological attachment. The analysis showed a strong relation between the two constructs (0.77), which makes possible the understanding that the greater the brand awareness/association, the stronger will be the psychological attachment of the soccer fan and vice versa.

It can be noted in Table 02, that satisfactory indexes were attained for CFI, IFI, TLI e NFI (greater than 0.9), as well as the relation of "Chi-square/Degrees of freedom" (less than 5) (Arbuckle, 2008; Marôco, 2010). Such evidence justifies carrying out the adjustments that were made. Once the tests of the hypothesis were made and the indexes of the adjustment of the model were registered, we proceeded to the next stage of work, with the objective of reflecting upon the results found.

d) Discussion and analysis of the final integrated model

After the validation of each individual construct which was done by the confirmatory factorial analysis, the evaluation of the integrated model was undertaken, observing both the measurement model and the structural model. The objective of this phase was to

analyze the theoretical structure of the hypothesis – that is, the relation between the constructors and the variables displayed in the measurement model. After these phases, the design of the final model was shown in Figure 02.

The hypothesis *H1a* of this study predicted a direct and positive relation between the psychological attachment and the emotional attachment of a soccer club fan. As was presented in Table 02, the confirmation of this hypothesis was obtained, having a value of 0.72. This means that when one is dealing with the purchase intention of products associated with a football club, psychological attachment has a direct effect on the person's emotional attachment. This fact creates a potential of a strong emotional attachment with the brand, typically characterized by the high level of emotional attachment and engagement on part of the consumer, as shown in Abosag *et al.* (2012).

The second hypothesis *H1b* proposed a direct, positive effect of emotional attachment on loyalty behavior of the fan. Despite the existence of a certain relationship (0.09), it was found not to be significant, invalidating a deeper analysis. Hypothesis *H1c* sought to analyze the positive relationship between psychological attachment and behavioral loyalty, which was confirmed as having a value of 0.78. This fact demonstrates that psychological attachment is the main influence on brand loyalty as touching a person's purchase intention of products from soccer clubs. The relation between emotional attachment and loyalty, however, could not be confirmed in this sample.

As to hypothesis *H1d*, it involved the analysis of the direct, positive relationship of behavioral loyalty and purchase intention non part of the football club fan. Once again, the proposition was confirmed, since it was a significant relationship and a value of 0.49. In this context, then, behavioral loyalty is linked with a strong commitment to purchase or to use a product or service associated with the football club with which the fan identifies.

In the hypothesis *H2c* the positive impact was predicted as to the awareness and association of the brand and the club's image. The analysis made confirmed a significant effect and a relationship of 0.60, confirming the hypothesis. This fact shows that when a fan has a strong awareness and association with his club, it ends up magnifying the club's image. Finally, it was thought that the club's image would have a positive impact on the fan's intention to purchase characterized in hypothesis *H2d*, which was also confirmed by the unidirectional force of 0.14. This fact shows that the club's image increases the possibility of a fan's purchase intention of their sports products.

V. CONCLUSION IMPLICATIONS

The present study had its objective the analysis of that which precedes purchase intention of sporting

goods from soccer clubs by their respective fans. To do this, a descriptive research was undertaken, with 1.056 questionnaires which were answered by fans. Through this study, the confirmation of certain hypotheticised relationships was observed.

The results demonstrated that there are positive, significant relationships between the following constructs: "psychological attachment" and "emotional attachment"; "psychological attachment" and "loyalty behavior", and "purchase intention"; "brand awareness/association" and "image of the soccer club" and finally; "image of the soccer club" and "purchase intention." In this way, the study ratifies results found in other Works which also suggest these relations and which were the bases for the hypothesis raised (Dichter, 1985; Keller & Aaker, 1992; Howard, 1998; Hunt *et al.* 1999; Mahony & Madrigal, 2000; Kpafere, 2001; Chernatony, 2003; Bauer *et al.*, 2005 and 2008; Abosag *et al.*, 2012).

On the other hand, it was not possible to test the propositions that foresaw the relationship involving "brand extension" which was due to reliability and validation indicators being insufficient. Even though the scale was taken from studies, with satisfactory results (Abosag *et al.* 2012), for this research, the construct analysis had to be removed. Consequently, the final theoretical model tested underwent some adaptations, since the hypothesis connected to that dimension were excluded from the study. The inclusion of those hypotheses not tested here can serve as reflections for further studies, with the suggestion of the use of a different scale to be used; as the processes of validation were put in place before the final gathering of data and, even so, did not reach the desired or tolerated indexes.

Another interesting result was the non-confirmation of the hypothesis that predicted the positive relationship "emotional attachment" and "loyalty behavior". Such a rejection opens the way for more research, especially with an exploratory focus, in order to better understand the reason for the lack of association. The results suggest that having emotional ties is not enough to have a behavioral loyalty which is characterized by a repeated purchase behavior towards certain products or services (Oliver, 1997). Perhaps in a situation where loyalty is not characterized as a positive buying process but is a certain predisposition to favorable buying and attitudes such as is the case of attitudinal loyalty, the hypothesis might be confirmed. In this way, the suggestion remains valid for future study.

In terms of management, the research provided backing for club managers, who are more and more concerned about their own professionalization. It gives them more support for making decisions, since this paper helped bring about reflection upon several dimension used within the business marketing for the sports ambit which is in need of more research (Abosag

et al., 2012). It is worth mentioning that this research project used a non-probabilistic sample for convenience sake, applied within two soccer club of the state of *Rio Grande do Sul* and, for this reason, should be analyzed under this optic making generalization not possible for all the population and associations of the country and out. For this reason, one more suggestion remains, which is to research with probabilistic samples and more have include fans from different clubs and region for a possible comparison of the results and to encourage consolidation of the results of this research.

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