THE INFLUENCE OF BRAND PERSONALITY TOWARDS IDENTIFICATION OF PREMIER SOCCER LEAGUE TEAMS IN SOUTH AFRICA: A STRUCTURAL EQUATION MODEL

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Abstract: Understanding the concept of brand personality and team identification for PSL (Premier Soccer League) sport team is important for both team managers and companies involved in sport marketing. As such, the objective of this study is to model the role of brand personality influencing team identification among PSL teams in South Africa. To achieve this objective, the study used the quantitative method with a self-administrated questionnaire. The items included in the questionnaire were obtained from the previous developed and validated scales form the literature. The questionnaire was distributed to 450 respondents. Confirmatory factor analysis for structural equation modelling (SEM) was used to validate and model the role of brand personality influencing team identification among PSL teams in South Africa. The study tested three variables that could potentially be influencing team identification among PSL teams. The results of the study revealed that only (2) two variables, namely Successfulness and Sincerity were statistically significant and are therefore influencing team identification among PSL teams. This suggests that Generation Y university students are knowledgeable about PSL teams in South Africa. As such, Management of PSL teams must incorporate brand personality incompliance to this cohort in their marketing efforts in order to keep the current and attracting new fans from Generation Y cohort. Companies planning to offer sponsorship to PSL teams should pay special attention to these two variables if they match brand personality of their companies, as they play a vital role for marketing strategies.

Keywords: Brand Personality; Team Identification; Premier Soccer League (PSL); South Africa

Introduction

The Premier Soccer League (PSL) is the South African professional soccer league established in 1996 (PSL, 2021). PSL is considered as one of the best leagues in the African continent in terms of organisation, competition, revenue and popularity (Amble, 2021). The league consists of 16 teams playing 30 games in a given season with one home game and one away game. In doing so, each team meets twice per season, one as a home game and the second one as an away game. According to PSL rules a team is rewarded three points for winning a game and one point is given to each team for a draw result. A team that finished last out of the 16 teams in the log is automatically relegated to the second league known as GladAfrica Championship,

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while a team that finished in the 15th position participates in the promotional playoffs with two teams from the GladAfrica Championship (PSL, 2021).

Mamelodi Sundowns F.C is the most successful team that managed to be awarded the PSL Championship title 14 times more than any other team in the PSL history (Gleeson, 2020). Following Mamelodi Sundowns F.C record is Kaizer chiefs F.C and Orlando Pirates F.C as each team managed to win the PSL championship title four times (Soccerway, 2021). The achievement of these three teams has made South African football more interesting than ever before and they have become daily topics of conversation among soccer fans. The most discussed topic is success among these teams popularly known as the big three PSL teams (Ditlhobolo, 2021; Breakfast, 2020). This discussion contributes to the development of brand personality for these PSL teams. In addition, fans discuss their perceptions about the teams which might encourage team identification from other fans. The objective of this study is to model the role of brand personality influencing team identification among PSL teams in South Africa.

Literature Review

Brand personality

Aaker (1997:347) defined "brand personality a set of human characteristics assigned to a brand". This definition indicates that individuals assign a certain characteristic to a specific brand, for example, the automobile brand Jeep is perceived as Tough, Outdoorsy, and Rugged (Carlson & Donavan, 2013; Carlson et al., 2009). A professional sport team is also considered as a brand (Shezi, 2020). Tsiotsou (2012) emphasised that professional sport teams have brand personality like any other brand. Thereafter, referred to brand personality as the image combining the entire team such as administration, personnel, players, coaches, and fans of a professional sport team (Tsiotsou, 2012). While Braunstein and Rose (2010) referred to brand personality of professional sport teams as unique characteristics associated with sport teams and sport products. In this article brand personality of a professional sport team is defined as unique and appropriate human characteristics given to a sport team. Correspondingly, fans have perceptions about professional sport teams. For example, a team's ability to defeat its competitors may influence perception of competitiveness among fans (Karjaluoto & Munnukka, 2016).

Understanding brand personality has major benefits for professional sport teams. Sport team marketers can use brand personality as an effective tool to distinguish the sport team from other sport teams referred to as competitors (Sung & Kim, 2011). For example, Mamelodi Sundowns is perceived as the most successful sport team in the South African league by winning the PSL title more than ten times and therefore there is no other team perceived more successful than Mamelodi Sundowns. Such perception will enhance the marketing programmes of a sport team (Sung & Kim, 2011). Brand personality can attract many sponsorships to a professional sport team. Tsiotsou (2012) highlighted that brand personality can assist businesses interested in sport marketing to identify a sport team with a similar brand personality for

sponsorship deals. Therefore, it is important for sport team marketers to strive and develop a unique brands personality for a sport team that will attract lucrative sponsorship deals from successful companies. PSL sport teams in South Africa known as the Big Three have managed to attract lucrative sponsorship and begged deals from corporate companies till date (City Press, 2012). This could be based on the success of winning PSL titles more than any other teams. Mamelodi Sundowns is receiving R100 million per season from Ubuntu-Botho, while the two Soweto giants Kaizer Chiefs and Orlando Pirates receive R100 million per season from Vodacom. Therefore, other PSL teams need to win PSL titles more often to be able to attract lucrative sponsorship deals like the Big Three teams. Perceived brand personality of a sport such as prestige and distinctiveness may result in individuals developing a stronger sense of team identification (Carlson et al., 2008).

Team identification

Team identification is defined as a positive attitude indicated by a fan who strongly identifies and feels a sense of belonging in a sport team (Trust Capital Institute, 2012). Likewise, all 16 teams in PSL identified by fans are from different provinces and even across the borders. In addition, fans can apply for official membership and as official fans they then affiliate themselves to fan branches of their choice. For example, Kaizer Chiefs fans with a membership are part of Kaizer Chiefs Soweto fans branch. These individuals feel a sense of unity with a sport team being identified (Gundlach et al., 2006). In addition, Kaizer Chiefs is the leading sport team among other PSL teams in terms of team identification (Nkabinde, 2021).

Any professional sport with a higher level of team identification like Kaizer Chiefs can benefit from team identification. Gau et al. (2009) highlighted that team identification is also associated with sport consumption. In other words, fans are willing to spend money on the teams identified as their favourite teams (Carlson et al., 2008). For example, fans spend money to access the game from the stadiums and buying sport team related merchandise. As a result of team identification, game attendance, seasonal ticket purchases and sport team licence merchandise sales contribute to the sport team profit generation (Boyle & Magnusson, 2007). Furthermore, sport fans with a stronger level of team identification are always willing to pay a higher price for team licensed merchandise (Kwon et al., 2007). Soccer fans may purchase casual wear such as a team jersey that displays colours and logo of their favourite team (Fullerton, 2010). Indeed, fans have been seen in South Africa during PSL matches wearing their teams' jerseys and branded merchandise in their teams' colours such as a helmet and carrying vuvuzelas making a horn sound as they go to the stadium to support their favourite teams.

Self-congruence theory

Self-congruence theory claims that consumers prefer those brands carrying symbolic value that enable them to represent or enhance their actual or desired self-image in order to derive emotional (that is, non-functional) benefits (Kuenzel & Halliday, 2010). Consumers use brand personality to express their actual or idealised self-image to a specific brand (Keller & Rickery, 2006). As a result, this theory supports

that brand personality drives brand identification (Kuenzel & Halliday, 2010). This could be the same for team identification among PSL teams. For example, Mamelodi Sundowns is perceived as a successful team and has a potential to influence team identification among individuals who idealise their self-image as successful. The objective of this study is to model the role of brand personality influencing team identification of PSL teams in South Africa. Having an understanding of the congruence theory clearly shows that brand personality of PSL teams influences team identification among PSL teams. Therefore, the theory of self-congruence is found to be more useful to investigate the role of brand personality influencing team identification among PSL teams in South Africa.

Social identity theory

A social identification means that an individual identifies a group for himself or herself to become a member (Kim et al., 2001). Mofokeng et al. (2015) argued that team identification is a manifestation of the social identity theory. A team is classified as a social group where individuals sense oneness in that group and will be identified in the form of team identification (Gundlach et al., 2006). By identifying with a sport team, individuals show a membership in a particular social category, therefore supporting social identity (Carlson et al., 2008). In other words, individuals categorise themselves into groups (Hogg et al., 1995). For example, PSL sport teams have groups of different supporter's branches. Groups include a reference group, but not limited to groups to which people belong to but also to a group to which they aspire to belong (Kim et al., 2001). Individuals aspire to belong in a specific group because the group personalities match their own personalities. Similarly, sport fans may drop sport teams and join others in order to be associated with their personality characteristics (Carlon, 2008). For example, a fan may drop Kaizer Chiefs and join Mamelodi Sundowns because the team is perceived as successful. Carlson et al. (2008) highlighted that individuals are attracted to sport teams perceived as prestigious and distinctive and this leads to team identification. Team identification is formed through individual perceptions about the sport team (Bayrakdaroglu, 2020). According to social identification theory individuals tend to identify a team and became a member of a group because of similar personalities between them and that group. Therefore, the theory of social identity is found to be more useful in understanding the role of brand personality influencing team identification among PSL teams in South Africa.
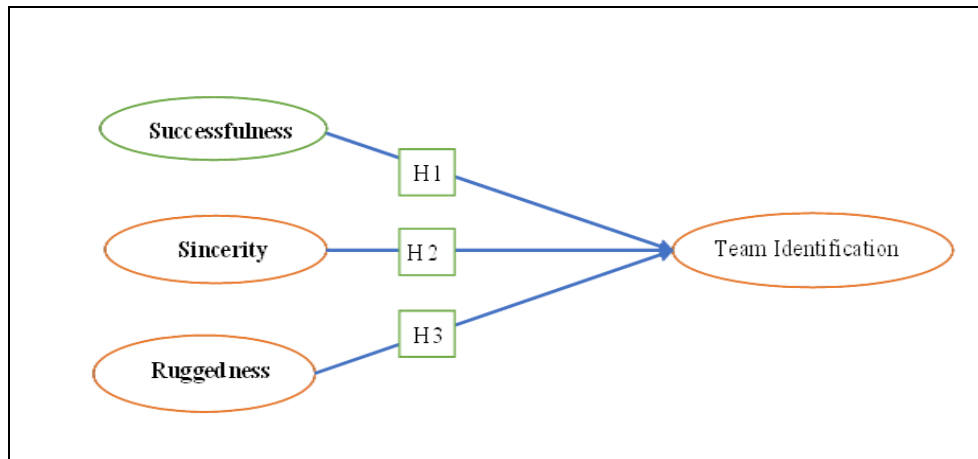
Figure 1: Proposed conceptual model
Source: Author's compilation.

Successfulness and team identification
Successfulness is linked to competence meaning the achievement of a brand (Jan, Shafiq, 2021). A professional team is a brand that need to be managed like any other brand (Braunstein & Ross, 2010). Therefore, sport teams have brand personality like the other brands. The study of Taskin and Baran, (2015) revealed that competency significantly affects sport fans' identification with their favourite team. In this study competency is linked to the brand personality "successfulness" of the sport team. Therefore, this study is in line with a study by (Taskin & Baran, 2015) proposing the following hypothesis:
H1: Successfulness positively influences team identification of PSL teams.

Sincerity and team identification
Sincerity is translated as the brand being just, fair and able to deliver its promises (Thomas & Sekar, 2008). According to (Polyorat & Preechapanyakul, 2020) sincerity has a significant influence on brand identification referring the university. Similarly, Taskin and Baran (2015) conducted a study and their results concluded that sincerity has a significant effect on sport fans' identification with their favourite team. Therefore, this study is in line with a study by (Taskin & Baran, 2015) proposing the following hypothesis:
H2: Sincerity positively influences team identification of PSL teams.

Ruggedness and team identification
Ruggedness reflects being active, masculine and athletic (Jan, Shafiq, 2021). In other words, the sport team has strong outstanding players contributing to good performance of the team and in return, the team is perceived as active. According to the study conducted by (Polyorat, 2011:62) it was found that ruggedness influences brand identification for a university brand in Thailand. Therefore, this study is in line with a study by (Polyorat, 2011) proposing the following hypothesis:

H3: Ruggedness positively influences team identification of PSL teams.

Research Methodology

As it was stated in the previous section, the main objective of this study is to investigate the role of brand personality influencing team identification among PSL teams in South Africa. In order to achieve research objective of this proposed study a descriptive research design and quantitative research method was used.

A self-administrated questionnaire was used as an instrument that included four sections (Section A, B, C and D). Section A comprised of demographic information of the participants, Section B included screening questions regarding sport interest among the participants and Section C included items in the form of questions to be rated using a Likert scale (1strongly disagree- 6 strongly agree) regarding team identification. Lastly, Section D included items in the form of questions to be rated using a Likert scale (1strongly disagree- 6 strongly agree) regarding the perceived brand personality of PSL teams. Measurement items used in the scale of the study in capturing the responses of the participants were adapted from previously validated scales. The items for team identification were adapted from Swanson *et al.* (2003) while items for perceived brand personality were adapted from Braunstein & Ross (2010).

Generation Y is the largest population in group in South. Majority of these Generation Y students are still at the universities enrolled for tertiary qualification. Therefore, Generation Y university students were the target population for this study. The participants were full-time students registered at two public higher education institutions in South Africa, namely a traditional university and a university of technology. Convenience sampling method of non-probability sampling was employed during the data collection process. A self-administered questionnaire was distributed to collect data from the participants. Data for this study was collected from the Sedibeng district in Gauteng, South Africa. A total number of 435 questionnaires were completed, and this sample is believed to be satisfactory for the type of analysis required for this study (Malhotra, 2010; Blanche *et al.,* 2006).

The study utilised descriptive statistics, reliability and correlation analysis. In addition, confirmatory factors analysis, specifically structural equation modelling (SEM) was used to validate and model the role of brand personality influencing team identification. The Statistical Package Social Sciences (SPSS) and Analysis of Moment Structures (AMOS), Version 27 for Windows were used to perform the analysis for this study.

Research Results

Correlation and reliability analyses
Table 1 illustrates reliability and correlation analyses. Cronbach alpha coefficients (α) were computed using SPSS 27. All the variables considered in this study were above the 0.60 (Malhotra, 2010) and 0.70 (Hair *et al*., 2010) as presented in Table 1. In addition, the figures in Table 1 indicate that the coefficients between each of the variables were statistically significant and in the expected direction. In addition, there was no correlation coefficient above 0.90 suggested the absence of multicollinearity issues between the variables measured in the study. Composite reliability (CR) produced values in excess of 0.70 and average variance extracted (AVE) produced values in excess of 0.50 giving further support for composite reliability and convergent validity (Hair et al., 2010; Malhotra, 2010).

Table 1. Correlation and reliability analyses.

Variables	(α)	TI	BP 1	BP 2	BP 3
Team Identification	0.788	1000			
Successfulness	0.916	0.372	1000		
Ruggedness	0.805	0.316	0.508	1000	
Sincerity	0.785	0.341	0.478	0.526	1000

Confirmatory factor analysis
The confirmatory factory analysis consisted of two stages, namely identifying and confirming the measurement model and developing a full structural equation model testing the developed hypothesis.

Measurement model
SEM was utilised to investigate the role of brand personality influencing team identification as shown in Figure 1. SEM is a multivariate analysis technique that is used to determine the extent to which a Priori Theoretical Model is supported by the sample data (Schumacker & Lomax, 2010). In accordance with the principles of conducting SEM, the "measurement model was initially specified and identified, and the measured indicator items were assigned to the latent variables of the model" (Hair *et al.,* 2010). The measurement model is presented in Figure 2 below.
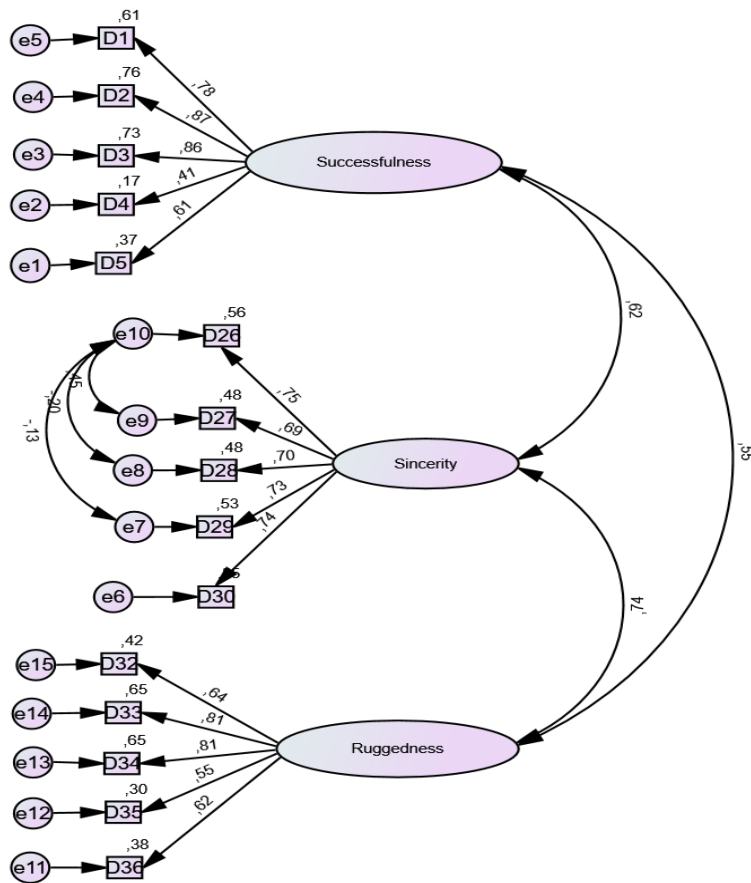
Figure 2: Measurement Model of BPITI

The measurement was assessed by several fit indices namely: λ2/df, GFI, AGFI, RMSEA, NFI, TLI, CFI and IFI. All fit indices met the recommended values and perfectly fit the measurement model in Table 2 below.

Table 2. Measurement model fit assessment

Model fit indices	λ²/df	GFI	Absolute fit indices			Incremental fit indices		
			AGFI	RMSEA	NFI	TLI	CFI	IFI
Acceptable scores (values)	<3.00	>0.90	>0.80	< 0.08	>0.90	> 0.90	> 0.90	> 0.90
Result of the Proposed SEM	2.956	0.93	0.90	0.06	0.92	0.93	0.95	0.95

Source: Hair *et al.* (2010); Malhotra (2010)

Structural model

Afterward, a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) comprising eight (4) latent and manifest variables, Team identification, Successfulness, Ruggedness and Sincerity were conducted. Items below 0.5 factor loadings were deleted as presented in Figure 3 below.
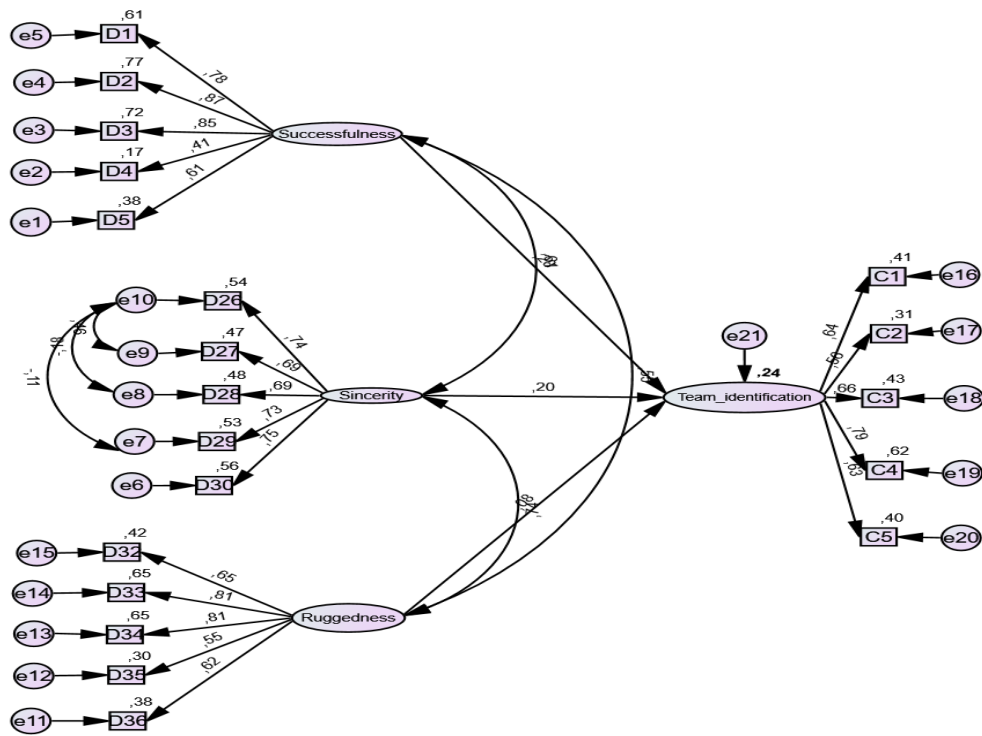

Figure 3: Structural Equation Model of BPITI

SEM is assessed by the goodness-of-fit index (GFI). There are several indices used to assess SEM such as Tucker Lewis index (TLI), adjusted goodness-of-fit index (AGFI), incremental fit index (IFI), and comparative fit index (CFI). Such goodness-of-fit index was calculated in order to ensure the reliability of the structural model as presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Structural model fit assessment

Model fit indices			Absolute fit indices			Incremental fit indices		
	λ^2/df	GFI	AGFI	RMSEA	NFI	TLI	CFI	IFI
Acceptable scores (values)	<3.00	>0.90	>0.80	< 0.08	>0.90	> 0.90	> 0.90	> 0.90
Result of the Proposed SEM	2.357	0.921	0.897	0.056	0.904	0.931	0.942	0.942

Source: Hair *et al.* (2010); Malhotra (2010)

Estimates of the Hypothesised Model

Table 4. Hypotheses testing

Structural path			Std. Reg. Weight	S. E	C.R	P. value	Results
Successfulness Identification	→Team		0.227	0,110	3.718	***	Accepted
Ruggedness Identification	→	Team	0.078	0.158	0.848	0.397	Rejected
Sincerity → Team Identification			0.202	0.140	2.005	0.045	Accepted

Three variables of brand personality variables (Successfulness, Ruggedness and Sincerity) were proposed to be influencing team brand personality. Only two variables (Successfulness and Sincerity) showed to be statistically significant, and therefore, proved to be influencing team identification among PSL teams in South Africa.

The study proposed that H1 Successfulness positively influence team identification. The results of the study as illustrated in Table 3 reveal that there is a statistically significant relationship between successfulness and team identification ($p < 0.05$), H1 is therefore supported. Also, H3 proposed that Sincerity positively influences team identification ($p < 0.05$). These are the only two variables that were supported while Ruggedness was found not to be influencing team identification. Therefore, Ruggedness is statistically insufficient regarding team identification of PSL teams.

Discussion

Appropriate brand personality of a sport team may distinguish a team unique and better than other teams. Very few studies of brand personality, especially for sport teams have been conducted in South Africa. Literature emphasised the importance of brand personality and its benefits for sport teams. Brand personality has an ability to set a brand apart from major competitors. This is applicable to sport teams as well. Brand personality is beneficial to a sport team for higher team identification and the attraction of sponsorships. Sport team marketers are advised to investigate how sport fans perceive the brand of the team. This study closed the existing gap by identifying variables perceived as brand personality of PSL teams in South Africa. In addition, it assessed if brand personality influences team identification among PSL teams in South Africa.

The proposed study tested three, (3) variables, namely Successfulness, Sincerity and Ruggedness that can possibly influence team identification among PSL teams in South Africa. The study concluded that out of the three (3) variables that were proposed influencing team identification, only two (2), namely Successfulness and Sincerity were statistically significant, and therefore, are considered to be variables influencing team identification among PSL teams in South Africa. A sport team must win at least one competition in one season and buy competitive players in order to be perceived as successful and reflect sincerity.

The marketers of sport teams, especially those from small teams with a lower level of team identification, are advised to strive to build team brand around Successfulness. This means winning more games and cups and Sincerity meaning that they deliver on promises to their fans. In addition, companies involved in sport sponsorship should also pay special attention to these two variables for sponsorship deals as part of marketing strategies in the sport industry. Companies should therefore offer sponsorships to teams reflecting brand personality similar to the companies' brand personality.

The findings of this study support the findings of the previous studies (Taskin & Baran, 2015; Carlson et al., 2008) where success and sincerity were found as the drivers of team indemnification. In contrast, this study is not in support of the results from the study of (Polyorat, 2011:62) where ruggedness was found influencing brand identification, as this study revealed that ruggedness is not influencing team identification of PSL teams among Generation Y university students. Clearly, team identification is mostly influenced by Successfulness and sincerity. Ruggedness might be applicable to other brand categories such automobiles.

Conclusion

The objective of the study was to model the role of brand personality influencing team identification among PSL teams in South Africa. To achieve that objective the study used a scale developed outside South Africa. Therefore, future studies should be conducted using the brand personality scale developed in South Africa to measure

brand personality of sport teams. In addition, this study only used the quantitative method to measure the brand personality of sport teams. It is therefore recommended that both quantitative and qualitative methods to be used as mixed method for future studies. Ruggedness was not found to be of any significance in influencing team identification. Therefore, this study recommends that Ruggedness should be included in future studies. The findings will support or oppose findings of this current study.

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WPŁYW OSOBOWOŚCI MARKI NA IDENTYFIKACJĘ ZESPOŁÓW PREMIER SOCCER LEAGUE W POŁUDNIOWEJ AFRYCE: MODEL RÓWNAŃ STRUKTURALNYCH

Streszczenie: Zrozumienie koncepcji osobowości marki i identyfikacji zespołu dla drużyny sportowej PSL (Premier Soccer League) jest ważne zarówno dla menedżerów zespołów, jak i firm zajmujących się marketingiem sportowym. W związku z tym celem tego badania jest modelowanie roli osobowości marki wpływającej na identyfikację zespołu wśród zespołów PSL w RPA. Aby osiągnąć ten cel, w badaniu wykorzystano metodę ilościową z samodzielnym kwestionariuszem. Pozycje zawarte w kwestionariuszu uzyskano z wcześniej opracowanych i zwalidowanych skal z literatury. Kwestionariusz został rozesłany do 450 respondentów. Konfirmacyjna analiza czynnikowa do modelowania

równań strukturalnych (SEM) została wykorzystana do walidacji i modelowania roli osobowości marki wpływającej na identyfikację zespołu wśród zespołów PSL w RPA. W badaniu przetestowano trzy zmienne, które potencjalnie mogą wpływać na identyfikację zespołu wśród zespołów PSL. Wyniki badania wykazały, że tylko (2) dwie zmienne, a mianowicie Powodzenie i Szczerość, były statystycznie istotne, a zatem wpływają na identyfikację zespołu wśród zespołów PSL. Sugeruje to, że studenci z pokolenia Y mają wiedzę o zespołach PSL w RPA. W związku z tym kierownictwo zespołów PSL musi uwzględniać niezgodność osobowości marki z tą kohortą w swoich działaniach marketingowych, aby utrzymać obecnych i przyciągnąć nowych fanów z kohorty Pokolenia Y. Firmy planujące oferować sponsorowanie drużynom PSL powinny zwrócić szczególną uwagę na te dwie zmienne, jeśli pasują one do osobowości marki ich firm, ponieważ odgrywają one istotną rolę w strategiach marketingowych.

Słowa kluczowe: osobowość marki; Identyfikacja zespołu; Premierowa Liga Piłkarska (PSL); Afryka Południowa

品牌个性对识别南非顶级足球联赛球队的影响：一个结构方程模型

摘要：了解 PSL（英超联赛）运动队的品牌个性和团队识别概念对于团队经理和参与体育营销的公司都很重要。因此，本研究的目的是模拟品牌个性在南非 PSL 团队中影响团队识别的作用。为了实现这一目标，该研究使用了定量方法和自我管理的问卷。问卷中包含的项目是从文献中先前开发和验证的量表中获得的。问卷被分发给 450 名受访者。结构方程模型 (SEM) 的验证性因素分析用于验证和模拟品牌个性在南非 PSL 团队中影响团队识别的作用。该研究测试了可能影响 PSL 团队中团队识别的三个变量。研究结果表明，只有 (2) 两个变量，即成功率和真诚度具有统计显着性，因此影响 PSL 团队的团队识别。这表明 Y 世代大学生对南非的 PSL 团队非常了解。因此，PSL 团队的管理层必须在营销工作中将品牌个性不合规纳入这一群体，以保持当前并吸引 Y 一代群体中的新粉丝。计划向 PSL 团队提供赞助的公司应特别注意这两个变量，如果它们与公司的品牌个性相匹配，因为它们在营销策略中起着至关重要的作用

关键词：品牌个性；团队识别；英超联赛（PSL）；南非