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# How to Utilize Sports Psychology for Better Customer Experience in Sports Retail Store as a Distribution Content Perspective

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## Abstract

**Purpose:** Contemporary consumers are increasingly adopting public displays of their loyalty towards brands: consumer dedication surpasses loyalty in that they find various ways to show their devotion to their favorite brands. The purpose of the current study is to utilize sports psychology to improve customer experience in the sports shops. **Research design, data and methodology:** To investigate the purpose of the study and suggest the solutions, Epistemology methods were used to analyze the nature of knowledge and various forms of attaining knowledge. As such, epistemology asks questions such as “what are constitutes of valid knowledge?”. **Results:** This study figured out five theoretical results to suggest for practitioners in the sports retail shop based on prior research. According to the research, sports psychology can affect consumer buying behavior which builds upon specific demographics and their differentiating behavior. The results also show that males shop with specificity, while female consumers are likely to shop for pleasure. Men are also less frequent shoppers than women. **Conclusions:** Above all, this study concludes that a consumer decision-making study is vital in the sports retail business, and information about consumer decision-making can be an influential factor for sports retailers to increase their competitive advantage.

**Keywords :** Sports Psychology, Customer Management, Distribution Perspective

**JEL Classification Codes :** D31, L81, L83,

## 1. Introduction

Hedonic psychology is defined as the study of what makes life experiences pleasant (Witkowski, 2020). Hedonic psychology focuses on positive aspects of human experiences such as positive institutions, positive individual traits, and positive subjective experiences (Araújo, Ribeiro, & Paúl, 2017). This area studies the activities from which people obtain enjoyment and those that contribute to the pleasure that people feel in their daily lives, such as

sporting events. For example, sports spectatorship gives pleasure to the mind because it results from emotions and cognitions blending and giving meaning and experience. Fernandes, Correia, Abreu, & Biscaia (2013) studied *The Relationship Between Sport Commitment and Sport Consumer Behavior*. According to the researchers' commitment to sports can be reviewed based on Thibaut, & Kelley (1959), social exchange theory that people participate in sporting activities depending on whether their participation is sufficiently favorable. According to Ortiz (2015), contemporary consumers are increasingly adopting public displays of their loyalty towards brands: consumer dedication surpasses loyalty in that they find various ways to show their devotion to their favorite brands.

However, the study of Nunes, & Arruda (2015) connect consumer products with both a symbol and utilitarian purposes. The premise is driven by the fact that products' choice is associated with different meanings; the products

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occupy the consumer's life and make a personal decision; thus, consumers define and redefine their products. For example, sports spectators obtain benefits from attending sporting events. Either they can experience the event through broadcast media or the internet (Fernandes, Correia, Abreu, & Biscaia, 2013). Fanatic consumption is associated with the pursuit of activities with a level of passion that is generally out of proportion to other more temperate consumers in the same product category. Those products sometimes could be manufactured by two companies that were in the strategic process of merger and acquisition (Kang, Nantharath, & Hwang, 2020). According to Ortiz (2015), fanatic consumption represents an enduring form of consumer involvement with the product, characterized by a persistent commitment to resources. It represents an intense dedication that could be described as unrealistic, excessive, or uncritical. Just like consumers in other industries, sports consumption is no different. The sports fan can develop a long-term commitment to a specific team, exhibiting an enthusiastic form of responsibility that is overwhelming and uncritical.

Fernandes and his associates (2013) refer to sport consumption behavior as involving consumers when they choose, buy products and services associated with the sports that satisfy their needs. This type of consumer behavior significantly contributes to the economic performance of the sporting industry. Spectator consumption behavior is exhibited when searching, participating, or evaluating a sporting event that will satisfy consumer needs. According to Ortiz (2015), contemporary consumers line up for Harry Potter books, wear clothes that show their loyalty to Star Trek, and own all the episodes of tapes of their favorite stars such as Andy Griffith. More passionate fans dress up to impersonate their sports stars. Thus, the level of consumer devotion depends on their commitment to the specific sport.

Therefore, sporting also involves tangible goods, products, and services manufactured, marketed, and distributed in the sports industry. Sports retailers sell their products depending on the associated benefits to the consumer with sporting goods, including sportswear, sports shoes, and sports practice support material. Traditionally, sports shoes were considered as a sports participant product. However, things have changed with sports shoes being part of almost everyone's wardrobe. Consumers use these products for many reasons, including evidence of their lifestyle: a consumption behavior whose objective is not to enjoy the quality of the products but associated with acquiring a public reputation, distinction, and portrayal of consumer loyalty. Therefore, it is crucial to study how to employ sports psychology for improving customer experiences in sports retail stores.

## 2. Literature Review

This paper aims to study how to use sports psychology to better customer experience in sports retail stores. The sports products and services industry, including countries and organizations, consider the importance of studying consumer behavior to evaluate their consumer preferences and experiences. According to Fletcher (2010), the sporting industry is a big business that involves big cities and big organizations. On the contrary, big companies, and as a matter of fact, all companies can be viewed as sports. Factors such as commitment to a sports organization are associated with inducing fanatic consumption. Spectatorship, fanaticism, and favoritism are connected with the balance between benefits and costs. A framework described by the study of Scanlan, Carpenter, Simons, Schmidt, & Keeler (1993) was influenced by the psychological processes associated with sports participation, that defined sports commitment as a psychological state that represents the desire to proceed with the involvement in a particular sports program or align with specific sporting material.

Theorists of consumer behavior point out the concept of commitment as pivotal since it shows consumer resistance to change. This means that even with persuasion, such as involving an alternative product, consumers will still be loyal to the same product. Therefore, emotions that arise with a commitment to a sport have been studied and related to consumer commitment. The attribution-dependent emotions are defined as the emotions that arise due to praiseworthiness, including respect, pride, admiration, and blameworthiness, such as anger, frustration, and irritation. Spectating a team that wins a specific game creates more emotions despite the valence. Another consequence of sports spectatorship is basking in reflected glory (BIRGing). According to Spinda (2011), BIRGing refers to sharing in the glory of the winning party with whom the consumer is associated somehow. BIRGing has based on the premise that fans increase their relationship with a winning team to enhance their self-esteem regardless of whether their connection may be trivial or critically incidental.

On the contrary, cutting off reflected failure (CORGing) is a form of ego protection theory that involves spectators distancing themselves from an unsuccessful team. Die-hard fans tend to BIRG more and CORG less than fans with low and moderate commitments. The assumption is that die-hard fans are more psychologically committed to the team. However, in either circumstance, self-esteem due to the outcome of a game but can be a temporary effect. Marketing specialists are always interested in understanding the factors that cause consumers to buy certain products. Impulse buying refers to unplanned

purchases or the customers' immediate need to purchase goods they did not plan to buy. Sports products are classified under impulse purchases since they convey the attitude of the one who buys them. As already described, sports have a strong psychological and socioeconomic impact on consumers. These key factors describe the key characteristics of sports consumers.

Fletcher (2011) cites Trevor Slack's observation that sport is big business and that big business is primarily involved in sports. In other words, the whole management and marketing domain can have much to study from sports psychology and match them to business management. Apart from the fact that sporting events stimulate consumer purchases based on their moods and attitudes, sporting psychology can also be studied and applied in improving employee performance and well-being. For instance, management researchers have investigated outcomes when managers use a coaching approach to enhance employee performance.

Therefore, aspects of sports psychology that focus on mental skills, the capacity to focus and concentrate, performance routing, mental imagery, and self-talk can be applied in enhancing employee performance and well-being. Fernandes and his associates (2013) studied the relationship between consumer behavior and sports involvement in light of the social exchange theory. According to the researchers, sports consumers' behavioral involvement is directly associated with how much time they spend on sports. In this case, involvement is viewed in terms of the amount of time people dedicate to sporting activities. The level of participation is a reliable predictor of the consumers sporting behavior. Thus, the level of involvement is directly associated with marketing performance since it is a strong predictor of the amount of time an individual will spend in a specific activity.

Based on the social exchange theory, consumers will continue to participate or connect with a sporting activity as long as they consider it beneficial. The commitment is propagated by a relationship where the benefits outweigh the costs. Similarly, consumers will be committed to participating in a sporting activity so long as the practice coincides with a positive experience. For instance, highly committed sports fans and players are likely to buy more sporting products. Fernandes and his colleagues (2013) found that a sports participant's ability to use sports shoes is on the higher average, followed by sportswear and other training equipment. Consumers mostly associate sports shoes with a specific lifestyle in contrast to sportswear and training equipment.

In a study by Chew (2016) to investigate *The Role of Social Influence in Purchasing Sports Apparel*, demand for sporting goods is influenced by the general population's increased sports participation and the increased acceptance

of sportswear daily wear. Therefore, while athletes buy sports apparel to use for sporting purposes, the general population engages in purchases for other purposes. In response, the sporting industry participates in much advertising to influence consumer choice. This is because sports can be consumed through media channels such as radio, television, and the internet. As a result, sports retailers work towards improving the broadcast media audiences, including premium cables, magazines, television options, and satellite networks. Therefore, retailers such as Adidas and Nike and many other entrants like Li-Ning from China invest in the advertisement to influence brand awareness and market share.

Bae, & Miller (2009) compared consumer behavior between males and females buying sports apparel. The researchers were motivated by the traditional assumption that consumers display consistent consumption behavior regardless of gender. However, male and female consumers project divergent consumer behavior relative to product advertisements. For instance, female consumers show more complex information processing criteria than male consumers. According to Bae, & Miller (2009), female consumers comprehensively analyze product advertisements and information while male consumers portray simple information processing criteria. While both men and women buy almost the same products, women tend to spend more time than males shopping and searching for product information. Also, female consumers hold different attitudes towards shopping and purchasing and are more dominant than male consumers.

On the contrary, male consumers are viewed as unique shoppers, mostly purchasing camping gear, insurance, and camping gear. Moreover, despite males spending less time shopping than females, they spend more money than females. Bae, & Miller (2009) found that despite female consumers being more interested in product information and engaging in much impulsive purchasing than male consumers. Female consumers also show increased interest in high-priced products for believing that brand and price are the significant indicators of quality. Despite female consumers spending more time at the store, they also need extensive assistance with decision-making since different brands, colors, and sizes make them more confused over the product to purchase. These assumptions show that male and female consumers will show different behavior patterns when buying sports apparel.

Abdomaleki et al. (2017) state that successful sports marketing began when retailers began interpreting both the why and how of sports spectatorship behaviors. These involved the study of the psychological factors associated with spectatorship, which influence the endurance and the consumer behavior of sports fandom. Sports fandom consumption is related to psychological aspects that are

directed towards a variety of sporting products. The action of both coaches, athletes, and sports fans and the factors that influence their association with specific sporting products, is key to developing marketing strategies for retailers, including organizations and organizers of sporting events. These are the concepts that sport retail stores need to understand to identify and supply their needs, expectations, and abilities.

**Table 1:** Main Summary of Prior Literature

Key factors for Practitioners	Attitudes of Narcissist Customer
1: Theorists of consumer behavior	* Male and female consumers project divergent consumer behavior relative to product advertisements.
2: Sports marketing for sports psychology	* Successful sports marketing began when retailers began interpreting both the why and how of sports spectatorship behaviors.
3: Management and marketing domain	* Marketing domain can have much to study from sports psychology and match them to business management.
4: Analysis between male and female customers.	* Male consumers are viewed as unique shoppers, mostly purchasing camping gear, insurance. Despite males spending less time shopping than females, they spend more money than females.

### 3. Method (Epistemology Positioning)

Epistemology is associated with the nature of knowledge, which means that it asks basically “*what* are constitutes of valid knowledge, and how can people obtain that knowledge?” To achieve the purpose of the current study, the present author utilized an interpretivism paradigm to ask subjective knowledge. Usually, scholars should demonstrate the legitimacy of their research model based on philosophical grounding which states what kind of knowledge can be obtained possibly (Woo, & Kang, 2020). The present study follows an interpretivist paradigm because it could create a research framework that may guide practitioners in the distribution channel, merging sports psychology strategy. Moreover, ‘Interpretivism’ may lead researchers to answer their research questions reasonably, providing the adequate social contexts for resolving issues at a given time. As the attributes of the interpretivism applied for this study, the present author used a qualitative method to collect context data from prior literature, aligning with an interpretivist point of view (Woo, & Kang, 2020).

There is little doubt that qualitative methodologies will be suitable with Interpretivism approaches because qualitative approaches usually try to investigate why and how situations happen inductively. Furthermore, these

methodologies are unlike positivist paradigms methods, which implies qualitative methods are critical and do not bound to the rules of science. For instance, Becker in seminal research pointed out that the method of quantitative approach can be expressed as ‘passive dolls’ due to limitations for answering why things happen in the research. That would also be limited to understand how findings happen (Kang, & Hwang, 2018; Han, & Kang, 2020). Research designs should be a comprehensive approach that a researcher combines various additives of a research logically. The researcher desires to deal with the studies hassle efficiently, and as such, the research design is a blueprint for the gathering measurement, and correct presentation of findings. Therefore, a research design ought to be on the same line with its method which can obtain credibility and persuasiveness. For that reason, the present author obtained reasonable contents from existing prior studies and analyzed it thoroughly based on trustable contents in the literature. As a result, this study was able to provide theoretical solutions regarding sports psychology for better customer experience.

The present author insists that a content analysis is a suitable approach for this study based on the study of Woo, & Kang (2020). First reason is because there are huge, existing contents in the sports psychology literature for supply chain management. Thus, the present author could obtain numerous textual data. Second, previous research has confirmed that the reliability of content analysis depends on consistently coding in the identical way across topics and texts. As long as researchers who analyze the same data interpret the data in the same way, it remains safe. Third, The research design through data obtained from prior studies is appropriate if different researchers can replicate the same findings when using the same epistemological paradigm, methodology. For instance, the methodology may be appropriate as long as the researcher has other brief evidence for investigation and confirms that the evidence is completely independent of the study.

Because research that the present author mentions is a qualitative method, new evidence available needs to consider the results and researchers might find it as textual formation, open public data, or the form of interpretation. Nevertheless, the research can be invalidated if there is no any means to measure, Woo, & Kang (2020) suggested that research design will be adequate based on the following supporting reasons:

1. This study obtained theoretical contents from prior literature.
2. The collected content was analyzed thoroughly for its validity and reliability in the prior literature.
3. The analyzed text included the independence of monitoring among various subjects



**Figure 1:** Step Up Process of Qualitative Textual Analysis

## 4. Theoretical Results

Consumer buying behavior builds upon specific demographics and their differentiating behavior. Worth noting, consumer behavior is associated with emotions. According to sporting psychology, hedonic consumers are interested in value, excitement, or entertainment. These consumers are interested in the emotional reward related to the product they are purchasing. Borrowing from hedonism, Ainsworth, & Foster (2016) found that consumers feel emotionally rewarded when they shop in a comfortable retail environment. Consumer comfort can be found among retailers who provide layouts, color, and music as they shop. Therefore, retailers should be on the watch out to capture the interests of their consumers.

### 4.1. Hedonic Consumers

Based on Kirgiz (2014), hedonic consumers are defined as those who enjoy consuming a specific product based on how they think. These consumers prefer not only the best products but also those that make them happy. Therefore, apart from the comfort that may be provided by retailers, consumers can buy products because of the meanings the products give them. These consumers buy for various uneconomical reasons such as entertainment, physical activity, and individual satisfaction. Hedonic consumers also purchase goods for status, attractiveness to the reference groups, and bargaining enjoyment. They are also consumers who engage in the highest number of impulse purchasing. They also tend to wear the latest fashion and choose among the most expensive brands. Moreover, these consumers put much importance on the store's color and decoration.

Consumer behavior is often influenced by multiple factors that could be either psychological or personal. However, sports retailers cannot control most of these factors, which they should consider. For example, apart from hedonistic consumers whose decisions are influenced by non-product factors, rational buyers tend to consider branding and product quality and cost. Therefore, sports retailers can employ the theory of hedonistic consumers to

ensure that they always satisfy the specific consumer's needs. This involves focusing on emotional completion while considering special emotional qualifications.

Çal, & Adams (2014) investigated *The Effect of Hedonistic and Utilitarian Consumer Behavior on Brand Equity*. The researchers found that hedonic consumption can further be extended to include cultural aspects. The researchers argue that cultural values can have a hedonic effect on consumers, such as consumers purchasing products due to cultural conditioning stimuli. For example, sports consumers mostly buy sportswear merely to associate with specific sports teams, personalities, or lifestyles. Therefore, retailers can combine cultural conditioning with other stimuli such as aesthetics, taste, symbolic experience, and symbolic meaning to achieve competitive advantage and consumer loyalty from hedonic consumers.

### 4.2. Team Identification

However, team identification, involvement, or fandom has various social and emotional effects on consumers. In this regard, team identification is the psychological relationship between sports teams and their fans by extending individual identity to the team. Team identification makes fans motivated to contribute to the team's success to enhance their feelings of respect and pride. Team identification is associated with terminologies, such as team loyalty, fan identification, and psychological attachment. Team identification is based on the social identity theory, which is the individual will to develop and maintain a positive social relationship when the group value is higher.

Awareness of membership, which is associated with the desire to belong, is the first step to allegiance, belongingness, or loyalty. Allegiance results in consistent and durable behavior. The study of Kang, & Hwang (2017) suggests that an individual can move from team awareness up to the commitment. Therefore, fans can develop team identification through team awareness. That means that fans can move through the stages of developing team identification just by knowing the team. Therefore, the way fans will attend or watch their teams through broadcast media will depend on team identification. Fan identification with the team creates an emotional attachment and commitment to the sports organization. For instance, fanatical supporters spend more money buying sports products. There is also the relationship between team identification, attitudinal loyalty, and customer satisfaction.

Retailers should take advantage of team identification to stimulate impulse buying among sports fans. According to Prayag et al. (2020), the concept of team identification seems to be a good predictor of customer satisfaction and loyalty, such as the potential to engage in future purchases. Team identification is also essential for stimulating

behavioral loyalty, including impulse buying, money spent on the team, and related merchandise. Therefore, retailers can invest in advertisements that seek to increase team awareness to increase team identification. According to Bodet & Bernache-Assollant (2011), by improving team identification, there is also an increase in games' actual attendance and eventually an increase in impulse buying and customer loyalty.

### **4.3. Basking in Reflected Glory (BIRGing)**

Basking in reflected glory is the spectator's sensitivity to the team's performance. For example, Fans tend to wear a team's apparel when the team has won than when the team is losing. As already described, BIRGing is either controlled by either the fan's self-esteem or the other fans' esteem (Helm, & Salminen, 2010). On the contrary, CORF is the tendency of spectators to distance themselves from their teams when they are not winning to maintain their self-esteem. BIRG and CORF are measures of individual allegiance (Spinda, 2011). Spectators who feel that their identity is enhanced or threatened by the team's performance are likely to experience emotions, leading to behavioral control loss such as impulse buying. BIRG is a positive psychological perspective about consumer behavior and is useful for explaining consumer allegiance to a specific brand. As already described, several factors, such as decoration, color, quality, and cost, can be used to stimulate consumer allegiance and impulse buying. BIRGing and CORFing concern the consumer's attitude and emotions towards the brand explicitly. If the consumer's attitude towards the brand is elevated, they are likely to engage in impulse buying and portray consumer loyalty by engaging in more purchases in the future.

### **4.4. Brand Images and Loyalty**

Just like sporting itself, sports apparel is conspicuous and are susceptible to social influences. For instance, consumers treat sports apparel with many attributes, including design, material, and aesthetics. Consumers choose a particular brand, color, and type of sports apparel, creating an identity for the users as members of a specific sports group. Based on Nunes, & Arruda (2018), the consumption of particular goods is not a way for the wealthy to project their status but a means for those who do not emulate their status. Therefore, consumers' objection for pure material value must be replaced with favor for social meanings and stratification.

Ströbel & Germelmann (2020) explore new methods of brand management in sports research. The researchers considered the brand management process level for national sports organizations, professional football clubs, among other sports entities. Ströbel & Germelmann (2020),

contemporary managers no longer believe that winning is the principal goal. Instead, the consumer's perception of the entities' brand image and their spectator behavior towards the organization are now more crucial. Thus, managers are investing in branding at a comparable level with the team's sporting success. Brand management has evolved to become key in the sports market. However, sports fans may not agree with the renewed focus on brand management. In the English Premier League (EPL), a group of Manchester United Football Club (MUFC) collaborated to form an alternative club, FC United of Manchester, for disagreeing with the club's acquisition of an external investor.

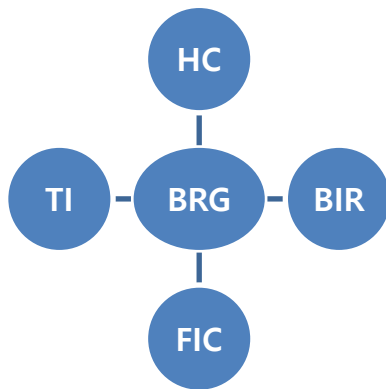
This form of behavioral brand loyalty is associated with consumer penetration. According to Romaniuk & Nenycz-Thiel (2013), consumer penetration is the number of consumers who buy a specific brand within a particular timeframe, which does not vary among consumers. All consumers are collectively by brand penetration, which is considered heterogeneous with specific consumer behavioral loyalty. Romaniuk & Nenycz-Thiel (2013) define consumer-based brand equity as the aspects of customer knowledge that differentiate their behavior towards the brand. Consumers who align themselves with a specific brand potentially have past experiences with a particular brand and potentially its competitors.

According to Nam (2011), brand loyalty and image are mainly built by the product's ability to meet the consumers' expectations. However, it is solely the brand's responsibility to meet its consumer expectations, which leads to customer satisfaction (Romaniuk, & Nenycz-Thiel, 2013). Extensively engaging customers can achieve brand loyalty with the brand. This is because the brand is an essential component of the customer's intention to purchase, which builds trust. The brand needs to form an opinion and image in the consumers' minds that is distinct from its competitors. Attitudinal loyalty has the role of connecting the consumer to the brand because it is built upon past experiences (Romaniuk, & Nenycz-Thiel, 2013). The impact of the brand on the consumer can be evaluated through the consumer's shopping experiences. This is because consumers used a preconceived notion about the brand's value or the quality of a product while making their purchases.

### **4.5. Factors Influencing Consumption**

Apart from the overall factors that influence consumers' buying behavior, cost and gender are also crucial for determining consumer loyalty. These can be achieved by studying specific target audience buying behavior. Retailers can use promotions to entice consumers into impulse buying or brand loyalty. This is because there is a big difference between customer involvement and the level of purchase.

Highly involving the consumers allows them to gauge between price and quality while consumers who are not engaged weigh between the competitors' prices to determine the best possible price. Additionally, there are differences in the shopping experiences of men and women. Males shop with specificity, while female consumers are likely to shop for pleasure. Men are also less frequent shoppers than women. When shopping for sportswear, shoes, and practicing equipment, women are more concerned about quality, price, recreational impulse, and brand consciousness.



- \*HC - Hedonic Consumers
- \*TI - Team Identification
- \*BRG - Basking in Reflected Glory
- \*BIR - Brand Image Loyalty
- \*FIC - Factors Influencing Consumption

Figure 2: The Structure of Theoretical Findings

#### 4. Conclusion and Discussion

Retailers in the sports industry can see the value of sports psychology and its relationship with consumer behavior. Sports psychology is a useful tool for analyzing, modifying, and directing consumer behavior in the sports industry and other sectors. For sports store retailers to significantly impact their consumers, they would have to evaluate several psychological factors that inform buying behavior. This review has found that consumer attitude, influenced by hedonic behavior, and utilitarianism is an important factor when studying individual consumption. Although hedonic consumption plays less in influencing brand equity but enhances impulse buying, it is an essential determinant of consumer buying trends. The most important conclusion drawn from this perspective is that if a retailer's main objective is to increase consumer hedonic towards any product or the whole brand, there is also the potential for the retailer to improve the consumer's brand association.

The psychological factors pointed here, including

BIRGing and CORGing, team identification, and the psychological influence of gender on consumer behavior, are pivotal for converting customer experience into a long-term relationship with the brand. In sporting psychology, sociocultural factors social class have minimal impact on the consumer's buying behavior. For example, consumers can buy high-quality apparel merely to emulate their sports stars. Therefore, retailers should determine other factors other than cost and quality that are associated with consumption. Gender differences are necessary since both male and female shoppers manifest varied consumption behavior. Female consumers spend more time doing their shopping than male consumers. However, male consumers spend more money shopping than female consumers. Besides, although there are no differences in product purchases among males and females in sports, female consumers will be more concerned about quality and price issues than male consumers. Retailers should take advantage of this psychological perspective and use it to improve their brand value.

This study aimed to determine how sports psychology can be used to improve customer experience in sports retail stores. This study has examined the psychological factors that influence consumer behavior in the sporting industry and associated them with consumer buying behavior, which can be reciprocated in the sports retail store. A consumer decision-making study is vital in the sports retail business, and information about consumer decision-making can be an influential factor for sports retailers to increase their competitive advantage. This review does not discuss all the psychological variables associated with consumption in sporting and spectating. Therefore, future researchers should consider more psychological variables.

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