



Managing Relationship Marketing between Football Club Organization, Players, and the Fans Club Community

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Abstract

Purpose: This research aims to analyze the relationship marketing between football club organizations, players, and the fans club community. **Research design, data, and methodology:** An ethnographic approach was used to observe for eight months in the community, interviews, and documents analysis in Bonek Mania community fans club and Persebaya, a football club management in Surabaya, Indonesia. **Results:** The results show that the management of the football club has maintained the football high-end brand image in the national league. Stakeholders have endeavored to build the values and shared meaning with the public and cohesively with Bonek Mania. The struggles and achievements are intended to maintain the local collective memory of Surabaya's patriotism as the "city of heroes." Sustainable relationships were built by professional football club managers, players, and the fans club to foster the spirit, economic resources, and sustainable development. **Conclusions:** This research implies that it can provide direction for the management of football clubs by paying attention to relationship marketing, developing unique local values to build the customers' loyalty. Further implications were discussed.

Keywords: Branding, Community, Football Fans Club, Persebaya Surabaya, Relationship Marketing

JEL Classification Code: H53, H72, I31, L83

1. Introduction

Football clubs grow the emotional side of the relationship between products and consumers in terms of marketing communication. The sense of belonging to a football club grows and strengthens with various events involving consumers or supporters. Speak football is thus not just a game but a long-term relationship between the idol brand and its fans or fans club. From an academic perspective, brand identity is an effective strategic tool and an essential source of sustainable competitive advantage, which benefits organizations, including corporately managed football clubs. Buil, Catalán and Martínez (2016) mention that the organization's various dimensions that need to be managed and controlled internally are essential because brand identity builds brand image.

As with many products, football is seen as a more of popular and growing sport globally. Football is the focal point that allows the audience to feel an attachment to a team. For football clubs, the support provided by supporters to the club is not only a source of motivation for players during matches. Still, it can also play a role in helping the club's financial needs or providing moral support when the club is in an unpleasant situation. Every year, millions of football fans worldwide invest time, energy, and money to support their favorite team. Thus, sports fans engage in various behaviors (Vallerand, Ntoumanis, Philippe, Lavigne, Carbonneau, Bonneville, Lagacé-Labonté, & Maliha, 2008). This fact demands the importance of a communication strategy that focuses on consumer experience and uses it as a spokesperson to generate positive sentiments towards brands, including in the context of football (Srivastava, 2019).

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Brand names in sports clubs have the privilege of providing a range of diverse elements compared to common product and service brands. Football clubs are considered public property or anyone willing to be emotionally attached to the name or geographic area where they live. Therefore, it is necessary to pay attention to attributes such as sustainable production, consumption, and distribution only a small part of the sports club's products (Gladden & Funk, 2002). Emotional ties to the club cannot be prevented by preference. The stronger the supporters' emotional bond with their club, the stronger their perception of the club as a brand.

Many individuals who love football then label themselves as supporters of the football team or as supporters. Supporters play a role in economic and socio-political cycles as a tangible form of strengthening brand equity. Supporters are social groups, namely associations or units that live together because of the reciprocal relationship and influence each other. Supporters of a club usually share ideas and experiences with the club they support and eventually form a brand community. Fillis and Mackay (2014) see social integration as very important in building the loyalty of football team supporters.

The formation of the brand community explains why football clubs can create strong ties to supporters in the sports fan community and increase their participation in the rituals and traditions of the community. Supporters as a brand community seem to provide many positive results for the club, including increasing the intensity of coming directly to matches, buying original club merchandise, and giving praise to the club's game to others (Arai, Ko, & Ross, 2014). Hedlund (2014) sees the importance of formally supporting supporters in providing participation because they create value.

A closer concept in looking at the relationship between supporters and football clubs is relationship marketing management. The concept of relational marketing is the effort to establish a relationship between consumers and entities that provide products or services. The concept for a football club brand is a behavioral entity and an active partner in several relationships with consumers (Fournier, 1998). Consumers also develop emotionally solid relationships with companies and brands, therefore often by themselves, companies drive efforts to build relationships (McAlexander, Schouten, & Koenig, 2002).

Football is the most popular sport in the world. Therefore, football fans are consumers with unique behavior with their football club brand. Demographically, organizations around the world are becoming increasingly homogeneous (Cayolla, 2014). In Indonesia, people's enthusiasm for football is relatively high, both in national and international matches. Indonesia is said to be the country with the third most fanatical football fans after England and Argentina. The difference between Indonesia and other countries is that Indonesia does not have a team that has ever entered the world's top 16, but Indonesian people like football. Domestically, Indonesia consists of thousands of islands with residents of various ethnicities, languages, and cultures. The football team representing each city is very emotionally strong with their cultural identity. Defrianto, Rahayu, and Hidayah (2019) also found the characteristics of soccer fans in various cities in Indonesia providing militant support local football clubs in Indonesia. Rohman (2019) said that the loyalty of football club fans must be improved as a meaningful resource. Football league matches in Indonesia are almost always filled with spectators who are supporters of the competing clubs. These carnivals can be seen from the average density of supporters in Indonesia. Ferrari (2019) stated that traditional football fandom had been transformed physically and virtually by social networks.

The uniqueness of football club fans is their very extreme emotional side to build brand loyalty. Football fans fill the stadium when the match is played at home in various match events, but sometimes fans will watch their football club while visiting the opponent's territory. However, football clubs must create a good club image to allow supporters to give positive expression and image. This way makes it easier for supporters to build a close relationship with the club.

The emotional relationship of consumers in marketing communication activities is often different from the concept of rationality in the decision-making process in acquiring a brand. Abosag, Roper, and Hind (2012) found a strong emotional connection that examined the relationship between brand emotion and brand extension among professional football club supporters. Football fans who have close ties to the club will continue to support and watch the match live even if the club they support is not at its best. Therefore, Bodet and Chanavat (2010) suggest that professional football clubs need to clearly define their strategic marketing to enhance the other two dimensions of brand equity, namely brand image and loyalty, which represent essential importance to differentiate themselves.

The various previous studies above show concern for the brand loyalty of a football club. However, the analysis of a change in soccer organization with relationship marketing was rarely the attention of previous researchers. Meanwhile, Indonesia has dozens of professional football clubs that bear the names of big cities geographically. The local identity of this football club reflects the primordial context and explores the emotional aspects of football fans from a relationship marketing perspective. This research chose the Persebaya club from Surabaya City as the ethnographic location for several reasons. First, Persebaya, in the past five decades, has always been at the top of the football standings in Indonesia. Second, Persebaya fans are very loyal, have high militancy in supporting every match, and are respected by their opponents. This discussion covers the strategy of the Persebaya relationship marketing to improve the image of the fan club outside the organization.

The research question in this article is how Persebaya Surabaya football club manages relationship marketing communication with the supporters' community. How does the Persebaya supporters' community carry out the shared meaning as an identity and foster loyalty based on local values and patriotism into the football fandom?

2. Literature Review

In the literature review section, the origin and development of the mascot and the definition and function of the Olympic mascots will be introduced.

2.1 Relationship Marketing

Relationship marketing is a change in the mindset that previously companies were more focused on competition to a mindset based on interdependence and mutually beneficial cooperation. Moreover, relational marketing is growing and developing nowadays (Payne & Frow, 2017), especially in an online relationship (Steinhoff, Arli, Weaven, & Kozlenkova, 2019). In the context of this interdependent relationship, the football club and the club's fans share the same drive for the progress and future of its business. Therefore, a marketing approach based on good relationships will provide customers with positive feedback to the organization. At the same time, followers or consumers can judge the quality of the relationship, resulting in consequences such as psychological consequences and behavioral consequences.

The importance of the relationship marketing concept that was put forward lies in getting to know each customer closer by creating two-way communication by managing mutually beneficial relationships between customers and the company. Cooperation will thus give birth to a new culture of mutual interest, as Knox and Gruar (2007) argue, that a cooperative inquiry approach was used to explore stakeholder relationships. Zhang, Watson, Palmatier, & Dant (2016) mentioned the dynamic relationship marketing with four relationship forms, according to each customer's level of commitment, trust, dependence, and relational norms.

Several previous researchers mentioned the importance of relational marketing that is essential to attract and retain customers. Gaurav (2008) suggested using a relational marketing approach to ensure that customers stay loyal and return for the same products and services. From the customer's point of view, the essential factors used to meet customer needs are trust, commitment, mutuality, and long-term relationships with customers. Therefore, the relational marketing strategy must create more value for consumers.

Football clubs, like products, have a long-life cycle, from generation to generation. Therefore, relational marketing in this context aims to find customer lifetime value. After the lifetime value was obtained, the next goal is to increase the lifetime value of each customer group from year to year. Tsotsou (2013) recommends that sports team marketing managers develop and care for a loyal community of sports fans.

2.2. Brand Identity and Community

A brand is a name, term, sign, symbol, or design, or a combination of them, intended to identify the goods or services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate the products or services of those of competitors. Rebranding is an effort to restore the previous brand with the same name but with the enrichment of new attributes and stronger associations to achieve a new vision. Brands for services are a promise of future satisfaction, and service companies build strong brands through distinctiveness, performance, message consistency, and emotional involvement of consumers (Berry, 2007). This concept is essential to be associated with the football club brand and the product in general. According to Al-Zyoud (2018), the marketing strategies are more inclined towards intentional branding than functional branding. The same thing will be found in the context of branding the football club as a common property of a social network.

Distinctiveness that emerges from brand characteristics, including geographic and sociocultural location, creates an identity. A brand identity is a unique set of brands to deliver a promise to customers and includes a core identity and a different identity. The core identity is the core, enduring essence of a brand that remains constant as the brand moves into new markets and products. Identity can be identical to brand personality as a set of distinct human personality traits that direct brands to pay attention to their environment (Conejo, 2021). Meanwhile, Linsner, Sotiriadou, Hill, & Hallmann (2021) suggested the importance of building a sports brand identity, image, and congruence, including the personalities of athletes or players.

Furthermore, to be effective, brand identity needs to be aligned with customers, differentiate the brand from competitors, and represent what the organization can and will do over time (Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2000). Football clubs do the same with corporations that offer goods. Thus, a brand is a distinctive identity that distinguishes the promise of relevant, long-lasting, and credible value associated with a product, service, or organization and indicates the source of that promise.

A football fan club can be seen as a community of lovers of a brand of products and or services. A brand community is a community that is built based on proximity to a product or brand by a group of people who have

the same vision. Some of the concepts that develop from this community are related to individual identity and culture. The term "brand community" was first coined by Muniz and O'Guinn (2001) as an asset to a football club (Kim, Kim, Magnusen, & Kim, 2020; Leitão & Baptista, 2019) whose relationship must be managed to provide sustainable equity. Participants in mass sporting events such as football are critical because they are the target market and brand associations (Rice, Hambrick, & Greenwell, 2019). Furthermore, Tan and Apisit-Isariyah (2018) stated that brand community engagement is a contextual-based process of value creation and social influence on market participant perceptions, attitudes, and behavioral participation.

In addition, the existence of brand communities based on social media (a particular type of online brand community) has a positive effect on crucial community elements and value creation practices in the community and brand trust and brand loyalty (Mastromartino, Zhang, & Wann, 2020).

3. Methodology

The population of football clubs in Indonesia is almost the same as the number of provinces, regencies, and cities in Indonesia, which are administratively 542. However, only a few football clubs are strict in various matches at the national level, such as the Surabaya City Football Association (Persebaya). Among all communities, Bonek Mania Persebaya is a community that is known to be very fanatic, loyal, and creative. This study chose Persebaya to observe where the researchers were amid the community as participants.

The researcher uses qualitative methods to explain and emphasize a fundamental problem. Ethnography is used as a method to collect data from the field and documents. A series of interviews were conducted with key informants and various informants as primary data to be analyzed based on open-ended questions arranged according to a conceptual framework. Ethnography provides a more active role for cognitive modes such as observing, watching, seeing, gazing, staring, and researching (Gobo & Marciniak, 2011). Researchers engaged in real ethnographic life in the community, participated in their activities to some degree, interviewed them, collected genealogies, drew local maps, and collected artifacts, and so on (Hammersley, 2006). According to Sorce (2019), participant observation in ethnography is an opportunity to experience events in their original conditions in the field.

Ethnographic activities are carried out for eight months (from April to November 2019) in the football management and the supporter community. In the field, participants were observed and interviewed in the headquarter of Bonek Mania community, Warkop Pitu Likur, Surabaya City. The researcher, therefore, collects data from a variety of sources, but observation and relatively informal conversation is often the primary tool that works well. In life history research, the focus may even be a single individual (Lillis, 2008) and the community's expressions of activism in football culture and an effort to change them (Numerato, 2016).

The core questions posed to the interviewees were the club's brand identity and attributes, the club's brand promise, fans and how emotionally maintained the relationship between fans and clubs, and the club's brand strategy. Researchers asked open-ended questions to each participant, and they were free to answer questions in in-depth interviews. The questions include several dimensions that are analyzed according to concepts such as "football management and performance" and "stakeholders' relationship." Researchers also asked about "sponsorship involvement," "relationship marketing communication," "the future of the club," "shared values among community members," "fans club engagement," "supporter loyalty and commitment," "talent recruitment," "players commitment," and "players wealth."

Some of the interviewees (each name is abbreviated for research ethics purposes) were five key persons in football management (NanPri 40 years old, RamSu 30 years old, SiSur 35 years old, Sun 45 years old, and EkoNu 43 years old). Nine participants of Bonek Mania community also interviewed (DriPu 23 years old, FarAg 24 years old, YuNog 25 years old, DedMi 37 years old, SumEd 27 years old, HarSube 30 years old, BejoKa 47 years old, HarJo 31 years old, and DwiNug 28 years old). Three Persebaya players were also interviewed (OtaDu 25 years old, AbuRi 29 years old, and RacIri 27 years old) to get their opinion on the Persebaya club. Each interview lasted between 35 and 45 minutes which was conducted face to face and or by phone.

4. Results

4.1. Football Club Management

Shared meaning in the fan club community is inseparable from the brand identity of the Persebaya football club. It was found from within the football club organization that all management team members have beliefs and values that the strength of a team becomes the focus of rebranding for each entity after experiencing adversity in the competition. Persebaya, as a brand, is believed to have a touch of rebranding strategy with new innovative values.

Therefore, the organization started by putting together a solid team framework to start its new season in the Indonesian League competition. Immediately launching a campaign in conventional media and social media accompanies the rebuilding of the image for Persebaya to communicate its identity to stakeholders.

"We are focused on building this team from scratch. We realize that it is not easy to re-brand Persebaya. However, that is the strategy that must be taken by starting improvements from within. We start by making young players support the team. Our best performance was aimed at satisfying Persebaya fans and all sports fans." (NanPri 40 years old, private interview).

Persebaya football organization expands market recovery by increasing the frequency of matches in various cities because these events will also generate news and support from stakeholders.

"We are also developing internal competitions to continue to create young talents who can support the team in the future. Management formed this team to restart the pursuit of our success in the past decade." (RamSu 30 years old, private interview).

Team management appreciates the shared, definite meaning within the community of its lover, Bonek Mania. Therefore, the hard work of the coaches and management was aimed at achieving the best performance of the Persebaya team. Victory and consistency are also things that the Persebaya team must maintain to get full support from supporters.

"We want Persebaya to be the number one team in Indonesia and a team that the citizens of Surabaya are proud of its performance. In addition to winning, we from the management will also try to maintain consistency in every match. We present the best playing of the Persebaya team to the community, especially Bonek Mania and the progress of football in the country." (NanPri 40 years old, private interview).

"Winning is the most important thing of all. We need to maximize our efforts to generate more wins and maintain the loyalty of supporters." (RamSu 30 years old, private interview).

In this case, several clubs, the main goal is to become number one in their country, as evidenced by statements. Persebaya supporters said,

"With Persebaya's return to Indonesian football competition, we as supporters can only provide moral support on the field so that this club can be the best in this competition." (FarAg 24 years old, private interview).

"This is in line with what the supporters group said. Cconsistency and seriousness must be the basis for this team to maintain its performance." (YuNog 25 years old, private interview).

Brands that have fallen into competition need rebranding to gain consumer trust. The Persebaya brand has experienced a prolonged slump so that it requires new energy to regain its position in the Indonesian national league. The organization was then reorganized, and the achievement strategy was fundamentally changed in the context of involving the historical or cultural values of the club-loving community. After experiencing dualism for a long time and having been absent for several seasons from the Indonesian League competition, Persebaya's management had to take new steps and strategies to raise the spirits of their supporters.

"The branding of Persebaya allows management to rebuild the brand's fundamental values related to culture and geography. To enter a completely new season, we had to overhaul the entire strategy and team framework to be able to compete in the competition and have the full support of Bonek Mania. The fan club community has become our primary branding and rebranding because the community is the main component." (RamSu 30 years old, private interview).

"Rising from adversity and starting a new chapter requires careful strategic calculations for the survival of this team in the competition." (NanPri 40 years old, private interview).

Persebaya management started looking for sponsorships to help with funding. This collaboration was also done to create various activities to strengthen the relationship between the team and supporters.

"Consolidation of the fans and the community is carried out with integrated marketing communications. All types of media were used to reach elements of society both in cities and suburbs. We collaborate with local media for public service advertisements and take advantage of the open space for banners. The installation of billboards in Surabaya was used to deliver information to the people of Surabaya in every part. These communication efforts were done to start the relationship with the people of Surabaya." (RamSu 30 years old, private interview)

Marketing communications from Persebaya Management must maintain publication. What was meant by maintaining publications is updating team developments. In addition to updating through social media, Persebaya Management also uses its website to post articles about Persebaya Surabaya. This article is accessible to everyone who opens the web. The function of this regular update is to publish to the public what Persebaya Surabaya has done.

"Initially we tried to build a relationship with Persebaya supporters through a website and social media that we developed specifically to provide information about this team." (RamSu 30 years old, private interview)

This communication channel turned out to be an essential source of information for its supporters, especially in 2017, the role of social media became a new channel for providing information other than print media.

"We saw some information about this team from official social media. Much information about the internal team and its development after this dualism ended." (FarAg 24 years old, private interview)

"Management is doing many fast movements through social media, which is the basis of information for us supporters. We, who are waiting for the team's development, are greatly helped by the official platform created by this management." (BejoKa 47 years old, private interview)

"As a supporter who also has a job, I am greatly helped by Persebaya's social media. I can still access information related to the team just by looking at the team's website or Instagram." (HarSube 30 years old, private interview).

Sponsorship involvement is part of stakeholders to build community integration between professional football club organizations, the community of lovers or fan clubs, society, business, and government. Therefore, the role of sponsorship should be analyzed as one of the research objectives. Rebranding can only be done with meaningful support from sponsors. The rebranding effort required significant funding to strengthen the team internally and marketing communications to all external parties. Teams of players must be strengthened by transfers and acquisitions of players, rental of stadiums and rental of players' residences, and various components of operating costs for good club management.

"We realize that the rebranding effort is not easy. One of the keys is a highly committed collaboration with sponsorship. We strive to find sponsors who can meet the expectations and needs of the team. Building a team from the start requires enormous financial needs and must be able to manage it well. Professional cooperation is very much needed to rebuild the Persebaya brand so that it is more successful than previous, and the brand image is stronger as it has been in the past decades." (RamSu 30 years old, private interview).

4.2. Bonek Mania Community

The closeness aspect of cultural relations was used by Persebaya football management to build consumer loyalty on an ongoing basis. During the planning period for the rebranding, fans were made to yearn to watch their favorite team. The Bonek Mania fan community is looking forward to the revival of the team they support, especially when Persebaya has not played in the league for a long time. The longing for this football club fan community is part of a strategy to strengthen long-term relationships between brand owners and consumers. For the management of the football club, this pause period is a temporary rebranding preparation for fans. The break is a challenge to strengthen their feeling towards the football club brand.

"We have been waiting for Persebaya's revival as our proud team. We will always wait for the pride of this beloved city. It has been seven years since the people of Surabaya have lost their favorite sports entertainment. However, our hearts love Persebaya even more. Persebaya's name has been fused in our deepest hearts." (DriPu 23 years old, private interview).

The loyalty of supporters, consumers, or the community is necessary for building a professional football team brand. The public who loves football clubs were consumers of various products such as match tickets and various merchandise. However, followers were also core marketers to build a brand on an ongoing basis. Various previous studies have proven that consumer engagement is used as the spearhead to win the competition. Because the supporter's participation in the service delivery process makes commitment particularly relevant to the service that accompanies the product, the commitment can result from emotional attachment or cognitive computing. Higher levels of commitment were expected with successful relationships. In the context of Persebaya as a brand built by the community, a fan club is at the core of the organization's professional rebranding efforts.

"For us, the name Persebaya is a part of us. It is the lifeblood of community life. A name that cannot be separated from the life of the people of Surabaya and its surroundings. Whatever the situation of Persebaya, from generation to generation, we give full support. Since the beginning, we have committed more always to support this team no matter the conditions. As supporters, we can only give moral spirit so that this team always develops. Persebaya is our blood, our soul as patriots because it is synonymous with heroism." (SumEd 27 years old, private interview).

Shared meaning and values culturally as 'Arek Suroboyo' have a special place in the supporters' hearts. It may not be found in other cities in Indonesia because the local supporters' values and emotions continue to be put forward in their communication messages.

Previous studies have shown a significant relationship between trust and relational outcomes in business services. High commitment to the club enables the supporters to increase the supporters' efforts to continue to support the team entirely. Sometimes the supporters think that this team is not just a sports brand but has become a lifestyle brand that must always be present in their lives.

"We always try to involve Persebaya Surabaya in every part of my life. I often use Persebaya Surabaya's attributes when I go to work, I am proud." (DedMi 37 years old, private interview)

"We are never ashamed to use anything about Persebaya. We are proud to use all Persebaya products because this team has been our pride since we were in this city. Whatever Persebaya has to offer, we will consume to build our proud team." (DwiNug 28 years old, private interview).

"We also develop internal competitions to continue to create young talents who can support the team in the future." (RamSu 30 years old, private interview).

4.3. Football Players

Football players and coaching teams are the keys to winning various matches, managing human resources for football players with the perspective of selected people recruited and honed their abilities to become the best players. The integration of human resources and capital resources will determine the future of the team. The collaboration between football management, players, and sponsorship will provide a continuous stream of growth. The local and national level was expected to meet the operational needs of football clubs, especially for the players' wealth, meet the criteria for a good and healthy life for the highest achievement. The Persebaya organization realizes that providing suitable housing, excellent health services, excellent and healthy food, disciplined training schedule arrangements, and providing happiness to the players will positively impact achieving achievements in various matches.

"Persebaya communicated the recruitment of new players with a much better coaching system. Cooperation with sponsorship provides more significant opportunities for football club management to recruit several key players, making the team even more solid." (DedMi 37 years old, private interview)

"We also hope that with the new sponsor, the players can feel comfortable in the team. The comfort of the players can trigger them to be able to give their best performance." (HarJo 31 years old, private interview).

Persebaya football players feel proud to be the chosen ones to win every game. They focus on providing the best performance for Persebaya, and their daily life is full of discipline. This commitment is not only given by the supporters but also by the team management. Those who form the team from the start must be able to maintain the confidence of the fans. Some Persebaya players said:

"I am very proud to be a Persebaya player. Something I've dreamed of since I was a child. Even my parents encouraged me to achieve this because we have been Persebaya fans for generations. Now I have to give the best performance for the team and Bonek Mania." (OtaDu 25 years old, private interview).

"Playing as a Persebaya team has particular value because I feel deep emotions when defending my hometown. When I was playing on the field, my spirit was getting higher with Bonek's support in all stadium corners." (AbuRi 29 years old, private interview).

"The fans' trust in us (management) must be paid for with good performance. We must make them believe that we can control this team well. Persebaya must strive to reach the top position in the national league, so that customer engagement was maintained on an ongoing basis." (NanPri 40 years old, private interview).

5. Discussion

The cultural approach in marketing communication is the right way to build the emotional side in the context of the loyalty of football fans. Primordial elements were put forward to build sustainable long-term relationships between managers of professional football organizations and their supporters. Some researchers see it as 'carnival fans' gathering in large groups, singing, drinking, and making noise is at least as important as what happens on the field (Nocker, 2015). Football fandom is a form of carnival expression because football supporters (even those who follow the game) belong to many different groups and subcultures of fandom. The Bonek Mania community for the Persebaya team is robust in carrying out the local values of the second-largest city in Indonesia. Local values such as a high fighting spirit to achieve freedom were manifested in football fans. The findings of this research are like Delia and Katz's (2019), which says that football fans join the community through cultural deepening and shared meaning that fosters a sense of belonging and uniqueness while traveling.

The ranking of football clubs in the national league can fluctuate, but performance analysis is critical as a basis for carrying out a rebranding policy. Performance analysis in professional football investigations is to explore the involvement of player choice. For comparison, in Carling, Wright, Nelson, & Bradley (2014) and Carling, Wright, Nelson, & Bradley (2016), performance analysis in soccer is fundamental to examine the level of interaction that reflects the coach's willingness and ability to involve players in discussions about their performance in the player's self-reflection process. Scelles and Andreff (2019) also note how important the football team's performance is in various matches and the quality of the individual players within the club.

Sponsorship determines its existence to support the football club and its fans club community. Analysis of determinants of sponsorship and the number of sponsors shows that companies become sponsors (Naidenova, Parshakov, & Chmykhov, 2016), which act as marketing partnership longevity and not just for a moment (Jensen & Head, 2020). Persebaya Surabaya is culturally approached by several large national companies more because of the geographical aspect of East Java or Java in general, which is densely populated and becomes a potential market for various products and brands. The results of this cultural study are also in line with other studies analyzing the relationship between sports sponsorship, team support, and loyalty. Because the ideal strategy to improve Persebaya's brand image is that achieving more wins accompanied by the collaboration will get greater exposure, and therefore, ROI for sponsors increases (Alonso-Dos-Santos, Moreno, & Alguacil, 2019).

From the point of view of the producer-consumer relationship, consumer involvement in branding activities was expected. However, it is more culturally unique that football supporters' involvement further includes the embedded values and awakens the primordial side of the community to contribute to the branding and rebranding of their idol football club. Primordial, in this case, is related to teams at the local and national levels in the region, but the phenomenon has been global with transnationalism football. As found in this study, the research of Stander and De Beer (2016) identifies similarities to fandom found elsewhere in the world but with major differences in the general characteristics of football fans resulting from the geography, distance, and league structure of the domestic football infrastructure. They also found that the fan engagement strategy robust to build football club image.

Loyalty and commitment of the football fan community were not separately demanded as stakeholders. However, other components such as professional football organization, growth climate, and government support are needed. The measure of growth and progress of football clubs goes from the local to the national, regional, to global levels. Football clubs were faced with the challenge of international activity and to exploit new football markets overseas without disappointing the local fans who have supported the team. Maderer and Holtbrügge (2019) suggest that segmenting customers into satellites and local fans helps managers design internationalization activities for specific segments. Meanwhile, football club fans get unique experiences, especially on the field when watching, because they get good entertainment, togetherness with family and friends, affordable ticket prices, and convenience to security and accessibility (Mazzei, Moraes, Carlassara, & Jr, A. J. R., 2020).

The Bonek Mania community was loyal and full of struggle to come to the venues for national matches in Indonesia. Although he often must deal with domestic security forces, Bonek Mania has always determined to be present in matches. Keshtidar, Sahebkar, Talebpour, and Kalashi (2018) also found about the character of the brand loyalty of football team fans. However, patriotism in the city-brand-sport-event relationship is critical. Kapareliotis and Voutsina (2020) stated the patriotism is a vital element, and brand personality has a more significant relationship with brand loyalty. In this way, the Persebaya Surabaya brand has merged into cultural values, communicated as a high brand association.

The practical implication of the research results is the importance of every football club to strategically plan marketing relationships from the cultural and emotional aspects in the long term, even from generation to generation, regarding the history and performance of the football club.

6. Conclusion and Limitations of the Research

Persebaya Surabaya carried out a rebranding to position the club as a true champion by carrying the values of heroism. The football club manages relationship marketing communications with the Bonek Mania football fan club community to establish long-term business relationships from generation to generation. Meanwhile, the Bonek Mania community carries out the shared meaning as an identity and fosters loyalty based on local values and patriotism into the football fandom.

This research has limitations. Firstly, a study using an ethnographic approach is robust in terms of observation and interviews. In the future, survey research is needed to understand the psychological and sociological aspects that can generalize the Bonek Mania community in Indonesia. Second, the study of football in Indonesia has limitations because the government's regulatory climate is often related to economic-political aspects outside the essence of the sports world that upholds *Citius, Altius, Fortius*, which is Latin for "Faster, Taller, Stronger." The Olympic motto put forward by Pierre de Coubertin at the time of the formation of the International Olympic Committee in 1894 should be a vision of sport development. It should not be of temporary political interest at the local and national levels. Thus, future research requires more extensive interviews with a more significant number of sources to be processed using software such as NVivo. Third, the study in this paper was based on the point of view of marketing communication with a focus on football rebranding. In contrast, future studies require multidisciplinary discussions such as sociology, psychology, anthropology, law, and public policy so that the understanding obtained will be more comprehensive.

The implications of the research results recommend that further research with a quantitative approach be carried out in the future by considering various factors that influence and influence each other.

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