



The Effects of Sports Team Evangelism on Licensed Product Purchase Intention: The Moderating Role of Website Usage Quality

Gökhan Aydın¹

Abstract: *This study aims to investigate the impact of sports team evangelism on licensed product purchase intention, with a particular focus on the moderating role of website usage quality in this relationship. The research was conducted using questionnaires with a total of 422 students studying at Atatürk University Faculty of Sports Sciences, selected through a convenience sampling method. In order to test the hypotheses, the moderating effect in the relationship between variables was examined using Process "Model 1", and a moderated multiple regression (MMR) analysis was performed. According to the regression analysis results, it is seen that the model explains approximately 49% ($R^2=0.492$) of the variance in the intention to purchase licensed products. It was found that sports team evangelism and website usage quality have positive and significant effects on the intention to purchase licensed products. The interactive effect (moderating effect) of sports team evangelism and website usage quality variables on the intention to purchase licensed products was found to be significant. The results show that sports team evangelism and website usage quality are important factors in shaping fans' purchase intention. While sports team evangelism strengthens fans' purchase intention by increasing their emotional bond and loyalty with the team, website usage quality also plays a moderating role in further strengthening this relationship.*

Keywords: Fan, Evangelism, Licensed Product, Purchase Intention, Website Usage Quality

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1. Introduction

One of the primary goals of sports organisations is to cultivate a loyal fan base (Dwyer et al., 2015). Fans who demonstrate a strong attachment to their teams not only follow competitions closely, but also demonstrate their loyalty by purchasing licensed merchandise associated with their teams (Olson, 2018). This behaviour shows that fan loyalty goes beyond an emotional connection and becomes a form of behaviour with significant economic value. In this context, the concept of evangelism provides a valuable framework for understanding fan loyalty from a broader perspective. Derived from the concept of brand evangelism, evangelism suggests that individuals who previously had no connection with a brand develop positive perceptions through interactions with passionate brand advocates (Matzler et al., 2007). In the context of sport, evangelism refers to the process by which fans embrace their teams as brands and extend this sense of belonging beyond their immediate communities, effectively promoting the image of their teams to a wider audience. This phenomenon, called sports team evangelism, plays a critical role in increasing the brand value

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¹ Asst. Prof., PhD., Atatürk University, Faculty of Sports Sciences, Department of Sports Management, Erzurum, Türkiye, gokhan.aydin@atauni.edu.tr

of sports clubs and expanding their fan base. This process helps teams gain loyal fans while also creating an effect that strengthens club loyalty (Aydın & Kurudirek, 2025).

The fans actively support their teams and act as brand ambassadors within their social circles, promoting their teams through various forms of advocacy. Driven by a strong sense of belonging, evangelist fans share positive comments and information about their teams, helping to increase their teams' popularity. Such interactions strengthen the bond between fans and their teams while enhancing the teams' visibility in the wider community. This growing influence allows sports clubs to build fan loyalty and gain valuable marketing benefits. Sports team evangelism reinforces brand value and helps teams reach broader audiences (Amani, 2023). Engaging with both loyal fans and those influenced by them enables teams to expand brand awareness effectively. In this context, sports teams also leverage modern marketing dynamics to gain a competitive advantage and encourage deeper engagement with their fans. The intense competition within the sports market, coupled with an increasingly selective consumer base, necessitates the development of customer-centric strategies by brands (Rein et al., 2006). Accordingly, marketers aim to strengthen long-term relationships with consumers by developing innovative techniques and offering attractive options to enhance customer loyalty (Samaha et al., 2014).

In recent years, digital platforms such as official club websites have become strategic assets for sports clubs aiming to build stronger and more lasting relationships with their supporters (Şirin & Sevilmiş, 2019). Fans who are deeply committed to their teams and act as informal brand ambassadors within their social environments look for more than just simple, transactional communication. They expect emotionally rich digital experiences that reflect their identity and loyalty to the team (Herrera et al., 2020). Official websites, which serve as the primary digital representation of sports organizations, go beyond merely sharing information; they help shape the public's overall perception of the club's brand (Uralman & Akçay, 2022). Elements such as typography, color choices, visual content, and layout structure significantly influence how users perceive the site and affect the emotional connection they develop with the club (Featherman & Hajli, 2016). When fans with a high level of team identification encounter a visually coherent and aesthetically engaging website, their involvement tends to deepen, and their psychological bond with the team becomes stronger (Ioakimidis, 2010). The digital fan experience today, however, is not solely determined by visual elements. Features that encourage active participation, including live match updates, polls, comment sections, and online forums, enable fans to interact with the club and other supporters rather than merely consuming content (Ha et al., 2017). Personalized content and tailored product recommendations based on user interests further contribute to a more engaging and satisfying experience (Paek et al., 2021). These interactive and personalized elements not only enhance user engagement but also influence consumers' perceptions and purchasing behavior, particularly their intention to buy licensed products. As online shopping habits become more widespread, the digital presence and reputation of a brand have started to play a more critical role in consumer decision-making processes (Aydınhan & Erat, 2020). This shift toward digital engagement presents sports clubs with significant opportunities to foster fan loyalty and generate revenue through platforms designed with the user experience in mind (Longstreet et al., 2022; Nalbantis et al., 2017; Romero-Jara et al., 2023; Wong & Haque, 2022).

Despite the increasing research on various factors affecting consumer behavior in sports marketing - such as psychological motivations (Funk & James, 2006), service quality and game-day experiences (Yoshida et al., 2014), and digital engagement through social media platforms (Rai et al., 2021)- little attention has been paid to the interaction of sports team evangelism and website usability in shaping purchase intentions towards licensed products. Previous studies on sports team evangelism have primarily focused on its relationship with fan loyalty, word-of-mouth behavior, and brand advocacy (Batra et al., 2012; Dwyer et al., 2015; Yoshida et al., 2013), emphasizing how highly identified fans promote their teams voluntarily and passionately. Many studies have also examined the relationships between fan loyalty, brand advocacy, and online purchasing behavior (Katlav & Öney, 2018; Longstreet et al., 2022; Nalbantis et al., 2017; Yüzgenç et al., 2022). However, the combined influence of sports team evangelism and website usability on purchase intentions has not been adequately explored. Therefore, the current study aims to contribute to the literature by investigating how these two important variables interact to shape consumers' intentions to

purchase licensed products. By examining them together, this research offers a new perspective on how sports teams can enhance both fan engagement and market reach through effective website design. Moreover, identifying the impact of website usability specifically on the sales of licensed products may assist sports clubs in shaping their digital marketing strategies more effectively. In this context, one of the central focuses of this study is to explore the role that website usability plays in the relationship between sports team evangelism and the intention to purchase licensed products.

The importance of this study lies not only in its theoretical contribution to the field of sports marketing but also in its potential to inform real-world practices aimed at improving digital engagement and fan interaction strategies. From a practical standpoint, the results may support sports organizations in developing more user-centered digital platforms that enrich the fan experience and nurture stronger emotional ties. Insights into the interplay between fan evangelism and perceived website quality can guide the creation of targeted online strategies that foster deeper engagement and encourage the purchase of officially licensed products. Additionally, the study offers valuable recommendations for optimizing digital investments, curating personalized online content aligned with fan identity, and strengthening long-term loyalty in an increasingly digitalized sports consumption landscape. This study will contribute to the existing literature by examining the complex relationships between fan evangelism, website usage quality, and consumer behavior, and will provide actionable insights for sports teams seeking to strengthen brand loyalty and increase licensed product sales in the digital age.

The rest of the study is structured as follows: In the second section, a review of the relevant literature is provided under the title of “theoretical background and research hypotheses”. In the third section, the research methodology, study design and data collection process are explained. In the fourth section, the findings of the study are presented. In the fifth section, these findings are discussed, the study results are summarized and academic and practical recommendations in the field of sports marketing are presented.

2. Theoretical Background and Research Hypotheses

Evangelism refers to individual or collective efforts aimed at spreading religious beliefs. This concept typically refers to active efforts made to communicate and direct others towards a particular belief (Aydın & Kurudirek, 2025). Initially originating in a religious context, the concept has gradually expanded to other domains, particularly in commercial areas such as brand management and consumer behavior. Brand evangelism can be defined as the process of advocating for and recommending a brand or product to others (Doss, 2010). In this context, individuals who share positive opinions about a brand or product and communicate these views to others are referred to as the brand's “evangelists”.

Sports team evangelism is derived from this evolving concept. Sports team evangelism can be defined as the conscious or unconscious efforts made by fans to transfer their attachment and passion for their teams to those around them, with the goal of strengthening the team’s brand image (Katz & Heere, 2016). Evangelist fans, due to their emotional attachment to their teams, strengthen the team’s brand value and image by sharing their positive opinions about the team with their social circles (Yoshida et al., 2014). These fans not only watch their teams for entertainment purposes but also actively work to spread the team's success within their social networks and encourage others to think positively about the team (Yadav et al., 2023).

Evangelist fans do not only discuss their team's successes within their social circles, but also actively promote the team’s brand by spreading information about the team (Muniz Jr & O'guinn, 2001). This process helps strengthen the team’s brand image and reach a wider audience. The support the team receives on digital platforms and the active participation of its fans directly contribute to the team’s economic and social success (Heere & James, 2007). Evangelist fans merge their identity with the team’s identity, which not only makes them fans who watch the team but also transforms them into brand ambassadors for the team (Amani, 2023). In this context, sports team evangelism becomes an essential strategy that strengthens the team’s brand value and fan loyalty. Sports team evangelism also has a strong commercial impact. By targeting these types of fans, teams can increase licensed product sales and enhance the team's economic value. This

is because as evangelist fans adopt and identify with the team's brand identity, they may demonstrate an increased demand for licensed products of their teams. These products not only symbolize the team's success but also reinforce the fan's identification with the team's identity. Fans materialize their attachment to the team through licensed products, and purchasing these products allows them to feel like a part of the team (Yoshida et al., 2014). In this context, it can be argued that the level of sports team evangelism can influence the intention to purchase licensed products. The relationship between these concepts can be better explained through social identity theory, brand community and the theory of planned behaviour. Additionally, the concept of Basking in Reflected Glory (BIRGING; Cialdini et al., 1976) offers a complementary perspective by suggesting that fans who strongly identify with a successful team tend to enhance their self-concept through that association and are therefore more likely to engage in supportive behaviours such as promoting the team or purchasing licensed merchandise.

First, social identity theory provides a strong foundation for understanding why highly identified fans, or evangelistic fans, are likely to engage in consumption behaviors that reinforce their group membership (Tajfel et al., 1979). According to this theory, individuals derive a significant part of their self-concept from their affiliation with social groups, such as sports teams. As fans internalize their connection with a team, they seek ways to express this identity publicly, often through the consumption of team-related products. Purchasing licensed merchandise becomes a symbolic act of loyalty and belonging, reinforcing their group affiliation (Wann & Branscombe, 1993). Recent empirical studies have reinforced the pivotal role of social identity in shaping fan behaviors. A meta-analysis by Lee et al. (2023) revealed that team identification significantly predicts both attendance at sporting events and the purchase of licensed merchandise, underscoring the behavioral manifestations of fan identity. Similarly, Sato et al. (2023) found that consumer-brand identification, rooted in social identity theory, enhances consumer happiness in experiential settings like sports, highlighting the emotional rewards of fan engagement. Moreover, research by Guo et al. (2023) demonstrated that self-transcendence values influence meaningful sports consumption behaviors through the mediating role of team identification and eudaimonic motivation, suggesting that deeper personal values intertwine with fan identity to drive consumption. These findings collectively affirm that fans' consumption behaviors are not merely transactional but are deeply embedded in their social identities and personal values. Second, the concept of brand community supports the notion that fan evangelism fosters stronger consumption behaviors. Evangelistic fans often serve as active members of brand communities, engaging in discussions, sharing experiences, and promoting the team both online and offline. This heightened level of involvement encourages them to support their team financially by purchasing official merchandise, as it aligns with their role as community leaders and passionate supporters (Muniz Jr & O'guinn, 2001). The influence of brand communities on shaping fan behaviors has been increasingly recognized in recent academic literature. Hsu (2019) found that value congruity within brand communities significantly influences brand evangelism behaviors, including positive word-of-mouth and increased purchase intentions. Similarly, Jiang et al. (2022) demonstrated that strong interactions within virtual brand communities enhance fans' identification with the brand, leading to higher engagement and loyalty. The research collectively shows that fan behavior is intricately linked to identity expression and community belonging, going far beyond mere purchase activity. Furthermore, theory of planned behavior suggests that attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control shape individuals' intentions toward specific behaviors. In this context, the positive attitudes evangelistic fans hold toward their team, combined with social pressures from their community (subjective norms), significantly increase their intention to purchase licensed merchandise (Ajzen, 1991). For instance, Kim and James (2016) found that perceived social expectations significantly impact fans' intentions to purchase officially licensed merchandise. Similarly, Yim and Byon (2020) examined the purchasing behaviour of millennial sports fans, emphasizing that social influence, particularly from peers, plays a pivotal role in influencing various sport-related consumption decisions, including the acquisition of merchandise. Lastly, research on word-of-mouth marketing indicates that individuals who actively promote a brand (or team) often feel a stronger connection to the brand and are more likely to engage in supportive behaviors, such as purchasing official products (Cheung & Thadani, 2012). Evangelistic fans, who frequently share positive content about their teams, are likely to reinforce their loyalty through consumption practices.

In summary, fans who exhibit evangelistic behavior are not only emotionally connected to their team but also motivated to express their loyalty through tangible actions-such as purchasing licensed merchandise.

Empirical studies support these theoretical frameworks. For instance, Göktaş and Tarakcı (2020) found that sports team evangelism significantly predicts behavioral loyalty, including purchase intentions. Similarly, Altın et al. (2020) reported that fans with higher levels of evangelistic tendencies are more inclined to purchase licensed products. Yüzgenç et al. (2022) also revealed a positive and significant relationship between fan evangelism and consumers' willingness to spend on team merchandise. Recent research continues to affirm these findings. A study by Sarpong and Zungu (2023) demonstrated that fan attitudes mediate the relationship between sports sponsorship and purchase intentions, highlighting the role of fan engagement in consumption behaviors. Additionally, Silva and Veríssimo (2020) found that team identification influences purchase intentions towards sponsors' products, emphasizing the impact of fan identity on consumer behavior. Based on these theoretical perspectives and empirical findings, the following hypothesis is proposed:

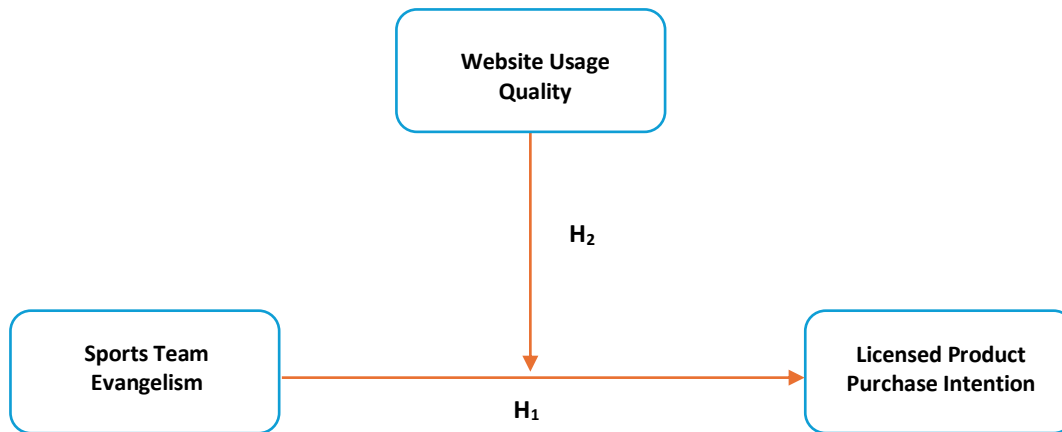
H₁: Sports team evangelism has a positive effect on licensed product purchase intention.

While sports team evangelism is a strong predictor of purchase intentions, the quality of the website that supports the purchasing process can either amplify or diminish this effect. Website usability refers to the ease with which consumers can navigate a site, the efficiency of the purchasing process, and the overall user experience, including factors such as load time, design clarity, and accessibility (Belanche et al., 2012; Karaosmanoğlu et al., 2016). According to the theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 1991), a user-friendly and functional website reduces perceived barriers to purchase, making it easier for consumers to act on their intentions. This suggests that when the website usability is high, fans are more likely to follow through on their purchase intentions by interacting with the team's digital platform in a more meaningful way (Dedeke, 2016). Additionally, research has shown that website usability enhances user satisfaction, which is directly linked to higher purchase intentions in online shopping (Liu et al., 2017). For sports teams, this can be especially relevant, as fans not only seek a seamless shopping experience but also expect their emotional connections with the team to be supported through a well-designed, functional digital environment (Huang & Chen, 2017; Yoshida et al., 2013).

When both sports team evangelism and website usage quality are present, fans are more likely to exhibit strong purchase intentions. A high-quality website enhances the fan's overall experience and helps fulfill their emotional and functional needs, reinforcing the positive effect of sports team evangelism on purchase intentions. In contrast, if the website's usability is low, fans may experience frustration or difficulty in completing purchases, reducing the likelihood of acting on their evangelistic tendencies (Belanche et al., 2012; Kocabulut & Albayrak, 2017). This dynamic aligns with findings suggesting that the effectiveness of online shopping behaviors, including licensed product purchases, is contingent upon the website's ability to facilitate a smooth and satisfying user experience (Kim & Kim, 2020). Furthermore, as noted by Yoshida et al. (2013), fans' purchasing behavior can be intensified when the website provides a seamless interface that matches their emotional investment in the team. In summary, the interaction between sports team evangelism and website usability plays a key role in shaping purchase intentions for licensed products. This theoretical framework supports the following hypothesis H2.

H₂: Website usage quality moderates the relationship between sports team evangelism and licensed product purchase intention, and this relationship is stronger at higher levels of website usage quality.

The theoretical model of the study created within the scope of hypotheses is shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Research Model

3. Methodology

3.1. Sample and Data Collection

The universe of this research consists of a total of 1270 students studying at the Faculty of Sports Sciences of Atatürk University. The sample group of the study consists of individuals who were selected using the convenience sampling method and who volunteered to participate in the research. The sample includes a total of 422 participants, 141 female and 281 male.

Before starting this study, first, the ethics committee approval was received from the Atatürk University Faculty of Sports Sciences Ethics Sub-Committee (Date: 20 November 2024, Decision Number: 2024/11-126). The research data were collected using two methods: online via Google Forms and face-to-face. Collection took place between 13 and 27 January 2025. All questions in the online survey were made mandatory to ensure completeness and consistency of data. Participants were required to respond to every item to minimize missing data. To prevent multiple submissions from the same individual, the “sign-in required” feature of Google Forms was activated, allowing only one response per verified email address. During the face-to-face data collection process, participants were asked whether they had already completed the online survey. Those who reported prior participation were excluded from the face-to-face administration. Furthermore, after data collection, both datasets were cross-checked to identify and eliminate any potentially duplicate or suspiciously similar responses. These measures were implemented to ensure that each participant contributed only once to the study, thereby maintaining the integrity of the dataset and enhancing the validity of the research findings.

3.2. Data Collection Tools

Personal information form, sport team evangelism scale (STES), licensed product purchase intention scale (LPPIS), and website usage quality scale (WUQS) were used as data collection tools in the research. In this study, two of the measurement instruments utilize a 5-point Likert scale, while one employs a 7-point Likert format. The instruments were administered in their original forms as developed by their respective authors, and their validity and reliability were assessed based on these original structures. The presence of different Likert scale formats does not pose a methodological concern as long as no direct comparisons are made between raw scores across different measures (Krosnick & Fabrigar, 1997). Nevertheless, to account for potential discrepancies in scale sensitivity -which may artificially inflate or deflate effect sizes in regression based analyses- all variables were standardized using z-scores prior to analysis. This approach allowed for the control of scale range differences and ensured the meaningful interpretation of interaction effects in the moderation analyses (Aiken & West, 1991).

3.2.1. Sport Team Evangelism Scale

The scale, developed by Dwyer et al. (2015) and adapted to Turkish by Yüksekbilgili (2017), consists of 12 items and four sub-dimensions (advocate, advertise, antagonize and assimilate). The scale is a 5-point Likert type and has the evaluation as “1: I strongly disagree; 5: I strongly agree”. In the reliability analysis conducted by Yüksekbilgili (2017) during the adaptation process, the Cronbach alpha (α) reliability value was calculated as 0.830 for the “advocate” sub-dimension; 0.882 for the “advertise” sub-dimension; 0.826 for the “antagonize” sub-dimension; 0.823 for the “assimilate” sub-dimension and 0.936 for the total of the scale.

Although the original scale was designed with a four-factor structure, the exploratory factor analysis conducted in this study revealed a three-factor structure. Specifically, the “advocate” sub-dimension retained its original structure with 3 items, and the “advertise” sub-dimension consisted of 4 items. In contrast, the items from the “antagonize” and “assimilate” sub-dimensions were combined under a single factor. Given the conceptual similarities and shared features of these two dimensions -particularly their reflection of fandom's social expressions- this new factor was labeled “social fandom.” The term “social fandom” captures this broader interpersonal orientation, emphasizing the role of social dynamics in fan behavior. No items were removed from the scale, and no cross-loadings were observed. These results suggest that, while the factor structure deviates from the original model, it still offers a valid and contextually appropriate construct for the sample used in this study.

In the reliability analysis conducted in light of the data obtained within the scope of this study, the Cronbach alpha (α) reliability value was calculated as 0.796 for the “advocate” sub-dimension; 0.825 for the “advertise” sub-dimension; 0.897 for the “Social Fandom” sub-dimension and 0.914 for the total of the scale. The increase in the average score obtained from the scale indicates an increase in the level of sports team evangelism.

Although the sub-dimensions under this scale ultimately define sports team evangelism, the advocate sub-dimension essentially refers to the level at which fans advocate and support their teams. Individuals in this dimension actively demonstrate their support by sharing their positive views about their teams with their social circles. The advertise sub-dimension measures the tendency of fans to promote their teams and recommend them to others. Individuals who score high on this dimension create awareness by frequently sharing about their teams on social media or other platforms. The final sub-dimension, social fandom, indicates the extent to which fans express and reinforce their attachment to a team through social interactions and group affiliations. Individuals who score high on this dimension tend to associate with others who support the same team, engage in fan communities, and experience a sense of belonging by sharing team-related values, experiences, and successes within their social networks.

3.2.2. Licensed Product Purchase Intention Scale

This scale was developed by Katlav & Öney (2018). The scale consists of a single dimension. 4 items are used to determine the intention to purchase a licensed product. The responses to the statements were measured with a seven-point Likert scale ranging from one to seven, as follows: “1: Strongly Disagree; 7: Strongly Agree”. In the reliability analysis conducted by Katlav and Öney (2018), the Cronbach alpha (α) reliability value was calculated as 0.830 for the scale. In the reliability analysis conducted in light of the data obtained within the scope of this study, the Cronbach alpha (α) reliability value was calculated as 0.921 for the total of the scale. An increase in the average score obtained from the scale indicates an increase in the individual's intention to purchase licensed products.

3.2.3. Website Usage Quality Scale

This scale was developed by Aydınhan and Erat (2020) using the E-s Qual scale developed by Parasuraman et al. (2005), WebQual scale developed by Loiacono et al. (2002), and eTailQ scale developed by Wolfinbarger and Gilly (2003). The scale consisted of a total of 26 items, encompassing three dimensions: Seven items measuring “website efficiency”, 17 items assessing “website usability”, and two items evaluating “response time”. The responses to the statements were measured with a seven-point Likert scale ranging

from one to seven, as follows: “1: Strongly Disagree; 5: Strongly Agree”. In the reliability analysis conducted by Aydınhan and Erat (2020), the Cronbach alpha (α) reliability value was calculated as 0.898 for the scale. In the reliability analysis conducted in light of the data obtained within the scope of this study, the Cronbach alpha (α) reliability value was calculated as 0.917 for the “website efficiency” sub-dimension; 0.948 for the “website usability” sub-dimension; 0.819 for the “response time” sub-dimension and 0.963 for the total of the scale. An increase in the average score obtained from the scale indicates that the individual's perception of quality towards the website increases.

Website efficiency, one of the sub-dimensions under this scale, refers to the level at which a website enables users to access the information they need quickly and easily. High efficiency indicates that users can access the content they are looking for with minimal effort. Website usability evaluates whether a website is user-friendly, easy to navigate, and whether its overall design is suitable for user experience. Websites with high usability allow visitors to easily explore and interact with the site. The last sub-dimension, response time, measures how quickly a website responds to user demands. High response time refers to page loading speed and fast and fluid responses to user actions.

3.4. Analysis of Data

In accordance with the purpose of the study, Pearson correlation test was used to examine the relationship between the variables. Then, moderated multiple regression (MMR) was used to test the hypotheses stated in the research model. MMR is a regression analysis used to test whether the effect of the independent variable (predictor) on the dependent variable (outcome) is changed by a third variable (moderator) (Baron & Kenny, 1986). SPSS Process Macro version 4.2 application was used for regression analyses. Process Macro “Model 1” was applied to test the moderator effect (Hayes & Rockwood, 2017).

4. Findings

Table 1 shows the demographic characteristics of the participants. The majority of the participants are male (66.6%) and between the ages of 20-21 (46.2%). In terms of academic distribution, the highest percentage of students are enrolled in Coaching Education (35.3%) and Sport Management (28.4%) programs. Regarding class levels, most participants are in their 3rd year (29.6%). When examining income status, 37.0% of the participants earn between 2,001-7,000 TL, while 20.9% have an income of 2,000 TL or less. These findings provide an overview of the participants' key demographic and socioeconomic characteristics.

The skewness and kurtosis tests conducted to assess the distribution of the data indicated that the values fell within the range of -1.5 to +1.5, suggesting that the data met the assumptions of normal distribution. Additionally, no extreme values were detected that could pose a significant issue (Table 2). As stated by Tabachnick and Fidell (2013), skewness and kurtosis values within this range are considered appropriate for assuming normality in data analysis.

When Table 2 is examined, it is seen that the skewness value of STES is -0.436 and the kurtosis value is -0.511; the skewness value of LPPIS is -0.549 and the kurtosis value is -0.795; the skewness value of WUQS is -0.735 and the kurtosis value is 1.091. Since the mentioned values are distributed between -1.5 and +1.5, it can be said that the normality assumption is met and the data belonging to the three scales show a normal distribution (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013).

Table 1. Personal Information of the Participants

Variable	Group	N	%
Gender	<i>Female</i>	141	33.4
	<i>Male</i>	281	66.6
Age	<i>18-19</i>	114	27.0
	<i>20-21</i>	195	46.2
	<i>22 or over</i>	113	26.8
Department	<i>Coach training</i>	149	35.3
	<i>Physical Education and Sports Teaching</i>	74	17.6
	<i>Recreation</i>	79	18.7
	<i>Sports Management</i>	120	28.4
Class	<i>1</i>	108	25.6
	<i>2</i>	99	23.5
	<i>3</i>	125	29.6
	<i>4</i>	90	21.3
Income Status	<i>2,000 TL or less</i>	88	20.9
	<i>2,001-7,000 TL</i>	156	37.0
	<i>7,001-12,000 TL</i>	82	19.4
	<i>12,001-17,000 TL</i>	26	6.2
	<i>17,001 TL or more</i>	70	16.5
TOTAL		422	100.0

TL: Turkish Lira

Table 2. Normality Test Results for Scale Scores

Scale	N	\bar{X}	S	Min.	Maks.	Skewness	Kurtosis
STES	422	3.41	0.99	1	5	-0.436	-0.511
LPPIS	422	4.63	1.80	1	7	-0.549	-0.795
WUQS	422	3.81	0.73	1	5	-0.735	1.091

Note: STES: Sports Team Evangelism Scale, LPPIS: Licensed Product Purchase Intention Scale, WUQS: Website Usage Quality Scale.

Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was conducted to test the validity of the scales in the study. As a result of the EFA, factor structures for three different scales were revealed. A three-factor structure was determined for the STES and the factor loadings ranged between 0.57 and 0.86. These values exceed the commonly accepted threshold of 0.40 for factor loadings (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007), indicating that the items are sufficiently related to the factors. The total variance explanation rate of the STES is 70.818%, which is considered high in social sciences, where 60% or more is generally accepted as adequate (Hair et al., 2019). The KMO value was 0.911, which is regarded as “marvelous” according to Kaiser (1974), and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was significant ($p < 0.001$), indicating that the data are suitable for factor analysis.

The LPPIS shows a single-factor structure and the factor loadings vary between 0.74 and 0.93. The total variance explanation rate is at a very high level of 80.999%. The KMO value was found to be at a good level with 0.812 and Bartlett's test yielded significant results ($p < 0.001$). These results reveal that the one dimensional structure of the LPPIS is clear and reliable.

WUQS also has a three-factor structure. Factor loadings vary between 0.52 and 0.74 and are at a sufficient level. The total variance explanation rate for this scale was calculated as 63.270%. The KMO value was found to be quite high with 0.959 and Bartlett's test was significant ($p < 0.001$). These findings show that the construct validity of the WUQS is at a sufficient level. Information on all these results is shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Exploratory Factor Analysis Results

Scales	Sub Dimension Number	Factor Loading Range	Initial Eigenvalues	Total Variance Explained (%)	KMO Value	Bartlett's Test	p
STES	STES 1	0.61-0.86	6.206	70.818	0.911	2913.287	0.000***
	STES 2	0.57-0.84	1.281				
	STES 3	0.66-0.84	1.010				
LPPIS	1	0.74-0.93	3.240	80.999	0.812	1358.518	0.000***
WUQS	WUQS 1	0.52-0.74	13.541	63.270	0.959	8053.242	0.000***
	WUQS 2	0.55-0.81	1.581				
	WUQS 3	0.53-0.74	1.329				

Note: ***p<0.001, STES: Sports Team Evangelism Scale, LPPIS: Licensed Product Purchase Intention Scale, WUQS: Website Usage Quality Scale, STES 1: Antagonize, STES 2: Assimilate, STES 3: Social Fandom, WUQS 1: Website Efficiency, WUQS 2: Website Usability, WUQS 3: Response Time.

The results in Table 4 show that all three scales are structurally reliable and valid (Fornell & Larcker, 1981), as they meet the recommended threshold values for average variance extracted ($AVE \geq 0.50$) and composite reliability ($CR \geq 0.70$), indicating adequate convergent validity and internal consistency. The factor loadings of the STES scale ranged between 0.57 and 0.86, with a CR value of 0.89 indicating internal consistency and an AVE value of 0.64 indicating convergent validity. These findings indicate that the items of the scale are both consistent and represent the concept well. Although the LPPIS scale has fewer items (4 items), the factor loadings are quite high between 0.74 and 0.93. With a CR value of 0.93 and AVE value of 0.69, this scale is also strong in terms of reliability and validity. In the WUQS scale, factor loadings ranged between 0.52 and 0.81, with a CR value of 0.86 and AVE value of 0.61, indicating that the scale has sufficient internal consistency and convergent validity. In general, the factor structures of all scales are robust and it can be said that the measurements meet the validity-reliability standards.

Table 4. Reliability and Validity Results of the Scales

Scales	Number of Items	Factor Loading Range	Composite Reliability (CR)	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
STES	12	0.57-0.86	0.89	0.64
LPPIS	4	0.74-0.93	0.93	0.69
WUQS	26	0.52-0.81	0.86	0.61

Confirmatory factor analysis was conducted using AMOS software (version 25, IBM SPSS) to test the validity of the factor structures obtained in the exploratory analysis. The fit indices of the STES scale are RMSEA=0.083, CFI=0.948, GFI=0.927 and AGFI=0.826. The RMSEA value is at an acceptable level (<0.08) and the high level of other fit indices (especially CFI and GFI >0.90) indicates that the model shows a good fit in general (Hu & Bentler, 1999; Kline, 2016).

The RMSEA=0.076, CFI=0.950, GFI=0.931 and AGFI=0.886 values obtained in the LPPIS show very strong model fit. All values were within the ideal limits and the one-factor structure of the scale was confirmed (Byrne, 2010).

The CFA results obtained for the WUQS are also satisfactory. A very good model fit with RMSEA=0.067, CFI=0.932, GFI=0.872 and AGFI=0.844 values were found to be acceptable. In the light of these data, it can be said that the three-factor structure of the WUQS was confirmed (Hair et al., 2019). Information on all these results is shown in Table 5.

Table 5. Confirmatory Factor Analysis Results

Scales	$\Delta\chi^2/df$	RMSEA	CFI	GFI	AGFI
STES	3.775	0.083	0.948	0.927	0.826
LPPIS	3.483	0.076	0.950	0.931	0.886
WUQS	2.870	0.067	0.932	0.872	0.844

Note: STES: Sports Team Evangelism Scale, LPPIS: Licensed Product Purchase Intention Scale, WUQS: Website Usage Quality Scale, RMSEA: Root Mean Square Error Approximation, GFI: Goodness of Fit Index, AGFI: Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index, CFI: Comparative Fit Index, $\Delta\chi^2/df$: Chi-Square/Degrees of Freedom.

When both analyses are evaluated together, it can be concluded that the factor structures of the scales are statistically significant and reliable, the models are validated and their structural validity is supported. The data obtained as a result of the analyses show that the scales used are valid and reliable measurement tools.

A correlation analysis was carried out to examine the relationships among the variables used in the study, namely “sports team evangelism,” “licensed product purchase intention,” and “website usage quality.” The results obtained from this analysis are presented in Table 6. Accordingly, there is a strong positive relationship ($r=0.689$, $p<0.001$) between sports team evangelism and licensed product purchase intention (Ural & Kiliç, 2005). There is a positive moderate relationship ($r=0.389$, $p<0.001$) between sports team evangelism and website usage quality. Similarly, there is a positive moderate relationship ($r=0.372$, $p<0.001$) between licensed product purchase intention and website usage quality.

Table 6. Relationship between Sports Team Evangelism, Licensed Product Purchase Intention and Website Usage Quality

		Sports Team Evangelism	Licensed Product Purchase Intention	Website Usage Quality
Sports Team Evangelism	r	1		
	p			
Licensed Product Purchase Intention	r	0.689	1	
	p	0.000***		
Website Usage Quality	r	0.389	0.372	1
	p	0.000***	0.000***	

Note: *** $p<0.001$

To test the moderating role of website usability in the effect of sports team evangelism on the intention to purchase licensed products, regression analysis was conducted using the Process Macro developed by Hayes (2018). According to the results presented in Table 6, it is observed that all predictor variables included in the regression analysis explain approximately 49% of the variation in the intention to purchase licensed products ($R^2=0.492$). It was found that sports team evangelism ($b=1.163$, $p<0.001$) and website usability ($b=0.333$, $p<0.001$) have a positive and significant effect on the intention to purchase licensed products. The interaction effect of sports team evangelism and website usability on the intention to purchase licensed products (moderating effect) was found to be significant ($b=0.165$, $p<0.048$).

Based on the results presented in Table 7: H₁: “Sports team evangelism has a positive effect on licensed product purchase intention” hypothesis is supported. H₂: “Website usage quality moderates the relationship between sports team evangelism and licensed product purchase intention, and this relationship is stronger at higher levels of website usage quality” hypothesis is supported.

Table 7. The Moderating Role of Website Usage Quality in the Effect of Sports Team Evangelism on Licensed Product Purchase Intention

Independent Variables	<i>b</i>	SE	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	LLCI	ULCI
Constant	4.592	0.067	68.299	0.000***	4.459	4.724
Sport Team Evangelism (X)	1.163	0.069	16.826	0.000***	1.027	1.298
Website Usage Quality (W)	0.333	0.095	3.517	0.000***	0.147	0.519
Moderating Effect (X*W)	0.165	0.083	1.980	0.048*	0.001	0.329
Model Summary	R	R²	F	df1	df2	p
	0.701	0.492	134.943	3	418	0.000***
	X*W	R²	F	df1	df2	p
		0.005	3.920	1	418	0.048*

Note: * $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.001$

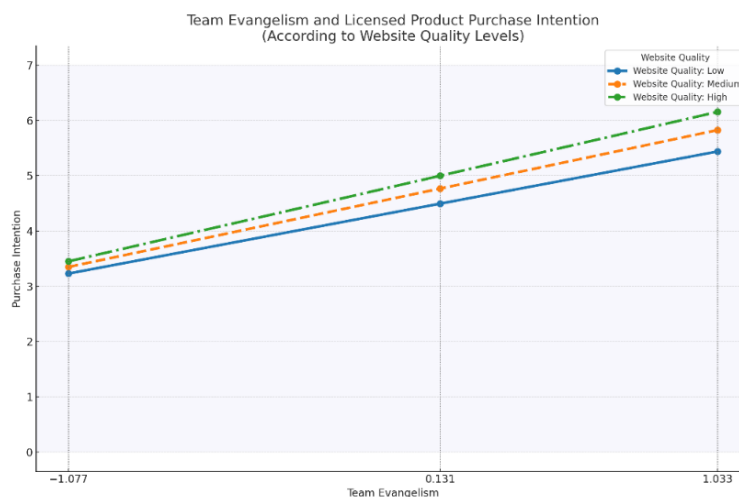
The effects of the moderator variable at low, medium, and high levels are shown in Figure 2 based on the slope analysis. The appearance of Figure 2 is derived from the data presented in Table 8. Upon examining the details of the moderating effect, it was observed that as the website usability increases (low: $b=1.047$, $p<0.001$; medium: $b=1.174$, $p<0.001$; high: $b=1.282$, $p<0.001$), the effect of sports team evangelism on the intention to purchase licensed products progressively increases. This relationship is even stronger when website usability is high. A key observation here is that the effect of sports team evangelism on the intention to purchase licensed products remains significant even when website usability is low ($b=1.047$, $p<0.001$).

Table 8. Situational Effects According to Different Values of the Moderator Variable

	WEB	<i>b</i>	SE	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	LLCI	ULCI
Low	-0.700	1.047	0.093	11.3123	0.000***	0.865	1.229
Medium	0.068	1.174	0.069	16.9989	0.000***	1.038	1.310
High	0.722	1.282	0.089	14.3377	0.000***	1.106	1.458

Note: *** $p < 0.001$

Figure 2 shows that as website usability increases, so does the slope. When website usability is one standard deviation below the mean (low level), the effect of sports team evangelism on purchase intention decreases, whereas when it is one standard deviation above the mean (high level), the effect increases. In summary, as website usability improves, the effect of sports team evangelism on the intention to purchase licensed products increases.

Figure 2. Graphical Representation of the Moderating Effect of Website Usage Quality

5. Conclusion and Discussion

This study examines the effects of sports team evangelism and website usability on the intention to purchase licensed products, as well as the interaction (moderating effect) between these two variables. The regression analysis performed using the Process Macro developed by Hayes (2018) revealed that the model accounts for approximately 49% of the variance in licensed product purchase intention. This finding suggests that the model has strong explanatory power and demonstrates robustness.

The finding that sports team evangelism significantly predicts the intention to purchase licensed products ($b=1.163$, $p<0.001$) highlights the critical role of fans' emotional and psychological attachment in shaping consumption behavior. This result suggests that evangelistic fans, who strongly identify with and advocate for their teams, are more likely to engage in behaviors that reinforce their affiliation, such as purchasing licensed merchandise. These consumption acts are not merely transactional but serve as expressions of loyalty and personal identity. This outcome is consistent with Dwyer et al. (2015), who reported that fans exhibiting evangelistic behaviors tend to participate in team-supporting actions such as game attendance and encouraging others to engage with the team. Our findings extend this understanding by revealing that such evangelistic tendencies also directly contribute to the intention to purchase, emphasizing the economic implications of psychological identification in the sports context. Similarly, the current result aligns with Doğru et al. (2021), who found that fans' psychological attachment to their teams significantly influences their purchasing behavior toward club-related products. The strength of the relationship observed in our study supports this idea and demonstrates that sports team evangelism is a tangible mechanism through which emotional bonds are transformed into purchasing intentions. Furthermore, the significant impact observed in our research resonates with Göktaş and Tarakçı (2020), who showed that brand evangelism leads to increased consumer loyalty, purchase dependency, and recommendation behavior. In this regard, our study contributes to the growing body of literature by providing further empirical support that evangelism functions not only as an attitudinal construct but also as a predictive factor for actual consumer behavior in sports. In conclusion, the current findings reinforce the view that sports team evangelism is a key psychological construct that translates affective fan experiences into measurable economic outcomes, particularly in the domain of licensed product consumption. By aligning with and expanding upon prior research, this study offers robust evidence of the marketing relevance of fan identity and advocacy behaviors.

The finding that website usage quality has a positive and significant effect on the intention to purchase licensed products ($b=0.333$, $p<0.001$) provides empirical support for the role of digital platforms in enhancing consumer engagement within the sports industry. Specifically, when a team's website is designed to be user-friendly, informative, and interactive, it facilitates a seamless and engaging consumer experience that translates into a stronger intention to purchase. This result supports the idea that website usability not only serves a functional role in facilitating transactions but also acts as a psychological bridge that strengthens fan-team interaction. In this regard, the current study's findings are consistent with Paek et al. (2021), who demonstrated that website interaction quality contributes to a more immersive and satisfying shopping experience, which in turn enhances fans' likelihood of purchasing licensed merchandise. The present study extends this conclusion by showing a direct statistical link between website usage quality and purchasing intention in the context of sports fandom. Furthermore, our findings align with previous research in broader e-commerce contexts. For instance, Dedeke (2016) and Liu et al. (2017) both emphasize that various dimensions of website quality -such as layout, navigation, and visual appeal- significantly predict purchase intentions across different consumer segments. Similarly, the study by Huang and Chen (2017) in the tourism sector highlights that consumer satisfaction with website features is a reliable predictor of future purchases and loyalty. These findings resonate with our results and suggest that perceived quality in digital interaction is a critical determinant of consumer behavior across industries. However, it is worth noting that the current results stand in contrast to findings by Mirzəyev and Benli (2025), who reported no significant relationship between website quality and purchase intention among consumers in Azerbaijan. This divergence may be attributed to cultural, technological, or contextual differences, underscoring the importance of considering regional consumer behavior patterns in digital marketing strategies. Overall, the evidence from this study

reinforces the theoretical premise that digital touchpoints such as websites play a strategic role in shaping fan behavior by enhancing convenience, satisfaction, and emotional engagement. These results underline the necessity for sports organizations to invest in high-quality, user-centric digital platforms to optimize consumer interaction and drive purchasing behaviors.

The interaction effect (moderating effect) between sports team evangelism and website usage quality on the intention to purchase licensed products is significant ($b = 0.165$, $p < 0.048$). This finding indicates that website usage quality strengthens the relationship between sports team evangelism and the intention to purchase licensed products. In other words, when usage quality is high, the effect of sports team evangelism on the intention to purchase licensed products becomes even stronger. This suggests that website usage quality plays a moderating role in this relationship.

The model is highly successful in explaining the intention to purchase licensed products ($R^2 = 0.492$). This indicates that sports team evangelism and website usability are significant factors in shaping fans' purchase intentions. While sports team evangelism strengthens the intention to purchase by enhancing fans' emotional connection and loyalty to the team, website usability also plays a role in further strengthening this relationship. These findings emphasize the need for sports teams to focus on both increasing fan loyalty and effectively utilizing their digital platforms (websites).

Theoretical Contributions

This study enriches the existing literature by investigating the effect of sports team evangelism on the intention to purchase licensed products within the context of digital platform usage. Grounded in the theory of planned behavior, it offers a comprehensive understanding of how fans' emotional and social attachments are translated into consumption behaviors. By integrating concepts from fan loyalty, brand commitment, and digital marketing, the research highlights the multifaceted nature of fan engagement in the digital age. Furthermore, the findings underscore the importance of user-friendly, interactive, and content-rich digital platforms, such as sports teams' websites, in strengthening the connection between fans and their teams. This study contributes theoretically by demonstrating that the quality and functionality of digital touchpoints not only facilitate consumer behavior but also amplify the influence of emotional and advocacy-driven fandom on purchasing intentions.

Practical Implications

Practically, the findings present actionable insights for sports clubs and digital marketing professionals. The demonstrated impact of website usage quality on purchasing intentions highlights the importance of investing in user-friendly, interactive, and informative digital platforms. In this regard, the study serves as a valuable reference for sports organizations aiming to strengthen fan engagement and diversify revenue through digital strategies. By drawing attention to the influence of fan evangelism and its connection with perceived website quality, this study outlines a conceptual basis for designing online environments that engage fans on an emotional level rather than merely facilitating transactions. The findings obtained from this research can guide sports clubs in developing tailored digital content, embedding features that nurture fan loyalty, and creating interactive online platforms that reinforce a sense of community and affiliation with the team. Furthermore, the results emphasize the strategic importance of aligning digital interfaces with the psychological expectations and needs of fans, which can lead to both immediate consumer responses and enduring brand commitment. These practical implications are especially significant in today's digital era, where an effective online presence is not merely a complementary asset but a core component of fan engagement and the overall success of sports organizations.

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

This study has several limitations that should be acknowledged to guide the interpretation of the findings and to inform future research directions. First and foremost, the data were collected from a specific sample group, which may not be representative of the broader population of sports fans. The demographic and psychographic characteristics of the participants -such as age, gender, socioeconomic status, or the

particular sport/team they support- may have influenced the outcomes. Consequently, the generalizability of the findings to other fan populations, particularly those in different cultural or geographic contexts, may be limited. Second, although the study offers insights into the relationship between sports team evangelism, website usage quality, and purchase intentions, it does not take into account the potential moderating effects of cultural and regional variations. Fan behavior is often shaped by local traditions, social norms, and cultural meanings attached to sports, and these factors can significantly influence digital engagement and consumption patterns. Future research should explore how these variables interact with digital marketing strategies across different countries or fan cultures. Third, the research design is cross-sectional in nature, capturing data at a single point in time. This approach restricts the ability to observe changes in consumer behavior over time, particularly in response to evolving digital media strategies or team performance. Longitudinal studies would offer a more comprehensive understanding of how fan loyalty and purchasing behaviors develop and persist, especially in dynamic sports environments. Finally, the scope of the study focuses primarily on licensed product purchase intentions, which represents only one aspect of fan engagement. Future research may benefit from incorporating other outcome variables such as brand advocacy, social media interaction, or long-term fan loyalty to provide a more holistic picture of the impact of digital fan experiences.

Building on the limitations identified in this study, future research could adopt a more diversified and comparative approach by examining fan behaviors across different geographical regions and cultural contexts. Since sports fandom is often shaped by localized traditions, socio-cultural values, and regional team identities, cross-cultural comparisons could provide valuable insights into how digital engagement strategies should be tailored for specific markets. Future research could also expand the scope of fan-related behaviors being analyzed. While this study focused on licensed product purchase intention, upcoming work could examine other meaningful outcomes such as social media advocacy, participation in fan events, or engagement with team-sponsored digital content. Including diverse outcome variables would provide a more holistic understanding of how digital strategies influence the broader fan journey. Additionally, longitudinal research designs are recommended to examine how fans' digital behaviors and purchasing intentions evolve over time. This would enable scholars to track causal relationships and assess the long-term impact of digital marketing efforts, team performance, or brand crises on fan engagement and loyalty.

Experimental studies could also be employed to test the effectiveness of specific digital interventions - such as gamified content, personalized communication, or influencer partnerships - on fan behavior. These studies could help sports marketers identify which digital features most effectively convert casual followers into loyal fans and active consumers. Finally, future research might benefit from including behavioral data (e.g., actual purchase records, clickstream data, or web analytics) alongside self-reported measures. Such a mixed-methods approach would increase the validity of findings and allow for a more nuanced understanding of the mechanisms underlying fan engagement and consumption in digital environments.

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