

Changeable loyalties in cricket? A longitudinal qualitative study of Pakistan Super League fans

¿Lealtades cambiantes en críquet? Un estudio cualitativo longitudinal de los seguidores de la Superliga de Pakistán

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Abstract: Cricket has always been known for its international level competitions; however, recently, league-format has been introduced into it. The purpose of the current study is to investigate the motives of fans' loyalty (and disloyalty) in the context of Pakistan Super League (PSL). For this purpose, a longitudinal qualitative study was established among the PSL fans. The first study was conducted before the beginning of the PSL and the second study was conducted at the end of PSL. The responses of the participants indicated that the PSL fans have short-term and changeable loyalties. The study identified various reasons that motivate fans to detach from one team/athlete and attach to another team/athlete. In the context of teams, four motives emerged: performance, location, the team itself and the athlete; whereas, in the context of athletes, three different motives emerged: performance, off-field attributes and other on-field attributes. The results of the study are also discussed in the context of the previous literature.

Key words: Cricket; Sport marketing; Sport management; Fans loyalty.

Resumen: El críquet siempre ha sido conocido por sus competiciones de nivel internacional; sin embargo, recientemente se ha introducido el formato de liga. El propósito del presente estudio es investigar los motivos de la lealtad (y deslealtad) de los seguidores de este deporte en el contexto de la Superliga de Pakistán (PSL). Para ello, se estableció un estudio cualitativo longitudinal entre los seguidores de la PSL. El primer estudio se realizó antes del comienzo de la PSL y el segundo estudio se realizó al final de la PSL. Las respuestas de los participantes indicaron que los seguidores de la PSL tienen lealtades cambiantes y a corto plazo. El estudio identificó varias razones que motivan a los seguidores a separarse de un equipo / deportista y unirse a otro equipo / deportista. En el contexto de los equipos, se encontraron cuatro motivos: rendimiento, ubicación, el equipo en sí y el deportista; mientras que, en el contexto de los deportistas, se encontraron tres motivos diferentes: rendimiento, atributos fuera del campo y otros atributos dentro del campo. Los resultados de este estudio también se discuten en el contexto de la literatura previa.

Palabras clave: Críquet; Marketing deportivo; Gestión deportiva; Lealtad de los seguidores.

1. Introduction

Sport and sports celebrities are considered brands (Williams, Kim, Agyemang, & Martin, 2015). During the past decade, many sports teams and athletes not only emerged as brands but also established their name among top brands of the world. Manchester United FC, Real Madrid FC, Chicago Bulls, New York Yankees, Cristiano Ronaldo, David Beckham, Michael Jordan and LeBron James are a few names among them. Billions of dollars are spent in the sports branding industry each year into four areas: the athlete, the team or sports organization, sports events, and sports goods manufacturing (Hoye, Smith, Nicholson, & Stewart, 2015; Nucci, 2015). That is why, "The Celebrity 100" list contained one-quarter sports stars along with other celebrities (i.e., Hollywood stars and musicians) (Papp-Váry, 2011). Athletes not only improved their image, enhanced brand equity of their name brand but also were able to redeem their brand status via sponsorship and entrepreneurial ventures (Hasaan, Biscaia, & Ross, 2019).

The positive impact of an athlete casts its effect not only on the athletes themselves but also on the teams, endorsers and the sport itself. For instance, the popularity of a certain sport which is not common in a certain area (i.e., cycling, athletics, freestyle wrestling) benefited from world-renowned athletes via more viewership and loyalty of sports fans (Greenhalgh, Simmons, Hambrick, & Greenwell, 2011). For example, road cycling brand became more popular than ever because of the cyclist Lance Armstrong (Butryn & Masucci, 2003).

Sports brands, however, are perceived to be of different nature when compared to traditional brands because a sports brand is more friable in nature. Mullin et al. (2014) further noted that sports brand management is complex and has a different life cycle compared to other products given its volatile and unpredictable cycle. In this vein, Milligan (2009) noted that building a sports brand (i.e., athlete, club, event, organization) is more complicated as this is dealing with complex issues. These are few among many reasons that make sports brand more complex. As a result, loyalties attached to a sports brand become fragile (Özdiñç & Özdiñç, 2015). However, the success of a sports brand is based on these fra-

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gile loyalties that can shift towards other teams and athletes due to various reasons.

In the context of sports brands, past studies have identified various reasons that affect the loyalties of the fans. For instance, athletes transfer (Hasaan, Kerem, Biscaia, & Agyemang, 2016), performance (Yu, 2005), success (Biscaia, Correia, Ross, Rosado, & Maroco, 2013), sponsorship (Lee & Aiken, 2010), immoral activities (Hasaan, Kerem, Biscaia, & Agyemang, 2018), media (Arai, Ko, & Kaplanidou, 2013) and impression management (Agyemang, Williams, & Kim, 2015). However, there is still a dearth of studies that discuss the motives which persuade fans to change their loyalties to other sports brands (i.e., team, athletes). Sport branding literature ignored the dimension changeable loyalty among fans. Although it has been discussed that sport brands have shorter life (Hasaan et al., 2019) and fragile (Özdiñç & Özdiñç, 2015), yet very few studies focused on the topic of fans loyalty substitution. Also, as the Pakistan Super League (PSL) and cricket leagues are not very old concepts, the idea of loyalty towards cricket league's athletes/teams remains unexplored. Therefore, this is the area where the current study aims to contribute by conducting a longitudinal study among the PSL fans to explore the specific factors which contribute towards making/breaking a fan's loyalty towards a specific team/athlete.

2. Literature review

Sport branding

Sports brand is defined as a unique name, design, symbol that a sports organization uses to differentiate its product (Arai, Ko, & Ross, 2014; Bouchet, Hillairet, & Bodet, 2013). A branding strategy is considered a powerful tool to obtain sustainable competitive advantages in the market (Su & Tong, 2015). In this sense, brand management is considered an advantageous activity as it helps to generate additional value for the brands (Pappu, Quester, & Cooksey, 2005). In this context, Bauer, Sauer and Schmitt (2005) mentioned that one of the most important assets of a sports organization is its brand. Sports managers and scholars also view sports organizations as brands and focus on the consumers (i.e., fans) for the products and services they provide (Ross, 2006). Therefore, sports marketers have driven sports brands by entrepreneurs and organizations via rule-making, equipment, unique names, and adoption of new technologies (Hardy, Norman, & Sceery, 2012).

Sports brand loyalty

Branding in sport is often discussed in the context of brand equity. Aaker (1991) defined brand equity as the added value

associate with a brand. Keller (1993) defined customer-based brand equity (CBBE) as brand equity that is developed via brand awareness and brand association in a customer's mind. Consistent with Keller's arguments, much marketing literature to date addresses the topics of brand awareness, brand association (i.e., among fans) and brand loyalty (Parmentier & Fischer, 2012). In consequence, fan loyalty has been more focused on establishing brand equity of sports clubs and teams (Bauer, Stokburger-Sauer, & Exler, 2008). That is why, sports brands tend to achieve brand status to get long-lasting loyalties of fans that sustain even at the worst time of the brand (Kwon & Trail, 2001). As Ferrand, Robinson and Valette-Florence (2010) mentioned that loyal fans underpin the profitability and success of a sports brand, and, therefore, sports brands aim to build a long-term relationship (i.e., loyalty) with their fans.

In contrast, researchers also mentioned that sports brands are more of a hybrid nature (i.e., positive/ negative news cast the same effect on bands) (Arai et al., 2013; Cortsen, 2013). Fans and brands want to be associated with a winner and use the instant recognition and attention that top sports brands provide. This connection also formed emotional connection between the athlete and the consumer (Nucci, 2015), which puts a high pressure for performance and winning on these brands. Therefore, sports brand has been considered friable in many ways because many factors have eroded the power of a sports brand (Chadwick & Burton, 2008). The strongest brand identification comes when the consumer feels a relationship with the product or a person (Nucci, 2015). Therefore, Özdiñç and Özdiñç (2015) recognized that brand loyalty in youth are not very long lasting and strong.

Sports brand detachment/substitution

Loyalty is often interchangeably used with alignment, switching intention or attachment in academia (Funk & James, 2006; Lin, 2017; Martin & Goldman, 2015). For instance, degree of attachment to a team is loyalty to a team (Bauer et al., 2008). That is why, this study used both (loyalty & attachment) as single concept. Attachment is defined as the mental power and emotional bond connecting the brand with the individual (Park, MacInnis, & Priester, 2006). In the context of sport, attachment is defined as a process that occurs when an individual commits emotionally, functionally and symbolically to a sports team (Funk & James, 2006). In contrast, detachment is defined as a psychological state of distance with regards to a brand (Perrin-Martinenq, 2004). In the context of sport, detachment is considered an emotional and psychological distance that indicates a weaker connection between the individual and a sports brand (Martin & Goldman, 2015). This weaker connection can lead to a

change of the favorite sport brand (loyalty substitution) that causes a loss and failure to a brand.

Sports fan detachment is still not a well-addressed topic in sports branding. Bodet and Chanavat (2010) mentioned that fans have tendency to change their favorite team when their favorite athlete left the team. Thus, fans are open to switching their allegiance to a competitor (either team or athlete) (Bridgewater, 2010; Hasaan et al., 2016; Maderer, Holtbruegge, & Woodland, 2016). McDonald, Karg and Lock (2010) indicated that fans do not remain attached to a single team. Instead, they follow multiple teams. Dwyer (2011) described this phenomenon as divided loyalty in which sports fans are become less loyal to one specific brand and embrace several acceptable brands based on their needs. Also, Hasaan et al. (2016) highlighted that fans tend to have second (multiple) favorite sports teams and athletes. According to Martin and Goldman (2015), detachment process goes through breakdown trigger, iterative decline, disengagement incident, and an exit. Mai and Canti (2008) explained the four-stage detachment process including breakdown, decline, disengagement, and dissolution. Mai & Canti (2008) also mentioned that perception of quality and emotional attachment are key factors influencing brand detachment. Also, Hasaan et al. (2016) discussed that fans often detach from one sports team in favor of another when their favorite athlete leaves. Likewise, Lin (2017) mentioned that fans with low team identification have greater switching intentions.

There are only a few studies from the past that address loyalty detachment in the context of sports brands, and none of them explicitly discusses motives of detachments. That is why it is important to develop a deeper understanding of motives that trigger sports brand detachment among sports fans. Therefore, the current study adopts a qualitative method of research as a starting point to develop a deeper understanding of the fan loyalty detachment motives. The research question guiding this study is as follows:

RQ1: What are the motives that contribute to fan detachment from sports teams and athletes in the PSL?

3. Methods

Sampling of participants

A purposeful, convenience sampling was employed to select the study participants. Criterion sampling is a type of purposeful sampling that calls for participants to meet predetermined criteria for selection (Patton, 2002). For this study, a participant had to meet the following criteria: 1) they must consider themselves as PSL fans, 2) they have at least one favorite athlete and team in the PSL, 3) they have watched/ followed the last season of the PSL (live or through television) and 4) they have been following this particular athlete

and team on various media channels (i.e. mass media, social media). The purpose of using these criteria was to select a legitimate “PSL fan” for this study as Crawford (2002) defined a fan as someone who considers himself/ herself obsessed with sports (i.e., team, athlete, celebrity). In line with this view, these conditions helped to select a proper PSL fan who is more enthusiastic and passionate. Apart from this, it was made sure that all the participants were willing to participate in the study twice. The final sample comprised of eight fans. All interviews were conducted by the lead researcher in settings preferred by the interviewees.

Data collection

Data were collected through a set of eight interviews twice: (1) before the beginning of the PSL season 3 and (2) after the completion of the PSL season 3. All interviews were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim. A semi-structured interview guide was created in accordance with the interview guidelines proposed by (Patton, 2002). Semi-structured or unstructured interviews are suitable for the cultural/symbolic studies where situations is defined according to perceptions (Ruspini, 2002). The participants were asked to sign a voluntary participation form that explained the purpose of the study and their acceptance to participate twice in the study.

Saldaña (2003) mentioned that a longitudinal design has multiple waves of observations that could be achieved through a substantial calendar time (weeks, months or years). In this vein, the first phase of the interviews was conducted during the month of February 2018, while the second phase was conducted during the month of April 2018 (once PSL season 3 had formally ended). The first-phase interviews lasted 15 to 30 minutes while the second-phase interviews lasted 20 to 40 minutes. The reason for longer second-phase interviews was the probing questions asked from the interviewees to know the reasons behind their choices. In this process, the researcher serves as an instrument to elicit data (Kvale, 1996). To do so, follow-up questions were asked to extract more details from the participants.

Through the interviews, it was tried to cover the issues mentioned in the literature related to sports brand attachment and detachment/substitution among fans. For example, it was asked: (1) which is your favorite PSL team and athlete? (2) Why do you like that specific team/athlete? (3) Did you change your favorite team/athlete during the past PSL editions? Any reason behind changing/not changing your favorite team/athlete? In the second phase, the following questions were asked: (1) which is your favorite PSL team and athlete in the latest PSL edition? (2) Why do you like that specific team/athlete? (3) Did you change your favorite team/athlete during the current PSL edition? Any reason behind changing/not changing your favorite team/athlete?

Data analysis

The procedure of data analysis started after conducting the first interview as Marshall and Rossman (1995) mentioned that this technique allows the researchers to understand participants' responses much better. Thus, firstly, the interviews were heard and transcribed, verbatim. After noting the first impressions of the interview, the researcher wrote down the initial themes. Following this sequence, the researcher was able to improve follow-up interviews so that the research team could gain a better understanding and response from the participants.

Two levels of coding (i.e., open and axial) were adopted in the current study. Open coding is described as breaking data apart and delineating concepts to stand for blocks of raw data (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). This coding was employed for the initial analysis. Therefore, interview responses were read until a good understanding of the data was attained. This step led the researchers to established preliminary themes. Once preliminary themes were identified, axial coding was used to combine them into more defined, concrete themes; in some cases, similar themes were combined where they could not stand alone. This is in line with the guidelines from Corbin and Strauss (2008) as they defined axial coding as the process of interconnecting or relating the initial themes to one another.

Theoretical memoing is most commonly associated with grounded theory (Clarke, 2005). The most important contribution that is made by memoing however, is that it initiates and maintains productivity in the researcher (Charmaz, 2006). In a qualitative inquiry, memos perform a number of functions in the research process that justify specific examination. For instance, mapping research activities; extracting meaning from the data; maintaining momentum; and, Ope-

ning communication (Birks, Chapman, & Francis, 2008). Thus the study in the next step sorted memos, which is the key to formulate the theory for presentation to others. During sorting lots of new ideas emerge, which in turn are recorded in new memos (giving the memo-on-memos phenomenon). Sorting memos generate theory that explains the main action in the studied area. The different categories are now related to each other and the core variable. Ultimately, the results obtained are listed that are described in detail in next section.

Although trustworthiness considered as an essential from data collection to reporting of the results (Elo et al., 2014) but achieving trustworthiness in a qualitative study is difficult (Rolfe, 2006). This study followed Lincoln and Guba (1985) guidelines to achieve data trustworthiness via taking care of the credibility and dependability/conformability. For credibility, it was ensured that the researchers had competence in the qualitative methodology. Peer-debriefing was also used to achieve this credibility. For dependability, the authors had described the research process in detail so it would be possible to replicate the study. Conformability was achieved through unbiasedness of researchers as the researchers remained unbiased throughout all the interviews.

4. Findings

The participants of the study were interviewed twice regarding their favorite teams and athletes. The overall outcome of the study is explained in Figure 1. The results of the study show that the fans of the PSL are used to shifting their loyalties (see table 1). The PSL fans have changed their favorite teams and athletes during the course of the season of the PSL. The results of the study were divided into two parts: team's loyalty and athlete's loyalty.

Table 1. Participants responses.

Name	Study 1 (Before PSL)		Study 2 (After PSL)	
	Favorite PSL team	Favorite PSL cricketer	Favorite PSL team	Favorite PSL cricketer
Aaqib	Multan Sultan	Shahid Afridi	Multan Sultan	Luke Ronchi
Akash	Multan Sultan	Ahmad Shahzad	Lahore Qalander	Brendon McCullum
Raouf	Multan Sultan	Ibtisam sheikh	Pishawar Zalmi	Darren Sammy
Shahrukh	Karachi Kings	Muhammad Amir	Karachi Kings	Joe Denly
Usman	Islamabad United	Andre Russel	Islamabad United	Luke Ronchi
Waqar	Quetta Gladiators	Shahid Afridi	Quetta Gladiators	Shahid Afridi
Zafar	Quetta Gladiators	Kevin Pietersen	Quetta Gladiators	Sarfraz Ahmad
Kaleem	Karachi Kings	Shahid Afridi	Peshawar Zalmi	Shahid Afridi

Although loyalty is considered a long-term prospect but three of the eight participants acknowledged that they had changed their favorite team during the current PSL season

(see table 2). As one of the participant, Akash, mentioned that:

Multan Sultan was my favorite team at the beginning of the PSL. As Multan is the neighboring city of Bahawalpur, it is almost like my second home. However, after their bad

performance I changed my favorite team to Lahore. Lahore is the capital of the Punjab province where I live so I feel a connection to Lahore Qalandar as well.

Table 2. Participants' favorite teams and reason for loyalty shift.

	Favorite PSL team before PSL	Favorite PSL team after PSL	Reason of loyalty shift
Aaqib	Multan Sultan	Multan Sultan	No change
Akash	Multan Sultan	Lahore Qalander	Performance
Raouf	Multan Sultan	Peshawar Zalmi	Performance
Shahrukh	Karachi Kings	Karachi Kings	No change
Usman	Islamabad United	Islamabad United	No change
Waqar	Quetta Gladiators	Quetta Gladiators	No change
Zafar	Quetta Gladiators	Quetta Gladiators	No change
Kaleem	Karachi Kings	Peshawar Zalmi	Performance

According to the study's participants, the reason to change their favorite teams is performance. Three out of the eight participants acknowledged that they change their favorite team in this edition of the PSL. Two of Multan Sultan's supporters stopped liking Multan when they started to perform badly, while one of Lahore Qalander's fans also changed his mind. For example,

My favorite team in the PSL was Karachi Kings. I changed my favorite team to Peshawar Zalmi when Karachi Kings was unable to perform well and failed to reach in the final round [Kaleem, study 1].

When asked why they liked certain teams, the most common factor was the location (i.e., proximity). The second reason for liking a certain team was a 'star athlete.' Star power attracted them to like certain teams. In this context, fans also

suggested an overall combination of the team (i.e., the team itself) as a source of motivation (in choosing/shifting their loyalties). For instance,

I support Multan Sultan because Multan is my hometown [Aqib, study 2].

I like Karachi Kings because two of my favorite players Muhammad Aamir and Shahid Afridi represent Karachi Kings [Shahrukh, study 1].

My favorite team is Quetta Gladiator because it is a perfectly balanced team in my point of view, in terms of bowling as well as batting. I like this team because of Sarfraz Ahmad, Captain of the team, and its overseas players are main reasons to like Quetta Gladiators [Waqar, study 1].

Table 3. Participants' favorite teams and motive to choose the team.

	Favorite team (1)	Reason	Favorite team (2)	Reason
Aaqib	Multan Sultan	Star athlete (Shoaib Malik)	Multan Sultan	Location (home town)
Akash	Multan Sultan	Location (Neighbor city)	Lahore Qalander	Location (Fav city) & Owner of club
Raouf	Multan Sultan	Team itself (overall team combination and coaches)	Peshawar Zalmi	Star athlete (Darren Sammy)
Shahrukh	Karachi Kings	Star athlete (Muhammad Amir & Shahid Afridi)	Karachi Kings	Star athlete (Muhammad Amir)
Usman	Islamabad United	Team itself (overall team combination)	Islamabad United	Team itself (overall team combination)
Waqar	Quetta Gladiators	Team itself (overall team combination)	Quetta Gladiators	Team itself (overall team combination)
Zafar	Quetta Gladiators	Star athlete (Sarfraz Ahmad and Kevin Pietersen)	Quetta Gladiators	Stars players (many)
Kaleem	Karachi Kings	Star athlete (Shahid Afridi)	Peshawar Zalmi	Star athlete (Old team of Shahid Afridi)

The second section of the study was based on athlete loyalty. Six out of eight fans changed their favorite athlete. The

major factor to change their favorite athlete is also performance. Two fans chose Luke Ronchi as their favorite player

who was a top scorer in the competition. Other reasons to change a favorite player were off-field attributes (looks, participation in cultural activities) and on-field attributes (commitment, attitude, skills). For example,

The best thing about Luke Ronchi is that he is a consistent performer and a top scorer of the tournament [Usman, study 1].

I like Ahmad Shahzad because of his looks [Aqib, Study 2].

Darren Sammy really impressed me with his captaincy and commitment to the Peshawar team. He is learning Pashto (local language) and often dressed like the locals [Raouf, Study 2].

Shahid Afridi can change the course of the match anytime via his batting, bowling and fielding [Shahrukh, Study 2].

Sarfraz's captaincy is his positive point, and he is also very calm and composed on the field [Zafar, Study 2].

Table 4. Participants' favorite athlete and reason for loyalty shift.

	Favorite PSL cricketer before PSL	Favorite PSL cricketer after PSL	Reason of loyalty shift
Aaqib	Shahid Afridi	Luke Ronchi / Ahmad Shahzad	Performance / Looks
Akash	Ahmad Shahzad	Brendon McCullum	Performance
Raouf	Ibtisam sheikh	Darren Sammy	Off-field characteristics
Shahrukh	Muhammad Amir	Joe Denly	on-field characteristics
Usman	Andre Russel	Luke Ronchi	Performance
Waqar	Shahid Afridi	Shahid Afridi	No change
Zafar	Kevin Pietersen	Sarfraz Ahmad	on-field characteristics
Kaleem	Shaid Afridi	Shahid Afridi	No change

When asked why they liked a certain athlete, the most common 'on-field' attributes mentioned were: skills, achievements, style of play. Performance and attitude were other on-

field characteristics that motivated the PSL fans to like certain players. Among the off-field attributes, fans pointed out social media activities, looks and local culture participation.

Table 5. Participants' favorite athlete and motive to choose the favorite athlete.

	Favorite athlete (1)	Reason	Favorite athlete (2)	Reason
Aaqib	Shahid Afridi	Fitness and attitude	Luke Ronchi / Ahmad Shahzad	Performance consistency/ Looks
Akash	Ahmad Shahzad	Social media activeness	Brendon McCullum	Performance and captaincy
Raouf	Ibtisam sheikh	Team itself (overall team combination and coaches)	Darren Sammy	Skills, Involvement in local culture
Shahrukh	Muhammad Amir	Skills, achievements, Style of play	Joe Denly	Skills, Style of play
Usman	Andre Russel	Team itself (overall team combination)	Luke Ronchi	Performance, Style of play, achievement
Waqar	Shahid Afridi	Team itself (overall team combination)	Shahid Afridi	Skills, achievements, Style of play
Zafar	Kevin Pietersen	Style of play	Sarfraz Ahmad	Skills, Style of play
Kaleem	Shaid Afridi	Skills, achievements, Style of play	Shahid Afridi	Skills, achievements, Style of play

5. Discussion

The current study is a longitudinal qualitative study among the Pakistan Super League (PSL) fans. The study aimed to explore whether the loyalty of the PSL fans was temporary or permanent; and, in case of temporary, which factors contributed in the process of fans' change of mind. In this context, the purpose of this study was to explore the motives that contributed to fans detachment (i.e., changing of their

favorite team/athlete). The current study aided the literature of sport management and sport branding by discussing loyalty attachment and motives that caused fan detachment among fans. Furthermore, this study also provided a pathway for sport brand practitioners (i.e., PSL teams and athletes) as the motives of detachment open the doors for new loyalties and opportunities. The PSL and other cricket leagues are new concepts in cricket and that is why it is important to study these concepts. Therefore, this study discussed motives of fan

detachment and loyalty substitution in the term of favorite team and athlete. The findings from this study are summarized in figure 1.

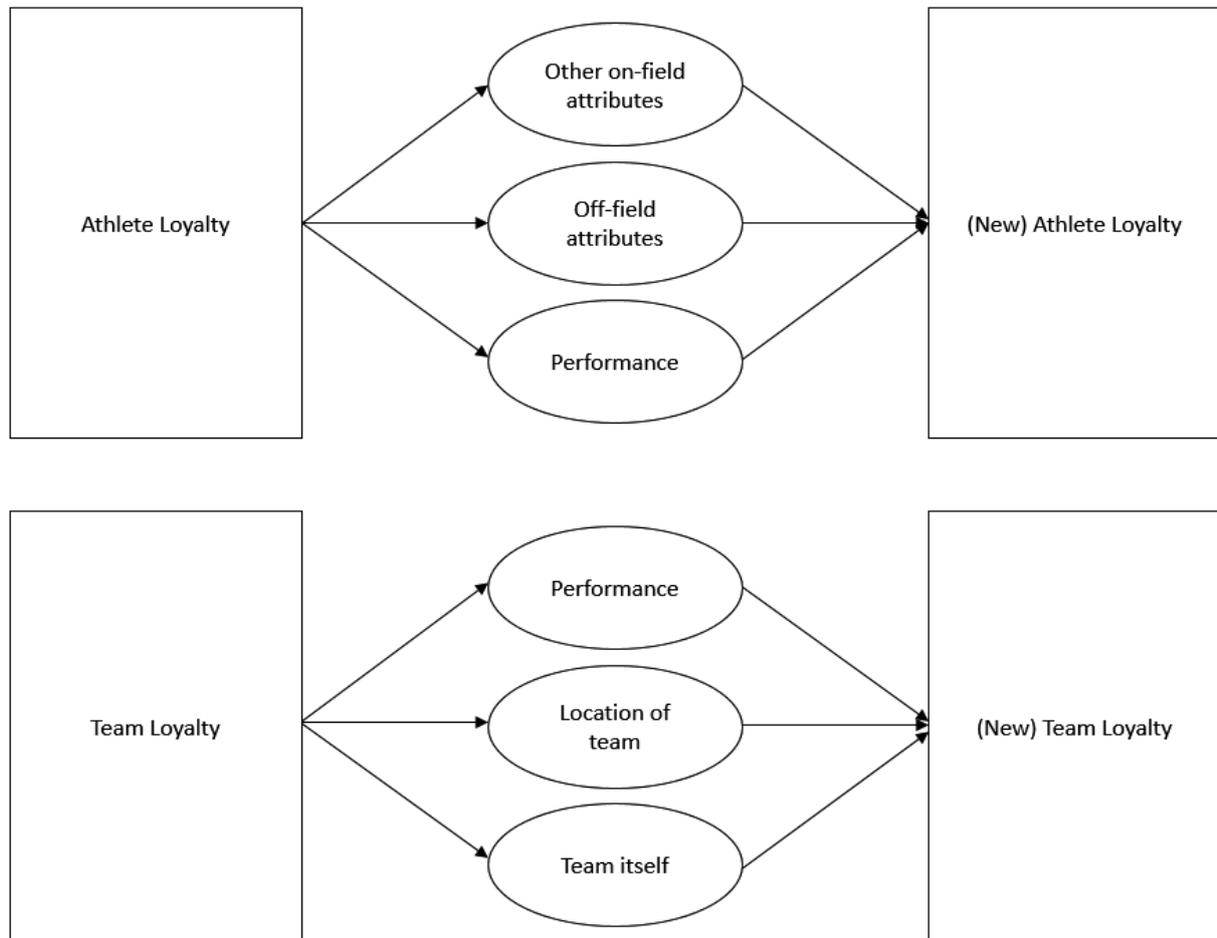


Figure 1. Attachment/ detachments motives among PSL fans.

The results of the study indicated that changing a favorite team or athlete is not unusual among the PSL fans. The response is infrequent as fans often stick to their favorite teams and athletes. For instance, Parker and Stuart (1997) and Tapp (2004) mentioned that sport fans are loyal to their adopted team and they display long-lasting loyalty to professional sports teams in all circumstances. In this vein, Richardson and O'Dwyer (2003) noted that fans in Ireland become loyal to a certain team at a young age and that is why English clubs' attempts to persuade fans to switch their favorite teams are a waste of resources. However, recent studies have discussed the prospect of a potential loyalty shift and studies about potential factors that affect fan loyalty (Bristow & Sebastian, 2001; Lin & Lin, 2008). Furthermore, recent studies about sport branding also discussed that fans tend to change their loyalties (Hasaan, 2016; Kunkel, Doyle, Funk,

Du, & McDonald, 2016; Martin & Goldman, 2015).

According to the study's participants, the reasons for the detachment are team performance, team location, the team itself and the athlete. Performance is considered a major factor for sports brands (i.e., team, athlete). Past studies have identified that fans perceive their favorites as winners; therefore, performance is an important factor when talking about winning loyalties (Batra & Homer, 2004). In this context, a dip in the performance is a major cause of detachment that is in line with the result of the current study. The second motive identified in the study was the location of the team. The location of a team is considered a source of inspiration in the context of team loyalty among fans (Richardson & Turley, 2006). For instance, (Hasaan et al., 2018) mentioned that people have attachments with certain locations and if the team is located in that place it can win people's loyalty.

Therefore, geographical locations of the team are considered as a socializing agent that influence fans' choices of sports brand (i.e., team, athlete) (Tainsky & Stodolska, 2010). The third reason for loyalty detachment was the team itself. Participants of the study pointed out that bad performance of a team could harm team loyalty while good team (i.e., performance, team combination, playing team) can lead to new attachments. This is in line with past studies, such as Delia and James (in press) explained that the modern day teams consist of current players, coaches, rivalries, game traditions, and family/friends. In this vein, Bauer, Sauer and Exler (2005) mentioned that a team brand could be developed through product-related attributes (i.e., team members and team coach). The fourth factor that affected fan loyalties is the athlete. That is also in line with past studies as Hasaan et al. (2016) and Hasaan (2016) mentioned that when a fan likes an athlete, he/she tends to follow the team in which the athlete plays. In some cases, the fan can change his/her favorite team due to the athlete's presence in a certain team. Yu (2005) also noted that star athletes such as David Beckham, Cristiano Ronaldo have the power to win the loyalties of fans for the teams they represent.

The second dimension of the current study was to find out the motives behind athlete detachment. The first reason in this context is the performance. According to fans, bad performance de-motivated them to keep loyal to their favorite team and athlete. As a result, team or athlete who is performing well attracted these fans. For instance, Luke Ronchi, with his consistent performance, was able to detach many fans from their favorite athletes and emerge as their new favorite during the course of the PSL. This finding is consistent with that of Cortsen (2013) who stated that an athlete's brand might be affected by either positive or negative mental associations towards him depending on his performance. The second motive identified by the fans was 'on-field' attribute. In this regard, Hasaan et al. (2018) identified various athlete's performance-related characteristics and summarized them as on-field attributes. Also, participants of the current study identified various non-sporting reasons that motivated fans to attach loyalties to new athletes. This is also in line with Hasaan et al. (2018) findings as they identified various non-sporting motive and summarized them as off-field attributes.

The current study discussed the reasons that motivated fans to shift their loyalties to another team and athlete. A longitudinal nature of the study was able to explain that fans tend to change their favorite team/athlete in the PSL. The current study explained the attributes that attracted fans towards loyalty of certain teams/athletes could also lead them towards another team/athlete. Cortsen (2013) explained that athlete brand is hybrid in nature, so when something positive or ne-

gative happens to a brand personality (i.e., athlete, team), its shadow is cast over the brand, as well. In this sense, the results of this study indicate that when a team or athlete start to lack certain qualities, fans start to look at other options (i.e., athlete, team). However, it is important to be reminded that the PSL is just a month-long activity – unlike the year-long European football — so cricket fans have a very short time to attach themselves with certain teams/athletes and, therefore, are not so intense, or die-hard, in their loyalties.

In summary, the current study was aimed to investigate the motives of fan loyalty attachment/detachment among the PSL fans. For that purpose, a longitudinal qualitative study was carried out among the PSL fans. The first study conducted before the beginning of the PSL and the second study was conducted at the end of the PSL. The responses of the fans indicated that the PSL fans have short-term and changeable loyalties. The current study identified various reasons that motivate fans to detach to one team/athlete and attach to another. In the context of teams, four motives emerged: performance, location, the team itself and the athlete. While in the context of athletes, three motives emerged: performance, off-field attributes and other on-field attributes. As this is one of the pioneering studies that discussed team loyalty and athlete loyalty detachment among fans, it is a valuable addition in the sports management literature. Also, this study is helpful for marketing teams and managers of PSL to establish loyalty via motives identified in this study as the results of this study have indicated that in PSL 'one man's loss is another man's gain.'

6. Limitations and future research directions

The current study is intended to be a springboard for future studies, and therefore, limitations and future research suggestions are now provided. Although the current study is longitudinal, there might be some limitations because of its qualitative nature; therefore, it will be inappropriate to generalize the results for an entire population (Mason, 2002). That is why, even though qualitative data provides an in-depth understanding of this topic, future studies could employ quantitative methods in order to provide further support for these findings with a larger sample of sports fans.

Secondly, the current study comprises a sample of fans from the same geographical region. Therefore, other resources involving sample collection and selection could bring more detailed results. In short, future research should collect larger volumes of data using fans from different countries, leagues and cultural backgrounds, as previous studies suggest that consumer opinions about brands are culturally sensitive (Yoo & Donthu, 2002).

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