STUDENT JOURNAL OF BUSINESS AND ECONOMICS
Vol. 1, No. 5 (2026), pp. 50–65 • ISSN 3144-0363
DOI: 10.67521/sjbe.2026.044

ORIGINAL RESEARCH

The Impact of the Manchester United Sponsorship to Adidas Branding (Awareness, Association, Equity, and Loyalty): A Comparative Perceptual Study on 2010–2014 vs. 2015–2025

Aadi Pachauri, Giselle Madeline Jauvano, Mysha Aneeqa Randiatmoko*

ACS Jakarta, Jl. Bantar Jati, Kelurahan Setu, Cipayung, Jakarta Timur, DKI Jakarta, 13880, Indonesia
**Corresponding author email: myshaaneeqa21@gmail.com*

Accepted: November 21, 2026

Abstract

This study examines the impact of the Adidas–Manchester United kit sponsorship on Adidas branding by comparing the periods before the sponsorship (2010–2014) and after the sponsorship (2015–2025). The research focuses on four branding dimensions: brand awareness, brand association, brand equity, and brand loyalty. The Adidas–Manchester United partnership is considered one of the largest sponsorship agreements in football history, making it a relevant case for analyzing the effectiveness of sport sponsorship as a branding strategy.

This research uses a quantitative explanatory research design. Data were collected through questionnaires distributed via Google Forms to populations who are familiar with both Adidas and Manchester United. The study applied purposive sampling to select respondents who had been exposed to the sponsorship collaboration. The collected data were analyzed using SmartPLS with the Partial Least Squares–Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) approach to test the proposed hypotheses.

The findings reveal that the sponsorship had a significant positive impact on brand awareness and brand loyalty. The collaboration successfully increased Adidas' visibility and strengthened customer loyalty through Manchester United's global popularity, international fanbase, and extensive media exposure. However, the results indicate that the sponsorship did not have a statistically significant impact on brand association and brand equity. This suggests that sponsorship alone may not strongly influence deeper consumer perceptions and emotional connections toward a brand without additional marketing support and branding strategies.

Keywords: Sport Sponsorship; Adidas; Manchester United; Brand Awareness; Brand Association; Brand Equity; Brand Loyalty

1. Introduction

The global sports industry has experienced substantial growth over the past decade, driven by shifting consumer dynamics and evolving media landscapes. According to Statista (2026), revenue in the sports market is projected to reach US$87.53 billion in 2026. Furthermore, the market is expected to demonstrate a compound annual growth rate (CAGR 2026–2030) of 3.36%, ultimately expanding to a projected volume of US$99.91 billion by 2030.

Key factors driving this growth include rising viewership, higher participation rates, and deeper fan engagement, largely accelerated by digital platforms. Among the primary innovations in the industry is the rise of smart, AI-based wearables designed for both elite athletes and everyday fitness enthusiasts. Additionally, sports streaming has become more immersive than ever, with over-the-top (OTT) platforms like ESPN and DAZN delivering real-time data, instant highlights, and dynamic multi-viewing experiences.

As part of this growth, football remains one of the world's most commercially valuable sports. The global football market was valued at USD 3.5 billion in 2025 and is projected to reach USD 4.8 billion by 2034, reflecting a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 3.32% between 2026 and 2034 (IMARC Group, 2026). Europe continues to lead the sector, capturing over 35.0% of the total market share in 2025. This sustained dominance and market momentum are primarily fueled by rapid digital transformation, high-value brand sponsorships, and the booming popularity of competitive gaming platforms like EA Sports FC and eFootball.

Alongside this expansion, sponsorship investment has reached unprecedented levels as brands increasingly recognize football as an effective platform to strengthen market visibility and consumer engagement. Rather than distributing sponsorship investments across numerous individual athletes, companies are now concentrating on elite clubs, global superstars, and league-level partnerships that offer broader international exposure (Mordor Intelligence, 2026). The evolution of sports sponsorship can be clearly illustrated through high-profile partnerships between global brands and elite football clubs.

DRIVER	(~) % IMPACT ON CAGR FORECAST	GEOGRAPHIC RELEVANCE	IMPACT TIMELINE
Rising popularity of football as a global sport	+0.6%	Global, with accelerated gains in Asia-Pacific (China, India, Southeast Asia) and Middle East (Saudi Arabia, UAE)	Long term (≥ 4 years)
Growth of professional leagues and competitions	+0.5%	Europe (established), Asia-Pacific (emerging), Middle East (rapid expansion)	Medium term (2-4 years)
Technological advancements in football manufacturing	+0.4%	Global, with premium adoption concentrated in Europe and North America	Medium term (2-4 years)
Rising sponsorships and partnerships from brands	+0.3%	Global, with highest intensity in Europe and emerging concentration in Middle East	Short term (≤ 2 years)
Expansion of football merchandise and licensing	+0.2%	Europe, Asia-Pacific, North America	Medium term (2-4 years)
Development of youth and grassroots football programs	+0.5%	Global, with institutional scale in Europe and accelerating investment in Asia-Pacific and Africa	Long term (≥ 4 years)

Figure 1. Football Industry – Drivers Impact Analysis. Source: Mordor Intelligence (2026).

Sport sponsorship refers to a commercial relationship in which a company provides financial or material support to a sporting organization, event, or individual in exchange for promotional opportunities and positive brand exposure (Kottke, 2024). Companies increasingly adopt sport sponsorship as a strategic marketing tool to enhance brand visibility, strengthen corporate reputation, and build deeper relationships with consumers. Given the global audience attracted by football, brands gain repeated exposure through broadcasts, stadium branding, merchandise, and digital content viewed by millions of fans worldwide. Ultimately, sponsorship activities are expected to influence consumers' purchase intentions by aligning a brand with the passion and emotional attachment that sports fans have toward their favorite clubs and competitions (Sarpong & Zungu, 2025).

The strategic importance of sponsorship is particularly evident within professional football. A significant proportion of sponsorship investment is concentrated in Europe's 'Big Five' leagues—England, Spain, Italy, Germany, and France—which collectively generated €12.5 billion in sport sponsorship rev-

enue in 2025. As of April 2026, all 96 clubs competing across these leagues had secured at least one main shirt sponsor, reflecting the growing commercialization of football and the importance of sponsorship as a revenue-generating and branding mechanism.



Figure 2. Top 10 Kit Supplier Deals in Europe's Big Five Leagues. Source: Football Benchmark (2026).

The dominance of global sportswear brands is especially visible in this competitive landscape. Adidas accounts for five of the top ten kit sponsorship deals, while Nike holds four and Puma maintains its presence through Manchester City FC (Football Benchmark, 2026). Among these partnerships, the collaboration between Adidas and Manchester United represents one of the most commercially valuable sponsorship agreements in world football.

In 2015, Adidas signed a record-breaking 10-year kit deal worth £750 million with Manchester United, replacing its long-time competitor Nike as the club's official kit supplier after previously partnering with the club between 1980 and 1992 (Slater, 2023). This partnership demonstrates how football sponsorship has evolved beyond simple logo placement into a long-term branding investment. Despite Manchester United experiencing inconsistent sporting performance in recent years, Adidas further strengthened its commitment by extending the partnership through a new agreement reportedly worth £900 million (Slater, 2023).

Manchester United itself has a prolonged period of on-field fluctuation and lack of Premier League titles since 2013. This suggests an interesting discussion because conventional marketing models believe that commercial revenue closely aligns with the brand or subject's performance (Dobson & Goddard, 2011). Despite the sub-50% Premier League win rate across 2015 – 2025, the club somehow still secured a record-breaking sponsorship deal with Adidas.

Table 1. Manchester United Statistics in Premier League

Premier League Season	Win Rate	Wins (W)	Draws (D)	Losses (L)
2015 – 2016	50%	19	9	10
2016 – 2017	47.4%	18	15	5
2017 – 2018*	65.8%	25	6	7
2018 – 2019	50%	19	9	10
2019 – 2020	47.4%	18	12	8
2020 – 2021	55.3%	21	11	6
2021 – 2022	42.1%	16	10	12
2022 – 2023	60.5%	23	6	9
2023 – 2024	47.4%	18	6	14
2024 – 2025**	28.9%	11	9	18

*Highest in decade. **Lowest point in modern Premier League history.
Source: StatMuse (2026).

However, Adidas' willingness to invest significantly more than Nike's previous annual sponsorship fee suggests that the company views Manchester United not merely as a football club, but as a globally recognized brand capable of generating long-term value through worldwide exposure, merchandise sales, and access to a loyal international fan base. As supporters repeatedly encounter the Adidas logo alongside Manchester United, consumers may gradually associate Adidas with the club's identity, prestige, and heritage.

Market expectations surrounding the partnership have also been largely positive. Adidas expected the collaboration to strengthen its position in key global markets and generate approximately £1.5 billion in sales throughout the partnership period. Industry experts similarly argued that the agreement demonstrated strong confidence in Manchester United's global brand value despite the club's absence from the UEFA Champions League, while marketing scholars suggested that adding Manchester United to Adidas' sponsorship portfolio could further reinforce the company's competitive position against Nike (Bloomberg, 2023).

Although these commercial achievements indicate strong market confidence in the Adidas–Manchester United partnership, existing discussions primarily emphasize financial value, projected sales, and expert opinions. Whether the sponsorship creates sustainable branding outcomes beyond its commercial success remains less clearly understood. Furthermore, clubs such as Real Madrid, Bayern Munich, and Barcelona continue to generate the highest kit merchandising revenue through official channels (UEFA, 2025) compared to Manchester United.

Rank	Club	Total	Kit Contract	Royalties
1	**Real Madrid**	€196m	€120m (Adidas)	€76m
2	**Bayern Munich**	€171m	€110m (Adidas)	€61m
3	**Barcelona**	€171m	€105m (Nike)	€66m
4	**Liverpool**	€146m	€70m (Adidas)	€76m
5	**Manchester United**	€146m	€105m (Adidas)	€41m
6	**Arsenal**	€120m	€85m (Adidas)	€35m
7	**Tottenham**	€96m	€35m (Nike)	€61m
8	**Chelsea**	€95m	€70m (Nike)	€25m
9	**Galatasaray**	€85m	€25m (Nike)	€60m
10	**PSG**	€81m	€70m (Nike)	€11m
11	**Manchester City**	€76m	€75m (Puma)	€1m
12	**Juventus**	€74m	€51m (Adidas)	€23m
13	**Borussia Dortmund**	€72m	€30m (Puma)	€42m
14	**Fenerbahçe**	€69m	€15m (Adidas)	€54m
15	**AC Milan**	€59m	€30m (Puma)	€29m
16	**Inter Milan**	€51m	€30m (Nike)	€21m
17	**Celtic**	€35m	€10m (Adidas)	€25m
18	**Beşiktaş**	€34m	€10m (Adidas)	€24m
19	**Ajax**	€33m	€30m (Adidas)	€3m
20	**Roma**	€27m	€5m (Adidas)	€22m

Figure 3. Supplier Deals and Merchandise Sales per Clubs. Source: UEFA (2025).

While sport sponsorship's main purpose is to positively drive corporate image, brand awareness, and purchase intention among the sport enthusiast (Seo, 2022), it remains uncertain whether the Adidas–Manchester United kit sponsorship produces a lasting impact on Adidas' brand performance or whether its influence is limited to the duration of the partnership.

Therefore, this study aims to examine the impact of the Adidas–Manchester United Kit Sponsorship on Adidas' branding, particularly in terms of brand equity, brand awareness, brand association, and brand loyalty, to better understand whether this sports sponsorship case study delivers short-term promotional benefits or sustainable long-term branding outcomes.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Research Theory

2.1.1 Sport Sponsorship

Sport sponsorship has been studied extensively as a promotional tool distinct from traditional advertising. Cornwell and Maignan (1998) conducted a landmark cross-disciplinary review of sponsorship research worldwide, organizing the field into five research streams: the nature of sponsorship, managerial aspects, measurement of sponsorship effects, strategic use, and legal/ethical considerations. They defined sponsorship as a business relationship in which a sponsor provides financial or material support to a property, such as a sports team or event, in exchange for the right of legitimate association and marketing exploitation of that relationship. Building on this, sponsorship captures a purposeful exchange relationship between a sponsoring entity and a separate sponsored entity in support of a tangible activity, event, or dialogue engaged by the sponsored entity (Cornwell & Kwon, 2020). In the context of sport, sponsorship has grown into one of the most dominant forms of marketing communication. Sponsorship enables companies to tap into the emotional and psychological bonds that consumers form with the sponsored property, fostering long-term loyalty and favorable brand perceptions. Kit sponsorship—where a sportswear brand supplies and brands a team's playing kit—represents one of the highest-visibility forms

of sport sponsorship, as the brand logo appears on players during every match, broadcast, and merchandise sale globally.

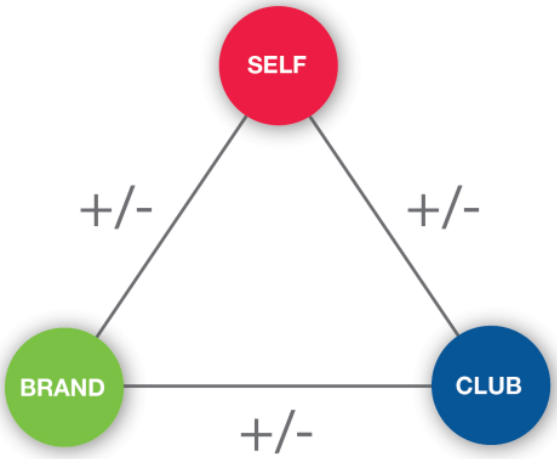


Figure 4. Heider's Attribution Theory (1958) – Adapted to Sports Industry. Source: Dentsu (2025).

To examine how corporate sponsorships function within the sports ecosystem, this study adopts the triadic framework of Heider's Attribution Theory (1958), adapted for sports sponsorship contexts (Dentsu, 2025). The framework evaluates the attitudinal relationships across three distinct dimensions:

- **Self <> Club**
  The emotional attachment and identification a fan holds toward the football club.
- **Club <> Brand**
  The commercial association and perceived fit between the club and its sponsor.
- **Self <> Brand**
  The consumer's resulting attitude and purchase intent toward the sponsoring brand.

According to cognitive consistency principles, when a fan maintains a strong positive relation with a club (Self–Club) and that club forms an elite partnership with a brand (Club–Brand), the consumer is psychologically motivated to evaluate the sponsor favorably (Self–Brand) to achieve cognitive balance. This explains why high-value sponsorships remain effective even when pitch outcomes fluctuate.

2.1.2 Branding

According to Aaker (1991), branding is a strategic asset management system rather than a mere tactical campaign. Aaker defines branding as a bridge to develop core identity, customer relationships, and long-term market relevance. Another perspective puts branding as an intricate, multi-sensory system that works magic on how people perceive companies, products, and institutions. This activity goes far beyond static graphics, instead it is a holistic discipline that synthesizes form, color, typography, imagery, sound, motion, and technology into a unified identity system (Sussek & Muller, 2026).

The Brand-Added Value Theory (Aaker, 1991) defines branding as part of marketing activity that structured from four key dimensions:

Brand Awareness

Brand awareness refers to a consumer's ability to recognize or recall a brand under different conditions. The concept of brand awareness consists of brand recall and brand recognition performance, where brand recall relates to the consumer's ability to retrieve the brand name from memory without prompting, and brand recognition relates to the ability to remember past exposure to the brand (Keller, 1993).

In sport sponsorship, awareness is one of the most immediate and measurable outcomes. Sport sponsorships provide several unique opportunities for sponsors, including national and global brand exposure, a close tie to product usage, and trade components that can be utilized for customer hospitality opportunities (Jensen & Vlacancich, 2023). For Adidas, having the Manchester United crest paired with its

three-stripe logo across kits, training gear, and merchandise creates repeated consumer exposure across one of the world's largest football fanbases.

Brand Association

Appelbaum (2025) defines brand associations through a cognitive lens that conceptualizes a brand as an associative mental network of meanings, experiences, and feelings stored in the consumer's memory. Grounded in neuroscience and cognitive psychology, these associative networks function as cognitive shortcuts that drive brand salience, shape consumer preference, and dictate purchasing decisions.

An example of brand association in Adidas and Manchester United sponsorship is the strategy to avoid anchoring their marketing campaigns exclusively to contemporary match outcomes. During the sponsorship period, Adidas leverages heritage brand associations through retro lifestyle collections and streetwear associations. By connecting the brand to the club's historical identity and global pop culture rather than transient seasonal results, Adidas maintains strong brand equity and high merchandise demand regardless of Manchester United's on-field performance.

Brand Loyalty

Brand loyalty is a form of behavioral commitment and value-aligned attachment that is influenced by generational dynamics. Maintaining brand loyalty in modern consumer segments requires companies to consistently deliver value, transparency, and strong digital customer experiences (Maciejewski, 2022).

Brand loyalty is typically conceptualized through three distinct lenses: behavioral, attitudinal, and composite (a combination of both). Behavioral loyalty focuses on observable consumer actions, such as repeat purchasing patterns, brand preference, sustained customer retention, and brand allegiance. In contrast, attitudinal loyalty reflects the psychological dimension, characterized by a consumer's favorable brand perception and long-term commitment to consistently selecting the brand (R. Chakkaravarthy & R. Candramohan, 2024).

Brand Equity

Brand equity is broadly defined as the value a brand holds in the minds of consumers, beyond its functional attributes. The most widely applied framework in sports sponsorship research is Aaker's (1991) model, which identifies four consumer-based dimensions of brand equity: brand awareness, brand associations, perceived quality, and brand loyalty. This study examines the effects of sport sponsorship on each of Aaker's (1991) components of brand equity—brand awareness, brand associations, perceived quality, and brand loyalty—and demonstrates that all components are positively influenced by sport sponsorship (Hunt & Hunt, 2022).

Complementing Aaker, Keller (1993) developed the Customer-Based Brand Equity (CBBE) model, arguing that brand equity arises from consumer knowledge of the brand. In the context of kit sponsorships, both frameworks suggest that sustained, high-visibility exposure—such as a club's jersey—can meaningfully shift consumers' brand knowledge and overall brand valuation.

2.2 Hypotheses

H1: There is a significant difference in Adidas's brand awareness between the period before (2010–2014) and after its sponsorship with Manchester United (2015–2025).
H2: There is a significant difference in Adidas's brand association between the period before (2010–2014) and after its sponsorship with Manchester United (2015–2025).
H3: There is a significant difference in Adidas's brand equity between the period before (2010–2014) and after its sponsorship with Manchester United (2015–2025).
H4: There is a significant difference in Adidas's brand loyalty between the period before (2010–2014) and after its sponsorship with Manchester United (2015–2025).
H0: There is no significant difference in Adidas's brand awareness, brand association, brand equity, and brand loyalty between the periods 2010–2014 and 2015–2025.

DOI: 10.67521/sjbe.2026.044

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Methodology

This study will employ a quantitative research method. Quantitative research is a systematic approach that explains the relationships between phenomena (Skiadas & Skiadas, 2025). This method, which utilizes numerical procedures such as statistics, graphs, and data, is considered capable of representing a population and can be used as a basis for generalizing that population. Furthermore, based on its objective, this study will use an explanatory quantitative research design. Explanatory quantitative research is a type of research that is able to explain the cause-and-effect relationships between a variable that influences other variables in a more comprehensive manner (Darwin et al., 2021).

3.2 Measurement Scale

Only responses from participants who are aware of both Adidas and Manchester United were included in the analysis. This research will employ a questionnaire as the instrument, distributed to the population and sample using a Likert Scale. The Likert Scale is a measurement tool that enables respondents to rate specific statements based on their level of agreement, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

3.3 Population and Sample

The population is the entire set of subjects that possess the specific characteristics we wish to study. For this research, the population consists of individuals from Generation Z and Generation Alpha, aged 13 to 29, who are aware of both Manchester United and Adidas.

Due to our limitation in reaching the whole population, the sample is the representative of the population in smaller numbers. For this research, purposive sampling is employed. Our sample primarily consists of individuals who are aware of both Manchester United and Adidas. These respondents were intentionally selected because their familiarity with the football club enables them to provide relevant perspectives on the Adidas-Manchester United sponsorship and its potential impact on consumer perceptions.

Data were collected using a questionnaire created in Google Forms and distributed through Instagram and Whatsapp, which allowed the researchers to reach Manchester United followers across different social circles. Data collection and analysis took place from April to June 2026. In total, 31 respondents completed the questionnaire and met the inclusion criteria, and all 31 responses were included in the analysis. Below is the age distribution among all the respondents.

Age Group	Age Status	Total Respondent	% of Total Respondent
13 – 17	Teenager / Adolescent	11	35.5%
18 – 25	Young Adult	18	58%
26 – 29	Adult	2	6.5%

However, this study has a limitation in its sample. The final sample consists of 31 respondents, which is relatively small for PLS-SEM analysis. A small sample reduces statistical power, which means weaker relationships between variables may not reach statistical significance even if they exist. In addition, because purposive sampling was used, most respondents are already familiar with Manchester United, so the sample may not represent general consumers or Adidas customers worldwide. Many respondents were also young children before 2015, so their comparison between the two periods relies on memory. Therefore, the findings of this study show a pattern within this sample and cannot yet be generalized to the wider population.

3.4 Data Analysis

The collected data will then be processed and analyzed using SmartPLS to examine the relationships between the proposed research variables and to test the research hypotheses. The use of SmartPLS is

considered appropriate for this study as it enables the analysis of complex relationships between latent variables and their indicators through the Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) approach (Hair et al., 2014).

4. Result and Discussion

4.1 Continuum Distribution Table

The Continuum Distribution Table evaluates the overall perception and attitudes of respondents by comparing the actual empirical score against the ideal maximum score. The quantitative results demonstrate robust performance across all measured dimensions, showing that respondents maintain a strong positive attitude in all variables involved.

Variable	Max. Ideal Score	Min. Ideal Score	Total Empiric Score	Average Score	Continuum Percentage (%)	Continuum Category
Sport Sponsorship (X)	620	124	505	4.07	81.45%	Very Good
Brand Awareness (Y1)	620	124	462	3.73	74.52%	Good
Brand Association (Y2)	775	155	591	3.81	76.26%	Good
Brand Equity (Y3)	620	124	484	3.90	78.06%	Good
Brand Loyalty (Y4)	620	124	488	3.94	78.71%	Good

4.2 Research Result

4.2.1 Outer Model Result

a. Factor Loading

Based on the SmartPLS results, all indicators showed factor loading values above 0.60. This indicates that each indicator has a strong correlation with its respective construct and is able to properly measure the intended variable. Therefore, all indicators used in this research are considered valid and suitable for further analysis.

Variables	Indicators	Factor Loading Value	Result
Sport Sponsorship (X)	CP1	0.775	Valid
	CP2	0.906	Valid
	CP3	0.875	Valid
	CP4	0.826	Valid
Brand Awareness (Y1)	BA2	0.699	Valid
	BA3	0.761	Valid
	BA4	0.728	Valid
Brand Association (Y2)	BAS1	0.749	Valid
	BAS2	0.928	Valid
Brand Equity (Y3)	BE1	0.665	Valid
	BE2	0.635	Valid
	BE3	0.658	Valid
	BE4	0.617	Valid
Brand Loyalty (Y4)	BL1	0.732	Valid
	BL3	0.726	Valid
	BL4	0.879	Valid

b. Average Variance Extracted (AVE)

The AVE test results show that most variables achieved values above the minimum threshold of 0.50, indicating adequate convergent validity. This means that the constructs are capable of explaining more than 50% of the variance of their indicators. However, the Brand Equity variable did not meet the recommended AVE threshold, suggesting that the indicators measuring brand equity may not fully capture the construct optimally.

Variable	AVE Value	Result
Sport Sponsorship (X)	0.718	Valid
Brand Awareness (Y1)	0.533	Valid
Brand Association (Y2)	0.711	Valid
Brand Equity (Y3)	0.415	Invalid
Brand Loyalty (Y4)	0.612	Valid

c. Composite Reliability

The Composite Reliability values for all variables exceeded 0.70, indicating that the constructs possess good internal consistency reliability. Thus, the measurement items used in this study are considered reliable for measuring their respective constructs.

Variable	Composite Reliability Value	Result
Sport Sponsorship (X)	0.910	Reliable
Brand Awareness (Y1)	0.733	Reliable
Brand Association (Y2)	0.830	Reliable
Brand Equity (Y3)	0.739	Reliable
Brand Loyalty (Y4)	0.824	Reliable

d. Cronbach's Alpha

The Cronbach's Alpha results indicate that only the Sport Sponsorship variable achieved a value above the acceptable threshold of 0.60. This suggests that the Sport Sponsorship construct demonstrates acceptable internal consistency, while the remaining variables may have relatively weaker reliability consistency based on Cronbach's Alpha measurements. However, since Composite Reliability values for all variables exceeded 0.70, the constructs can still be considered reliable in PLS-SEM analysis.

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha Value	Result
Sport Sponsorship (X)	0.869	Reliable
Brand Awareness (Y1)	0.572	Weak Reliability
Brand Association (Y2)	0.619	Weak Reliability
Brand Equity (Y3)	0.553	Weak Reliability
Brand Loyalty (Y4)	0.676	Weak Reliability

e. Fornell Larcker Analysis

The Fornell-Larcker Criterion results indicate that all constructs satisfy the discriminant validity requirement. This means that each variable in the model is empirically distinct from other variables and measures different concepts within the study.

	Brand Association (Y2)	**Brand Awareness (Y1)**	**Brand Equity (Y3)**	**Brand Loyalty (Y4)**	**Sport Sponsorship (X)**
Brand Association (Y2)	0.843	-	-	-	-
Brand Awareness (Y1)	0.522	0.730	-	-	-
Brand Equity (Y3)	0.398	0.365	0.644	-	-
Brand Loyalty (Y4)	0.545	0.493	0.358	0.782	-
Sport Sponsorship (X)	0.327	0.674	0.279	0.706	0.847

4.2.2 Inner Model Result

a. Effect Size (F-Square)

The F-square analysis was conducted to examine the effect size of the Sport Sponsorship variable on each endogenous variable.

The results show that Sport Sponsorship has a significant effect on Brand Awareness ($f^2 = 0.832$) and Brand Loyalty ($f^2 = 0.995$). According to the general guideline where f^2 values of 0.02, 0.15, and 0.35 indicate small, medium, and large effects respectively, these findings suggest that Adidas's sponsorship collaboration with Manchester United has a substantial influence on increasing consumers' awareness and loyalty toward the Adidas brand.

Meanwhile, the effect of Sport Sponsorship on Brand Association ($f^2 = 0.120$) falls within the small to medium effect category and Brand Equity ($f^2 = 0.084$) falls within the small to insignificant effect category. This indicates that although the sponsorship contributes to these variables, the magnitude of its influence is relatively limited compared to its effect on brand awareness and brand loyalty.

Variables Relationship	**F-Square Value**	**Result**
Sport Sponsorship (X) → Brand Awareness (Y1)	0.832	Significant effect
Sport Sponsorship (X) → Brand Association (Y2)	0.120	Small to medium effect
Sport Sponsorship (X) → Brand Equity (Y3)	0.084	Small to insignificant effect
Sport Sponsorship (X) → Brand Loyalty (Y4)	0.995	Significant effect

b. Path Coefficient and Hypothesis Testing

The path coefficient analysis was conducted to determine the significance and direction of the relationship between Sport Sponsorship and the branding variables. The significance was evaluated using T-statistics and P-values, with a significance level of 5% ($p < 0.05$).

Variables Relationship	**Path Coefficient Value**	**P-Value**	**Hypothesis Result**
Sport Sponsorship (X) → Brand Awareness (Y1)	0.676	0.000	Accepted
Sport Sponsorship (X) → Brand Association (Y2)	0.323	0.059	Rejected
Sport Sponsorship (X) → Brand Equity (Y3)	0.279	0.203	Rejected
Sport Sponsorship (X) → Brand Loyalty (Y4)	0.651	0.000	Accepted

H1: Sport Sponsorship → Brand Awareness

The path coefficient between Sport Sponsorship and Brand Awareness shows a coefficient value of 0.676, with a T-statistic of 10.376 and a P-value of 0.000. Since the P-value is below 0.05, the relationship is statistically significant. This indicates that Adidas's sponsorship of Manchester United significantly influences brand awareness among consumers. Therefore, H1 is accepted.

H2: Sport Sponsorship → Brand Association

The relationship between Sport Sponsorship and Brand Association produced a coefficient value of 0.323, with a T-statistic of 1.888 and a P-value of 0.059. Since the P-value exceeds 0.05, the relationship is not statistically significant. Therefore, H2 is rejected.

H3: Sport Sponsorship → Brand Equity

The path coefficient between Sport Sponsorship and Brand Equity shows a coefficient value of 0.279, with a T-statistic of 1.275 and a P-value of 0.203. Since the P-value is greater than 0.05, the relationship is not statistically significant. Therefore, H3 is rejected.

H4: Sport Sponsorship → Brand Loyalty

The relationship between Sport Sponsorship and Brand Loyalty resulted in a coefficient value of 0.651, with a T-statistic of 7.822 and a P-value of 0.000. Since the P-value is below 0.05, the relationship is statistically significant. Therefore, H4 is accepted.

4.3 Research Discussion

4.3.1 A Comparative Study of Before and After Sports Sponsorship

Respondents perceived a positive change following Adidas' sponsorship of Manchester United, with Sport Sponsorship scoring 81.45% (Very Good), suggesting that the partnership improved Adidas' visibility and consumer preference.

Brand loyalty (78.71%), brand equity (78.06%), brand association (76.26%), and brand awareness (74.52%) also received positive scores. However, the inner model confirms that only brand awareness and loyalty were significantly influenced by the sponsorship. Other factors, including Adidas' reputation, product quality, and athlete endorsements, may also contribute to its brand equity and association, but not as strong as the other variables. These results should be interpreted with caution, as they are based on a small sample of 31 respondents.

4.3.2 Sports Sponsorship Effects on Brand Awareness

Sports sponsorship has a significant positive effect on brand awareness ($\beta = 0.676$, $T = 10.376$, $p = 0.000$, $f^2 = 0.832$). Therefore, H1 is accepted.

This supports Keller's (1993) concept of brand recognition and recall, as repeated Adidas logo exposure through Manchester United kits, matches, and merchandise increases brand visibility. The findings also align with Hunt and Hunt (2022), who identified a positive relationship between sports sponsorship and brand awareness.

However, the findings primarily reflect brand recognition rather than spontaneous recall, as the top-of-mind awareness indicator was removed during model evaluation. In addition, most respondents are familiar with Manchester United and see the kit often, so the effect may be smaller among general consumers.

4.3.3 Sports Sponsorship Effects on Brand Association

The relationship between sports sponsorship and brand association is positive but not statistically significant ($\beta = 0.323$, $T = 1.888$, $p = 0.059$, $f^2 = 0.120$). Therefore, H2 is rejected.

Although respondents associate Adidas with elite football clubs, this perception may already exist due to its long-standing presence in football and sponsorship of other major clubs. Consequently, the Manchester United partnership may not provide sufficient differentiation to strengthen existing brand associations.

The result should be interpreted cautiously, as the p-value is close to the significance threshold and the sample of 31 respondents is small, which may have contributed to reducing the statistical power to detect this effect. Additionally, only two of the original five brand association indicators remained after model evaluation.

4.3.4 Sports Sponsorship Effects on Brand Equity

Sports sponsorship does not have a statistically significant effect on brand equity ($\beta = 0.279$, $T = 1.275$, $p = 0.203$, $f^2 = 0.084$). Therefore, H3 is rejected.

Although Adidas received a positive brand equity score (78.06%), this value may be driven by factors beyond the Manchester United partnership, including product quality, brand reputation, and other sponsorships. This supports Hunt and Hunt's (2022) observation that sponsorship exposure alone may be insufficient to build brand equity without further activation.

Furthermore, brand equity recorded an AVE of 0.415, below the recommended threshold of 0.50, indicating potential measurement limitations. Future research should refine its indicators to better capture sponsorship-related brand equity. As with the other variables, the small sample of 31 respondents means this result cannot yet be generalized.

4.3.5 Sports Sponsorship Effects on Brand Loyalty

Sports sponsorship has a significant positive effect on brand loyalty ($\beta = 0.651$, $T = 7.822$, $p = 0.000$, $f^2 = 0.995$). Therefore, H4 is accepted.

This finding suggests that sponsorship leverages consumers' emotional attachment to a sports club to strengthen loyalty toward the sponsor. Through their connection with Manchester United, fans may develop stronger preferences for Adidas, including recommending the brand to others.

However, the remaining indicators primarily measure attitudinal loyalty rather than actual purchasing behaviour, as purchase intention was removed during model evaluation. Therefore, the findings indicate stronger brand preference and recommendation, rather than confirmed purchasing behaviour. Since the sample of 31 respondents is small, the large effect size ($f^2 = 0.995$) should be read as a sign of a strong relationship rather than an exact measure.

5. Conclusion

5.1 Research Conclusion

The findings indicate the sponsorship had a significant positive impact on certain aspects of Adidas' branding. Based on the hypothesis testing results, H1 and H4 were accepted, showing there were significant differences in brand awareness and brand loyalty after the sponsorship agreement with Manchester United. The path coefficient showed strong relationships between sport sponsorship and both brand awareness ($\beta = 0.676$, $p = 0.000$) and brand loyalty ($\beta = 0.651$, $p = 0.000$), suggesting the partnership successfully increased public recognition of Adidas and strengthened customer loyalty toward the brand. Manchester United's global popularity and media exposure likely contributed to Adidas gaining greater visibility & maintaining stronger consumer engagement.

However, the results for brand association & equity were not statistically significant. H2 and H3 were rejected because p-values for brand association ($p = 0.059$) and brand equity ($p = 0.203$) exceeded the significance threshold, indicating that although the sponsorship improved awareness and loyalty, it did not create a sufficiently strong impact on consumers' perceptions or overall evaluation of Adidas as a brand, suggesting that sponsorship alone may not be enough to significantly influence deeper brand perceptions without additional marketing strategies.

The study concludes that the Adidas-Manchester United sponsorship was effective in strengthening Adidas' market visibility and consumer loyalty, but less effective in significantly enhancing brand association and equity, therefore, sports sponsorship can be considered an important branding strategy particularly for increasing awareness and loyalty, although its effectiveness on broader brand value may depend on other supporting factors. However, these conclusions are based on a small sample of 31 respondents selected through purposive sampling, so they cannot yet be generalized to the wider population.

5.2 Recommendation

5.2.1 Recommendation for Manchester United

Manchester United should leverage the sponsorship's positive impact on Adidas' brand awareness and loyalty to strengthen future sponsorship negotiations. The club should also maintain strong fan engagement, particularly in international markets such as Indonesia, through local events and community programmes, as fan attachment contributes to sponsor value.

Additionally, Manchester United should collaborate with Adidas on exclusive campaigns highlighting the club's history, players, and identity to strengthen brand associations. Clear differentiation between sponsors is also necessary to prevent competing brand exposure.

5.2.2 Recommendation for Adidas

Since the findings show a significant increase in brand awareness but no significant effect on brand association and equity, Adidas should move beyond logo exposure towards meaningful brand engagement. Exclusive products and campaigns that connect Adidas with Manchester United's identity could strengthen brand differentiation.

Adidas should also evaluate sponsorship performance through brand awareness, association, and equity indicators rather than relying solely on exposure and sales. Future evaluations should use refined measurement scales and more representative consumer samples.

5.2.3 Recommendation for Further Research

Future research should address this study's limitations by increasing the sample size beyond 31 respondents to improve statistical power and generalizability. Broader sampling across different countries and fan communities could also provide more representative findings.

Additionally, future studies should strengthen the before-and-after comparison through longitudinal research and secondary data, such as merchandise sales and brand value rankings, rather than relying solely on respondents' recall.

Measurement instruments should also be improved using validated scales, particularly for Brand Equity, which recorded an AVE of 0.415. Finally, researchers should consider external influences such as other sponsorships, athlete endorsements, and competitor activities, while exploring additional variables including fan identification, sponsor–club fit, and purchase intention.

Conflict of Interest

The author declares that there are no conflicts of interests related to this work.

DOI: 10.67521/sjbe.2026.044

References

Aaker, D. A. 1991. *Managing Brand Equity: Capitalizing on the Value of a Brand Name*. New York: The Free Press.

Appelbaum, U. 2025. *The Science of Brand Associations: Win Minds, Win Markets*. Independently published.

Bloomberg. 2023. "Adidas Signs a £900 Million Shirt Deal with Manchester United." July 31, 2023. https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2023-07-31/adidas-signs-900-million-shirt-deal-with-manchester-united.

Cornwell, T. B. 2020. *Sponsorship in Marketing: Effective Partnerships in Sports, Arts and Events*. New York: Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429325106.

Cornwell, T. B., and Maignan, I. 1998. "An International Review of Sponsorship Research." *Journal of Advertising* 27: 1–21.

Darwin, M., et al. 2021. *Quantitative Approach Research Method*. Edited by T. S. Tambunan. Media Sains Indonesia.

Dentsu. 2025. "Dentsu Sports." https://www.dentsu.com/dentsu-sports.

Football Benchmark. 2026. "Mapping the Sponsorship Landscape: Key Assets across Europe's 'Big Five' Leagues." https://footballbenchmark.com/w/mapping-the-sponsorship-landscape-key-assets-acrosseurope-s-big-five-leagues.

Hair, J. F., Hult, G. T. M., Ringle, C., and Sarstedt, M. 2014. *A Primer on Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM)*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Hunt, J. B., and Hunt, T. G. 2022. "The Effect of Sport Sponsorship on Brand Equity: A Study within the Context of Professional Soccer." *Archives of Business Research* 10 (10): 96–113.

Jensen, J. A., and Vlacancich, J. 2023. "Improving the Generalizability of the Effects of Sport Sponsorship on Brand Awareness: A Longitudinal, Multilevel Perspective." *Sport Marketing Quarterly* 32 (3): 235–45. https://doi.org/10.32731/SMQ.323.092023.05.

Keller, K. L. 1993. "Conceptualizing, Measuring, and Managing Customer-Based Brand Equity." *Journal of Marketing* 57 (1): 1–22. https://doi.org/10.1177/002224299305700101.

Kottke, M. 2024. "What Is Sponsorship?"

Kumaresan, R. C., and Chandramohan, S. 2024. "Analyzing the Impact of Brand Resonance on Consumer Purchase Intentions for Fast Moving Consumer Goods: An Empirical Study." *Salud, Ciencia y Tecnología – Serie de Conferencias* 3: 912. https://ideas.repec.org/a/dbk/confer/v3y2024ip912id912.html.

Maciejewski, G., and Krowicki, P. 2022. "Customer Engagement." *Marketing of Scientific and Research Organizations* 43 (1): 53–74. https://doi.org/10.2478/minib-2022-0003.

Mordor Intelligence. 2026. "Sports Analytics Market." https://www.mordorintelligence.com/industry-reports/sports-analytics-market.

Sarpong, A., and Zungu, N. P. 2025. "Sports Sponsorship, Brand Image, and Purchase Intentions toward Sponsors' Products." *Managing Sport and Leisure*. https://doi.org/10.1080/23750472.2024.2444449.

Seo. 2022. "Relationship between Corporate Image, Brand Awareness, and Purchase Intention According to Sports Sponsorship." *Asia-Pacific Journal of Convergent Research Interchange* 8 (4): 21–34. https://doi.org/10.47116/apjcri.2022.04.03.

Skiadas, C. H., and Skiadas, C., eds. 2025. *Quantitative Methods and Data Analysis in Applied Demography*. Vol. 1, *Health, Mortality and Covid-19*. Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-82275-9.

Slater, M. 2023. "Man United, Adidas, and the £900m Deal That Underlines Club's Huge Commercial Power."

Statista. 2026. "Global Sports Market." https://www.statista.com/topics/8468/global-sports-market/.

StatMuse. 2026. "Manchester United 2026 Season Stats." https://www.statmuse.com/fc/club/manchester-united-78/2026.

Sussek, K., and Müller, J. 2026. *The Elements of Brand Design*. Multilingual ed. TASCHEN.

UEFA. 2025. *European Club Finance and Investment Landscape*. https://ecfil.uefa.com/.