

**Fan Identification, Brand Community Identification, and Oppositional Brand Loyalty towards Sponsors of a Rival Sports Team: The Mediating Role of Schadenfreude  
The Case Study of Selected Sports Team in Tanzania**

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**ABSTRACT**

*Empirical evidence confirms that brand loyalty is broadly understood in the context of positive side i.e. supportive loyalty compared to negative side i.e. oppositional loyalty. However, theoretically positive (supportive) loyalty cannot be explained exclusively without considering negative (oppositional) loyalty. This study, therefore, examines brand loyalty using a triadic approach combining both negative and positive loyalty in the cycle of love and hate relationship. Specifically, the study examined the influence of fan and brand community identification on oppositional brand loyalty towards sponsors of a rival team in sports industry. A survey cross-sectional research design was adopted, through collecting data using semi-structured questionnaire from 228 highly identified fans of two giant sports teams in Tanzania namely Simba Sports Club and Young Africans Sports Club. The collected data were analyzed using Structural Equation Modelling (SEM), and findings revealed that fan and brand community identification have a strong positive significant influence on oppositional brand loyalty towards sponsors of a rival team when mediated with schadenfreude. Therefore, business firms should take precautions when embarking on sponsorship of highly competing sports teams. Finally, this study adopted a quantitative approach, hence further studies that adopt a qualitative approach is recommended to get a naturalistic picture of subject under the study. Additionally, a comparative study is recommended to compare level of resistance loyalty exhibited by fans of each team.*

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**Keywords: Fan Identification, Brand Community Identification, Schadenfreude, Brand Loyalty, Oppositional Brand Loyalty**

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## INTRODUCTION

Globally, loyalty is perceived as the core dimension of brand capital and hence attracts the special attention of scholars in marketing (Amani, 2019). Evidence confirms that loyalty minimizing intention to switch, increase price insensitivity, patronage, etc. Theoretically, two major streams or schools of thought exist regarding loyalty namely behaviorist school of thought (Tucker, 1964), and cognitivist school of thought (Day, 1969). These two schools of thought gave birth to behavioral and cognitive loyalty respectively (Frisou, 2010). Behaviorists define loyalty as an observable or visible behavior in the form of repetitive buying or purchase. Likewise, to cognitivism, the term loyalty represents a positive attitude that a consumer has regarding a particular brand. In view of this, cognitivism perceives behavioral loyalty as false loyalty with arguments that examining loyalty based on repetitive purchase is inadequacy as there are several determinants of repetitive buying including price level, distance from the point of purchase, availability of products, etc. (Frisou, 2010). In contrary they argue that true loyalty must emanate from an individual internal disposition which stimulates willingness to buy and consume a given brand (Bristow and Sebastian, 2001). In this regard, both cognitive and behavioral streams concentrate on the behaviors of consumers on the chosen brand while ignoring competing brands that always exist in the market (Djedidi, 2013).

However, while both cognitive and behavioral streams have been admired to be vital in building a theoretical foundation of loyalty, yet in modern business settings both have failed to provide theoretical explanations in the framework of dual behavior exhibited by consumers in the course of building loyalty (Djedidi, 2013). In the context of consumer psychology, consumers exhibit a dual behavior by consuming the chosen brand which heightens their self-image while rejecting or avoiding competing brands that might add or signify deadly meaning to their life (White and Dahl, 2006; Hogg et al., 2008). In addition, consumers of the chosen brand do not only demonstrate their opposition to the competing brand, but they tend to develop an ironic rivalry to the consumer of the competing brands. They have a habit of criticizing competing brands through challenging their consumers as a means to defend and to support the chosen brand. This means consumers of a given brand tend to define or describe themselves by the chosen brand they usually buy and consume as well as the competing brand that they do not buy and they do not consume (Djedidi, 2013). Technically this is known as oppositional brand loyalty (Muniz and Hamer, 2001). Ideally, this behavior can be well conceptualized through identification theory which advocates that an individual develops self-identification with a brand that has characteristics similar to his/her internal disposition.

Therefore, basing on the above arguments a triadic conception of the term loyalty is propounded as it conceptualize loyalty in the framework of relations between the consumer and his/her preferred brand, the existing relationship between the consumer and the discarded or rejected brand, and finally the relationship between the preferred brand and the rejected brand. The triadic conception describes loyalty beyond observable behavior e.g. repetitive purchase or positive attitude towards brands. It suggests an idea that a consumer uses his/her preferred brand as a central dimension for defining who he/she is as opposed to the way the competing brand and its consumers know. However, the study of loyalty in the context of a triadic conception which created the-

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oretical base for the emergence of oppositional brand loyalty is in infancy and hence calls for more empirical studies (Djedidi, 2013; Kuo and Huo, 2017). This study, therefore, intends to explore the influence of fan and brand community identification on oppositional brand loyalty when mediated with schadenfreude in the context of sports industry.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

### Oppositional Brand Loyalty (OBL)

The concept of oppositional (resistance) brand loyalty is very new in the literature and body of knowledge regarding branding. Given its infancy, scholars suggest that a triadic approach that is different from contemporary approach proposed by both cognitivists and behaviorists could provide the most useful way for examining oppositional brand loyalty (Djedidi, 2013). In the view of Djedidi, (2013); Kuo and Huo, (2017) the triadic approach provides a new and holistic framework for examining loyalty which has not been much popular in literature regarding brand loyalty. In the context of triadic approach, loyalty should be well examined by looking relationship that a consumer develops with his/her chosen brand, relationship which exists between the consumer and avoided brand, as well as the relationship which prevails between the chosen brand and avoided brand. In the view of Ewing *et al.*, (2013) consumers do not only define themselves by things they like most, or in terms of “*who are they*”, but they prefer to be known by things they dislike most or in terms of “*who they are not*”. In this regard, competing brands serve as a subject for making comparison (Kuo and Huo, 2017).

Hence, oppositional brand loyalty is psychological behavior whereby an individual expressing appraising behavior on his/her favorite brand and at the same time exhibits adversarial behavior on rival brands or competing brands. A person who expresses opposition towards competing brands may decide intentionally to degrade the competing brands, and more than that, he/she may challenge consumers, adopters, or followers of competing brands. Thus, in the context of oppositional brand loyalty feelings of love towards preferred brand and feelings of hate towards competing brands coexist concurrently. This implies that feelings of love and hate falling under the so-called “*a cycle of love-hate relationship*” in which one form of feeling always creates the base for another form of feeling to occur (Zarantonello *et al.*, 2016). It further implies that an individual cannot develop positive loyalty towards preferred brands, without developing negative loyalty towards competing brands. In fact, oppositional brand loyalty is more intensified by the presence of competing brand which seems to threaten the survival of chosen brands.

### Fan Identification (FI)

Fan identification has the power to influence an individual to be loyal to the extent of being fanatics to his/her favorite or preferred team, raise purchase intention of sponsor brands, and to minimize intention to switch to fans of sponsored team (Thorne and Bruner, 2006; Ramírez *et al.*, 2019). Fan identification is situation in which a person feels that he/she is emotionally attached to, or being part of his/her favorite sports team. It is a person's self-image constituting a personal (individual) identity and a social (group) identity both defines individual distinctive personal characteristics and specific social group classification which the individual belongs or attached to. In this

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regard, high identification with a certain social group in this case sports team is influenced by the extent to which the sports team replicates the peculiar characteristics of an individual person (Bristow and Sebastian, 2001). It can be said that Fan identification with a particular sports team involves an attempt of a person to define a team identity as an integral part of the person's self-identity (Madrigal, 2000; Kelley and Tian, 2004). Furthermore, fan identification can influence transfer of images between fans of sponsored teams and sponsor's brands (Grohs *et al.*, 2015). This means, highly identified fans do not only develop emotional connection with their team, but this goes further to anybody who supports the team notably sponsors and their brands.

Despite its contribution on prosperous of the sports industry, fan identification has been the source of undesirable, deadly, and detrimental outcomes for fans in sports industry (Wann *et al.*, 2003; Wakefield and Wann, 2006). Wann and Wilson (2001) pointed out that, highly identified fans tend to be "dysfunctional" and demonstrate illegal and immoral behaviors to both rival sports teams and their sponsors. According to Wann *et al.*, (2005), some of highly identified fans are ready to support their favorite team be victorious through illegal practices such as corruption or any form of cheating if at all their anonymity would be guaranteed. It is necessary to note that, highly identified fans consider their favorite team victories as something which augment their own self-prestige and self-esteem through Basking in the Reflective Glory (BIRGing) of the favorite team (Dalakas *et al.*, 2004). Experience shows that many sports fans know and acknowledge that some of these behaviors are improper or socially unacceptable, however they consider them as what a real fan should do to support or to help his/her favorite team be victorious (Ramírez *et al.*, 2019).

*H<sub>1</sub>: Fan Identification (FI) has a positive significant influence on Oppositional Brand Loyalty (OBL)*

### **Brand Community Identification (BCI)**

Recently, consumers consider brand communities as the most reliable, quick, and efficient way of accessing information about different brands. As a matter of fact, consumers respond quickly to information shared and accessed through brand communities compared to information delivered and accessed through advertising (Amani, 2019). Muniz and O'Guinn (2001) describe a brand community as a specialized and non-geographically restricted social community built on a well-defined structured set or settings of community relationships among fanatics or admirers of a given brand. In fact, group of consumers creates community or social relationships basing on specific social identifications and commonalities (McAlexander *et al.*, 2002). According to Muniz and O'Guinn (2001) these two dimensions i.e. commonalities or social identification with other members spark behavior that is in line with the key characteristics of a community namely consciousness of kind, rituals and traditions, as well as a sense of moral responsibility.

Muniz and O'Guinn (2001) described these dimensions as follows: the concept of consciousness of kind is intrinsic feelings related to the connection that a person has with other members of the community (in-group members) and the shared sense of being different from others who are not members of the community (out-group members). In other words, consciousness of kind develops a sense that consumers of a certain brand (a chosen brand) are to some extent different and distinct from consumers of a rival brand. According to Kuo and Feng (2013), members of group who have such

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consciousness develop common understanding of belonging, and usually differentiate and sometimes discard or abandon those who are not members of a given community. On the other side, rituals and traditions consist of behavior such as sharing of stories, experiences on using the brand, reflecting the history of the brand, or sometimes demonstrating specific behavior e.g. way of greeting to fellow brand users. Lastly, a sense of moral responsibility includes actions such as encourage other users of the brand to continue being loyal to the brand, sharing information with others non-members to recruit them in the community, and finally make them purchase the brand.

Therefore, brand community identification is described as the person's consciousness or realization that he/she belongs to a certain brand community which makes this person perceive him/herself as a symbolic or an actual member of the brand community (Scarpi, 2010). The person develops identification towards the brand community when he/she perceive mutual ground between his/her own value, and specific value of the brand community in the course of identifying him/herself with other members of the group (Zhou *et al.*, 2012). In this view, brand community identification involves consumers, brands, and members of the community. In order for brand community identification to occur, there must be congruity between these three entities. In this regard, a brand acts as a central to brand community identification, due to the fact that, in-group members are brought together due to their love towards the brand (Zhou *et al.*, 2012). The moment in-group members come together, they find to have similar interests, personalities, etc., which replicate the brand personalities.

*H<sub>2</sub>: Brand Community Identification (BCI) has a positive significant influence on Oppositional Brand Loyalty (OBL)*

### **Schadenfreude (SE)**

The term schadenfreude is a German word that is used to describe an undesirable socially emotion behavior expressed by an individual in the form of being happy due to misfortune or failure of another person (Ouwkerk and Van Dijk, 2014; Leach *et al.*, 2015). It exists in situation where there is antagonistic relationship between two parties. For instance, Popp *et al.*, (2016) divulge that the majority of fans of sports teams they would miss something if antagonisms between sports teams would have not been there, as there would be no sports team to hate, meaning that no reason to feel and express schadenfreude. Based on this, schadenfreude is attributed by negative responses, and therefore it is technically perceived by the majority of people as undesirable, unacceptable, distasteful (Hoogland *et al.*, 2015), and malicious or hateful (Leach *et al.*, 2014). In sports industry, schadenfreude is behavior that emerges slowly extending from minor propensities such as feeling pleasure when a rival team fails or loses to more severe behavior such as celebrating severe or serious injuries of disliked players (Dalakas and Melancon, 2012). In this regard, schadenfreude goes beyond feeling enjoyment due to victorious of favorite team rather it goes together with feelings of pleasure as the results of defeat or failure of opposing or competing teams. (Leach *et al.*, 2003; Cikara *et al.*, 2011).

In addition, in the sports industry schadenfreude exist when fans of favorite team feel hurt and anger at a competing team's achievement or success (Cikara *et al.*, 2011). It can take form of feelings of joy at the adversity of a rival team, its followers/fans, and its sponsors (Dalakas and Phillips-Melancon, 2012; Dalakas *et al.*, 2015). On the other side, schadenfreude to a great extent surfaced due to in-group behavior within a

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given social community (Cikara *et al.*, 2011; Dalakas and Melancon, 2012; Popp *et al.*, 2016). Therefore, individuals who highly identified themselves with a given social group (in-group members) has great possibility of expressing schadenfreude compared to non-members of the social communities (Hickman and Ward, 2007; Popp *et al.*, 2016). On some occasions, in-group members develop schadenfreude to out-group members as a means position themselves as very special group within the society (Cikara *et al.*, 2011). In this view, this study used schadenfreude as a mediated variable due to its ability to provide explanation regarding how and why fans of favorite teams develop oppositional brand loyalty towards rival teams, their fans, and more specifically their sponsors. As a matter of fact, theoretically schadenfreude is very popular in sports industry, though has not been well examined in studies related to sponsorship while concentrating on negative customer reaction (oppositional brand loyalty) (Angell *et al.*, 2016). Therefore, it is hypothesized that,

- H<sub>3</sub>: Fan Identification (FI) has a positive significant influence on Schadenfreude (SE)  
H<sub>4</sub>: Brand Community Identification (BCI) has a positive influence on Schadenfreude (SE)  
H<sub>5</sub>: Schadenfreude (SE) has a positive significant influence on Oppositional Brand Loyalty (OBL).

## CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This study is hypothesized a four-factor model that is Fan Identification (FI), Brand Community Identification (BCI), Schadenfreude (SE), and Oppositional Brand Loyalty (OBL). The model is explained by using a social identity theory which is based on theoretical understanding that, an individual seeks to categorize him/herself within a given social categorization as a means to differentiate him/herself with other individuals outside the social category.

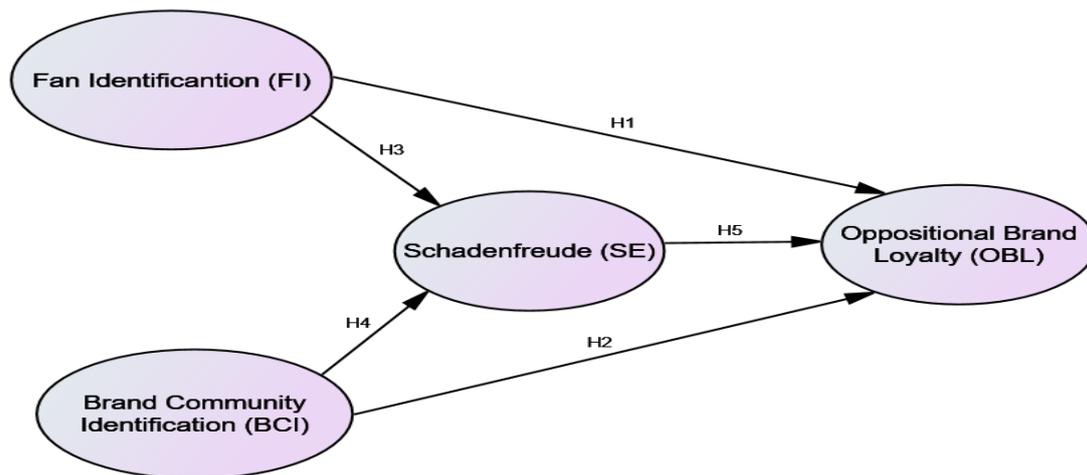


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Sources: Constructed by a Researcher from Theoretical and Empirical Review, 2019

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## **THEORETICAL BASE**

### **Social Identity Theory**

This study built its theoretical foundation on social identity theory propounded by Tajfel (1974) and Tajfel and Turner, (1985). The theory advocates that an individual develop self-categorization through creating an emotional connection with members of the society as a means to build social identity. A social identity should be defined as an individual understanding that he/she belongs to a given social group or category (Hogg and Abrams, 1988). The social group or category is a group of individuals who have a shared social identification or perceive themselves as important members of the same social category through differentiating themselves with others who are not in the given social category (Stets and Burke, 2000). Thus, the theory is based on the idea of intergroup relations consisting how individuals come to consider themselves as important members of a given social group (the in-group) in comparison with other groups (the out-group) which the results of this categorization are ethno-centrism (Hogg and Turner, 1987).

Thus, social identity theory suggests that individuals prefer to be defined in the context of who are they in the given social groups (in-group members) which creates the bases for contrasting with outgroup members. Theoretically, in-group members' favoritism, as explained by social identity theory is expected to offer in-depth theoretical explanations of how brand community identification and fan identification trigger oppositional brand loyalty. Thus, this study is theoretically grounded in the social identity theory by explaining how fan and brand community identification influence oppositional brand loyalty on sponsor of rival sports teams.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Area of Study**

The study was conducted in Dar-es-Salaam region in Tanzania. This area of study was selected because the two selected teams i.e. Simba Sports Club and Young Africans Sports Club have very strong fans base in Dar-es-Salaam compared to other regions in Tanzania. The study employed a cross-sectional survey research design due to the reasons that, the main intention of the study was not to monitor any change that occurs after intervention, and data were collected at one point of time and place so as to examine the subject under the study during particular period of time and place. Finally, sports industry was selected because is the most attractive industry for investment in the form of sponsorship in the world (see. Jense and Cornwell, 2017).

### **Sampling Procedures**

#### **Population**

The population of the study was all fans of Simba Sports Club and Young Africans Sports Club resided in Tanzania.

### **Sample Size and Sampling Technique**

Given the nature of the sports industry in Tanzania, it was very difficult to establish sample size, and therefore, previous studies of this nature were consulted to establish reasonable sample size that could fit the study objective and other methodological issues. Previous studies of this nature had sample size ranging from 100 – 500 (see. Da-

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lakas and Melancon, 2012; Shoham *et al.*, 2015; Grohs *et al.*, 2015; Cho *et al.*, 2019). Therefore, this study adopted a total sample of 228 respondents which are within the sample size adopted by the majority of previous studies of this nature. In addition, this sample size is slightly above the recommended sample size when deploying multivariate analysis techniques which are above 200 (see Hoe, 2008; Hair *et al.*, 2006).

### **Data Collection Procedures**

In order to achieve the objective of this study, data were to be collected to fans who are highly identified with either of the teams. In view of this, it was necessary to adopt purposive sampling technique to get respondents who can provide detailed, enriched, and reliable information about the subject matter. Thus, data were collected using semi-structured questionnaire which was self-administered to selected respondents.

### **Data Analysis**

Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) found in the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software Version 21 was used to analyze data. SEM has the power to estimate accurately indirect effects of specific exogenous variables on given endogenous variables (Hair *et al.*, 2006). In addition, SEM as a multivariate statistical model is more useful in dealing with multiple constructs defined and measured by using a set of measurement items. In this study, SEM was suitable because all study variables are latent variables, and are properly defined and measured by using multiple items.

### **Operationalization of Variables**

In operationalizing study variables, measurement scales were adopted from previous studies with some minor adjustments while considering context, setting and social background of the place where the study was conducted. Measurement scales for fan identification were adopted from Dalakas and Melancon, (2012), brand community identification was adopted from Zhou *et al.*, (2012) and Kuo and Huo (2017), and schadenfreude were adopted from Dalakas and Melancon, (2012). Furthermore, measurement scales for oppositional brand loyalty were adopted from Kuo and Feng (2013) and Kuo and Huo (2017). All variables were captured by using a five-point Likert scale, 5-agree to 1-Disagree.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Respondents Characteristics**

From a total of 228 respondents, Males were 139 which is 61% and females were 89 which is 39%. In addition, respondents who are fans of Simba Sports Club were 115 (50.4%), and Young Africans Sports Club was 113 (49.6%). Marital status indicates that Married was 181 (79.4%) and Single was 47 (20.6%). Age categories indicate that, 10-20 were 3 (1.3%), 21-30 were 88(38.6%), 31- 40 were 52 (22.8%), 41-50 were 25 (11%), 51-60 were 8 (3.5%) and > 60 were 52 (22.8%). Respondents' level of education shows that primary education was 18 (7.9%), secondary education was 12 (5.3%), certificate was 93 (40.8%), diploma was 98 (43%), degree was 7 (3.1%). Occupational status indicates that students were 17 (7.5%), self-employed were 81 (35.5%), employed were 95 (41.7%), retired were 34 (14.9%), and others were 1 (4%).

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### Goodness of Fit of the Models

In assessing goodness of fit of both measurement model and structural model, the following goodness of fit index was used: Normed Fit Index (NFI), Incremental Fit Index (IFI), Tucker-Lewis Coefficient (TLI), Comparative Fit Index (CFI), Goodness of Fit Index (GFI), Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) and  $\chi^2/df$ .

### Measurement Model

For the intention of assessing goodness of fit of the hypothesized model, Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was conducted (see Holtzman, and Vezzu, 2011). Precisely, all goodness of fit index was within acceptable range, implying that, the hypothesized model fit well the data and hence the model was accepted (see Hooper *et al.*, 2008). Table 1 below shows goodness of fit index, their recommended values, and actual value of each index.

**Table 1:** Goodness of Fit for Measurement Model

Goodness of Fit Index	Acceptable Value	Value of Index
GFI	Close to 1	0.926
NFI	Close to 1	0.927
IFI	Close to 1	0.953
TLI	Close to 1	0.937
CFI	Close to 1	0.953
$\chi^2/df$	$1 \leq \chi^2/df \leq 3$	2.662
RMSEA	$0 \leq RMSEA \leq 0.1$	0.086

**Source:** Data Analysis, 2019

Additionally, factor loadings of all measurement items for both fan identification and brand community identification were above the cutoff point which is  $> 0.60$  (see Kline, 2005; Tabachnick and Fidell, 2007). Furthermore, Composite Reliability (CR) for fan identification and brand community identification were 0.88 and 0.88 respectively (see Fornell and Larcker, 1981). Likewise, Cronbach alpha coefficient ( $\alpha$ ) for fan identification (5 items) = 0.877, and brand community identification (5 items) = 0.877, and cutoff point is  $> 0.70$  (see Tavakol and Dennick, 2011). Thus, measurement items for fan and brand community identification were the good measure of the constructs. Again, Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for fan identification, brand community identification were 0.591 and 0.588 respectively, and the threshold is  $> 0.50$  (see Fornell and Larcker, 1981). This indicates good convergent validity of measurement scales. In addition; discriminant validity was good because the value of squared correlation (0.386) was less than Average Variance Extracted (AVE) of each construct (i.e. 0.591 and 0.588 for FI and BCI respectively).

### Structural Model

The goodness of fit of the structural model indicates that all goodness of fit index falls within the acceptable range, and hence the model was accepted (see Hooper *et al.*, 2008). Table 2 below shows goodness of fit index, their recommended values, and actual value of each index.

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**Table 2:** Goodness of Fit for Structural Model

Goodness of Fit Index	Acceptable Value	Value of Index
NFI	Close to 1	0.869
IFI	Close to 1	0.913
TLI	Close to 1	0.901
CFI	Close to 1	0.913
GFI	Close to 1	0.846
$\chi^2/df$	$1 \leq \chi^2/df \leq 3$	2.699
RMSEA	$0 \leq RMSEA \leq 0.1$	0.087

**Source:** Data Analysis, 2019

Additionally, factor loadings of all measurement items used to measure variables i.e. fan identification and brand community identification, schadenfreude, and oppositional brand loyalty were above the threshold which is  $> 0.60$  (see. Kline, 2005; Tabachnick and Fidell, 2007). Furthermore, Cronbach alpha coefficient ( $\alpha$ ) for Schadenfreude (5 items) = 0.939, and Oppositional Brand Loyalty (5 items) = 0.916, and cutoff point is  $> 0.70$ . Composite Reliability (CR) for Schadenfreude, and Oppositional Brand Loyalty were 0.936 and 0.916 respectively. This implies that all measurement scales were good measures of the constructs.

### Regression Analysis

Statistically, regression analysis was performed through regressing exogenous variables and endogenous variables to establish their statistical relationship. The results revealed that fan identification and brand community identification influence significantly oppositional brand loyalty when mediated with schadenfreude. It can be revealed from table 1 below that, fan identification has significant influence on oppositional brand loyalty with p-value = 0.009 below cutoff point i.e.  $< 0.05$ , and  $\beta = 0.214$  and hence hypothesis 1 was supported. In addition, brand community identification influence significantly oppositional brand loyalty with p-value  $< 0.05$  and  $\beta = 0.461$ , implies hypothesis 2 was supported. Furthermore, fan identification has positive influence on schadenfreude with p-value  $< 0.05$  and  $\beta = 0.320$ , meaning that hypothesis 3 was supported. Again, brand community identification has positive influence on schadenfreude with p-value  $< 0.05$  and  $\beta = 0.429$ , hence hypothesis 4 was supported. Lastly, schadenfreude influence positively oppositional brand loyalty with p-value  $< 0.05$  and  $\beta = 0.551$ , which implies that hypothesis 5 was supported.

**Table 3:** Regression Analysis

Proposed Hypothesis	P-value	Standardized Regression Weight ( $\beta$ )	Standard Error (SE)	Critical Ratio (CR)	Decision
Hypothesis 1	0.009	0.214	0.082	2.621	Supported
Hypothesis 2	***	0.461	0.084	5.499	Supported
Hypothesis 3	***	0.320	0.093	3.456	Supported
Hypothesis 4	***	0.429	0.091	4.741	Supported
Hypothesis 5	***	0.551	0.067	8.232	Supported

**Source:** Data Analysis, 2019

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In addition, the SOBEL test was conducted to test the strength of mediated variable. Statistically, complete mediation occurs when mediated variable reduce the effect between exogenous and endogenous variables to zero. Furthermore, partial mediation occurs when mediated variable cause a nontrivial decrease of effect between exogenous and endogenous variables (see Preacher and Hayes, 2004). The results indicate that, with the inclusion of mediated variable (Schadenfreude), the effect between Fan Identification and Oppositional Brand Loyalty decrease significantly but not to zero. Likewise, when the mediated variable (Schadenfreude) is introduced the effect between Brand Community Identification and oppositional Brand Loyalty decrease slightly. These results imply that partial mediation occurs when schadenfreude is introduced in both relationships. Tables 4 and 5 below show SOBEL test output of both Fan Identification, Brand Community Identification, Schadenfreude, and Oppositional Brand Loyalty.

**Table 4:** SOBEL test for FI, SE, and OBL

Variables	Coeff	s.e.	t	Sig(two)
FI→OBL	.2755	.0539	5.1102	.0000
FI→SE	.4240	.0748	5.6714	.0000
SE→OBL	.3667	.0414	8.8606	.0000
FI→SE→OBL	.1200	.0497	2.4133	.0166

Source: Data Analysis, 2019

**Table 5:** SOBEL test for BCI, SE, and OBL

Variables	Coeff	s.e.	t	Sig(two)
BCI→OBL	.3719	.0581	6.4021	.0000
BCI→SE	.5087	.0819	6.2105	.0000
SE→OBL	.3457	.0413	8.3752	.0000
BCI→SE→OBL	.1960	.0550	3.5641	.0004

Source: Data Analysis, 2019

## DISCUSSION

The findings of the study have uncovered a new insight that has not been given attention by scholars and practitioners about sponsorship and brand loyalty. It has been revealed that sponsorship which for decades has been popularized to be very crucial in building sponsors' competitive edge may have detrimental effects on the sponsors and its brands. Specifically, though sports industry in the world has been the most attractive area for investment through sponsorship, precaution is necessary before embarking on sponsoring highly competing or opposing teams. To a large extent, highly identified fans of a chosen team may demonstrate brutality behavior to brands that spon-

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sored a rival team. Furthermore, brand community identification has confirmed to be the paramount source for building oppositional brand loyalty to sponsors of a rival team among members of the brand community (in-group members). Through brand community identification, in-group members differentiate themselves with outgroup members especially fans of a rival team, and users of brands of sponsors of a rival team. In addition, brand community identification has been confirmed to be the most powerful catalyst in prompting schadenfreude to in-group members (fans of a favorite team) toward outgroup members (fans of a rival team). Usually, in-group members develop oppositional brand loyalty as a means to defend their favorite team against a rival team, and anybody who supports the rival team including fans and more specifically sponsors.

In fact, by viewing these findings in the context of Tanzania it can be explained that, although there are no serious brutality behaviors or actions that have been reported in sports industry, yet there are feelings of hatred between fans of highly competing teams. The findings confirm that, fans of highly competing teams will feel happy if key players of rival team get serious injuries, they will feel joy if fans of a rival team get social challenge, they will be happy if sponsors of a rival team found in legal trouble, undergo bankruptcy, or get any serious social problems. In view of this, schadenfreude is the issue of concern to majority of fans in sports industry in Tanzania. The results have shed light on the idea that highly identified fans usually feel happy due to misfortune of a rival team, its fans, and eventually its sponsors. Furthermore, when feelings of happiness due to misfortune of the rival team, its fan, and its sponsors continue over time may give birth to hostility behavior which is exhibited in the form of oppositional brand loyalty. However, the fact that they cannot be able to exhibit these behaviors openly, they usually engage in serious sabotage actions such as social media-based anti-brand communities' techniques such as negative WOM, negative brand referral, etc. through both online and offline brand communities. Generally, the results demonstrate that if highly identified fans are exposed to environments that give them room to exhibit their brutality behavior, detrimental effects may occur to sponsors of the teams.

The study findings are in the line with Popp *et al.*, (2016) who investigated media-based anti-brand communities in professional football. It was revealed in this study that, fans of professional football teams use social media as a forum to express their positive and negative feelings on their favorite and rival teams. In addition, schadenfreude has been surfaced in this study as a tool for expressing joy and happiness when the opposing team fails. On top of that, Dalakas and Melancon, (2012), uncovered that the importance of winning among highly identified fans trigger schadenfreude to rival teams and their fans. In other words, highly identified fans who are Basking in Reflective Glory (BIRGing) of their preferred team, consider winning as very crucial aspects, and hence develop schadenfreude to rivals team to ensure their team victory. On the other side, Grohs *et al.*, (2015); Angell *et al.*, (2016) discovered that, though sponsorship has been viewed as an important tool for building competitive edge, highly identified fans may respond negatively when sponsorship is offered to an opposing team. This, means, when sponsorship is offered to a rival team, highly identified fans of a chosen team may develop hostility behavior to the sponsor and its brands.

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## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### Conclusion

The major intention of this study was to examine the influence of fan identification, brand identification on oppositional brand loyalty when mediated with schadenfreude. It seeks to examine the power of fans at an individual level (fan identification) and group level (brand community identification) on oppositional brand loyalty towards sponsors of rival teams. The findings divulged that both fan identification and brand community identification have significant influence on oppositional brand loyalty towards sponsors of a rival sports team. Basing on these findings it can be concluded that it is necessary to assess the nature of industry before embarking on sponsorship. In other words, marketers should carry out industry analysis in order to make prudent decisions on either to invest in sponsorship or otherwise, given the fact that the effects of sponsorship can be manifested in both positive and negative responses. Specifically, it can be concluded that the decision to sponsor a sports team may elicit negative responses to highly identified fans of a rival team. The propensity of these negative responses may start from very light negative actions to serious and complex responses such as disparaging or disapproving sponsor's brands. In addition, these responses may exhibited by an individual person as a fan of a given sports team, but serious detrimental effects can be seen when negative responses are expressed by members of brand community.

### Recommendations

Following the findings of this study, it is recommended that business firms should view sponsorship in both positive and negative responses. In this regard, business firms have to take in-depth analysis before engaging in any form of sponsorship program. This can be done through intensive industry analysis which seeks to explore the nature of competition, which dominates the industry. This may be helpful in deciding which form of sponsorship is suitable given the nature of competition and competitors prevailing in the industry. It is very crucial for business firms to design sponsorship program focusing on reducing negative effects while strengthening positive responses. This is possible through minimizing direct connection between the business firm and its brands with sponsored teams, particularly during mass advertising. This recommendation is based on the evidence from previous studies that, the majority of fans of rival teams feel unhappy when sponsors associate their success with sponsored teams. They dislike any mass communication which tries to convince the public that success of the sponsors and its brand is due to popularity or strength of sponsored team. In view of this, a hybrid sponsorship program focusing on sponsoring the most competing teams collectively can be adopted as a means to avoid negative effects on sponsors and their brands.

### Limitations and Future Study

Despite the findings of the study, this study is not free from limitations. This study adopted a quantitative approach that does not provide room for exploring in-depth understanding of the phenomena under the study. Therefore, further studies should employ a qualitative approach for exploring a naturalistic picture of topic under the study. In addition, a comparative study should be conducted to compare level of resistance loyalty exhibited by fans of each team, and fans at individual level (fan identification) in comparison with fans at group level (brand community identification).

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