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Psychological Process of Loyalty Formation towards Professional Sport Brands:

The Differences and Similarities between Domestic and Overseas Consumers

by

June Kyu Choi

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy in Marketing

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Warwick Business School

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Abstract

The way consumers perceive professional sport brands and form their loyalty towards the brands has been one of the central interests of researchers and practitioners. Despite growing importance of overseas markets for the brands, those studies have been limited in domestic market context, and the issue has been under-researched in overseas consumer context. This research investigates loyalty formation process towards the brands in both domestic and overseas consumer contexts, particularly focusing on the attitudinal aspect of brand loyalty, and compares the two groups of consumers. It argues that these two types of consumers are likely to be different in the psychological process of forming loyalty towards the brands.

A conceptual model which consists of the hypothesised relationships amongst the types of brand associations and brand loyalty is proposed and tested empirically. Data for the empirical test is collected from 537 fans of a professional sport brand (Arsenal FC). Exploratory factor analysis is conducted in order to validate the measurement scale in the two market contexts and the professional sport (football) setting. Confirmatory factor analysis is administered for checking the fit of measurement models and structural equation modelling is used to test the proposed hypotheses empirically.

The results show that, at the level of attitudinally loyal fans, domestic consumers and overseas consumers have not only dissimilarity but also similarity in the loyalty formation. The two types of consumers display dissimilarity in terms of the relevance of attributes to their perception of benefits. However, those two types of consumers exhibit similarity in terms of the needs they seek to satisfy in the brand consumption. This research provides useful implications to marketers of the brands by suggesting an insight on consumers with high attitudinal loyalty in the overseas markets. The research also provides limitations of the study and suggestions for future research.

Abbreviations

AES	-	Aesthetics
ATL	-	Attitudinal Loyalty
ATT	-	Attitudes
AVE	-	Average Variance Extracted
BHL	-	Behavioural Loyalty
BIRF	-	Basking in spite of Reflected Failure
BIRG	-	Basking in Reflected Glory
CBBE	-	Customer-based Brand Equity
CFA	-	Confirmatory Factor Analysis
CFI	-	Comparative Fit Index
CMIN/DF	-	Minimum Discrepancy divided by its Degrees of Freedom
CORF	-	Cutting off Reflected Failure
EB	-	Experiential Benefits
EFA	-	Exploratory Factor Analysis
ESC	-	Escape
EPL	-	English Premier League
FB	-	Functional Benefits
FC	-	Football Club
HIS	-	Team History (and Tradition)
IDT	-	Identification
IFI	-	Incremental Fit Index
IMP	-	Importance
KFA	-	Korea Football Association
KMO	-	Kaiser-Myer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy

KNO	-	Knowledge
LOG	-	Logo Design
MGM	-	Management
MNG	-	Manager (Head Coach)
MSA	-	Measure of Sampling Adequacy
NNFI	-	Non-Normed Fit Index
NOS	-	Nostalgia
NRA	-	Non-product-related Attributes
PCT	-	Psychological Commitment to Team
PGA	-	Peer Group Acceptance
PIP	-	Pride in Place (or Community)
RIV	-	Rivalry
RMR	-	Root Mean Square Residual
RMSEA	-	Root Mean Square Error of Approximation
PRA	-	Product-related Attributes
PRO	-	Product Delivery
SB	-	Symbolic Benefits
SCS	-	Success
SEM	-	Structural Equation Modelling
SOC	-	Socialising
SRMR	-	Standardised Root Mean Square Residual
STA	-	Star Player(s)
TAM	-	Team Association Model
TBAS	-	Team Brand Association Scale
TLI	-	Tucker-Lewis Index
TMG	-	Team Management

Chapter 1: Introduction to the Thesis

1.1. Chapter Introduction

This research explores overseas consumers' loyalty formation process towards professional sport brands in the context of international marketing by comparing them to domestic customers. This chapter is designed to introduce an overview of the study and to advance the research justification. This introduction chapter also provides the outline of the thesis structure at the end of the chapter.

On the basis of the theories of attitude formation, the functional theory of attitude, and the means-end theory, the loyalty formation process is explored by examining the relationships between brand associations and loyalty. From the philosophical position of logical empiricism, structural equation modelling is employed in order to investigate the loyalty formation process of professional sport consumers in different market settings. The theories of attitude formation are applied to discuss the roles of brand associations in loyalty formation. The functional theory of attitude is applied to argue for the differences and similarities of the professional sport consumers in international marketplaces. The means-end theory is employed to structure the relationships amongst brand associations and brand loyalty.

The study will be justified by presenting the research objectives and potential contributions. The purposes of this research are: 1) to validate the measures of brand associations and brand loyalty for professional sport brands in international market contexts; 2) to structure and examine a relational model for the loyalty formation of professional sport consumers; 3) to investigate the overseas consumers' loyalty

formation process towards the brands; 4) to identify the individual differences between domestic and overseas markets in forming loyalty at the level of attitudinally loyal fans.

1.2. Research Justification

Contextual Background

The consumption of major professional sports, such as European football leagues, is not limited to their domestic or regional markets where the contents were originally distributed, but is extended to global markets, thanks to the technological advance in telecommunications (Gratton 2003). This globalisation of professional sport markets increases the financial significance of overseas markets for professional sport teams. For example, English Football League is now shown live in more than 200 countries worldwide (PremierLeague 2011) and generates 1.4 billion pounds per annum via overseas broadcasting rights. The following paragraphs will provide the contextual background for the current study by describing the current financial situation of the European professional football industry and the growth of overseas markets, and by addressing the necessity of developing the overseas markets. The examples of the English Premier League will be particularly used throughout because this league seems the most representative example of market globalisation in football. It is the most financially successful football league in the world and has been chosen as the most appropriate context for empirical part of this research.

Despite the recent turbulent state of the global economy, the Deloitte financial reports (Battle et al. 2012) on football show that major European football leagues

have maintained their revenue growth. This revenue growth, However, has been overshadowed for the Premier League by declining operating profit, or indeed continuing operating loss, due to soaring costs, particularly those of player wages. For example, although the English Premier League, is the biggest league globally in terms of revenue, ranking top of the 'big five ' European football leagues (England, France, Germany, Italy, and Spain), its clubs are suffering from operating profits because wage costs continue to increase at a higher rate than incomes. In 2010/11 season, Premier League clubs' wage costs accounted for 70% of their revenues, which took away more than 80% of the season's income growth (Battle et al. 2012).

The difficulty which European football clubs are facing in controlling thier player wage costs is related to their eagerness to be competitive in the game. In football, a certain level of correlation exists between total wage costs and success on the pitch. According to the analysis of Deloitte Annual Review of Football Finance (Battle et al. 2012), there has been historical evidence showing a relatively strong correlation between total wage costs and league position in English Premier League. In relation to increasing player costs, Battle et al. (2012, p.25) explains that

> *"decisions to invest in playing squads in an attempt to be ever more competitive on the pitch have in most cases been prioritised over balancing this expenditure relative to revenues"*

Thus, cost control remains the biggest challenge for English football clubs. Given the worsening financial stability of clubs, it will be hard to maintain this level of investment in playing assets. Moreover, recently introduced UEFA financial fair play regulations, which set a wage/revenue ration of 70% as a regulatory guideline, and similar rules adopted by national football associations make European football clubs'

spending power more restricted. Therefore, the clubs need to increase their income continuously in order to achieve the on-field competitiveness while sustain their financial health (Brand Finance 2012).

As a result of the necessity of improving the revenues of European professional football clubs, the domestic market is not large enough to bring about this continued revenue growth, and domestic markets are showing signs of saturation. Professional sport teams' revenue streams can be divided into three categories, matchday income, commercial revenues - including sponsorship and merchandise sales -, and broadcasting rights. Amongst these three revenue sources, matchday income gives an indirect insight into the state of health of the domestic market because it is mainly generated by the domestic fans. In the English Premier League, the average facility utilisation has stood at over 90% for last 15 years so there is limited additional potential to generate further matchday income unless clubs increase ticket price or stadium capacity, which is very costly and time-consuming. The contribution to club's revenues from its matchday was outstripped by the other two sources of income in 2010/11 (Figure 1.1).
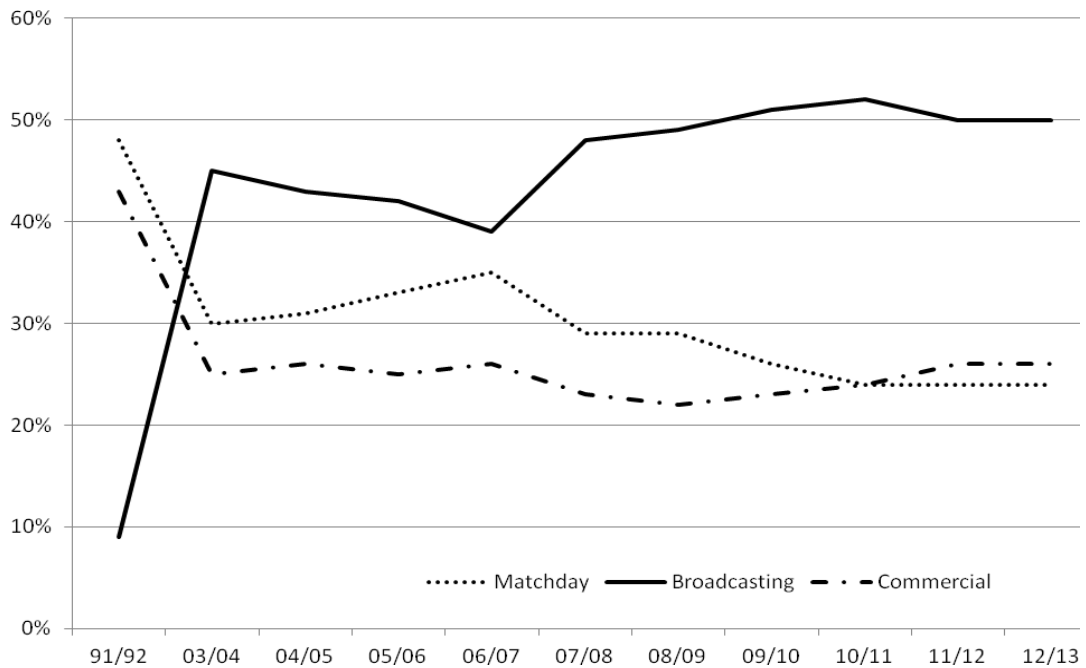
Figure 1.1: Proportions of Premier League clubs' revenue streams by category -
1991/92-2010/11 actual and 2011/12-2012/13 projected (adopted from
Deloitte Annual Review of Football Finance 2012)

In the English Premier League, income from broadcasting rights has been the largest income source to the clubs for last decade. Whilst commentators have been suggesting that the ability of the Premier League to sign ever bigger broadcast deals might be restricted by global recession, this has not, so far, proven to be the case. A significant trend, however, has been the increase in relative importance of overseas compared with domestic broadcast revenue. In 2010/11, the proportion of revenue from broadcasting rights was 52% of clubs' total revenue. A sharp increase in international broadcasting deals has been the main driver of English Premier League's recent revenue growth (Battle et al. 2012). Figure 1.2 shows the annual value of the league's broadcasting deals and the split of broadcasting revenues between domestic and international rights fees. In contrast with a 10% contribution from overseas broadcast rights to total broadcast revenue in the early 2000s, this has

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now grown to 40% of the total broadcasting revenues, with the value of 480 million pounds per season in the current deal. It is expected that the value of the international broadcasting rights fee is likely to exceed that of domestic TV rights in the next package of Premier League broadcasting rights deals (Battle et al. 2012). Considering this sharp growth in overseas markets, it is reasonable to say that developing overseas markets must be one of the most significant opportunities for increasing income and creating new revenue streams.
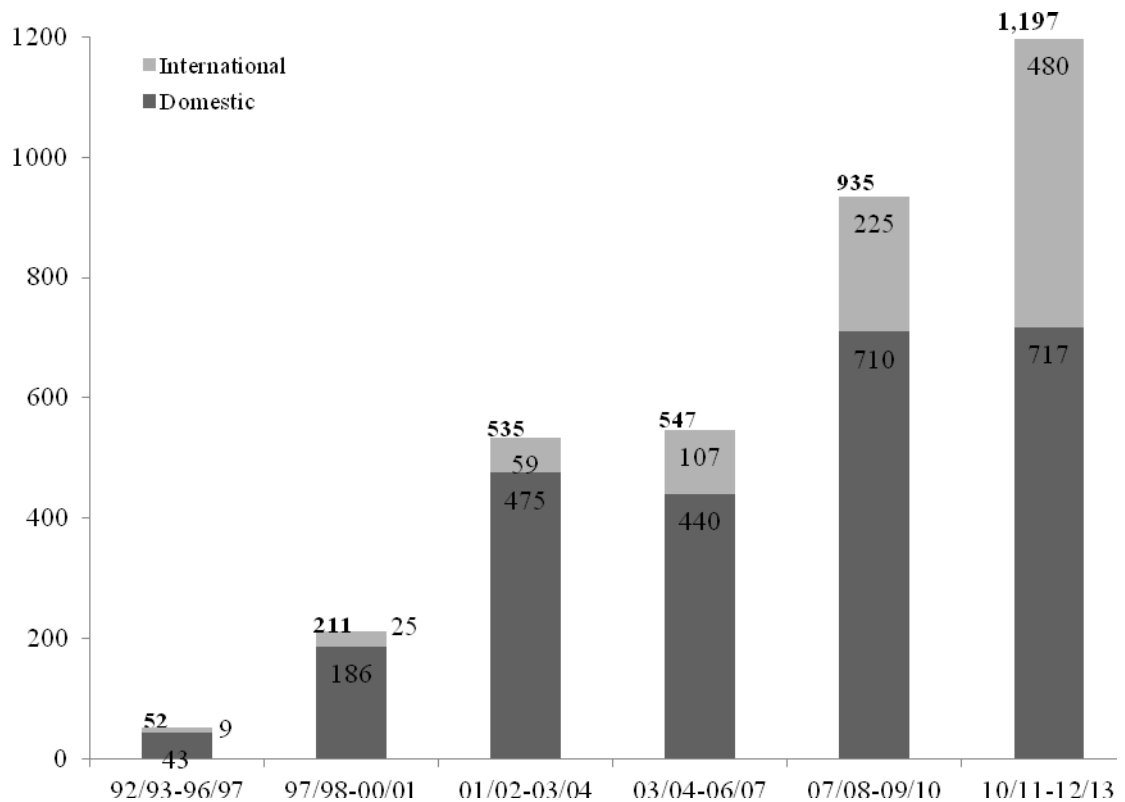
Figure 1.2: Annual value of English Premier League broadcasting deals - 1992/93-2012/13 (£m per season) (adopted from Deloitte Annual Review of Football Finance 2012)

Against this context, professional sport teams with bigger global popularity can enjoy commercial advantages based on their global appeal. As well as significant merchandise sales in overseas markets, professional sport brands with a global profile can also expect to have greater bargaining power in commercial deals. In the Brand Finance Football Brands 2012 report (Brand Finance 2012), it is noted that English clubs' global popularity makes them better able to find sponsors and puts them in a better position in sponsorship negotiations because the clubs' global reach can convince the sponsors to pay higher fees. It is also said that

> *"clubs with a more global profile (...) have been able to renegotiate significantly increased amounts from their main shirt and kit sponsorship agreements, and develop their next tier of partners, whereas more UK or regionally focussed clubs found market conditions more challenging"* *(Battle et al. 2012, p.32).*

With the increasing importance of broadcasting revenue from international TV rights deals and the commercial advantages from global appeal, it is clear that developing overseas markets has become a marketing priority for leading professional sport team brands.

Lack of Research on Overseas Consumers of Professional Sport Brands

Customer loyalty towards a brand is important as it enables the brand to attract and retain customers (Aaker 1991). Companies are also able to maintain profitability by increasing brand loyalty because it ensures base profits from a predictable level of sales and helps the companies to protect their customers from competitors' challenge

(Boone et al. 1995, Grossman 1994, Shocker et al. 1994). Thus, understanding how consumers form their loyalty towards a particular brand is critical in managing brands. In the same vein, Galdden and Funk (2001, p.68) emphasise the importance of brand loyalty to sport teams for two main reasons that brand loyalty "ensures a more stable following even when the core product's performance falters (i.e. the team has a losing season)" and "creates opportunities for product extensions beyond the core product". Therefore, it is believed that understanding sport consumers' loyalty formation process towards professional brands is crucial for professional sport teams (Bauer et al. 2008, Ross 2006).

There have been studies on investigating brand loyalty towards professional sport teams and identifying factors that influence brand loyalty (Bauer et al. 2005, Bauer et al. 2008, Gladden et al. 1998, Gladden and Funk 2001, Gladden and Funk 2002, Kaynak et al. 2008, Ross 2006, Ross et al. 2006, Ross et al. 2007, Ross et al. 2008). These studies pay attention to the consumer's perception of brand image and associations as predictive factors of brand equity and fan loyalty. As a result, the existing studies focus on developing brand associations and loyalty measures for sport brands (Gladden et al. 1998, Gladden and Funk 2002, Kaynak et al. 2008, Ross 2006, Ross et al. 2006, Ross et al. 2007, Ross et al. 2008) and examining these associations' role in the loyalty formation process of sport consumers (Bauer et al. 2005, Bauer et al. 2008, Gladden and Funk 2001).

As discussed at the first part of this section, the growth of overseas markets has contributed to professional sport teams financially and, as a result, developing the overseas markets has been attracting the attention of those professional sport brands. In spite of this increasing importance of overseas markets for professional sport

brands, the brand consumption behaviour of the consumers who consume the brands outside of the brands' domestic market is under-researched. Even though there have been studies on developing predictive factors for sport brand loyalty and investigating the loyalty formation of sport consumers, these previous studies have been limited to domestic market context and also mostly developed in North American markets. Consequently, it is difficult to assume that the current predictive factors for sport consumer loyalty work in non-domestic market context. Moreover, consumers' evaluations of brand associations (Day et al. 1979) and organisation of their attitudes (Katz 1960, Locander and Spivey 1978, Lutz 1991) can be context-dependent and differ in accordance with their particular needs. Thus, it cannot be said that the consumers in the overseas markets form their loyalty towards sport brands in the same way as the consumers in the domestic market.

In summary, as like other business sectors, understanding the way consumers form their loyalty towards sport brands is important for managing professional sport brands. Despite the markets for professional sports becoming globalised, there has been a lack of research on the psychological process of loyalty formation of professional sport brands consumers who consume those brands outside of the brands' domestic market. Moreover, the brand associations for sport brands proposed by the existing studies need to be validated in an overseas consumer context because the constructs have been developed in a domestic consumer context. Thus, it is believed that this state of reality justifies the necessity of the current research which aims; 1) to validate the current constructs of brand associations and loyalty of sport brands in a non-domestic consumer context; 2) to investigate overseas consumers'

loyalty formation process towards the brands; and 3) to compare the overseas consumers' loyalty formation process with the domestic consumers'.

1.3. Context, Scope and Domain of the Research

The present study will use customer-based brand equity as an approach to investigate the consumers' loyalty formation process towards professional sport brands. In the course of the investigation, the research will focus on consumers' perceptions of sport brands and the influence of these perceptions on the loyalty of customers. According to the works of Aaker (1991) and Keller (1993) on brand equity, consumers' mental associations with a particular brand have a large influence on the formation of brand equity. Because brand loyalty is one of the merits of brand equity (Keller 1993), the creation of brand loyalty can be examined by the consumers' evaluation of the association of the brands. Thus, the loyalty formation process of professional sport brands consumers will be explored by examining the relationships between brand associations and brand loyalty.

Moreover, existing literature (Bauer et al. 2008, Gladden et al. 1998, Gladden and Funk 2002, Ross et al. 2007) on brand equity of professional sports emphasises the need for further research into brand associations for professional sport brands in wide variety settings and their influence on the customers' loyalty towards such brands. The current research responds to these requests by verifying the brand associations in an overseas market setting.

Furthermore, previous studies (Bilyeu and Wann 2002, Gantz and Wenner 1991, Kwon and Trail 2001, Won and Kitamura 2007) of sport brand equity stress the

differences in evaluation of brand associations between dissimilar groups of customers, and call for a further study on this issue. Based on the concept of the functional approach to attitude formation (Katz 1960, Lutz 1991), the current research responds to the calls by identifying whether the loyalty formation process towards professional sport brands is different between consumers in the domestic market of the brands and consumers outside of that market.

1.4. Expected Contributions

The current study is expected to contribute in theoretical and managerial ways. The potential contributions of this research will be explained in the following two sections.

1.4.1. Expected Theoretical Contribution

This research will examine how the psychological process of loyalty formation towards professional sport brands by domestic customers and overseas consumers can be different depending on the function and purpose for which attitude is employed. The functional theory of attitude formation (Katz 1960, Lutz 1991) argues that an individual's reason for favourable attitudes towards an object is dependent on what psychological needs the person has. The thesis of this research is that the differences between domestic and overseas consumers of professional sport brands are distinctive in terms of the purpose of the brand consumption. This distinction can explain why overseas fans' psychological process of loyalty formation towards the brands differs from that of domestics fans'.

This will be explored by examining the relationships between brand associations and brand loyalty (attitudinal and behavioural). As human beings form their attitudes towards an object based on their evaluations of the object's associations (Heider 1958), customers' evaluation of the associations of a brand explains the reason for forming favourable attitudes towards the brand and the motivation for consuming the brand. Thus, the findings of this research are expected to provide an insight into the difference in the psychological process of forming loyalty towards brands, particularly professional sport brands.

There have been several attempts to identify the brand associations for professional sport brands (Bauer et al. 2008, Gladden and Funk 2001, Gladden and Funk 2002, Kaynak et al. 2008, Ross 2006, Ross et al. 2006, Ross et al. 2008). The limitation of current brand associations for professional sport brands is that they were largely developed in the domestic market context. Thus, it is problematic if domestic market related associations such as venue and concessions are used for examining overseas customers' evaluation of the brand associations. This is because, in most cases, access to such services is geographically restricted to domestic consumers only. Therefore, our current understanding of brand associations needs to be validated in an overseas markets context.

Through the validation of brand association scales for professional sport brands in the context of an overseas market, this research will develop a scale which can be used in an international market setting. Moreover, unlike conceptual models proposed by a number of the existing studies of professional sport brand associations, this research will structure and examine a sequential model for the relationship between brand associations and brand loyalty. The relational model in this study will

provide an insight into the customers' process of forming their attitudinal loyalty towards the brands and will enable the researcher to investigate the process.

1.4.2. Expected Managerial Contribution

There have been several empirical studies which investigate differences in consumer behaviour towards professional sports between different groups of customers (Bilyeu and Wann 2002, Kwon and Trail 2001, Won and Kitamura 2007). These studies attempted to compare different types of professional sport brands consumers in terms of regional origins (local and international students), ethnicity (African Americans and European Americans), and nationality (Korean and Japanese). The results of the preceding studies hint at possible differences in professional sport brands consumption between different groups of customers such as customers in domestic and overseas markets. However, there is a lack of empirical research which examines the differences between consumers who consume the same professional sports brand but are located in different markets (e.g. domestic and overseas).

As this research identifies the differences in loyalty formation towards professional sport brands between domestic and overseas consumers, it will be able to provide deeper understanding of overseas consumers' behaviour in consuming such brands. This will help the managers and marketers of professional sport entities, who wish to promote their brands in overseas marketplaces, to develop effective brand management strategies. Moreover, because this research focuses on consumers with high attitudinal loyalty, the findings of this study will aid those managers and marketers in retaining the support from overseas markets on a long term basis.

Identifying the loyalty formation process of overseas fans towards the brands could assist those marketers of professional sport brands in a variety of ways. Because it will show the types of attributes which overseas consumers react to in forming their brand loyalty, those managers will be able to have an idea about which attributes they should utilise in order to foster the brands in overseas markets. Moreover, the loyalty formation process will also inform the brand managers what kind of psychological needs the overseas consumers seek in brand consumption. Thus, it will help the managers to understand what kind of consumer needs they should pay attention to in nurturing the long-term loyalty of overseas consumers.

1.5. Research Objectives

Based on the aforementioned justification, the research objectives of the current research can be summarised as:

Objective One: To validate the measures of brand associations and brand loyalty for professional sport brands in the context of consumers who consume the brands outside of the brands' domestic market;

Objective Two: To structure and examine a relational model for the loyalty formation of professional sport consumers;

Objective Three: To identify whether the loyalty formation process towards the brands is different between domestic and overseas consumers at the level of attitudinally loyal consumers.

1.6. Organisation and Structure of the Thesis

This thesis consists of six chapters. This first chapter introduces it. The introduction chapter provides an outline of the current study and introduces the aims of the research. It justifies the research by presenting gaps in the existing literature and the potential contributions of the study. It offers the context, scope and domain of the research, and states the objectives of the study.

A literature review chapter (Chapter 2) will follow the introduction chapter. This will provide a concept of brand and a brief discussion of professional sport teams as brands. The chapter will review the theories of attitude formation including functional theory and expectancy-value theory. The literature on brand equity will be reviewed in the chapter particularly focusing on Keller's (1993) conceptualisation of customer-based brand equity. Brand loyalty will be discussed and the literature review of existing studies on brand equity for professional sport brands will be included. The literature review chapter will conclude with the conceptual framework. In the later part of chapter 2, the concepts of brand associations for professional sport brands will be discussed. The types of brand associations (attributes, benefits, and attitudes) and each brand association for a professional sport brand will be defined and discussed based on the existing literature related to the topics. Then, the conceptual model of the current study will be demonstrated. The chapter will explain the construction of the conceptual model and the development of the conceptual framework. It will discuss the specific propositions for this research and testable research hypotheses will be produced from the propositions.

Chapter three is a methodology chapter. It will discuss the philosophical background of the research which is logical empiricism. Research design, industrial context and

the sample framework will be demonstrated. It will also give an explanation of the way the questionnaire for this current survey is developed. The techniques which are used for the data analyses will be demonstrated. The main survey will be also described.

The methodology chapter (Chapter 3) will be followed by the data analysis chapter (Chapter 4). Chapter four will deal with the validation of the scales which are used in the main survey. It will involve an exploratory factor analysis including reliability tests in order to confirm the usability of the developed scales for the research context. The items of each construct will be refined in this chapter. Chapter four will also report Structural Equation Modelling. The chapter will administer the confirmatory factor analysis of the model and structural equation model testing. The validity of the model will be tested by confirmatory factor analysis, and the best fit model will be produced by testing the relationships amongst the latent variables. The hypotheses of the current research will be tested by assessing the identified structural relationships of the latent variables. The loyalty formation process models of the domestic and overseas consumers will be also compared in this chapter.

Chapter five is a discussion chapter which will discuss the result of research hypotheses tests. Both supported and rejected hypotheses will be discussed in chapter five. Moreover, the result of comparative analysis between the two groups of customers will be discussed.

In chapter six, the implications of the research will be offered in terms of theoretical and managerial perspectives. Limitations of the research will be discussed and suggestions of future research will be provided. Finally, the chapter will be concluded with the overview of the thesis.

1.7. Chapter Summary

This introductory chapter has introduced the current research. It firstly offered the aims of this research and justified the necessity of conducting this research. The chapter stated the research's context and scope, and mentioned the expected contributions of the current research in terms of theoretical and managerial perspectives. The objectives of this research were also presented. Lastly, it outlined the organisation and structure of this thesis. The next five chapters will be written in accordance with the outline of this thesis structure.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1. Introduction

This chapter provides a literature review on the concepts and existing studies related to the current research. It also presents the conceptual development of the current research.

This chapter is composed by ten sections. Section 2.1 is the current section and outlines the chapter. Section 2.2 provides a literature review on the concepts of brand in general and professional sports contexts. Section 2.3 reviews the literature on the concept of attitude including its definition, a functional approach towards it, and expectancy-value theory for its formation. Section 2.4 provides a literature review on concepts of brand equity and existing studies of brand equity models, mainly focusing on customer-based brand equity. Section 2.5 provides a literature review on a consumer's brand evaluation behaviour in terms of context-dependant customer behaviour. Section 2.6 reviews the literature on brand loyalty and also provides a literature review on brand loyalty in professional sports. Section 2.7 presents a literature review on existing brand equity studies for professional sport brands. There are two subsections in the section 2.7. The first subsection reviews the literature on brand equity models in professional sports in a customer-based context. The second subsection of the section 2.7 provides a literature review on existing research on brand associations for professional sport brands.

The later part of this chapter provides the conceptual development. The brand associations for professional sport brands are discussed. Then the explanation of how

the conceptual model was constructed is given. Following this, the propositions of the research are stated and the research hypotheses are posited from the propositions. Section 2.8 conceptualises the brand associations for professional sport brands and is categorised into three subsections. These three subsections cover three types of brand associations which are attributes, benefits, and attitudes. Section 2.9 details the model conceptualisation of the research. Based on means-end theory, the relationships amongst the three types of brand associations are conceptualised as means-end chain model. Research hypotheses about these relationships are presented. The section 2.9 also discusses the relationships between brand associations and brand loyalty, and between attitudinal and behavioural loyalty. Hypotheses relevant to those relationships are posited. A hypothesis which posits the possible difference in attitudinal loyalty formation process between domestic and overseas consumers is stated at the end of the section 2.9. Finally, a summary of chapter 2 is presented in section 2.10.

2.2. Brand

2.2.1. Definition of Brand

According to the American Marketing Association, a brand is referred as a "name, term, sign, symbol, or design, or a combination of them, intended to identify the goods and services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of competition" (Keller 2008, p.2). Kotler (1994) describes brand as a name, logo, symbol, design, or combination of these components used for distinguishing a product or service from other providers' products. These characteristic components

of a brand that enable the brand to be identified and differentiated are called brand elements (Keller 2008).

Keller (2008) notes that in practice the meaning of a brand is referred more broadly as "something that has actually created a certain amount of awareness, reputation, prominence, and so on in the marketplace" (p.2) and describes it as "something that resides in the minds of consumers" (p.10). With this broader concept of brands, the role of brands is not only restricted to the identification and distinction of a product from other products in the same category but also inclusive of signalling the product's characteristics more efficiently and delivering various meanings related to the product such as attributes and values.

The benefits of branding can be viewed from both consumers' and manufacturers' standpoints. Firstly, from consumers' point of view, brands enable customers to identify particular products that the buyers already have opinions on. By recognising specific products that consumers like or dislike, they are able to facilitate the process of purchasing and reduce the time required for the process (Dibb et al. 2006, Keller 2008). Secondly, consumers are able to evaluate the quality of product by considering brands. If a customer perceives a brand with a certain level of quality, this perception of quality can be transferred to the products which are presented by the brand. As a result, customers are able to reduce their perceived risk of purchase. This benefit of branding as a risk reducer is especially useful when customers' knowledge about a product is not sufficient for judging the product, because they can estimate the known item based on their existing knowledge about the brand such as its quality, characteristics, and so on (Dibb et al. 2006, Keller 2008). Thirdly, brands can satisfy the psychological needs of customers. Consumers choose brands not only

because of the brands satisfy their functional needs but also as the brands may serve their symbolic needs (Dibb et al. 2006, Keller 2008, Kotler 1994). For example, consumers can express their self-image by possessing a brand which signals a particular status or user image.

Branding is also beneficial to manufacturers (Dibb et al. 2006, Keller 2008). Firstly, as mentioned in the previous paragraph, brands provide an identification function of a company's products. A company is able to make its product distinguishable from the other competitors' products by using a brand. Consequently, the firm's brand makes its customers identify its products easily, and induces the customers' repeat purchasing (Dibb et al. 2006). Secondly, branding is useful for companies in extending their business (brand extension) and introducing new products (product extension). If consumers are familiar with a firm's existing brands and favourable to the brands, they will likely be favourable to the products that are newly introduced by the firm and carry the brands they already know (Dibb et al. 2006). Thirdly, branding helps companies to promote their product and build competitiveness. Branding allows firms to endow their products with unique meanings and associations. By delivering unique associations, brands influence customers' perception and user imagery of the branded products. As this consumers' perception of a particular brand is difficult to be copied by the others, brands can be a source of competitive advantage (Keller 2008). Lastly, manufacturers are able to foster brand loyalty through branding. Successful branding ultimately leads customers to be brand loyal and enables companies to have on-going support from customers. Thus, firms with successful brands can enjoy the positive consequences of brand loyalty such as charging premium price for their products, maintaining constant market

share, having sustainable revenue (particularly during a turbulent economic situation), and so forth (Dibb et al. 2006, Keller 2008).

2.2.2. Professional Sport Teams as Brands

Branding is applicable universally to various industrial contexts. For example, physical goods (e.g. BMW, Apple), services (e.g. Easy Jet, HSBC), retail stores (e.g. Tesco, Best Buy), online product and services (e.g. Google, Amazon), persons or organisations (e.g. UNICEF, Green Peace) , place (e.g. Las Vegas), entertainment (e.g. Disney) all can be the subjects of branding (Keller 2008). Sport is not an exception to the subjects of branding. Especially, professional sport is widely recognised as a brand. The reasons professional sport can be regarded as a brand is as follows.

Firstly, there is increasing recognition of image of professional sport teams (Bauer et al. 2008, Braunstein and Ross 2010, Ferrand and Pages 1999). Sport entities are getting growingly preoccupied with their image and the behaviour of the people who are engaged with sporting organisations is significantly influenced by the image of those organisations (Ferrand and Pages 1999). In line with Aaker's (1991) emphasis on the potential effect of image on consumer behaviour and consequent change in brand equity, Ferrand and Pages (1999) suggest that it is worth to regard sport entities as brands.

Secondly, sport consumers show behavioural characteristics as brand loyal customers (Bridgewater 2010). A number of studies about the relationships between professional sport clubs and their customers (fans) discuss these consumers' high

level of loyalty towards the professional sport teams they support (e.g. Calrson, Donovan, and Cumiskey 2007, Funk and James 2001, Pritchard and Funk 2008, Mahoney, Madrigal and Howard 2000).

Thirdly, rapid commercialisation has been occurring in professional sport (Beech 2004). As there has been a large amount of research about sport consumers' behaviour, there is a growing consensus of opinion amongst academic researchers and practitioners on viewing a professional sport as a business. Commercialisation itself is not a requirement for being recognised as brands, because non-commercial entities such as non-profit organisations, places, and so on can also be branded. However, commercialisation is a satisfactory condition for being the subject of branding. Therefore, it is reasonable that a professional sport club as a business should be considered as a brand.

2.3. Attitude

2.3.1. Definition of Attitude

Attitude is defined as "a learned predisposition to respond in a consistently favourable or unfavourable manner with respect to a given object" (Fishbein and Ajzen 1975, p.6). In other words, attitude is simply regarded as an overall positive or negative evaluation on a particular given object. From this definition of attitude, three basic features are found that 1) attitude is learned; 2) it predisposes action; and 3) it is consistent (Fishbein and Ajzen 1975).

Firstly, attitude towards a particular object tends to be relatively consistent in various situations (Fishbein and Ajzen 1975). In order to conceptualise attitudes, it is

necessary to make clear the notion of response consistency. The meaning of response consistency in the definition of attitude has to be seen in terms of evaluative consistency over time (Rosenberg 1960). Even though a person might behave differently with regards to an object on different occasions, the overall favourability shown by those different patterns of behaviour may stay relatively persistent (Fishbein and Ajzen 1975).

The second feature of the definition of attitude is the notion of attitudes as predispositions (Rosenberg and Hovland 1960). Attitude is regarded as a underlying variable which is believed to influence behaviour (Fishbein and Ajzen 1975). In line with the concept of overall evaluative consistency mentioned above, the predisposition represents the overall favourability of a behavioural pattern. In other words, the predisposition of a person should be seen as a certain extent of favourability in the person's behaviour with respect of an object, and the overall favourability can be expressed in different behavioural ways (Fishbein and Ajzen 1975). Together with the notion of response consistency, this concept of predisposition suggests an implication that attitude which is unobservable directly may be inferred from the observation of consistency in behaviour.

Lastly, attitudes are learned from an individual's experiences, external information, inference, and so on (Ajzen and Fishbein 1980). It is believed that residues of a human being's experiences affect his or her behaviour of organism, and thus attitude can be viewed as to be learned because attitude composes such residues (Fishbein and Ajzen 1975). Accompanied with the previously discussed two features, Fishbein and Ajzen (1975, p.10) describe that "predispositions to respond in consistently favorable or unfavorable ways are assumed to be the result of past experience". This

notion of attitudes signals that human beings' attitudes towards an object can be modified by additional experience or input of extra information related to the object (McGuire 1969).

2.3.2. Functional Approach towards Attitude

Locander and Spivey (1978, p.576) describes the basic notion of the functional approach to attitude that "the different persons might like or dislike some object with equal intensity but for completely different reasons". A functional approach to understanding attitude aims to explain why people have their attitudes towards objects in terms of the reasons they hold (Katz and Stotland 1959, Katz 1960, Smith et al. 1958). The basic assumption of this approach is that attitude formation and attitude change should be scrutinised with regard to the needs they serve (Katz 1960). The functional approach states that having a favourable attitude towards a brand depends on what kind of attitude's function a person seeks by forming his or her attitude towards the object (Lutz 1991). According to the motivational basis, Katz (1960) categorises the functions of attitudes into four major functions, namely, utilitarian, value-expressive, ego-defensive, and knowledge.

Firstly, the utilitarian function is theoretically founded on behaviouristic learning theory and is also known as instrumental or adjustive function (Lutz 1991). The utilitarian function is related to human desire for maximising the rewards and minimising the penalties (Katz 1960). Favourable attitudes are formed towards objects that facilitate achieving desirable goals, or avoiding undesirable goals (Locander and Spivey 1978). In like manner, unfavourable attitudes are built towards

objects that hinder desirable goals. Human beings assume attitudes towards objects by learning from their reinforcing experiences with the objects (Katz 1960). Based on this basic human nature, customers are likely to have positive attitudes towards products or brands which deliver more benefits for fewer costs.

Secondly, the value-expressive function assists individuals giving a chance to express their central values and the image they want to impress on the others' mind (Lutz 1991). This function of attitude is theoretically underpinned on the theories of ego psychology which emphasise the importance of self-expression, self-development, and self-realisation (Katz 1960). An individual is able to express his or her value by having a positive attitude towards an object which carries a desirable image, and as a result the person can impose his or her self-identity on other people (Locander and Spivey 1978). In addition, the self-expressive function of attitudes is not only a way of showing a person's notion of himself or herself, but also a way of defining one's self-concept by himself or herself (Day 1968).

Thirdly, the ego-defensive function stems out of Freudian psychology, and it provides people with the opportunity to protect their ego from internal unacceptable impulses and external threatening forces (Katz 1960). Some attitudes towards objects (or social situation) operate to assist a person in handling his or her internal conflict by forming defensive mechanism or rationalising the problem (Day 1968). This motivation is functionally opposite to the value-expressive function which is to show a person's internal sense of value (Lutz 1991). In respect of consumer behaviour, consumers tend to avoid buying products which reveal their handicaps but are likely to purchase products which make up for the weak points.

Lastly, the knowledge function is related to the fact that a person's ability to process information adequately is limited and thus, in order to economise cognitive effort, he or she is forced to count on references which simplify reality (Locander and Spivey 1978). A human being has a natural desire to organise appropriate structure (i.e. clear and consistent structure) of his or her perceived world (Katz 1960). The knowledge function of attitudes provides broad frames of reference for understanding a situation when a person is exposed to a complicated external stimulus (Lutz 1991). These frames of reference are believed to provide 'a simplified and practical manual of appropriate behaviour towards specific objects' (McGuire 1969). Thus, an individual's attitude towards an object can be utilised as a guideline for perceiving other objects which are associated with that object. Hence, when a person faces a new object (or situation) the individual is able to decide his or her attitude towards the object more efficiently in terms of time and effort by processing the information of the object on the basis of the frames of reference.

2.3.3. Expectancy-Value Theory for Attitude Formation

According to cognitive learning theory, which emphasises the role of motivation and mental process in producing a desired response, a person forms his or her attitude towards an object through information processing (Schiffman et al. 2008). Consistent with this theory, customers form their attitudes towards a product or brand through processing of their beliefs (or information) about the attributes of the product or brand, and then the organised attitudes have influence on the customers' decision of purchasing the product or brand. Thus, it is believed that the process of attitude organisation and attitude change can be understood by investigating

structural relationships between attitudes and beliefs about the objects of attitudes (Rosenberg 1956).

In social psychological research, there has been comprehensive theorisation of the relationships between attitudes and beliefs (e.g., Fishbein 1963, Rosenberg 1956). Fishbein's theory (1962) is the widely accepted theory of the relationships between beliefs about an object and the attitude towards the object. In this theory of the relationships (Fishbein and Raven 1962, p.42), belief is defined as "the probability dimension of a concept – 'Is its existence probable or improbable?'", and attitudes are defined as "the evaluative dimension of a concept – 'Is it good or bad?'". Fishbein and Raven (1962, p.42) make further distinction of 'belief about a concept' defining it as "belief in the existence of a number of relationships between the concept and other concepts". Fishbein's theory of the belief - attitude relationships can be described as follows: "(1) An individual holds many beliefs about a given object; i.e., the object may be seen as related to various attributes, such as other objects, characteristics, goals, etc. (2) Associated with each of the attributes is an implicit evaluative response, i.e., an attitude. (3) Through conditioning, the evaluative responses summate, and thus (4) on future occasions the attitude object will elicit this summated evaluative response, i.e., the overall attitude." (Fishbein and Ajzen 1975, p.29)

In order to explain the relationships between customers' beliefs about a product's (or brand's) attributes and their attitude formation, multi-attribute attitude models are developed on the basis of cognitive learning theory (Lee et al. 2010). Based on his theory of the relationships between beliefs about an object and the attitude towards the object, Fishbein (1963) proposes an expectancy-value model which is a multi-

attribute attitude model, and the expectancy-value model seems to be particularly relevant to understanding consumer behaviour in marketing research (Ajzen and Fishbein 1980). The expectancy-value model advances that an individual person's attitude towards an object is decided by the person's beliefs about the attributes of the objects, and the evaluation of those beliefs (Fishbein 1963). In principle an individual can hold a large number of beliefs about any given object and all beliefs about an object may affect the person's attitude towards the object. This is because that all beliefs about an object carry an evaluative aspect. However, it seems that human beings are able to take only a relatively small number of beliefs, so-called as salient beliefs, into consideration at any given moment (Ajzen and Fishbein 1980). Thus, it can be restated that an individual's attitude towards an object is a function of the person's beliefs about the object's salient attributes, and the individual's evaluation on those attributes. This expectancy-value model can be presented algebraically as below:

$$A_o = \sum_{i=1}^{N} B_i E_i$$

Where:

A_o: A person's attitude towards an object O

B_i: The belief 'i' about the object O

E_i: The evaluation of attribute 'i'

n : The number of beliefs

In terms of the discipline of marketing, expectancy-value models can be utilised for explaining customers' attitude organisation (and change) towards products or brands (Ajzen and Fishbein 1980). As the expectancy-value model is applicable to any

object such as things, persons, opinions, and whatever object of attitude, the model can also be adoptable for use in marketing setting (Lee et al. 2010). From marketing's point of view, belief can be interpreted as a customer's subjective opinion about a particular product or brand. Thus, the equation of an expectancy-value model can be substituted with marketing terms as below:

$$A_p = \sum_{i=1}^{n} b_i e_i$$

Where:

A_p : A customer's attitude towards a product or brand

b_i : The customer's belief about the attribute 'i' of the product or brand

e_i : The customer's evaluation on the attribute 'i' of the product or brand

n : The number of salient attributes of the product or brand

The works of Hackman and Anderson (1968) and Wyer (1970) argue that each attribute of an object should be given a weight for its importance (or salience). Based on this argument, Bass and Talarzyk (1972), extend the expectancy-value model in order to increase the model's applicability to a marketing context, and suggest a multi-attribute attitude model which is called attribute satisfaction-importance model. While the expectancy-value model is developed for providing an explanation of a person's attitude formation towards an object in Social Psychology, the attribute satisfaction-importance model is established by marketing researchers in order to describe a customer's relative preference to a particular product or brand amongst

other products or brands. This attribute satisfaction-importance model proposes that a customer's attitude towards a particular brand is a function of his or her beliefs about the brand's attributes and the relative importance of each of those attributes (Bass and Talarzyk 1972). According to this model, the expectancy-value model can be modified as follows:

$$A_b = \sum_{i=1}^{N} W_i B_{ib}$$

Where:

A_b : The attitude towards a particular product or brand

W_i : The weight or importance of the attribute 'i' of the product or brand

B_{ib} : The evaluative aspect or belief towards the attribute 'i' of the product or brand

N : The number of attributes important in the selection of the product or brand in the given product category

However, it is argued that it is unnecessary to add the attribute importance aspect to expectancy-value model as the model, in fact, takes the aspect into account (Fishbein and Ajzen 1975). It is believed that the expectancy-value model contains the information of the attribute importance because a human being's evaluations on attributes that are important tend to be more polarised (i.e. more positively or negatively) than those on attributes that are relatively unimportant (Fishbein and Ajzen 1975). Moreover, an individual is inclined to have more information about attributes that are important to them, and as a result the person's beliefs about those important attributes are likely more certain (or stronger) than the one's beliefs about

unimportant attributes (Ajzen and Fishbein 1980, Fishbein and Ajzen 1975). These facts suggest that the importance aspect of the attribute satisfaction-importance model is already reflected in the expectancy-value model, and thus addition of importance to the expectancy-value model seems to be unnecessary. Furthermore, the inclusion of the important aspect in addition to the dimensions of belief strength and attribute evaluation tends to attenuate the prediction of attitude. A number of studies (Anderson 1970, Hackman and Anderson 1968, Kaplan and Fishbein 1969, Wyer 1970) show that including importance as an additional dimension in the expectancy-value model actually lessens the predictive validity of the attitude model. In sum, it is believed that the expectancy-value model is considered to be suitable enough for explaining a customer's attitude organisation towards products or brands, and the omission of attribute importance construct is appropriate in terms of the model's predictive power.

2.4. Brand Equity

Since brand equity has been recognised as one of the core concept in marketing, brand equity has been defined in a number of different ways and for various purposes (Fetscherin and Toncar 2009). Farquhar (1990, p.1) defines brand equity as "the "added value" with which a given brand endowed a product". One of the most agreed definition of brand equity is advanced by Aaker (1991, p.15), and states that " brand equity is a set of brand assets and liabilities linked to a brand, its name and symbol, that add to or subtract from the value provided by a product or service to a firm and/or to that firm's customers". Companies with high brand equity have the competitive advantage such as a) they are able to charge a premium on the price of

their product or service; b) they can have increased demand by customers; c) their brand extension will be relatively easier; d) customers will more likely accept the communications of these brands; e) the companies will enjoy better trade leverage; f) they might be able to achieve larger margins; g) and they will be more sustainable under turbulent economic environments and in competitive markets (Aaker 1996, Anselmsson et al. 2007, Bendixen et al. 2004, Hague and Jackson 1994, Keller 2008, Quelch and Harding 1996, Wood 2000).

Brand equity can be viewed from two different perspectives which are company-based (or financial) and customer-based (Fetscherin and Toncar 2009, Lassar et al. 1995). The company-based brand equity, which is also called the financial brand equity, focuses the brand value to companies (Kim et al. 2003). It is regarded as the value of financial asset which is originated from the brand equity and is provided to the firms (Lassar et al. 1995). From this financial point of view, Simon and Sullivan (1993, p.29) defines the brand equity as "the incremental cash flows which accrue to branded products over and above the cash flows which would result from the sale of unbranded products". In measuring brand equity, company-based perspective takes a top-down approach. This top-down approach assumes a positive cause-effect relationship between the company's profitability and brand equity (Fetscherin and Toncar 2009). Thus, the information of a firm's overall performance, such as balance sheets, is used for the purpose of measuring this type of brand equity (Kim et al. 2003). In other words, a company's good performance in financial outcome means that the firm has high brand equity, whereas a poor financial performance represents low brand equity. However, this assumption of the top-down approach restricts the

measurement to the considered data only, and as a result it is unable to take the key elements of marketing mix in to account (Fetscherin and Toncar 2009).

Customer-based perspective emphasises the brand value to the customers (Kim et al. 2003). This approach views brand equity from a marketing decision-making context, and gives prominence to the way brands are perceived by consumers (Kim et al. 2003). As consumer-based perspective assumes that the brand value and meanings are given by consumer, this approach is able to include the key factors of marketing mix such as price and product attributes in measuring the brand equity (Fetscherin and Toncar 2009). This research will take the customer-based view in examining brand equity throughout and the customer-based brand equity will be further reviewed in the following sections.

2.4.1. Aaker's Brand Equity Model

Aaker (1991, 1996) proposes a brand equity model approaching it from customer centred viewpoint. He (1991) suggests that brand equity has major asset categories which are brand loyalty, brand awareness, perceived quality, brand associations, and other proprietary brand assets.

Firstly, brand loyalty refers a customer's attachment towards a particular brand (Aaker 1991). Brand loyalty enables a company to reduce marketing cost because keeping existing customers is relatively less expensive than attracting new customers (Kotler 1994). It also helps to attract new customers as brand exposure and reassurance can be created by existing customers (Reichheld and Teal 1996). Moreover, brand loyalty allows firms to have time to response to competitors' action

because loyal customers are relatively more reluctant to make brand switching behaviour (Linton 1993).

Secondly, brand awareness is referred as "the strength of a brand's presence in the consumer's mind" (Aaker 1996, p.10). Consumers tend to purchase a familiar brand. This may be due to the fact that they feel comfortable with familiar ones, or they assume that a familiar brand might be reliable and have reasonable quality (Aaker 1991). Moreover, brand awareness is a prerequisite for linking other associations to the brand. Brand awareness is particularly important for the brand to be considered by customers. In order to be evaluated by customers, it is necessary to be included to the considerations set.

Thirdly, perceived quality represents a customer's perception of overall quality of the brand's product or service. It is noted that perceived quality does not need to be judged based on knowledge of actual specifications (Aaker 1991). Perceived quality directly influences on consumers decision making by giving a customer a reason-to-buy which differentiates the brand from the others. It also allows firms to charge a premium price, and consequently results in better profit. Moreover, positive perceived quality is beneficial for a brand extension (Aaker 1996).

Fourthly, it is stressed that "brand equity is supported in great part by the associations that consumers make with a brand" (Aaker 1996, p.25). Well positioned brand associations create a customer's positive attitude or feeling towards the brand, and they facilitate a customer's information processing (Aaker 1991). Moreover, as brand associations are difficult to be copied by competitors, they provide competitive advantage to the brand. Strong brand associations linked to the brand can also be the source of a brand extension (Aaker 1991).

Lastly, other proprietary brand assets are the brand assets that a company may use for protecting their customer base and loyalty from competitors' threats (Aaker 1991). The representative examples for these brand assets are trademarks, patents, distribution channels, and so on. These proprietary brand assets provide competitive advantages in market to a firm.

Aaker's (1991, 1996) model provides a meaningful approach to brand equity by viewing it from a consumer's standpoint. The model also contributes to understanding brand equity concept as it suggests the categories of elements forming brand equity. However, in spite of the fact that Aaker (1991) admits the existence of interrelationships amongst the dimensions of brand equity, the relationships are not discussed and the dimensions are presented independently. Especially, he (1991) noted that brand awareness, perceived quality, brand associations, and other proprietary brand assets are able to positively influence on brand loyalty, and these potential impact of the other dimensions on brand loyalty is considerable enough. Thus, the interrelationships amongst the brand equity dimensions, particularly the relationship between brand loyalty and the other dimensions, remains as the subject of further discussion. Moreover, even though perceived quality is considered as a dimension of brand equity, it is unsure whether perceived quality is clearly separate from the dimension of brand associations. As perceived quality is evaluated largely based on a consumer's perception of a brand but the detailed specification of the brand's product does not matter for the evaluation, perceived quality may be viewed as an element of brand associations. Thus, it is still questionable whether perceived quality should be viewed as a dimension of brand equity or be considered as a component for brand associations.

2.4.2. Keller's Customer-Based Brand Equity Model

Customer-based brand equity is a concept of brand equity which is viewed from the consumer's point of view. Keller (1993, p.2) defines customer-based brand equity as "the differential effect of brand knowledge on consumer response to the marketing of the brand", based on the basic assumption of the concept that "the power of a brand lies in what resides in the minds of customers" (Keller 2008, p.48). In other words, brand equity emerges from differences in consumers' response which is caused by the consumers' knowledge about the brand. Customer-based brand equity is useful for marketers as it provides guidelines for marketing strategies and tactics and, on the other hand, is helpful for managers as it suggests areas where research is able to contribute in decision making (Keller 1993, Keller 2008).

The conceptualisation of customer-based brand equity empathises that; 1) marketing efforts have various influences on consumers' brand knowledge and changes in the brand knowledge affect conventional marketing consequences (e.g. sales); 2) the knowledge about the brand in consumers' memory is constructed by the company's short-term marketing activities and contributes the long-term success of marketing strategies (Keller 1993). As the components of brand knowledge involve a consumer's process of thinking about a brand, it is important to understand the contents and the composition of consumers' brand learning process in order to increase the effectiveness of brand strategies (Keller 1993, Keller 2008).

Figure 2.1 displays the dimensions of brand knowledge suggested by Keller (1993). The following subsections will review the Keller's conceptualisation of brand knowledge. The associative network memory model which provides a theoretical underpinning to the concept of brand knowledge will be reviewed first. Brand

awareness, which is a dimension of brand knowledge, will be reviewed in the next subsection. Subsection 2.3.2.3 will review the brand image dimension focusing on the types of brand associations. The last subsection will deal with the review of the favourability, strength, and uniqueness of brand associations.
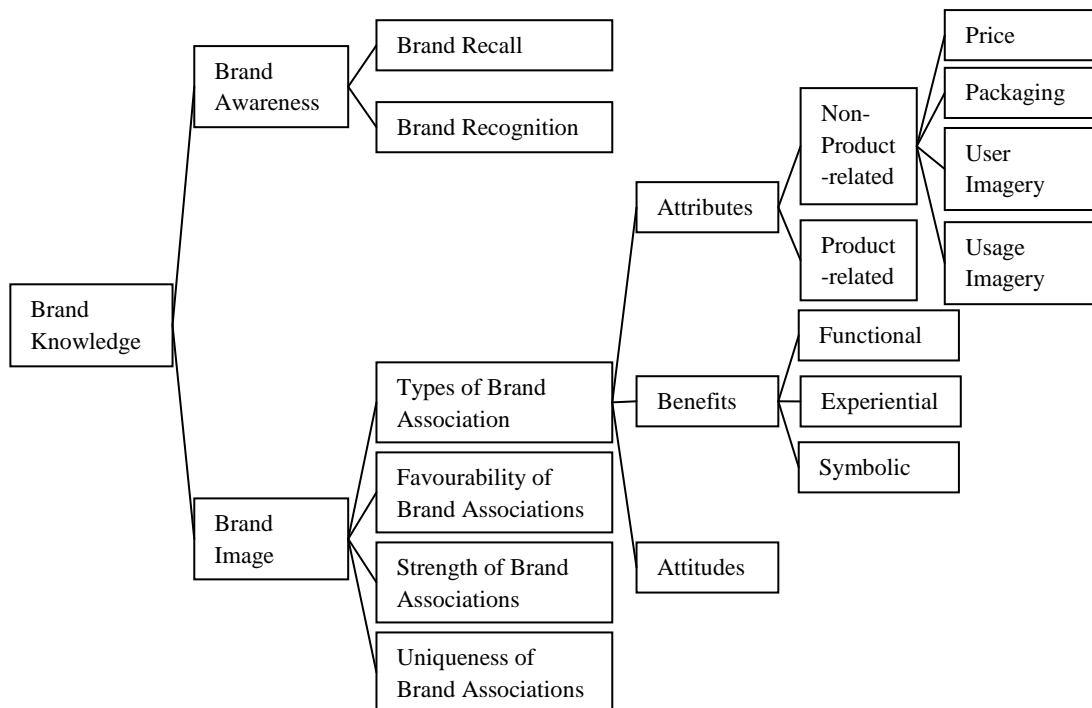
Figure 2.1: Dimensions of Brand Knowledge (Keller 1993, p.7)

2.4.2.1. Associative Network Memory Model

The notion of associative network memory model provides a view to explain the way brand knowledge exists in the memory of customers (Keller 1993). According to the model, semantic memory or knowledge is composed of a set of nodes which are

interconnected by links (Anderson 1996, Collins and Loftus 1975). In this network of nodes and links, nodes stand for stored information or concepts, and the strength of relationships amongst the information and concepts is represented by links (Anderson 1996, Ratcliff and McKoon 1988, Srull and Wyer 1989). The links in the semantic network model (associative network memory model) normally direct in both ways between the interconnected nodes (Collins and Loftus 1975). Nodes are connected by relational links if the information or concepts stored in the nodes are related or they have been learned conjunctionally (Anderson 1996, Ratcliff and McKoon 1988). The works of Collins and Loftus (1975) and Ratcliff and McKoon (1988) propose spreading activation theory as the information processing mechanism within this network of nodes and links.

The theory of spreading activation offers an explanation for the information process within the associative network (semantic network) of memory (Collins and Loftus 1975, Ratcliff and McKoon 1988). Since spreading activation theory was proposed, it has been a popular and dominant theory of memory search and retrieval (Collins and Loftus 1975, Ratcliff and McKoon 1988). Spreading activation theory advances that "processing a concept temporarily activates that concept and closely related concepts as activation spreads from link to link through the network" (Ratcliff and McKoon 1988, p.385). A node acts as an activation starting point for other nodes either in encoding process of newly learned information, or in retrieval process of stored concepts from long-term memory. When an information input occurs in the memory network, the node which stores the presented information or concept is activated. Then, activation spreads from the activated node to other linked nodes throughout the network. Consequently, the activation levels of the related nodes are

increased. The activation levels of the linked nodes depend on the strength of associative relationships between the initially activated node and the connected nodes. Thus, the more closely related concept that is in the associative network to the input information; the more likely it will be activated.

Based on this concept of associative network memory model, Keller (2008, P.51) regards brand knowledge as "consisting of a brand node in memory with a variety associations linked to it" and suggests brand awareness and brand image as two elements of brand knowledge. These elements of brand knowledge will be reviewed in the following three sections.

2.4.2.2. Brand Awareness

Brand awareness is a rudimentary form of brand knowledge and the reflection of consumers' capability of brand identification under various contexts (Baker et al. 1986, Hoyer and Brown 1990, Rossiter and Percy 1997). It is composed of the extent of brand recognition and brand recall. Both of the dimensions of brand awareness require consumers' previous learning of the brand (Rossiter and Percy 1997). Brand recognition is related to consumers' ability to discriminate the brand by confirming previous encounter with the brand (Hoyer and Brown 1990, Keller 1993, MacInnis et al. 1999). On the other hand, brand recall is dependent on customers' ability to retrieve the brand from memory when they are provided with a cue related to the brand, such as the product category or the needs which can be served by the category (Keller 1993, MacInnis et al. 1999, Rossiter and Percy 1997).

Previous research proposes three main ways in which brand awareness influences consumer decision making. Firstly, a brand with high awareness is able to increase the possibility of being considered in consumers' brand choice process. It is shown that consumers are not normally loyal to one brand only but often have a small number of brands they may consider for a particular purchasing situation (Bettman and Park 1980). This small pool of alternatives is called a consideration (or evoked) set and increasing brand awareness helps the brand to be included in the consideration (or evoked) set (Baker et al. 1986, Nedungadi 1990). Secondly, a high level of brand awareness can increase the chance to be chosen from the consideration set by consumers (Adaval 2003). Preceding research shows that consumers may make their purchasing decision based on the familiarity of a brand only (Jacoby et al. 1977, Roselius 1971). This kind of brand awareness dependent decision making rule occurs particularly when consumers' involvement in the decision making is relatively low (Bettman and Park 1980, Hoyer and Brown 1990, Park and Lessig 1981). Lastly, brand awareness is important because it is a necessary condition to build a brand image. According to associative network memory model, human beings' memory forms a semantic network (Anderson 1996, Ratcliff and McKoon 1988). Thus, in order to create a brand image in consumers' mind, a brand node to which all the associative information or concept can be successfully interconnected should exist fundamentally. In other words, having the centripetal point, the brand node, other nodes are able to be connected and, as a result, a brand image can be created in consumers' mind.

Even though brand awareness is one of the important dimensions of brand knowledge, the dimension will not be considered in the conceptual framework of the

current research. This is because brand awareness of professional sport teams is usually very high in popular sports leagues (Bauer et al. 2008). Particularly, within a regional or domestic marketplace, professional sport teams rarely have strong competitors to the core product (Gladden and Funk 2002, Ross 2006). Moreover, because this research is conducted in the context of international markets, a globally well-known professional sport brand will be selected as the brand to be studied. Thus, high brand awareness of the selected professional sport team is set as a prerequisite condition. Furthermore, this study is targeting a sample of customers who are attitudinally loyal towards the selected brand, so the brand awareness of the brand in the sample is regarded to be very high already. Therefore, the current research will focus on brand associations dimension rather than brand awareness dimension. Brand associations, the other dimension of brand knowledge, will be reviewed in the following section.

2.4.2.3. Brand Associations / Brand Image

As displayed in Figure 2.1, the other dimension of brand knowledge suggested by Keller (1993) is brand image. Brand image is defined as "perceptions about a brand as reflected by the brand associations held in consumer memory" (Keller 1993, p.3). In accordance with the concept of an associative network memory model of brand knowledge, brand image results from all the nodes linked to the brand node in consumers' memory (Keller 2008). These nodes store the meanings which consumers make up of the brand and are called as brand associations (Aaker 1991, Keller 2008). Unlike brand awareness, brand image is influential particularly when consumers' involvement in the decision making is relatively high (Keller 1993).

Brand associations are defined as anything in a customer's mind related to a particular brand (Aaker 1991). There are various ways of classifying brand associations into difference categories. For example, Aaker (1991) suggests 11 categories of brand associations which are product attributes, intangibles, customer benefits, relative price, use/application, user/customer, celebrity/person, life-style/personality, product class, competitors, and country/geographic area. Having been defining brand image as the associations linked to brands, Biel (1992) divides brand associations into corporate image, product image and use image. Then he subdivides each of the three categories into 'hard' type which represents tangible/functional attributes and 'softer' type which includes emotional attributes (Biel 1992). Farquhar and Herr (1993) propose four types of brand associations which are product category, usage situation, product attribute, and customer benefits. Chen (2001) initially groups brand associations into product and organisational associations. Product associations are subdivided into functional and non-functional attributes, and organisational associations are separated into corporate ability and corporate social responsibility associations (Chen 2001).

Even though there are several classification methods of brand associations, a number of studies have suggested the level of abstraction for categorising the type of brand associations (Alba and Hutchinson 1987, Chattopadhyay and Alba 1988, Johnson 1984, Russo and Johnson 1980). Following this way of distinction, Keller (1993) divides brand associations into three categories which are attributes, benefits and attitudes.

Attributes

Attributes are defined as "those descriptive features that characterize a product or service – what a consumer thinks the product or service is or has and what is involved with its purchase or consumption" (Keller 1993, p.4). Although there are various ways of classifying attributes (Myers and Shocker 1981), this research follows Keller's way (1993) which subdivides attributes into product-related attributes and non-product related attributes. This way of distinguishing attributes depends on to what extent the attributes are directly related to the core product of a particular brand.

Product-related attributes are the elements which are directly related to the core product or service of the brand and are needed for delivering the expected functions (Keller 1993). In other words, they mean the associations which consumers seek from the function of the core product or service (O'Cass and Grace 2003). These attributes are related to the physical configuration of a product or the necessity of a service (Keller 1993). For example, product-related attributes for automobiles can include associations directly related to the basic function of the product such as acceleration, braking, engine, and so on.

Non-product-related attributes are the product's or service's external characteristics that are related to customers' purchase or consumption of the product or service (Keller 1993). On the contrary to product-related attributes, non-product-related attributes are the associations which customers are offered indirectly by the consumption and apart from the core function of the product (O'Cass and Grace 2003). For example, price, product appearance, user and usage imagery, or brand personality are able to be mentioned as types of non-product-related attributes (Chen

2001, Keller 1993). Price is regarded as a non-product related attribute as it influences a customer's brand choice although it is not directly related to the function of product or service. Consumers tend to form strong beliefs about the value of a brand in association with the price, and identify the brand distinctively from the other brands by separating them into different price tiers (Blattberg and Wisniewski 1989). Packaging is also considered as a non-product related attribute. Even though it does not have direct relationship with the performance of a product, it still affects significantly on consumers' perception and evaluation of the product's brand image (Hagtvedt and Patrick 2008, Pantin-Sohier 2009). User imagery and usage imagery are also not directly related to the product itself. They are rather indicating the way the use of the product represents the user, or in what kind of situation the product is used (Myers and Shocker 1981). User and usage imagery are able to be interpreted as brand personality attributes because the brand personality (or character) is one of the elements of brand image (Keller 1993, Plummer 1984).

Benefits

Benefits are described as "the personal value consumers attach to the product or service attributes − that is, what consumers think the product or service can do for them" (Keller 1993, p.4). Benefits are subdivided in to three categories − functional benefits, experiential benefits, and symbolic benefits, in conformity to the consumers' underlying motivations to which these types relate (Park et al. 1986b).

Functional benefits are the rather intrinsic merits which consumers are able to achieve by consuming the product or service and are believed to be often correlated

with product-related attributes (Keller 1993). This type of benefits satisfies consumers' basic motivations, such as physiological and safety needs (Maslow 1987), and customers' desire of problem solving (Fennell 1978, Rossiter and Percy 1997).

Experiential benefits are related to consumers' feelings of using the product or service and are also likely corresponding to product-related attributes (Keller 1993). This type of benefits serves consumers experiential needs. From buying and using product or service, modern customers do not seek only functional features and benefits, quality of product, and a positive brand image, but also they consume brands in order to satisfy their desire of fascinating their senses, impressing their emotions, and stimulating their minds (Schmitt 1999).

Symbolic benefits are relatively extrinsic merits which consumers can seek from their consumption of the product or service (Keller 1993). These benefits are normally correlated to non-product-related attributes and respond to consumers' latent desire which is related to their self-concept such as expressing self-identity or fortifying self-esteem (Keller 1993, Solomon 1983). Human beings in nature tend to interact with others through communication (Wood 1982) and brand consumption behaviour is not an exception from this social nature of humans. Consumers are willing to develop and express their self by choosing and using a brand which carries the symbolic meanings they wish to possess. For example, when a consumer selects a gift for another person or him/herself, he or she obviously considers whether the gift fairly represents the identity of the giver or the receiver (Belk 1979, Mick and Demoss 1990, Mick and Faure 1998, Wolfinbarger 1990).

Attitudes

The definition of brand attitudes is what consumers evaluate in a brand overall (Chen 2001). Their importance lies in that they often provide the fundamental basis for consumer behaviour such as brand choice decision making (Keller 1993). Expectancy-value model (Rosenberg 1956) is regarded as a widely accepted approach of a person's attitude which is particularly relevant for a consumer's brand attitude (Ajzen and Fishbein 1980, Fishbein and Ajzen 1975). Expectancy-value models view a person's attitude toward an object as "a function of his salient beliefs that the object has certain attributes and his evaluations of these attributes" (Ajzen and Fishbein 1980, p.153). Thus, brand attitudes can be induced by estimating consumers' beliefs about the attributes and benefits the brand contains, and their evaluations of those beliefs (Keller 1993). Brand attitudes are not only related to product-related attributes, functional benefits and experiential benefits, but also to non-product-related attributes and symbolic benefits.

2.4.2.4. Favourability, Strength, and Uniqueness

Brand knowledge is formed from the degrees of favourability, strength, and uniqueness of the different types of brand associations: product-related attributes, non-product-related attributes, functional benefits, symbolic benefits, experiential benefits, and overall brand attitudes (Hoeffler and Keller 2003, Keller 1993, 2008). Brand associations can vary dependent on how favourably they are regarded by consumers, how strongly they are connected with the brand node and other associations of the brand, and how uniquely they are recognised by consumers

within the comparison with competing brands (Hoeffler and Keller 2003, Keller 1993). In other words, based on the existence of strong, favourable and unique brand associations, the differential effect on consumer response to marketing activity, which is brand equity, results (Hoeffler and Keller 2003, Keller 2008). These favourability, strength, and uniqueness of brand associations will be reviewed in the following sections.

Favourability

Favourability of brand associations represents how favourably brand associations are evaluated, and these associations can differ relative to the degree of favourability (Keller 1993). When a brand has relevant attributes and benefits which can satisfy the customers' needs, the brand will successfully build a positive overall brand attitude towards the brand in the customers' mind (Ajzen and Fishbein 1980, Fishbein 1963, Fishbein and Ajzen 1975). Thus, creating favourable brand associations is a key marketing practice.

Strength

Another way of differing between brand associations is the strength of connection to the brand node (Keller 1993). The strength of brand associations is determined by the way the information is encoded in consumer's memory and it is stored as part of the brand image (Keller 1993). In other words, stronger brand associations result if a customer thinks more deeply about product information and relates it within the brand memory system (Craik and Lockhart 1972, Craik and Tulving 1975, Lockhart

et al. 1976). If a customer learns or receives a piece of information with a brand and the input information is strongly cued into the customer's memory system related to the brand, then the stored information will likely be retrieved as a valid brand image when the consumer thinks about the brand (Isen 1992). Thus, making strong links between positive brand associations and the brand node in the customer's mind is important for building a positive brand image.

Uniqueness

In order to build high brand equity, favourable brand associations do not only need to be strongly related to the brand image in the customer's mind, but also present uniquely (Keller 1993). A brand has to share some associations with other competing brands as the product or service of the brand cannot help having category membership once it is marketed (Keller 1993). Sharing these product category associations is essential because they are crucial determinant of brand awareness (MacInnis et al. 1992). In order to make a brand competitive with the other competing brands in the same category, a unique selling proposition is required because it can leads consumers to have a persuasive reason for rationalising their decision of purchasing the brand (Aaker and Shansby 1982, Ries and Trout 1979, Wind 1982). This competitive brand advantage can be achieved by creating and emphasising unique brand associations which differentiate the brand from the other brands in the same product category (Keller 2008).

2.5. Context-Dependant Consumer Evaluation on Brand

2.5.1. Attributes Importance

It is believed that customers' decision making process is partly guided by their perceptions of the importance of product attributes. The importance of attributes significantly influences on consumer's information seeking, process of product evaluation, and purchasing decision making (Mackenzie 1986). Attributes importance is narrowly defined as "the importance of an attribute in determining a person's attitudes toward a set of brands", and broadly as "a person's general assessment of the significance of an attribute for products of a certain type" (Mackenzie 1986, p.175). While the former definition is conceptualised from the context of a specific set of brands in a product class (e.g., Alpert 1971, Myers and Alpert 1968, 1977), the latter is based on the context of all brands in a product category (e.g., Beckwith and Lehmann 1973, Sheth and Talarzyk 1972, Wilkie and Pessemier 1973).

Based on this definition, it is suggested that the 'evaluative aspect' element of expectancy-value models of attitude is related to attributes importance conceptually and empirically (Mackenzie 1986). Fishbein and Ajzen (1975, 1980) also advanced that attributes importance is very closely related to polarity of attributes evaluation. In other words, customers will evaluate attributes (or benefits) that are important to them more positively or negatively than they judge unimportant attributes (or benefits). This close relationship between attribute importance and the polarity of its evaluation hints that consumers' judgement on attributes or benefits can be context-dependant. Thus, brand associations which are relevant to consumers brand consideration may vary based on the context of brand purchase. Hence, the valuation

of a brand association can be situation specific (Miller and Ginter 1979). Day, Shocker, and Srivastava (1979) also noted that the evaluations of brand associations can be various relative to the context which consumers make the purchasing decision, and the specific needs which the consumers seek from the brand consumption. In short, importance on brand associations can vary by the types of consumers and, as a result, brand associations that are weighted in the evaluation of a brand can be different according to the types of consumers.

2.5.2. Levels of Processing

The strength of brand associations is decided by the quantity (or amount) and quality (or nature) of processing the information receives at encoding (Hoeffler and Keller 2003, Keller 1993). The levels of processing (or the depth of processing) approach provides an insight on the formation of brand association strength. According to the levels of processing, perceived stimuli undergoes through several levels (or stages) of analysis to be stored in human memory (Craik and Lockhart 1972, Craik and Tulving 1975, Lockhart et al. 1976). These stages are inclusive from the perception of physical or sensory features (preliminary stages) to matching the input with existing abstract information in memory (later stages) (Craik and Lockhart 1972). In other words, once a stimulus is recognised, it will be further elaborated by following a number of levels of processing. This series of processing mechanism is referred to as depth of processing.

This approach argued that memory traces are consequences of the processing executed on stimuli (Craik and Lockhart 1972). Thus it is suggested that "the nature

and durability of the memory trace is determined by the level at which a stimulus is processed: Deep, semantic processing is associated with higher retention than is processing at a shallower perceptual level" (Moscovitch and Craik 1976, p.447). In other words, if the input information is processed with deeper levels of analysis and is associated with more existing information, it will result stronger traces than shallow processed and less elaborated information. Craik and Lockhart (1972, p.676) note that the depth of processing is determined by several factors such as "the amount of attention devoted to a stimulus, its compatibility with the analyzing structures, and the processing time available". Hence, the information which is more meaningful to the perceiver is processed to a deeper level with more elaboration than less meaningful information. Therefore, when a consumer perceives information related to the product (or service) of a brand, the strength of the associative relationship between the input information (brand association) and the brand is various in accordance with how much the input information is meaningful to the customer. This is because of the fact that the strength of brand association is resulted from the degree of elaboration level.

The studies of Loftus and Loftus (1980), Tulving and Psotka (1971), and Isen (1992) provide an explanation on the strength of brand association in terms of the accessibility to the stored information in human memory. Information stored in human memory is exceedingly durable and the association strength of the information is immensely stable although it is not permanent and decreases very slowly (Loftus and Loftus 1980). Thus, retrieval of stored information in memory is the matter of accessibility to the information rather than its availability (Tulving and Psotka 1971). To put it differently, once information is stored, it is potentially

available for retrieval but sufficient amount of reminders and retrieval cues are necessary for being accessible. Thus, larger number of cues linked to the information facilitates the recall of the information (Isen 1992).

This insight of processing information into the strength of brand associations indicates that some brand associations may be particularly salient and easily recallable as the levels (or depth) of processing information are influenced by the degree of meaningfulness which consumers reward to the input. Thus, the salient associations can be different according to the types of consumers. In sum, the strength of brand associations may differ depending on the context in which the brand is considered by customers.

2.6. Brand Loyalty

Brand loyalty means a measure of attachment that a consumer holds towards a brand (Aaker 1991). According to Jacoby (1971, p.25) the concept of brand loyalty is referred as "the tendency to prefer and purchase more of one brand than of others". It is important for a company to build customer's loyalty towards its brand as keeping the existing customers, who generate more profits for the company and produce communications favourable for its brand, is more cost effective than attracting new customers (Kotler and Keller 2006).

In marketing, brand loyalty has attracted the attention of researchers and practitioners because it does not only have economic benefits but also noneconomic benefits. Economically, brand loyalty is beneficial to a company because that it can save the costs of acquiring new customers; it may secure base profits and growth in

per-customer; it is able to reduce the operating costs of the firm; the brand can be recommended directly or indirectly to new customers by existing customers; the company may expect extra income through price premium; and brand loyalty helps the company to reduce the costs of introducing new products of the brands (Reichheld and Teal 1996). On the other hand, noneconomic benefits which firms can expect from brand loyalty include inducing customers repeat purchasing; enhancing long-term business performance; improving customer retention; fortifying customer relationships; differentiating their product from the competitors'; expending distribution channels; and so on (Linton 1993).

Brand loyalty is the essence of brand equity because it is a major generator of brand's value to a company as an asset (Aaker 1996). Brand loyalty is distinguishable from the other dimensions of brand equity in qualitative nature as use experience is a prerequisite for the existence of brand loyalty (Aaker 1991). The concept of brand loyalty has been approached from behavioural and attitudinal viewpoints and, thus, has been discussed in various ways. The following sections will discuss the concept of brand loyalty from both behavioural and attitudinal points of view.

Early studies about brand loyalty mainly focus on customers' repeat purchasing behaviour (Cunningham 1956) and this approach, which mainly pays attention to behavioural aspect of brand loyalty, is called the stochastic view (Odin et al. 2001). From the stochastic point of view, loyalty is behaviour and the customer who repurchases a particular brand is directly considered to be loyal to the brand (Fournier and Yao 1997, Odin et al. 2001). This view influences brand loyalty studies which look brand loyalty as retention and total share of consumers (e.g.,

Griffin 1995). However, it is disputed that using this stochastic approach alone is not adequate for assessing brand loyalty because of its lack of exploratory power, and inability to provide knowledge of the actual cause of loyalty (Jacoby and Kyner 1973, Fournier and Yao 1997, Jacoby and Chestnut 1978, Odin et al. 2001). It is suggested that brand loyalty has to be differentiated from simple repeat purchasing behaviour, because true (intentional) loyalty is different from spurious loyalty which is caused by the absence of alternative brands or a long-term sales promotion of a particular brand, etc. (Day 1969).

In response to this debate on using the stochastic approach only, it is suggested that the deterministic view which regards attitudinal aspect of brand loyalty has to be considered together in understanding brand loyalty (Jacoby and Chestnut 1978). According to the deterministic view, repeat purchasing does not just happen but it is the direct result of something underlying the consumer's behaviour (Jacoby and Chestnut 1978). Thus, although repeat purchasing behaviour is necessary, it is not sufficient condition for brand loyalty and customers' attitudinal aspect must be considered together with repeat purchasing behaviour (Jacoby 1971). The deterministic view focuses on individual level of brand loyalty which means brand loyalty exists and is able to be examined for each consumer. Jacoby and Chestnut (1978, p.8) note that "purchasing … is the output of a dynamic, decision-making system involving numerous psychological variables, and since BL (brand loyalty) is one of these variables, it should be replaced in the context of the individual's process of cognitive/behavioural activities".

Based on the works of Day (1969) and Jacoby (1971), Jacoby and Kyner (1973, p.2) propose the definition of brand loyalty, integrating the two approaches, that it is

" (1)the biased (i.e., non-random), (2) behavioural response (i.e., purchase), (3) expressed over time, (4) by some decision-making unit, (5) with respect to one or more alternative brands out of a set of such brand, and (6) is a function of psychological (decision-making evaluative) processes". Brand loyalty needs to be biased experiential response expressed over a period, because if it were random event, there would be no possibility of prediction and control over it; if the verbal reports of brand preference is not expressed by behaviour, it cannot be sufficient to be called loyalty; and the preference should be expressed by behaviour at least twice in order to insure the consistency of the bias (Jacoby and Kyner 1973). Moreover, it is necessary to identify the decision maker of the brand choice; otherwise, it will be impossible to examine the underlying psychological process and causative factors for the brand preference. Furthermore, there should be alternative brands which can substitute the preferred brand, as it will be unable to distinguish the actual brand loyalty from the 'spurious' loyalty (Day 1969, Jacoby 1971). Lastly, in order to make clear distinction between brand loyalty and simple repurchasing behaviour, it should be viewed from the point of psychological commitment (Jacoby and Kyner 1973).

In the same vein, Jacoby (1971) also suggests two primary facets of brand loyalty: brand loyal behaviour and brand loyal attitudes. Brand loyal behaviour is defined as the apparent behaviour of particular repeat purchasing caused by evaluative psychological decision processes, while brand loyal attitudes are regarded as the underlying predispositions to act in a specific way (Jacoby 1971). This conceptualisation of brand loyalty can be found in later studies' definitions of brand

loyalty such as Wilkie's (1994) work which describes it as a favourable attitude and consistent purchase towards a specific brand.

Brand Loyalty in Professional Sports

As advanced in a number of customer-based brand equity studies (Aaker 1991, Berry 2000, Keller 1993), brand loyalty is influenced by the quality of product or service. Thus, customer's loyalty towards a brand can be weakened when the product or service of the brand fails to satisfy the expectation of the customer. As a result, consumer may consider choosing one of the competing brands for next purchase instead of repurchasing the same brand. However, this brand shifting behaviour is rarely observed amongst loyal sport customers. Unlike the other customers in general product or service industry, consumers in professional team sport industry hold distinctive disposition towards the teams they support. Sport customers, so-called fans, show strong and unquestioning loyalty which is different from the other forms of brand loyalty towards products or services.

Persistence and consistency of customer's loyalty towards sport brands are often highlighted by previous studies (e.g. James et al. 2002, Funk and James 2001, Wakefield and Sloan 1995). In explaining loyal sport consumers, James, Kolbe, and Trail (2002, p.215) describe them as "people who remain with the team over an extended period of time". Customer loyalty in sport refers longitudinal persistence and consistence support irrespective of the circumstances a team faces (Funk and James 2001). Wakefield and Sloan (1995) regard team loyalty as the most influential factor on a spectator's attendance to stadium for sport events, and define it as

enduring allegiance to a specific team. For instance, professional sports fans tend to keep their support to their team even when the team performs badly on the field. Nottingham Forest and Leeds United used to be two of the top English football clubs. However, they have failed to continue their in-field success, and now each belongs to Championship, the second tier division in English football league, after suffering from several relegations. Nevertheless, they still enjoy relatively strong support from their fans and a large crowd in stadium on a match day.

Some studies have identified a phenomenon in which fans make a distance from their team when the team's performance is disappointing (Cialdini et al. 1976, End et al. 2002). This behaviour is called as 'cutting off reflected failure (CORF)' (Cialdini et al. 1976, End et al. 2002, Madrigal 1995). However, although the fans distance themselves from the unsuccessful side, they still recognise the team as their team and are willing to remain as the fans of that team. This unconditional supporting behaviour suggests that professional team sports consumers' favourable attitude towards their teams (the brands) is very consistent and intense.

2.7. Brand Equity Studies for Professional Sport Brands

2.7.1. Customer-Based Brand Equity Models in Professional Sport Studies

As there are a number of studies about brand equity in mainstream marketing (e.g. Aaker 1991, 1996, Berry 2000, Keller 1993, Simon and Sullivan 1993), so there are also an increasing number of works on brand equity in marketing professional sport entities. Like traditional brand equity research, these studies approach brand equity in professional sport setting from both a company-based view on brand equity (e.g.

Boone et al. 1995) and a customer-based view (Bauer et al. 2005, Bauer et al. 2008, Gladden et al. 1998, Gladden and Funk 2001, Gladden and Funk 2002, Kaynak et al. 2008, Ross 2006). Since this research approaches professional sport brand equity from a customer's point of view, a focus on customer-based brand equity will be used in the following sections on professional sport brand equity covered in the reminder of this section.

The following two subsections will provide the review of the customer-based brand equity models in sport brand context. Two conceptual studies of Gladden, Milne, and Sutton (1998) and Ross (2006) will be primarily reviewed. The main reason for reviewing these two particular works is because these two studies provide conceptual foundations to a number of subsequent works on developing and examining scales to measure brand associations for sport brands. Firstly, Gladden et al.'s (1998) work is followed by studies on brand associations such as Gladden and Funk (2001, 2002), Bauer et al. (2005), Bauer el al. (2008) and Kaynak et al. (2008). On the other hand, Ross's (2006) conceptual framework provides a theoretical basis to brand association studies such as Ross et al. (2006), Ross et al. (2007), and Ross et al. (2008). Another reason for reviewing the two works of Gladden et al. (1998) and Ross (2006) is that, although these two studies are both based on Keller's (1993) conceptualisation of customer-based brand equity, the two works have distinctive differences to each other in their conceptualisation of customer-based brand equity for sport brands. Thus, it is necessary to review the two conceptual works (Gladden et al. 1998, Ross 2006) separately in order to comparatively review the differences and similarities between the two conceptual frameworks. The work of Gladden et al. (1998) will be

reviewed first in the following subsection and the review of Ross's (2006) study will be provided in the second subsection.

2.7.1.1. Gladden, Milne and Sutton's Model

In terms of the distinction between sport-related brand equity research and the business-based literature, Gladden, Milne and Sutton (1998) stress the high intangible nature of the business in the sport context, and then note that both tangible and intangible indicators should be considered in measuring brand equity in the sport setting. Based on the brand equity model of Aaker (1991, 1996), they (1998) propose a conceptual model for assessing brand equity in amateur sports (college athletics). Figure 2.2 shows Gladden et al.'s conceptual framework of assessing sport brand equity.
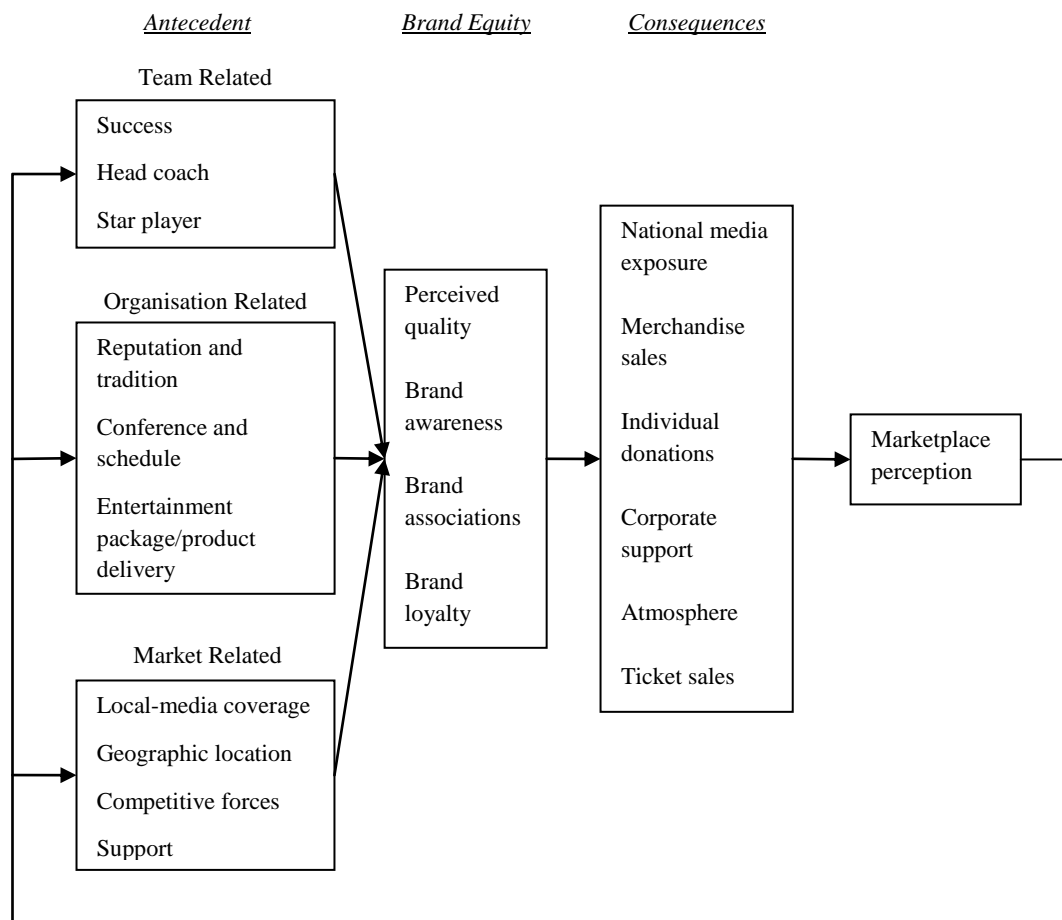
Figure 2.2: Conceptual Framework of Brand Equity in College Athletics
        (Gladden et al. 1998, p.5)

The model consists of three categories of brand equity antecedents (team related, organisation related and market related). These are regarded as precursors to brand equity which is composed of its four elements (brand awareness, brand associations, brand loyalty and perceived quality) suggested by Aaker (1991, 1996). The authors also note in their model that the consequences of brand equity, such as national media exposure, sponsorship, and merchandise sales, form an image of the sport product in customers' mind. Gladden and Milne (1999) then modify the framework

to include professional sport setting and test empirically, introducing additional factors (logo design, stadium or arena) to the antecedents.

Gladden et al.'s (1998) brand equity model contributes on professional sport brand equity literature as it introduces the concept of brand equity in sport marketing by adjusting Aaker's brand equity model to the sport context. The model is also meaningful because it suggests antecedents of brand equity in the sport setting such as product related, organisation related and market related antecedents. These works make a conceptual basis for the following studies about brand associations for professional sport brands (e.g. Bauer et al. 2005, Bauer et al. 2008, Gladden and Funk 2001, Gladden and Funk 2002, Kaynak et al. 2008, Ross 2006). Therefore, it can be said that Gladden et al.'s (1998) model has significance as it provided a conceptual foundation to brand equity research in the sport context.

However, Gladden et al.'s (1998) framework cannot avoid the limitations in appropriateness for sport brand because the brand equity models (Aaker 1991, 1996, Keller 1993) which they were based on had been developed for physical goods (Ross 2006, Ross et al. 2006). Moreover, the dimensions of brand equity (perceived quality, brand awareness, brand associations, and brand loyalty) are treated parallel as they are categorised in Aaker's (1991, 1996) model. As a result, Gladden et al.'s (1998) model still ignores the potential interrelationships amongst those dimensions. Furthermore, by following the Aaker's suggestion on dividing the dimensions of brand equity, Gladden et al.'s model is also not free from the debatable issue of the Aaker's model on whether perceived quality can be considered as a separate dimension from brand associations.

2.7.1.2. Ross' Model

Unlike a mainstream product, the sport product has unique characteristics. The sport product is simultaneous, unpredictable, perishable and intangible (Shank 1999). Moreover, the consumption of it is experiential and emotional (Shank 1999). Taking this peculiar nature of the sport product into consideration, the core product of sport is more similar to service rather than manufactured goods. It has been already pointed out that branding concepts developed from physical goods cannot be adapted directly to service branding (Berry 2000, Parasuraman et al. 1988). Thus, the frameworks which were conceptualised with manufactured product basis may not be suitable for sport setting. Bearing the concept of Berry's service branding model (2000) in mind, Ross (2006) proposes a framework for sport brand equity, so called spectator-based brand equity. Figure 2.3 displays Ross' conceptual framework for spectator-based brand equity.
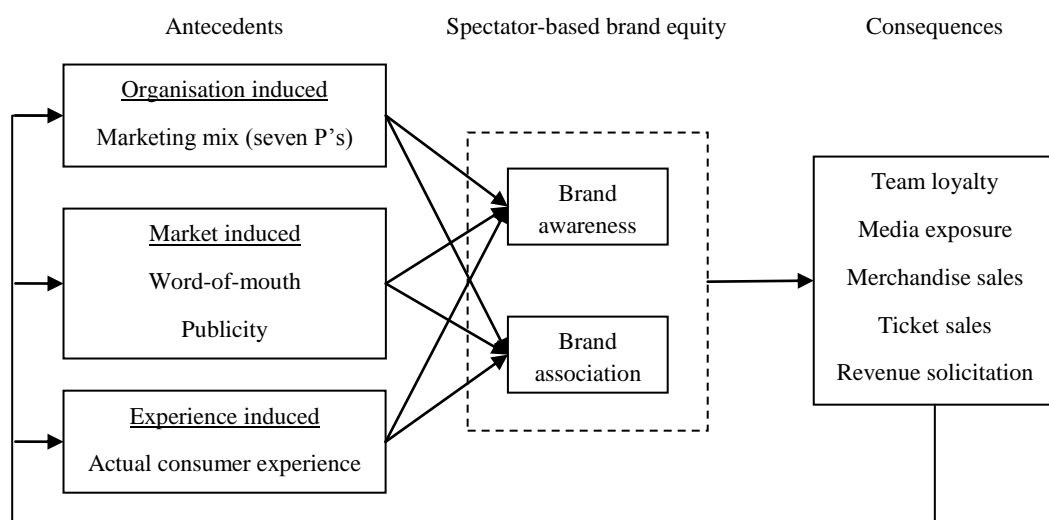
Figure 2.3: Conceptual Framework for Spectator-based Brand Equity
          (Ross 2006, p.28)

As with Gladden et al.'s (1998) brand equity model for sport brands, Ross' (2006) framework for spectator-based brand equity consist of antecedents, spectator-based brand equity, and consequences. However, the components of each stage in Ross' model differ from those of Gladden et al.'s (1998) framework. Unlike Gladden et al. (1998), Ross (2006) categorises the antecedents into organisation induced, market induced, and experience induced antecedents which involve in creating spectator-based brand equity. These alterations on the categorisation of brand equity antecedents are the results of reflecting the characteristics of service brands.

A distinctive characteristic of Ross' (2006) conceptualisation is that spectator-based brand equity is composed by two dimensions which are brand awareness and brand associations. Differently from Gladden et al.'s (1998) model which proposes four dimensions (perceived quality, brand awareness, brand associations, and brand loyalty) for brand equity, Ross (2006) reduces the number of dimensions to two dimensions (brand awareness and brand associations). This modification is clearly in line with Keller's (1993) conceptualisation of brand equity model which also suggests brand awareness and brand associations as components of brand equity. Brand awareness and brand associations are defined as the important elements on which customers evaluate and choose a sport product, as they are in service brand equity concept. Since the process of consuming service is experiential and emotional, product quality in service industry is regarded as a part of customer experiences which is a precursor for brand association (Berry 2000). Thus, product quality is considered as one aspect of brand association rather than a separate element of spectator-based brand equity.

Another noticeable difference in Ross' model from Gladden et al.'s conceptual framework is that brand loyalty is not counted as a component of brand equity, but is referred to as a consequence of brand equity. The interrelationship amongst dimensions of brand equity has been an issue in brand equity studies (Bauer et al. 2008, Gladden and Funk 2001, Kaynak et al. 2008). In addition, Keller's (1993) study also omits brand loyalty from the dimensions of brand equity. Taking this debate into consideration, Ross (2006) comprehends team loyalty (brand loyalty) as one of the consequences of brand equity, along with media exposure, merchandise sales, ticket sales, and revenue solicitation. By making this modification on the position of brand loyalty in the framework, the spectator-based brand equity model offers a possibility to resolve the questions related to the relationship between brand equity and brand loyalty.

Ross' (2006) model contributes to professional sport brand equity literature by introducing the concept of service brand equity to professional sport brand context. By viewing professional sport products as services, Ross' framework for spectator-based brand equity regards perceived quality as a specific type of brand associations rather than an independent dimension of brand equity. Moreover, the model treats team loyalty (brand loyalty) as a consequence of brand equity instead of considering it as a particular component of brand equity. As a result, it manages to simplify the dimensions of brand equity (spectator-based) with two components (brand awareness and brand associations), and afford an opportunity to examine the relationship between brand loyalty and brand equity. However, in spite of these contributions, Ross' (2006) study is unable to offer a further discussion of brand associations such

as specification of brand associations. Moreover, developing methods and actual measures for assessing the brand equity is also left for further research.

2.7.2. Previous Research on Developing Scales to Measure Brand Associations for Professional Sport Brands

Since customer-based brand equity models for professional sport brands were suggested by the two conceptual studies of Gladden et al. (1998), and Ross (2006), brand equity research in sport contexts has been focused on developing scales to measure brand associations for professional sport brands (Bauer et al. 2008, Gladden and Funk 2001, 2002, Kaynak et al. 2008) and the relationship between brand associations and consumers' brand loyalty (Bauer et al. 2008, Gladden and Funk 2001, Kaynak et al. 2008).

As proposed by Gladden et al. (1998) and Ross (2006), the elements for professional sport brand equity can be summarised as brand awareness and brand associations. Even though the sport brand equity model proposed by Gladden et al. (1998) suggests four components of brand equity which are perceived quality, brand awareness, brand associations, and brand loyalty, Ross' (2006) conceptualisation for spectator-based brand equity simplifies the dimensions to brand awareness and brand associations by including perceived quality to brand associations, and considering team loyalty (brand loyalty) as a consequence of spectator-based brand equity.

The studies following the two conceptual works of Gladden et al. (1998) and Ross (2006) have particularly paid attention to brand associations rather than brand awareness (e.g. Bauer et al. 2008, Gladden and Funk 2001, 2002, Kaynak et al. 2008,

Ross et al. 2006). This is because brand awareness for professional sport teams is normally high especially in major professional sport such as baseball, basketball, and football (Bauer et al. 2008). Moreover, compare with brand awareness, brand associations provide more marketing opportunities to marketers and managers of professional sport clubs who eager to develop their brand equity (Bauer et al. 2008, Gladden and Funk 2001). Thus, those subsequent studies have centred its attention mainly on developing measures of brand associations for sport brands, and examining the relationships between the brand associations and brand loyalty. Preceding studies on brand associations for professional sport brands will be reviewed in the following sections, spotlighting on some key studies in the literature. The key studies are displayed in the table 2.1. The following paragraphs will focus on general reviews of the key research in the main but will not discuss each brand association for professional sport brands in detail. Brand associations for professional sport brands will be discussed further in the section 2.8 of this chapter.

Table 2.1: Previous Key Studies on Brand Associations for Sport Brands

Author(s)	Brand Associations
Gladden & Funk (2001)	Attributes: Success, Star player, Head coach, Management, Logo design, Stadium/Arena, Product delivery, Tradition Benefits: Escape, Fan identification, Peer group acceptance, Nostalgia, Pride in place
Gladden & Funk (2002)	Attributes: Success, Star player, Head coach, Management, Logo design, Stadium, Product delivery, Tradition Benefits: Escape, Fan identification, Peer group acceptance, Nostalgia, Pride in place Attitudes: Importance, Knowledge, Affect
Ross et al. (2006)	Non-player personnel, Team success, Team history, Stadium community, Team play characteristics, Brand mark, Commitment, Organisational attributes, Social interaction, Concessions, Rivalry
Kaynak et al. (2008)	Product-related attributes: Success, Star player, Head coach, Management Non-product-related attributes: Logo, Stadium, Product delivery, Tradition Functional benefits: Escape Symbolic benefits: Fan identification, Peer group acceptance Experiential benefits: Nostalgia, Pride Attitudes: Importance, Knowledge, Affective reactions
Bauer et al. (2008)	Product-related attributes: Team, Head coach, Star player, Team performance Non-product-related attributes: Logo and club colours, Club history and tradition, Stadium, Fans, (Management), (Sponsor or owner), (Regional provenance) Benefits: Identification, Peer group acceptance, Escape/Get away from it all, Emotions, Socialising/Companionship, Nostalgia/Evoke fond memories, Entertainment, (Pride in place) Attitudes: Uniqueness, Trustworthiness, Positive feelings, Favour

The following subsections will provide the review of the key studies on brand associations for sport brands (Table 2.1). One reason that these studies are reviewed in separate subsections is because of their differences in developing the constructs of brand associations. Although the studies of Bauer et al. (2008), Kaynak et al. (2008), and Ross et al. (2006) are all influenced by the brand equity concept of Gladden et al. (1998) and basically refer to the works of Gladden and Funk (2001, 2002), they have noticeable differences amongst them in developing scales of brand associations. Moreover, the conceptual frameworks of those studies are different to one another, because Ross et al.'s (2006) study is conceptualised on the basis of Ross' (2006) brand equity model, and Bauer et al. (2008) and Kaynak et al. (2008) consider brand

loyalty as a consequence of brand association in their conceptual development. Thus, in order to see how those works develop brand associations and the measures differently, the key studies will be reviewed separately. The first subsection will review two studies of Gladden and Funk (2001, 2002), and the review of Ross et al.'s (2006) work will be detailed in the second subsection. The review of the works of Kaynak et al. (2008) and Bauer et al. (2008) will be provided in the last two subsections.

2.7.2.1. Team Association Model

A study by Gladden and Funk (2001) examines the relationship between brand associations and brand loyalty in professional sport. In the research, the authors initially propose 13 brand associations for professional sport brands and, then, empirically test the relationship between these associations and brand loyalty.

Gladden and Funk (2001) identify the dimensions of brand associations for professional sport brands based on Keller's (1993) conceptual framework on customer-based brand equity which suggests three kinds of associations: attributes, benefits, and attitudes. The study proposes 13 brand associations which are success, star player, head coach, management, logo design, stadium/arena, product delivery, tradition, escape, fan identification, peer group acceptance, nostalgia, and pride in place (Gladden and Funk 2001). In line with Keller's conceptualisation of brand associations, those 13 brand associations are categorised as attributes and benefits according to their level of abstraction. Eight associations (success, star player, head coach, management, logo design, stadium/arena, product delivery, and tradition) are

grouped as attributes, and the other six associations (escape, fan identification, peer group acceptance, nostalgia, and pride in place) are included into benefits.

Gladden and Funk (2001) conduct multiple regression analysis in order to examine the link between the 13 brand associations and brand loyalty, using a sample of professional sport consumers in U.S.A. This regression analysis intends to investigate which of the 13 brand association dimensions might be used to explain a customer's team loyalty (loyalty towards a customer's favourite team brand). In their research, the authors consider attitudinal loyalty as the dependent variable (team loyalty) of the independent variables (brand associations), rather than behavioural loyalty. The result of the multiple regression analysis shows that seven out of the thirteen factors of brand associations (fan identification, nostalgia, peer group acceptance, escape, tradition, product delivery, and star player) have significant relationships to team loyalty of the highly committed customers. Amongst those seven significant dimensions, four brand associations (fan identification, nostalgia, escape, and product delivery) are positively related to team loyalty. However, negative relationships are found between the other three factors (peer group acceptance, tradition, and star player) and brand loyalty.

The study of Gladden and Funk (2001) is meaningful as it is one of the early studies which explore brand associations for professional sport brands. It also contributes to the literature on professional sport brand equity by sub-dividing the types of brand associations into attributes and benefits, based on Keller's conceptualisation of brand associations. Moreover, it suggests a useful research viewpoint to professional sport brand equity by considering brand associations as the means of explaining a customer's loyalty towards professional sport brands.

Gladden and Funk's study (2001) on brand associations is followed by another research of the authors (Gladden and Funk 2002). The latter study extends the former research's identification of brand associations for professional sport brands. In the research (Gladden and Funk 2002), the authors add three additional dimensions (importance, knowledge, and affect) to the previously suggested 13 brand associations (Gladden and Funk 2001) for professional sport brands. These overall 16 dimensions of brand associations are named as team association model.

Those three newly added associations are suggested as the dimensions for attitudes which is neglected in the authors' (2001) previous work of exploring brand associations for professional sport brand. Attitudes, which is recognised as one of the types of brand associations in Keller's (1993) conceptualisation of brand equity, is omitted from the consideration of brand associations for professional sport brands in Gladden and Funk's (2001) early study. The reason of this omission is explained that "while attitudes are an important component of Keller's (1993) conceptualisation of brand associations, attitudes are very abstract and thus difficult to operationalise for managerial action" (Gladden and Funk 2001, p.75). However, team association model attempts to cover the attitude type of brand associations by suggesting three factors of importance, knowledge, and affect as the dimensions of the attitude category of brand associations for professional sport brands (Gladden and Funk 2002).

2.7.2.2. Team Brand Association Scale

Based on Ross's (2006) conceptual framework of spectator-based brand equity, several studies (e.g. Ross et al. 2006, Ross et al. 2007, Ross et al. 2008) carry out developing the scale of brand associations for professional sport brands. Ross, James, and Vegas (2006) point out that preceding brand association studies (e.g. Gladden and Funk 2001, 2002) have validity problem of developing the scales for brand associations and lack in paying attention to the customer's thoughts. In order to reflect the customer's thoughts to the development of brand associations for professional sport brands, the authors conduct free-thought listing technique for producing initial items. Then, they administer expert panel review as well as statistical validity tests for the purpose of securing the validity. Ten factors of brand associations are initially developed through the free-thought listing and exploratory factor analysis. The factors are non-player personnel, team success, team history, stadium community, team play characteristics, brand mark, consumption experience, characteristics of sport, commitment, organisational attributes. These ten initial categories, then, are modified to 11 categories after expert review process as the 'consumption experience' factor is divided into two separate categories which are 'social interaction' and 'concessions'. The 'characteristics of sport' factor is also renamed 'rivalry' for the better representation of the factor in this review process. As a result, 11 factors (non-player personnel, team success, team history, stadium community, team play characteristics, brand mark, commitment, organisational attributes, social interaction, concessions, and rivalry) are finally proposed as dimensions of brand associations and these dimensions were called as team brand association scale. Unlike Gladden and Funk's (2002) team association model, Ross

et al.'s (2006) team brand association scale does not distinguish sub-categories of brand associations such as attributes, benefits, and attitudes.

Two studies (Ross et al. 2007, Ross et al. 2008) follow Ross et al.'s (2006) research and attempt to empirically test the usability of the team brand association scale. A study of Ross, Bang, and Lee (2007) assesses the applicability, validity, and reliability of the team brand association scale in the context of intercollegiate sport (ice hockey). Their research confirms that the team brand association scale is valid and reliable in intercollegiate sport contexts, and thus the scale is not only applicable in professional sport contexts but also in amateur sport setting. A research of Ross, Russell, and Bang (2008) uses the team brand association scale in examining Ross's (2006) spectator-based brand equity framework as the measure for brand association dimension of the brand equity model. The result of the study showed that the team brand association scale is also valid in the empirical assessment of spectator-based brand equity model (Ross et al. 2008).

A notable contribution which Ross et al.'s (2006) team brand association scale made is that it initiated the development of the brand association dimensions for professional sport brands from the actual customer's thoughts. As criticised by Ross et al. (2006) earlier, preceding studies on professional sport brand associations has been centrally relying on the researchers' thoughts in the process of exploring the brand associations, and consequently that method raises a validity issue. By starting the process from listening the customer's thoughts (free-thought listing), the study (Ross et al. 2006) is able to contribute in improving the validity of the developed scale. Moreover, accompanied with several following empirical assessment studies, it provides rigorous scales of brand associations. Furthermore, the team brand

association scale has a function of reassuring Gladden and Funk's (2002) team association model indirectly as most of the brand associations suggested by Ross et al. (2006) are overlapped with the brand associations proposed by Gladden and Funk. In fact, although the dimensions of brand associations are named differently between the two models, the concepts of the nine dimensions in the team brand association scale (i.e. non-player personnel, team success, team history, stadium community, team play characteristics, brand mark, commitment, organisational attributes, and social interaction) are almost identical to those in the team association model. In addition, the team brand association scale suggests new dimensions of professional sport brand associations which are concessions and rivalry. These two factors have not been covered by preceding studies such as the team association model. However, there is a limitation in the usability of the team brand association scale. The scale makes no distinctions in the proposed brand associations according to the types of the dimensions such as attributes, benefits, and attitudes. This limitation of the team brand association scale restricts the usability of the scale for the studies investigating the customer's loyalty formation process.

2.7.2.3. Kaynak, Salman, and Tatoglu's Study

Kaynak, Salman, and Tatoglu (2008) produce an exhaustive review on brand associations for professional sport, and suggest a conceptual framework linking brand associations and brand loyalty in professional team sport contexts. The authors develop the framework mainly based on Gladden and Funk's studies (2001, 2002). Thus, there are a lot of similarities between Kaynak et al.'s study and Gladden and

Funk's research in proposed brand associations and the conceptual model constructions.

Overall 16 brand associations are suggested by Kaynak et al. (2008) and the associations are composed of success, star player, head coach, management, logo, stadium, product delivery, tradition, escape, fan identification, peer group acceptance, nostalgia, pride, importance, knowledge, and affective reactions. These 16 dimensions of brand association are identical with those of Gladden and Funk's research (2002) in nature, although there are few variations in naming. The conceptual model proposed by Kaynak et al. (2008) is also similar to Gladden and Funk's (2001) conceptual framework because its basic structure is propositioning the relationship between brand associations and brand loyalty. Figure 2.4 shows the conceptual model of Kaynak et al.'s study.
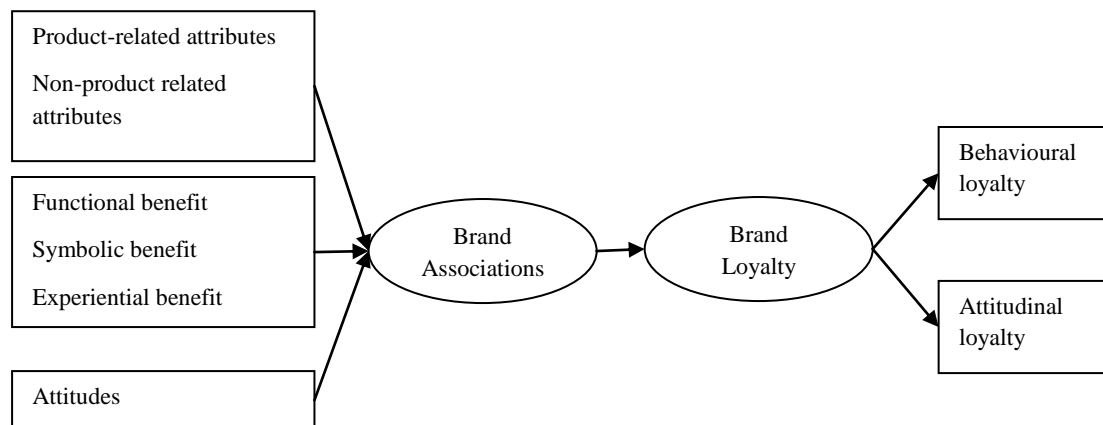
Figure 2.4: Kaynak, Salman, and Tatoglu's Conceptual Model (2008, p.342)

Even though Kaynak et al.'s research (2008) has a lot in common with Gladden and Funk's studies (2001, 2002), there are notable differences between the two works. Unlike Gladden and Funk's study (2002), Kaynak et al. (2008) attempt to clearly

distinguish the types of brand associations in further detail. Gladden and Funk (2002) divide the brand associations into three categories which are attributes, benefits, and attitude, in spite of the fact that they mention about the existence of sub-categories for those three types of brand association. Kaynak et al. pay their attention on the possibility of further distinction of the types, and group the brand associations into six sub-categories. In Kaynak et al.'s study, attributes are sub-divided into product-related attributes and non-product-related attributes. On the other hands, benefits are further categorised into functional benefits, symbolic benefits, and experiential benefits. Thus, including attitude, overall six types of brand associations are proposed.

In terms of conceptual model construction, Kaynak et al.'s study is also slightly different from Gladden and Funk's research (2001). Whereas Gladden and Funk's (2001) conceptual framework for the relationship between brand associations and brand loyalty focuses on the attitudinal aspect of brand loyalty, Kaynak et al.'s conceptual model covers the behavioural dimension of brand loyalty as well as the attitudinal dimension.

Kaynak et al.'s conceptual framework is significant in literature as it makes clear distinctions of the types of brand associations for professional sport brands. By categorising the associations according to Keller's (1993) conceptualisation of brand association, it offers opportunities for examining the influence of each type of brand association on brand loyalty. Thus, it enables researchers to compare the influences each other. Moreover, the conceptual model of the study considers the behavioural loyalty as an indicator for the dependant latent variable, brand loyalty. By including the behavioural aspect in the conceptualisation, the study may offer a better

understanding for the relationship between brand associations and brand loyalty. Furthermore, the research of Kaynak et al. (2008) also contributes to the literature by suggesting the measurement items for each indicator of brand associations and brand loyalty.

However, the fact that all the types of brand associations are treated parallel in the conceptual structure is considered as a limitation. This parallel allocation of brand association categories restricts the chance to investigate the relationships amongst the types of brand associations. This limitation restricts the model's usability for exploring the customer's loyalty formation process towards such brands.

2.7.2.4. Bauer, Stokburger-Sauer, and Exler's Study

Bauer, Stokburger-Sauer, and Exler's (2008) research is one of the recent studies that attempt to examine the influence of brand image on customer loyalty in the professional team sport context. The authors propose brand associations for professional sport brands and develop a structural model for the relationship between the brand associations and brand loyalty.

In conceptualisation of brand associations, the study reviews two preceding studies on brand associations for professional sport brands which are Gladden and Funk's (2002) work and Ross et al.'s (2006) research. The authors point out that Ross et al.'s (2006) team brand association scale is not fit to their purpose of the study as the scale makes no distinction on the types of brand associations. Instead, the study initiates its development of brand associations based on Gladden and Funk's team association model which follows Keller's (1993) classification of brand associations

(attributes, benefits, and attitudes). Although the authors start the development based on Gladden and Funk's (2002) team association model, they modify the team association model and propose alternative operationalised items instead of adopting the model directly as the measure of brand associations. This is because the study is intended to focus on the properties of brand associations asserted by Keller (1993) which are uniqueness, favourability, and strength. Hence, Bauer at al. (2008) develop the items which measure brand associations in terms of the degree of uniqueness, favourability, and strength. As a result, the study produces 20 dimensions for the brand associations of professional team sport. The suggested 20 dimensions are team, head coach, star player, team performance, logo and club colours, club history and tradition, stadium, fans, identification, peer group acceptance, escape, emotions, socialising, nostalgia, entertainment, uniqueness, trustworthiness, positive feelings and favour. The authors classify these dimensions into four categories which are product-related attributes (team, head coach, star player, and team performance), non-product-related attributes (logo and club colours, club history and tradition, stadium, and fans), benefits (identification, peer group acceptance, escape, emotions, socialising, nostalgia, and entertainment), and attitudes (uniqueness, trustworthiness, positive feelings and favour).

Distinctive characteristics of Bauer et al.'s (2008) study can be found in its conceptual model construct. In contrast to Keller's (1993) conceptualisation, Bauer et al.'s (2008) research tests the relationships amongst the components of brand associations in its framework. In other words, causal relationships amongst attributes, benefits, and attitudes are propositioned in line with means-end theory. Figure 2.5 displays the conceptual framework of Bauer et al.'s (2008) study. The empirical

result of the research shows that the proposed conceptual relationships exist except for the links of attitudes variable. Attitudes variable, one of the components of brand associations, is omitted from the conceptual model due to lack of discriminant validity from attitudinal loyalty.
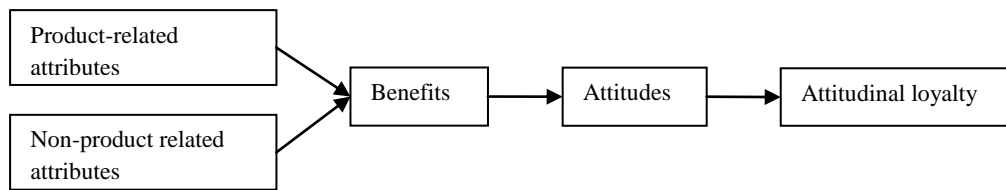
Figure 2.5: Bauer, Stokburger-Sauer, and Exler's Conceptual Framework
        (Adopted from Bauer et al. 2008)

A noticeable contribution of Bauer et al.'s (2008) work is that it applies the concept of causality to the relationships amongst the components of brand associations in designing the conceptual framework. Although the potential interrelationships amongst the components are noted in early studies (see, Aaker 1991), the relationships have not been considered in preceding research about professional sport brands associations. By introducing the causal relationships amongst brand association elements, Bauer et al.'s study provides a useful foundation to studies investigating brand associations-loyalty relationships. Moreover, the research is also meaningful as it suggests an alternative approach of operationalising the items for brand associations by measuring them with the degree of uniqueness, favourability, and strength.

In spite of the above contributions of Bauer et al.'s (2008) research, there are some drawbacks of the study. Even though it divides attributes into product-related attributes and non-product-related attributes, it does not distinguish the types of benefits in its framework. According to Keller's (1993) conceptualisation of brand association, benefits are able to be sub-divided into functional benefits, symbolic benefits, and experiential benefits (e.g., Park et al. 1986a). Although the authors sort the factors of benefits as symbolic benefits and experiential benefits, all the factors are treated as indicators of one latent variable (benefits) rather than separately considered in the framework. In addition that, functional benefits dimension is omitted from the consideration. Due to this lack of differentiating benefits, the research restricts its utility as a research tool for examining customer's loyalty formation process. The reason is that it is unable to identify the needs which a customer wishes to mainly satisfy in the consumption of a brand, without classifying benefits into sub-categories (functional, symbolic, and experiential). On the other hand, compared with other brand association models such as Gladden and Funk's (2002) team association model and Ross et al.'s (2006) team brand association scale, the factors of brand associations and their operationalised items proposed in Bauer et al.'s (2008) research are not empirically assessed enough. In order to secure the rigorousness, they need to be validated by further studies.

2.8. Brand Associations for Professional Sport Brands

The view of customer-based brand equity has been a central concept in professional sport studies. Evaluating brand equity from customers' point of view has been developed by a number of brand equity studies (Aaker 1991, Keller 1993). Keller's

(1993) customer-based brand equity model is widely accepted conceptualisation throughout branding research. The conceptualisation is composed of two elements that 1) customers' brand awareness must exist and 2) customers must have a positive and unique image about the brand in their mind (Keller 1993, 2008). As brand awareness is generally high in professional sports industry, brand equity studies for professional sport team brands have focused on brand image rather than brand awareness (Gladden and Funk 2002, Bauer et al. 2005). In some major professional sports leagues such as English Premier League, the brand awareness of the teams in such leagues is still high even outside of their domestic markets. Thus, this study also focuses on brand image in the conceptualisation of the customer-based brand equity in overseas markets setting.

According to Keller (1993), brand image is formed from associations of a brand. Brand associations are defined as anything in a customer's mind related to a particular brand (Aaker 1991). As brand loyalty is one of the benefits of brand equity and customer-based brand equity is induced by the brand associations in customers' mind, it is proposed that the relationship between brand associations and brand loyalty exists (Aaker 1991, Keller 1993, Gladden and Funk 2001, Kaynak et al. 2008). According to balance theory, human beings form their attitudes towards an object based on their evaluations of the object's associations (Heider 1958). Thus, customers' attitudes towards a brand can be traced from their evaluations of the associations of the brand. Therefore, in order to understand customers' loyalty formation process towards brands, it is prerequisite to identify the associations of the brands.

There have been several attempts to identify the brand associations for professional sport brands (Gladden and Funk 2001, Gladden and Funk 2002, Ross 2006, Ross et al. 2006, Ross et al. 2008, Bauer et al. 2008, Kaynak et al. 2008). Gladden and Funk (2001) proposed brand associations for professional sport brands, based on Keller's (1993) conceptual model of customer-based brand equity. In their research (2001), the authors developed brand associations for professional sport brands and tested the links between the associations and brand loyalty. Gladden and Funk produced another research (2002) on the subject and in the study, the brand associations were empirically tested. Ross (2006) pointed out the limitation of the preceding studies in customer-based brand equity concept in professional sports that the concept excessively relied on the models regarding physical goods and ignored the intangible aspect of the brands. In addition, Ross (2006) suggested extended conceptualisation of professional sports brand equity, so called spectator-based brand equity, which paid attention to the intangible aspect of the brands. Ross's conceptual framework (2006) was followed by two studies (Ross et al. 2006, Ross et al. 2008) which dealt with brand associations for professional sport brands. The measures of the brand associations for professional team sport brands were proposed in the former research (Ross et al. 2006) and the measures were empirically validated in the latter study (Ross et al. 2008). The research of Bauer et al. (2008) focused on the relationship between brand image and loyalty towards professional sport brands and assessed the relationship empirically. The study (Bauer et al. 2008) particularly contributed to brand equity of professional sport literature, as the study approached the concept from the European professional sport context. Kaynak et al. (2008) reviewed the preceding studies on professional sport brand equity and suggested integrative

conceptualisation of the link between brand associations and customer's loyalty towards the brands.

Brand associations for professional sport brands can be divided into attributes and benefits (Gladden and Funk 2001). Even though there were three types of brand associations (attributes, benefits, and attitudes) in Keller's (1993) conceptualisation, attitudes are sometimes not considered as a type of brand associations for professional sport brands (Gladden and Funk 2001). The reasons why attitudes are not counted in are that they are too abstract to operationalise for managerial action, and they are regarded as mediators in forming strong associations based on attributes and benefits (Gladden and Funk 2001).

2.8.1. Attributes

Attributes are defined as the physical features associated with a specific brand (Keller 2008). Attributes are subdivided into product-related attributes and non-product-related attributes according to whether they are related to the core product of a particular brand.

2.8.1.1. Product-Related Attributes

Product-related attributes are the elements which are directly related to the core product (a match) of the brand and are needed for delivering the expected functions (Gladden and Funk 2001). For example, in professional sports context, the success of the team, the manager of the team, or the star players in the team are considered as

product-related attributes. Particularly, it is suggested that product-related attributes could be closely related to functional and experiential benefits (Gladden and Funk 2001, Kaynak et al. 2008).

Success

Bearing in mind that the core product of professional sports is the match, success on a field is undoubtedly one of the major components of brand associations and brand equity for professional sport brands (Gladden et al. 1998, Gladden and Funk 2002). Earlier research articulates the sports customers' tendency to become more enthusiastic about a team which is having a successful season (Cialdini et al. 1976, Fisher and Wakefield 1998, McDonald et al. 2002). A number of preceding studies have also shown the positive consequences of on-field success such as increased match day sales representatively (e.g. Branvold et al. 1997, Porter and Scully 1982).

Star Player(s)

Presence of star players in the team is considered as one of the product-related attributes as players directly influence the customers' perceived product quality. Having a star player or star players in the team squad may contribute to the general appeal of the team (Schofield 1983). Human beings attempt to identify themselves with successful others in order to satisfy their needs of achievement by sharing the achieving others' success (Lipmann-Blumen et al. 1983). In sports, this desire of vicarious achievement may be observed from the fans' tendency to associate themselves with a successful player (or players) (McDonald et al. 2002). The study

of Fisher and Wakefield (1998) suggests that although the success of a team is regarded as the most important factor attracting fans support towards the team, unsuccessful sport teams are still able to develop their brand equity by obtaining star players and by marketing the popularity of the star players.

Manager (Head Coach)

A head coach who manages a team is regarded as one of the brand associations for professional sport brands. Managers of professional football teams make a wide range of strategic and tactical decisions such as trading players, selecting starting line-up, making substitutions, and so on. Managers also train the teams and design team tactics. These roles of a manager are all directly related to a team's match performance which is the core product of sports (Porter and Scully 1982). There are several anecdotal studies that evidence that a manager may have influences not only on the outcome of the matches but also on the sales of team merchandise goods (e.g. Bruening and Lee 2007, Robinson and Miller 2003). The study of Robinson and Miller (2003) provides a good example of the manager's impact on professional sport brand equity by presenting the case of a star manager Bobby Knight. The case study shows that hiring Bobby Knight as the men's basketball team head coach at Texas Tech University had positive impact on the team's brand equity (customer-based brand equity) as well as their revenue increase (company-based brand equity).

Aesthetics

In sport context, aesthetics is defined as the beauty, grace, or other artistic property of sport (Willis and Campbell 1992). This characteristic of sport is regarded as one of the factor appealing to spectators (McDonald et al. 2002). Sport of eurhythmics such as gymnastics, synchronised swimming, and figure skating (see McIntosh 1987) is a representative example of sport which is particularly characterised with aesthetic aspect of sport. Although sport of eurhythmics is the common example, the aesthetic appeal can also be found in professional team sport. In football context, an individual player's personal skills, such as dribbling, or the tactical performance of a team, like a promised movement in free kick situation, may provide technical aesthetics to spectators. Thus, aesthetic perspective of sport can be a source of brand association.

Management

Team management is considered as one of the product-related attributes by a number of earlier studies (Gladden and Funk 2001, 2002, Kaynak et al. 2008). In order to clearly define the notion of team management, it should be distinguished from the concept of manager (head coach) as a brand association. The distinction may be addressed by contrasting the roles of a management team and a head coach in a professional sport team. Whereas head coaches mainly take the charge of on-pitch management such as making player transfer decision, and supervising and training players, the role of management team mostly involves off-pitch business matters such like funding the transfer budget, negotiation deals of signing players, and so on.

For instance, a head coach of a football team may decide the transfer targets that the manager wants to sign, but the team's management department carries out the actual transfer process including the negotiations with the players over the personal terms and with the team which the players belong to over the transfer fees, and setting up medical tests for them. This management department of a profession sport team is also often called as 'club front'. It is believed that a consumers' feeling (trust) towards a specific marketing organisation can lead the consumer decision-making (Garbarino and Johnson 1999). Moreover, it is suggested that the brand-consumer relationship depends on the customer's trust towards organisations related to the brands to some degree (Fournier 1998). In the same vein, football fans' trust in the supporting club's management team may result from their perception of the club front's performance, such as signing new players from other teams and keeping the team's key players in a transfer market for building a competitive team, and investing in youth development. Then, consequently, the trust (or distrust) which is created from the perceived management activities may influence positively (or negatively) on the professional sport team brand equity.

2.8.1.2. Non-Product-Related Attributes

Non-product-related attributes are the elements which are not directly related to the overall product performance but still affect the brand consumption (Keller 2008). Associations such as product delivery, the team history, or the logo design of the team are regarded as non-product-related attributes. The associations which are related to a venue of a professional sports team, for instant stadium atmosphere and concession, are considered as non-product-related attributes (Gladden and Funk 2001,

Gladden and Funk 2002, Kaynak et al. 2008). However, these venue-related attributes are omitted from non-product-related attributes in this research because most overseas customers of professional sport brands are geographically restrained from accessing the venues. Preceding studies (Gladden and Funk 2001, Kaynak et al. 2008) also suggested that non-product-related attributes might be connected to symbolic benefits more than functional or experiential benefits.

Logo Design

Corporate marks or logos are frequently regarded as important elements of creating brand associations in customer-based brand equity studies (Aaker 1991, Keller 1993). It is suggested that a corporate logo can be utilised to enhance the retrieving process of associations with a specific brand (Biehal and Sheinin 1998). Some case studies also show that the design of logo may positively or negatively impact a company by affecting the brand equity (e.g. Omar and Williams 2006). Logo, as an operational component of a trade mark, makes consumers able to identify the product with its producer (Levy and Rook 1981). Thus, it should be distinctive from the other manufacturers' and be well associated with the identity of its brand. In sport context, professional sport teams also pay attention to their logo design in order to make their logos to harmoniously represent their brands. For example, in designing their logos, a lot of English football clubs have been using particular symbolic images which are closely associated with the geographical locations they based in or with the club history. The logo of Liverpool Football Club contains an image of a Liver bird which is the symbol of the city of Liverpool. Meanwhile, the picture of cannon in the logo

of Arsenal Football Club signals the origin of the club which was first established by workers at Royal Arsenal.

Product Delivery

As a non-product-related attribute, product delivery is related to the fans' desire to be entertained. Wann's (1995) early research on sport fans' motivation shows that their needs to be entertained can be one of the motivational factors for following sport. This desire of the customers can be fulfilled through the delivery of the product, and brand associations may also be developed by this product delivery (Gladden and Funk 2002). The product delivery does not only cover the performance by a team but also supplementary activities offered by the sport club including promotions (Gladden and Funk 2002, Marcum and Greenstein 1985). The product delivery is categorised as non-product-related attributes, since it counts overall activities for entertaining fans, whether the activities are related to a match or not.

Team History (and Tradition)

The history or tradition related to a sport team is regarded as an important basis of brand associations. Preceding studies (Gladden and Funk 2002, Kaynak et al. 2008, Ross et al. 2006) insist that the notion of tradition (or history) should not be limited to a sport club's past result of performance such as winning championships, but it should include overall history related to the team. A team's past record of performance is obviously a crucial element of the team's history. Athletic success such as the number of final tournament appearance and a past history of winning

trophies takes a major part of a sport team's history (Rhoads and Gerking 2000). However, there are more sources of team tradition (or history) apart from sporting performance. Tradition or history of a sport team can be created from various non-sporting factors, for instance ethical management of the team, a typical playing style, and other reputations related to the team (Gladden et al. 1998, Kolbe and James 2000, Putler and Wolfe 1999). This extended concept of team tradition even includes negative part of the team's history such as jinx (Gladden and Funk 2002). In summary, team history or tradition could be described as every historical aspects related to a team, whether it is positive or negative, which can contribute to the creation of the own culture of the team and the supporters.

Rivalry

Some existing studies assume rivalry as one of the significant sources of creating brand associations for sport brands (Ross et al. 2006, Ross et al. 2007, Ross et al. 2008). In their work of developing the 'Team Brand Association Scale', Ross, James and Vegas (2006, p. 270) suggest that rivalry can be a meaningful element of brand associations, and define rivalry as "thoughts regarding the competitive nature of sport; pertains to the competition among teams that are known to be historically significant competitors". According to this definition, the notion of rivalry basically assumes a) involvement of a team and its significant competitors; and b) the historically oriented competition between the teams. For rivalry to be formed, historical reasons are necessary why they recognise each other as significant competitors. The reasons for causing rivalry can be various, for example a geographical reason, a history of competition, and so on. In football context, this

rivalry is often observed as a form of so-called 'derby'. Derby, in associated football, is the term used for meaning matches between rival teams. Geographical locations of teams often cause local derbies (e.g. North London derby between Arsenal F.C. and Tottenham Hotspur F.C.). However, a history of national competition between big teams can also originate national rivalry (e.g. 'El Clásico' between FC Barcelona and Real Madrid C.F.). The other requirement for rivalry is that at least two teams are required. Although, rivalry occurs between two teams in many cases, rivalry is not restricted to relationships between two teams but multiple teams sometimes have rivalry amongst them (e.g. Tyne-Tees-Wear derby amongst Newcastle United F.C., Middlesbrough F.C., and Sunderland A.F.C.). Rivalry increases consumers' particular interests on matches between specific teams and, thus, is able to generate brand associations.

2.8.2. Benefits

Benefits stand for the psychological meaning and value which customers grant to the product (or service) and there are three types of benefits: functional, symbolic, and experiential (Keller 2008). The study of Park, Jaworski, and MacInnis (1986a) on brand concept and image provides a basis for Keller's (1993) categorisation of brand benefit. Park et al. (1986a) insist that brands may often offer a combination of symbolic, functional, and experiential benefits which serves basic consumer needs. Functional needs are described as "those that motivate the search for products that solve consumption-related problems" (Park et al. 1986a, p.136). Functional benefits serve externally created consumption needs including solving a current problem, avoiding a potential problem, and so on (Fennell 1978, Park et al. 1986a). Symbolic

needs are explained as "desires for product that fulfill internally generated needs for self-enhancement, role position, group membership, or ego-identification" (Park et al. 1986a, p.136). For example, a car is regarded as a product which gratifies well consumers' symbolic needs rather than simply serves their functional needs. Lastly, experiential needs of consumers are defined as "desires for products that provide sensory pleasure, variety, and/or cognitive stimulation" (Park et al. 1986a, p.136). These are internally caused needs for stimulation such as consumer aesthetics and customer experience.

2.8.2.1. Functional Benefits

Functional benefits mean the associations which satisfy basic motivations of customers. For instance, a chance to escape from daily routines and an opportunity to socialise with people are the functional benefits of consuming professional sport brands.

Escape

Sport is used as a way of escape from daily routines and problems (Wann 1995). Some previous marketing studies suggest that consumers' desire of escape from daily stress may be one of the motivations of participating activities, and consumers try to satisfy this desire by having extraordinary experiences such as multiday white river rafting (Arnould and Price 1993) or by consuming fantasy such like exploring mythical and wild place (Belk and Costa 1998). This eager of escape can also be observed in consumption of sport. A sport match is played under relatively clear

rules or regulations of the game, and the outcome of the match is also produced by standardised scoring system. This neat and regulated environment of sport provides a temporary rest from the complicated real world life and stress (Smith 1988). Emphasising this escape function of consuming sport, Smith (1988, p.56) describes sport as "an oasis of stability in a turbulent society". Thus, the escape that is delivered by sport can be a functional benefit of consuming professional sport, and may be an element of brand associations (Gladden and Funk 2001, Kaynak et al. 2008)

Socialising

Sport's ability to provide consumers with socialising opportunity is regarded as one of the factors motivating the consumers to watch sport matches or to attend sporting events (Gantz and Wenner 1991). It is believed that customers consume objects in order to facilitate their relationship with others (Bateson 1955). Holt (1995, p.9) describes this interpersonal dimension of consuming that "consuming not only involves directly engaging consumption objects but also includes using consumption objects as resources to interact with fellow consumers". Spectators of sporting events are able to acquire opportunity to socialise with others who watch or attend matches together (Funk et al. 2001). This socialising opportunity includes not only attending the sporting events but also pre-event and post-event activities such as having a meal or a picnic with family or friends who accompany to the sporting events. The consumption of sport also provides consumers with topics and materials for conversation with their friends or colleagues, and thus they are able to involve actively in that kind of chat. By using their experience and knowledge of sport

products, sport consumers become available for making daily conversation related to the sport at social activities or workplaces. A number of researchers have paid their attention to this socialising opportunity rewarded by consuming sport products as one of the main motives of sport consumption (Funk et al. 2001, Funk et al. 2003, Wann 1995). As a result, the socialising factor has been included as a measure in several sport consumer motivation scales (Funk et al. 2001, Wann 1995). Thus, the socialising opportunity that is given from the consumption of sport products can be considered as a component of brand associations, and may be regarded as a functional benefit which customers are able to obtain by consuming professional sport brands.

2.8.2.2. Symbolic Benefits

Symbolic benefits include the associations related to customers' needs for group affiliation and ego enhancement and so on. These benefits are the brand associations which are relevant to the individual with a desired group or self-image (Kaynak et al. 2008). Peer-group acceptance (by supporting a same team with family members or friends) is considered as symbolic benefits which consumers can achieve from following professional sport brands.

Identification

The symbolic benefit of fan identification with a sport team is defined as "the ability of a team to provide a source of identification and fulfil a consumer's need to affiliate with something successful or desirable" (Gladden and Funk 2001, p.74).

Existing studies on an individual's tendency of 'basking in reflected glory' show that people tend to express their association with successful sport teams (Cialdini et al. 1976, Wann and Branscombe 1990). This desire to increase their association with successful others is theoretically based on human being's eager of an ego enhancement (Wann and Branscombe 1990). According to the tendency to bask in reflected glory, people seem to believe that they can share the glory of successful others by publicly announcing their association with the achieving others. Then, by sharing the success, they are able to satisfy their desire to reinforce their ego. However, the function of the identification is not limited to the vicarious achievement. According to social identity theory (Tajfel and Turner 1985), individuals are able to sort out the social environment and place themselves and others in various social groups by identifying themselves with those classified social groups (Turner 1985). Thus, social identification enables an individual to perceive his or her belongingness to an actual or symbolic of a specific group (Mael and Ashforth 1992). In this rationale, identification with a particular sport team can satisfy fans with feelings of belongingness and make them to avoid feelings of alienation. Therefore, fan identification with a sport club as a symbolic benefit may create brand associations of sport team brands (Branscombe and Wann 1991).

Peer Group Acceptance

Peer group acceptance is another symbolic benefit which consumers can acquire by consuming professional sport brands. Gladden and Funk (2001, p.73) defines this symbolic benefit as "the ability of a team to provide a vehicle which generates broad social approval when followed". In marketing literature, friends and family members

are believed to play an important role in delivering the meaning of brands to customers, and they are regarded as a crucial element of external communication such as word-of-mouth (Berry 2000, Grace and O'cass 2001, 2002, Swanson and Kelley 2001). In the context of sports, friends and family often act as a decisive factor in a consumer's choice of sport team brands (Parker and Stuart 1997). A preceding study by Wakefield (1995) shows that all aspects of a sport customer's consumption experience will be perceived more favourably when the customer receives the approval of friends and family for his or her support to a particular team. Individuals' need of belongingness is regarded as an underlying motivation for seeking this benefit. However, peer group acceptance may differ from identification in terms of the object to which the customers hope to belong. In the case of peer group acceptance, the desire is specified to the feeling of belongingness to the important others which indeed are friends and family.

2.8.2.3. Experiential Benefits

Experiential benefits provide symbolic meaning or an enjoyable experience such as hedonism. As these benefits are related to the customer's feeling of using the product or service, they usually correspond to the product related attributes (Keller 1993). Nostalgia, which a customer of a professional sport brand could recall during the consumption of the brand, is an example of experiential benefits.

Nostalgia

In prior studies on brand associations for sport brands, nostalgia is regarded as an experiential benefit that a sport brand can provide to its customers (Gladden and Funk 2002, 2001, Kaynak et al. 2008). The concept of nostalgia is viewed as "a longing for the past, a yearning for yesterday, or a fondness for possessions and activities associated with days of yore" (Holbrook 1993, p.245). Based on this view, Holbrook and Schindler (1991, p.330) defines nostalgia as " a preference (general liking, positive attitude, or favourable affect) toward objects (people, places, or things) that were more common (popular, fashionable, or widely circulated) when one was younger (in early adulthood, in adolescence, in childhood, or even before birth)". Thus, in team sport context, this definition of nostalgia can be restated as a favourable affect towards a sport team brand that was frequently or distinctively experienced by a fan when he or she was younger. Although some literature interpret the term 'preference' in the definition as the belief of superiority(Best and Nelson 1985, Davis 1979), the meaning of nostalgia in sport brand context does not need to carry the belief that the past was superior. Rather than signifying the superiority of the past, the notion of nostalgia in sport conveys the pleasurable feeling from remembering the memories related to a sport team. In this sense, the concept has meanings in common with the notion of sentimentality which is "the tendency to retain emotional and/or tangible ties to one's past, and to derive pleasure from discussing or reliving one's past (Mael and Ashforth 1992, pp.108 - 109). A number of preceding studies advance that nostalgic (or sentimental) aspect of consumer needs can be satisfied by the consumption of sport team brands (Mael and Ashforth 1992, Trujillo and Krizek 1994).

Pride in Place (or Community)

Pride in place or community is another benefit provided by sport clubs. Gladden and Funk (2002) suggest that individuals' affiliation with a local team which is based in their hometown can be derived from the sport team's ability to represent the place or community. In the study of Zhang, Pease, and Hui (1996) on examining the value dimensions of professional sport, the authors identify 'community solidarity' as one of the factors for the community impact scale and back the concept of pride in place (or community) as an experiential benefit of sport team brands. For sport consumers, the relationship between a sport team and the place it is located is considered to be inseparable. The bond between a sport club and its hometown is rather stronger in European sport context (particularly football) where a sport team is often recognised as a public asset of its supporters than in Northern American sport franchise system. The case of Wimbledon F.C. is a representative example that shows the importance of the geographical relationship between a sport club and its customers. When the South-London based football club relocated to Milton Keynes, which is about 90km remote from the place it had been originally based, most of Wimbledon F.C. fans were strongly opposed to the move and boycotted the club. The fans reacted to the relocation with establishing a new Wimbledon-based football club, AFC Wimbledon, and insisted that the identity of Wimbledon F.C. was succeeded by AFC Wimbledon. Given this nature of sport consumers' regional preference, it can be said that a team's ability to deliver the representativeness of the tied-in community and geographical place may significantly influence the development of brand associations of sport team brands.

2.8.3. Attitudes

Brand attitudes are referred as consumers' overall evaluations of a brand, and are regarded as the source of the basis for initiating consumer behaviours (Keller 1993, Wilkie 1994). According to Fishbein and Ajzen's (1975, Ajzen and Fishbein 1980) multi-attribute formulation model, brand attitudes are interrelated to the associated attributes and benefits which are salient for the brand. Given the influence of perceived quality on consumer perceptions, it can be said that brand attitudes are a function of customer's beliefs about product-related attributes, functional benefits, and experiential benefits (Zeithaml 1988). On the other hand, brand attitudes may also have relationships with customer's beliefs about non-product-related attributes and symbolic benefits (Rossiter and Percy 1997) in line with the value expressive function of attitude (Katz 1960, Lutz 1991).

Some studies admit that brand attitudes are difficult to be utilised for managerial action as attitude is the most abstract form of brand associations (Gladden and Funk 2001). However, it is believed to be worth considering attitudes as a dimension of multi-attribute model of consumer preference, because attitude towards the brand is able to cover the customer valuation of the brand which is not captured by the attributes or benefits (Keller 1993, Srinivasan 1979).

Importance

Attitude importance is regarded as an indicator of attitude. In attitude research, importance has been used as a way of measuring attitude (Festinger 1954, 1957, Newcomb 1956, 1961). Attitude importance is defined as "a person's interest in or

concern about an attitude", and reflects a person's subjective beliefs which represent attitudinal characteristics related to the subjective evaluation of an object based on its discerned pertinence (Krosnick 1988, p.197).

In sport settings, attitude importance is also believed as a significant predictor of customers' commitment to a professional sport brands, and stands for "a person's perception of the psychological significance and value he or she attaches to a sports team" (Gladden and Funk 2002, p.61). A personal self-reports about importance of an issue or an object towards the individual is suggested as a measure of attitude importance (Krosnick 1988).

Knowledge

Attitude knowledge is also considered as an indicator of attitude. Attitude knowledge, which represents how a person evaluates an attitudinal item from his or her memory, signifies an individual's cognitive structure that depicts the position of the attitude within an associative links network (Fazio 1986).

In sport literature, attitude knowledge as an indicator of attitudinal aspect of brand associations is defined as "the amount of attitude-relevant knowledge that accompanied an individual's attitude related to a sport team" (Gladden and Funk 2002, p.61). Attitude-related knowledge is often measured by the amount of knowledge a person holds and the person's accessibility to that knowledge. For the method of measuring a person's attitude-related knowledge, Kallgren and Wood (1986) suggests questioning the person to list exhaustively the things he or she knows and remembers about an object. On the other hand, a person's self-reports on

how knowledgeable he or she thinks about an object can also be used as a way of examining the amount of attitude-related knowledge a person has (Davidson et al. 1985).

Table 2.2: Brand Associations for Professional Sport Brands

Dimension	Definition	Literature
Attributes		
Product related attributes (PRA)		
Success (SCS)	-Quality, performance and success of a team. Winning and competing	Branvold et al. (1997), Bauer et al. (2008), Cialdini et al (1976), Fisher & Wakefield (1998), Gladden & Funk (2001, 2002), Gladden & Milne (1998), Gladden et al. (1998), Kaynak et al. (2008), McDonald et al. (2002), Porter & Scully (1982), Ross et al. (2006), Schofield (1983)
Star player(s) (STA)	-The presence of an outstanding player	Bauer et al. (2008), Fisher and Wakefield (1998), Gladden & Funk (2001, 2002), Gladden et al. (1998), Kaynak et al. (2008), Lipmann-Blumen et al. (1983), McDonald et al. (2002), Schofield (1983)
Manager (Head coach) (MNG)	-The presence of a successful or charismatic head coach	Bauer et al. (2008), Bruening & Lee (2007), Gladden & Funk (2001, 2002), Gladden & Milne (1998), Gladden et al. (1998), Kaynak et al. (2008), Porter & Scully (1982), Robinson & Miller (2003)
Aesthetics (AES)	-The organisation's ability to convince the customers that management is doing its best to satisfy consumer needs	McDonald et al. (2002), Smith (1988), Wann (1995), Willis & Campbell (1992)
Management (MGM)	-The organisation's ability to convince the customers that management is doing its best to satisfy consumer needs -Categorised as 'non-product related attribute' in Bauer et al.'s framework	Bauer et al. (2008), Fournier (1998), Garbarino & Johnson (1999), Gladden & Funk (2001, 2002), Kaynak et al. (2008), Ross et al. (2006)
Non-product related attributes (NRA)		
Logo design (LOG)	-Use of logo and marks to establish and reinforce an image	Bauer et al. (2008), Biehal & Sheinin (1998), Gladden & Funk (2001, 2002), Gladden & Milne (1998), Kaynak et al. (2008), Levy & Rock (1981), Omar & Williams (2006), Ross et al. (2006)
Product delivery (PRO)	-The team's ability to satisfy a consumer's need for entertainment	Gladden & Funk (2001, 2002), Gladden et al. (1998), Kaynak et al. (2008), Marcum & Greenstein (1985), Wann (1995)
Team history & Tradition (HIS)	-Team possession of a history of wining or behaving in a certain manner	Bauer et al. (2008), Gladden & Funk (2001, 2002), Gladden et al. (1998), Kaynak et al. (2008), Kolbe & James (2000), Putler and Wolfe (1999), Rhoads & Gerking (2000), Ross et al. (2006),
Rivalry (RIV)	-Thought regarding the competitive nature of sport	Ross et al. (2006), Ross et al. (2007), Ross et al. (2008)

Table 2.2: Brand Associations for Professional Sport Brands (*continued*)

Dimension	Definition	Literature
Benefits		
Functional benefits (FB)		
Escape (ESC)	-The ability of the team to provide an escape from daily routines	Arnould & Price (1993), Bauer et al. (2008), Belk & Costa (1998), Smith (1988), Gladden & Funk (2001, 2002), Kaynak et al. (2008), Wann (1995)
Socialising / companionship (SOC)	-Developing and maintaining relations with other fans	Bateson (1955), Bauer et al. (2008), Funk et al. (2001, 2003), Gantz & Wenner (1991), Holt (1991), Wann (1995)
Symbolic benefits (SB)		
Identification (IDT)	-The team's ability of providing a vehicle (often representing success) with which consumers can affiliate	Bauer et al. (2008), Branscombe & Wann (1991), Cialdini et al. (1976), Gladden & Funk (2001, 2002), Kaynak et al. (2008), Mael & Ashforth (1992), Ross et al. (2006), Tajfel & Turner (1985), Wann & Branscombe (1990)
Peer group acceptance (PGA)	-The ability of a team to provide a vehicle which generates broad social approval when followed	Bauer et al. (2008), Berry (2000), Gladden & Funk (2001, 2002), Grace & O'cass (2001, 2002), Kaynak et al. (2008), Parker & Stuart (1997), Ross et al. (2006), Swanson & Kelley (2001), Wakefield (1995)
Experiential benefits (EB)		
Nostalgia (NOS)	-The team's capability to conjure up feelings from the past and fond memories	Bauer et al. (2008), Best & Nelson (1985), Davis (1979), Gladden & Funk (2001, 2002), Holbrook (1993), Holbrook & Schindler (1991), Kaynak et al. (2008), Mael & Ashforth (1992), Trujillo & Krizek (1994)
Pride in place (PIP)	-Team's capability to provide a rallying point for civic pride -Categorised as 'experiential benefit' in Gladden & Funk's framework	Bauer et al. (2008), Gladden & Funk (2001, 2002), Gladden et al. (1998), Kaynak et al. (2008), Ross et al. (2006), Trujillo & Krizek (1994), Zhang et al. (1996)
Attitudes (ATT)		
Importance (IMP)	- A person's perception of the psychological significance and value he or she attached to a sports team	Festinger (1954, 1957), Gladden & Funk (2002) Krosnick (1988), Newcomb (1956, 1961)
Knowledge (KNO)	- the amount of attitude-relevant knowledge that accompanied an individual's attitude related to a sport team	Davidson et al. (1985), Fazio (1986), Gladden & Funk (2002), Kallgren & Wood (1986)

2.9. Model Conceptualisation

This section 2.9 will demonstrate the conceptual model of the current research. The next subsection (section 2.9.1.) will brief about the construction of the conceptual model. The relationships amongst the types of brand associations (attributes, benefits, and attitudes) will be described at subsection 2.9.2 based on means-end chain theory. The relationship between brand equity and brand loyalty will be discussed at the subsection 2.9.3. At the subsection 2.9.4, the relationship between behavioural loyalty and attitudinal loyalty will be described. The section 2.9 will be concluded with discussing the differences between domestic and overseas consumers in their attitudinal loyalty formation process towards professional sport brands. On the bases of the discussions, research propositions will be produced and the hypotheses of the current study will be stated.

2.9.1. Construction of the Conceptual Model

This research investigates the consumer's attitudinal loyalty formation process towards professional sport brands by examining the relationships amongst the types of brand associations (attributes, benefits, and attitudes) and brand loyalty. The three types of brand associations are subdivided into product-related attributes, non-product-related attributes, functional benefits, symbolic benefits, experiential benefits, and attitudes. On the other hand, brand loyalty is fractionised to behavioural loyalty and attitudinal loyalty. Figure 2.6 displays the conceptual framework of this study.
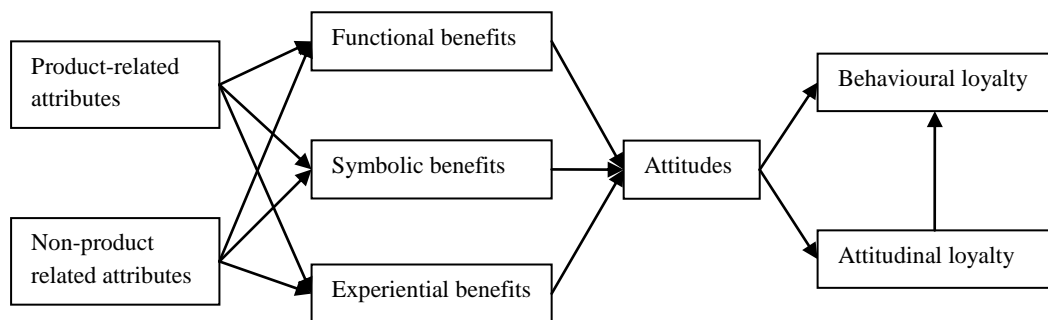
Figure 2.6: Conceptual model

Unlike the variables of brand loyalty which are observable constructs, the types of brand associations are unable to be measured directly. Hence, the current research introduces a second-order factor model in its model construction, and attempts to measure the latent variables with the associations of professional sport brands which are observable as these brand associations have been well operationalised. The conceptual model of this research is structured as Jarvis, MacKenzie, and Podsakoff's (2003, p.204) "Type I" (reflective-reflective) model which posits "a series of first-order latent factors with reflective indicators and also that these first-order factors are themselves reflective indicators of an underlying second-order construct". In the model framework of this research, the types of brand associations are regarded as second-order latent constructs, whereas brand associations act as first-order latent variables. The second-order factor model of the present study is shown at figure 2.7
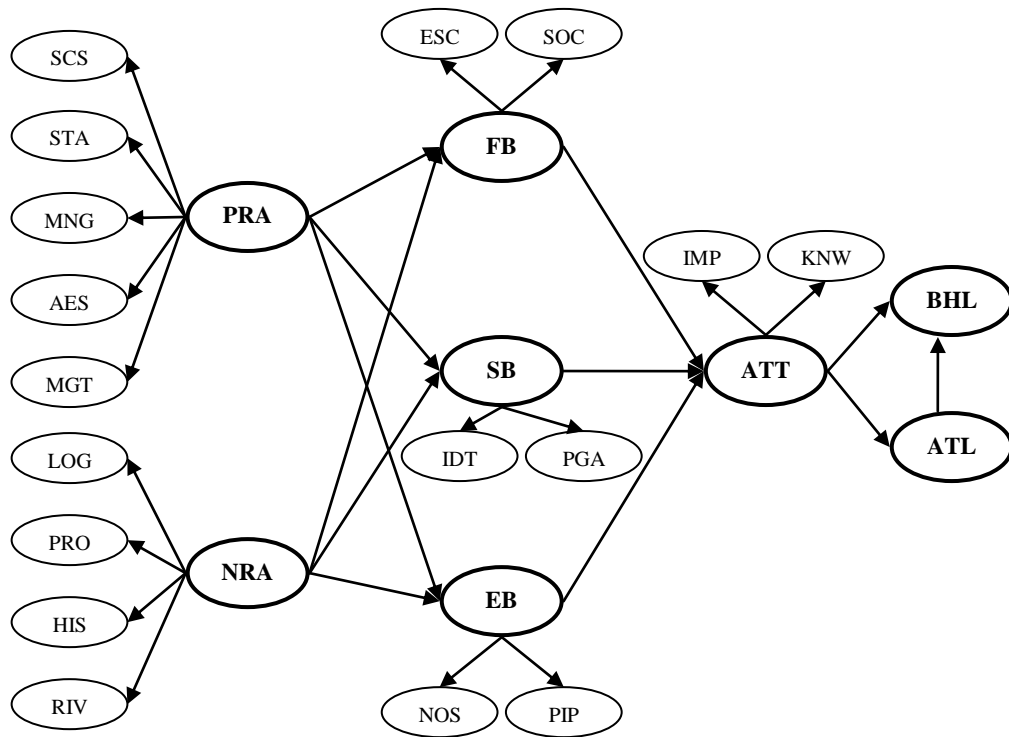
Figure 2.7: Second Order Factor Structural Model
(Labels - BHL: behavioural loyalty, ATL: attitudinal loyalty, see table
2.2 for labels of brand associations)

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2.9.2. Means-End Chain Model of Brand Association Types

2.9.2.1. Means-End Theory

In the current research, the relationships amongst the types of brand associations (attributes, benefits, and attitudes) are conceptualised with a sequential flow of means-end theory based on level of abstraction. A means-end chain is developed by Gutman (1982) as a way to explain how a customer achieves his or her desired end states through the choice of product or service. 'Means' are regarded as "objects (products) or activities in which people engage (running, reading)", while 'ends' are referred as "valued states of being such as happiness, security, accomplishment"

(Gutman 1982, p.60). Means-end theory provides a conceptual structure of consumers' decision making and information processes by linking those means and ends (Reynolds and Gutman 1988).

Means-end theory assumes two fundamental assumptions about consumer behaviour. It assumes firstly that values (desirable end-states of existence) play a vital role in leading a customer's selection patterns (Gutman 1982). The second fundamental assumption of the theory is that, in order to decrease the level of complexity of choice, human beings deal with the immensely various products which are potentially able to lead their desirable end-states through categorising them into sets or classes (Gutman 1982).

Along with those two fundamental assumptions, the means-end chain model is also based on two general assumptions about consumer behaviour. These two additional assumptions are that "all consumer actions have consequences … and that consumers learn to associate particular consequences with particular actions" (Gutman 1982, p.61). These general assumptions are in line with Rosenberg's (1956) expectancy-value theory.

Means-end theory explains the interrelationship amongst product-meaning which can be viewed in terms of attributes, consequences, and values (Goldenberg et al. 2000). This interrelationship amongst attributes, consequences, and values is demonstrated by the levels of abstraction concept (Goldenberg et al. 2000, Mort and Rose 2004, Goldenberg et al. 2005).

The concept of levels of abstraction demonstrates how consumers think about a product or a service (Mort and Rose 2004). Customers perceive a product or a

service in terms of its attributes. These attributes standing for the product or service are physical or concrete, and are regarded as the lowest level of abstraction (Goldenberg et al. 2005). On the other hand, the consumption of the product or service produces consumers' outcomes such as functional and psychological consequences. Consequences are referred to outcomes related to specific attributes, and to be more abstract compare with attributes (Gutman 1982). Consequences can be desirable or undesirable, and particularly in marketing literature desirable consequences are commonly called as benefits (Haley 1968, Myers 1976). Values stand for desirable end-state of being, and can be instrumental or terminal (Goldenberg et al. 2000). Values are regarded to be abstract at the higher levels compared with the attributes of the product or service, and the consequences (Gutman 1997, Olson and Reynolds 1983, Reynolds and Gutman 1988).

A consumer's motivation is derived from the product's personal relevance to the customer and this relevance is originated from connections between the attributes of the product and the desired goals (values) of the customer (Gutman 1982, 1997). In means-end theory, product attributes are the means to achieve customers' values and this achievement occurs through the consequences produced from the consumption of the product (Mort and Rose 2004). Consumers evaluate the attributes of products based on the consequences led by the product's use, and consequently the customers are able to learn which product consumptions deliver their desired outcomes (Gutman 1997). Therefore, means-end chain theory posits that attributes, consequences, and values are interrelated (Goldenberg et al. 2005).

Based on Rokeach's (1973) concept of the nature of human values in which individual values stays relatively constant over long terms, Gutman (1997, p.546)

posits that "achieving a valued state is brought about, facilitated, or caused by consequences at lower levels of abstraction, not the converse". Due to this nature of the levels of abstraction, influences between the elements with different extends of abstraction are unilateral from the lows to the highs. In short, they are hierarchically ordered. The elements of the lower level of abstraction can influence the higher level components, whereas the latter are unable to affect the former. In other words, product attributes are able to affect consumer outcomes (consequences) but not vice versa. Therefore, Gutman (1997, p.546) advances that "there is a flow toward desired ends at successively higher levels of abstraction extending from the product to important aspects of consumers' self-concepts", and, from this premise, describes means-end chains as "hierarchically related sets of elements across levels of abstraction".

Given that, these entities (attributes, consequences, and values) are viewed as fundamentally interrelated rather than as separate elements (Allman et al. 2009, Gengler and Reynolds 1995, Goldenberg et al. 2000, Goldenberg et al. 2005, Gutman 1982, 1997). These sequential relationships between attributes, consequences, and then values are the essence of means-end chains (Goldenberg et al. 2005), and it enables the researchers to trace "the logical semantic sequences from the 'means' to the 'end'" (Allman et al. 2009, p.234).

2.9.2.2. Means-End Chain Relationships amongst the Types of Brand Associations

The means-end theory provides insights for the relationships amongst the types of brands associations which are attributes, benefits, and attitudes. The types of brand

associations differ in terms of the levels of abstraction. Hence, the interrelationships amongst the types of brand associations can be organised hierarchically according to the levels of abstraction concept.

Myers and Shocker (1981) advance that 'product referent' attributes are descriptive features of a product or a service, and refer this type of attributes as characteristics which consist of physical and pseudo-physical characteristics. Then, they define benefits as the advantages that customers are able to obtain from the consumption of a product or a service, and classify this type of attributes as 'task or outcome referent' (Myers and Shocker 1981). According to them, benefits are the perceived results or outcomes from using a product or a service which can be described by characteristics. Thus, benefits, which are relatively more abstract attributes, are the consequences of characteristics, which are less abstract compare with benefits. In this conceptualisation, characteristics and benefits correspond to the notion of product attributes and benefits of brand association concept respectively. In the discussion of this relationship between product attributes and benefits using means-end chain concept, Howard (1977) also posits that product attributes are regarded as 'means' to achieve benefits which are considered as instrumental or terminal values. In sports brand literature, Bauer et al.'s (2008) study empirically shows that means-end chain relationship exists between attributes (both product related and non-product related) and perceived benefits. The authors (Bauer et al. 2008, p.211) insist that "Keller's (1993) brand associations model should be extended to causalities among the construct ... there should be not only an assumed link between attributes and benefits, but also a positive effect emanating from attributes to benefits".

Overall, in case of brand associations, the 'means' in the means-end chain theory can be thought of as attributes, and the 'ends' as customer's perceived benefits. This leads to the first research proposition that:

Proposition 1: There is a positive relationship between customer's evaluation of a brand's two types of attributes - product-related and non-product related attributes - and the three perceived benefits of sport; functional, symbolic, and experiential benefits.

As discussed earlier, research identifies three facets of "value" for fans in supporting sports clubs. These can broadly de divided into functional benefits, symbolic benefits, and experiential benefits. The functional benefits which sport consumers can obtain from supporting particular teams are captured in Hypotheses H1D, H1O, H4D, and H4O. The benefits captured in Hypotheses H2D, H2O, H5D, and H5O are the symbolic benefits which fans gain from supporting particular clubs. Hypotheses H3D, H3O, H6D, and H6O further relate to the experiential benefits which fans may gain from supporting their clubs.

For Hypotheses H1D and H1O, product-related attributes are expected to have a positive influence on consumers' perceived functional benefits because consumers tend to consume a product or a service in order to solve the problems they have, and achieve a desirable state (Fennell 1978, Park et al. 1986a). As product-related attributes contain associations related to physical components of professional sport brands such as team's performance on the pitch, these attributes would be able to

contribute to satisfying the consumers' functional needs like escaping from daily routine or acquiring an opportunity to socialise. For example, a football spectator is able to temporarily forget about problems that he or she has in one's daily life while the person watches the performance of his or her favourite football team. Thus, product quality such as success on the field and team management may be related to the satisfaction of the spectator's needs to escape from daily routine. Moreover, scales such as that of Gladden and Funk (2001) and Wann (1995) do not just include the factor of escape as functional benefits but also capture the social possibilities of supporting a team. The role of "social" opportunities in the functional benefits offered by sport teams is also identified by Holt (1995). Product-related attributes such as team performance, star players in the team, and team management can help consumers to engage in conversations with others by providing a common topic or interest. Holt (1995) also contends that professional sports can act as a resource for communing between and socialising of spectators. Therefore, the following hypotheses, which refer to the effect of customer's evaluation of a brand's product-related attributes on the perceived functional benefits, can be posited as below:

H1D: In domestic market context, there will be a positive relationship between customer's evaluation of product-related attributes and the perceived functional benefits.

H1O: In overseas markets context, there will be a positive relationship between customer's evaluation of product-related attributes and the perceived functional benefits.

Holt's work (1995) seems, however, to go beyond the functional benefits offered by sport teams and also discuss the "symbolic" benefits offered by sports teams and events. He highlights the extraordinary occurrences which happen in sport matches, such as a spectacular play or a dramatic finish, which can cause reactions of spectators and interactions amongst them. Holts (1995) and authors such as Melnick (1993) point to moments where fans of different religions or nationalities, who might otherwise be in conflict, can be brought together by the power of sport.

Such benefits seem to go beyond the functional into symbolic benefits offered by sport. These symbolic benefits can clearly in the work of authors, such as Cova (1997) and others in the field of "modern tribes" who discussing "societing" as a concept of marketing and argue that this link between consumers is more important than the "thing" that they are uniting around. Theses authors link their concept of "societing" to a decline in the traditional family unit, religions and communities and attribute these to a search for meaning and a common identity amongst consumers. Sport fans appear to exhibit many characteristics of modern tribes (Madrigal 1995).

Even though product-related attributes of professional sport brands are believed to be closely related to functional benefits and experiential benefits (Gladden and Funk 2001), it is possible they could also have influence on symbolic benefits. The concept of ego enhancement (Cialdini et al. 1976, Wann and Branscombe 1990) forms the basis for this hypothesised relationship between product-related attributes and symbolic benefits. Human beings have a desire of ego enhancement and this eagerness can be expressed through their intention to associate themselves with successful others. Thus, a consumer who wishes to enhance his or her ego may be

willing to associate oneself with a successful sport team and, consequently, his or her perceived functional benefits will likely be influenced by product-related attributes. The fact that a team with a successful campaign is able to attract more followers, so called bandwagon effect, could be an example of product-related attributes' influence on symbolic benefits. This kind of fan behaviour is well addressed by Cialdini et al.'s (1976) concept of basking in reflected glory (BIRG). Cialdini et al. (1976, p.366) insist that people tend to "publicize a connection with *another person* who has been successful", and shows this BIRG fan behaviour empirically. Moreover, in the same vein, the presence of a star player in a team could affect a consumer who seeks an opportunity for vicarious achievement in his or her evaluation of the symbolic benefits of a professional sport brand. Therefore, the following hypotheses, which refer to the effect of customer's evaluation of a brand's product-related attributes on the perceived symbolic benefits, can be posited as below:

H2D: In domestic market context, there will be a positive relationship between customer's evaluation of product-related attributes and the perceived symbolic benefits.

H2O: In overseas markets context, there will be a positive relationship between customer's evaluation of product-related attributes and the perceived symbolic benefits.

The third type of benefits which research identifies as being offered by football clubs in that of experiential benefits. The theoretical basis for the hypothesis that product-

related attributes are positively related to a consumer's perceived experiential benefits is drawn from the concept of experiential consumption (Hirschman and Holbrook 1982, Holbrook and Hirschman 1982, Holbrook et al. 1984) which emphasises consumers' experiential needs in consumption. In professional sport brands consumption, an impressive match or outcome, such as a successful runs in a tournament, could make a memorable moment for a customer. Moreover, Given that a football club in Europe and the city or town the club is based are inseparable (see section 2.8.2.3), watching the development of a star player who is from the local region or through the club's youth system could also affect consumers' feeling about the place or community the club is related. Furthermore, Robinson and Miller's (2003) study reports that product related attributes (a team's regular wins and an iconic manager) have positive influence on the atmosphere of the teams' supporters. Therefore, the following hypotheses, which refer to the effect of customer's evaluation of a brand's product-related attributes on the perceived experiential benefits, can be posited as below:

> H3D: In domestic market context, there will be a positive relationship between customer's evaluation of product-related attributes and the perceived experiential benefits.

> H3O: In overseas markets context, there will be a positive relationship between customer's evaluation of product-related attributes and the perceived experiential benefits.

For each of the above types of benefits, hypotheses can also be identified which discuss the non-product related attributes which may link to these.

The hypothesis that non-product-related attributes are positively related to consumers' perceived functional benefits of a brand is posited on the basis of the concept of problem solving function of consumption (Fennell 1978) and non-product-related attributes' nature of usage imagery attributes (Keller 1993). As one of the main types of non-product-related attributes, usage imagery stands for "where and in what types of situations the product or service is used" (Keller 1993, p.4) and includes the time, the location, or the types of activity of the consumption (Keller 1993). Given that consumer's functional needs are associated to solve externally oriented problems, such as escaping from daily routine or stress, and acquiring a socialising opportunity, usage imagery attributes could influence consumers to satisfy their functional needs. For example, a consumer who wishes to resolve his or her stress from the work place during weekdays might be able to forget about the stress by enjoying a match of one's favourite football team at weekend. Moreover, promotions or events offered by a football club could provides chances of participating a team-related activities and may serve a customer's desire of escaping from daily routine and having a chance of socialising. Furthermore, a team's history or tradition can be a source of interaction with others in various occasions. Based on their qualitative research, Parker and Stuart (1997) advance that football related topic is powerful and unifying subject of conversation at workplace or with people share no other clear common subjects. Thus, this could also serve a consumer who seeks for a socialising opportunity through the consumption of a professional sport brand. Therefore, non-product-related attributes are expected to have a positive influence on

a consumer's perceived functional benefits. The following hypotheses, which refer to the effect of customer's evaluation of a brand's non-product-related attributes on the perceived functional benefits, can be posited as below:

H4D: In domestic market context, there will be a positive relationship between customer's evaluation of non-product-related attributes and the perceived functional benefits.

H4O: In overseas markets context, there will be a positive relationship between customer's evaluation of non-product-related attributes and the perceived functional benefits.

Non-product-related attributes are believed to be most closely related to symbolic benefits amongst three types of consumers' perceived benefits (Gladden and Funk 2001, Kaynak et al. 2008). The theoretical basis for the conceptualisation that non-product-related attributes have a positive impact on symbolic benefits is taken from social identity theory (Tajfel and Turner 1985) and the non-product-related attributes' nature of user imagery attributes (Keller 1993). According to social identity theory, an individual can segregate the social environment, and classify oneself and others in a specific social group through identification with the social group (Turner 1985). The main purpose of pursuing social identity is having the feeling of belongingness (Mael and Ashforth 1992). Symbolic benefits can be achieved through a personal expression (identification) or social approval (peer group acceptance), and user imagery attributes are relevant for the means of those

two types of process. As user imagery means "what type of person uses the product or service" (Keller 1993, p.4), user imagery attributes are able to provide consumers with sources of personal expression or social approval. For example, non-product-related attributes of history or tradition and rivalry which are closely related with supporters of a football club are good sources for expressing one's social identity or receiving social approval. Thus, the following hypotheses, which refer to the effect of customer's evaluation of a brand's non-product-related attributes on the perceived symbolic benefits, can be posited as below:

H5D: In domestic market context, there will be a positive relationship between customer's evaluation of non-product-related attributes and the perceived symbolic benefits.

H5O: In overseas markets context, there will be a positive relationship between customer's evaluation of non-product-related attributes and the perceived symbolic benefits.

The hypothesis regarding the relationship between non-product-related attributes and experiential benefits is based on the concepts of consumer aesthetics and experiential consumption (Hirschman and Holbrook 1982, Holbrook and Hirschman 1982, Holbrook et al. 1984) and usage imagery nature attributes (Keller 1993). Usage imagery attributes such as history or tradition, and rivalry could satisfy consumer's experiential needs like nostalgia and pride in place. For example, a particular past event in the club history or a specific tradition which was originated from an event of

the club's history can be stimuli of a nostalgic moment in a consumer's memory. Trujillo and Krizek's (1994) qualitative research reveals that a sport fan's personal experience of a particular event related to a sport team or venue generates the individual's nostalgic memory linked to the team or venue. Moreover, rivalry as non-product-related attributes, especially a geographically originated rivalry, may provide a special experience to consumers who belong to the location or community which the club is based in. Therefore, the following hypotheses, which refer to the effect of customer's evaluation of a brand's non-product-related attributes on the perceived experiential benefits, can be posited as below:

H6D: In domestic market context, there will be a positive relationship between customer's evaluation of non-product-related attributes and the perceived experiential benefits.

H6O: In overseas markets context, there will be a positive relationship between customer's evaluation of non-product-related attributes and the perceived experiential benefits.

The next set of hypotheses relate to the three benefits which are previously identified; functional, symbolic, and experiential benefits, but this time these are related to the attitudes which may interact with them.

Attitudes are located at the last level of hierarchical order of brand associations' means-end chain model, because they are often described as the most abstract type of brand associations. Based on Fishbein and Ajzen's (1975, Ajzen and Fishbein 1980)

multi-attribute model of attitude formation, Keller (1993, p.4) asserts that "brand attitudes are a function of the associated attributes and benefits that are salient for the brand", and refers them as consumer's overall evaluation of a brand. Brand attitudes can be considered as the consequences of the other brand associations (attributes and benefits) because attitudes are believed to be dependent on the strength and favourability of the attributes and benefits that the brand provides (Keller 2008). Thus, attitudes as a type of brand associations are able to be considered as the 'consequence' of brand benefits.

The literature concerning brand associations for sport brands well reflects this Keller's view on brand attitudes. Gladden and Funk (2001, 2002) advance that attitudes are the most abstract form of brand associations. Bauer et al (2008, p.213) also note that "because brand attitudes are overall evaluations of a brand, they are abstract and are above the other more specific types of brand associations". Thus, it can be expected that the perceived benefits affect attitudes. On these bases, the second research proposition is stated as below:

Proposition 2: There is a positive relationship between the three perceived benefits of sport; functional, symbolic, and experiential benefits and attitudes.

As reviewed earlier (section 2.8.2), the perceived benefits are sub-categorised into functional benefits, symbolic benefits, and experiential benefits. The following paragraphs provide the justifications for the hypotheses referring to the effect of the

three types of perceived benefits on attitudes in conjunction with Katz's (1960) conceptualisation of the functional approach to attitudes.

The positive relationship between consumers' perceived functional benefits and attitudes is hypothesised based on the concept of the utilitarian function of attitudes. As reviewed in section 2.3.2, utilitarian function of attitudes is associated with a person's eagerness to obtain an advantageous state or to stay away from a disadvantageous state, or to satisfy instrumental needs (Katz 1960). Functional benefits are related to a consumer's needs to resolve his or her problems which are externally oriented. In the context of sport brands, escaping from the daily routine and achieving opportunities to socialise with others can be regarded as problems which a fan wishes to resolve through the consumption of professional sports. Thus, consumers who pursue functional benefits in their brand consumption likely have favourable attitudes towards brands which can help to solve their external problems. Therefore, the following hypotheses, which refer to the effect of consumers' perceived functional benefits on attitudes, can be posited as below:

H7D: In domestic market context, there will be a positive relationship between the perceived functional benefits and attitudes.

H7O: In overseas markets context, there will be a positive relationship between the perceived functional benefits and attitudes.

Consumers' perception of symbolic benefits is expected to have a positive influence on their attitudes. This hypothesised relationship can be justified on the basis of the

concept of the value-expressive function of attitudes. The value-expressive function of attitudes is related to allowing a person to express his or her core values and the desirable image he or she wants to be seen as by the others (Katz 1960). A number of existing studies show that supporting a sport team is commonly used as a way of expressing a fan's social identity, and is regarded as an effective way acquiring social approval from significant others (Branscombe and Wann 1991, King 1997, Parker and Stuart 1997, Richardson and O'Dwyer 2003, Richardson 2004). As symbolic benefits are closely associated with expressing identity and achieving approval from significant others, consumers who care about symbolic benefits in brand consumption likely have favourable attitudes towards the brands that can offer the value-expressive function. Thus, the following hypothesis regarding the positive influence of symbolic benefits on attitudes can be formulated as below:

H8D: In domestic market context, there will be a positive relationship between the perceived symbolic benefits and attitudes.

H8O: In overseas markets context, there will be a positive relationship between the perceived symbolic benefits and attitudes.

The theoretical basis for the hypothesis regarding the influence of perceived experiential benefits on consumers' attitudes is drawn from the Katz's (1960) conceptualisation of the utilitarian function of attitudes. The influence of experiential benefits on consumers' attitudes can be differentiated from functional benefits of which impact on attitudes are also justified by the utilitarian function of attitudes.

Experiential benefits are related to deal with consumers' internally oriented issues, whereas functional benefits are associated with solving their externally oriented problems. As reviewed in section 2.8.2.3, a fan's intrinsic needs, such as stimulating nostalgia and increasing pride in a community can be satisfied through the consumption of professional sports. Thus, consumers who seek experiential benefits in their brand consumption likely have favourable attitudes towards the brands that can provide the utilitarian function. Therefore, the following hypotheses, which refer to the influence of perceived experiential benefits on attitudes, can be posited as below:

H9D: In domestic market context, there will be a positive relationship between the perceived experiential benefits and attitudes.

H9O: In overseas markets context, there will be a positive relationship between the perceived experiential benefits and attitudes.

2.9.3. The Relationships between Brand Associations and Brand Loyalty

Brand loyalty is regarded as a result of brand equity. A customer's loyalty towards a particular brand can occur when the customer holds positive brand associations about the brand. Although some researchers consider brand loyalty as a component of brand equity (Aaker 1991, Srivastava and Shocker 1991), there are several other studies that see only attitudinal aspect of brand loyalty as an element of brand equity but view behavioural loyalty as a dependent variable of brand equity. Moreover, Keller's (1993) conceptualisation of brand equity includes brand awareness and

brand image as dimensions of brand equity but excludes brand loyalty from the model's components. This shows that brand loyalty can be considered as a dependent variable of brand equity in accordance to the way of defining the concept of brand equity. As the current research focuses on the role of brand associations in customer's loyalty formation towards professional sport brands, brand loyalty can be utilised as a dependent variable which displays the strength and favourability of brand associations.

In addition, a positive relationship between brand equity and brand loyalty has also been posited in preceding studies (Lassar et al. 1995, Morgan 1999). Particularly in the literature on brand equity and loyalty for sport brands, brand loyalty is often regarded as a function of brand equity. Several existing studies suggest that brand loyalty as a consequence of brand equity in their conceptual models for professional sport brand equity (Bauer et al. 2008, Kaynak et al. 2008, Ross 2006). Moreover, previous studies of Bauer et al. (2008) and Gladden and Funk (2001) empirically show that a causal relationship exists between brand associations and fan loyalty towards professional sport brands. On these foundations, the current study predicts that there should be a positive relationship between brand equity and brand loyalty. Because brand attitudes have been already regarded to be at the pinnacle of means-end chain of brand associations, it is expected that the customers' attitudes will have positive influence on their loyalty towards professional sport brands. This leads to the third research proposition that:

Proposition 3: There is a positive relationship between customer attitudes and their loyalty towards professional sport brands.

As the current research examines brand loyalty from both attitudinal and behavioural aspects (section 2.6), two hypotheses, which refer to the effect of attitudes on consumer's loyalty towards professional sport brands, are posited as below:

H10D: In domestic market context, there will be a positive relationship between attitudes and customer's attitudinal loyalty towards a professional sport brand.

H10O: In overseas markets context, there will be a positive relationship between attitudes and customer's attitudinal loyalty towards a professional sport brand.

H11D: In domestic market context, there will be a positive relationship between attitudes and customer's behavioural loyalty towards a professional sport brand.

H11O: In overseas markets context, there will be a positive relationship between attitudes and customer's behavioural loyalty towards a professional sport brand.

2.9.4. The Relationship between Attitudinal Loyalty and Behavioural Loyalty

Proposition 4: There is a positive relationship between customer's attitudinal loyalty and behavioural loyalty towards professional sport brands.

The conceptual model underpinning this research supposes that behavioural loyalty, as an outcome of consumers' favourable attitudes towards professional sport brands, is affected by attitudinal loyalty. Given that the word 'attitude' was initially proposed in social psychology for the purpose of explaining human behaviour (Ajzen and Fishbein 1980), it can be drawn that there is a strong relationship between attitude and behaviour. This view is well expressed in Fishbein and Ajzen's (1975, p.336) note that "there is a close correspondence between the ways in which a person behaves toward some object and his beliefs, feelings, and intentions with respect to that object". There has been a large amount of literature which aligns itself with this view on the link between attitude and behaviour, and the attitude-behaviour consistency (e.g. Kallgren and Wood 1985, Davidson, Yantis and Montano 1985). Moreover, a number of studies suggest the influence of attitude on behaviour (e.g., Chaudhuri and Holbrook 2001, Freedman et al. 1970, Iwasaki and Havitz 2004). Based on this reasoning, it can be said that attitudinal aspect of loyalty could have positive influence on behavioural loyalty.

Therefore, Hypothesis 12, which refers to the effect of customer's attitudinal loyalty on behavioural loyalty towards professional sport brands, is posited as below:

H12D: In domestic market context, there will be a positive relationship between customer's attitudinal loyalty and behavioural loyalty towards a professional sport brand.

H12O: In overseas markets context, there will be a positive relationship between customer's attitudinal loyalty and behavioural loyalty towards a professional sport brand.

2.9.5. The Functional Differences in Forming Loyalty towards Professional Sport Brands between Domestic and Overseas Consumers

The justification of this possible contextual difference in consumers' brand evaluation is drawn from the concepts of the attributes importance (Mackenzie 1986) and the levels of processing (Craik and Lockhart 1972). According to the concept of attributes importance, consumers' evaluation of brand associations is more polarised for brand associations which are more important for the consumers than those of unimportant (Ajzen and Fishbein 1980, Fishbein and Ajzen 1975). Moreover, the relevance of brand associations to a consumer can be various depending on the contexts (Day et al. 1979). As a result, evaluative aspect of expectancy-value models of attitude is influenced by attributes importance (Mackenzie 1986). Furthermore, the concept of the levels of processing suggests that consumers' perception of brand associations may vary depending on the meaningfulness of the brand associations for the customers, and, consequently, the variance in the meaningfulness of the brand associations can make difference in the degree of those associations salience. As the meaningfulness which consumers grant to brand associations cannot be separated

from the consumers' environmental contexts, the contextual difference of consumers may cause variance in the degree of salience of brand associations. Therefore, the process of loyalty formation can differ depending on the consumers' market context.

According to the functional theory of attitude (Katz and Stotland 1959, Katz 1960, Smith et al. 1958), consumer's attitude towards a brand is shaped in course of satisfying his or her needs through the benefits that can be acquired by consuming the brand. This suggests that the way of forming loyalty towards a brand can be various from person to person depending on the needs a consumer pursues in the brand consumption. As mentioned earlier (section 2.3), there are four major functions of attitudes which are utilitarian (instrumental), ego-defensive, value-expressive, and knowledge (Katz 1960).

Domestic fans are believed to form their attitudinal loyalty towards sports team brand particularly because of value-expressive function of attitudes. Preceding studies show that domestic fans' strong attitudinal loyalty towards professional sport brands largely relies on their tendency to pursue symbolic benefits in the brand consumption. It is said that functional benefits and experiential benefits are also significant motivations of those customers to follow a particular professional sport team (Mahony et al. 2002, Bauer et al. 2008, Won and Kitamura 2007, Wann and Branscombe 1990). However, especially for the attitudinally loyal supporters, symbolic benefits play an important role in the loyalty formation process of the customers towards professional sport brands (Parker and Stuart 1997, Branscombe and Wann 1992, Wann and Branscombe 1993).

This is because they often have guided relationships, such as geographical, occupational, or parental influence, with their clubs and those factors are believed to

construct a strong connection between the domestic fans and the teams (Parker and Stuart 1997, Bridgewater 2008). By supporting a same team with their family members or local friends, they are able to identify themselves within the society they belong to. Thus domestic customers, or local fans, follow a particular professional sport team, often the team which is based on their local area, not only because they want to satisfy their needs related to functional and experiential benefits, but also because they wish to use the brand consumption behaviour as a mean of expressing their identity.

By constructing favourable attitude towards a sports brand, domestic consumers are able to express their desirable image and to indicate their identities to the others. Branscombe and Wann (1991) advanced that high identification with a particular team lessens feeling of alienation and increases feeling of belongingness. Moreover, it is insisted that team identification replaces community-based attachment to the larger social structure, and fosters life satisfaction among other things (Branscombe and Wann 1991, Madrigal 2000). Therefore, this enables an individual to express his or her central value or identity through displaying his or her favourable attitude towards a particular sports team to the other members of the community where he or she belongs to or wants to.

The findings of existing studies on domestic customers' loyalty formation, however, cannot be taken for granted in understanding customers who consume professional sport team brands outside of the brands' domestic markets, since they do not normally have such geographical or social relationships with the teams they follow. Although some of the dislocated fans could have such relationships, emigration for example, those links are rarely found from the most of overseas customers. Thus, it

is difficult to believe that overseas customers form their favourable attitude towards the professional sport brands in order to mainly employ the value-expressive function of attitudes as the domestic consumers do.

A number of existing studies on sport fan motivation empirically show the existence of contextual differences between different consumer groups (Bilyeu and Wann 2002, Gantz and Wenner 1991, Kwon and Trail 2001, Won and Kitamura 2006). Bilyeu and Wann (2002) investigates racial differences in sport fan motivation by comparing African Americans and European Americans, and finds the differences between the two racial groups. Gantz and Wenner's (1991) study reveals that gender difference exists in the spectator experience with broadcast sports. A study of Kwon and Trail (2001) examines motivational differences between American and international students of US Universities who support their college sports teams. The research (Kwon and Trail 2001) shows that the international students are differently motivated to support their teams from the American students, and insists that the former should be segmented separately from the latter. Won and Kitamura's (2006) research compares the motivational factors of K-League (Korean professional football league) and J-League (Japanese professional football league) fans. The study (Won and Kitamura 2006) reveals that the motivational factors influencing the sport consumption behaviour are not identical between the two countries. Hence, it is possible to assume that overseas customer's loyalty formation process towards a professional sport brand might be different from domestic customer's process because the former may seek different benefits from the latter in their consumption of the brand (sections 2.3.2 and 2.5). This leads to the fifth research proposition that:

Proposition 5: The formation process of overseas consumers' loyalty towards professional sport brands is different from that of domestic customers.

And a hypothesis, 13, which relates to this proposition.

Hypothesis 13 refers to the differences in loyalty formation process towards professional sport brands between domestic customers and overseas consumers (section 2.5), is posited as below:

> H13: The structural model of overseas consumers' loyalty formation process towards professional sport brands will have a different structure from that of domestic consumers.

2.10. Chapter Summary

This chapter provided a literature review on the concepts of a brand and an attitude towards a brand, and detailed the conceptual development of the current research.

The literature review included the functional approach towards attitude and the expectancy-value theory of attitude formation. The chapter also presented a literature review on brand equity, especially on customer-based brand equity. A literature review on customer-based brand equity in professional sport was also provided in this chapter. Particularly, this chapter reviewed the literature on brand associations for professional sport brands considering them as the possible antecedents of a

consumer's attitude towards such brands. Existing studies related to the current research were reviewed in the chapter.

This chapter also developed a conceptual framework and produced research hypotheses for the current research. This chapter firstly conceptualised the brand associations for the professional sport brand in terms of three main categories, which were attributes, benefits, and attitudes. These categories were sub-divided into six types of brand associations which were product-related attributes, non-product-related attributes, functional benefits, symbolic benefits, experiential benefits, and attitudes. Based on means-end theory, sequential relationships amongst those types of brand associations were conceptualised. Nine research hypotheses testing the means-end chain relationships were posited (H1, H2, H3, H4, H5, H6, H7, H8, and H9). Moreover, three hypotheses examining the relationships between the brand associations and loyalty (attitudinal and behavioural), and between attitudinal and behavioural loyalty were posited (H10, H11, and H12). These 12 hypotheses were duplicated in the two consumer contexts (domestic and overseas). As a result, 24 hypotheses were stated. Furthermore, an additional hypothesis (H13) positing the difference in loyalty formation process between domestic and overseas consumers were suggested. Therefore, overall 25 research hypotheses were provided in this chapter.

The following chapter will provide the methodological framework, including philosophical background, research context, sample framework, questionnaire development, plans for data analyses, procedure of main survey, and demographical description of the sample groups.

Chapter 3: Methodological Framework

3.1. Introduction

This chapter presents the methodological framework employed in the current research. Firstly, the philosophical background and design of the research are detailed, followed by the contexts of research. Secondly, the questionnaire development is described. Thirdly, the plans of data analysis and analysis techniques employed are explained. Lastly, the description of the main survey conducted is provided.

This chapter is comprised of nine main sections including this introductory section. Section 3.2 describes the philosophical background, which is logical empiricism, of the present research. Section 3.3 details the industrial context of the research in terms of the industry and its markets. The section also introduces the selected brand and sample frame of the research with the justification of the selection. Section 3.4 briefs the research design. Section 3.5 explains the development of the questionnaire used in the main survey. Section 3.6 writes about the plans for data analysis and the explanations of data analysis techniques utilised. The section provides an explanation of model fit indices. The kinds of model fit measures which are used for testing the fitness of models in this research are detailed. Section 3.7 provides the description of the main survey including the procedure of data collection and the initial result of the survey. The section describes the process of data cleaning and confirms the two final samples (domestic and overseas) used. In section 3.8, the

demographical description of the final sample groups is presented. The chapter 3 is summarised in the last section.

3.2. Philosophical Background of the Research

As a philosophical background, the current study takes a position of logical empiricism. As a descendent of positivism, logical empiricism finds its origin on logical positivism, the differences between them exist (Brodbeck 1982). Logical positivism, which is a stricter form of logical empiricism, depends heavily on formal symbolic logic as an analysis method and emphasises that the truth of any scientifically meaningful propositions are able to be determined through unbiased observations (Peter and Olson 1983). Logical positivism accepted early Wittgenstein's verification theory of meaning which claims that "statements or propositions are meaningful only if they can be empirically verified" (Anderson 1983, p.19). However, owing to the logical positivists' pure logical grounds it faced the problem of induction – the truth of universal statements cannot be justified by finite number of observations (Chalmers 1999).

Logical empiricism is a more moderate version of positivism (Anderson 1983, Peter and Olson 1983). In order to avoid the induction problem, logical empiricism introduced the concept of 'increasing confirmation' instead of verification. The concept means that scientific propositions can be increasingly confirmed by accumulation of successful empirical tests, which provide probabilistic support for its conclusions although they cannot be conclusively verified (Anderson 1983,

Easton 2002, Peter and Olson 1983). This distinction is described as "the substitution of the "testability principle" for the "verifiability principle"" (Hunt 1991, p.39).

An ontological assumption which is made by positivists about the nature of reality is a realist position. It is assumed that a single objective reality exists, which is divisible and fragmentable, and is independent from individuals' perceptions (Hudson and Ozanne 1988). This ontological position is reflected in positivists' epistemological assumptions. It is presupposed that science is context-free so that it can be generated without considering cultural, social and economic factors. On the other hand, as the scientific goal of positivists is explanation and prediction of phenomenon, they emphasise the identification of real causal links and argue causal relationships among variables can be discovered most confidently by controlled experiment (Hunt 1983, Kerlinger 1973). In other words, it is believed that knowledge can be obtained by experiments under the controlled variables and the produced knowledge, causal linkages, can be generalised. In the meantime, Hunt (1984) suggested a moderated position of logical empiricism. He (1984, p.33) advanced more lenient assumptions of logical empiricism such as; "there is a real world, although science attempts to discover the nature of reality, the "true" nature of reality can never be known with certainty"; "although complete objectivity is impossible, science is more objective in justifying its knowledge-claims than nonsciences"; "scientific knowledge is never absolute… [but] cumulative"; "science attempts to discover regularities…some of these regularities are stated in universal form and others are stated in probabilistic form".

Logical empiricist research is preferred in the marketing field since it is able to produce law-like theories for explaining phenomena such as consumer behaviour.

Moreover, once a law-like theory, a probabilistic statement in logical empiricist term, is generated from a sample it can be used for predicting an expected reaction in general (Keat and Urry 1975). Given the practical nature of marketing discipline and the fact that it is normally interested in a mass of customers, it is beneficial to marketing researchers and practitioners to be able to have highly probable explanations and predictions about the phenomena in their market. Normally, marketers deal with a large consumer population and endeavour to figure out the characteristics of the market. Thus, it is proper that marketing researchers prefer to take logical empiricist's approach which can assist them to discover "probabilistic" regularities, so-called statistical truth.

Since the purpose of this research is comparison between markets, with large number of customers for each, it seems to be rational to adopt a positivistic approach in order to carry out a comparative research. Otherwise, it will not only be extremely time-consuming but also be very difficult to establish a standard of measurement for the comparison. Taking logical empiricism as the philosophical position, the current research is also able to rationalise its choice of structural equation modelling as methodology. Structural equation modelling enables researchers to have sophisticated understanding of complex phenomena through testing of complex path models which are relevant to those situations (Kelloway 1998). Moreover, structural equation modelling allows researchers to frame and to test complex phenomena through assessing predictive relationships amongst constructs (Kelloway 1998). These statistical abilities of structural equation modelling seem to correspond well with the view of the philosophical position.

3.3. Industrial Context and Sample Framework

3.3.1. Industrial Context: English Premier League (EPL)

The English Premier League (EPL) is the subject of this research's industrial context. The EPL is a professional association football league and the top division of the English football league system. 20 football teams participate in a season which runs from August to May. In a season, teams in the league play each other twice on the home and away basis and consequently digest 38 matches (19 home and 19 away games). It was originally the First Division of the Football League which had been founded in 1888. However, the league was rebranded as the Premier League in 1992 and has been called as the Premiership or the Premier League since 1992/03 season.

The EPL is believed to be an appropriate professional sport league for the current study which aims to compare the domestic and overseas customers because the league is also popular at outside of its domestic market, the UK. The EPL is regarded as one of the five major European professional football leagues (English Premier League, French Ligue 1, German Bundesliga, Spanish Primera Liga, and Italian Serie A) which are so-called 'Big Five' (Byars et al. 2007). These big five European football leagues tend to be consumed not only in their domestic markets but also in foreign markets. The EPL seems to particularly appeal to the overseas markets. The present detail of the league's overseas broadcasting describes well the global interest in the league. In the season 2010/11, the live coverage of EPL was broadcast to more than 200 countries in the world which enabled the live league matches reach to about 643 million households (PremierLeague 2011). Approximately 185,000 hours of match coverage was screened by 131,000 broadcasts during the season. It is estimated that the league attracted about 3.9 billion global viewers cumulatively

which is relevant to 103 million weekly audience. From this fact, the EPL is able to be considered as the most widely consumed professional sport league in the world (PremierLeague 2011).

3.3.2. Customers of English Premier League

National Fan Survey which has been conducted by Premier League provides a useful insight to the domestic customers of EPL (PremierLeague 2007, 2008, 2011). National Fan Survey has been carried out annually since 1995/96 season in order to determine the characteristics of EPL fans. The survey questions the fans of 20 football clubs which participate in the Premier League each year.

The results of the recent surveys show that the average age of the fans is around 42-years-old and the fans are well dispersed over all age groups (PremierLeague 2007, 2008, 2011). The results have consistently showed that the majority of the fans are male customers with about 85% of EPL fans are reported as males.

According to the surveys (PremierLeague 2007, 2008, 2011), it has been continuously reported that the influence of family members and friends takes the biggest part of the fans' choice of club they support. On the other hand, the quality of the football, the high level technical skill of the players, and the footballers own passions on the pitch seem to play major roles in attracting the customers to the home matches.

Reportedly, the vast majority of the customers watch live matches on television broadcasting due to the limited capacities of the stadia, expensive ticket price, the distance from the venues, and so on. The fans who frequently watch live football

matches on TV (once a week or more) seem to prefer home as a place to watch the live broadcasting, followed by pubs (PremierLeague 2007, 2008, 2011). However, the customers who consume the live match on TV once or twice a month prefer pubs than home for the place to watch. The amount of fans who watch the live broadcasting online has been gradually increasing.

3.3.3. The Brand explored within the English Premier League

Arsenal Football Club (Arsenal FC) will be used as a professional sport brand for this research. Arsenal FC is a professional football club which has been competing at the English Premier League since the league was rebranded in 1992. They have not been relegated from the top English football division since they were promoted in 1919 which is the English record for the longest uninterrupted stay in the top division. They are regarded as one of the most successful English football clubs with the history of winning 13 top division titles (10 First Division and 3 EPL titles) and 10 Football Association Cups. Thanks to this success, the football club also enjoys their international popularity having a large global fan base, and can be considered as one of the most globally popular EPL clubs.

3.3.4. Population, Sample Frame, and Sample Justification

The population of interest in this investigation is the consumers of EPL in the UK and outside of the UK. Because the current research aims to compare the customers of a professional sport brand in the domestic market and those who are outside of the brand's domestic market, the data is necessary to be collected from both the

domestic market of EPL, which is the UK, and the overseas market of it. Moreover, from this comparison, the present study is intended to find out the differences in customer loyalty formation process between the two groups of consumers. Thus, this research is particularly interested in the consumers who are attitudinally loyal towards a professional sport brand.

The sample frame for the current study is Arsenal FC fans. Specifically, the sample is consisted of the Arsenal FC fans that registered themselves as online member at Arsenal FC official website. The football club have a list of those people who agreed to receive the club's weekly e-mail newsletters, and the survey of this investigation were conducted from the fans on the list. In other words, the sample frame of the survey is the Arsenal FC fans that are on the club's e-mailing list for the official newsletters.

Arsenal FC fans are selected as the subject of the survey as the present research focuses on the customers with the high level of attitudinal loyalty towards a professional sport brand. Hence, it needs to narrow down the sample to highly loyal consumers. It can be thought that the fact that one registers oneself as a member of a club's official website and subscribes the club's weekly newsletters could reflect the person's certain degree of loyalty towards the team. Although the fact cannot warrant a conclusive judgement on the degree of the person's loyalty, it could still offer a probability of indirectly assuming the person's loyalty level. Thus, using the Arsenal FC's e-mailing list for the club newsletters to collect the data may help to narrow down the subject population.

As mentioned earlier, Arsenal FC has global fan base and this also justifies the sample selection. The football club's relatively high level of world recognition

enables this survey to collect data from both domestic and overseas consumers. Arsenal FC has been actively making an effort to build an international fan base through carrying out various marketing activities in foreign regions such as the US, Far East Asia, and Western Europe (Kinnear 2008). The facts that their squad is composed by 21 nationalities and their official website is serviced in four languages (Chinese, English, Japanese, and Korean) do not only reflect their serious interest on foreign market places but also hint their worldwide fan base. Moreover, according to Deloitte's report 'Football Money League' which publishes the highest earning football clubs in Europe, Arsenal FC was ranked at fifth place in the table with recording core football revenues of 224.4 million pounds in 2010 (Battle et al. 2011). Even though this figure does not tell the club's global popularity straightforwardly, it is sill useful to estimate the team's global recognition indirectly. Thus, it can be though that this sample frame is suitable for examining both groups of consumers who are inside and outside of the brand's domestic market.

3.4. Research Design

This research is a comparative research in its nature. Although there are existing works on domestic consumer behaviour in professional sports industry and measure of customer-based brand equity for such brands, there is lack of research on overseas consumers. Thus, firstly, this research is validating the existing measures for loyalty formation process towards professional sport brands in overseas consumer settings. This study also aims to determine the underlying structure of constructs that suggests a better model for the psychological process of loyalty formation of overseas consumers towards professional sport brands. Lastly, through these steps, this

research attempts to identify the differences in professional sport brands consumption between domestic supporters and overseas fans in terms of their functional differences of loyalty formation.

3.5. Questionnaire Development

3.5.1. Attributes

Measurement scales for sport brand associations are relatively well developed owing to previous studies. There have been a number of studies which developed scales for sport brand associations and assessed the scales empirically (Bauer et al. 2008, Gladden and Funk 2001, 2002, Kaynak et al. 2008, Ross et al. 2006, Ross et al. 2007, Ross et al. 2008).

Gladden and Funk (2001) suggest eight indicators for attributes of sport brands which are success, star player, head coach (manager), logo design, stadium, product delivery, and tradition (section 2.5.2.), and then they develop three operationalised items for each indicators. Their development of the scale, which is called team association model, is based on literature review, and the reliability of the scale is tested. The authors (2002) subsequently conduct another research in order to provide the team association model with empirical support. They carry out focus group interviews for the purpose of confirming the dimensions of the scale. Exploratory factor analysis and confirmatory factor analysis are used for testing the reliability and validity of the scale.

Based on literature review, Kaynak et al. (2008) divide the dimensions of attributes for professional sport brand developed by Gladden and Funk (2001, 2002) into two

categories that are product-related attributes and non-product-related attributes. They classify success, star player, head coach, and management as product-related attributes, and group logo design, stadium, product delivery, and tradition as non-product-related attributes.

Ross et al. (2006) develop the team brand association scale through the process of free thought listing, exploratory factor analysis, expert review, and confirmatory factor analysis (section 2.3.2). Six dimension of attributes suggested by Gladden and Funk (2001, 2002) can be found in Ross et al.'s team brand association scale, and these indicators are success, manager (head coach), management, logo design, tradition (history), and stadium. However, head coach and management are regarded as one dimension, namely non-player personnel, in the team brand association scale. In addition to those five attributes (success, non-player personnel, logo design, history, and stadium), Ross et al. propose rivalry as a dimension of professional sport brand association. Given the nature of the dimension, rivalry, that it influences customer's perception of a sport team brand but not directly affects the core product of the brand, rivalry may be regarded as non-product-related attributes (section 2.8.1.2).

Bauer et al. (2008) also develop a scale for professional sport brand associations mainly based on Gladden and Funk's (2001, 2002) team association model (section 2.5.2.). Notable points in Bauer et al.'s (2008) scale are that, unlike Gladden and Funk (2001, 2001) and Kaynak et al. (2008), they categorise management as non-product-related attributes, and add team performance as product-related attributes. The authors insist that management dimension, which is regarded as product-related attributes in previous studies (Gladden and Funk 2001, 2002, Kaynak et al. 2008),

should be considered as non-product-related attributes because management is not a factor directly influencing the core product of professional sport which is a match. However, this argument is controversial as management is closely related to the quality of the core product since it affects significantly the other dimensions of product-related attributes, such as star player, manager, and success, and this is the original reason it had been regarded as product-related attributes by the other researchers. Moreover, according to the result of Bauer et al.'s (2008) empirical analysis, management is eventually dropped from the indicators of non-product-related attributes due to lack of reliability and validity criteria fitness. Thus, the present research follows Gladden and Funk's suggestion on the classification of management dimension and considers management as product-related attributes. On the other hand, Bauer et al. (2008) propose team performance as an indicator for product-related attributes because a team might be unsuccessful in spite of displaying good performance. Because this suggestion is in line with the concept of aesthetic perspective of sport (section 2.8.1.1), the dimension is included in the measurement model of the current study as aesthetics.

The present research follows mainly Gladden and Funk's (2001, 2002) suggestion for the dimensions and classifications of attributes. The operational items developed by Gladden and Funk (2001, 2002) are also utilised principally in this study. Four dimensions which are success, star player, manager (head coach), and management are taken for product-related attributes. In addition, aesthetics is included in product-related attributes (section 2.8.1.1). Operational items for aesthetics are adopted from the existing scales of sport fan motivation (Kwon and Trail 2001, Robinson et al. 2004, Wann 1995) and sport interest (Funk et al. 2001, Funk et al. 2002, Funk et al.

2003). All of the items are measured by a seven-point Likert scale (1: strongly disagree, 2: disagree, 3: slightly disagree, 4: neither agree nor disagree, 5: slightly agree, 6: agree, 7: strongly agree). Table 3.1 shows the measurement items of product-related attributes used in this study.

Table 3.1: Measurement Items of Product-Related Attributes

Measurement items	Label	References
Success		
1. I do not care whether my favourite team wins or loses (Reverse coded)	SCS1	Gladden & Funk (2001, 2002)
2. It is very important my favourite team finishes the season securing a European competition place for next year	SCS2	
3. It is important that my favourite team competes for league championships	SCS3	
Star player(s)		
4. My favourite team does not have any star players whom I like to watch (Reverse coded)	STA1	Gladden & Funk (2001, 2002)
5. I like to watch my favourite team's star players	STA2	
6. My favourite team has star players whom I like to watch	STA3	
7. If star players that I like to watch are not on the pitch, I am not interested in the match as much	STA4	
Manager (Head coach)		
8. I like the manager of my favourite team	MNG1	Gladden & Funk (2001, 2002)
9. My favourite team's manager is well known throughout the sport	MNG2	
10. The manager of my favourite team does a good job	MNG3	
11. My team has an excellent manager	MNG4	
Aesthetics		
12. The quality of my team's performance is high-standard	AES1	Funk et al. (2001), Wann (1995)
13. The performance of my team is first-class	AES2	
14. My team play technically good football	AES3	
Management		
15. The management team of my favourite team does its best to field a good team	MGM1	Gladden & Funk (2001, 2002)
16. My favourite team's management team does a good job of running the team	MGM2	
17. The management team of my team makes wise player personnel decisions	MGM3	

Logo design, stadium, product delivery, and team history (tradition) are recommended for the dimensions of non-product-related attributes by the team association scale (Gladden and Funk 2001, 2002). Stadium is the venue related

associations of professional sport brands, for instant stadium atmosphere and concession, and regarded as non-product-related attributes in previous studies (Gladden and Funk 2001, 2002, Kaynak et al. 2008). However, this research omits this venue-related dimension from the questionnaire because most overseas customers of professional sport brands are geographically restrained from accessing the venues. Instead, rivalry is additionally included in the scale as a dimension of non-product-related attributes (section 2.8.1.2). For the items measuring rivalry, this study adopts the items developed by Ross et al. (2006) and rephrases them in football context in order to better respondents' understanding. The questionnaire requests respondents to choose the appropriate answer from a seven-point Likert scales with 1 as strongly disagree and 7 as strongly agree. The operational items for non-product-related attributes are displayed in table 3.2.

Table 3.2: Measurement Items of Non-Product-Related attributes

Measurement items	Label	References
Logo design		
1. I like the colours of my favourite team	LOG1	Gladden & Funk (2001, 2002)
2. I like the logo of my favourite team	LOG2	
3. The logo of my favourite team is unique	LOG3	
4. My favourite team's jersey is attractive	LOG4	
Product delivery		
5. My favourite team's games are exciting	PRO1	Gladden & Funk (2001, 2002)
6. My favourite team's games are entertaining	PRO2	
7. My favourite team's games are enjoyable	PRO3	
Team history and tradition		
8. My favourite team has a history of winning	HIS1	Gladden & Funk (2001, 2002)
9. My favourite team has a prestigious history	HIS2	
10. My favourite team has no history (Reverse coded)	HIS3	
Rivalry		
11. My team belongs to a competitive league	RIV1	Ross et al. (2006)
12. My team often beat their biggest opponents	RIV2	
13. My team does well against their major rivals	RIV3	

3.5.2. Benefits

This research builds upon the research of a number of authors including Gladden and Funk (2001, 2002), Kaynak et al. (2008), Ross et al. (2006), and Bauer et al. (2008) in identifying the benefits which fans seek in supporting professional sport brands.

Five dimensions are proposed by Gladden and Funk (2001, 2002) for benefits, and those dimensions are escape, identification, peer group acceptance, nostalgia, and pride in place (section 2.5.3.). The authors develop three or four operational items for each dimensions (Gladden and Funk 2001, 2002). According to Park et al. (1986a), benefits can be classified into three types which are functional benefits, symbolic benefits, and experiential benefits. Based on this classification of benefits, Gladden and Funk (2001) categorise benefits into the three types. They group identification and peer group acceptance into symbolic benefits, while regard nostalgia and pride in place as experiential benefits. Escape is considered as functional benefits.

In their subsequent study, Gladden and Funk (2002) make a change in their classification of benefits. In the study, identification and peer group acceptance are categorised as experiential benefits, whereas the other three dimensions (escape, nostalgia, and pride in place) are all classified as experiential benefits. The difference in classification between Gladden and Funk's early study (2001) and their later study (2002) is in how the concept of escape is treated in the two. The earlier study classes this as a functional benefits but the later has this in experiential benefits. This is justified that "given professional team sport's largely intangible and perishable nature, … the notion of functional benefits is not particularly applicable in identifying brand associations in this setting" (Gladden and Funk 2002, p.60).

However, they cautiously note that the identification of types of benefits can vary depending on the consumer.

Kaynak et al. (2008) propose five indicators for benefits which are same as those Gladden and Funk (2001, 2002) suggest. They also attempt to sort the five dimensions of benefits into functional benefits, symbolic benefits, and experiential benefits, based on Park et al.'s (1986a) classification. Kaynak et al.'s (2008) classification of benefits dimensions is identical with Gladden and Funk's study (2001). In other words, the authors recognise escape as functional benefits, while nostalgia and peer group acceptance were viewed as experiential benefits.

The current research adopts the approach of Gladden and Funk (2001) and Kaynak et al. (2008) in classifying escape. Thus, escape is categorised as functional benefits. The reason is because escape is related with solving sport customers' problems which are originated from the customers' daily life. Hence, escape is believed to be in the category of functional benefits.

The dimensions of identification and pride in place can also be found in the brand associations suggested by Ross et al. (2006) who does not make distinction between attributes and benefits. Identification is labelled 'commitment' in Ross et al.'s research (2006). On the other hand, organisational attributes proposed by Ross et al. (2006) connotes the definition of pride in place. It is noticeable that Ross et al. (2006) include social interaction as a dimension of functional benefits. Social interaction, which is described as "the idea of associating with others is reflected in social interaction with friends and other fans of a particular professional team" (Ross et al. 2006, p.270), is able to be considered as a dimension of functional benefits since it serves sport brand consumers as a method of facilitating their relationship

with others (section 2.8.2). This social interaction dimension is also mentioned as a factor of benefits in another study on brand associations for professional sport brands (Bauer et al. 2008). In Bauer et al.'s (2008, p.212) study, social interaction is labelled with 'socialising and companionship' which is referred as "developing and maintaining relations with other fans".

The current research basically follows the classification of benefits used by Gladden and Funk (2001), and Kaynak et al. (2008), which divides benefits into three sub-categories: functional, symbolic, and experiential benefits. Thus, escape is classed as functional benefits, whereas nostalgia and pride in place are grouped as experiential benefits. The other two factors, identification and peer group acceptance are classified as symbolic benefits. In addition, based on the assertions of Ross et al. (2006) and Bauer et al. (2008), socialising (companionship) is added to functional benefits category. As a result, each type of benefits has two sub-dimensions.

Apart from socialising (companionship), operational items for the dimensions of benefits are adopted from Gladden and Funk's (2001, 2002) team association scale. The measurement items for socialising developed by the scales of sport fan motivation (Kwon and Trail 2001, Robinson et al. 2004, Wann 1995) and sport interest (Funk et al. 2001, Funk et al. 2002, Funk et al. 2003) are modified to football context and used in the present study. All of the operational items are measured using a seven-point Likert scales (1: strongly disagree, 2: disagree, 3: slightly disagree, 4: neither agree nor disagree, 5: slightly agree, 6: agree, 7: strongly agree). The operational items for each dimension of benefits are displayed in table 3.3 (functional benefits), table 3.4 (symbolic benefits), and table 3.5 (experiential benefits).

Table 3.3: Measurement Items of Functional Benefits

Measurement items	Label	References
Escape		
1. Watching, reading, and talking about my favourite team provide a temporary escape from life's problems	ESC1	Gladden & Funk (2001, 2002)
2. Watching, reading, and talking about my favourite team help me forget day-to-day problems	ESC2	
3. Watching, reading, and talking about my favourite team take me away from life's hassles	ESC3	
Socialising (companionship)		
4. My team offers me an opportunity to spend time with friends	SOC1	Funk et al. (2001), Wann (1995)
5. Being a fan of the team is a good way to meet other people	SOC2	
6. Many of my friends share my interest in my team	SOC3	
7. Supporting my team provides me a topic of conversation with other people	SOC4	

Table 3.4: Measurement Items of Symbolic Benefits

Measurement items	Label	References
Identification		
8. It is important that my friends see me as a fan of my favourite team	IDT1	Gladden & Funk (2001, 2002)
9. My friends and family recognise me as a fan of my favourite team	IDT2	
10. When someone praises my favourite team, it feels like a compliment	IDT3	
11. When I talk about my team, I usually say "we" rather than "they"	IDT4	
12. I consider myself a loyal fan of my team	IDT5	
13. Supporting my team is very important to me	IDT6	
Peer group acceptance		
14. I began following my favourite team because of my family members or friends	PGA1	Gladden & Funk (2001, 2002)
15. It is important to follow the same team as my members or friends	PGA2	
16. I follow my favourite team because my family members or friends like the same team	PGA3	

Table 3.5: Measurement Items of Experiential Benefits

Measurement items	Label	References
Nostalgia		
17. I can vividly remember the excitement of my team's most important moments	NOS1	Gladden & Funk (2001, 2002)
18. I have fond memories of following my favourite team	NOS2	
19. I have fond memories of following my favourite team with friends or family members	NOS3	
Pride in place (or community)		
20. My favourite team helps its residents be proud of where they live	PIC1	Gladden & Funk (2001, 2002)
21. My favourite team helps elevate the image of its community	PIC2	
22. My favourite team brings prestige to the community	PIC3	
23. My team unifies the community	PIC4	

3.5.3. Attitudes

Attitudes are often described as the most abstract form of brand associations and believed to act an important role as a foundation of consumer behaviour. Although Gladden and Funk exclude attitudes from the scale of sport brand association in their early research (2001), they later include the dimensions of attitudes in the scale and develop measurement items for the dimensions (2002). Gladden and Funk (2002) insist that attitudes can be measured by three indicators: knowledge, importance, and affective reactions (section 2.8.3). These three dimensions of attitudes also appear in the brand association scale proposed by Kaynak et al. (2008). However, the usage of affective reactions as a measure of attitudes leaves room for debate.

Unlike the other two dimensions (knowledge and importance), it is suggested that affective reactions, which are referred as a customer's feelings about a sport brand, can be assessed by using a set of semantic differential scales (Gladden and Funk 2002, Kaynak et al. 2008). For example, Gladden and Funk (2002) used four items of semantic differential scales which are 'foolish – wise', 'good – bad', 'worthless –

beneficial', and 'strong – weak'. However, there is some doubt whether these items are able to assess attitudes because the responses to these items can easily be influenced by temporary image of a sport brand such as the team's performance at the latest match. By definition, attitudes are learned predispositions to act or perceive in a consistent manner towards a particular object (Fishbein and Ajzen 1975). Given that the responses to those items can be inconsistent due to the influence of temporary image of a brand, it is questionable whether those measurement items can reflect respondent's consistent way of perceiving the brand. Based on this assertion, the present research does not use affective reactions as a dimension of attitudes but utilises importance and knowledge as indicators.

The operational items used to measure importance and knowledge are taken form Gladden and Funk's (2002) scale for sport brand association. All the measurement items are measured using a seven points Likert scales which range from 1 as strongly disagree to 7 as strongly agree. Table 3.6 shows the constructs used for attitudes and the operational items which these are made up.

Table 3.6: Measurement Items of Attitudes

Measurement items	Label	References
Importance		
1. I consider my favourite team to be personally important.	IMP1	Gladden & Funk (2002)
2. My favourite team means more than a football club to me.	IMP2	
3. Compared to how I feel about other professional teams my favourite team is very important to me.	IMP3	
Knowledge		
4. I possess a great deal of knowledge about my favourite team	KNO1	Gladden & Funk (2002)
5. Being more knowledgeable about my favourite team is important to me.	KNO2	
6. Compared to other sport teams I consider myself an expert about my favourite team.	KNO3	

3.5.4. Brand Loyalty

The current study measures customers' loyalty towards professional sport brands from both behavioural and attitudinal aspects of brand loyalty. Day's seminal work (1969) identifies two types of loyalty, behavioural and attitudinal. These two types of loyalty can be defined as follows:

Behavioural loyalty stands for customer's tendency to repurchase the same brand over time (Jacoby and Kyner 1973). On the other hand, attitudinal loyalty is defined as the emotional and psychological attachment to a particular brand (Beatty and Kahle 1988).

Both of these constructs have been used in a number of studies which look at fans' loyalty to professional sport brands (e.g. Bauer et al. 2008, Funk and Pastore 2000, Gladden and Funk 2001, Kaynak et al. 2008, Mahony et al. 2000). These studies have used a number of different measures of behavioural and attitudinal loyalty.

Actual purchase behaviours, such as purchase rate have been used a direct measure of behavioural loyalty (Aaker 1991). Behavioural loyalty towards a professional sport brand is often measured by frequency of attending or watching the team's matches (Baade and Tiehan 1990), and purchasing team merchandise goods (Wann and Branscombe 1993). In addition, due to a limited capacity of venue and a geographical difficulty of access, some studies (Funk and James 2001, Gladden and Funk 2001) also consider following a specific team through media coverage as a measure of behavioural component of loyalty.

Gladden and Funk (2001) measure behavioural loyalty using three items which are number of attended matches in a season, regularity of following the supporting team

through media, and frequency of participating the team related activities. These measures are also found in Kaynak et al.'s (2008) study as behavioural loyalty measures. Kaynak et al. (2008) used three similar measures which are attendance, involvement with the team (following media coverage and purchasing merchandise), and involvement with the club (activities done in conjunction with club's offerings).

Behavioural aspect of loyalty is included in the conceptual framework of the current research. The reason the inclusion is to identify whether domestic and overseas fans' favourable attitudes towards professional sport brands can be expressed in behavioural terms. In order to measure behavioural loyalty of fans, this study develops measurement items adapted from Gladden and Funk's (2001) behavioural loyalty measures. The reason this research uses the three behavioural loyalty measures of Gladden and Funk (2001) is because it successfully reflects the general measures of behavioural loyalty in sport context (Kaynak et al. 2008). Moreover, the nature of Gladden and Funk's research (2001), which examines the relationship between brand association and sport fan loyalty, is similar to the current study. Thus, the behavioural loyalty measures of this study are basically taken from Gladden and Funk's (2001) work.

Even though Gladden and Funk's (2001) measures of behavioural loyalty has been used in previous study (Funk and James 2001, Gladden and Funk 2001), the measurement items are developed in domestic market context. Thus, current research modifies the measures in order to measure behavioural loyalty of fans in both domestic and overseas markets. Given that overseas fans are particularly restricted in their access to the stadium of the team they support and have limited opportunity to participate in the activities the team offers, the questionnaire of the present research

stresses the role of media as a communication channel that allows fans to follow their favourite professional sport team. As a result, this research adds an item embracing the notion that sport customers behavioural loyalty can be reflected in their behaviour of following the team related news or reports through media. Bauer et al. (2008) also noted that fans' intention to follow team-related news or reports in the media could reflect their behavioural loyalty, as well as watching matches and buying club-related merchandise. Thus, the current research assesses behavioural aspect of sport customer's brand loyalty by using three items which are operationalising the frequencies of 1) attending or watching the team's matches; 2) following the team related media reports or news; 3) purchasing club merchandise goods. These items are measured using a seven-point Likert scales ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (7), and displayed in table 3.7.

Additionally, in order to check the usability of these behavioural loyalty measures in both domestic and overseas consumer contexts, exploratory factor analysis will be conducted using both consumer samples.

Table 3.7: Measurement Items of Behavioural Loyalty

Measurement items	Label	References
Behavioural loyalty		
1. I have often attended or watched games of my favourite team in the stadium or on TV	BHL1	Gladden & Funk (2001), Bauer et al. (2008)
2. I have often followed news or reports about my favourite team in various media	BHL2	
3. I have often purchased a lot of club-related merchandise	BHL3	

Attitudinal dimension of brand loyalty is regarded as consumer's consistent favourable attitudes towards a brand. It is believed that this attitude may lead people to stay committed to the brand longer (Baldinger and Rubinson 1996). Thus, attitudinal loyalty has been measured in terms of the degree of consumers' psychological commitment towards a specific brand (Dick and Basu 1994, Jacoby and Chestnut 1978, Keller 2008). Previous studies (Gladden and Funk 2001, Mahony et al 2000, Prichard et al. 1999) on sport fans' loyalty propose that sport fans' commitment to teams can be measured by three elements of commitment which are inner attachment, persistence, and resistance. Thus, fans' attitudinal loyalty can be measured by asking whether "they feel a deep inner attachment to their favorite team" and "their commitment is persistent over time and resistant to criticism" (Bauer et al. 2008, p.207).

Pritchard, Havtiz, and Howard (1999) suggest a measurement for attitude bias elements of loyalty utilising the factors of commitment as the basis for describing psychological processes underlying and leading to customer loyalty. In the same vein, Mahony et al. (2000) extend Pritchard et al.'s (1999) research and develop 14 operational items for examining attitudinal loyalty in professional team sport context. This scale of Mahony et al. (2000) is called Psychological Commitment to Team (PCT) scale. They (Mahony et al. 2000, p.18) posit that "fans who demonstrate loyalty toward a sports team possess an attitude bias that is both resistant to change and persistent over time". Base on this assertion, the authors (Mahony et al. 2000) develop items stressing the importance of resistant to change. Especially, the developed items attempt to examine "whether fans would remain committed to the team when something occurred that might change their commitment" (Mahony et al.

2000, p.18). For example, the items ask whether the customers would keep their support to the team under certain events such as poor team performance or change in the coach.

Funk and Pastore's (2000) study uses the framework of the PCT scale to measure sport fans' attitudinal loyalty towards professional baseball team. The work of Gladden and Funk (2001) emphasise the importance of attitudinal dimension of brand loyalty in sport and utilise the PCT scale framework to measure sport fans' attitudinal loyalty towards professional sport brands. Bauer et al. (2008) also measure German football fans' attitudinal loyalty using items adapted from the PCT scale.

The current study includes attitudinal aspect of fan loyalty in the conceptual framework, because the attitudinal loyalty can demonstrate fans 'true' loyalty towards sport brands (Mahony et al. 2000). Mahony et al. (2000) insist that fans' psychological commitment to teams can demonstrate 'true' loyalty towards teams. Moreover, a number of studies (Bauer et al. 2008, Gladden and Funk 2001, Kaynak et al. 2008) on sport brand equity emphasise that it is difficult to distinguish sport fans' 'true' loyalty from 'spurious' loyalty by measuring their behavioural loyalty only. Thus, by including attitudinal loyalty in the conceptual framework, this research may identify whether fans' perception of professional sport brands positively influence their true loyalty towards the brands.

In order to measure attitudinal aspect of customer's loyalty towards professional sport brands, the current research adopts measurement items from the PCT scale which was developed by Mahony et al. (2000). The PCT scale is chosen because the scale has been recognised as a rigorous scale of assessing attitudinal loyalty of sport

customers in several preceding studies on sport brand equity (Bauer et al. 2008, Gladden and Funk 2001).

It should be noted that the PCT scale is developed in domestic market context of American football. Even though the PCT scale is used in German football context in Bauer et al.'s study (2008), it may not apply in English football context. Moreover, the usability of the scale in overseas consumer context is also questionable. Thus, as with behavioural loyalty measures, the PCT scale' validity will be tested in the process of exploratory factor analysis.

As the items of PCT scale are generated regarding to the customers of American football (National Football League), the present study rephrases the items to fit in football (soccer) context. All items use a seven-point Likert scales ranging 1 as strongly disagree to 7 as strongly agree. The operational items are displayed in table 3.8.

Table 3.8: Measurement Items of Attitudinal Loyalty

Measurement items	Label	Reference
Attitudinal loyalty		
1. I might rethink my allegiance to my favourite team if this team consistently performs poorly (Reverse coded)	ATL1	Mahony et al. (2000)
2. I would watch a game featuring my favourite team regardless of which team they are playing	ATL2	
3. I might rethink my allegiance to my favourite team if management traded away its best players (Reverse coded)	ATL3	
4. Being a fan of my favourite team is important to me	ATL4	
5. Nothing could change my allegiance to my favourite team	ATL5	
6. I am a committed fan of my favourite team	ATL6	
7. It would not affect my loyalty to my favourite team if management hired a head coach that I disliked very much	ATL7	
8. I could easily be persuaded to change my favourite team preference (Reverse coded)	ATL8	
9. I have been a fan of my team since I began watching professional football	ATL9	
10. I could never switch my loyalty from my favourite team even if my close friends were fans of another team	ATL10	
11. It would be unlikely for me to change my allegiance from my current favourite team to another	ATL11	
12. It would be difficult to change my beliefs about my favourite team	ATL12	
13. You can tell a lot about a person by their willingness to stick with a team that is not performing well	ATL13	
14. My commitment to my favourite team would decrease if they were performing poorly and there appeared little chance their performance would change (Reverse coded)	ATL14	

3.6. Data Analyses Plans and Proposed Technique of Quantitative Analysis

3.6.1. Data Cleaning

3.6.1.1. Missing Data

Missing data is defined as information which is unavailable for a case where other information is available and is often caused when a respondent does not answer to one or more questions in a survey (Hair et al. 1998). Missing value has to be managed before the data is analysed.

Diagnoses of Missing Data

There are no clear guidelines for the amount of missing data which is tolerable for a certain size of sample. However, it is suggested that the problems which are provoked by missing data are less serious if the amount of missing value is less than 5% in a random pattern (Tabachnick and Fidell 2007).

The randomness of missing value is considered to be more important than the amount of missing data (Tabachnick and Fidell 2007). This is because if missing data are not random they could have a meaning. Thus, it is necessary to check whether missing values occur randomly or not. The existence of a meaningful pattern of missing data is able to be examined by dividing the data into two groups which are observations with missing values and those without missing data, and comparing those two groups of data. A significance test is often used for verifying whether there are significant differences between the two data sets (Hair et al. 1998). The patterns of missing data are classified as missing completely at random (MCAR), missing at random (MAR), and missing not at random (MNAR). Missing completely at random is the case when the occurrence of missing value has no pattern and is unpredictable (Tabachnick and Fidell 2007). Missing data are called as missing at random when the pattern of missing values does not depend on dependent variables but on other variables (Hair et al. 1998). This kind of missing data is also regarded as ignorable nonresponse. In case of the values missing not at random, the pattern of missing data is related to dependent variables (Tabachnick and Fidell 2007). In the situation of MNAR, the missing data is not ignorable and further investigation is necessary.

Dealing with Missing Data

There are two possible ways of dealing with missing data which are using observations with complete data only and replacing the missing data. Using complete data only is the simplest way of dealing with missing values, and this can be done by including only the observations with complete data or by removing the cases with missing values for data analyses. This approach is only applicable when the missing data is classified as MCAR (Hair et al. 1998).

The alternative way of dealing with missing data is replacing the missing values with statistically estimated values. There are several methods to estimate (or impute) missing values such as case substitution, mean substitution, cold deck imputation, regression imputation, multiple imputation, and expectation maximisation. In the case of MCAR, any of those estimation methods is available. However, it is suggested that expectation maximisation provided with better estimation where a meaningful pattern of missing data exists (Tabachnick and Fidell 2007).

3.6.1.2. Outliers

An outlier is referred as "a case with such an extreme value on one variable (a univariate outlier) or such a strange combination of scores on two or more variables (multivariate outlier) that it distorts statistics" (Tabachnick and Fidell 2007, p.72). It is difficult to say conclusively whether outliers are beneficial or problematic. Outliers can be beneficial as they may provide researchers with the characteristics of the population that could be unable to be found in the normal way of analysis (Hair et al. 1998). However, outliers may also be problematic because they could cause

harmful influence on data analyses (Hair et al. 1998). Therefore, outliers have to be considered carefully in the context of the research and must be assessed by the information they are able to indicate (Hair et al. 1998).

Outliers can be divided into univariate outliers and multivariate outliers. Univariate outliers are defined as "cases with an extreme value on one variable", and multivariate outliers are referred as "cases with an unusual combination of scores on two or more variables" (Tabachnick and Fidell 2007, p.73). Univariate outliers can be visually spotted by using graphical methods such as histograms and box plots. Detecting multivariate outliers involves statistical methods such as Mahalanobis distance, leverage, discrepancy, and influence (Tabachnick and Fidell 2007). Mahalanobis distance is a widely used measure for detecting multivariate outliers. Mahalanobis distance refers the distance of a case from the mean centre (centroid) of the other cases in multidimensional space (Tabachnick and Fidell 2007). The statistical properties of Mahalanobis distance can be utilised for significance test (Hair et al. 1998). A very conservative level (p<.001) is recommended for the threshold of this significance tests using Mahalanobis distance properties (Hair et al. 1998, Moon 2009, Tabachnick and Fidell 2007).

3.6.1.3. Normality Test

Normality is one of the fundamental assumptions underlying multivariate analysis and it refers to "the shape of the data distribution for an individual metric variable and its correspondence to the normal distribution, the benchmark for statistical

methods" (Hair et al. 1998, p.70). Normality can be checked by graphical analyses or statistical tests.

Graphical Analyses

Graphical analyses of normality involve a visual examination of histograms and normal probability plots. Histograms and normal probability plots are able to display graphically how the observed data values are distributed in accordance with the normal distribution. Graphical analyses of normality are simple and widely recommended methods (Hair et al. 1998). However, it should be noted that those graphical representations can be distorted by small sample size (Hair et al. 1998). Thus, those methods are suitable for normality test when the sample size is sufficiently large.

Kurtosis and skewness are the characteristics of distributions shape. Kurtosis stands for whether the shape of distribution is peaked or flat in comparison with the normal distribution curve (Moon 2009). In the normal probability plots, if the line locates below the diagonal line, the distribution shape of the data values is flatter than the normal curve. Conversely, when the line is plotted above the diagonal line, the shape of the data distribution is peaked than expected (Hair et al. 1998). On the other hand, skewness represents the symmetrical shape of the data distribution (Tabachnick and Fidell 2007). In the normal probability plots, a positive skewness, which the centre of the distribution curve leans towards right, is shown by an ark above the diagonal line. In contrast, a negative skewness, which the centre of the distribution curve inclines towards left, is displayed by an ark below the diagonal line (Hair et al. 1998).

Statistical Analyses

Statistical analyses of normality are also available for checking normality. Both kurtosis and skewness cannot only be assessed visually using the normal probability plots but also be tested statistically by calculating the statistic values of them (Hair et al. 1998). The statistic values of kurtosis and skewness indicate the normal distribution when the values are close to zero (Tabachnick and Fidell 2007). A positive value of kurtosis means that the shape of distribution is peaked, whereas a negative value of kurtosis indicates that the shape of distribution is flat. A positive value of skewness represents that the centre of the distribution leans towards left, while a negative value of skewness signifies that the centre of the curve inclines towards right. There is yet a clear guideline for evaluating the acceptable degree of those statistic values. If a value of kurtosis is within the range of -10 to +10, it is regarded as acceptable, and skewness is considered as not seriously problematic when the value does not exceed ±3 (DeCarlo 1997, Moon 2009).

Alternative way of statistically examining normality is using Kolmogorov-Smirnov test and Shapiro-Wilk test. These tests conduct the comparison between the values in the sample and a set of data which is normally distributed, and has same mean and standard deviation (Field 2009). If the result shows those two sets of data are not significantly different (p>.05), it means that the sample data is normally distributed. However, it is noted that those methods are very sensitive to sample size and they often produce significant results with large sample (Field 2009). Due to this limitation, Kolmogorov-Smirnov test and Shapiro-Wilk test are not suitable when a researcher uses a large sample.

Even though normality is one of the basic assumptions underlying multivariate analysis, the distribution of data does not need to be the normal distribution completely but it just needs to be similar to the normal distribution. It should be noted that the assumption of normality becomes less important when the sample size is sufficiently large, for example larger than 200 (Field 2009, Tabachnick and Fidell 2007).

3.6.1.4. Common Method Bias

Common method variance is defined as "variance that is attributable to the measurement method rather than to the constructs the measures represent" (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, and Podsakoff 2003, p.879) and is believed to "creates a false internal consistency, that is, an apparent correlation among variables generated by their common source" (Chang, Witteloostuijn, and Eden 2010, p.178). Podsakoff et al. (2003) summarise that the potential causes of common method bias are: 1) using a common source which is the case that the data of the predictor and criterion variable is collected from the same respondent; 2) item characteristics which is the way items are presented to respondents; 3) item context which is the way items are placed on a questionnaire; and 4) measurement context which is the broader contextual influences such as time, location, and media utilised to measure the variables.

Remedies for dealing with common method bias can be divided into procedural and statistical approaches. Procedural remedies involve in the stage of research design in order to avoid or minimise common method variance. Procedural remedies include:

1) collecting data from independent and dependent variables from different sources; 2) temporal, proximal, psychological, or methodological separation of measurement; 3) providing confidentiality and anonymity to respondents, and reducing evaluation apprehension; 4) counter balancing the order of questions; and 5) improving scale items (Podsakoff et al. 2003). Unlike procedural remedies which involve in research design stage, statistical remedies are post research measures. Several statistical remedies are proposed by researchers such as Harman's single-factor test and partial correlation procedures (Lindell and Whitney 2001, Podsakoff et al. 2003). However, Conway and Lance (2010) insist that statistical remedies are not recommended because significant drawbacks exist in using the techniques and poor empirical results have been shown from some of them. The current study takes Conway and Lance's (2010) suggestion related to dealing with common method variance which discourages the use of statistical remedies but recommends using some of procedural remedies.

The current research uses self-reporting type measures and collects the data for independent and dependent variables from a same source. There is concern over using self-report measures collected from a same sample as it might cause common method bias (Podsakoff and Todor 1985, Organ and Ryan 1995). However, some researchers insist that self-reports are appropriate way of measuring a number of private events, particularly for a personal event which can be uniquely accessible to an experiencing individual (Chan 2009, Skinner 1957). This research is interested in measuring consumers' perception of professional sport brands' associations which are perceived image and benefits, and their attitudinal loyalty which is the level of individual commitment to the brands. These individual perception and commitment

are uniquely accessible to the consumers themselves and, thus, it makes self-report measures the most relevant method. Moreover, due to the same reason, different sources for independent and dependent variables are not available in the case of the current study.

This study considers some of procedural remedies that are suggested by Conway and Lance (2010) and Podsakoff et al. (2003). Firstly, the notice of confidentiality is clearly stated at the beginning of the questionnaire. Secondly, spatial breaks are inserted on the questionnaire between variables in order to create a temporal separation by introducing a time leg. Thirdly, negatives, such as 'do not' or 'would not', are presented in bold strokes within negatively worded items for the purpose of reducing the chance that respondents fail to recognise the existence of some reverse coded items. Lastly, in order to improve scale items, unfamiliar terms in the items of the original scales, which are developed in North American sports context, are replaced by relevant terms used in the football context. For example, the term 'club front' which is not widely used in British football industry is substituted with 'management team'.

3.6.2. Validation of Measurement Scales

In order to confirm the suitability of the developed scale for use, scale validation is carried out. As mentioned earlier (section 3.4.), due to the fact that the scale development was mainly based on the existing literature which had been produced in Northern American professional sport contexts, some of the items in the scale were modified and rephrased to make them suitable for a football context. Hence, the

scale needs to be validated for use in the context of the current research. Exploratory factor analysis is administered for the purpose of confirming that the factors are identified as designed. Scale reliability and validity are also tested for the process of scale validation.

3.6.2.1. Exploratory Factor Analysis

The sample size is important for carrying out factor analysis. It is advised that researchers must aim to collect data from a relatively large sample and avoid using factor analysis with a small sample such as a sample fewer than 50 cases (Hair et al. 1998). Although a preferable size of sample is various depending on researchers, it is generally recommended that the sample size should be larger than 200 (Comrey 1973, Cattell 1978). On the one hand, it is proposed that a minimum of five observations for each variable to be assessed is necessary, and more preferably a ten-to-one ratio is required (Hair et al. 1998, Nunnally and Bernstein 1994). For example, for a factor analysis with 20 variables, a sample size of 100 is acceptable, and 200 observations are believed to be recommendable.

Kaiser-Myer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy

Kaiser-Myer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy is an index to assess the appropriateness of factor analysis by comparing the proportions of simple correlation coefficient and partial correlation coefficient (Kaiser 1970, 1974). The KMO measure provides an index ranging from 0 to 1, which displays the ratio of variance amongst the variables. If a KMO value is close to 1, the sample is adequate for a

further analysis, whereas a KMO index lower than 0.5 means that the sample is not appropriate for a factor analysis (Kaiser 1970, Dziuban and Shirkey 1974). Kaiser (1974, p.35) suggests a guidelines for evaluation levels of KMO index that anything in the .90s is "marvellous", in the .80s is "meritorious", in the .70s is "middling", in the .60s is "mediocre", in the .50s is "miserable", and below .50 is "unacceptable" (Table 3.9).

Table 3.9: Indices of Factorial Simplicity (Kaiser 1974)

KMO Value	Evaluation
Above 0.9	Marvellous
Between 0.9 to 0.8	Meritorious
Between 0.8 to 0.7	Middling
Between 0.7 to 0.6	Mediocre
Between 0.6 to 0.5	Miserable
Below 0.5	Unacceptable

Measure of Sampling Adequacy

Measure of sampling adequacy (MSA) is a measure to test the extent of intercorrelations amongst the variables and shows the suitability of factor analysis (Hair et al. 1998). Elements on the diagonal line in an anti-image correlation matrix represent MSA (ranging from 0 to 1). The guidelines for the interpretation of this index are that a value above .80 is meritorious, below .80 and above .70 is middling, below .70 and above .60 is mediocre, below .60 and above .50 is miserable, and below .50 is unacceptable (Kaiser 1970). The value of MSA tends to be increased in the following conditions when: 1) the sample size increases; 2) the average correlations grows; 3) the number of variables rises; or 4) the number of factors decreases (Kaiser and Rice 1974).

Bartlett's Test of Sphericity

Bartlett's test of sphericity (Bartlett 1950) can be used as another measure of determining the appropriateness of factor analysis, and it statistically examines the existence of correlations amongst the variables (Hair et al. 1998). Bartlett's test of sphericity indicates the level of the probability whether there are significant correlations amongst the variables (Yang 2006). Thus, values of significance level lower than 0.05 demonstrate that there are significant relationships amongst the variables, while higher values show the data is not suitable for factor analysis. Because the Bartlett's test of sphericity tend to become more sensitive to diagnosing the correlations as the sample size gets bigger, it is recommended that the measure should be used in conjunction with other modes of assessing the adequacy of factor analysis, especially when the sample size is relatively small (Hair et al. 1998).

3.6.2.2. Reliability Test

Reliability is defined as an "assessment of the degree of consistency between multiple measurements of a variable" (Hair et al. 1998, p.117). Internal consistency is the most widely utilised measure of reliability (Peter 1979). Cronbach's Coefficient Alpha (Cronbach 1951) is the most commonly used measure of examining the internal consistency of a scale. The coefficient alpha is calculated by the formula below:

$$\alpha = \frac{n}{n-1}\left(1 - \frac{\sum_{i=1}^{n}\delta_i^2}{\delta_t^2}\right)$$

Where:

n : The number of components

δ_t^2 : The variance of the observed total test scores

δ_i^2 : The variance of component i

As a general rule, .70 is regarded as an acceptable lower limit for Cronbach's coefficient alpha, and the value above .80 is seen as desirable (Nunnally and Bernstein 1994, Robinson and Shaver 1973, Robinson et al. 1991). The cut-off limit could be lowered to the level of .60 in exploratory research (Robinson et al. 1991).

However, it is sometimes inadequate to rely on only Cronbach's coefficient alpha in assessing reliability, as the coefficient is positively related to the length of scales. In other words, Cronbach's coefficient alpha is very sensitive to the number of items in the scales and it tends to be increased as the number of items in the scales grows (Cronbach 1951, Voss et al. 2000). It is often reported that low Cronbach's coefficient alpha values are commonly found when the number of items is below seven (Pallant 2007, Swailes and McIntyre-Bhatty 2002). In case of using short scales, it is advised to report the mean inter-item correlation for the items for assessing internal consistency (McKennell 1978). The recommended optimal rage of the mean inter-item correlations is between .20 and .40 (Briggs and Cheek 1986).

The other available reliability measures which can be complementary to Cronbach's coefficient alpha are the composite reliability (construct reliability) and the average variance extracted (Hair et al. 1998). Both of these measures are derived from

confirmatory factor analysis. The composite reliability is a measure used in testing the reliability of the construct in the aggregate (Fornell and Larcker 1981) and is calculated as below:

$$\rho_\eta = \frac{\left(\sum \lambda_i\right)^2}{\left(\sum \lambda_i\right)^2 + \sum \varepsilon_j}$$

Where,

ρ_η : The reliability for the construct η

λ_i : The standardised loading

ε_j : The measurement error for each indicator

It is generally recommended that the construct reliability should exceed .50. This threshold value approximately corresponds to a standardised loading of .70 (Fornell and Larcker 1981, Hair et al. 1998).

The average variance extracted (AVE) measure is another reliability measure and is able to complement to the construct reliability. This measure reflects the overall amount of variance explained by the latent construct (Fornell and Larcker 1981). Higher values of average variance extracted means that the latent variable is well represented by the indicators (Hair et al. 1998). The average variance extracted is calculated from the formula below:

$$\rho_{AVE} = \frac{\sum(\lambda_i^{\,2})}{\sum(\lambda_i^{\,2}) + \sum\varepsilon_j}$$

Where,

ρ_{ave} : The average variance extracted

λ_i : The standardised loading

ε_j : The measurement error for each indicator

It is generally recommended that a value of the average variance extracted needs to be greater than .50 for a construct (Fornell and Larcker 1981, Hair et al. 1998).

3.6.3. Structural Equation Modelling

Structural equation modelling is the main methodology in this research. Structural equation modelling is a sophisticated statistical approach for examining hypotheses about the links between observed and latent variables (Bentler 1989, Hair et al. 1998, Tomarken and Waller 2005, Kelloway 1998). It is regarded as one of the most robust means of examining the relationships amongst theoretical constructs such as brand loyalty. Structural equation modelling consists of factor analysis and multiple regression. SEM incorporates measurement error directly in the estimation process (Hair et al. 1998). Thus, SEM can make up for the weak point of multiple regression analysis which is unable to consider the measurement errors in its process. In addition to that, SEM is also able to estimate multiple interrelated dependence relationships amongst constructs simultaneously (Hair et al. 1998). This merit of SEM provides researchers with the estimates of indirect influences amongst latent variables which a model contains.

These abilities of SEM make it a suitable analysis technique for this research. This technique is employed not only for producing a model which explain the relationships amongst the variables of customer-based brand equity, but also for comparing two customer groups in domestic and overseas markets. This research aims to test the relationships amongst a number of variables (e.g. attitudinal loyalty, behavioural loyalty, and brand associations such as logo, history, star players etc.). Thus, SEM is considered as an appropriate way of investigating the relationships of the variables. Moreover, because the model of this research has a form of sequential structure, SEM is an efficient tool for examining their direct and indirect relations amongst each variable at the same time. Furthermore, as SEM allows researcher to fulfil a comparison between two groups of data, it is believed to be useful for the comparative analysis between domestic customers and overseas consumers in this research.

3.6.3.1. Process of Structural Equation Modelling

The process of structural equation modelling consists of two stages which are the measurement model testing and the structural model testing. The first step of structural equation modelling is the measurement model testing. The measurement model relates the indicators (observable variables) to the constructs (latent variables). The measurement model specifies the indicators for each construct and examines the reliability of each construct for measuring the causal relationships (Hair et al. 1998). Fundamentally, the measurement model is similar to a confirmatory factor analysis (Hair et al. 1998, Iacobucci 2009). The measurement model testing involves with two examinations of factor loadings and the overall model fit. An indicator with a

small factor loading (< 0.4) needs to be removed from further analysis as a small factor loading indicates that the item dose not measure the factor properly. In addition to that, the fitness of the measurement model should also be ensured. The method of testing the model fit will be discussed in section 3.6.3.2.

Once the measurement model testing is conducted, researchers can move on to the next stage of the structural equation modelling which is the structural model testing. The structural model is also called as path model and consists of multiple dependence relationships relating the hypothesised model's constructs (Hair et al. 1998, Iacobucci 2009). The structural model cannot be tested alone as the model represents the relationships amongst latent variables (constructs) only. Thus, in order to test the structural model, the combination of a measurement model and a structural model is used. This combined model of a measurement model and a structural model is called a full SEM model (Iacobucci 2009). In the current research, the testing of the full SEM model will be regarded as the structural model testing for the sake of convenience. In the step of the structural model testing, the structural model fit should be ensured adequately. Once the structural model shows relevant fit, the path coefficients and the significance of the hypothesised relationships amongst the constructs in the model are utilised for testing the hypotheses. The following subsection 3.6.3.2 will provide the discussion about the model fit measures and their recommended cur-off criteria.

Some structural equation modelling software programmes provide a multiple group analysis function. This function of multiple group analysis enables researchers to test a structural model with more than one sample and examine possible differences across samples statistically (Schumacker and Lomax 2004). However, this function

is not used in the current research because the structural models with different underlying structure are produced for domestic and overseas samples from the exploratory factor analysis stage (sections 4.3 and 4.6). As the validation of the existing measure in the overseas consumer setting is a part of this study and the resulting models from the exploratory factor analysis for the two consumer contexts are different, the multiple group analysis technique is not able to be used. This issue will also be discussed later in section 4.8.

3.6.3.2. Model Fit Indices

A fitness of model can be tested by utilising model fit indices. Model fit indices show how well the conceptualised model fits the collected data. As model fit indices estimate a fitness of the model purely mathematically without considering theoretical relationships amongst variables, the result of model fit indices has statistical meaning only but not theoretical.

There are a number of model fit indices developed but there is no single guideline that which indices should be used for reporting model fitness. Although selecting model fit indices is dependent on a researcher's choice and a purpose of a research, it is generally recommended (Boomsma 2000, McDonald and Ho 2002) that researchers need to report Chi-square (χ^2) value, Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA), Comparative Fit Index (CFI), Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI), and Standardised Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR). In addition to these indices, Incremental Fit Index (IFI) was used for assessing model fitness in the present research.

Chi-square can be used to examine model fitness as "a large value of chi-square relative to the degrees of freedom signifies that the observed and estimated matrices differ considerably" (Hair et al. 1998, p.654). The likelihood-ratio chi-square static is the most fundamental measure of overall fit using chi-square. The likelihood-ratio χ^2 statistic shows the probability that the difference between the observed and estimated matrices. Thus, the value should be greater than statistical significance level (p >.05) because this means the actual and predicted matrices are not significantly different (Hair et al. 1998). However, this measure is often criticised as it is too sensitive to sample size. It is noticed that using the likelihood-ratio chi-square statistic is unreliable when the sample is larger than 200. In order to lessen this size sensitive problem, the normed chi-square is widely used as an alternative measure to the likelihood-ratio χ^2 statistic. The normed χ^2 can be calculated by dividing χ^2 by degree of freedom (*df*). It is suggested that the normed chi-square is acceptable level when the value is smaller than 2.0 (Byrne 2010). The normed χ^2 is presented as CMIN/DF in a result produced by AMOS 19. CMIN/DF (normed chi-square) was utilised in the current study.

Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) is an index of absolute fit. The RMSEA assesses the discrepancy per degree of freedom where the discrepancy is examined in terms of the population. A RMSEA value less than .05 (RMSEA <.05) is considered to represent a very good fit to the data, and RMSEA values ranging from .05 to .08 (.05≤ RMSEA <.08) are believed to be acceptable level (Brown and Cudeck 1993).

Incremental Fit Index (IFI), Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI), and Comparative Fit Index (CFI) are the measures of incremental fit which compare the proposed model to the

null model (Hair et al. 1998). The TLI is also known as Non-normed fit index (NNFI). For IFI, TLI, and CFI, a recommended acceptance level is a value greater than .90 (Hu and Bentler 1999).

Standardised Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) is a residual-based fit index. SRMR is the standardised index of "the average differences between the sample variances and covariances and the estimated population variances and covariances" (Tabachnick and Fidell 2007, p.720). SRMR values of .05 or less are regarded as representing a very good model (Moon 2009). SRMR values ranging from .05 to .08 (.05< SRMR <.08) are acceptable (Hu and Bentler 1999). Table 3.10 displays the measures of model fit and the cut-off criteria for those indices.

Table 3.10: Model Fit Measures

Fit Measure		Recommended Values
Normed Chi-square	CMIN/DF	≤ 2.0
Incremental Fit Index	IFI	$\geq .90$
Tucker-Lewis Index (Non-normed Fit Index)	TLI (NNFI)	$\geq .90$
Comparative Fit Index	CFI	$\geq .90$
Root Mean Square Error of Approximation	RMSEA	$< .05$: Very good; $< .08$ Acceptable
Standardised Root Mean Square Residual	SRMR	$< .05$: Very good; $< .08$ Acceptable

3.7. Main Survey

The main survey was conducted through on-line survey between the 26th of October and the 6th of November 2010. The data collection was undertaken with the cooperation of Arsenal Football Club.

3.7.1. Procedure

Respondents were Arsenal FC fans who were registered as on-line members of the club's official website (www.arsenal.com) and had been subscribing the club's weekly news letter by e-mail. Arsenal FC was contacted by the researcher and agreed to cooperate with the data collection. The football club allowed the researcher to include an on-line survey webpage link in their e-mail news letter which is sent to the people on their e-mail subscribing list. The club's e-mail news letter is posted on Tuesday every week and the e-mail with the survey participation request was sent on the 26th of October 2010.

In the e-mail news letter, brief introduction of the survey and request for participating in the questionnaire were worded and the link to the on-online survey webpage was provided. The provided link to the on-line survey was hyperlinked to the webpage which had been developed for the on-line questionnaire. The respondents were able to easily access the on-line survey webpage by simply clicking the link that was displayed in the e-mail news letter. In order to attract the attention of the respondents, they were informed the fact that the respondents who completed the questionnaire will be entered into a prize draw. The prize in this occasion was a 2010/11 season official home jersey of Arsenal FC.

3.7.2. Result of the Survey

In total, 624 responses were collected. Amongst this collected sample, three questionnaires were eliminated because the respondents of these three indicated themselves as non-Arsenal FC fans (one for each of Chelsea FC, Liverpool FC, and

Manchester United FC). As this investigation targets the consumers who are attitudinally loyal to the brand (Arsenal FC), those three questionnaires completed by non-Arsenal FC fans were regarded as ineligible.

3.7.3. Data Cleaning Process

A total number of online questionnaires collected were 624 and 54 questionnaires out of these 624 responses were incomplete. Apart from those 54 incomplete questionnaires, which a respondent stopped answering in the middle of the survey, 570 responses were complete and contained no missing values. The online survey was designed such that if there are unanswered questions, a respondent could have notice which indicates where the unanswered questions are before submitting the questionnaire. It is believed that this function of the notice helped a respondent to avoid submitting a questionnaire with missing values. In addition to those 54 incomplete questionnaires, three responses were omitted, because these three questionnaires had been answered by non-Arsenal FC fans (section 3.7.2). In order to discover outliers, a visual inspection and Mahalanobis distance were utilised. A conservative criterion ($p<.005$) was applied for Mahalanobis distance. A total of 30 cases were estimated as outliers. Those 30 responses were eliminated and, thus, 537 responses were remained. The remaining 537 questionnaires were used for further data cleaning process.

Normality tests were conducted by examining histograms, box plots, skewness, and kurtosis. Normality was visually inspected and there was no extreme distribution found from the shapes of the data distributions. The skewness and kurtosis did not

indicate any serious problems, although they did not perfectly satisfy the normal distribution. It should be regarded as a fact that generally a data collected by a survey is normally unable to match the normal distribution in practice, and particularly the current research was targeting highly loyal customers of professional sport brands. Moreover, when a sample is very large (200 or more), it is recommended researchers to rely on a visual inspection of the shape of the distribution (Field 2009). The sample size of the present research is regarded as very large. Taking these points above into account, it is able to be said that the data of this research did not seriously violate the normality.

3.8. Demographical Description of the Sample Groups

As the result of the data cleaning process which was described in the section 3.7.3, a total of 537 responses were retained for the main data analysis. Amongst those 537 responses, 290 sets of data are classified as a group of domestic consumers which includes the responses from the U.K. national respondents. The other 247 data sets, which were answered by non-UK national respondents, are grouped as a sample of overseas customers. Even though it is recommended researchers to secure a sufficiently large sample for conducting structural equation modelling, there is no clear criterion of sample size. Generally, a sample size of larger than 200 is required (Hair et al. 1998, Yang 2006). Thus, both of the sample groups are regarded as large enough samples. The demographical description of those two sample groups are as follows.

3.8.1. Domestic Consumer Sample

The domestic consumers sample consists of 21.03% female and 77.24% male (Table 3.11). 1.72% of respondents refused to identify his or her gender. The gender distribution of the domestic consumers sample shows the majority of respondents are males. However, taking the fact that most of customers in football are male into consideration, this skewed gender characteristic in the sample is understandable. According to the EPL National Fan Survey 2007/08, male customers are predominant in EPL's domestic fan base with 85% share, in contrast with female's 15% (PremierLeague 2008). The gender distribution of this sample shows a similar result to the EPL National Fan Survey 2007/08.

The average age of the domestic sample was 42.20, and the median age of the respondents was 44. The minimum age value for the sample was 16, whereas the maximum age was 67. Table 3.11 displays the age distribution of the sample. 7.93% of the respondents were teenaged. 15.86 % of the sample was between 20 and 29 years old. The respondents in the age group of 30 to 39 were 15.86%. About a quarter of the respondents (25.52%) were in the age group of 40 to 49. 19.31% of the respondents were belonged to the age group of 50 to 59. 13.79% of the sample was above the age 60. 1.72% of the respondents did not provide with their age.

In terms of educational level, 5.86% of the respondents were studying at primary or secondary school. 26.90% of the respondents had not attended college or university. College or university students occupied 5.86% of the sample. 35.17% of the respondents held a Bachelor's degree. There were two respondents (0.69%) who were studying at postgraduate level. 11.38% of the respondents had graduated a

postgraduate school. 8.97% of the respondents indicated their educational level as 'other', while 5.17% of the respondents did not report the information.

Table 3.11: Sample Demographics – Domestic Sample (N = 290)

Age			Age Distribution	N	%	Educational Level	N	%
Min	16		Under 19	23	7.93	Primary or Secondary (current)	17	5.86
Max	67		20 to 29	46	15.86	Primary or Secondary (graduate)	78	26.90
Average	42.2		30 to 39	46	15.86	College or University (current)	17	5.86
Median	44		40 to 49	74	25.52	College or University (graduate)	102	35.17
Gender	**N**	**%**	50 to 59	56	19.31	Postgraduate School (current)	2	0.69
Female	61	21.03	Over 60	40	13.79	Postgraduate School (graduate)	33	11.38
Male	224	77.24	N/A	5	1.72	Other	26	8.97
N/A	5	1.72				N/A	15	5.17

3.8.2. Overseas Consumer Sample

The overseas consumers sample is composed of 5.67% female and 93.93% male (Table 3.12). One respondent (0.40%) refused to indicate his or her gender. The gender distribution of the overseas consumers sample is more skewed to the male. However, taking the fact into account that male football fans are predominant, this skewness of gender distribution is plausible.

The mean age of the overseas sample was 35.12, and the median age of the respondents was 33. The age distribution of the sample is shown in Table 3.12. 9.31% of the respondents were teenagers. A little more than one-third (34.01%) of the respondents were between 20 and 29 years old. The respondents in the age group

of 30 to 39 were 19.03%. A little more than one-fifth (20.65%) of the respondents were in the age group of 40 to 49. 11.34% of the respondents were in their 50s. 5.67% of the sample was above the age of 60.

Regarding educational level, 4.45% of the respondents were primary or secondary school students. 10.53% of the respondents had not attended college or university. Slightly more than one-fifth (30.24%) of the respondents were studying at college or university. 36.84% of the respondents held a college or university degree. 2.02% of the respondents reported themselves as postgraduate students. 22.67% of the respondents had graduated a postgraduate school. 3.24% of the respondents did not provide with their educational level information.

Table 3.12: Sample Demographics – Overseas Sample (N = 247)

Age			Age Distribution	N	%	Educational Level	N	%
Min	15		Under 19	23	9.31	Primary or Secondary (current)	11	4.45
Max	66		20 to 29	84	34.01	Primary or Secondary (graduate)	26	10.53
Average	35.12		30 to 39	47	19.03	College or University (current)	50	20.24
Median	33		40 to 49	51	20.65	College or University (graduate)	91	36.84
Gender	**N**	**%**	50 to 59	28	11.34	Postgraduate School (current)	5	2.02
Female	14	5.67	Over 60	14	5.67	Postgraduate School (graduate)	56	22.67
Male	232	93.93	N/A	0	0.00	Other	8	3.24
N/A	1	0.40				N/A	0	0.00

3.9. Chapter Summary

This chapter explained the philosophical background of the current research at the beginning. The chapter then described the contexts of the research and the research design. The selected brand (Arsenal FC) and sample frame (consumers in domestic market and overseas markets) was detailed and the selections were justified. The development of the questionnaire for the main survey was also explained. This chapter described the data analysis plans and provided the explanation of the employed data analysis techniques. Section 3.6 briefed the model fit indices used in the research and provided the explanations of the measures. Moreover, the procedure and initial result of the conducted main survey was presented in section 3.7. The section also showed the initial data analysis process of the collected data and the final sample groups used for the main data analysis. Section 3.8 reported the demographical characteristics of the final samples.

The following chapter will provide the results of data analysis including the demographics of the samples collected and exploratory factor analysis.

Chapter 4: Data Analysis

4.1. Introduction

This chapter details the results of data analysis, which include exploratory factor analysis and structural equation modelling. This chapter firstly presents the data analysis results of the domestic sample. The results of exploratory factor analysis are provided first. SPSS 19 was employed for the procedure of exploratory factor analysis. Based on the results of exploratory factor analysis, the modification of the conceptual model and hypotheses follows. Next, the results of measurement model analysis, which is a confirmatory factor analysis, and structural model analysis are presented. AMOS 19 was utilised for these structural equation modelling analyses. Based on the structural model analysis, the hypotheses of the current research are tested. The results of data analysis using the overseas sample are provided in the latter half of the chapter. The order of presenting the results of the overseas data analysis and the programmes utilised in the analysis procedure are same as the data analysis of the domestic sample described above.

There are nine main sections in this chapter. The first section is the current one which introduces this chapter. Section 4.2 provides the results of factor analysis of the domestic sample including the principal component analysis for loyalty constructs and the exploratory factor analysis of the composite scale. The section 4.2 also reports the results of internal consistency tests of the scales of each construct. Section 4.3 presents the modification of the conceptual model for the domestic consumers resulted from the factor analysis. Based on the modification, the altered

hypotheses are stated at the end of the section 4.3. Section 4.4 presents the results of the structural equation modelling of the domestic sample. The section firstly details the results from the measurement model testing including measurement model fit tests, discriminant and convergent validity checks, and construct reliability tests. The structural model testing is then provided in the section. The results of the structural model testing and the process of improving the models are presented. The last part of the section 4.4 describes the tests of the hypothesised relationships in the domestic consumer context based on the proposed structural models.

The results of the data analysis using the overseas sample are reported from section 4.5 to section 4.7. Section 4.5 presents the results of the factor analysis of the overseas sample. Section 4.6 provides the modification of the conceptual models for the overseas consumers resulted from the factor analysis, and the consequent alteration of the hypotheses. Section 4.7 details the results of the confirmatory factor analysis (measurement model testing). The section also provides the result of structural model testing. The tests of the hypothesised relationships based on the proposed structural model for the overseas consumers are presented at the end of the section 4.7. Section 4.8 provides the comparison of the two proposed structural models for domestic and overseas consumer contexts as the way of testing the hypothesis regarding the difference between the two types of consumers in their process of forming attitudinal loyalty towards a professional sport brand. Finally, a summary of the chapter 4 is provided in section 4.9.

4.2. Factor Analysis in Domestic Consumer Context

Factor analysis is a statistical technique which enables researchers to comprehend underlying structures. It is able to "identify representative variables from a much larger set of variables for use in subsequent multivariate analyses" or "create an entirely new set of variables, much smaller in number, to partially or completely replace the original set of variables for inclusion in subsequent techniques" (Hair et al. 1998, p.95). The aim of this process is to reduce the number of the variables and obtain the most parsimonious set of variables whilst the nature and character of the variables are kept. SPSS version 19.0 was utilised for the factor analysis.

4.2.1. Principal Component Analysis for Loyalty Constructs

Before exploratory factor analysis for the composite scale of the loyalty formation process model is conducted, principal component of the items for loyalty constructs (behavioural and attitudinal loyalty) is carried out. As reviewed in the previous chapter (section 3.5), the measurement scales for the constructs of brand associations (attributes, benefits, and attitudes) have been thoroughly examined for their internal consistency and validity by a number of studies. Unlike those constructs for the brand associations, the items for loyalty constructs have not been well tested. Thus, it is necessary to initially investigate the items that are internally consistent by conducting exploratory factor analysis of the scales of the loyalty constructs.

In order to identify the underlying dimensions of loyalty constructs, principal component analysis was applied. Principal component analysis uses "the correlations among the variables to develop a small set of components that empirically

summarises the correlations among the variables" and provides "the description of the relationship" (Tabachnick and Fidell 2007, p.25).

4.2.1.1. Behavioural Loyalty

Three operationalised items were designed for measuring respondents' behavioural loyalty towards professional sport brands. The three items included in the behavioural loyalty scale were: 60) *I have often attended or watched games of my favourite team in the stadium or on TV* (BHL1), 61) *I have often followed news or reports about my favourite team in various media* (BHL2), 62) *I have often purchased a lot of club-related merchandise* (BHL3). Those three items reflect the frequencies of attending or watching a team's matches (BHL1); following news or reports related to the team (BHL2); purchasing the club's merchandise goods (BHL3). The following principal components analysis was conducted with these items using domestic sample.

With the domestic sample, the principal components analysis of the behavioural loyalty items showed acceptable level of the suitability of factor analysis. The result of Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant ($X^2 = 132.274$, $df = 3$, Sig. $= 0.000$) and a Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin value was .569. A measure of sampling adequacy was also satisfactory as all the values on the diagonal line in the anti-image correlation matrix displayed as larger than .50.

Table 4.1 displays that 56.678% of the variance in the data was explained by those comprised of three items for the construct of behavioural loyalty. Cronbach's coefficient alpha was used for checking the internal consistency of the scale.

However, the alpha value of .484 was less than the guideline value of .60 (Cronbach's α > 0.6) which is recommended in the literature (Cronbach 1951). The result of reliability test suggested that the alpha value could be increased to .671 if the item BHL3 is deleted. Thus, the item BHL3 was eliminated from the scale.

Table 4.1: Principal Component Analysis: Behavioural Loyalty Scale

Item Name	Eigenvalue	Variance %	Rotated Factor Loading	Cronbach's Alpha	Correlated Item-Total Correlation	Mean Item-Item Correlation
BHL2	1.700	56.678	.847	.484	.472	.339
BHL1			.808		..354	
BHL3			.574		.268	

4.2.1.2. Attitudinal Loyalty

14 items measuring the construct of attitudinal loyalty were factor analysed in order to confirm the underlying dimension of the loyalty construct. As discussed earlier (section 3.5), the 14 operationalised items were adopted from an existing scale of Psychological Commitment to Team (Mahony et al. 2000). In spite of the relatively good psychometric properties of the scale, a following study (Kwon and Trail 2003) which re-examined the validity of the scale pointed out that the scale needs to be factor analysed in advance of being used. The re-examination showed that the scale possibly consists of more than one underlying dimension as the items were loaded on different factors although they were intended to measure the same construct (Kwon and Trail 2001).

Items with factor loading <0.5 were deleted from the scale and items with low communalities (<0.4) were also considered for omission. Since theoretically the

items of the scale should be loaded into one factor, items which were loaded into another factor or were loaded into multiple factors were removed from the scale.

With the domestic sample, six items were statistically retained as a scale for attitudinal loyalty construct. Those six items were: 66) *Being a fan of my favourite team is important to me* (ATL4), 67) *Nothing could change my allegiance to my favourite team* (ATL5), 68) *I am a committed fan of my favourite team* (ATL6), 72) *I could never switch my loyalty from my favourite team even if my close friends were fans of another team* (ATL10), 73) *It would be unlikely for me to change my allegiance from my current favourite team to another* (ATL11), 74) *It would be difficult to change my beliefs about my favourite team* (ATL12). The factor analysis showed that the suitability of factor analysis was fine with a large and significant Bartlett's test of sphericity ($X^2 = 745.045$, $df = 15$, Sig. $= 0.000$) and a Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin value of .819. A measure of sampling adequacy was also plausible as all the values on the diagonal line in the anti-image correlation matrix indicated as larger than .50.

Table 4.2 shows the result of principal component analysis of the items for the construct of attitudinal loyalty with using the domestic sample. 56.209% of the variance in the data was explained by the set of six items for the attitudinal loyalty construct. In order to check the internal consistency of the scale, Cronbach's coefficient alpha was utilised. The value of Cronbach's alpha was .805. As the alpha value is larger than the guideline level of .60 (Cronbach 1951), the homogeneity of the scale was appropriate.

Table 4.2: Principal Component Analysis: Attitudinal Loyalty Scale

Item Name	Eigenvalue	Variance %	Rotated Factor Loading	Cronbach's Alpha	Correlated Item-Total Correlation	Mean Item-Item Correlation
ATL6	3.373	56.209	.797	.805	.687	.473
ATL11			.773		.616	
ATL10			.767		.591	
ATL12			.742		.609	
ATL5			.713		.591	
ATL4			.702		.572	

4.2.2. Exploratory Factor Analysis of the Composite Scale

4.2.2.1. Factor Reduction

Exploratory factor analysis was conducted with 19 first order constructs of the composite scale for the conceptualisation of customer's loyalty formation process towards professional sport brands. The 19 first order constructs were composed by 17 factors of brand associations and two factors of brand loyalty. As reviewed earlier, the 17 factors of brand associations consisted of Success, Star Player(s), Manager, Aesthetics, Management, Logo Design, Product Delivery, Team History, Rivalry, Escape, Socialising, Identification, Peer Group Acceptance, Nostalgia, Pride in Place (or Community), Importance, and Knowledge. The two constructs of brand loyalty were Behavioural Loyalty and Attitudinal Loyalty. The factor analysis was carried out with using the domestic samples.

Table 4.3 presents a result of factor extraction for the composite scale of loyalty formation process with using the domestic sample. A total of 15 factors were extracted from the factor analysis. These 15 factors were produced with the guideline of Eigenvalues >1. The scree plot also showed that the plot falls steeply between the component 15 and 16. Factors of Aesthetics, Importance, and Knowledge were

deleted during the process as the items of these three factors were not loaded together on independent factors, or they were loaded on multiple factors. Three items for the constructs of Manager and three items of Management scale were jointly loaded on a single factor. The three items for the constructs of Manager were: 8) *I like the manager of my favourite team* (MNG1), 10) *The manager of my favourite team does a good job* (MNG3), 11) *My team has an excellent manager* (MNG4). On the other hand, the three of the Management scale were: 15) *The management team of my favourite team does its best to field a good team* (MGM1), 16) *My favourite team's management team does a good job of running the team* (MGM2), 17) *The management team of my team makes wise player personnel decisions* (MGM3). These six items of Manager and Management constructs were retained at this stage because these two constructs could be merged into a new compounded factor (Team Management). This retention of those six items will be further discussed later (section 4.2.2.4).

Overall, as the result of the factor reduction with using the domestic sample, the retained 15 factors were Success, Star Player(s), Manager and Management (Team Management), Logo Design, Product Delivery, Team History, Rivalry, Escape, Socialising, Identification, Peer Group Acceptance, Nostalgia, Pride in Place (or Community), Behavioural Loyalty, and Attitudinal Loyalty. Those 15 factors explained 72.579% of the total variance in the domestic sample data. The appropriateness of this factor analysis was satisfied with a large and significant result of Bartlett's test of sphericity ($X^2 = 9200.232$, $df = 1275$, Sig. $= 0.000$), and a suitable level of Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy (a value of .810). An acceptable degree of a measure of sampling adequacy was also achieved as all the

values on the diagonal line in the anti-image correlation matrix displayed as larger than .50.

Table 4.3: Exploratory Factor Analysis: Factor Extraction - Domestic Sample

Component		Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
		Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	IDT	9.594	18.813	18.813	9.594	18.813	18.813
2	TMG	3.916	7.678	26.490	3.916	7.678	26.490
3	RIV	3.255	6.382	32.872	3.255	6.382	32.872
4	STA	2.577	5.052	37.924	2.577	5.052	37.924
5	PGA	2.448	4.800	42.724	2.448	4.800	42.724
6	PIC	2.254	4.419	47.143	2.254	4.419	47.143
7	ESC	2.226	4.365	51.508	2.226	4.365	51.508
8	SCS	1.757	3.446	54.954	1.757	3.446	54.954
9	PRO	1.650	3.236	58.190	1.650	3.236	58.190
10	ATL	1.418	2.781	60.971	1.418	2.781	60.971
11	BHL	1.358	2.662	63.633	1.358	2.662	63.633
12	LOG	1.247	2.445	66.078	1.247	2.445	66.078
13	SOC	1.193	2.339	68.417	1.193	2.339	68.417
14	HIS	1.123	2.202	70.619	1.123	2.202	70.619
15	NOS	1.000	1.960	72.579	1.000	1.960	72.579

4.2.2.2. Analysis for Success Construct (SCS)

Three items were initially designed for the construct of Success and these items were: 1) *I do not care whether my favourite team wins or loses* (SCS1), 2) *It is very important my favourite team finishes the season securing a European competition place for next year* (SCS2), 3) *It is important that my favourite team competes for league championships* (SCS3).

With the domestic sample, two items (SCS2 and SCS3) were retained for the scale of Success construct. SCS1 was deleted from the composite scale because it was loaded on a different factor. Cronbach's coefficient alpha was used for checking the internal consistency of the scale. The alpha value was .926 which was well above the reference value of .60 (Cronbach's $\alpha > 0.6$). Table 4.4 displays the result.

Table 4.4: Exploratory Factor Analysis: Success Scale

Item Name	Eigenvalue	Cumulative Variance %	Rotated Factor Loading	Cronbach's Alpha	Correlated Item-Total Correlation	Mean Item-Item Correlation
SCS2	1.757	54.954	.923	.926	.863	.863
SCS3			.914		.863	

4.2.2.3. Analysis for Star Player(s) Construct (STA)

The Star Player scale initially consisted of four items: 4) *My favourite team does not have any star players whom I like to watch* (STA1), 5) *I like to watch my favourite team's star players* (STA2), 6) *My favourite team has star players whom I like to watch* (STA3), 7) *If star players that I like to watch are not on the pitch, I am not interested in the match as much* (STA4).

Three items (STA1, STA2, and STA3) of Star Player factor were reserved as measurement items from the result of the factor analysis with using the domestic sample. STA4 was deleted from the composite scale. Cronbach's coefficient alpha was used for testing the reliability. The alpha value of .737 was larger than the cut-off value of .60 (Cronbach's $\alpha > 0.6$). Table 4.5 indicates the result.

Table 4.5: Exploratory Factor Analysis: Star Player(s) Scale

Item Name	Eigenvalue	Cumulative Variance %	Rotated Factor Loading	Cronbach's Alpha	Correlated Item-Total Correlation	Mean Item-Item Correlation
STA1	2.577	37.924	.712	.737	.395	.478
STA2			.772		.664	
STA3			.802		.646	

4.2.2.4. Analysis for Team Management Construct (TMG)

As mentioned earlier, items for the constructs of Manager and Management were loaded jointly on a same component in domestic sample. With using the domestic sample, three items (MNG1, MNG3, and MNG4) for the scale of Manager and three items (MGM1, MGM2, and MGM3) for the measure of Management construct were loaded together in a single factor. As those items were loaded strongly into one factor, it can be considered that they may be combined into a compounded scale.

Conceptually, the two associations of Manager and Management are very close. Both constructs are categorised into product-related attributes of professional sport brands, and are closely associated to the selection and composition of players. As discussed in section 2.8.1.1, a manager and a management team involve in the decision making of hiring players and building the squad of a team. Thus, it may be possible that the items of these two constructs can be used in combination for conceptually explaining a composite scale of 'Team Management'. In order to confirm this possibility of creating a combined construct 'Team Management', further principal factor analysis was conducted on the one factor solution.

With the domestic sample, the six items (MNG1, MNG3, MNG4, MGM1, MGM2, and MGM3) of the construct of Team Management was performed. The suitability

of the factor analysis was acceptable level with a large and significant Bartlett's test of sphericity ($X^2 = 1294.935$, $df = 15$, Sig. = 0.000) and a Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin value of .831. A measure of sampling adequacy was also appropriate level as the values on the diagonal line in the anti-image matrix were all above .05. Those six items of the Team management construct explained 66.137% of the variance in the data of the domestic sample. The result is indicated in Table 4.6.

Table 4.6: Principal Component Analysis: Team Management Scale

Item Name	Eigenvalue	Variance %	Rotated Factor Loading	Cronbach's Alpha	Correlated Item-Total Correlation	Mean Item-Item Correlation
MNG3	3.968	66.137	.875	.884	.789	.591
MGM2			.843		.779	
MNG1			.841		.733	
MNG4			.832		.710	
MGM1			.748		.652	
MGM3			.730		.628	

Table 4.7 displays the factor loadings of the items from the factor analysis of the 15 factors model. Six items of MNG1, MNG3, MNG4, MGM1, MGM2, and MGM3 were statistically retained as the measure of Team Management construct. Item MNG2 (*My favourite team's manager is well known throughout the sport*) were deleted because it was loaded in a different factor. An internal consistency was tested by using Cronbach's coefficient alpha and the alpha value was .884. Because this value was well above the guideline value of .60, the reliability of the scale was acceptable.

Table 4.7: Exploratory Factor Analysis: Team Management Scale

Item Name	Eigenvalue	Cumulative Variance %	Rotated Factor Loading	Cronbach's Alpha	Correlated Item-Total Correlation	Mean Item-Item Correlation
MNG1	3.916	26.490	-.841	.884	.733	.591
MNG3			-.844		.789	
MNG4			-.877		.710	
MGM1			-.653		.652	
MGM2			-.792		.779	
MGM3			-.675		.628	

4.2.2.5. Analysis for Logo Design Construct (LOG)

The Logo Design scale was initially composed of four items which were: 18) *I like the colours of my favourite team* (LOG1), 19) *I like the logo of my favourite team* (LOG2), 20) *The logo of my favourite team is unique* (LOG3), 21) *My favourite team's jersey is attractive* (LOG4).

In the domestic setting, four items (LOG1, LOG2, LOG3, and LOG4) of Logo Design construct were retained as measurement items. An internal consistency was assessed by examining Cronbach's coefficient alpha. The coefficient alpha value of the four items was .720 which was larger than the cut-off value of .60 (Cronbach's α > 0.6). The result of the reliability test showed that those four items for the construct of Logo Design are internally consistent. The result is displayed in Table 4.8.

Table 4.8: Exploratory Factor Analysis: Logo Design Scale

Item Name	Eigenvalue	Cumulative Variance %	Rotated Factor Loading	Cronbach's Alpha	Correlated Item-Total Correlation	Mean Item-Item Correlation
LOG1	1.247	66.078	.598	.720	.397	.409
LOG2			.763		.660	
LOG3			.723		.581	
LOG4			.681		.497	

4.2.2.6. Analysis for Product Delivery Construct (PRO)

Three items were originally designed for the scale of Product Delivery construct. These items were: 22) *My favourite team's games are exciting* (PRO1), 23.) *My favourite team's games are entertaining* (PRO2), 24) *My favourite team's games are enjoyable* (PRO3).

The factor analysis result of Product Delivery construct with using the domestic sample is shown in Table 4.9. All the three items (PRO1, PRO2, and PRO3), which had been inputted as measurement scales, were conserved for the construct. A further internal consistency was inspected by examining Cronbach's coefficient alpha. The coefficient alpha value was .865 and this value was larger than the guideline value of .60 (Cronbach's $\alpha > 0.6$). Thus, the reliability of the scales for the construct was satisfactory.

Table 4.9: Exploratory Factor Analysis: Product Delivery Scale

Item Name	Eigenvalue	Cumulative Variance %	Rotated Factor Loading	Cronbach's Alpha	Correlated Item-Total Correlation	Mean Item-Item Correlation
PRO1	1.650	58.190	-.946	.865	.824	.690
PRO2			-.879		.735	
PRO3			-.830		.689	

4.2.2.7. Analysis for Team History (and Tradition) Construct (HIS)

The initial items for the construct of Team History were: 25) *My favourite team has a history of winning* (HIS1), 26) *My favourite team has a prestigious history* (HIS2), 27) *My favourite team has no history* (HIS3).

Two items (HIS1 and HIS2) were retained for the measurement scale of Team History construct as a result of the factor analysis with using the domestic sample. Item HIS3 was deleted as it was loaded on a different component. A further internal consistency test was performed by using Cronbach's coefficient alpha. The alpha value was .565 which was less than the guideline value of .60 recommended in the literature (Cronbach 1951). However, the construct of Team History with the scale of the two items was reserved. It is suggested that a scale with its coefficient alpha lower than .60 can be kept for a further analysis when the size of the sample is large enough, such as a sample size larger than 200 (Hair et al. 1998, Moon 2009). Because the size of the domestic sample is well above 200 and the alpha value is slightly less than .60, the scale is believed to be appropriate. Moreover, the construct of Team History is deemed to be an important dimension of non-product-related attributes for professional sport brands. Hence, the Team History factor was retained.

Table 4.10: Exploratory Factor Analysis: Team History (and Tradition) Scale

Item Name	Eigenvalue	Cumulative Variance %	Rotated Factor Loading	Cronbach's Alpha	Correlated Item-Total Correlation	Mean Item-Item Correlation
HIS1	1.123	70.619	-.809	.565	.417	.417
HIS2			-.773		.417	

4.2.2.8. Analysis for Rivalry Construct (RIV)

The Rivalry scale initially composed of three items which were: 28) *My team belongs to a competitive league* (RIV1), 29) *My team often beat their biggest opponents* (RIV2), 30) *My team does well against their major rivals* (RIV3).

A result of the Rivalry factor analysis with using the domestic sample is presented in Table 4.11. RIV2 and RIV3 were the items retained for the construct of Rivalry while item RIV1 was removed as it was not loaded on the same factor. Cronbach's coefficient alpha was calculated for examining the reliability and the alpha value was .898. This alpha value was well above the cut-off value of .60 (Cronbach's $\alpha >$ 0.6).

Table 4.11: Exploratory Factor Analysis: Rivalry Scale

Item Name	Eigenvalue	Cumulative Variance %	Rotated Factor Loading	Cronbach's Alpha	Correlated Item-Total Correlation	Mean Item-Item Correlation
RIV2	3.255	32.872	-.945	.898	.815	.815
RIV3			-.946		.815	

4.2.2.9. Analysis for Escape Construct (ESC)

The initial items for the scale of Escape construct were: 31) *Watching, reading, and talking about my favourite team provide a temporary escape from life's problems* (ESC1), 32) *Watching, reading, and talking about my favourite team help me forget day-to-day problems* (ESC2), 33) *Watching, reading, and talking about my favourite team take me away from life's hassles* (ESC3).

With the domestic sample, all the three items (ESC1, ESC2, and ESC3) were statistically retained for the Escape construct. A value of Cronbach's coefficient alpha, as a measure of internal consistency, for the Escape scale was .951. This coefficient alpha value was well above the recommended cut-off value of .60

(Cronbach 1951), thus the reliability of the Escape scale was deemed to be appropriate. This result can be found in Table 4.12.

Table 4.12: Exploratory Factor Analysis: Escape Scale

Item Name	Eigenvalue	Cumulative Variance %	Rotated Factor Loading	Cronbach's Alpha	Correlated Item-Total Correlation	Mean Item-Item Correlation
ESC1	2.226	51.508	-.925	.951	.869	.867
ESC2			-.937		.934	
ESC3			-.904		.890	

4.2.2.10. Analysis for Socialising Construct (SOC)

Overall four items were initially designed for measuring the Socialising construct. These four items were: 34) *My team offers me an opportunity to spend time with friends* (SOC1), 35) *Being a fan of the team is a good way to meet other people* (SOC2), 36) *Many of my friends share my interest in my team* (SOC3), 37) *Supporting my team provides me a topic of conversation with other people* (SOC4).

As displayed in Table 4.13, four items (SOC1, SOC2, SOC3, and SOC4) were reserved for the construct of Socialising in the context of the domestic sample. Cronbach's coefficient alpha was calculated for checking an internal consistency. The alpha value of the Socialising scale was .734 which showed an adequate level of the scale reliability referring the guideline value of .60 (Cronbach 1951).

Table 4.13: Exploratory Factor Analysis: Socialising Scale

Item Name	Eigenvalue	Cumulative Variance %	Rotated Factor Loading	Cronbach's Alpha	Correlated Item-Total Correlation	Mean Item-Item Correlation
SOC1	1.193	68.417	-.715	.734	.643	.402
SOC2			-.693		.580	
SOC3			-.642		.566	
SOC4			-.428		.344	

4.2.2.11. Analysis for Identification Construct (IDT)

The initial items for the scale of the Identification construct consisted of overall six items. These items were: 38) *It is important that my friends see me as a fan of my favourite team* (IDT1), 39) *My friends and family recognise me as a fan of my favourite team* (IDT2), 40) *When someone praises my favourite team, it feels like a compliment* (IDT3), 41) *When I talk about my team, I usually say "we" rather than "they"* (IDT4), 42) *I consider myself a loyal fan of my team* (IDT5), 43) *Supporting my team is very important to me* (IDT6).

With the domestic sample, a total of six items (IDT1, IDT2, IDT3, IDT4, IDT5, and IDT6) were inputted for the factor analysis and all of these six items were retained for the construct of Identification. Cronbach's coefficient alpha was estimated as a test of reliability and the alpha value of .779 were produced. This alpha value was well above the guideline of .60 and meant that the internal consistency of the scale was secured. The result is displayed in Table 4.14.

Table 4.14: Exploratory Factor Analysis: Identification Scale

Item Name	Eigenvalue	Cumulative Variance %	Rotated Factor Loading	Cronbach's Alpha	Correlated Item-Total Correlation	Mean Item-Item Correlation
IDT1	9.594	18.813	.671	.779	.608	.428
IDT2			.556		.553	
IDT3			.619		.600	
IDT4			.587		.504	
IDT5			.532		.525	
IDT6			.594		.642	

4.2.2.12. Analysis for Peer Group Acceptance Construct (PGA)

Overall three items were employed in the factor analysis for the construct of Peer Group Acceptance. These items were: 44) *I began following my favourite team because of my family members or friends* (PGA1), 45) *It is important to follow the same team as my members or friends* (PGA2), 46) *I follow my favourite team because my family members or friends like the same team* (PGA3).

With the domestic samples, all the three items were statistically retained for the Peer Group Acceptance construct. Cronbach's coefficient alpha was utilised for checking the scale reliability. The alpha value of the scale was .837 and the value was sufficiently larger than the range recommended (Cronbach's $\alpha > 0.6$) in the literature. Table 4.15 presents the result of the factor analysis.

Table 4.15: Exploratory Factor Analysis: Peer Group Acceptance Scale

Item Name	Eigenvalue	Cumulative Variance %	Rotated Factor Loading	Cronbach's Alpha	Correlated Item-Total Correlation	Mean Item-Item Correlation
PGA1	2.448	42.724	.827	.837	.650	.646
PGA2			.849		.697	
PGA3			.915		.777	

4.2.2.13. Analysis for Nostalgia Construct (NOS)

The items for the scale of the Nostalgia construct were initially composed of three items which were: 47) *I can vividly remember the excitement of my team's most important moments* (NOS1), 48) *I have fond memories of following my favourite team* (NOS2), 49) *I have fond memories of following my favourite team with friends or family members* (NOS3).

Table 4.16 shows the result of the factor analysis for the construct of Nostalgia with using the domestic sample. Out of three items inputted, two items (NOS1 and NOS2) were retained for the Nostalgia factor. Item NOS3 was deleted because it was not loaded on the same factor. As a result of conducting Cronbach's coefficient alpha, a value of .708 was obtained. Comparing the alpha value with the cut-off level of .60, the internal consistency of the Nostalgia scale was seemed to be appropriate.

Table 4.16: Exploratory Factor Analysis: Nostalgia Scale

Item Name	Eigenvalue	Cumulative Variance %	Rotated Factor Loading	Cronbach's Alpha	Correlated Item-Total Correlation	Mean Item-Item Correlation
NOS1	1.000	72.579	-.790	.708	.570	.570
NOS2			-711		.570	

4.2.2.14. Analysis for Pride in Place (or Community) Construct (PIC)

The Pride in Place scale originally consisted of four items. These items were: 50) *My favourite team helps its residents be proud of where they live* (PIC1), 51) *My favourite team helps elevate the image of its community* (PIC2), 52) *My favourite team brings prestige to the community* (PIC3), 53) *My team unifies the community* (PIC4).

All of the four initially inputted items (PIC1, PIC2, PIC3, and PIC4) for the construct of Pride in Place (or Community) were retained as the scale. A Cronbach's coefficient alpha was estimated in order to check the internal consistency of the scale. The coefficient value of .892 was compared with the acceptable value of .60 (Cronbach's $\alpha > 0.6$) which is recommended in the literature (Cronbach 1951). The reliability of the scale looked sufficient. Table 4.17 contains this result.

Table 4.17: Exploratory Factor Analysis: Pride in Place (or Community) Scale

Item Name	Eigenvalue	Cumulative Variance %	Rotated Factor Loading	Cronbach's Alpha	Correlated Item-Total Correlation	Mean Item-Item Correlation
PIC1	2.254	47.143	-.836	.892	.735	.688
PIC2			-.941		.853	
PIC3			-900		.802	
PIC4			-.790		.690	

4.2.2.15. Analysis for Behavioural Loyalty Construct (BHL)

As discussed earlier (section 4.2.1.1), the construct of Behavioural Loyalty was included only in the model for the domestic sample. The two items of BHL1 and BHL2 were all retained for the Behavioural Loyalty factor. For the purpose of a further reliability test, Cronbach's coefficient alpha was utilised. The alpha value of .671 was obtained and the value was larger than the cut-off level of .60. This result of the Behavioural Loyalty construct is displayed in Table 4.18.

Table 4.18: Exploratory Factor Analysis: Behavioural Loyalty Scale

Item Name	Eigenvalue	Cumulative Variance %	Rotated Factor Loading	Cronbach's Alpha	Correlated Item-Total Correlation	Mean Item-Item Correlation
BHL1	1.358	63.633	.846	.671	.532	.532
BHL2			.801		.532	

4.2.2.16. Analysis for Attitudinal Loyalty Construct (ATL)

As explained in section 4.2.1.2, six items (ATL4, ATL5, ATL6, ATL10, ATL11, and ATL12) were initially inputted for the construct of Attitudinal Loyalty. The result of the factor analysis with using the domestic sample revealed that item ATL4

was not loaded together with the other items. Thus, item ATL4 was deleted and the other five items were retained for the construct of Attitudinal Loyalty. As a method of testing the scale reliability, Cronbach's coefficient alpha was used. A coefficient alpha value of .775 was obtained and the value was compared with the guideline value of .60 (Cronbach's $\alpha > 0.6$). Table 4.19 shows the result.

Table 4.19: Exploratory Factor Analysis: Attitudinal Loyalty Scale

Item Name	Eigenvalue	Cumulative Variance %	Rotated Factor Loading	Cronbach's Alpha	Correlated Item-Total Correlation	Mean Item-Item Correlation
ATL5	1.418	60.971	.670	.775	.573	.491
ATL6			.569		.613	
ATL10			.857		.619	
ATL11			.751		.634	
ATL12			.686		.605	

4.3. Conceptual Model Modification and Hypotheses Alteration in Domestic Consumer Context

The exploratory factor analysis reduced the dimensions of the composite scale to 15 components for the domestic sample. In the domestic sample setting, three factors of Aesthetics, Importance, and Knowledge were deleted in the process of the factor analysis whereas factors of Manager and Management were merged into a compounded factor named Team Management. Due to this factor reduction which had resulted from the exploratory factor analysis process, it was inevitable to modify the conceptual model for domestic consumers.

In the context of domestic consumers, constructs of Importance and Knowledge were removed. As a second order variable of Attitudes was designed to be measured by

those two first order variables (Importance and Knowledge), the second order variable of Attitudes became unable to be tested. Thus, the second order variable of Attitudes was removed from the conceptual model for the domestic consumers.

Instead of Attitudes, the construct of Attitudinal Loyalty was allocated as the consequence of Benefits (Figure 4.1). This change in the conceptual model could be justified as follows. Firstly, because the ultimate purpose of the current research is investigating the process of customers' loyalty formation process towards professional sport brands, locating the variable Attitudinal Loyalty as a consequence of the Benefits variables is believed to be rational. Moreover, in the original conceptual model, the second order variable of Attitudes played a linking role between the Benefits variables and the variable Attitudinal Loyalty. Thus, it is also possible that the Benefits variables may be directly connected to Attitudinal Loyalty variable. Furthermore, this way of setting direct relationships between the variables of Benefits and Attitudinal Loyalty is also found in an existing study. In the research of Bauer et al. (2008), the authors deleted the variable of Attitudes and tested a direct relationship between benefits and attitudinal loyalty. Based on these justifications above, the allocation of Attitudinal Loyalty variable as a consequence of the Benefits variables can be rationalised. The following paragraphs provide further theoretical justifications for the influence of each type of Benefits variables on consumers' attitudinal loyalty.

Firstly, functional benefits are expected to have a positive influence on consumers' attitudinal loyalty. This hypothesised relationship is based on the concept of the utilitarian function of attitudes. Utilitarian function (instrumental or adjustive function) of attitudes reflects a human being's nature of achieving a desired

consequence or avoiding an undesirable end, or satisfying instrumental motives (Katz 1960). As functional benefits are associated with satisfying customers' needs of solving external problems through the brand consumption, such as escaping from daily routine or socialising with others, it can be served by utilitarian functions of attitudes. Thus, consumers who seek to satisfy their instrumental needs through forming attitudes can be influenced by the perceived functional benefits of consuming a brand. Therefore, the hypothesis H7D is modified as below:

H7Dm: In domestic market context, there will be a positive relationship between the perceived functional benefits and attitudinal loyalty.

Secondly, the theoretical basis for the hypothesis regarding the influence of symbolic benefits on consumers' attitudinal loyalty is drawn from the concept of the value-expressive function of attitudes. Katz (Katz 1960, p.173) explains the value-expressive function of attitudes as "the function of giving positive expression to his central values and to the type of person he conceives himself to be". Given that symbolic benefits are associated with an individual's needs of personal expression (identification) and acquiring social approval (peer group acceptance), it is believed that symbolic benefits can be relevant to the loyalty formation of consumers who wish to express their self-image as a result of the brand consumption. Thus, the hypothesis H8D is rephrased as below:

H8Dm: In domestic market context, there will be a positive relationship between the perceived symbolic benefits and attitudinal loyalty.

Lastly, the hypothesised relationship between experiential benefits and attitudinal loyalty is demonstrated by the concept of the utilitarian function of attitudes. Even though the influence of functional benefits on attitudinal loyalty was also explained by the utilitarian nature of attitude formation, experiential benefits' impact on forming attitudinal loyalty is differently characterised because they deal with consumers' internal desire such as cognitive stimulation. Unlike functional benefits which involve in solving consumers' externally oriented problems through brand consumption, experiential benefits concern matters which occurs from consumers' inside such as memory or feeling. Thus, for a consumer who seeks to satisfy his or her intrinsic instrumental needs in professional sport brand consumption, experiential benefits have relevance to the consumer in having a favourable opinion on a professional sport brand he or she follows. Therefore, the hypothesis H9D is modified as below:

H9Dm: In domestic market context, there will be a positive relationship between the perceived experiential benefits and attitudinal loyalty.

Because the second order variables of Attitudes were omitted from the conceptual model, hypotheses H10D and H11D are unable to be tested. Thus, the following hypotheses are deleted:

H10D: In domestic market context, there will be a positive relationship between attitudes and customer's attitudinal loyalty towards a professional sport brand.

H11D: In domestic market context, there will be a positive relationship between attitudes and customer's behavioural loyalty towards a professional sport brand.

Figure 4.1 displays the modified conceptual model for the domestic sample. The list of hypotheses testing in domestic consumer context is presents in Table 4.20.
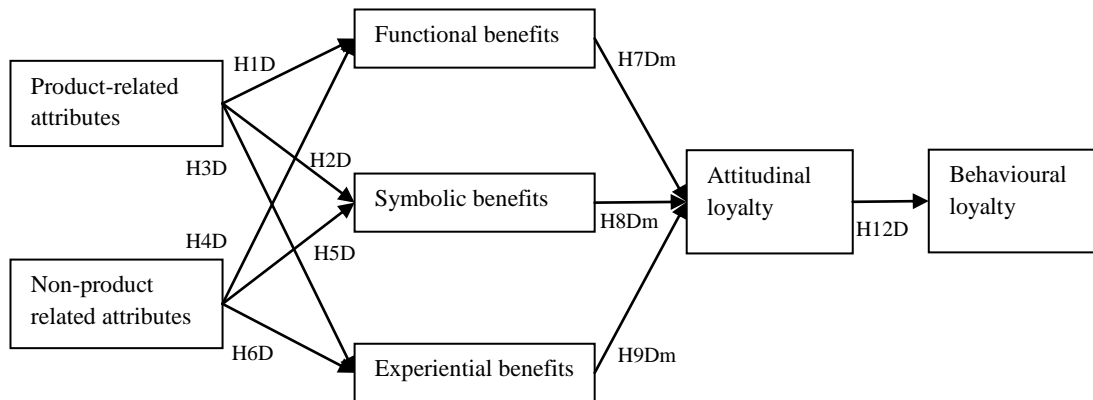
Figure 4.1: Modified Conceptual Model – Domestic Consumer Context

Table 4.20: List of Research Hypotheses - Domestic Consumer Context

Label	Hypotheses
H1D	In domestic market context, there will be a positive relationship between customer's evaluation of product-related attributes and the perceived functional benefits.
H2D	In domestic market context, there will be a positive relationship between customer's evaluation of product-related attributes and the perceived symbolic benefits.
H3D	In domestic market context, there will be a positive relationship between customer's evaluation of product-related attributes and the perceived experiential benefits.
H4D	In domestic market context, there will be a positive relationship between customer's evaluation of non-product-related attributes and the perceived functional benefits.
H5D	In domestic market context, there will be a positive relationship between customer's evaluation of non-product-related attributes and the perceived symbolic benefits.
H6D	In domestic market context, there will be a positive relationship between customer's evaluation of non-product-related attributes and the perceived experiential benefits.
H7Dm	In domestic market context, there will be a positive relationship between the perceived functional benefits and attitudinal loyalty.
H8Dm	In domestic market context, there will be a positive relationship between the perceived symbolic benefits and attitudinal loyalty.
H9Dm	In domestic market context, there will be a positive relationship between the perceived experiential benefits and attitudinal loyalty.
H12D	In domestic market context, there will be a positive relationship between customer's attitudinal loyalty and behavioural loyalty towards a professional sport brand.

4.4. Structural Equation Modelling in Domestic Consumer Context

4.4.1. Measurement Model Testing

The measurement model testing was initially conducted with all the 15 first order variables by using the domestic sample. A total of 51 items which had been retained from the exploratory factor analysis were used for the measurement model. The model fit indices of the initial measurement model indicated values of: CMIN = 2012.023, DF = 1120, CMIN/DF = 1.796, IFI = .893, TLI = .876, CFI = .891, RMSEA = .052, SRMR = .0634. Although CMIN/DF, RMSEA, and SRMR indicated an acceptable fit, IFI, TLI, and CFI fell slightly short of the recommended cut-off level. The result of the initial measurement model is displayed in Table 4.21.

Table 4.21: Measurement Model Fit – Domestic Sample

Model Estimated	CMIN	DF	CMIN/DF	IFI	TLI	CFI	RMSEA	SRMR
Initial Model	2012.023	1120	1.796	.893	.876	.891	.052	.0634
Final Model	1375.155	798	1.723	.924	.908	.922	.050	.0615

Table 4.22: Correlations between Constructs following CFA - Domestic sample

	SCS	STA	TMG	LOG	PRO	HIS	RIV	ESC	SOC	IDT	PGA	NOS	PIC	BHL
STA	.416													
TMG	-.022	.125												
LOG	.091	.226	.208											
PRO	.010	.190	.435	.398										
HIS	.174	.187	.406	.312	.393									
RIV	-.026	.066	.103	.126	.154	.183								
ESC	.054	.139	.152	.190	.231	.152	.136							
SOC	-.075	.161	.085	.409	.311	.140	.295	.500						
IDT	.162	.207	.334	.290	.300	.324	.069	.389	.320					
PGA	.012	.048	-.139	.007	-.120	-.101	-.015	.091	.160	-.027				
NOS	.083	.177	.319	.343	.362	.344	.060	.332	.299	.463	-.017			
PIC	.051	.180	.305	.350	.236	.242	.157	.282	.343	.302	-.027	.345		
BHL	.059	.214	.277	.249	.196	.193	.006	.187	.258	.478	.019	.465	.205	
ATL	.065	.299	.328	.257	.271	.393	.021	.195	.183	.608	-.095	.388	.153	.492

In order to achieve better model fit, further refinement of scales was carried out. First of all, an item with a low regression weight (<.40) was deleted. The result of initial measurement model test (confirmatory factor analysis) showed that one item (STA1) of the Star Player variable indicated a regression weight of .381. This regression weight value, which was smaller than .40, means that item STA1 did not explain the variable Star Player well enough. Thus, this item STA1 was dropped from future analysis. Secondly, an item with a relatively small factor loading (<.50) was considered for deletion. Items LOG3, SOC4, and ATL5 demonstrated factor loadings which were smaller than .50 with showing .498, .487, and .452 respectively. Because the regression weights of these items were larger than the threshold value

of .40, each of the three items was removed one at a time and the model fit outcomes resulted from each turn were checked against the guidelines. As a result, it was found that the model fit was sufficiently increased when the three items had been deleted. Therefore, those items were omitted from future analysis. Lastly, after the deletion of the four items (STA1, LOG3, SOC4, and ATL5), the factor loading item LOG2 indicated a relatively small factor loading of .469. Items LOG1 and LOG4 which are the other two items of the Logo Design variable showed regression weights of .708 and .876 respectively. As the factor loading of the item LOG2 was too small comparing with those of the other two items LOG1 and LOG4, the item LOG2 was also removed from future analysis.

Table 22 shows the correlations between the constructs of the brand associations and loyalty in the domestic consumer setting. Examination of the correlation matrix revealed acceptable discriminant validity amongst the 15 factors. As there was no correlation above .800, a problem with extreme multicollinearity and singularity within the data was not observed (Field 2009). From the correlations between the constructs, the highest correlation was between the team identification and attitudinal loyalty factors (.608). On the other hand, the highest correlation from the correlations between the brand association constructs was the one between the escape and socialising factors (.500). Construct reliability and AVE were calculated for those 15 factors. Construct reliabilities was established as the values were larger than .50. The AVE for each construct was above .50, except two constructs of Identification and History. Two items of IDT1 and IDT2 which indicated relatively smaller factor loadings amongst the items of Identification construct were omitted in order to better the AVE value. As a result, the AVE value of Identification construct

satisfied the guideline (>.50). On the other hand, the AVE value (.45) of History variable was smaller than .50. However, because the construct had only two items the value could not be improved by removing an item. As this construct was thought to be an important element of professional sport brands' non-product-related attributes and it was also included in the conceptual model of overseas consumer context, deleting the construct was not a preferable option. Moreover, they marginally missed out the guideline. Thus, the items of History construct were kept for further analysis.

The standard regression weights, t-values (C.R.), significance levels, construct reliabilities, and AVE of the final measurement model are displayed in Table 4.23. The standard regression weights of the items used in the measurement model test showed the items properly explained the variables in the analysis. Construct reliability and convergent validity of the constructs were considered to be acceptable. Discriminant validity was supported because the AVE values of the constructs were greater than the squared correlation coefficient between constructs. All of the 15 variables were statistically significant at the level of .001, as the t-values and p – levels are evidenced in Table 4.23.

Table 4.23: Measurement Model Estimates – Domestic Sample

Construct	Items	Standardised Regression Weights	C. R.	*p* level	Construct Reliability	AVE
Success	SCS2	.999			.93	.87
	SCS3	.865	29.207	<0.001		
Star Player	STA2	.933			.86	.75
	STA3	.792	10.470	<0.001		
Team Management	MNG1	.835			.89	.58
	MNG3	.886	18.697	<0.001		
	MNG4	.871	18.233	<0.001		
	MGM1	.637	11.729	<0.001		
	MGM2	.733	14.153	<0.001		
	MGM3	.546	9.713	<0.001		
Logo Design	LOG4	.858			.77	.63
	LOG1	.720	8.227	<0.001		
Product Delivery	PRO3	.733			.89	.73
	PRO2	.882	14.928	<0.001		
	PRO1	.933	15.322	<0.001		
History	HIS1	.675			.62	.45
	HIS2	.661	6.196	<0.001		
Rivalry	RIV3	.984			.89	.82
	RIV2	.814	7.345	<0.001		
Escape	ESC3	.945			.96	.90
	ESC2	.995	43.000	<0.001		
	ESC1	.896	28.066	<0.001		
Socialising	SOC1	.813			.78	.55
	SOC2	.704	11.052	<0.001		
	SOC3	.700	11.006	<0.001		
Identification	IDT3	.547			.79	.50
	IDT4	.520	6.989	<0.001		
	IDT5	.830	9.228	<0.001		
	IDT6	.853	9.308	<0.001		
Peer Group Acceptance	PGA3	.920			.86	.67
	PGA2	.843	15.399	<0.001		
	PGA1	.678	12.432	<0.001		
Nostalgia	NOS1	.714			.81	.68
	NOS2	.924	9.704	<0.001		
Pride in Place	PIC4	.703			.90	.70
	PIC3	.878	14.169	<0.001		
	PIC2	.943	14.925	<0.001		
	PIC1	.808	13.102	<0.001		
Behavioural Loyalty	BHL1	.798			.74	.59
	BHL2	.732	8.367	<0.001		
Attitudinal Loyalty	ATL6	.594			.81	.53
	ATL10	.878	10.501	<0.001		
	ATL11	.831	10.298	<0.001		
	ATL12	.536	7.612	<0.001		

Following the refinement process, a measurement model test was conducted again with 44 items for the 15 constructs. The model fit measures of the final measurement

model displayed values of: CMIN = 1375.155, DF = 798, CMIN/DF = 1.723, IFI = .924, TLI = .908, CFI = .922, RMSEA = .050, SRMR = .0615. All the model fit indices showed a good fit with IFI, TLI, and CFI values are all greater than the guideline (>.90). Thus, this measurement model was chosen for future analysis. The result of the final measurement model fit is shown in Table 4.21.

4.4.2 Structural Model Testing

The structural model testing was conducted with using the domestic sample in order to test the hypothesised relationships amongst the five second order variables (product-related attributes, non-product-related attributes, functional benefits, symbolic benefits, and experiential benefits) and the two loyalty variables (behavioural and attitudinal). The model fit of the initial structural model is displayed in Table 4.24. CMIN/DF of the initial structural model was 1.779 which was below the cut-off level of 2.0. The RMSEA value of .052 and the SRMR value of .0717 demonstrated an acceptable model fit. IFI, TLI, and CFI of the hypothesised model were .893, .885, and .892 respectively. Because these values of IFI, TLI, and CFI did not reach the cut-off threshold narrowly, modification was necessary to improve the model fit. In order to achieve a better model fit, the modification index of the structural model was consulted.

Before proceeding to the modification using the modification index, it is important to notice that modification indices do not provide any theoretical justification but only suggest statistical information based on the data. Hence, it has been emphasised in

literature that any modification of a structural model by using modification indices has to be justified theoretically.

In this structural model, a covariance was set up between error terms e52 and e53 based on the modification index (M.I. = 66.974, Per Change = .026). The error term e52 represented the error of an observable variable ATL10 and the error term e53 indicated the error of an observable item ATL11. This setting up of the covariance between the error terms e52 and e53 can be justified by the type of the questions. Both of the items were negatively worded in the questionnaire. ATL10 was "*I could never switch my loyalty from my favourite team even if my close friends were fans of another team*" and ATL11 was "*It would be unlikely for me to change my allegiance from my current favourite team to another*".

A model fit test of a new structural model with having the covariance between error terms e52 and e53 was executed. The modified structural model showed an improved model fit with values of: CMIN = 1854.289, DF = 1106, CMIN/DF = 1.677, IFI = .907, TLI = .900, CFI = .906, RMSEA = .048, SRMR = .0685. RMSEA indicated a very good fit of the model and the other model fit indices were all satisfied the acceptable levels. Therefore, it can be said that the structural model has an acceptable level of good model fit. The detailed indices of the initial hypothesised model and the final structural model are shown in Table 4.24.

Table 4.24: Structural Model Fit – Domestic Sample

Model Estimated	CMIN	DF	CMIN/DF	IFI	TLI	CFI	RMSEA	SRMR
Initial Model	1969.036	1107	1.779	.893	.885	.892	.052	.0717
Final Model	1854.289	1106	1.677	.907	.900	.906	.048	.0685

4.4.3. Results of the Hypotheses Tested

This sub-section describes the tests of the hypotheses relationships in the process of structural equation modelling (SEM). The result of the hypotheses test from the structural model in domestic market context is displayed in Table 4.25.

Before it proceed to detail the results of the hypotheses tests, there is an issue should be noted. As it can be noticed from the table 4.25, some of the standardised path coefficients are shown to be greater than 1 in the absolute value which might be seen as unusual for coefficient β. There are some previous works on dealing with the standardised coefficient which exceeds ±1. These existing studies show that standardised coefficient can be legitimately larger than one in magnitude for any structural coefficient in any structural model, unless it is in the case of simple regression (Deegan 1978, Jöreskog 1999). Deegan (1978, p.882) notes that "while standardized regression coefficient are analogous to correlation coefficients, they are *not* correlations (or partial correlations), they are rates of change" and thus "standardized regression coefficients are not numerically bounded by ± 1, as are correlation coefficients, except in the simple regression case...". It is suggested that the presence of multicollinearity in the data can be suspected as a possible reason for the occurrence of standardised path coefficient greater than 1 in the absolute value (Deegan 1978, Jöreskog 1999).

Given that the model was produced through the procedures of exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses which were satisfactory, the possible presence of multicollinearity was an unexpected issue. This issue seems to be caused by the use of a higher order model. Because the model uses second order variables which utilise first order variables as their indicators, multicollinearity might exist amongst the

second order variables. As an effort to resolve this issue, the current research divided the model into three stages (e.g. attributes, benefits, and loyalty parts) and conducted confirmatory factor analyses for each stage separately. However, this alternative way of confirmatory factor analysis produced a same structure to the original one. On the other hand, a similar issue occurs in the data analysis with using the overseas sample. The alternative way of confirmatory factor analysis was also attempted with the overseas data but the result was same. It looks that this issues is unavoidable in the current design of the models. According to the previous studies, as the presence of multicollinearity does not cause bias in estimated coefficient and does not affect the predictability of the model, the result should be reported and interpreted directly as same as other rates of change (Deegan 1978, Jöreskog 1999). Thus, taking this suggestion of the previous studies on this issue, the current research reports the results and interprets the rates of change directly. This issue will be further discussed at the limitation of the research in Chapter 6.

Table 4.25: Hypotheses Test – Domestics Consumer Context

Hypothesis		B	β	C. R.	p level
H1D	Product-related Attributes → Functional Benefits	-14.689	-3.191	1.360	.174
H2D	Product-related Attributes → Symbolic Benefits	-5.647	-1.221	-1.221	.222
H3D	Product-related Attributes → Experiential Benefits	-2.488	-1.108	-1.101	.271
H4D	Non-product-related Attributes → Functional Benefits	9.556	3.689	2.032	.042
H5D	Non-product-related Attributes → Symbolic Benefits	4.720	1.814	2.191	.028
H6D	Non-product-related Attributes → Experiential Benefits	2.519	1.994	2.278	.023
H7Dm	Functional Benefits → Attitudinal Loyalty	-.183	-.344	-2.140	.032
H8Dm	Symbolic Benefits → Attitudinal Loyalty	.333	.630	5.019	<0.001
H9Dm	Experiential Benefits → Attitudinal Loyalty	.580	.532	3.097	.002
H12D	Attitudinal Loyalty → Behavioural Loyalty	.797	.614	6.241	<0.001

4.4.3.1. Relationships between Product-Related Attributes and Benefits

Relationships between product-related attributes and the three types of benefits (functional, symbolic, and attitudinal) were posited as the hypotheses H1D, H2D, and H3D in domestic consumers setting. Firstly, H1D posited that domestic consumers' evaluation of product-related attributes positively influences the consumers' perceived functional benefits. Secondly, H2D posited that domestic consumers' evaluation of product-related attributes positively affects their perceived symbolic benefits. Lastly, H3D posited that domestic consumers' perceived experiential benefits are positively influenced by their evaluations of product-related attributes. However, these three hypotheses were statistically insignificant at a level of P < 0.05. The SEM results showed the significances of: H1D with a t value of

1.360, H2D with a t value of -1.221, H3D with a t value of -1.101. Therefore, the SEM results do not support these three hypotheses.

4.4.3.2. Relationships between Non-Product-Related Attributes and Benefits

Relationships between non-product-related attributes and the three types of benefits (functional, symbolic, and attitudinal) were hypothesised as H4D, H5D, and H6D in the domestic market setting. H4D posited that domestic consumers' evaluation of non-product-related attributes positively affects their perceived functional benefits. The SEM results provides support for this hypothesis, with the estimated coefficient B of .9556 (β = 3.689) and t value of 2.032 which represented a statistical significance of $p < 0.05$. H5D posited that domestic consumers' evaluation of non-product-related attributes has a positive influence on the consumers' perceived symbolic benefits. The estimated coefficient B of 4.720 (β = 1.814) with a t value of 2.191 was statistically significant at a level of $p < 0.05$. Thus, the hypothesis H5D is supported by the SEM results. H6D posited that domestic consumers' perceived experiential benefits are positively influenced by their evaluation of non-product-related attributes. The SEM result of an estimated coefficient B of 2.519 (β = 1.994) with a t value of 2.278 display a statistical significance at a level of $p < 0.05$. Therefore, the SEM results support the hypothesis H6D.

4.4.3.3. Relationships between Benefits and Attitudinal Loyalty

H7Dm, H8Dm, and H9Dm hypothesised the positive influence of the three types of benefits (Functional, symbolic, and experiential) on attitudinal loyalty in domestic

consumer setting. Firstly, H7Dm posited that domestic consumers' perceived functional benefits positively influence their attitudinal loyalty. The estimated coefficient B of -.183 (β = -.344), with a t value of -2.140, was statistically significant at a level of $p < 0.05$. However, the relationship between the two constructs indicated a negative influence. Thus, the SEM results do not support this hypothesis. Secondly, H8Dm posited that domestic consumers' perceived symbolic benefits have positive influence on their attitudinal loyalty. The SEM results show very strong support for this hypothesis. The estimated coefficient B of .333 (β = .630) with a t value of 5.019, highly significant at $p < 0.001$, provided evidence for the hypothesis. Lastly, H9Dm posited that domestic consumers' attitudinal loyalty is positively affected by their evaluation of experiential benefits. The estimated coefficient B of .580 (β = .532), with a t value of 3.097, was highly significant at $p < 0.01$. The SEM results provide strong support for this hypothesis.

4.4.3.4. Relationship between Attitudinal Loyalty and Behavioural Loyalty

As mentioned in an earlier section (section 4.3), the relationship between attitudinal loyalty and behavioural loyalty was tested with the domestic sample only. Hypothesis H12D posited that domestic consumers' attitudinal loyalty positively influences their behavioural loyalty. This hypothesis is very strongly supported by the SEM results. The estimated coefficient B of .797 (β = .614), with a t value of 6.241, statistically very highly significant at $p < 0.001$, provided evidence for the hypothesis H12D.

4.5. Factor Analysis in Overseas Consumer Context

The exploratory factor analysis using the domestic sample produced a 15-factor composite scale which contains 13 constructs of brand associations and two dimensions of loyalty (attitudinal and behavioural). As mentioned previously, factor analysis process is also necessary using the overseas sample in order to validate the original scale in overseas consumer context and verify whether the underlying dimensions of the scale is same as those in domestic market setting. This section details the results of the factor analysis using overseas consumer sample. In the same way the domestic results of factor analysis were presented in section 4.2, the overseas results of the factor analysis will be provided including principal component analysis for loyalty constructs and exploratory factor analysis of the composite scale.

4.5.1. Principal Component Analysis for Loyalty Constructs

4.5.1.1. Behavioural Loyalty

In the overseas sample setting, a principal components analysis was also conducted with the three behavioural loyalty items (BHL1, BHL2, and BHL3). As shown in section 4.2.1.1, the frequency of purchasing the club's merchandise goods (BHL3) was eliminated and the other two items (BHL1 and BHL2) were retained in domestic consumer context.

The result of factor analysis using the overseas sample indicated that the suitability of factor analysis was adequate with a large and significant Bartlett's test of sphericity ($X^2 = 57.172$, $df = 3$, Sig. $= 0.000$) and a Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin value of .604.

A measure of sampling adequacy was also acceptable because the anti-image correlation matrix displayed that the values on the diagonal line were all greater than .05.

The combination of those three items for the construct of behavioural loyalty explained 52.529% of the variance in the data of the overseas sample. An internal consistency test was assessed by estimating Cronbach's coefficient alpha. However, the alpha value of .458 was below the recommended cut-off level of .60 (Cronbach's $\alpha > 0.6$). The result of reliability assessment showed that the scale could not be further improved enough even if any of the items is deleted. Since the internal consistency of the scale was too low to be accepted, the construct of behavioural loyalty was removed from the consideration for the modelling.

Table 4.26: Principal Component Analysis: Behavioural Loyalty Scale

Item Name	Eigenvalue	Variance %	Rotated Factor Loading	Cronbach's Alpha	Correlated Item-Total Correlation	Mean Item-Item Correlation
BHL2	1.576	52.529	.782	.458	.414	.286
BHL1			.700		.287	
BHL3			.689		.292	

4.5.1.2. Attitudinal Loyalty

As a result of the principal component analysis of the attitudinal loyalty items with using the overseas sample, items ATL4, ATL5, ATL6, ATL10, ATL11, and ATL12 were statistically retained as the scale of the construct. The result of Bartlett's test of sphericity ($X^2 = 523.120$, $df = 15$, Sig. = 0.000) was significant and the outcome of

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy was also acceptable level with a value of .826. The anti-image correlation matrix showed that the values on the diagonal line in the matrix were all greater than .50. Thus, the result of a measure of sampling adequacy test was satisfactory.

The combination of those six items for the attitudinal loyalty construct explained 55.253% of the variance in the overseas sample data. Reliability of the scale was assessed using Cronbach's coefficient alpha as a test of internal consistency. The alpha value of .830 was checked against the acceptable level. This value of coefficient alpha was greater than .60 (Cronbach 1951). The internal consistency of the scale was fine enough.

In addition, this combination of items for the construct of attitudinal loyalty produced from the principal component analysis were same as the result in domestic context which also produced the set of items ATL4, ATL5, ATL6, ATL10, ATL11, and ATL12. These comprised of six items are utilised as the scale for the construct of attitudinal loyalty in a further analysis.

Table 4.27: Principal Component Analysis: Attitudinal Loyalty Scale

Item Name	Eigenvalue	Variance %	Rotated Factor Loading	Cronbach's Alpha	Correlated Item-Total Correlation	Mean Item-Item Correlation
ATL6	3.315	55.253	.790	.830	.677	.462
ATL5			.757		.627	
ATL10			.753		.608	
ATL4			.743		.611	
ATL11			.720		.587	
ATL12			.694		.561	

4.5.2. Exploratory Factor Analysis of the Composite Scale

4.5.2.1. Factor Reduction

Exploratory factor analysis in overseas market setting was conducted with 18 first order constructs of the composite scale for the conceptualisation of customer's loyalty formation process towards professional sport brands. The 18 first order constructs consisted of 17 factors of brand associations and attitudinal dimension of brand loyalty. The 17 factors of brand associations were composed of Success, Star Player(s), Manager, Aesthetics, Management, Logo Design, Product Delivery, Team History, Rivalry, Escape, Socialising, Identification, Peer Group Acceptance, Nostalgia, Pride in Place (or Community), Importance, and Knowledge. The factor analysis was conducted with using overseas samples.

A result of factor extraction for the composite scale of loyalty formation process with using the overseas sample is displayed in Table 4.28. The factor analysis extracted a total of 14 factors. For this factor reduction, both scree plot and Eigenvalues were used as references. Although 11 components indicated with Eigenvalue >1, the Eigenvalue of factor 12 was very close to 1, and a relatively steep slope on the scree plot was found after component 14. Moreover, the factor extraction corresponded to the theoretically produced factors with 14 factors model rather than 11 or 12 factors models. Thus, 14 factors extraction was used while factors of Aesthetics, Importance, Knowledge, and Behavioural Loyalty were removed. The deletion of these four factors was conducted because the items of these four factors were not loaded together on separate factors, or they were loaded on

multiple factors at the same time. Similar to the result from the domestic sample, the items for the constructs of Manager (MNG3 and MNG4) and Management (MGM1, MGM2, and MGM3) were conjointly loaded on a same factor with using the overseas sample. In the same manner as the case of the domestic sample, the five items of those two constructs were retained at this step for the purpose of being used for producing a compounded construct, Team Management. The justification of this creation of Team Management construct will be addressed later (section 4.5.2.4).

In sum, the factor analysis with using the overseas sample produced 14 factors which were Success, Star Player(s), Team Management (Manager and Management), Logo Design, Product Delivery, Team History, Rivalry, Escape, Socialising, Identification, Peer Group Acceptance, Nostalgia, Pride in Place (or Community), and Attitudinal Loyalty. 75.005% of the variance in the data was explained by those 14 factors. The factor analysis presented that the suitability of factor analysis was acceptable with a large and significant Bartlett's test of sphericity (X^2 = 6447.006, df = 990, Sig. = 0.000) and a Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin value of .817. The anti-image correlation matrix showed that the values on the diagonal line in the matrix were all larger than .05. This result of a measure of sampling adequacy test indicates that the adequacy was appropriate.

Table 4.28: Exploratory Factor Analysis: Factor Extraction – Overseas Sample

Component		Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
		Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	ATL	10.075	22.389	22.389	10.075	22.389	22.389
2	TMG	3.859	8.576	30.965	3.859	8.576	30.965
3	PIC	2.895	6.433	37.398	2.895	6.433	37.398
4	SCS	2.635	5.855	43.253	2.635	5.855	43.253
5	PGA	2.242	4.982	48.235	2.242	4.982	48.235
6	ESC	1.873	4.162	52.397	1.873	4.162	52.397
7	RIV	1.773	3.941	56.338	1.773	3.941	56.338
8	PRO	1.693	3.761	60.100	1.693	3.761	60.100
9	IDT	1.544	3.432	63.532	1.544	3.432	63.532
10	LOG	1.239	2.754	66.286	1.239	2.754	66.286
11	NOS	1.116	2.481	68.767	1.116	2.481	68.767
12	SOC	.993	2.207	70.974	.993	2.207	70.974
13	STA	.918	2.041	73.014	.918	2.041	73.014
14	HIS	.896	1.990	75.005	.896	1.990	75.005

4.5.2.2. Analysis for Success Construct (SCS)

The three items (SCS1, SCS2, and SCS3) for the construct of Success were employed for the factor analysis. Previously, it was shown that items SCS2 and SCS3 were retained for the measurement, whereas item SCS1 was dropped in the domestic consumer context

In the overseas setting, items SCS2 and SCS3 were also obtained for the measure of Success construct. SCS1 was removed from the composites scale as it was loaded on another factor. Thus, item SCS1 was not included in both domestic and overseas consumer context. In order to check the reliability of the scale, Cronbach's alpha was assessed. The coefficient alpha value of .837 showed a satisfactory level of internal consistency (Cronbach's $\alpha > 0.6$). The result is also presented in Table 4.29.

Table 4.29: Exploratory Factor Analysis: Success Scale

Item Name	Eigenvalue	Cumulative Variance %	Rotated Factor Loading	Cronbach's Alpha	Correlated Item-Total Correlation	Mean Item-Item Correlation
SCS2	2.635	43.253	.871	.837	.724	.724
SCS3			.921		.724	

4.5.2.3. Analysis for Star Player(s) Construct (STA)

As shown in section 4.2.2.3, three items (STA1, STA2, and STA3) out of the initial four items were retained as the items for the construct of Star Player in domestic consumer context. The four original items for the construct were initially used for the factor analysis in overseas market setting.

With the overseas sample, two items (STA2 and STA3) were retained for the scale of Star Player construct. In addition to item STA4 which was also deleted in overseas consumer context, item STA1 was removed in overseas consumer setting. Both of the items (STA1 and STA4) were removed from the scale as they were not loaded on a same component. For the purpose of examining the internal consistency, Cronbach's coefficient alpha was utilised. The value of coefficient alpha was .881 which was greater than the guideline value of .60 (Cronbach's $\alpha > 0.6$). The result is shown in Table 4.30.

Table 4.30: Exploratory Factor Analysis: Star Player(s) Scale

Item Name	Eigenvalue	Cumulative Variance %	Rotated Factor Loading	Cronbach's Alpha	Correlated Item-Total Correlation	Mean Item-Item Correlation
STA2	.918	73.014	-.813	.881	.789	.789
STA3			-.773		.789	

4.5.2.4. Analysis for Team Management Construct (TMG)

Similar to the result from the factor analysis using the domestic sample, items for the constructs of Manager and Management were loaded jointly on a same dimension in overseas sample. In the context of the overseas sample, two items (MNG3 and MNG4) for the scale of Manager and three items (MGM1, MGM2, and MGM3) for the measure of Management construct were loaded conjointly in a single component. In the same sense with the domestic factor analysis, the strong loadings of those items into one factor suggest that they may be combined into a compounded scale. Thus, on the basis of the same justification that used in domestic market setting (section 4.2.2.4), the two constructs (Manager and Management) were merged into a combined construct of Team Management. As a result, those five items of the two constructs were utilised as a composite scale of Team Management construct. The following paragraph details the principal factor analysis of the combined scale for measuring Team Management construct for the purpose of verifying the combined scale in overseas consumer context.

A principal component analysis was conducted with the five items (MNG3, MNG4, MGM1, MGM2, and MGM3) for the Team Management construct in the context of the overseas sample. The factorability was appropriate as the result of Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant ($X^2 = 600.770$, $df = 10$, Sig. $= 0.000$). Moreover, the outcome of Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy was also satisfactory level with a value of .786. Because the anti-image matrix indicated that the values on the diagonal line in the matrix were all larger than .50, the result of a measure of sampling adequacy was acceptable. The combination of those five items for the

construct of Team Management explained 65.069% of the variance in the overseas data.

Table 4.31: Principal Component Analysis: Team Management Scale

Item Name	Eigenvalue	Variance %	Rotated Factor Loading	Cronbach's Alpha	Correlated Item-Total Correlation	Mean Item-Item Correlation
MGM2	3.253	65.069	.852	.857	.749	.561
MNG4			.849		.727	
MNG3			.828		.700	
MGM3			.754		.624	
MGM1			.743		.611	

The result of factor analysis of the items for the Team Management construct in the 14 factors model is shown in Table 4.32. Five items (MNG3, MNG4, MGM1, MGM2, and MGM3) were retained as they were loaded into a same factor, while items of MNG1 and MNG2 were removed because they were not loaded in the factor. Cronbach's coefficient alpha was calculated in terms of testing reliability. The coefficient alpha value of .857 was greater than the cut-off value of .60 which was recommended in the literature (Cronbach 1951). Thus, the internal consistency of the scale was acceptable.

Table 4.32: Exploratory Factor Analysis: Team Management Scale

Item Name	Eigenvalue	Cumulative Variance %	Rotated Factor Loading	Cronbach's Alpha	Correlated Item-Total Correlation	Mean Item-Item Correlation
MNG3	3.859	30.965	.801	.857	.700	.561
MNG4			.842		.727	
MGM1			.708		.611	
MGM2			.798		.749	
MGM3			.679		.624	

4.5.2.5. Analysis for Logo Design Construct (LOG)

All of the initial four items for the construct of Logo Design were retained in the domestic consumer context (section 4.2.2.5). The initial four items were employed for the factor analysis with using the overseas sample.

Table 4.33 shows the result of factor analysis of the items for the construct of Logo Design in the overseas context. The retained items (LOG1, LOG2, LOG3, and LOG4) for the construct were identical to those reserved from the domestic sample. Cronbach's coefficient alpha was used for checking a further internal consistency. The alpha value of .747 was checked against the acceptable level (Cronbach's $\alpha >$ 0.6). As the value was greater than .60, the homogeneity of the scale was adequate.

Table 4.33: Exploratory Factor Analysis: Logo Design Scale

Item Name	Eigenvalue	Cumulative Variance %	Rotated Factor Loading	Cronbach's Alpha	Correlated Item-Total Correlation	Mean Item-Item Correlation
LOG1	1.239	66.286	.736	.747	.608	.444
LOG2			.722		.638	
LOG3			.557		.430	
LOG4			.809		.537	

4.5.2.6. Analysis for Product Delivery Construct (PRO)

Previously, the result of the factor analysis with using the domestic sample indicated that all the three items for Product Delivery construct were reserved (section 4.2.2.6). The three original items were used initially for the process of the factor reduction in overseas consumer context.

With the overseas sample, the three items (PRO1, PRO2, and PRO3) were all retained for the construct of Product Delivery. This result was identical to the outcome of the factor analysis in domestic consumer setting. Cronbach's coefficient alpha was also used for testing an internal consistency. The alpha value was .885 and the reliability was secured. The cut-off level of .60, which was suggested by the literature (Cronbach 1951), was used as the reference value. The result is indicated in Table 4.34.

Table 4.34: Exploratory Factor Analysis: Product Delivery Scale

Item Name	Eigenvalue	Cumulative Variance %	Rotated Factor Loading	Cronbach's Alpha	Correlated Item-Total Correlation	Mean Item-Item Correlation
PRO1	1.693	60.100	-775	.885	.785	.724
PRO2			-.889		.805	
PRO3			-.811		.747	

4.5.2.7. Analysis for Team History (and Tradition) Construct (HIS)

In section 4.2.2.7, it was shown that two items HIS1 and HIS2 out of the initial three items were conserved for the scale for Team History construct in domestic market context. The initial three items were inputted to the factor reduction process using the overseas sample.

A result produced in the overseas context was identical to the outcome from the domestic sample. Two items (HIS1 and HIS2) were retained for the construct of Team History. Item HIS3 was removed because it was not loaded on the same factor with the other two items. Cronbach's coefficient alpha was used for checking the

internal consistency and the alpha value was .725. This coefficient value was above the acceptable level of .60 (Cronbach's α > 0.6). The result is displayed in Table 4.35.

Table 4.35: Exploratory Factor Analysis: Team History (and Tradition) Scale

Item Name	Eigenvalue	Cumulative Variance %	Rotated Factor Loading	Cronbach's Alpha	Correlated Item-Total Correlation	Mean Item-Item Correlation
HIS1	.896	75.005	.668	.725	.572	.572
HIS2			.717		.572	

4.5.2.8. Analysis for Rivalry Construct (RIV)

It was shown that, in domestic market setting, two items of RIV2 and RIV3 were loaded on the construct of Rivalry, whereas the other item RIV1 was not loaded on the same factor with those two items. Three items were initially utilised for the factor analysis in the overseas consumer setting. The result form the overseas sample was same as that from the domestic sample.

Two items of RIV2 and RIV3 were also loaded on the Rivalry factor as a result of factor analysis with using the overseas sample. RIV1 was deleted from the scale as it was loaded on a different component. An internal consistency was assessed by examining the Cronbach's coefficient alpha of the scale. The alpha value of the Rivalry scale was .835 which was larger than the satisfactory level of .60 recommended in the literature (Cronbach 1951). Table 4.36 shows the result.

Table 4.36: Exploratory Factor Analysis: Rivalry Scale

Item Name	Eigenvalue	Cumulative Variance %	Rotated Factor Loading	Cronbach's Alpha	Correlated Item-Total Correlation	Mean Item-Item Correlation
RIV2	1.773	56.338	.870	.835	.719	.719
RIV3			.766		.719	

4.5.2.9. Analysis for Escape Construct (ESC)

All the initial three items for the scale of Escape construct were retained in the domestic consumer context (section 4.2.2.9). For the factor analysis using the overseas sample, those four initial items were employed. Table 4.37 represents the result of this factor analysis in the overseas consumer context.

Similar to the result from the domestic sample, three items (ESC1, ESC2, and ESC3) were all loaded on a same component in the overseas setting. A reliability test (Cronbach's coefficient alpha) showed that the measurement of the Escape scale in internally consistent with resulting the coefficient alpha value of .922 (Cronbach's α > 0.6).

Table 4.37: Exploratory Factor Analysis: Escape Scale

Item Name	Eigenvalue	Cumulative Variance %	Rotated Factor Loading	Cronbach's Alpha	Correlated Item-Total Correlation	Mean Item-Item Correlation
ESC1	1.873	52.397	.898	.922	.796	.798
ESC2			.943		.897	
ESC3			.920		.839	

4.5.2.10. Analysis for Socialising Construct (SOC)

As shown previously in section 4.3.3.10, the result of the factor reduction with using the domestic sample indicated all the four items were conserved for the Socialising factor. Those four factors were initially utilised for the construct in the factor analysis using the overseas sample.

With the overseas sample, all the four items (SOC1, SOC2, SOC3, and SOC4) were also retained for the Socialising factor. An internal consistency of the scale was tested using Cronbach's coefficient alpha. The alpha value of .810 was larger than the cut-off level of .60 which is recommended in the literature (Cronbach 1951). This result of the reliability test showed that the homogeneity of the scale was appropriate. Table 4.38 contains the result of this factor analysis.

Table 4.38: Exploratory Factor Analysis: Socialising Scale

Item Name	Eigenvalue	Cumulative Variance %	Rotated Factor Loading	Cronbach's Alpha	Correlated Item-Total Correlation	Mean Item-Item Correlation
SOC1	.993	70.974	.762	.810	.684	.524
SOC2			.643		.680	
SOC3			.827		.599	
SOC4			.589		.580	

4.5.2.11. Analysis for Identification Construct (IDT)

Overall six items for the Identification construct were initially used in both domestic and overseas consumer contexts. In section 4.2.2.11 showed that all the six items were reserved for the construct of Identification in the domestic market setting.

However, the result of the factor analysis using the overseas sample was different from the outcome of the analysis utilising the domestic sample.

Unlike the result from the domestic sample, four items (IDT1, IDT2, IDT3, and IDT4) out of the initial six items were retained for the Identification factor. Two items of IDT5 and IDT6 were removed from the scale as they were not significantly loaded (factor loading <.40) on the component. Internal consistency of the scale was examined by using Cronbach's coefficient alpha. The coefficient value of .813, which was greater than the reference value of .60 (Cronbach 1951), suggested that the reliability of the scale was satisfactory. Table 4.39 indicates the result of this factor analysis.

Table 4.39: Exploratory Factor Analysis: Identification Scale

Item Name	Eigenvalue	Cumulative Variance %	Rotated Factor Loading	Cronbach's Alpha	Correlated Item-Total Correlation	Mean Item-Item Correlation
IDT1	1.544	63.532	-.661	.813	.691	.537
IDT2			-.472		.564	
IDT3			-.803		.720	
IDT4			-.836		.626	

4.5.2.12. Analysis for Peer Group Acceptance Construct (PGA)

In section 4.2.2.12, it was addressed that all of the three items for the Peer Group Acceptance were statistically retained in domestic consumer context. The three items were initially inputted to the factor analysis in overseas market setting.

In the overseas setting, the factor analysis revealed an identical outcome with the domestic sample's result. The three items for the Peer Group Acceptance construct were all loaded on a same component. In internal consistency test was carried out by utilising Cronbach's coefficient alpha and the result of the reliability test showed the homogeneity of the scale was fine with the alpha value of .816 (Cronbach's $\alpha > 0.6$). The result of this analysis with using the overseas sample is displayed in Table 4.40.

Table 4.40: Exploratory Factor Analysis: Peer Group Acceptance Scale

Item Name	Eigenvalue	Cumulative Variance %	Rotated Factor Loading	Cronbach's Alpha	Correlated Item-Total Correlation	Mean Item-Item Correlation
PGA1	2.242	48.235	.818	.816	.629	.617
PGA2			.869		.655	
PGA3			.888		.759	

4.5.2.13. Analysis for Nostalgia Construct (NOS)

It was previously shown that, in the domestic consumer context, two items of NOS1 and NOS2 were conserved for the Nostalgia scale, while the other item NOS3 was omitted from the scale (section 4.2.2.13). In order to validate the items of the Nostalgia scale in the overseas customer setting, the original three items were initially employed.

With the overseas sample, two items of NOS1 and NOS2 were also reserved for the construct of Nostalgia like they were with the domestic sample. The other item (NOS3) was removed as it was not loaded together with the retained items. A Cronbach's coefficient alpha was calculated for the purpose of checking the

reliability of the scale. The value of .637 was yielded as the coefficient alpha for the Nostalgia construct. Because the alpha value was larger than the guideline level of .60 (Cronbach 1951), the homogeneity of the scale was considered to be good enough. The result is shown in Table 4.41.

Table 4.41: Exploratory Factor Analysis: Nostalgia Scale

Item Name	Eigenvalue	Cumulative Variance %	Rotated Factor Loading	Cronbach's Alpha	Correlated Item-Total Correlation	Mean Item-Item Correlation
NOS1	1.116	68.767	.798	.637	.500	.500
NOS2			.638		.500	

4.5.2.14. Analysis for Pride in Place (or Community) Construct (PIC)

Four items were originally designed for the construct of Pride in Place and all of the items were loaded on the same factor in the factor analysis process using the domestic sample (section 4.2.2.14). For the purpose of validating those items in overseas market setting, the four items were initially inputted into the factor analysis using the overseas sample.

Identical to the result from the domestic sample, the four items of PIC1, PIC2, PIC3, and PIC4 were all loaded on the same component in the result of the factor analysis with using the overseas sample. A Cronbach's coefficient alpha, as a test of reliability, was calculated. A value of .915 was obtained for the alpha value and it was well above the guideline value of .60. This result from the overseas sample is indicated in Table 4.42.

Table 4.42: Exploratory Factor Analysis: Pride in Place (or Community) Scale

Item Name	Eigenvalue	Cumulative Variance %	Rotated Factor Loading	Cronbach's Alpha	Correlated Item-Total Correlation	Mean Item-Item Correlation
PIC1	2.895	37.398	.821	.915	.759	.734
PIC2			.894		.869	
PIC3			.888		.880	
PIC4			.798		.729	

4.5.2.15. Analysis for Attitudinal Loyalty Construct (ATL)

The section 4.5.1.2 exhibited that, as a result of the principal component analysis, a set of six items (ATL4, ATL5, ATL6, ATL10, ATL11, and ATL12) was produced for the scale for the construct of Attitudinal Loyalty in overseas consumer context. Moreover, these six items are identical to those for the construct in domestic consumer setting. The result of the factor analysis with using the domestic sample previously showed that, except the item ATL4, five out of the six items were reserved for the scale. The six items were utilised for the factor reduction process in overseas market setting.

Similar to the result from the domestic sample, five items (ATL5, ATL6, ATL10, ATL11, and ATL12) were retained for the construct of Attitudinal Loyalty as a result of the factor analysis with using the overseas sample. Item ATL4 was removed because it was not loaded jointly with the other items. Cronbach's coefficient alpha was utilised as a mean of examining a further reliability. An alpha value of .800 was yielded and was checked against the acceptable level of .60 which is recommended in the literature (Cronbach 1951). Because the coefficient alpha value was greater

than the guideline, the scale was considered to be internally consistent. The result of this factor analysis is indicated in Table 4.43.

Table 4.43: Exploratory Factor Analysis: Attitudinal Loyalty Scale

Item Name	Eigenvalue	Cumulative Variance %	Rotated Factor Loading	Cronbach's Alpha	Correlated Item-Total Correlation	Mean Item-Item Correlation
ATL5	10.075	22.389	.502	.800	.613	.463
ATL6			.456		.634	
ATL10			.880		.618	
ATL11			.767		.598	
ATL12			.503		.529	

4.6. Conceptual Model Modification and Hypotheses Alteration in Overseas Consumer Context

The exploratory factor analysis reduced the dimensions of the composite scale to 14 components for the overseas sample. In overseas markets context, four factors of Aesthetics, Importance, Knowledge, and Behavioural Loyalty were omitted in the process of the factor analysis whilst constructs of Manager and Management were bound together to a combined dimension of Team Management. Because of this factor reduction, the conceptual model for overseas consumers needed to be modified.

As like domestic consumer context, constructs of Importance and Knowledge were also omitted in overseas consumer setting. Hence, it is unable to test the second order variable of Attitudes. Thus, the second order variable of Attitudes was removed from the conceptual model for the overseas consumers. Based on the same justification

with the case of domestic consumers (section 4.3), the construct of Attitudinal Loyalty replaced Attitudes in the conceptual model for the overseas consumers (Figure 4.2).

According to the same further justifications for the influences of three types of perceived benefits (functional, symbolic, and experiential benefits) on consumers' attitudinal loyalty (section 4.3), the replacement of Attitudes by Attitudinal Loyalty variable as a consequence of the Benefits variables is rationalised. Thus, the hypotheses H7O, H8O, and H9O are now modified as below:

> H7Om: In overseas markets context, there will be a positive relationship between the perceived functional benefits and attitudinal loyalty.
>
> H8Om: In overseas markets context, there will be a positive relationship between the perceived symbolic benefits and attitudinal loyalty.
>
> H9Om: In overseas markets context, there will be a positive relationship between the perceived experiential benefits and attitudinal loyalty.

Because of the omission of the second order variable of Attitudes from the conceptual model, hypotheses H10O and H11O cannot be examined. Thus, the following hypotheses are deleted:

H10O: In overseas markets context, there will be a positive relationship between attitudes and customer's attitudinal loyalty towards a professional sport brand.

H11O: In overseas markets context, there will be a positive relationship between attitudes and customer's behavioural loyalty towards a professional sport brand.

Lastly, due to the fact that the variable of Behavioural Loyalty was deleted from the conceptual model in the context of overseas markets, the hypothesis about the relationship between attitudinal loyalty and behavioural loyalty can be tested in the domestic context only. Thus, the following hypothesis (H12O) is deleted:

H12O: In overseas markets context, there will be a positive relationship between customer's attitudinal loyalty and behavioural loyalty towards a professional sport brand.

Figure 4.2 indicates the modified conceptual model for the overseas sample. The list of hypotheses testing in overseas consumer setting is shown in Table 4.44.
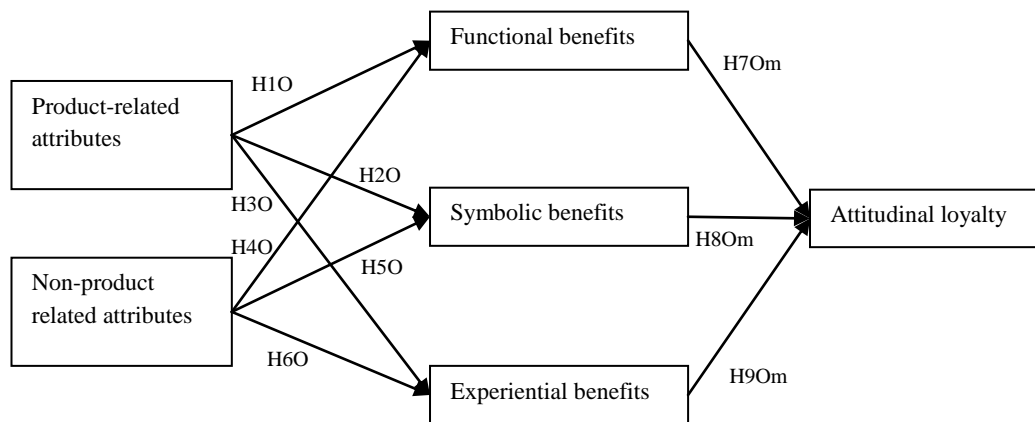
Figure 4.2: Modified Conceptual Model – Overseas Consumer Context

Table 4.44: List of Research Hypotheses - Overseas Consumer Context

Label	Hypotheses
H1O	In overseas markets context, there will be a positive relationship between customer's evaluation of product-related attributes and the perceived functional benefits.
H2O	In overseas markets context, there will be a positive relationship between customer's evaluation of product-related attributes and the perceived symbolic benefits.
H3O	In overseas markets context, there will be a positive relationship between customer's evaluation of product-related attributes and the perceived experiential benefits.
H4O	In overseas markets context, there will be a positive relationship between customer's evaluation of non-product-related attributes and the perceived functional benefits.
H5O	In overseas markets context, there will be a positive relationship between customer's evaluation of non-product-related attributes and the perceived symbolic benefits.
H6O	In overseas markets context, there will be a positive relationship between customer's evaluation of non-product-related attributes and the perceived experiential benefits.
H7Om	In overseas markets context, there will be a positive relationship between the perceived functional benefits and attitudinal loyalty.
H8Om	In overseas markets context, there will be a positive relationship between the perceived symbolic benefits and attitudinal loyalty.
H9Om	In overseas markets context, there will be a positive relationship between the perceived experiential benefits and attitudinal loyalty.

4.7. Structural Equation Modelling in Overseas Consumer Context

4.7.1 Measurement Model Testing

In overseas consumer setting, the measurement model testing was carried out with all the 14 first order variables. A total of 45 items which had been retained from the exploratory factor analysis stage were utilised for the measurement model. The result of measurement model testing demonstrated a good model fit to the data. As shown in Table 4.45, the measurement model satisfied the acceptable level of model fit criteria with values of: CMIN = 1386.676, DF = 855, CMIN/DF = 1.622, IFI = .922, TLI = .908, CFI = .920, RMSEA = .050, SRMR = .0510.

Table 4.45: Measurement Model Fit – Overseas Sample

Model Estimated	CMIN	DF	CMIN/DF	IFI	TLI	CFI	RMSEA	SRMR
Final Model	1386.676	855	1.622	.922	.908	.920	.050	.0510

Table 4.46: Correlations between Constructs following CFA - Overseas sample

	SCS	STA	TMG	LOG	PRO	HIS	RIV	ESC	SOC	IDT	PGA	NOS	PIC
STA	.511												
TMG	.246	.280											
LOG	.365	.361	.434										
PRO	.190	.319	.585	.520									
HIS	.188	.263	.554	.509	.656								
RIV	.072	-.007	.378	.268	.180	.340							
ESC	.100	.192	.211	.320	.370	.290	.281						
SOC	.227	.236	.016	.329	.315	.228	.260	.419					
IDT	.203	.242	.156	.424	.349	.214	.204	.458	.636				
PGA	.021	-.018	-.125	-.192	-.113	-.046	.152	.012	.178	.087			
NOS	.225	.135	.277	.463	.467	.435	.123	.398	.369	.562	.006		
PIC	.186	.309	.347	.267	.429	.488	.312	.379	.382	.411	.002	.338	
ATL	.242	.229	.448	.615	.599	.558	.309	.404	.349	.572	-.082	.759	.418

The standardised regression weights from the measurement model test demonstrated the items used in the analysis measured the constructs as intended. As the measurement model also showed an appropriate model fit, further refinement of the model was not necessary. Table 4.46 displays the correlations between the constructs of the brand associations and loyalty in the data of the overseas sample. Examination of the correlation matrix exhibited acceptable discriminant validity amongst the 14 factors. A problem with extreme multicollinearity and singularity within the data was not observed because all the correlations showed below .800 (Field 2009). The highest correlation from the correlations between the constructs was the one between the nostalgia and attitudinal loyalty factors (.759). On the other hand, amongst the correlations between the brand association constructs, the highest was between the history and product delivery factors (.656). Construct reliabilities of the constructs were all sufficiently high. As the all AVE values of the construct were above .50, convergent validity was achieved. The AVE values were compared with the squared correlations in order to check discriminant validity. Because the AVE values were larger than the squared correlations, discriminant validity was secured. The t-values and p levels of the 14 constructs showed all variables were statistically significant. Table 4.47 displays the standard regression weights, t-values (C.R.), significance levels, construct reliabilities, and AVE.

Table 4.47: Measurement Model Estimates – Overseas Sample

Construct	Items	Standardised Regression Weights	C. R.	*p* level	Construct Reliability	AVE
Success	SCS2	.976			.87	.77
	SCS3	.760	10.082	<0.001		
Star Player	STA2	.751			.87	.78
	STA3	.998	17.771	<0.001		
Team Management	MNG3	.838			.89	.62
	MNG4	.862	16.367	<0.001		
	MGM1	.707	12.346	<0.001		
	MGM2	.836	15.668	<0.001		
	MGM3	.684	11.807	<0.001		
Logo Design	LOG4	.677			.84	.57
	LOG3	.606	8.560	<0.001		
	LOG2	.853	11.435	<0.001		
	LOG1	.853	11.434	<0.001		
Product Delivery	PRO3	.842			.91	.76
	PRO2	.901	17.781	<0.001		
	PRO1	.877	17.161	<0.001		
History	HIS1	.780			.78	.63
	HIS2	.811	10.876	<0.001		
Rivalry	RIV3	.865			.84	.73
	RIV2	.841	10.492	<0.001		
Escape	ESC3	.885			.93	.81
	ESC2	.972	23.423	<0.001		
	ESC1	.839	18.257	<0.001		
Socialising	SOC4	.636			.81	.53
	SOC3	.609	8.043	<0.001		
	SOC2	.830	10.050	<0.001		
	SOC1	.804	9.881	<0.001		
Identification	IDT1	.821			.83	.54
	IDT2	.667	10.617	<0.001		
	IDT3	.780	12.718	<0.001		
	IDT4	.669	10.651	<0.001		
Peer Group Acceptance	PGA3	.942			.84	.64
	PGA2	.749	11.927	<0.001		
	PGA1	.689	11.020	<0.001		
Nostalgia	NOS1	.597			.71	.56
	NOS2	.869	8.175	<0.001		
Pride in Place	PIC4	.756			.92	.75
	PIC3	.948	16.216	<0.001		
	PIC2	.939	16.076	<0.001		
	PIC1	.794	13.187	<0.001		
Attitudinal Loyalty	ATL5	.729			.83	.50
	ATL6	.813	12.014	<0.001		
	ATL10	.683	10.139	<0.001		
	ATL11	.704	10.446	<0.001		
	ATL12	.583	8.643	<0.001		

4.7.2. Structural Model Testing

In overseas markets context, the initial structural model was tested for the purpose of examining the hypothesised relationships amongst the five second order variables (product-related attributes, non-product-related attributes, functional benefits, symbolic benefits, and experiential benefits) and the construct of attitudinal loyalty. CMIN/DF of the hypothesised model indicated an acceptable level with a value of 1.755. The values of RMSEA and SRMR were .055 and .0729 respectively. Both of the values were below the cut-off threshold of .80. The IFI value of .896, the TLI value of .888, and the CFI value of .895 were below the recommended guideline value .90. As these three indices of IFI, TLI, and CFI fell slightly short to the acceptable level, modification of the model was carried out in order to better the model fit. The modification index of the initial model was referred.

Similar to the case of the structural model with the domestic sample, setting up covariance was considered for this hypothesised model. As a result, a covariance was also made between error terms e52 and e53 based on the modification index (M.I. = 35.548, Per Change = .183). Like the domestic model case, the error terms e52 and e53 represented the errors of observable variables ATL10 and ATL11 respectively. The justification of this creation of the covariance between the error terms e52 and e53 is also identical to the previous case in the domestic setting. Both of the items ATL10 and ATL11 were operationalised using negatively worded sentences.

As a result of the modification of the structural model, a model with a slightly better fit was obtained. The modified structural model satisfied the acceptable level of model fit criteria with values of: CMIN = 1585.287, DF = 926, CMIN/DF = 1.712, IFI = .902, TLI = .894, CFI = .901, RMSEA = .054, SRMR = .0724. Except TLI, all

the model fit measures demonstrated an acceptable model fit. Even though the TLI value of .894 was smaller than the cut-off level of .90, it is very close to the reference value. Therefore, it can be said that the model fit of the final structural model is satisfactory. The detailed results of the initial hypothesised model and the final structural model are displayed in Table 4.48.

Table 4.48: Structural Model Fit – Overseas Sample

Model Estimated	CMIN	DF	CMIN/DF	IFI	TLI	CFI	RMSEA	SRMR
Initial Model	1626.676	927	1.755	.896	.888	.895	.055	.0729
Final Model	1585.287	926	1.712	.902	.894	.901	.054	.0724

4.7.3. Results of the Hypotheses Tested

This sub-section describes the tests of the hypotheses relationships in the processes of structural equation modelling in overseas markets setting. The result of the hypotheses test is listed in Table 4.49.

Table 4.49: Hypotheses Test – Overseas Consumer Context

Hypothesis		B	β	C. R.	p level
H1O	Product-related Attributes → Functional Benefits	-4.335	-2.705	-2.527	.012
H2O	Product-related Attributes → Symbolic Benefits	-7.588	-3.013	-2.583	.010
H3O	Product-related Attributes → Experiential Benefits	-1.981	-1.770	-2.255	.024
H4O	Non-product-related Attributes → Functional Benefits	5.849	3.244	3.282	.001
H5O	Non-product-related Attributes → Symbolic Benefits	9.708	3.426	3.252	.001
H6O	Non-product-related Attributes → Experiential Benefits	3.222	2.559	3.288	.001
H7Om	Functional Benefits → Attitudinal Loyalty	-5.533	-4.907	-6.031	<0.001
H8Om	Symbolic Benefits → Attitudinal Loyalty	2.336	3.255	2.161	.031
H9Om	Experiential Benefits → Attitudinal Loyalty	4.162	2.577	2.823	.005

4.7.3.1. Relationships between Product-Related Attributes and Benefits

Relationships between product-related attributes and the three types of benefits (functional, symbolic, and attitudinal) were posited as the hypotheses H1O, H2O, and H3O in overseas markets context. Firstly, H1O posited that overseas consumers' evaluation of product-related attributes positively influences their perceived functional benefits. The estimated coefficient B of -4.335 (β = -2.705) with a t value of -2.527 was statistically significant at a level of $p < 0.05$. However, the SEM results showed a negative relationship between the two variables. Thus, the SEM results do not support the hypothesis H1O. Secondly, H2O posited that overseas consumers' perceived symbolic benefits are positively affected by their evaluation of product-related attributes. The SEM results of an estimated coefficient B of -7.588 (β = -3.013) with a t value of -2.583, significant at $p < 0.05$, indicate a statistically significant but negative relationship between the two variables. Thus, the hypothesis H2O is also not supported. Lastly, H3O posited that overseas consumers' evaluation of product-related attributes positively affects their perceived experiential benefits. The estimated coefficient B of -1.981 (β = -1.770) with a t value of -2.255 was statistically significant at a level of $p < 0.05$. However, the coefficient showed a negative value. Therefore, the hypothesis H3O is not supported by the SEM results.

4.7.3.2. Relationships between Non-Product-Related Attributes and Benefits

Relationships between non-product-related attributes and the three types of benefits (functional, symbolic, and attitudinal) were hypothesised as H4O, H5O, and H6O in overseas markets context. Firstly, H4O posited that overseas consumers' perceived

functional benefits are positively influenced by their evaluation of non-product-related attributes. The estimated coefficient B of 5.849 ($\beta = 3.244$) with a t value of 3.282, statistically significant at $p < 0.01$, provides strong support for the hypothesis. Secondly, H5O posited that overseas consumers' evaluation of non-product-related attributes positively affects their perceived symbolic benefits. The estimated coefficient B of 9.708 ($\beta = 3.426$) with a t value of 3.252 indicated the existence of strong relationship between the two variables at statistical significance level of $p < 0.01$. Thus, the SEM results support the hypothesis H5O. Lastly, H6O posited that overseas consumers' evaluation of non-product-related attributes positively influences their perceived experiential benefits. The estimated coefficient B of 3.222 ($\beta = 2.559$) with a t value of 3.288, and a statistical significance of $p < 0.01$ indicated that the hypothesis H6O is strongly supported by the SEM results.

4.7.3.3. Relationships between Benefits and Attitudinal Loyalty

The hypotheses H7Om, H8Om, and H9Om were designed for the relationships in overseas markets context. Firstly, H7Om posited that overseas consumers' perceived functional benefits positively influence their attitudinal loyalty. The estimated coefficient B of -5.533 ($\beta = -4.907$), with a t value of -6.031, was very highly significant at $P < 0.001$ but showed a negative relationship between the variables. Thus, the hypothesis is not supported. Secondly, H8Om posited that overseas consumers perceived symbolic benefits have a positive effect on their attitudinal loyalty. This hypothesis is statistically supported because the estimated coefficient B of 2.336 ($\beta = 3.255$), with a t value of 2.161, was statistically significant at $p < 0.05$. Lastly, H9Om posited that overseas consumers' attitudinal loyalty is positively

influenced by their perceived experiential benefits. The estimated coefficient B of 4.162 (β = 2.577), with a t value of 2.823, was highly significant at a level of $p < 0.05$. The SEM results provide strong support for this hypothesis.

4.8. Difference in Loyalty Formation Process between Domestic and Overseas Consumers

Hypothesis H13 posited that the structural model of overseas consumers' loyalty formation process towards professional sport brands will have a different structure from that of domestic consumers. As it was acknowledged initially in section 3.6.3.1, this hypothesis is not tested by using the function of multiple group analysis provided by AMOS 19. Earlier sections on the exploratory factor analysis (sections 4.3 and 4.6) showed that two models with different underlying structures were produced for the domestic and overseas groups from the result of exploratory factor analysis. Due to the fact that groups to be compared have to share an identical model in order to utilise the multiple-group analysis function of the analysis programme, the function cannot be used in this test of the hypothesis H13. Therefore, instead of using the multiple-group analysis function, the two loyalty formation process models of the domestic and overseas consumers were compared based on the path coefficients and significance of the relationships amongst the second order latent variables of brand associations and the construct of attitudinal loyalty.

The proposed structural model of domestic consumers' loyalty formation process is depicted in Figure 4.3. In domestic consumers' model, the relationships between product-related attributes and three types of benefits (functional, symbolic, and

experiential) were not significant, whereas non-product-related attributes variable was significantly related to those benefits. The relationships between the three categories of benefits and attitudinal loyalty were also significant. On the other hand, Figure 4.4 shows the proposed structural model of overseas consumers' loyalty formation process. The relationships between three variables of benefits and attitudinal loyalty were significant as they were in domestic consumers' model. The path coefficients of those relationships showed similar tendency with those of the domestic model. Non-product-related attributes variable was also significantly related to those three variables of benefits. The paths from non-product related attributes variable to the variables of benefits displays dissemblance in their weight to those of the domestic model. The influence of non-product-related attributes variable to functional benefits is relatively bigger than those to symbolic and experiential benefits in domestic model, whereas non-product-related attributes variable affects relatively less to experiential benefits than to functional and symbolic benefits in overseas model. Moreover, unlike the domestic consumers' case, the relationships between product-related attributes and the three variables of benefits were negatively significant. Hence, it cannot be said that the two proposed structural models are identical. Therefore, the hypothesis H13 is supported.
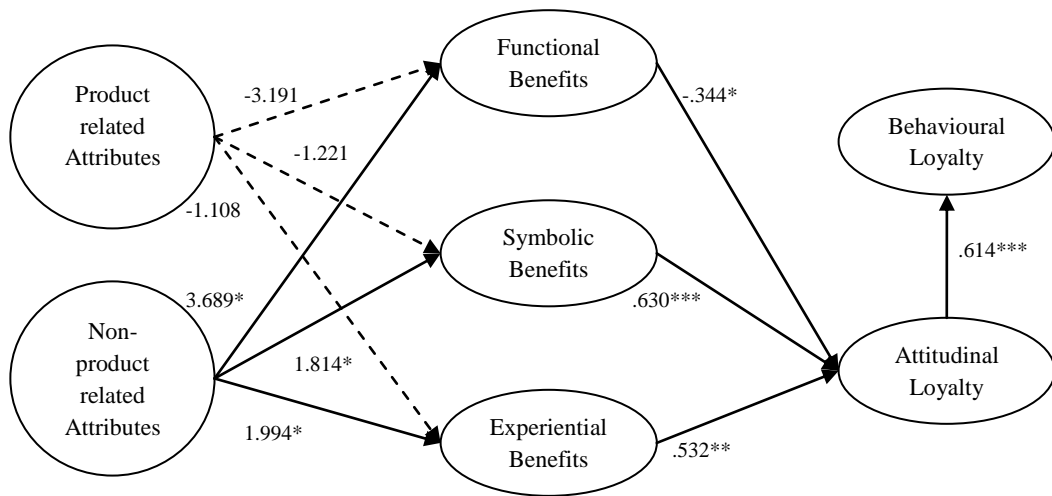
Figure 4.3: Proposed Structural Model – Domestic Consumer Context
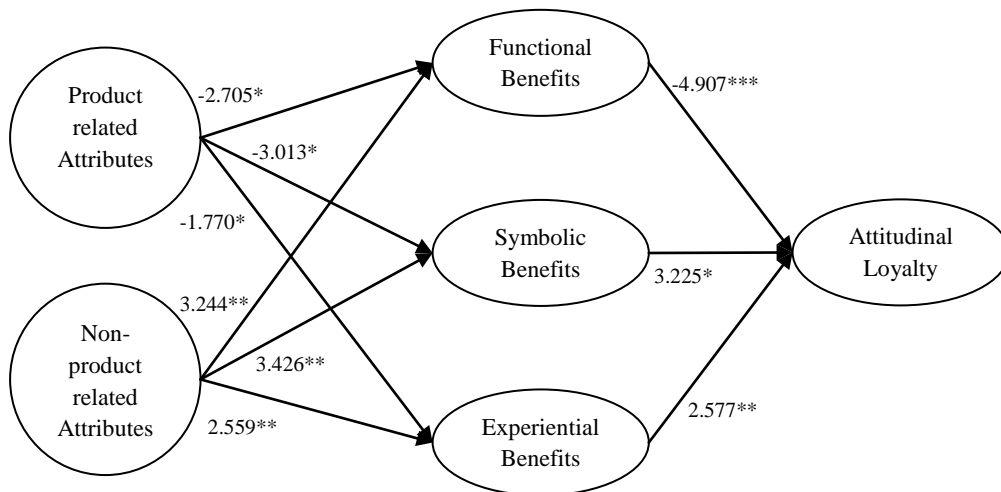
Figure 4.4: Proposed Structural Model – Overseas Consumer Context

4.9. Chapter Summary

This chapter presented the results of the data analysis including exploratory factor analysis and structural equation modelling. The results of the domestic sample were presented from section 4.2 to section 4.4. Section 4.2 described the results of principal component analysis for the constructs of attitudinal and brand loyalty. The section then provided the results of exploratory factor analysis of the composite scale. As a result of the factor analysis, a composite scale with 15 dimensions was produced for the domestic sample. The reliability tests of the scales of each factor were also reported in this section. Based on the results of the factor analysis, the conceptual models were modified and presented in section 4.3. In accordance with the model modification, the research hypotheses were also altered where necessary. Section 4.4 reported the results of the structural equation modelling in domestic consumer context. Section 4.4 reported the result of the measurement model testing, which was the confirmatory factor analysis. The model obtained from the previous section (section 4.3) were utilised for the measurement model testing. The section provided the result of the structural model testing, and showed the courses of improving the initial structural model and proposed the final structural model for the domestic sample. The results of the research hypotheses tests were presented at the part of the section 4.4. The hypotheses tests in domestic consumer context is briefly summarised in the following paragraph.

The proposed structural model for the domestic consumers shows three hypothesised relationships between product-related attributes and three types of perceived benefits (functional, symbolic, and experiential benefits) are rejected as those relationships are not shown to be significant. On the other hand, non-product-related attributes of

a professional sport brand are shown to be significantly and positively influential towards the three types of perceived benefits. Thus, the three hypotheses for those relationships are all supported. Amongst three hypotheses for the impacts of three types of perceived benefits on the consumers' attitudinal loyalty towards professional sport brands, two of the hypotheses, symbolic and experiential benefits towards attitudinal loyalty, are supported, whereas the hypothesis regarding the influence of functional benefits on attitudinal loyalty is refuted. Lastly, the hypothesis for the impact of attitudinal loyalty on behavioural loyalty is supported.

Section 4.5, 4.6, and 4.7 presented the data analysis results of overseas consumer sample. Section 4.5 provided the results of factor analysis. Based on the result of the factor analysis which produced a 14-factor composite scale for the overseas consumer group, the modification of conceptual model and the alteration of research hypotheses were detailed in section 4.6. Section 4.7 reported the results of structural equation modelling including measurement model testing and structural model testing. The section also provided the result of the research hypotheses tests in overseas consumer context. The following paragraph details the summary of the hypotheses tests in overseas consumer context.

In the overseas markets context, three hypotheses that product-related attributes and perceived benefits are positively related are rejected. However, three hypotheses regarding non-product-related attributes' positive influence on perceived benefits are all supported. Amongst the three hypothesised relationships between the three types of perceived benefits and attitudinal loyalty, two hypotheses that symbolic and experiential benefits are positively related to attitudinal loyalty are supported, while

the hypothesis regarding the positive influence of functional benefits on attitudinal loyalty is refuted.

Finally, section 4.8 presented the comparison of the two proposed structural models for domestic and overseas consumer contexts. The comparison of the two proposed structural models shows that the loyalty formation process between domestic consumers and overseas consumers are different.

The following chapter will provide the discussion about the results of the main analysis which were presented in this chapter. Both supported and rejected hypotheses will be discussed in the next chapter. Based on the two final structural models obtained in this chapter, the differences in loyalty formation process between domestic and overseas consumers will be discussed in chapter 5.

Chapter 5: Discussion

5.1. Introduction

This research is a comparative study which identifies the differences between domestic and overseas fans in their process of forming attitudinal loyalty towards professional sport brands.

Chapter 4 reported the results of exploratory factor analysis on the composite scale for both domestic and overseas market contexts. Based on the measurement models derived from the exploratory factor analysis, structural model testing was carried out and the proposed structural models for each market contexts were produced. Those suggested structural equation models which were described in the previous chapter tested the hypotheses which had been proposed in chapter 3 and the modified hypotheses derived from the results of the exploratory factor analysis. Based on the results of the proposed structural equation models detailed in the previous chapter, this chapter provides a discussion of the hypotheses that are both supported and rejected.

This chapter is composed of six sections. The first section is the current introductory section which summarises the results of this study. Section 5.2 provides a discussion of the relationships between the two types of attributes (product-related and non-product-related attributes) and the three types of consumers' perceived benefits (functional, symbolic, and experiential benefits). Section 5.2 is divided into two sub-sections 5.2.1 and 5.2.2, and these sub-sections discuss the influences of product-related attributes and non-product-related attributes on consumers' perceived benefits

respectively. Section 5.3 presents a discussion of the relationships between the three types of consumers' perceived benefits and their attitudinal loyalty towards professional sport brands. Section 5.4 provides a discussion of the influence of domestic consumers' attitudinal loyalty on behavioural loyalty. Section 5.5 provides a discussion of the comparison of overall attitudinal loyalty formation between domestic and overseas consumers. Finally, a summary of chapter 5 is provided in Section 5.6.

5.2. Determinants of Consumers' Perceived Benefits

The hypothesised relationships between the two types of attributes (product-related attributes and non-product-related attributes) and three kinds of consumers' perceived benefits (functional benefits, symbolic benefits, and experiential benefits) are discussed in this section. This section consists of two sub-sections. The influence of product-related attributes on consumers' perceived benefits is discussed in the first sub-section and the influence of non-product-related attributes on the benefits is discussed in the second sub-section.

5.2.1. Product-Related Attributes

This subsection provides discussions of the relationships between product-related attributes and consumers' perceived benefits. The hypotheses regarding the influence of product-related attributes on the three types of perceived benefits are discussed first, followed by an overall discussion of the relationships between product-related attributes and perceived benefits.

5.2.1.1. The Influence of Product-Related Attributes on Functional Benefits

The positive relationship between product-related attributes and consumers' perceived functional benefits is hypothesised in the domestic consumer context (H1D) and the overseas consumer context (H1O). The justification for this hypothesised relationship is drawn from the fact that consumers tend to consume a product or a service in order to solve the problems they have and to achieve a desirable state (Fennell 1978, Park et al. 1986a). This hypothesis is rejected in both domestic and overseas consumer contexts. The relationship in the domestic market context (H1D) is shown to be insignificant, while the influence of product-related attributes on functional benefits in the overseas market context (H1O) is reported to be negatively significant. This finding means that product-related attributes do not increase consumers' perceived functional benefits in both domestic and overseas consumer contexts. Thus, both domestic and overseas fans do not utilise product-related attributes as a means of solving their problems.

The rejection of the hypothesis H1D indicates that domestic consumers' perception of functional benefits is not affected by their evaluation of product-related attributes of a sport team brand. Although product-related attributes' influence on functional benefits was logically expected, some previous studies (Bauer et al. 2008, Funk et al. 2002, Gladden and Funk 2001) show similar results. The work of Bauer et al. (2008) shows that product-relative attributes of sport team brands have less relevance to the consumers' perception of brand benefits. One possible explanation for this could be found in the fact that the respondents are composed of highly committed fans. Bauer et al. (2008) note that highly loyal fans often have a long relationship with their teams and, as a result, they recognise that product-related attributes are changeable.

Thus, a result of a match or the presence of star players or a renowned coach in the team does not affect significantly fans with high attitudinal loyalty. Moreover, the study of Gladden and Funk (2001) on the relationship between brand associations and brand loyalty also throws light on this. The research indicates that some product-related attributes of brand associations, such as success, manager and management, are not significant predictors of highly loyal consumers' long term loyalty towards sport team brands. This finding is also in line with the result of Funk, Mahony, and Ridinger's (2002) research. The authors (Funk et al. 2002) find that product-related attributes, such as presence of aesthetics and interest in a specific player, are not significant factors which influence the level of spectator support.

The hypothesis H1O is rejected as the findings show that product-related attributes have a negative influence on overseas consumers' perception of functional benefits. This is a confusing result because it means that product-related attributes are not just irrelevant for the overseas fans' perception of functional benefits but they negatively affect on the perception. One possible explanation for this can be drawn from the work of Gladden and Funk (2001) which shows that a brand association (Star players) of product-related attributes could have a negative influence on loyalty of highly committed fans. The authors argue that due to the highly-mobile nature of professional players in North American professional sports the impact of the presence of star players might be lessened to the fans with high attitudinal loyalty. The negative influence of product-related attributes on fan behaviour is also found in other previous studies (Mahony et al. 2002, Nakazawa et al. 1999, Won and Kitamura 2007) on the behaviour of football fans. The works of Mahony et al. (2002) and Nakazawa et al. (1999) show that Japanese football fans with a long fan

history are not attracted by players. On the other hand, Won and Kitamura's (2006) study shows that there are negative relationships between player factor and the behaviour of football fans in Japan and Korea. In line with these previous works (Mahony et al. 2002, Nakazawa et al. 1999, Won and Kitamura 2007, Gladden and Funk 2001), the rejection of the hypothesis H1O suggests that product-related attributes, which are changeable in nature, may have little or negative influence on highly committed consumers in overseas markets of professional sport brands.

Another possible explanation for this negative relationship between product-related attributes and perceived functional benefits may rest in the traits of the chosen brand (Arsenal FC). It is possible that the sporting performance of the brand in recent seasons might affect the respondents of the survey. Arsenal FC have not produced distinctive sporting success in recent years and they have been experiencing trophy-less seasons since they won the FA cup in 2005. Moreover, mainly due to this lack of sporting success, the team and manager's transfer policy, which is focusing on investing in young prospects instead of spending on star players, has been under criticism. As a result, the overseas consumers may evaluate the product-related attributes negatively.

5.2.1.2. The Influence of Product-Related Attributes on Symbolic Benefits

The hypotheses H2D and H2O posit that product-related attributes have a positive influence on symbolic benefits in the contexts of domestic consumers and overseas consumers respectively. These hypotheses are justified by the fact that individuals wish to associate themselves with successful others in order to enhance their egos

(Cialdini et al. 1976, Wann and Branscombe 1990). The hypothesised relationship is refuted in both domestic and overseas consumer contexts. The influence of product-related attributes on symbolic benefits in the domestic market context (H2D) is shown to be insignificant, whereas the relationship in overseas market context (H2O) indicates a significant but negative influence. This finding shows that consumers' perceived symbolic benefits are not increased by the influence of product-related attributes in both domestic and overseas contexts.

The rejection of the hypotheses H2D and H2O might come as a surprise because sport consumers' tendency to follow a successful team is generally known. Cialdini et al. (1976, p.366) defined this tendency to "bask in reflected glory (BIRG)" as "people appear to feel that they can share in the glory of a successful other with whom they are in some way associated; one manifestation of this feeling is the public trumpeting of the association". In the same vein, it is suggested that people are inclined to distance themselves from unsuccessful others in order to protect their egos, and this tendency is called 'cutting off reflected failure' (CORF) (Snyder et al. 1986). However, the finding of this research disproves these concepts. A possible explanation for this finding is that the strong loyalty of highly committed fans, who are the subjects of the current research survey, may moderate the influence of product-related attributes, such as the team's sporting success or the presence of star players, on those consumers' perception of symbolic benefits. Some studies in the literature on sport consumer behaviour provide a support for this explanation. The work of Wann and Branscombe (1990, p.111) advances this view that "persons highly identified with the team appeared to maintain their association with the team and continued to enjoy them even when faced with defeat, thereby showing a

reduction of the tendency to CORF relative to those low in identification". Thus, according to the results of this study, in contrast to the CORF suggestions of Cialdini et al. (1976), highly committed fans are less likely to cease their support than less committed fans in line with the expectations of Wann and Branscombe (1990).

Additionally, this finding suggests an interesting insight into the behaviour of overseas fans. Branscombe and Wann (1991) insist that dislocated fans who are geographically remote from a team are more likely to be influenced by the success of the team and have the tendency to bask in reflected glory. In this study, however, overseas fans with high attitudinal loyalty are not positively affected by product-related attributes such as success of the team, which similar to the highly committed fans in the domestic market. Overseas fans with high attitudinal loyalty tend to continue their support for their team regardless of the team's success. In other words, highly committed overseas fans may remain loyal even if their team is unsuccessful. Campbell, Aiken, and Kent (2004) describe this fan behaviour as basking in spite of reflected failure (BIRF). They (Campbell et al. 2004) insist that basking in spite of reflected failure may be believed to be loyalist behaviour and can be found in highly loyal fans' behaviour. Thus, this research finding suggests that, in contrast to Branscombe and Wann's (1991) claim of dislocated fans' proneness to BIRG, highly committed overseas fans do not show a particular tendency to pursue their team's success.

5.2.1.3. The Influence of Product-Related Attributes on Experiential Benefits

The hypothesis H3D and its overseas equivalent H3O hypothesise a positive relationship between product-related attributes and experiential benefits. The theoretical foundation for this conceptualisation is taken from the concept of experiential consumption (Hirschman and Holbrook 1982, Holbrook and Hirschman 1982, Holbrook et al. 1984) which claims consumers' experiential benefits can be served by stimulation received from consumption. In both domestic and overseas consumer contexts, the hypothesised relationship is rejected. The hypothesis H3D which regards the influence of product-related attributes on experiential benefits in the domestic market context is shown to be insignificant. The hypothesis H3O which deals with the relationship in overseas market context is refuted as it displays a negatively significant influence of product-related attributes on experiential benefits. Thus, in both domestic and overseas consumer contexts, product-related attributes do not increase consumers' perceived experiential benefits. This finding means that sport fans' experiential benefits are not satisfied by the stimuli which are generated from product-related attributes.

The rejection of the hypotheses H3D and H3O means that sensory pleasure and experiential satisfaction of committed fans in both domestic and overseas markets do not originate from physical and concrete aspect of attributes. The study of Bauer et al. (2008) sheds light on why product-related attributes do not increase committed fans' experiential benefits. Presenting their finding that product-related attributes have a very small influence on consumers' perception of benefits, they (Bauer et al. 2008) explain that product-related attributes, which are changeable and have a temporary effect, have little relevance to the utility perception of highly loyal sport fans, who

have a long fan history. Moreover, the works of Mahony et al. (2002) and Nakazawa et al. (1999) also argue that aesthetics negatively influence on the support of Japanese football fans who have a long-term relationship with their teams. The current research finding provides some supports to these previous studies (Bauer et al. 2008, Mahony et al. 2002, Nakazawa et al. 1999) by showing empirical evidence in the contexts of domestic and overseas consumers. The finding of this research shows that, consistent with the previous studies (Bauer et al. 2008, Mahony et al. 2002, Nakazawa et al. 1999), committed fans' perception of a sport brand's experiential benefits is not influenced by product-related attributes.

Another possible explanation for this result is, as previously mentioned, the lack of sporting success of the chosen brand in recent years. Due to the unsatisfactory performance of the brand which falls short of the fans' expectations, the brand might fail to provide sufficient sensory and experiential pleasure to the fans. As a result, the fans do not consider product-related attributes in their utility perception of experiential benefits.

5.2.1.4. The Relationships between Product-Related Attributes and Perceived Benefits

In the domestic consumer context, the influence of product-related attributes on functional benefits (H1D), symbolic benefits (H2D), and experiential benefits (H3D) are not supported. Based on the levels of abstraction concept (Goldenberg et al. 2000, Gutman 1982), Mayers and Shocker (1981) and Howard (1977) proposed that there can be means-end chain relationships between product attributes and benefits. The

current research shows, however, that means-end chain relationships do not exist between product-related attributes and domestic fans' perception of benefits. From these results, it is believed that highly attitudinally loyal domestic fans' positions towards professional sport brands are fairly constant and they are resistant to the influence of the physical attributes (product-related attributes) of the brands.

Although product-related attributes were logically expected to have an influence on consumers' perceived benefits, some previous studies (Bauer et al. 2005, Bauer et al. 2008, Mahony et al. 2002, Nakazawa et al. 1999) show that loyal fans of professional sport brands who have a long fan history are unlikely to be influenced by brand associations of product-related attributes. Thus, the rejection of those hypotheses is understandable because the respondents of the survey are highly committed fans who have a long term view on the brand. Product-related attributes such as presence of star players, or a popular head coach are changeable brand associations in the long run. Especially, the movement of star players has become more frequent and changing a manager also often occurs in English Premier League. However, domestic customers with high attitudinal loyalty tend to have a long term view on their football clubs (Bauer et al. 2008, Gladden and Funk 2001) and, as a result, these product-related attributes can be recognised as irrelevant to their evaluation of the benefits of the professional sport brands. In the same vein, teams' success on the pitch may also not matter for those consumers as their perception of the brands is merely affected by temporary success or failure of the teams (Campbell et al. 2004). Thus, the impact of those changeable brand associations on the consumers' brand perception cannot help being limited. Even though they could be temporarily affected by product-related attributes in their evaluation of the benefits

offered by the brands, on a long term basis it can be said that product-related attributes are not able to influence highly committed domestic consumers' opinion on the benefits of the brands sufficiently.

On the other hand, in the overseas consumer context, the hypotheses regarding the influence of product-related attributes on functional benefits (H1O), symbolic benefits (H2O), and experiential benefits (H3O) are also all rejected. These relationships are shown to be significant but negative. These findings mean that there are no positive means-end chain relationships between product-related attributes and overseas fans' perceived benefits. Thus, these findings also partially contradict the insistence of Mayers and Shocker (1981) and Howard (1977) in the context of professional sport brands consumption.

This might come as an unexpected result because product-related attributes which were logically believed to have a positive impact on perceived benefits are shown to have a negative influence on consumers' perception of benefits. It is often seen that sport clubs' judgement of buying star players is sometimes prompted by the intention to attract customers. For example, it is obvious that transfer cases of star players such as David Beckham's move from Real Madrid to LA Galaxy or Ji-Sung Park's move from Manchester United to Queens Park Rangers were made not only for sporting purposes but also for marketing and promotional reasons of these purchasing clubs. Needless to say, this kind of transfer policy is based on those clubs' expectation that product-related attributes such as the presence of star players are positively related to consumers' perceived benefits. A past study (Choi 2007) also shows that there is a positive relationship between brand associations of product-related attributes (such

as star players and success) and overseas consumers' loyalty. Moreover, Branscombe and Wann (1991) insist that dislocated fans are more likely BIRGing.

Unlike common belief and past research, the result of the current research demonstrates that a significant negative relationship exists between product-related attributes and perceived benefits. This opposite result can be explained by considering the fact that the overseas sample consisted of highly attitudinally loyal consumers. The consumers with high attitudinal loyalty towards professional sport brands tend to care about their long term relationship with the brands instead of being swayed by a changeable short term environment. Thus, although product-related attributes such as the presence of star players and winning a trophy may influence positively general customers' perception of professional sport brands, those attributes may not have a positive impact on the perceptions of highly committed consumers. Those attitudinally loyal consumers may refuse to judge their supporting clubs based on the changeable brand associations. Choi's research (2007) which uses a sample of general overseas consumers also suggests that the impact of product-related attributes can be different for the overseas consumers who are highly identified with their supporting clubs. Moreover, a work of Gladden and Funk (2001) also shows a consistent result with the current research. The study (Gladden and Funk 2001) shows that the presence of star players has a significantly negative influence on sports consumers' long term loyalty, and the attributes of success are not significant in relationship with the consumers' attitudinal loyalty. Additionally, Campbell et al. (2004) claim that loyal fans have an inclination to remain loyal to their team regardless of team success or failure. The findings of this study provide empirical evidence to support Campbell et al.'s (2004) argument.

As suggested in section 5.2.1.1, another possible explanation for this negative influence of product-related attributes on perceived benefits is the chosen brand's lack of sporting success in recent years. In responding to the survey, fans may negatively evaluate product-related attributes due to the recent sporting outcome of the brand, which could not meet its consumers' expectation. This fan behaviour is empirically proved in Fisher and Wakefield's (1998) study which shows that fans of unsuccessful teams do not consider a team performance factor in identifying themselves with their team.

These results and explanations suggest an interesting insight into overseas consumers' behaviour. Even though overseas consumers can be influenced by product-related attributes in their early stage of supporting a foreign professional sport brand, when they become attitudinally loyal towards the sport team brand the influence of product-related attributes decreases. In other words, overseas consumers' reaction to product-related attributes becomes more similar to that of domestic fans as they get more attitudinally loyal.

5.2.2. Non-Product-Related Attributes

This subsection provides discussions of the relationships between non-product-related attributes and consumers' perceived benefits. It firstly discusses the hypotheses regarding the influence of non-product-related attributes on the three types of perceived benefits. An overall discussion of the relationship between non-product-related attributes and perceived benefits is also provided later.

5.2.2.1. The Influence of Non-Product-Related Attributes on Functional Benefits

The hypotheses H4D and H4O posit that non-product-related attributes positively affect consumers' perceived functional benefits in the contexts of domestic and overseas consumers respectively. This hypothesised relationship is justified by the concept of problem solving function of consumption (Fennell 1978) and the nature of non-product-related attributes as usage imagery attributes (Keller 1993). The hypothesised relationship is supported in both domestic and overseas consumer contexts. The hypothesis H4D regarding the positive influence of non-product-related attributes on domestic consumers' perceived benefits is supported as the research shows the relationship is significant. The result also indicates that non-product-related attributes have a positive and significant influence on overseas consumers' perception of functional benefits. These findings mean that usage imagery attributes of professional sport brands assist both domestic and overseas fans' problem solving during brand consumption. Thus, it is believed that non-product-related attributes increase sport brand consumers' perceived functional benefits in both domestic and overseas market contexts.

The positive influence of non-product-related attributes on domestic consumers' perceived benefits are studied in previous studies (Bauer et al. 2005, Bauer et al. 2008) which show non-product-related attributes have large relevance for highly loyal consumers' utility perception. This finding of the current research confirms the results of the existing studies (Bauer et al. 2005, Bauer et al. 2008). It also provides support for the work of Kolbe and James (2000). Kolbe and James (2000) show that sport consumers' functional needs of socialising can be served by product delivery which is a brand association of non-product-related attributes. Moreover, the work of

Gladden and Funk (2001) also shows that non-product-related attributes such as product delivery positively affect on fans' long term loyalty.

The acceptance of the hypothesis H4O indicates that overseas consumers with high attitudinal loyalty tend to react to non-product-related attributes similarly to domestic consumers in terms of their perception of functional benefits. This research finding means that the above argument of non-product-related attributes on sport consumers' utility perception (Bauer et al. 2005, Bauer et al. 2008, Kolbe and James 2000) is also valid in the context of overseas consumers. Given that product-related attributes do not have a positive influence on overseas consumers' functional benefits, this research finding suggests that promotion using non-product-related attributes is advisable for satisfying functional needs of committed fans not only in domestic markets but also in overseas markets.

5.2.2.2. The Influence of Non-Product-Related Attributes on Symbolic Benefits

The positive relationship between non-product-related attributes and consumers' perceived symbolic benefits is hypothesised in the domestic consumer context (H5D) and the overseas consumer context (H5O). This hypothesised relationship is justified on the basis of the concept of social identity theory (Tajfel and Turner 1985) and the user imagery nature of non-product-related attributes (Keller 1993). In both domestic and overseas consumer contexts, the hypothesised relationship is supported. The hypothesis H5D which deals with the relationship in the domestic market context is supported as it is shown to be positively significant. The hypothesis H5O which posits the relationship in the overseas market context is also accepted because it

indicates a positive and significant relationship exists. These findings mean that non-product-related attributes can be utilised by both domestic and overseas fans as tools for classifying themselves in a specific social group. Thus, in both domestic and overseas consumer contexts, non-product-related attributes increase sport brand consumers' perception of symbolic benefits.

Consistent with previous research contributions (Bauer et al. 2005, Bauer et al. 2008), this research finding shows non-product-related attributes have a positive influence on domestic consumers' perception of symbolic benefits (H5D). Moreover, the acceptance of hypothesis H5O suggests that highly committed fans in overseas markets have an identical tendency to domestic consumers in their reaction to symbolic benefits. Keller (1993, p.4) argues that "they [symbolic benefits] usually correspond to non-product-related attributes and relate to underlying needs for social approval or personal expression and outer-directed self-esteem". The findings of this research empirically validate Keller's (1993) assertion for both domestic and overseas consumer contexts. The findings of the hypotheses H2D and H2O show that product-related attributes are not positively related to symbolic benefits in both domestic and overseas consumer contexts. On the other hand, the findings of H5D and H5O show that contextual factors (non-product-related attributes) are positively influential both domestic and overseas fans in their perception of symbolic benefits.

Another possible explanation of these findings can be drawn from Fisher and Wakefield's (1998) work. Fisher and Wakefield (1998) demonstrate that fans of unsuccessful teams tend to ignore the team performance related factor and, instead, to associate with factors that are unrelated to the team performance in their identification with the team. In conjunction with the chosen brand's lack of sporting

success in recent years, it can be said that the fans (the respondents of the survey) may be react to more likely to non-product-related attributes in identifying themselves with the brand.

5.2.2.3. The Influence of Non-Product-Related Attributes on Experiential Benefits

The hypothesis H6D and its overseas equivalent H6O hypothesise a positive relationship between non-product-related attributes and experiential benefits. The justification for this hypothesised relationship is drawn from the concept of consumer aesthetics and experiential consumption (Hirschman and Holbrook 1982, Holbrook and Hirschman 1982, Holbrook et al. 1984) and the nature of non-product-related attributes as usage imagery attributes (Keller 1993). The hypothesised relationship is supported in both domestic and overseas consumer contexts. The result of the research shows that the relationship is positively significant in both consumer contexts. These findings mean that non-product-related attributes as usage imagery attributes can stimulate both domestic and overseas fans' emotional or sensory pleasure. Thus, non-product-related attributes increase sport brand consumers' perceived experiential benefits in both domestic and overseas markets.

Hypotheses H3D and H3O, discussed in section 5.2.1.3, found that product-related attributes do not have a positive influence on consumers' experiential benefits in both domestic and overseas consumer contexts. These findings would seem to suggest that committed fans' sensory pleasure and experiential satisfaction are derived from non-product-related attributes rather than product-related attributes. This means, in other words, that consumers with high attitudinal loyalty in both domestic and

overseas markets are more likely to react to contextual factors in perceiving experiential benefits of sport brand consumption.

In conceptualising the notion of consuming as experience using the case of professional baseball consumers, Holt (1995, p.6) notes that "aesthetic responses involve emotional reactions to the artistry and beauty of professional baseball" and "spectators are particularly responsive to situations and actions that challenge the expectations set up by the baseball world framework". In the same vein, the finding of the current research suggests that committed football fans are responsive to how a match is played by the team (product delivery) in their sensory and experiential satisfaction rather than whether the team wins or loses the game. Probably, this is because fans with high attitudinal loyalty have a long-term expectation of the brand and, thus, grant more importance to contextual aspects of the brand instead of match results. Additionally, a previous study of Kolbe and James (2000) insists that product delivery may facilitate spectators' feeling of excitement. The findings of this research provide empirical support for the claim of Kolbe and James (2000).

5.2.2.4. The Relationships between Non-Product-Related Attributes and Perceived Benefits

In the domestic market context, the three hypothesised relationships regarding the impacts of non-product-related attributes on functional benefits (H4D), symbolic benefits (H5D), and experiential benefits (H6D) are all supported. These finding show that means-end chain relationships exist between non-product-related attributes and domestic fans' perception of benefits.

Amongst the three types of perceived benefits, the influence of non-product-related attributes on functional benefits shows the strongest relationship, followed by those on experiential benefits and symbolic benefits. These results are consistent with previous studies on associations for professional sport brands (Bauer et al. 2005, Bauer et al. 2008) that show non-product-related attributes have a positive influence on perceived benefits and the impacts are even larger than those of product-related attributes. Moreover, a number of previous studies on sport fan motivation (Funk et al. 2001, Gladden and Funk 2001, Mahony et al. 2002) also show that motives relevant to non-product-related attributes influence sport fans' motivation to support relatively more strongly than motives relevant to product-related attributes. An explanation for this phenomenon may be found from loyal fans' long lasting relationship with their teams. In English football, loyal fans are extremely unlikely to change their supporting team (Parker and Stuart 1997). Consequently, those fans are used to experiencing both good and bad seasons. Thus, their utility perception is not easily influenced by changeable product-related attributes but, instead, they are prone to react to contextual attributes which are non-product-related. The results suggest that at the level of attitudinally loyal customers, non-product-related attributes have relevance to the consumers' evaluation of benefits achieved from the consumption of professional sport brands. Given that the product-related attributes are not relevant for the domestic consumers' perception of benefits (section 5.2.1.4), these results suggest that utilising contextual factors (non-product-related attributes) in developing marketing or branding strategies may be more effective for communicating with the consumers with high attitudinal loyalty than using product-related attributes.

In the overseas markets setting, three hypotheses that posited the influence of non-product-related attributes on functional benefits (H4O), symbolic benefits (H5O), and experiential benefits (H6O) are also all supported. The result of the structural model testing for the overseas consumers shows that symbolic benefits are the most affected benefits by non-product-related attributes, while experiential benefits are the least influenced benefits. As it was discussed in the previous paragraph, these results are consistent with past research contributions (Bauer et al. 2005, Bauer et al. 2008). Given that the hypotheses regarding the influence of product-related attributes on perceived benefits were rejected earlier (section 5.2.1), at the level of attitudinally loyal customers, these research findings mean that non-product-related attributes act as the main determinants for the overseas consumers' perception of benefits as they do for the domestic consumers.

However, it should be noted that there are a difference between the domestic and overseas fans in the degree of non-product-related attributes' impact to the perceived benefits. For the domestic consumers, non-product-related attributes are most influential on functional benefits and the impact on symbolic benefits is the least, whereas the overseas consumers' perception of symbolic benefits is affected most strongly by non-product-related attributes and their perception of experiential benefits is the least influenced. This difference between domestic and overseas fans will be discussed in section 5.5.

5.3. Determinants of Consumers' Attitudinal Loyalty

The hypothesised relationships between the three types of perceived benefits (functional benefits, symbolic benefits, and experiential benefits) and consumers' attitudinal loyalty are discussed in this section. The influences of each type of perceived benefits on consumers' attitudinal loyalty are discussed first, and then an overall discussion of the relationships between perceived benefits and attitudinal loyalty is provided.

5.3.1. The Influence of Functional Benefits on Attitudinal Loyalty

The hypothesis H7Dm and its overseas equivalent H7Om propose that there is a positive relationship between functional benefits and fans' attitudinal loyalty. This hypothesised relationship is justified by the concepts of expectancy-value theory (Fishbein 1963) and the utilitarian function of attitudes (Katz 1960). The hypothesis is rejected in both domestic and overseas consumer contexts due to the fact that the hypothesised relationship is negatively significant in the two market contexts. This finding means that consumers' perception of functional benefits does not increase the attitudinal loyalty of consumers in either domestic or overseas markets.

Given that functional benefits are often regarded as significant motives of sport consumers, the rejection of the hypotheses H7Dm and H7Om is unexpected. Smith (1988, p.56) describes sport as "an oasis of stability in a turbulent society" and argued that sport's traditional attractiveness is its ability to provide a simple regulated environment for consumers who wish to be away from complicated daily life. Additionally, a previous study of Stone (1969) claims that because most people

have at least a certain amount of knowledge of sport, it is one of the safest topics of involving conversation. Consequently, the socialising opportunity given by sport can appeal to sport consumers (Stone 1969). Some of previous studies on sport consumers' motivational factors (Funk et al. 2003, Gladden and Funk 2001) show that brand associations of functional benefits such as escape and socialising are the factors which motivate those consumers to support a sport team. Opposed to these previous studies, the findings of this research show that functional benefits such as escape and socialising are not a reason for domestic and overseas fans' support football teams. This result is understandable by considering the highly committed fans' purpose of supporting a football team. For the consumers with high attitudinal loyalty, supporting their favourite football team may not be a method or means of achieving other objects or solving externally caused problems but the football team itself is their purpose of supporting. Thus, the highly committed consumers might refuse to agree with the suggestion that they support their clubs as a means of achieving other aims. Moreover, Gladden and Funk (2002) also note that in conceptualising brand associations in professional sport context, functional benefits are not particularly applicable due to the intangible and perishable nature of professional sport.

The result of the hypothesis H7Om which rejects the positive influence of functional benefits on overseas consumers' attitudinal loyalty is worthy of attention. Given a previous study (Choi 2007), overseas consumers' loyalty towards European professional football clubs is expected to be positively influenced by functional benefits. However, the result shows that like domestic consumers overseas consumers with high attitudinal loyalty are not actually affected positively by the

functional benefits in their attitudinal loyalty formation. This means that, at the level of attitudinally loyal fans, consumers in overseas markets also support a football team not as a way of solving or satisfying other needs but as a purpose in itself. This will be further discussed later in conjunction with a discussion of the symbolic benefits' influence on attitudinal loyalty (chapter 5.3.4).

5.3.2. The Influence of Symbolic Benefits on Attitudinal Loyalty

The hypotheses H8Dm and H8Om posit that symbolic benefits have a positive influence on attitudinal loyalty of sport brand consumers in domestic and overseas markets respectively. These hypotheses are justified by the concepts of expectancy-value theory (Fishbein 1963) and the value expressive function of attitudes (Katz 1960). Both hypotheses are supported as this research finding shows the hypothesised relationship is positively significant in the two consumer contexts. Thus, perceived symbolic benefits are believed to increase the attitudinal loyalty of domestic and overseas consumers towards professional sport brands.

There are a number of previous studies that show brand associations of symbolic benefits, such as identification or peer group acceptance, are the main motives of sport consumers' support towards a team (King 1997, King 2002, Kolbe and James 2000, Parker and Stuart 1997, Richardson 2004, Wakefield 1995). Consistent with these previous studies, the research finding indicates that symbolic benefits play an important role in forming attitudinal loyalty of football fans. Given that the chosen brand (Arsenal FC) for the survey is a football team in England where football clubs are very closely tied with their community (Parker and Stuart 1997), the acceptance

of H8Dm is not surprising. The influence of symbolic benefits in forming consumers' loyalty towards their sport team brands has been particularly emphasised in the domestic market context and the current research finding confirms that.

The result of hypothesis H8Om shows that symbolic benefits are the most influential factor to overseas fans' attitudinal loyalty. The result suggests that the overseas consumers with high attitudinal loyalty wish to express their identity by being loyal to the professional sport brand, like the highly committed domestic consumers do. A similar result is shown in a previous research contribution of Kwon and Trail (2001). The study (Kwon and Trail 2001) compares sport fan motivation of American and International students and shows that the level of identification with team is not significantly different between American and International students. In line with the study of Kwon and Trail (2001), the findings of this research show that once fans become attitudinally loyal, the fans' level of identification with their teams is equally high and plays an important role in loyalty formation regardless of whether they are local or non-local.

As discussed earlier in chapter 2 (section 2.3.2), the value-expressive function of attitudes serves consumers' needs of expressing their self-image, and, underneath this desire, there is the consumers' eagerness to be classified in a social group which they wish to belong to (Locander and Spivey 1978). In the case of domestic consumers, the social groups they want to be categorised with are often family members, friends, or local communities. On the other hand, for the highly committed overseas fans, the social groups they wish to be classified with might be the conventional fans of the football clubs, who are actually the domestic consumers with high attitudinal loyalty. Those highly committed fans in overseas markets probably want to be recognised as

real fans of their favourite football teams and hope to be distinguished from general overseas consumers such as 'casual followers' (Tapp and Clowes 2002) or fans with 'spurious loyalty' (Day 1969, Jacoby 1971, Mahony et al. 2000).

These previous studies (King 1997, 2002, Richardson and O'Dwyer 2003) insist that there can be certain football fans, who believe themselves to be 'authentic' fans. They regard other fans to be 'inauthentic' fans and try to distinguish themselves from them (King 1997, 2002, Richardson and O'Dwyer 2003). The work of King (1997) describes this kind of distinction behaviour using a case of some Manchester United fans' reaction to the redevelopment of Old Trafford in 1990s.

> "... the replica shirt and other branded clothing have been regarded with increasing hostility by the lads, who see the clothing as symbolic of the developments at Old Trafford which have threatened their notion of fandom. The wearing of the replica shirt is irretrievably associated in the lad's consciousness with a style of support which is not masculine. ...
>
> In response to the association of replica shirts and club clothing with inappropriate style of support, the lads have self-consciously developed a style of dress by which they distinguish themselves from unacceptable support and sustain a distinctive identity for themselves." (King 1997, p.339)

Similarly, highly committed overseas fans may want to be distinguished from 'inauthentic' overseas fans whose loyalty is spurious. For overseas fans with high attitudinal loyalty, the motives for support of those overseas fans who simply follow a winning team or a particular player is considered to be an inappropriate style of

support. Thus, in order to make a distinction between themselves and casual overseas followers, the committed overseas fans may try to attain a committed domestic fan-like identity by being attitudinally loyal towards a football club.

5.3.3. The Influence of Experiential Benefits on Attitudinal Loyalty

A positive relationship between perceived experiential benefits and consumers' attitudinal loyalty is hypothesised in the domestic market context (H9Dm) and the overseas market context (H9Om). The justification for this hypothesised relationship is taken from the concepts of expectancy-value theory (Fishbein 1963) and the utilitarian function of attitudes (Katz 1960). The hypotheses H9Dm and H9Om are all supported as the result shows that the posited relationship is positively significant in both domestic and overseas consumer contexts. Thus, it is believed that perception of experiential benefits increases the attitudinal loyalty of sport consumers in both domestic and overseas markets.

This result is consistent with previous studies on sport consumers' motives to support a sport team which shows that brand associations of experiential benefits play a role in initiating consumers' support towards a sport team. The qualitative work of Trujillo and Krizek (1994) advances that a consumer's attachment to a sport brand can occur from the customer's nostalgic memory, and the study of Gladden and Funk (2001) shows that the construct of nostalgia has a positive relationship with consumers' long-term loyalty towards professional sport brands. On the other hand, the research of Won and Kitamura (2007) asserts that community pride is one of the drivers to make South Korean football fans loyal towards football teams. The current

research finding confirms those previous studies by indicating the positive relationship between experiential benefits and attitudinal loyalty of English football consumers in domestic and overseas markets.

This finding suggests that fans' wish to stimulate their nostalgic memories or feelings through the consumption of professional sport brands, and their attitudinal loyalty will be increased when the brands supply such stimuli. Holbrook's (1993) study asserts that nostalgia plays a role in forming consumers' preference. The finding of this research provides a modest support for Holbrook's (1993) assertion in the context of professional sport brand consumption.

Previously, the findings of the hypotheses H7Dm and H7Om show that consumers' perceptions of functional benefits do not increase their attitudinal loyalty either in domestic and overseas markets. In the results of H9Dm and H9Om, however, perceived experiential benefits are shown to have a positive influence on domestic and overseas fans' attitudinal loyalty. These findings provide a meaningful insight into committed fans' utilitarian needs in following a sport team. As discussed in chapter 2 (section 2.9.2.2), both functional and experiential benefits are related to utilitarian function of attitudes. However, they are different because functional benefits are related to solving consumers' externally oriented issues, such as acquiring socialising opportunities, whereas experiential benefits are related to dealing with their internally oriented issues, such as nostalgia. Given this difference between functional and experiential benefits, the utilitarian function which consumers wish to obtain by being attitudinally loyal towards a professional sport brand is associated with satisfying their internal needs rather than solving external problems.

5.3.4. The Relationships between Perceived Benefits and Attitudinal Loyalty

Amongst the three hypothesised relationships between the three types of perceived benefits and consumers' attitudinal loyalty in the domestic consumer context, the impact of functional benefits (H7Dm) is shown to be negative, whereas those of the symbolic benefits (H8Dm) and experiential benefits (H9Dm) are positive. The influence of symbolic benefits on attitudinal loyalty is stronger than that of experiential benefits. This result is consistent with past studies which emphasise the importance of symbolic benefits in forming consumers' loyalty towards sport team brands (Parker and Stuart 1997, Richardson 2004, Wakefield 1995). On the other hand, overseas consumers show similar tendency to domestic consumers in the influences of functional benefits (H7Om), symbolic benefits (H8Om), and experiential benefits (H9Om) on consumers' attitudinal loyalty. This means that the overseas consumers have similar characteristics to the domestic consumers in terms of the types of benefits that increase their attitudinal loyalty.

The similar tendencies of domestic and overseas consumers in these hypothesised relationships are very important findings in this research. The research findings suggest that, at the level of highly committed consumers, the overseas fans' needs that they wish to satisfy from the consumption of professional sport brands are similar to the domestic fans. It is shown that both domestic and overseas fans are mainly influenced by symbolic benefits in their loyalty formation towards professional sport brands. This may be unexpected to one who anticipated the relatively smaller impact of symbolic benefits on the overseas consumers' attitudinal loyalty.

A number of previous studies highlight that symbolic benefits are important factors that influence domestic fans' attitudinal loyalty (e.g. Gladden and Funk 2001, Kwon and Trail 2001, Mahony et al. 2002, Richardson 2004, Wakefield 1995, Won and Kitamura 2007). The significance of symbolic needs in domestic fans' loyalty formation is often explained by environmental influence (e.g. Kolbe and James 2000, Parker and Stuart 1997, Wakefield 1995). Domestic fans are likely to have influences from their surroundings, such as family members or the locations they are associated with, at the early stage of their choice of professional sport brands. Previous research on domestic consumers' motives of sport team loyalty confirms that domestic consumers are likely affected by those environmental elements in their sport team brand choice (Kolbe and James 2000, Parker and Stuart 1997, Tapp 2004) and, consequently, symbolic benefits seem to be an important factor for their loyalty towards the sport teams. However, it is difficult to imagine that the consumers in overseas markets are likely to have such environmental influences at this early stage of brand choice. Hence, symbolic benefits' role in loyalty formation could have been expected as less influential for the overseas consumers in comparison with the other two benefits. In this study, however, symbolic benefits show the strongest relationship with overseas consumers' attitudinal loyalty.

A possible explanation for this phenomenon may be drawn from social identity theory. Social identity theory is defined as "the part of the individual's self-concept which derives from their knowledge of their membership in a social group together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership" (Tajfel 1982, p.24). In the context of the current study, social identity which committed overseas fans want to be associated with is perhaps a 'real fan' of the football team. In section

5.2.1.2 of this chapter, it is discussed that committed overseas fans tend to remain loyal regardless of team's success/failure (BIRF). Campbell et al. (2004, p.153) explain that a primary desire of acting BIRF "may be avoiding being labeled a fair-weather fan". Given the Campbell et al.'s explanation, the overseas fans with high attitudinal loyalty do not want to be seen as other overseas fair-weather fans who simply follow a winning team or support an individual player in a team. Thus, in order to be differentiated from those overseas fair weather fans and to obtain a 'authentic fanship', committed overseas fans wish to express their identity as a 'real' fan, and they may be served these symbolic needs by being attitudinally loyal.

5.4. Influence of Attitudinal Loyalty on Behavioural Loyalty

The hypothesis H12D that domestic consumers' attitudinal loyalty is positively related to their behavioural loyalty is posited in Fishbein and Ajzen's (1975) work on attitude and behaviour which contends that a close correspondence exists between a human being's beliefs, feelings, and intentions, and that person's behaviour. The hypothesised relationship between attitudinal loyalty and behavioural loyalty is tested in the domestic consumer context only, because the result of the exploratory factor analysis shows that the measurement scale of behavioural loyalty is inappropriate for the overseas consumer context. The hypothesis H12D is supported as the result shows a positive and significant relationship between attitudinal and behavioural loyalty. This finding means that domestic fans' attitudinal loyalty has a positive impact on their behavioural loyalty. The acceptance of the hypothesis H12D provides empirical support for Fishbein and Ajzen's (1975) conceptualisation of the

positive relationship between attitude and behaviour, and also shows that the concept is valid in the professional team sport setting.

The influence of attitudinal loyalty on behavioural loyalty could not be tested in the overseas consumer context because the measurement items of behavioural loyalty lacked internal consistency. Although the relationship was unable to be examined, attitudinal loyalty is expected to increase overseas consumers' behavioural loyalty. Several previous studies (Chaudhuri and Holbrook 2001, Freedman et al. 1970, Iwasaki and Havitz 2004) show that there is a positive influence of attitude on behaviour. However, in order to measure overseas fans' behavioural loyalty, an alternative measurement scale should be developed.

The form of behavioural loyalty expressed by overseas consumers could be different from that of domestic fans. Possibly, the current measures of sport consumers' behavioural loyalty are not appropriate for overseas fans because those fans are geographically dislocated. Due to the geographical restriction and, consequently, time difference, the overseas fans' accessibility to a match (both attending and watching) is severely limited. Thus, the measure regarding the frequency of attending or watching a favourite team's matches cannot reflect the overseas fans' behavioural aspect of loyalty well enough. Moreover, given that the availability of club related merchandise goods in foreign markets varies depending on markets, the scale item regarding the frequency of purchasing the merchandise goods is also difficult to reflect the overseas fans' behavioural loyalty. Therefore, in order to measure overseas fans' behavioural loyalty, future research is needed to develop an alternative measurement scale which can efficiently estimate those consumers' behavioural aspect of loyalty.

5.5. Differences in Loyalty Formation Process towards Professional Sport Brands between Domestic and Overseas Consumers

The hypothesis H13 that the model structure of the overseas consumers' loyalty formation is different from that of the domestic consumers is posited in the argument of context-dependent consumer evaluation on brand (Day et al. 1979). The comparison of the two proposed models for the domestic and overseas consumers shows that those two models are not identical. Thus, the hypothesis that there are differences between the domestic and overseas consumers in forming attitudinal loyalty towards professional sport brands is supported. Day et al. (1979) assert that consumers' evaluation of brand associations can vary depending on the contexts in which the consumers exist and the particular needs which the consumers wish to satisfy from the brand consumption. The acceptance of the hypothesis H13 validates this assertion in the professional sport brand setting and the contexts of domestic and overseas consumers.

The domestic and overseas fans show not only differences but also similarities in their loyalty formation. The two proposed models show differences in terms of the relationships between attributes and benefits. Product-related attributes are insignificant for the domestic fans' perceived benefits, whereas they are negatively related to the overseas fans' perceived benefits. On the other hand, the influences of non-product-related attributes on the three types of perceived benefits also show dissimilarity between the two groups of customers. In the domestic consumer context, functional benefits receive the strongest influence from non-product-related attributes, followed by experiential benefits and symbolic benefits. Non-product-related attributes have the strongest influence on the overseas consumers' perceptions

of symbolic benefits and functional benefits are the second most strongly influenced benefits. In spite of the fact that the two proposed models of the domestic and overseas consumers show differences in the attributes-benefits dimension of the models, they have similarities in terms of the relationships between perceived benefits and attitudinal loyalty. The results indicate a similar tendency between the two groups of consumers in the benefits-attitudinal loyalty dimension of the models. In both domestic and overseas models, symbolic benefits show the strongest relationship with attitudinal loyalty, whereas functional benefits are shown to be negatively related to attitudinal loyalty. The influence of experiential benefits on attitudinal loyalty is relatively weaker than symbolic benefits'.

This comparison of the two proposed models provides an insight into the two consumer groups' consumption behaviour of professional sport brands. In the domestic fan context, symbolic and experiential benefits increase the domestic consumers' attitudinal loyalty and those benefits are positively affected by non-product-related attributes. In line with Katz's (1960) concept of a functional approach to attitudes formation, the findings of this research show that committed domestic fans' attitudinal loyalty is formed by serving their symbolic needs through the value-expressive function of attitudinal loyalty, and experiential needs through the utilitarian function of it. Particularly, symbolic benefits most strongly influence domestic consumers' loyalty formation, and this result is consistent with previous research (Bauer et al. 2005, Bauer et al. 2008, Gladden and Funk 2001). On the other hand, experiential benefits show a positive relationship with attitudinal loyalty, whereas functional benefits indicate a negative relationship with it. Thus, it is believed that domestic consumers do not seek to solve external problems in the

brand consumption but wish to satisfy their internal needs by being attitudinally loyal towards the sport team brands through the utilitarian function of attitudes (Katz 1960). Non-product-related attributes are shown to be factors that positively influence the utility perceptions of the domestic fans. This suggests that communicating with the highly committed domestic fans through non-product-related attributes can be effective to foster those consumers' attitudinal loyalty towards professional sport brands.

The overseas fans' attitudinal loyalty is also shown to be positively influenced by symbolic and experiential benefits. Those benefits are positively affected by non-product-related attributes but are negatively influenced by product-related attributes. In comparison with the domestic fans, it is worthy of attention that the benefits-attitudinal loyalty dimension of the proposed model for the overseas fans shows a similar tendency to the domestic fans'. This means that satisfying symbolic needs also plays an important role in the overseas fans' loyalty formation, as it does in the domestic consumers'. Given Katz's (1960) concept of a functional approach to attitudes formation, this finding suggests that overseas consumers with high attitudinal loyalty pursue symbolic benefits which can be served through the value-expressive function of being attitudinally loyal towards the football team brands. As discussed in the section 5.3.2, the overseas fans with high attitudinal loyalty may be eager to express their identity as a highly committed fan of the professional sport teams. Consequently, when the symbolic benefits of a professional sport brand serve the overseas fans' needs, the overseas fans' attitudinal loyalty is likely to be increased. On the other hand, unlike domestic fans, non-product-related attributes are most

strongly related to the overseas fans' perceived symbolic benefits, and product-related attributes are negatively related to their perceptions of benefits.

The importance of symbolic needs to the highly committed overseas fans may provide a possible explanation for the result of the attributes-benefits dimension in the proposed model of those fans. Based on social identity theory (Tajfel 1982) and the arguments of King (1997, 2002) and Richardson and O'Dwyer (2003), it is proposed that committed overseas fans may have a tendency to differentiate themselves and other general overseas consumers. The attitudinally loyal overseas fans who normally do not have obvious connections with their football clubs, such as family influence or geographical relationships, wish to have a means of expressing their high commitment to the teams and want to be distinguished from casual overseas followers, whose loyalty is considered to be spurious. For the purpose of making a distinction between themselves and the casual overseas followers, the committed overseas fans might consciously behave similar to committed domestic fans. Self-monitoring theory (Snyder 1974) may provide an explanation for this behaviour of committed overseas fans. Self-monitoring is related to "individual differences in the willingness or ability to modify behavior in accordance with the forms of situational appropriateness" (Miller and Thayer 1988, p.545). Accordingly, high self-monitors are more concerned with their self-image and social acceptance, and are willing to adjust their behaviour or appearance in order to achieve that image (Mahony et al. 1999, Snyder 1979). Because a 'true' fan is seen as an admirable image by sport fans (Campbell et al. 2004), committed overseas fans may adopt highly loyal domestic fans' supporting behaviour, such as BIRFing, in order to make their fandom more 'authentic'. Thus, it is possible that the overseas fans learn how

the local committed fans behave and react towards the professional sport brands, and copy their supporting behaviour, in order to categorise themselves with the 'authentic' domestic fans and differentiate from the 'inauthentic' overseas fair-weather fans. As a result, those committed overseas fans tend to react more sensitively to the contextual factors (non-product-related attributes) and intentionally refuse product-related attributes' influence on their attitudinal loyalty formation.

This peculiar trait of the overseas consumers with high attitudinal loyalty is an important finding of this research. It is generally recognised that marketing and branding strategies using product-related attributes are effective routes to develop the overseas markets for professional sport brands (Branscombe and Wann 1991). However, marketers, who wish to foster the overseas fans' attitudinal loyalty and shift casual overseas followers to highly committed fans, should communicate with the overseas fans through strategies utilising non-product-related attributes and consider the symbolic needs of those consumers.

Overall, the consumers in domestic and overseas markets show similarities and dissimilarities in their psychological process of forming loyalty towards professional sport brands. Firstly, overseas fans with high attitudinal loyalty have a similar tendency to committed fans in domestic market in terms of the influence of benefits on attitudinal loyalty. Both consumer groups are mainly motivated by symbolic benefits. This means the value-expressive function of attitudes plays the most important role in football fans' loyalty formation in both domestic and overseas market contexts. Secondly, the two markets show dissimilarities in terms of the influences of product-related attributes and non-product-related attributes on consumers' perception of benefits. Lastly, the research explains the similarity

between domestic and overseas consumers in terms of the committed overseas fans' intention to distinguish themselves from other overseas consumers. In order to be distinguished from casual overseas followers, overseas fans with high attitudinal loyalty may exhibit similar characteristics to committed domestic fans. Moreover, the dissimilarity in the relevance of attributes to the perception of benefits can be interpreted by the differentiating intention of committed overseas fans. The intention may lead the committed overseas fans to intentionally refuse the influence of product-related attributes, which are likely relevant to casual overseas followers, and seek alternative resources of identification. Consequently, this behaviour causes the dissimilarity.

The findings of the current research provide a meaningful insight into overseas consumers of professional sport brands who have high attitudinal loyalty. They exhibit different characteristics from general overseas consumers and tend to behave rather similarly to committed fans in the domestic market. The findings suggest that a new approach is necessary to develop sustainable support to professional sport brands in overseas markets. The conventional marketing strategies of professional sport brands for overseas marketplaces have been disproportionate to entering the markets and to targeting general overseas consumers. However, although those types of marketing strategies are necessary at the initial stage, it is questionable whether the overseas consumers will stay with the brands on a long-term basis because their loyalty is likely spurious. Thus, in order to secure sustainable support from consumers in overseas markets, professional sport brands should consider fostering the attitudinal aspect of overseas fans' loyalty. The current research urges that marketing managers of professional sport brands should pay attention to the

symbolic needs of overseas consumers and focus on satisfying their needs. Moreover, the current research findings suggest that utilising contextual factors (non-product-related attributes) of the brands would be effective for nurturing the attitudinal loyalty of overseas consumers.

5.6. Chapter Summary

This chapter provided the discussions on the findings of the current research. This chapter firstly discussed the results of hypotheses testing regarding the relationships between attributes and consumers' perceived benefits in section 5.2. The discussions about the influences of product-related attributes and non-product-related attributes on benefits were provided in the sub-sections 5.2.1 and 5.2.2 respectively. The research findings showed that there is no positive relationship between product-related attributes and perceived benefits. On the other hand, based on means-end theory (Gutman 1982) and the nature of user and usage imagery of non-product-related attributes (Keller 1993), the research showed that means-end chain relationships exist between non-product-related attributes and consumers' utility perception in both domestic and overseas contexts.

Section 5.3 presented the discussions about the research findings of the hypothesised relationships between three types of benefits and consumers' attitudinal loyalty. The discussions about the relationship between benefits and attitudinal loyalty were described in both the domestic and the overseas consumer contexts. In line with Katz's (1960) conceptualisation on the functional approach to attitudes, the research findings proved that the value-expressive function of attitudes plays the largest parts

in the formation of attitudinal loyalty towards professional sport brands in both domestic and overseas markets by showing symbolic benefits are the most influential factor to consumers' attitudinal loyalty in the two market contexts.

The discussion about the impact of domestic consumers' attitudinal loyalty on behavioural loyalty was presented in section 5.4. The findings of this study indicated that behavioural loyalty can be considered as a consequence of attitudinal loyalty in domestic consumer context. This provides empirical support to Fishbein and Ajzen's (1975) notion of the relationship between attitudes and behaviour.

Section 5.5 provided the discussion of the comparison between the domestic consumers and the overseas consumers in the overall process of attitudinal loyalty formation towards professional sport brands. The discussion dealt with both differences and similarities between the two groups of consumers. This research found that psychological process of attitudinal loyalty formation is different between domestic consumers and overseas consumers as the two consumer groups indicate a difference in the relevance of attributes to their perception of benefits. However, they also show similarity in the influences of benefits on attitudinal loyalty, as symbolic benefits are the most influential on their attitudinal loyalty formation. This finding suggests a useful insight into committed overseas consumers' nature. In terms of the needs which consumers pursue to satisfy in the consumption of professional sport brands, overseas consumers are similar to domestic consumers at the level of highly attitudinally loyal fans. Thus, overseas consumers with high attitudinal loyalty should be seen differently from other overseas consumers with low or no attitudinal loyalty as their functional approaches to be loyal towards professional sport brands would be different to each other.

Following this discussion chapter, chapter 6 will provide the implications of this research in terms of theoretical and managerial implications. The limitation of the current research and the suggestions for future research will also be presented in the following chapter.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

6.1. Introduction

This chapter concludes the thesis presenting research contribution, research limitations, and directions for future research. This chapter consists of five sections of which this introduction is the first section. Section 6.2 provides research contributions in terms of theoretical and managerial aspects. The limitations of the current research and the suggestions for future research are discussed in section 6.3. This chapter is summarised in section 6.4. Lastly, section 6.5 describes the overview of the thesis.

6.2. Research Contributions

6.2.1. Theoretical Contributions

There have been a number of studies on professional sports fans' loyalty, their motives and what influences loyalty (e.g. Bauer et al. 2008, Choi 2007, Gladden and Funk 2001, Kaynak et al. 2008, Mahony et al. 2002, Parker and Stuart 1997). However, these studies of sports fan loyalty have been conducted mainly in the domestic market context and there is a lack of research on consumers in overseas markets. Even though there are some studies which carried out comparative research between different consumer groups such as regional origins (Kwon and Trail 2001), ethnicity (Bilyeu and Wann 2002), and nationality (Won and Kitamura 2007), there

has been almost no research that compares professional sport consumers in the brand's domestic market and those who are outside of its domestic market.

This thesis aims to fill this gap in the theory by studying the loyalty formation process of domestic and overseas consumers of professional sports, specifically between football fans of a Premier League football brand in the UK and those outside of the UK. This study is particularly focussed on the formation of attitudinal loyalty in both of these contexts. It takes a series of hypotheses about brand associations and their impact on loyalty using means-end theory (1982, 1997) and the functional theory of attitude (Katz 1960, Lutz 1991).

This research contributes to the literature fourfold. Firstly, this research contributes to theory development by conceptualising the means-end chain relationships amongst the types of brand associations and consumer loyalty towards professional sport brands. Secondly, a contribution is made to exploring the attitudinal loyalty formation process of both domestic and overseas consumers. Thirdly, this research contributes to identifying committed overseas fan behaviour of basking in spite of reflected failure (BIRFing). Lastly, a contribution is made to explaining committed overseas fans' behaviour of differentiating themselves from overseas fair weather fans by self-monitoring theory.

This research conceptualises the sequential relationships amongst five types of brand associations (product-related-attributes, non-product-related attributes, functional benefits, symbolic benefits, and experiential benefits) and attitudinal loyalty. Based on the concepts of means-end chain and the function of attitude, the sequential model is composed of two stages. Firstly, it hypothesises the relationships amongst the types of brand associations which conceptualises two types of attributes (product-

related and non-product-related attributes) as exogenous variables (means), and three types of benefits (functional, symbolic, and experiential benefits) as endogenous variables (ends). Secondly, in the relationships between the three types of benefits and attitudinal loyalty, the influence of the perceived benefits on attitudinal loyalty is conceptualised. The relationship representing the influence of attitudinal loyalty on behavioural loyalty is included in the model for domestic consumers only. The results of the empirical tests show that means-end chain relationships exist amongst the types of brand associations and attitudinal loyalty. These findings provide empirical support for Bauer et al.'s (2008) study which asserts the existence of means-end relationship amongst the types of brand associations. Moreover, this research also suggests a possibility that causal relationships may exist in Keller's (1993) brand association model. The comparison of the two groups of consumers is discussed in terms of the attributes-benefits dimension and the benefits-attitudinal loyalty dimension below.

In terms of the relationships between two types of attributes and three types of benefits, the domestic consumers and the overseas consumers exhibit a different tendency. Firstly, in the domestic consumer context, the influences of product-related attributes on the perceived benefits are not significant, whereas those influences are shown to be negatively significant on the overseas consumers' perception of benefits. Secondly, even though non-product-related attributes have positively significant effects on consumers' perception of benefits in both domestic and overseas market contexts, there are dissimilar tendencies in the influences between the two groups of consumers. In the domestic market context, the influence of non-product-related attributes on the perception of functional benefits is the

largest, and the impact on symbolic benefits is the least. However, in the overseas market context, the impact of non-product-related attributes on the perception of symbolic benefits is the largest, followed by the impacts on functional benefits and experiential benefits. These research findings show that the domestic market and the overseas markets of the brand are heterogeneous in terms of the influences of brand attributes on the consumers' perception of brand benefits.

While the two groups of consumers show a difference in the attributes-benefits stage of the process, they display similarity in the benefits-attitudinal loyalty dimension of the model. In the relationships between the three types of benefits and consumers' attitudinal loyalty, the two consumer groups show a similar tendency. Symbolic benefits are most positively influential in domestic and overseas consumers' attitudinal loyalty formation, and experiential benefits also increase the attitudinal loyalty of the two groups of consumers. However, functional benefits are shown to have a negative influence on the attitudinal loyalty of consumers in the two market contexts. These research findings suggest that, from the functional point of view on attitudinal loyalty formation, the domestic consumers and the overseas fans of a professional sport brand are the same at the level of highly committed fans. These findings dispel myths that dislocated fans mainly seek functional benefits in their consumption of professional sport brands.

The findings of this research show that, like committed domestic fans, overseas fans with high attitudinal loyalty tend to remain loyal regardless of team success or failure. Previous research (Branscombe and Wann 1991) argues that dislocated fans are more likely to bask in reflected glory (BIRG) and to cut off reflected failure (CORF). In this study, however, the findings show that committed overseas fans

have a tendency to bask in spite of reflected failure (BIRF) (Campbell et al. 2004). This finding contradicts Branscombe and Wann's (1991) argument and suggests that committed overseas fans' support is persistent irrespective of a team's sporting performance.

Based on self-monitoring theory (Snyder 1974), this research provides an explanation for committed overseas fans' behaviour of copying committed domestic fans' behaviour and of differentiating themselves from other fair weather overseas fans. In order to achieve the social image of a 'true' fan, overseas fans with high attitudinal loyalty may imitate committed domestic fans' consumption behaviour. By adopting domestic fans' behaviour, committed overseas fans are able to be distinguished from inauthentic overseas fans and to make their loyalty more authentic. This finding extends the current knowledge about overseas fans with high attitudinal loyalty.

The findings of this study emphasise that consumers' symbolic needs have to be focused upon and non-product-related attributes should be utilised, for the purpose of fostering the attitudinal aspect of loyalty in overseas markets. Based on this insight suggested by the research findings, the following section provides the managerial implications of the research.

6.2.2. Empirical and Managerial Contributions

This research contributes empirically to the literature. There have been a number of studies on identifying brand associations for sport brands and developing measurement scales for the brand associations (Bauer et al. 2008, Gladden and Funk

2001, Gladden and Funk 2002, Kaynak et al. 2008, Ross 2006, Ross et al. 2006, Ross et al. 2007, Ross et al. 2008). Those studies conceptualise the brand associations and empirically test the measurement scales in both amateur and professional sports contexts. In line with the conceptualisation and the scale developments of brand associations, there have been also several studies to develop measurement scales for sport consumers' loyalty in both attitudinal and behavioural aspects (Bauer et al. 2008, Gladden and Funk 2001, Kaynak et al. 2008, Mahony et al. 2002). Even though those scales for brand associations and loyalty have been widely used in sport marketing and branding studies, the developments of those scales are limited to the domestic consumer context. Thus, in order to be used in overseas consumer setting, it is necessary to validate the existing measurement scales in overseas consumer context first. This research validates the existing scales for brand associations, attitudinal loyalty, and behavioural loyalty in the overseas consumer context. The following two paragraphs summarise the validation results of the measurement scales.

The result of factor reduction shows 13 factors out of 17 factors for brand associations are retained from both domestic and overseas consumer contexts. Aesthetics, Importance, and Knowledge are shown to be not independent dimensions, whereas Manager and Management seem to measure a same dimension. The other 12 factors are loaded separately. With this result, the current research contributes to the validation of brand association scales by showing that 13 factors of brand association scales can be used in conjunction with loyalty measures in both domestic and overseas contexts.

Sport consumer's loyalty is measured in terms of attitudinal and behavioural aspects. Psychological Commitment to Team (PCT) scale (Mahony et al. 2000) is used as the measurement scale for attitudinal loyalty in this research and the scale's validity is tested first. In their study of examining the validity of the PCT scale in amateur sport context with a student sample, Kwon and Trail (2003) suggest that the scale needs to be checked for its validity in the professional sport context using a non-student sample. This research empirically tests the validity of the PCT scale in a non-student professional sport consumer context, and verifies the assertion of Kwon and Trail (2003) that some of the items in the PCT scale cannot be used for measuring attitudinal loyalty. On the other hand, the following frequencies are used for measuring the behavioural aspect of sport consumer's loyalty: 1) watching a team's matches; 2) following the team-related news or reports through media; and 3) purchasing the team merchandise. This research empirically shows that these three behavioural loyalty measures, which have been suggested and used in previous studies (Funk and James 2001, Gladden and Funk 2001), are not suitable for being utilised in the overseas consumer context.

In terms of the managerial aspect of the implications, the comparison between domestic and overseas consumers in their attitudinal loyalty formation process is considerably suggestive. Particularly for marketing managers of professional sport teams who wish to develop the overseas markets, the research findings provide a useful insight into the overseas consumers which should be considered in the development of marketing strategies for expanding their markets to the overseas.

Growing importance of overseas markets for major professional sport brands emphasises the necessity to know not only how to enter the markets but also how to

nurture the overseas consumers' long-term loyalty. As previous research (Choi 2007) showed, marketing strategies utilising product-related attributes are believe to be useful ways of triggering the overseas consumers' brand awareness and attracting their attention at the initial stage of entering overseas markets. For example, signing notable Asian players has been practiced by a number of European football clubs as an effective way of making inroads into the Asian markets. However, although these marketing strategies, which depend on product-related attributes, seem to be able to attract overseas consumers' interests and create followers in overseas markets, it is uncertain whether those followers' loyalty towards the professional sport brands will continue over a longer term. For instance, those European football clubs who had signed Asian star players enjoyed popularity in the Asian markets for a short period of time but their popularity faded away shortly after the players' departure from the clubs. This anecdotal example hints that the overseas followers' loyalty which is triggered by product-related attributes dependent marketing strategies is not highly attitudinal but is spurious. Thus, in order to have sustainable support from overseas consumers, it is necessary to shift the overseas consumers' loyalty from a spurious one to attitudinal loyalty. The findings of the current research suggest professional sport brands should consider other routes for fostering overseas consumers' long-term loyalty, once the brands successfully attract initial support from those overseas followers. The following paragraphs suggest some ways of nurturing overseas consumers attitudinal loyalty based on the characteristics of highly committed overseas fans of professional sport brands.

This research shows that the overseas consumers' attitudinal loyalty is positively influenced by symbolic and experiential benefits as with domestic fans. This result

suggests that, in order to increase the overseas consumers' attitudinal loyalty, professional sport brands need to focus on satisfying the overseas consumers' symbolic and experiential benefits rather than functional benefits. Thus, it is necessary to provide stimuli for their symbolic and experiential benefits. In other words, professional sport teams should make overseas consumers feel like they belong to the clubs and supply more consumer experience to the fans in overseas markets. Due to the geographical restriction on the access to those markets, using online communication is recommended. For example, supporting foreign languages on official club websites and in newsletters could improve the consumer experience of the fans in overseas markets. In the same vein, operating official club accounts for social network services in foreign languages is also recommendable. As those overseas consumers wish to be recognised as real fans rather than marketable targets by their clubs and express their identity as committed fans, professional sport teams should show that they treat the overseas fans the same as the fans in the domestic market and provide elements which the overseas fans can utilise to show their identity as committed fans. A possible marketing tool for satisfying this type of overseas consumer needs is providing tangible methods which can be used by the overseas fans for expressing their identity. For example, professional sport clubs can consider issuing hard copy membership cards to the overseas subscribers of the official websites' online memberships, or launching a club credit card service in partnership with banks in the overseas markets.

The attributes-benefits dimension of the attitudinal loyalty formation process suggests useful ways to serve overseas consumers' symbolic and experiential benefits. The research findings show that non-product-related attributes have a

positive influence on overseas consumers' perception of symbolic and experiential benefits. Hence, marketers of professional sport teams should pay attention to contextual factors such as marketing tools which can foster overseas consumers' long-term loyalty serving those fans' symbolic and experiential needs. The focus of developing marketing strategies based on non-product-related attributes should be on displaying the clubs' willingness to build a long-term relationship with the overseas markets and making the fans in the overseas markets feel they can be a part of the clubs' history. One possible way of this contextual marketing is having a partnership with a foreign football association in youth development. For example, Sunderland AFC, who compete in the English Premier League, drove forward a partnership plan with the Korea Football Association (KFA) in 2011 including cooperation in developing KFA's youth programme. Although it is too early to judge the effect of such efforts, this type of marketing approach is a notable change as it shows the club's willingness to build a long-term relationship with the overseas market. Another possible way of building a long-term relationship with overseas markets is affiliating with professional football clubs in the target overseas markets. For instance, an advanced form of this partnership is the affiliation between AFC Ajax and Ajax Cape Town (Ajax CT). AFC Ajax, who are based in Amsterdam, Netherlands, own 51% of Ajax CT, who are based in Cape Town, The Republic of South Africa. These two clubs share an identical logo and home kit design and cooperate in youth development as a part of AFC Ajax's worldwide youth development programme. In terms of building a long-term relationship with overseas markets, this type of partnership model could also be considered by professional sport brands.

6.3. Research Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

Sport fans' loyalty has been a subject of research in marketing and the overseas consumer behaviour has been paid growing attention in sports industry. This research provides further understanding of the consumers outside of a professional sport brand's domestic market by identifying the differences and similarities between highly committed consumers in the domestic and the overseas markets. However, inevitably, there are limitations to the current research. The following subsections outline the limitations of the research and suggest directions for future studies.

The empirical aspect of this research was limited to the study of one chosen brand in one professional sport league, which is Arsenal FC in the English Premier League, although this limitation is caused by the time and resource restriction. Future research could consider including more brands of the professional sport for the survey. Future research could also explore the homogeneity and heterogeneity between domestic consumers and overseas consumers in different professional sports which are also globally popular such as basketball (e.g. National Basketball Association) or baseball (e.g. Major League Baseball). Moreover, a comparison of consumer behaviour amongst different sports, for example a comparison between football fans and baseball fans, can be considered as a direction for future research.

This study divided the respondents into two sample groups, which are the domestic consumers and overseas consumers, in order to compare the two types of consumers, but did not make further distinction amongst the overseas consumers. However, future research could further explore overseas consumers' loyalty towards foreign professional sport brands by subdividing overseas markets into several contexts, such as continents (e.g. Africa, America, and Asia), regions (e.g. Far East, Middle

East, and South East Asia), or countries (China, Japan, and Korea). Comparative studies using those subdivisions of overseas markets could provide further insights into the overseas consumers.

This study used brand associations as first-order variables which are utilised for the measurements of second-order variables (product-related attributes, non-product-related attributes, functional benefits, symbolic benefits, and experiential benefits). For the measures of the first-order variables, this study used existing measurement scales for brand associations of sport brands which were developed by a number of previous studies (Bauer et al. 2008, Gladden and Funk 2001, Gladden and Funk 2002, Kaynak et al. 2008, Ross 2006, Ross et al. 2006, Ross et al. 2007, Ross et al. 2008) and have been widely used in the literature. This was because the main purpose of this research was examining the relationships amongst the types of brand associations and attitudinal loyalty, rather than developing new measures. However, using the second-order factor model made the model too complicated and, as a result, it seems this caused the possible multicollinearity problem. Moreover, using second-order variables is shown to be not suitable for examining direct effects between attributes and loyalty due to the identification problem of structural equation modelling, even though those relationships are not hypothesised in the current research. Furthermore, there is also concern over the existing categorisation of the brand associations. In spite of the existence of many previous studies on grouping the brand associations, the present study shows a sign of doubt about the existing categorisation as the correlations between brand associations (first-order variables) are not high enough, particularly for attributes (section 4.4.1 and 4.4.7). Re-examining the existing categorisation of the brand associations is left for a future

study. Future research should consider developing a measurement scale which can measure the types of brand associations directly without using first-order variables in order to avoid possible multicollinearity and pursue better parsimony of modelling.

Another limitation caused by using second-order variables is that first-order variables may not be able to reflect the second-order variables well enough. For example, a second-order variable of experiential benefits is measured by first-order variables of nostalgia and pride in place / community but there seems to be a missing aspect, such as sensory pleasure, which could not be measured by those two first-order variables. Although those first-order variables might reflect the missing aspect indirectly, it is still questionable whether the aspect of the second-order variable can be measured sufficiently by the first-order variables. Moreover, the present study was unable to use the multiple group analysis function in the comparison between the domestic and overseas consumer samples because the exploratory factor analysis stage produced the models with different underlying structure for the two market settings. It will also be a task for future research to develop composite scales and factors for the brand associations and loyalty which can be universally fit in different market contexts and, consequently, a common model structure can be produced for further analysis. Future research on developing new direct measures for the second-order variables should consider including scale items which can reflect most aspects of the second-order variables.

It was shown that current measures of behavioural loyalty, which were used in this research, are not suitable for being used in the overseas consumer context due to poor internal consistency. As discussed in chapter 5.4, current measurement items for behavioural loyalty are not applicable to overseas consumers because of the

overseas consumers' restricted accessibility to matches and the limited availability of merchandise in overseas markets which were caused by the geographical dislocation and the consequent time difference. Moreover, in the domestic consumer context, the measurement scale was reduced from a three-item scale to a two-item scale due to a reliability problem. This reliability problem of the behavioural loyalty measure casts a doubt on its usability in either the domestic or the overseas consumer contexts. Consequently, this study mainly focused on the attitudinal aspect of loyalty. Future research should consider developing reliable measurement items for behavioural loyalty which can be used not only in the domestic consumer context but also in overseas consumer contexts.

This study utilised the psychological commitment to team (PCT) scale (Mahony et al. 2000) for measuring consumers' attitudinal loyalty towards professional sport brands. However, the result of the factor analysis shows that the scale carries a validity problem, although the measure has been used widely in previous studies. This result also confirms the work of Kwon and Trail (2003) that argues that the scale needs to be improved in terms of its construct validity. Future research could further improve the scale for attitudinal loyalty by developing new items or modifying the current items of psychological commitment to team scale.

The scope of this research was limited to the influence of the types of brand associations on consumers' attitudinal loyalty. Further research should explore the other influential factors such as length of support or attachment. On the other hand, as previously discussed, this study did not consider brand awareness, which is an element of brand equity, because the brand awareness of professional sport brands is generally high amongst consumers and, particularly, it is extremely high amongst

attitudinally loyal consumers. However, brand awareness could be considered for future studies which intend to examine casual followers' loyalty in overseas markets. This is because the brand awareness of professional sport brands cannot be said to be generally high in overseas markets.

Another future direction for research is to conduct market segmentation of overseas consumers. Even though there are a number of studies (Mahony et al. 2000, Ross 2007, Tapp and Clowes 2002, Tapp 2004) on market segmentation of sports in a domestic market context, there is obviously a lack of studies on overseas market segmentation. The characteristics of overseas consumers with high attitudinal loyalty, which is one of the findings of the current research, could be useful for future studies on overseas market segmentation.

This research was quantitative in nature and tested the relationships amongst the types of brand associations and consumers' loyalty in order to identify the attitudinal loyalty formation process of domestic consumers and overseas consumers by using structural equation modelling and the survey data. However, it is believed there will be areas and knowledge which can be explored further by qualitative studies. For instance, the current research suggests that the similarity between domestic and overseas consumers in the attitudinal loyalty formation process could be explained by committed overseas fans' intention to distinguish themselves from 'inauthentic' overseas consumers. Qualitative research of interviewing highly committed fans in overseas markets could further investigate those fans and validate the assertion of the present study by asking them what their opinion is on casual overseas followers; how they are different from the casual followers; and how they differentiate 'real' loyalty from 'spurious' loyalty. Therefore, another direction for future research is to conduct

further work in this topic on the basis of other philosophical foundations, and by using different methods for the purpose of further understanding the loyalty formation process of consumers in overseas markets towards professional sport brands.

6.4. Chapter Summary

This chapter concluded the thesis by providing research contributions, research limitations, and suggestions for future research.

Section 6.2 described research contributions in terms of theoretical and managerial aspects. The theoretical contributions of this research were summarised as 1) the conceptualisation of sequential relationships amongst brand associations and consumers attitudinal loyalty; 2) the exploration of attitudinal loyalty formation in both domestic and overseas consumer contexts; 3) the identification of committed overseas fan behaviour of basking in spite of reflected failure; 4) the explanation of attitudinally loyal overseas fans' behaviour of differentiating themselves from casual overseas followers, based on self-monitoring theory. The managerial contributions were provided, mainly focused on developing marketing strategies for overseas markets based on the characteristics of the overseas consumers' attitudinal loyalty. Concrete examples of managerial contributions were also provided.

Finally, section 6.3 presented a discussion on the limitations of the research and suggested future research. The research limitations were discussed in terms of the research design, research context and procedure, and problems with the current measurement scales. Particular directions for future research were suggested to

overcome the limitations of the research. Moreover, it also proposed directions for future research for pursuing further understanding of the overseas consumers' loyalty towards professional sport brands and insights into the consumers in the overseas markets.

6.5. Overview of the Thesis

This research identifies the psychological process of consumers' attitudinal loyalty formation towards professional sport brands. Based on means-end theory, the process is examined by testing the sequential relationships between brand associations and consumers' attitudinal loyalty. The conceptual model contains two stages of sequential relationships which are the attributes-benefits dimension and the benefits-attitudinal loyalty dimension. Attributes are divided into product-related attributes and non-product-related attributes, while benefits are grouped into functional benefits, symbolic benefits, and experiential benefits. As a comparative research, this study uses two groups of consumers which are domestic and overseas consumers. The domestic consumers are the fans in the domestic market (UK) of the chosen professional sport brand (Arsenal FC), whereas the overseas consumers are those who are outside of the brand's domestic market. Particularly, with an interest in consumers' attitudinal loyalty formation, this research recruits highly committed fans to the samples. The sequential model is examined in the two consumer contexts and, as a result, two structural models are proposed for each type of consumers. The attitudinal loyalty formation process of those two consumer groups are compared by the two proposed models.

This thesis is composed of six chapters. Chapter 1 provides the justification, context, scope, and domain of the research. The research objectives and expected contributions are presented in the introduction chapter. Chapter 2 provides a literature review on the concepts of brand equity and loyalty in general and professional sport brands contexts. The literature review chapter also includes a literature review of attitude and attitude formation. Based on the literature review, it conceptualises the brand associations for professional sport brands and provides the conceptualisation for the research hypotheses. Chapter 3 details the methodological framework of the study including philosophical background, research design, sample framework, and questionnaire development. The methodology chapter also provides an explanation of the data analysis procedure and the employed data analysis techniques. It also reports the initial results of the survey including the demographic description of the samples. Chapter 4 presents all the results of the data analysis which includes exploratory factor analysis and structural equation modelling. Based on the results of exploratory factor analysis, it also notes the modification of the research hypotheses. The proposed structural models for each sample of consumer groups and the tests of the hypothesised relationships are reported in chapter 4. Chapter 5 provides a discussion of the research findings in conjunction with the comparison of the domestic and overseas consumers. Finally, the current chapter (chapter 6) describes the overview of the thesis and provides the research implications. This conclusion chapter also notes the limitation of the thesis and the suggestions for future research.

Professional Sports Brand Equity Questionnaire

Confidentiality Statement

**The data obtained and your responses to this
questionnaire will only be used by Warwick Business
School for the purpose of academic research and no
information provided will be attributed to persons in part
or in full without their prior written consent.**

Thank you for participating in this study of professional sports brand
consumer behaviour. Please do not hesitate to contact the research team
by e-mail at: j.k.choi@warwick.ac.uk if you require any further
information.

June Kyu Choi

Doctoral Researcher
Marketing and Strategic Management Group
Warwick Business School

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire. Please indicate your answer or opinion by ticking the appropriate boxes. Throughout this survey, _MY TEAM_ refers the English Premier League team which you support.

People consider various brand associations when making professional sports brand choice. Please rate the following questions according to how you feel about them in relation to their role in your brand choice.

Please tick the appropriate number from 1-7 with 1 as STRONGLY DISAGREE and 7 as STRONGLY AGREE

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Slightly agree	Agree	Strongly agree
I do **not** care whether my favourite team wins or loses	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
It is very important my favourite team finishes the season securing a European competition place for next year	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
It is important that my favourite team competes for league championships	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
My favourite team does **not** have any star players whom I like to watch	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I like to watch my favourite team's star players	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
My favourite team has star players whom I like to watch	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
If star players that I like to watch are **not** on the pitch, I am not interested in the match as much	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I like the manager of my favourite team	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
My favourite team's manager is well known throughout the sport	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
The manager of my favourite team does a good job	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
My team has an excellent manager	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
The quality of my team's performance is high-standard	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
The performance of my team is first-class	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
My team play technically good football	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
The management team of my favourite team does its best to field a good team	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
My favourite team's management team does a good job of running the team	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
The management team of my team makes wise player personnel decisions	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Please tick the appropriate number from 1-7 with 1 as <u>STRONGLY DISAGREE</u> and 7 as <u>STRONGLY AGREE</u>

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Slightly agree	Agree	Strongly agree
I like the colours of my favourite team	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I like the logo of my favourite team	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
The logo of my favourite team is unique	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
My favourite team's jersey is attractive	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
My favourite team's games are exciting	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
My favourite team's games are entertaining	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
My favourite team's games are enjoyable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
My favourite team has a history of winning	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
My favourite team has a prestigious history	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
My favourite team has **no** history	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
My team belongs to a competitive league	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
My team often beat their biggest opponents	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
My team does well against their major rivals	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Please tick the appropriate number from 1-7 with 1 as <u>STRONGLY DISAGREE</u> and 7 as <u>STRONGLY AGREE</u>

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Slightly agree	Agree	Strongly agree
Watching, reading, and talking about my favourite team provide a temporary escape from life's problems	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Watching, reading, and talking about my favourite team help me forget day-to-day problems	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Watching, reading, and talking about my favourite team take me away from life's hassles	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
My team offers me an opportunity to spend time with friends	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Being a fan of the team is a good way to meet other people	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Many of my friends share my interest in my team	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Supporting my team provides me a topic of conversation with other people	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

*Please tick the appropriate number from 1-7 with 1 as **STRONGLY DISAGREE** and 7 as **STRONGLY AGREE***

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Slightly agree	Agree	Strongly agree
It is important that my friends see me as a fan of my favourite team	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
My friends and family recognise me as a fan of my favourite team	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
When someone praises my favourite team, it feels like a compliment	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
When I talk about my team, I usually say "we" rather than "they"	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I consider myself a loyal fan of my team	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Supporting my team is very important to me	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I began following my favourite team because of my family members or friends	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
It is important to follow the same team as my family members or friends	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I follow my favourite team because my family members or friends like the same team	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

3 2 1

Please tick the appropriate number from 1-7 with 1 as <u>STRONGLY DISAGREE</u> and 7 as <u>STRONGLY AGREE</u>

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Slightly agree	Agree	Strongly agree
I can vividly remember the excitement of my team's most important moments	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I have fond memories of following my favourite team	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I have fond memories of following my favourite team with friends or family members	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
My favourite team helps its residents be proud of where they live	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
My favourite team helps elevate the image of its community	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
My favourite team brings prestige to the community	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
My team unifies the community	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Please tick the appropriate number from 1-7 with 1 as <u>STRONGLY DISAGREE</u> and 7 as <u>STRONGLY AGREE</u>

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Slightly agree	Agree	Strongly agree
I consider my favourite team to be personally important.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
My favourite team means more than a football club to me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Compared to how I feel about other professional teams my favourite team is very important to me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I posses a great deal of knowledge about my favourite team	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Being more knowledgeable about my favourite team is important to me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Compared to other sport teams I consider myself an expert about my favourite team.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Please rate the following items in relation to your general behaviour and attitude towards the professional sport brand you support.

Please tick the appropriate number from 1-7 with 1 as <u>*STRONGLY DISAGREE*</u> *and 7 as* <u>*STRONGLY AGREE*</u>

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Slightly agree	Agree	Strongly agree
I have often attended or watched games of my favourite team in the stadium or on TV	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I have often followed news or reports about my favourite team in various media	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I have often purchased a lot of club-related merchandise	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I might rethink my allegiance to my favourite team if this team consistently performs poorly	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I would watch a game featuring my favourite team regardless of which team they are playing	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I might rethink my allegiance to my favourite team if management traded away its best players	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Being a fan of my favourite team is important to me	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Nothing could change my allegiance to my favourite team	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I am a committed fan of my favourite team	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
It would **not** affect my loyalty to my favourite team if management hired a head coach that I disliked very much	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I could easily be persuaded to change my favourite team preference	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I have been a fan of my team since I began watching professional football	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I could **never** switch my loyalty from my favourite team even if my close friends were fans of another team	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
It would be **unlikely** for me to change my allegiance from my current favourite team to another	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
It would be difficult to change my beliefs about my favourite team	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
You can tell a lot about a person by their willingness to stick with a team that is not performing well	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
My commitment to my favourite team would decrease if they were performing poorly and there appeared little chance their performance would change	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

These last questions are for classification purpose only.

Please tick the appropriate box or select the answer for your response to each item below

Please let us know which EPL team you support?

Please state what your nationality is?

Please state in which country you have mainly lived for last 3 years?

To be sure that we talk with people across ages, please state how old you are?

Please let us know whether you are:

☐ Female ☐ Male

How would you describe your current employment status or educational status?

☐ Office worker ☐ Manual worker

☐ Professional ☐ Self-employed

☐ Student ☐ Other

How would you describe your current employment status or educational status?

☐ Primary or secondary (current) ☐ Primary or secondary (graduate)

☐ College or university (current) ☐ College or university (graduate)

☐ Postgraduate School (current) ☐ Postgraduate School (graduate)

☐ Other

If you have questions or comment about any aspect of this research, you may contact the research team at Warwick Business School by e-mail at: j.k.choi@warwick.ac.uk.

Thank you very much for your help in this research.

June Kyu Choi

Doctoral Researcher
Marketing and Strategic Management Group
Warwick Business School

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