

## **The roles of team identification and psychological ownership in fans' intentions to purchase team-licensed and a sponsor's products: The case of FC Barcelona members**

### **ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this study is to investigate the relationships between points of attachment and participative decision-making, on the one hand, and team identification and psychological ownership, on the other. It also analyses how team identification and psychological ownership explain intentions to purchase team-licensed sports merchandise and the main sponsor's sports-apparel products. Data were collected from members of FC Barcelona, who are also season-ticket holders, by means of an online survey (n=1180). The study uses partial least squares to test and validate the proposed theoretical model. The results indicate that players, fans, and nation-attachment explain team identification and psychological ownership, whereas soccer only affects team identification. Participative decision-making strongly influences psychological ownership, which is in turn positively affected by team identification. Findings also reveal that the intentions to purchase team-licensed sports merchandise and the main sponsor's sports-apparel products are better explained by members' psychological ownership than by team identification. The study suggests managerial implications, such as the need to improve feelings of psychological ownership in the club's promotional activities and to continue to strengthen the other professional sports sections.

**Keywords:** psychological ownership, team identification, participative decision-making, points of attachment, team-licensed sports merchandise, sponsor's sports-apparel products

## **1. Introduction**

Global sales of sports apparel products have been increasing in recent years to reach 181 billion US dollars in 2019 and with a forecast of reaching 208 billion US dollars in 2025 (Statista, 2020). A relevant piece of this market is associated with team-licensed sports merchandise and the main sponsor's sports-apparel products, which represent a significant resource for sports clubs (Kwak, Kwon, & Lim, 2015) and are one of the strategies used to maximize revenues for sports organizations (Pons, Giraux, & Maltese, 2021). These products are therefore not only a key factor in increasing the financial resources of clubs, but also play a crucial role in helping to strengthen the ties between teams and fans (Couvelaere & Richelieu, 2005). Thus, it has been considered that the purchase of these products is a common behavior of sports fans, and especially of those who are identified with a team (Kwon & Kwak, 2014; Kwon, Trail, & James, 2007). Little is known, however, about the drivers that lead members of a club to purchase team-licensed sports merchandise and the main sponsor's sports-apparel products.

In the last few decades, the governance and ownership of professional soccer clubs in the major European leagues has tended to become the responsibility of private owners rather than an assembly of individual members, with some differences from one country to another. These private organizations are run by owners who exercise control over the club, as would be the case in any private company (Rohde & Breuer, 2017). Nevertheless, despite the current context in which soccer clubs tend to belong to private owners and/or private companies and/or international investors, some large European soccer clubs still continue to be controlled by an assembly of individual members (Rohde & Breuer, 2017).

The Spanish soccer league is no exception and has undergone the same ownership transformation process as most clubs in the main European soccer leagues. Only FC Barcelona (FCB), Real Madrid (RM), Athletic Bilbao, and Osasuna continue to be sports

clubs whose members share ownership of the club. In general, this membership model is based on the payment of an annual membership fee that entitles them to attend matches for a cheaper price, and they can democratically participate in the club's management decisions, by either direct or delegated participation, under the condition of "one member, one vote". This ownership does not entitle members to any type of monetary speculation, as might occur with a company stock investment. The results of this participation could exert a positive influence on the members' attitudes toward the club, which would be similar to the effect that the participative decision-making of the employees of a company has on corporate identification, as well as on feelings of psychological ownership (Chi & Han, 2008; Joensson, 2008). In addition, individuals tend to form more favorable evaluations of objects toward which they have feelings of ownership than does factual ownership (Pierce, Kostova, & Dirks, 2003). This behavior means that individuals create preferences for the target of psychological ownership, even if they have to spend more to purchase products from that target than from other alternatives (Asatryan & Oh, 2008). Hence, understanding the role of members' psychological ownership will help to comprehend their favorable behaviors toward both the club and the companies and brands associated with it (Cocieru, Delia, & Katz, 2019).

However, sports marketing research has paid very little attention to sports clubs with this ownership structure, and this is an important gap in the literature, given that the top two clubs in the world in terms of income are FCB and RM, which are well above the private owners' clubs that follow them by revenue, such as Manchester United, Bayern Munich, Paris Saint-Germain, Manchester City, and Liverpool (Deloitte, 2020). In addition, this organizational system is a success story as regards titles. For example, FCB and RM have won a total of 18 Champions League cups, while the other five clubs mentioned have 15 Champions League titles between them, most of which were won when those clubs were still governed by an assembly of individual members (Union of European Football Associations [UEFA], 2020).

In this sense, key variables such as participative decision-making and psychological ownership (PO) have not been considered in previous studies as antecedents of team identification and/or purchase intentions toward team-licensed products. In fact, previous sport management literature has been more concerned with analyzing the influence of team identification on the fans' or spectators' intention to attend matches (Katz, Ward, & Heere, 2018; Rocha & Fleury, 2017; Yoshida, Heere, & Gordon, 2015) than the effect on their intentions to purchase team-licensed products and sponsors' products (Alexandris & Tsioutsou, 2012; Kwon et al., 2007). Nevertheless, the marketing literature has posited that customers show a strong feeling of psychological ownership, and an increased demand or willingness to pay more. Moreover, when they participate in the selection of products that a company sells (Fuchs, Prandelli, & Schreier, 2010) or when they touch the products (Peck & Shu, 2009) or when, as customers, they participate in naming products, they feel a psychological ownership effect and this effect in turn leads to purchase intentions (Stoner, Blank, & Loken, 2018).

Researchers have carried out numerous studies on the effect of points of attachment (POA) on team identification (Heere & James, 2007; Katz & Heere, 2013; Yoshida et al., 2015). Most of these studies reveal that context determines the number and nature of POA that are critical in shaping fans' attitudes toward the team, as indicated by Robinson and Trail (2005). Consequently, it is necessary to identify the members' POA and their effects on team identification in soccer clubs that are managed as an assembly of individual members.

Accordingly, the purpose of this study is to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the role of attachment and participative decision-making in team identification and in psychological ownership in soccer clubs with a member-based ownership structure. Furthermore, an additional objective of this study is to analyze the gaps in the sport marketing and management literature regarding the effect of team identification and psychological

ownership on the intentions to purchase team-licensed merchandise products, and the main sponsor's products. For this purpose, this study uses FC Barcelona as a context, considering that it is one of the biggest soccer clubs with a membership ownership structure. The findings of this study provide a theoretical explanation of how several points of attachment and participative decision-making predict psychological ownership and identification with the team, and this team identification in turn improves feelings of psychological ownership. Furthermore, psychological ownership and team identification influence the intentions to purchase team-licensed sports merchandise, as well as the main sponsor's sports-apparel products.

### *1.1. Research context*

FCB is a democratic sports association, freely governed by its members, that has its roots in Barcelona and has historically identified with the Catalan identity (FC Barcelona, 2020a). This political, cultural, and social dimension makes it different from most other sports clubs around the world, which have entertainment as their main objective (Hamil, Walters, & Watson, 2010). In addition to soccer and other professional teams such as basketball, handball, roller hockey and futsal, it has also gradually incorporated women's teams, such as basketball and soccer (FC Barcelona, 2020b). However, professional soccer accounts for 80% of the total budget (FC Barcelona, 2019).

From an organizational perspective, FC Barcelona had a budget, prior to the Covid-19 crisis, of almost 1,000 million euros for the 2019-20 season. Of this, almost 50% was marketing and advertising revenue, which included sales of team-licensed products (FC Barcelona, 2019). The club had 142,323 members at the end of June 2018, each of whom paid a yearly fee of €184 in the 2019-20 season (FC Barcelona, 2020c). Of the total number, 40% of them live in Barcelona, 52% in other parts of Catalonia, and 8% in the rest of the world; 85% of them are over 18 years old, and 73% are male and 27% female (FC Barcelona,

2018a). FCB is governed by statutes that grant members the right to vote for the president every six years in the presidential elections. Control over membership is provided by the Assembly of Delegates (AD), which has the right to approve, or reject, proposals made by the Board of Directors, such as the results of the financial year, the budget, membership fees, large investments, requests for loans, modification of the statutes, and ratifying the appointment of the Board of Directors (FC Barcelona, 2018b). The AD is made up of 6,000 members with a seniority of more than 5 years in the club. Participants in the AD are selected by a random draw, and are renewed every two seasons. This ownership model does not allow members to sell their membership to other individuals, which differentiates this possession from any other private possession. If a member does not want to continue to pay their annual fee, they must return their membership to the club.

## **2. Conceptual background, literature review, and hypotheses development**

### *2.1. Theoretical background of the research model*

This study develops a theoretical model to identify the determinants that drive the intentions to purchase team-licensed merchandise and the sponsors' products in professional soccer clubs organized as members' associations. This particular organizational and ownership structure requires the development of a specific theoretical model that is distinct from those used by the sports marketing literature, which had previously analyzed sports clubs with different organizational and ownership structures (Alexandris & Tsioutsou, 2012; Biscaia, Correa, Rosado, Ross, & Maroco, 2013; Kamath, Ganguli, & George, 2020). To do so, attachment theory (AT), social identity theory (SIT), and psychological ownership (PO) theory have been integrated. Attachment toward a professional sports club represents a strong psychological bond that occurs when a sports supporter assigns emotional, functional, and

symbolic meanings to a team (Robinson & Trail, 2005). AT has shown that strong feelings of attachment can turn into feelings of possession (Kleine & Baker, 2004; Park, MacInnis, Priester, & Eisingerich, 2010), as it provides familiarity, knowledge, and a sense of ownership toward an object (Pierce, Kostova, & Dirks, 2003), and it is an antecedent of team identification (Yoshida et al., 2015; Kamath et al., 2020). The research on team identification (TI) toward a professional sports club is based mainly on the SIT, while a smaller number of scholars draw on identity theory (Lock & Heere, 2017). SIT posits that as regards their situation in a social environment, individuals classify themselves and others into social groups (Tajfel and Turner, 1986), professional sports clubs being one of the social groups in which they can be located (Rocha & Fleury, 2017). This identification develops a sense of PO over the clubs organized as members' associations (Cocireu et al., 2019). SIT also argues that the participative decision-making of the members of an organization is linked to identification because, as members, individuals feel that they are included (Fuller et al., 2006). In addition, participative decision-making develops elements of control over the organization, which is one of the components required for the evolution of individuals' psychological ownership (Pierce, Kostova, & Dirks, 2001). Finally, PO theory posits that individuals develop a psychological sense of possession toward objects, beyond the context of equity and economic and utilitarian ownership of those objects (Pierce et al., 2001), and it is associated with behavioral responses, such as favorable product judgment and product purchase (Grineikiene, Schlegelmilch, & Auruskeviciene, 2017).

## *2.2. Purchase intentions toward licensed products and the club's sponsor's products*

Purchase intentions refer to the possibility of consumers being willing to purchase a product or a service in the future (Diallo & Siqueira Jr, 2017). This study thus analyzes FCB

members' intentions to purchase team-licensed merchandise products, and the main sponsor's products. In the first case, they are products of the club, which authorizes a third party to sell them under a license. The second refers to all the products that one of FCB's main sponsors is selling on the market.

The sports marketing literature has analyzed purchase intentions toward a sponsor's products or team-licensed sports merchandise, such as in the cases of professional soccer teams (Biscaia et al., 2013; Zaharia, Biscaia, Gry, & Stotlar, 2016), a professional basketball team (Alexandris & Tsioutsou, 2012; Koo & Lee, 2019), or among viewers of cricket matches of the Indian Premier League (Kamath et al., 2020), as well as the intention to purchase team-licensed merchandise products in a soccer fan community (Hedlund, 2014). In fact, previous research indicates that sport consumers purchase team-licensed merchandise because they want to show their self-association with a specific team (Kwon et al., 2007), and to identify themselves as a real fan of a particular team (Kwon & Amstrong, 2002).

### *2.3. Psychological ownership*

Pierce et al. (2001) determined that the feeling of ownership is inherent to the human being, so that a person can develop a sense of PO toward both material and immaterial objects. PO develops an emotional attachment toward a possession that goes beyond any cognitive evaluation (Dawkins, Tian, Newman, & Martin, 2017). This PO has important effects on emotions, attitudes, and the behavior of people who feel that they have a feeling of PO toward such an object. Previous studies have indicated that PO focuses more on possession, since it emphasizes feelings of ownership while other motivational constructs, such as attachment, are related to more evaluative aspects and participation in an organization (Avey, Avolio, Crossley, & Luthans, 2009). These feelings can be developed by groups of individuals around a collective identification or group cohesion (Pierce & Jussila, 2010). The decision-making of



the group regarding these objects becomes a feeling of psychological ownership toward them (Pierce et al., 2003).

Research on PO posits that this theory responds to three fundamental human needs, which would be part of the soccer club member's feelings: 1) efficacy: individuals feel capable in a given domain of interest and they feel the need to do a particular task; (2) self-identity: possession of something reflects and affirms the individual's self-identity; and (3) belongingness: this confirms that an individual belongs to a specific organization (Avey et al., 2009; Dawkins et al., 2017). In sum, when someone meets these needs in an organization, it is because they feel PO and a sense of responsibility toward it (Pierce & Jussila, 2011).

While previous sport management literature has referred to the feelings of ownership that fans and supporters of soccer clubs have expressed (Cocieru et al., 2019; Kennedy, 2012; Rookwood & Chan, 2011), the same literature has paid little attention to the effects of PO, especially in the context of club membership. According to Garcia and Welford (2015), most of the research on soccer supporters published to date has focused on their commitment to the sports club, and they posited the need to conduct studies to analyze the supporters' commitment to the club's governance. Cocieru et al. (2019) used PO to examine how supporters of Steaua (Romania) tried to become owners of the club. These authors showed that the fans' feelings of PO could become the primary reason to become formal club owners.

Research related to PO has pointed out that feelings of PO have behavioral and attitudinal effects on a variety of objects (Dawkins et al., 2017; Jusila, Tarkiainen, Sarstedt, & Hair, 2015) and, specifically, when consumers consider a product to be part of the expanded self, they are more likely to buy it without worrying about the price (Jusila et al., 2015). In addition, PO has a positive effect on the willingness to pay more for a product (Lessard-Bonaventure & Chebat, 2015) and to purchase it (Asatryan and Oh, 2008; Kumar & Nayak, 2009), mainly when they perceive that these products have more value for them (Peck & Shu,

2009). Given the results mentioned above, if FCB members experience the club as their own, they are more likely to have the intention to buy FCB's team-licensed sports merchandise and the main sponsor's sports-apparel products. Thus, the following hypotheses were developed:

**Hypothesis 1.** Psychological ownership positively influences club members' intention to purchase FCB's team-licensed sports merchandise.

**Hypothesis 2.** Psychological ownership positively influences club members' willingness to purchase the sponsor's sports-apparel products.

#### *2.4. Team identification*

Social identity theory (SIT) posits that people satisfy a self-definitional role and make sense of the world by classifying themselves and other people into groups, in which they seek a positive social identity as a group member (Bodet & Bernache-Assollant, 2011; Tajfel & Turner, 1986). The individuals that belong to a group share common characteristics and values that will be at the base of the behavior according to the group's norms (Lock & Heere, 2017). Individuals wish to belong to groups and follow the team norms and values in order to achieve the support of the other group members (Yu, Lu, & Liu, 2010). Team identification refers mainly to the degree to which a supporter maintains a psychological connection with a specific sports team, as well as the emotional relationship of attachment, which makes him or her an unconditional supporter of the team (Lock, Funk, Doyle, & McDonald, 2014).

Furthermore, supporters identify themselves as fans of a specific sport according to the sports culture of the country (Lock & Filo, 2012), and it is possible that other identities might influence the formation of identification with a team, such as one's place of origin (Lock, Taylor, & Darcy, 2011). Sports teams emerge as symbolic representations of these groups or communities to which they are linked, and this in turn leads individuals to feel a sense of belonging to those communities (Anderson & Stone, 1981).

The marketing and organizational literature has previously conducted research on customer–company identification, which acts in a similar way to fan–team identification. This research field defines customer–company identification as the perception of belonging to a company, where customers define themselves in the same terms as the company. This perception is the result of superposing their self-concept on the beliefs that they have about the organization (Bergami & Bagozzi, 2000; Mael & Ashforth 1992). Consistent with SIT, the marketing literature posits that when customers are identified with a company they are more likely to support the company by repurchasing products or recommending them (Ahearne, Bhattacharya, & Gruen, 2005). This behavior, according to these authors, is an act of self-expression about their identification with the company, and has a positive influence on brand selection. In fact, previous research on the marketing and organizational fields has included studies in which their authors discovered that the consumer–company identification has positive effects on customer loyalty (Haumann, Quaiser, Wieseke, & Rese, 2014; Homburg, Wieseke, & Hoyer, 2009).

This study has considered team identification to be a one-dimensional construct (Yoshida et al., 2015; Kamath et al., 2020) and not a dimension of points of attachment (POA) (Robinson & Trail, 2005), the reason being that team identification is developed from SIT, which is based on an individual belonging to a group and their interaction, in contexts of belonging to the group (Terry & Hogg, 1996) and of non-belonging (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003). This is especially relevant to FCB members and season-ticket holders, who are formal members of a group with an FCB identity, and interact with each other in various circumstances: they always occupy the same location in the stadium, participate jointly in club decisions that are open to democratic participation, and group activities. In this sense, one of the consequences of the level of adhesion and identification of FCB members with the team is the creation of a close bond between them, as a group of members, this close bond being suggested as a

competitive advantage (Hamil, Walters, & Watson, 2010). In addition, previous sports marketing literature has found that higher levels of team identification, among fans of various team sports, are associated with a greater number of intentions to purchase club merchandise (Alexandris & Tsioutsou, 2012; Dale, van Iwaarden, van der Wiele, & Williams, 2005; Madrigal, 2000; Tobar, 2006), and more positive attitudes toward the sponsors of the sports teams (Gwinner & Swanson, 2003). Therefore, and following the previous sport marketing and management literature discussed above, supporter-members of FCB who feel more identified with the club will be willing to show favorable purchase intentions toward team-licensed merchandise and the main sponsor's products. This leads to the following hypotheses:

**Hypothesis 3.** Team identification positively influences club members' intentions to purchase FCB's team-licensed sports merchandise.

**Hypothesis 4.** Team identification positively influences club members' willingness to purchase the main sponsor's sports-apparel products.

Psychological ownership (PO) theory argues that people need to perceive themselves as linked to a group before having feelings of ownership (Pierce & Jussila, 2010). Therefore, team identification would be an antecedent of PO, given that SIT maintains that a strong identification with the team develops feelings of belonging to the team (Mael & Ashford, 1992). This relationship has not been analyzed in the sport management literature, but it has been studied in other contexts. For example, Asatryan and Oh (2008) suggested that customer–company identification becomes a continuous relationship with the company products and brands, which is the basis of the emotional and cognitive psychological bond between an individual and an object that is the essence of PO. These authors found a positive relationship between customer–company identification and psychological ownership among restaurant consumers. Asatryan, Slevitch, Larzelere, Morosan, and Kwun (2013) found that

identification with the university was directly associated with the formation of PO in a sample of university students from North America. Kumar and Nayak (2019) indicated that Indian tourists who were identified with certain tourist destinations in India developed a PO toward the destination. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

**Hypothesis 5.** Team identification positively influences club members' sense of psychological ownership toward the club.

### *2.5. Participative decision-making*

Participative decision-making is a process that allows people who are not equal in the hierarchical chain to share their influence in the decisions made in the organization of which they are members (Zanoni & Janssens, 2007). This participation in decision-making means that the authority is shared by those who have the power (Pierce & Rodgers, 2004). Therefore, members' participation in decision-making can be defined as a perception regarding the collective influence they have over the decisions of their club (Uhrich, 2020) and, consequently, for the context of FCB. In short, it refers to the component of control posited by Pierce et al. (2001) as the ability to obtain results through the actions of individuals, which contribute to psychological ownership (PO). This research refers to the special characteristics of the way FCB is organized, which allows a representation of its social body to participate in the decision-making processes of the club through the Assembly of Delegates and referendums. This participation in decision-making has not been studied extensively by the sport management literature, and most studies have dealt mainly with the influence that it exerts on PO and on team identification. In this context, decision-making regarding the participation of the fans has been considered beneficial for their satisfaction with the club (Cleland, 2010), and for the positive influence it has on the fans' intentions to attend matches and buy team merchandise, especially when they perceive that it has an influence on the

decisions of the club (Biscaia, Hedlund, Dickson, & Naylor, 2018). In addition, it is also beneficial for its potential capacity to reduce the distance between fans and clubs, and for getting the fans to accept management decisions (Uhrich, 2020). In this vein, the organizational literature has shown that when people engage in participative decision-making, they exercise some control over an organization (Wagner, Parker, & Christiansen, 2003) and develop the belief that they act in the interests of the organization (Li, Wang, Hui, & Lee, 2012), and control is a structural component of the development of PO (Pierce et al., 2001). Participative decision-making is therefore an antecedent of psychological ownership (Chi & Han, 2008; Li et al., 2012). Thus, the more opportunities they have to take part in participative decision-making, the more control they will exercise over the organization, and the more they will develop a sense of PO. Based on this reasoning, this study proposes the following hypotheses:

**Hypothesis 6.** Participative decision-making positively influences club members' sense of psychological ownership toward the club.

Findings from previous literature claimed that participation in decision-making increases affective commitment toward an organization (Elele & Fields, 2010), affective commitment being understood as the identification of an individual with the organization (Scott-Ladda, Travaglione, & Marshall, 2006). Participative decision-making is linked to the inclusion of members in an organization and the valuation of their opinions, and participation implies respect and status, which, according to social identity theory, makes identification with the organization possible (Fuller et al., 2006). It has been found that participation in the substantial decisions of organizations is associated with their members' identification with those organizations (Joensson, 2008). It is suggested that the level of participative decision-making is related to identification with the organization, and therefore the degree of influence

of members' participative decision-making is positively associated with identification with the FCB team:

**Hypothesis 7.** Participative decision-making positively influences club members' team identification with the club.

## *2.6. Points of attachment*

Attachment theory (AT) suggests that individuals develop psychological ties, both emotional and affective, with other humans (Bowlby, 1982) or between a person and an object (Park, MacInnis, & Priester, 2008). Management literature has also used AT to analyze attachment to places (Palau-Saumell, Forgas-Coll, Sánchez-García, & Prats, 2019; Veasna, Wu, & Huang, 2013), brands (Bahri-Ammari, Van Niekerk, Ben Khelil, & Chtioui, 2016; Japutra, Ekinci, & Simkin, 2018), and sports teams (Tsiotsou, 2013; Yoshida et al., 2015). These psychological ties mean, for example, that individuals who are attached to a brand are more likely to be supporters and consumers of that brand (Park et al., 2010). With regard to sports team attachment, Funk and James (2006) posited that attachment to a sports team leads a fan to carry out a somewhat complex emotional and dynamic internal process.

Previous sports marketing literature has identified some dimensions of attachment, from which individuals develop a psychological connection to the identification with the sports team (Wu, Tsai, & Hung, 2012). Most of these dimensions have their origin in the point of attachment index (PAI), which Trail, Robinson, Dirk and Gillentine (2003) used to validate seven points of attachment, namely to the team, player, coach, community, sport, university, and the level of the sport. However, these researchers agreed on the need to adapt the PAI to the type of sport, the context, and the experience perceived by the fan (Robinson & Trail, 2005). For example, Kwon, Trail and Anderson (2005) only validated six dimensions because they removed community, since they considered that the city was irrelevant to their study.

Robinson, Trail and Kwon (2004) modified the scale to adapt it to golf, and they tested the players, the tour, the sport, the charities, and the community as the dimensions of PAI. Shapiro, Ridinger and Trail (2013) added the athletics department and identification as a general sports fan to better adapt the scale to the university sports context. Other authors have not only adapted the points of attachment scale, but have used the team identification dimension as a dependent variable, and have identified a positive influence of the POA on team identification (Heere, James, Yoshida, & Scremin, 2011; Yoshida et al., 2015). In this vein, AT refers to the emotional and personal ties between an individual and a brand (Park et al., 2010), an organization (Kamath et al., 2020) or a place (Palau-Saumell et al., 2019). Team identification has therefore not been considered as a dimension of POA, since this identification develops a strong adhesion and a close link between the members, as a collective, and the club in FCB (Hamil et al., 2010). For example, Yoshida et al. (2015) only proposed player, local city, sport, and fan community as antecedents of team identification in a study among soccer club fans in Japan.

All these studies confirm that the context is especially relevant to define the points of attachment. Consequently, this study proposes, as points of attachment, those dimensions that are essential according to the context and the team to be analyzed.

For this study, these dimensions are the sport (soccer as the main professional sport of FCB), players (Messi, Suárez, Piqué, Busquets and other top world-class players who play in FCB, and other great legends who have also played in FCB, such as Kubala, Cruyff, Maradona, Koeman, Stóichkov, Ronaldinho, Neymar, and others), fans (role-based interactions with other club members or supporters), city (Barcelona – taking into account that FCB has the same name as the city), and the nation (Catalonia), considering that for FCB members, the club is the representative of these two larger groups, which are important to



them (Heere & James, 2007), because they reinforce the bond with their nation (Underwood, Bond, & Baer, 2001).

Previous research suggests that team identification is influenced by other symbolic points of attachment, such as state, city, and nationality (Heere & James, 2007). Katz and Heere (2013) showed the importance of the fan community when, in a qualitative study, they identified how interactions between university tailgating team followers contributed to the development and construction of a team community. Heere et al. (2011) identified state and city as antecedents of university identity, and university identity had a positive influence on team identity. Finally, Yoshida et al. (2015) showed that the sport and the fan community were antecedents of team identification, while the local city and player dimensions were not.

The literature on POA also posits that people who are strongly attached to objects, whether tangible or intangible, can develop PO behaviors (Pierce et al., 2003). In addition, PO theory suggests that attachment provides part of the feeling of a sense of ownership because it develops familiarity and knowledge (Pierce et al., 2003). In this regard, there is literature that shows that attachment to the organizer of a user community develops feelings of psychological ownership (Lee, Yang, & Koo, 2019). Consequently, and in the case of FCB, the greater the attachment of its members to soccer, to players, to other members and fans, to the city and to the nation is, the more they have a sense of psychological belonging to the club. Additionally, attachment theory suggests that consumers who are highly attached to a brand are more likely to engage and support that brand (Park et al., 2010) and, in sport, fans will be attached to a team through multiple points of attachment (Yoshida et al., 2015), as shown by the aforementioned evidence. On applying this argument, attachment to soccer, players, fans, city and nation is expected to have a positive impact on team identification. So, the following hypotheses are proposed:

**Hypothesis 8.** Club members' attachment to soccer positively influences: a) team identification; and b) sense of psychological ownership toward the club.

**Hypothesis 9.** Club members' attachment to players positively influences: a) team identification; and b) sense of psychological ownership toward the club.

**Hypothesis 10.** Club members' attachment to other members and fans positively influences: a) team identification; and b) sense of psychological ownership toward the club.

**Hypothesis 11.** Club members' attachment to the city positively influences: a) team identification; and b) sense of psychological ownership toward the club.

**Hypothesis 12.** Club members' attachment to the nation positively influences: a) team identification; and b) sense of psychological ownership toward the club.

Fig. 1 represents the model proposed in this study.

## INSERT FIG. 1

### 3. Method

#### *3.1. Sample and data collection*

The target population was composed of FCB members, all of whom were season-ticket holders, adults and residents in the city of Barcelona. Data were collected through an internal email survey with the support of FCB. As an incentive to those members who completed the questionnaire, they were offered the chance to win the following prizes: participation in a sweepstake of 4 VIP tickets for a game, with access to the Directors' Box and 8 shirts signed by the most charismatic players of the moment: Messi, Neymar and Suarez.

The survey was sent by email from the club's offices to the 14,080 members and season-ticket holders who live in the city of Barcelona, according to FCB's database. This email

contained a link to the survey. The information was collected for 30 days without any reminder email. Of all the members to whom the email had been sent, 2,015 opened the survey, 392 did not complete their membership details, and 320 abandoned the survey while answering it. After screening the surveys, 1,180 questionnaires were deemed usable for data analysis for an effective response rate of 8.3% out of 14,080, and 58.6% of those who opened the survey. Ages of the respondents ranged from 18 to 85 years. More specifically, 2.8% of the respondents were under 25 years old, 8.7% were between 26 and 35, 25% were aged between 36 and 45, 33.9% were in the 46–55 interval, 26.7% were between 56 and 65 years old, and 2.9% were older than 65. A great majority of them were males (85.4%). Regarding the length of time they had been a member, 30.5% of the respondents had been members for between 20 and 30 years, 20% between 40 and 50 years, and 18.5% between 30 and 40 years. Lastly, 19% had been members of the club for more than 50 years and 12% had been members for less than 10 years.

### *3.2.Measures*

The survey instrument included 39 questions that assessed attachment, participation in decision-making, team identity, psychological ownership, team-licensed merchandise apparel purchase intentions, intentions to purchase the sponsor's products, and members' demographic characteristics. All measurement items were translated into Catalan and back-translated into English to ensure accuracy between the original scales and the necessary translated versions (Banville, Desrosiers, & Genet-Volet, 2000). All items, except intentions to purchase team-licensed products, were assessed by using a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Items from intentions to purchase team-licensed products were assessed using a 7-point Likert scale (1 = very unlikely; 7 = very likely). The scales used in this study were obtained and adapted from the previous literature and all of them had shown

evidence of reliability and validity. Those for measuring intentions to purchase both team-licensed merchandise apparel and the main sponsor's products were developed using five items from Fisher and Wakefield (1998), and four items from Biscaia et al. (2013), respectively. In the questions related to the intentions to purchase the sponsor's products, an explicit reference was made to one of the most international iconic sports-related brands, which is one of FCB's biggest sponsors. A six-item scale was adopted from Van Dyne and Pierce (2004) to measure psychological ownership. The three-item scale proposed by Trail and James (2001) was used to assess team identification. Attachment consisted of five dimensions: sport, players, local city, fan community, and state. The constructs of sport, players, local city, and fan community were measured with a three-item scale in each case, adopted from Yoshida et al. (2015). Four fan community items were adapted from the communal-brand connection scale (Keller, 2003). Nation attachment was measured with a three-item scale adopted from the national attachment items of Huddy and Khatib (2007). Finally, participative decision-making was measured with four items adopted from Lam, Chen and Schaubroeck (2002). The items essentially ask FCB members to evaluate their participation in decisions affecting the club's main strategic decisions.

### *3.3. Common method bias assessment*

The measurement of the model's latent variables came from single respondents in a single one-off survey. Consequently, common method variance bias had to be assessed thoroughly. This research applied both procedural and statistical methods to assess the potential existence of this bias, which is a common characteristic of this type of quantitative studies (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003). On the one hand, regarding the procedural methods, in the introductory part of the survey, participants were informed about the terms of confidentiality and also the anonymous and aggregated processing of the information supplied. Moreover, the email requesting participation in the study came from an official FCB

account. In addition, members' participation in the study gave them the right to enter a draw for different official FCB merchandising products and tickets to VIP boxes during soccer matches. This reduced the probability of participants' answering in an artificial or dishonest way. On the other hand, as procedural methods, an exploratory factor analysis was performed with SPSS 20.0. The results of this test revealed the existence of nine factors underlying the structure of the data that explained 73.68% of the variance altogether. The largest factor accounted for 28.32% of this variability. In order to further explore the factorial structure of the data, a Harman single-factor test was run with EQS 6.1. Following this approach, the goodness of fit (GoF) of a measurement model with all the indicators loading on the same single latent construct was substantially inferior to the GoF of the alternative model, where every manifest variable loaded on its corresponding latent variable. This suggests that common method bias was not a problem in this study. Finally, a full collinearity test based on variance inflation factors (VIF) was conducted (Kock, 2015). All the VIF values of the inner model were below the critical threshold of 5 and also below the stricter limit of 3.3 (Hair, Hollingsworth, Randolph, & Chong, 2017). These results reflect, again, that common method bias is not really a problem in this study.

#### **4. Results**

The model was tested with Partial Least Squares (PLS), a particular type of structural equation modeling (SEM). PLS is based on the variance of the dependent variables, and aims to predict unobserved variables through the input values of observations. It focuses on maximizing the explained variance of the components, which are the type of latent variable employed in this methodology (Hair, Sarstedt, Hopkins, & Kuppelwieser, 2014; Cepeda-Carrion, Cegarra-Navarro, & Cillo, 2019). PLS was chosen for several different reasons. First, the study aimed to predict and explain the model's dependent variables rather than to confirm a global model as valid via its global model fit indices and global model verification. In this

sense, the study focused on explaining the dependent variables and maximizing their explained variance through the coefficient of determination and the sign, size and signification of the path coefficients. It also aimed to establish accurate predictions for the dependent variables, especially purchases of merchandise and sponsored products. Second, although the sample was large enough, the model included a great number of latent and manifest variables. This implies that, third, the model was also complex, since it included a large number of direct and indirect paths. In this sense, Henseler et al. (2014) showed that PLS-SEM substantially reduces the effects of measurement error, thereby increasing the reliability of the construct scores, in complex models where multiple mediators are present. And fourth, the nature of the latent variables can be approximated. This model combines the use of variables that can be conceived as composites (i.e., Merchandise purchase intentions) with others that are compatible with common-factor models (i.e., Team identification). In situations of mixed measurement models, where both factors and composites are used, the preferable option for PLS estimation is PLS consistent (PLSc) (Dijkstra & Henseler, 2015). PLSc is a particular algorithm of PLS that performs a correction of the correlations of reflective constructs to make results consistent with a factor-model (Dijkstra & Henseler, 2015). In other words, the PLSc approach follows a composite modeling logic, but the results mimic those of covariance-based SEM, which assumes a common factor model (Hair, Risher, Sarstedt, & Ringle, 2019).

#### *4.1. Assessment of the measurement model*

The measurement model was examined by analyzing the consistency of the latent variables, the average variance extracted, and the discriminant validity. To check the internal consistency of the constructs, the individual and composite reliability of the constructs were examined. Table 1 shows the results from the assessment of the measurement model. Next, the convergent validity of the model was assessed with the Average Variance Extracted

(AVE) metric. This indicator should be above 0.5 to guarantee the existence of this type of validity (Hair et al., 2019). As can be seen in Table 1, the latent variables present individual and composite reliability, and convergent validity. Discriminant validity of the constructs was established through the two most accepted approaches: the well-known Fornell and Larcker criterion and the more recent and accurate Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratios criterion (Henseler, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2015). For conceptually similar constructs, HTMT values above 0.9 suggest the existence of discriminant validity, while HTMT values of less than 0.85 are indications of discriminant validity for conceptually-distant constructs (Henseler et al., 2015). Regarding the Fornell-Larcker criterion, the square root of the AVE value of each construct should be above the estimated correlation of each pair of constructs. As displayed in Table 2, both the HTMT and the Fornell-Larcker criterion are met, thus implying the existence of discriminant validity.

*Table 1 about here*

*Table 2 about here*

#### *4.2. Assessment of the structural model*

Once it had been confirmed that the measurement model was valid and reliable, the assessment of the structural model was performed. First, we analyzed the collinearity of the exogenous constructs of a particular endogenous construct. Hair, Hollingsworth, Randolph, and Chong (2017) indicated that collinearity may appear when FIV values exceed the threshold of 5, or 3.3 for a more restrictive assessment. In our model, all the FIV values were below 2.346, thereby indicating that collinearity is not a problem in the model. In order to evaluate the significance of the structural parameters, a bootstrapping routine at the 5% significance level was then applied with 10,000 subsamples (Streukens & Leroi-Werelds, 2016). Since the hypotheses were stated in a particular positive direction, a one-tailed test was

performed. Finally, the  $R^2$  values were all above the threshold of 10%, which suggests that the model presents adequate power to explain the dependent variables. Similarly, the predicted  $Q^2$  values of the dependent variables of the model were positive, which appears to indicate that it presents predictive relevance.

*Table 3 about here*

Table 3 includes the estimated parameters of the structural model. Results support hypotheses 1, 2, 3 and 4. Estimations indicate that club members' perceived psychological ownership positively and significantly explains purchases of the club's official merchandise ( $\beta=0.298$ ;  $t=9.998$ ) and intentions to purchase the main sponsor's products ( $\beta=0.244$ ;  $t=7.590$ ). Similarly, higher levels of team identification positively explain members' purchases of merchandising products ( $\beta=0.140$ ;  $t=4.288$ ) and purchase intentions toward the sponsor ( $\beta=0.193$ ;  $t=6.078$ ).

Regarding the effect of team identification on psychological ownership, estimations confirm hypothesis 5. Team identification positively and significantly predicts members' sense of psychological ownership toward the club ( $\beta=0.147$ ;  $t=4.284$ ). Additionally, participation in the club's decision-making positively and significantly explains psychological ownership ( $\beta=0.323$ ;  $t=13.693$ ). Nevertheless, this effect is not statistically significant for the hypothesized team identification effect ( $\beta=0.033$ ;  $t=41.556$ ), thus confirming hypothesis 6 and rejecting 7. In relation to the diverse points of attachment, attachment to soccer significantly predicts team identification ( $\beta=0.340$ ;  $t=12.603$ ) but not psychological ownership ( $\beta=-0.031$ ;  $t=1.036$ ), thus confirming hypothesis 8a and rejecting 8b. Attachment to players positively influences both team identification ( $\beta=0.190$ ;  $t=6.606$ ) and psychological ownership ( $\beta=0.109$ ;  $t=3.067$ ), thus confirming hypotheses 9a and 9b. Similarly, attachment to other members and fans of the team significantly enhances identification with the team ( $\beta=0.255$ ;  $t=7.612$ ) and increases feelings of ownership ( $\beta=0.194$ ;  $t=4.933$ ), which supports hypotheses



10a and 10c. Surprisingly, attachment to the city of Barcelona does not predict team identification ( $\beta=0.009$ ;  $t=0.318$ ) or psychological ownership ( $\beta=1.336$ ;  $t=4.288$ ). In fact it is attachment to the historical nation of Catalonia that positively affects identification with the team ( $\beta=0.167$ ;  $t=6.177$ ) and psychological ownership ( $\beta=0.196$ ;  $t=6.003$ ).

## **5. Discussion**

Drawing on attachment theory, social identity theory, psychological ownership theory, and the theory of planned behavior as the main elements of its framework, this study examines how team attachment and participative decision-making positively influence psychological ownership and team identification, the relationship between team identification and psychological ownership, and how team identification and psychological ownership positively affect FCB members' intention to purchase team-licensed sports products and the sponsor's sports-apparel products. By doing so, this research is the first to examine participative decision-making and psychological ownership in a team identification model of antecedents and outcomes.

The results show that in soccer teams, as non-profit sports associations of a private nature involving natural persons, as is the case of FCB, the effect of psychological ownership on intentions to purchase the team-licensed merchandise apparel and the sponsor's products is much stronger than that of team identification. The effect of team identification had already been verified by previous studies (Alexandris & Tsioutsou, 2012; Dale et al., 2005; Gwinner & Swanson, 2003; Madrigal, 2000; Tobar, 2006), while the effect of psychological ownership is a novel contribution of this study. A possible explanation for this new finding in the sport marketing and management literature would be that the feeling of belonging makes FCB members far more involved in the life of the club than they would be if they were simply fans, as happens in the contexts of organizations and companies (Chi & Han, 2008; Pierce &

Rodgers, 2004), and this feeling is much more powerful than the identification that any fan could have without being a member. In fact, this could be a fundamental difference with teams with large and/or investor owners, where the relationship between the fan and the team would be based more on entertainment and results. As a consequence, this study extends the current literature on psychological ownership theory, beyond previous findings in organizational contexts, by exploring how FCB members' psychological ownership impacts the intention to purchase FCB's team-licensed sports merchandise, and willingness to purchase the main sponsor's sports-apparel products. It is found that in sports clubs with a membership ownership structure, the members develop a strong sense of ownership, which is a strong predictor of behavior. This research highlights the fact that psychological ownership is not restricted to objects, business organizations or products, as has been considered until recently (Kumar & Nayak, 2019; Lessard-Bonaventure & Chebat, 2015), but extends to sports clubs.

The results reveal that team identification and participative decision-making positively influence psychological ownership, as previous research has identified in hospitality contexts, in the first case (Asatryan & Oh, 2008), and in the organizational context in the second (Chi & Han, 2008; Li et al., 2012), but not in the sports marketing and management literature. However, the influence of participative decision-making is stronger than the influence of team identification. This could be explained by the fact that for the members of FCB, a representative portion of whom vote on such important issues as budgets, profit and losses, investments, naming rights, and other matters, in addition everyone has the right to participate in the democratic election of the president (FC Barcelona, 2018a). This is a determining factor in the development of feelings of psychological ownership because it would be an effect similar to that experienced by participation in decision-making by company employees (Han, Chiang, & Chang, 2010). In contrast, participative decision-making does not have a

significant influence on team identification, which may reflect the members' dissatisfaction with the club's governance and management (Uhrich, 2020). In sum, this study contributes to the sports marketing literature by extending social identity theory. The results revealed that the identification with a team is important to create a sense of ownership toward the club. Furthermore, this research extends the use of participative decision-making to the sports marketing literature, whereas previous studies had focused on the field of business organizations (Joensson, 2008; Elile & Fields, 2010). This is a relevant contribution because to date only one study about participative perception among the fans of German soccer teams, some of which are wholly or partially owned by Volkswagen, has been conducted (Uhrich, 2020), with findings suggesting that participation in the approval of management decisions influences fan satisfaction. Moreover, the results of this study show that participative decision-making influences the feeling of psychological ownership of FCB members far more than team identity and, according to social identity theory, the process of participation indicates inclusion and status (Fuller et al., 2006), as well as collective influence on the club's decisions (Uhrich, 2020), unlike a fan who does not usually participate in the decision-making process of a club. This allows FCB members to reinforce the sense of ownership because they are sharing the power through their involvement in the decision-making process (Li et al., 2012).

In relation to points of attachment, soccer has been the most significant influence on team identification, and it is consistent with previous findings in the sport management literature regarding the effect of sport attachment on team identification (Yoshida et al., 2015).

However, and contrary to what was expected, soccer attachment does not influence psychological ownership. One possible explanation could be that FCB is a multi-sport club and members not only feel soccer as a POA, but also feel linked to other sports such as basketball, handball, roller hockey and futsal in which FCB has professional teams.

Other results show the positive relationship between players and team identification and psychological ownership (PO). The first is also consistent with previous sport management literature (Wu et al., 2012), and the second is a novelty. These results are explained by the fact that FCB has one of the best teams in the world, with players like Messi, Griezman, Coutinho, Piqué, Ter Stegen, and De Jong, among others. Having such a good team, and the identification with these players, would reinforce both team identification and psychological ownership among FCB members, and especially so in the case of PO, since they are very likely to feel their players as part of the club's financial assets, in addition to being emotionally connected with them.

Furthermore, attachment to other members and fans has a positive effect on team identification (Yoshida et al., 2015) and on psychological ownership. This new finding regarding psychological ownership could be explained through the feeling of community that exists among FCB members. They travel together to attend important matches in different competitions, participate in member assemblies to make decisions about the club, and there are more than 1,245 official supporters' clubs with 170,000 registered fan club members around the world, including many of the 142,323 members. All this reinforces the FCB members' feeling of psychological ownership.

The most surprising aspect was that attachment to the city does not influence team identification or psychological ownership, taking into account that the sample was made up of members residing in Barcelona. A possible explanation could be related to differences in attachment to cities between residents born in the city and those born outside the city. In fact, attachment is a deep emotional bond that connects people and places, so an individual must previously develop place identity and place dependency in order to become attached to a particular place (Palau-Saumell et al., 2019). Previous studies have shown contradictory results in identifying the city inhabitants' attachment toward the city according to their place

of origin. Some authors have postulated that non-natives do not express attachment until they have identified themselves with the place (Hay, 1998; Hernández, Hidalgo, Salazar-Laplace, & Hess, 2007), while Casakin, Hernandez and Ruiz (2015) found no differences between natives and non-natives regarding the intensity of the bonds with a place. However, data from the city of Barcelona show that 50% of its inhabitants were born outside the city (Barcelona City Hall, 2019), and this figure is likely to be very similar among members of FC Barcelona. Consequently, there is also a high probability that members born outside the city have not yet developed emotional bonds to the place, which would explain the meaning of the results. Likewise, to partially explain the results of their study, in which attachment to the city did not influence team identification, Yoshida et al. (2015) pointed to the fact that a significant part of the sample used came from outside the city.

Another interesting finding in this study is the positive influence of attachment to the nation (Catalonia) on team identification and on psychological ownership. Although previous authors had found an influence of attachment to the state on the identification with a university indoor soccer team in the USA, netball games in New Zealand, and college football games in the USA (Heere et al., 2011), this identification occurred among students at a university in the United States. The results of this study, however, go beyond the scope of a university. It shows the attachment of FCB members to a nation, in this case Catalonia (which, although it has autonomous self-government and its own parliamentary institutions, is part of the Spanish state), as an antecedent of team identification (FCB) and the psychological ownership of the club. This suggests that the Catalan nationalist sentiment of FCB members is essential to strengthen team identity and to develop a feeling of psychological ownership. This relationship has been present historically since the early years of the history of FCB, when the founder, Hans Gamper, associated the club with the political ideology of Catalanism to prevent it from disappearing in 1908, and in subsequent years (Brown, 2007). Later, FCB

was used as a symbol of resistance by the Catalans against the fascist Franco dictatorship (1939-1975), and FCB also lent its support for other political claims by Catalans after rights and democracy were restored (Hamil et al., 2010). A final theoretical contribution shows that this study broadens the framework of points of attachment by incorporating the dimension "nation", as a political entity, unlike previous studies that had incorporated entities of political administration, such as the state (Ballouli, Trail, Koesters, & Bernthal, 2016), or geographic associations (Heere & James, 2007). The study shows that, for its members, FCB is a strong expression of the Catalan national identity. This identity has been reflected in the club's history and in the most recent political events (Whigham, Lopez-Gonzalez, & Ramon, 2019). Furthermore, the results confirm that points of attachment are a predictor of team identification and psychological ownership, but they have to be adapted to each context, as already suggested by Robinson and Trail (2005), since, according to attachment theory, people establish emotional bonds with their close relationships (Bowlby, 1982). Therefore, they must be analyzed according to each context, culture, and set of political circumstances.

## **6. Managerial implications**

In addition to its contributions to the sport marketing and management literature, this study also offers implications for the Board of Directors of FCB as well as other professional soccer teams with a similar organizational structure. This research has shown that psychological ownership has far more influence than team identification on the intentions to purchase both the FCB team-licensed merchandise apparel and the sponsor's products. Therefore, if FCB and its sponsors want to improve the turnover of their products among FCB members, they should strengthen their promotional activities by emphasizing feelings of psychological ownership. This means that both FCB and the sponsor/s should reflect the members, in their role as owners, in the content of their promotions, highlighting the pride of belonging to FCB,

the importance of purchasing products to further reinforce the link with the club, as a means of ensuring its economic viability, and avoiding any possibility of purchase by investors, in addition to being able to offer members of FCB better prices.

The FCB Board of Directors should perhaps consider improving the representativeness and decision-making capacity of members in club decision structures, taking into account the strong influence of participative decision-making on psychological ownership. However, it is true that these changes would strengthen psychological ownership, but to carry them out it would be necessary to modify the club's statutes and, to do so, very strong majorities are required or it could be one of the points included in future electoral programs.

The findings show how important soccer is for members to identify themselves with the team. However, soccer does not increase the feeling of psychological ownership among FCB members because they may perceive FCB as a multi-sport club. This means that the Board should continue to strengthen the other professional sections, providing them with good players and an adequate budget to allow them to compete for all the titles at stake.

The fan community greatly influences team identification and psychological ownership. FCB managers should continue to enhance the members' experience during matches, support members when traveling to other stadiums, improve the club's Social Area, and increase the activity of the World Confederation of Supporters' Clubs by promoting more encounters among supporters, especially among those in which members are also involved.

Furthermore, and having verified that for the FCB member Catalonia is far more relevant than the city of Barcelona, the Board must be far more aligned with and committed to the nation's social, political, and economic situation, without giving the impression of standing at some mid-point or of projecting any ambiguities.

## **7. Limitations and suggestions for future research**

This research has provided important insights into the understanding of the role of team identification and psychological ownership on the intentions to purchase FCB's licensed merchandise apparel, and the main sponsor's products. However, there are some limitations that should be considered for future studies. First, the measurement of the team identification variable has been examined using one of the dimensions of the PAI scale (Trail & Robinson, 2001), which was developed from identity theory. In future research, a better application of social identity theory, on which this study is based, should use another measurement scale from social identity theory, such as that of Wann and Branscombe (1993).

Second, the context was limited to one professional soccer team, FC Barcelona. Future research should therefore test this model in other soccer clubs with similar organization and ownership structures, such as Athletic Bilbao or Real Madrid, in Spain, to better generalize the findings. However, the model tested could also be applicable to sports clubs with governance by private owners, since many fans of the soccer teams that were sold to commercial investors maintain a certain feeling of psychological ownership (Llopis-Goig, 2012).

Third, the research is limited to club members who live in the city of Barcelona. Expanding the sample to all members could offer a more generalized view of the perceptions of all the FCB members as regards the causal relationships of the model.

Finally, the study is limited to a specific type of soccer club. Perhaps the research could be expanded to other clubs that, a few years ago, had an organizational and ownership structure similar to that of FCB before they were bought up by great magnates and/or international investors.



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**Table 1**

## Measurement model

Constructs	SL	Source
<b>Team-licensed products purchase intentions (TMP) (CRI=0.892; p<sub>A</sub>=0.851; AVE= 0.758)</b>		
How likely do you think you are to buy the following items in the future?		
Team shirts and apparel.	0.748*	
Tracksuits, jerseys.	0.802*	Fischer and Wakefield (1998)
Team scarf.	0.836*	
Caps or hats.	0.821*	
Other merchandising products: key rings, mugs.	0.738*	
<b>Sponsor's products purchase intentions (SPI) (CRI=0.939; p<sub>A</sub>=0.917; AVE= 0.794)</b>		
I would buy products from sponsor X.	0.876*	
When I need to buy apparel products I would consider buying them from X.	0.907*	
Sponsor X's sponsorship of FCB makes me more likely to buy its products.	0.882*	Biscaia et al. (2013)
I would be more likely to buy sponsor X's products than those of its competitors.	0.900*	
<b>Psychological Ownership (PO) (CRI=0.939; p<sub>A</sub>=0.923; AVE= 0.721)</b>		
This is my club.	0.766*	Van Dyne & Pierce (2004)
I sense this club belongs to its members.	0.863*	
I feel a very high degree of personal ownership for this organization.	0.877*	
I sense this club belongs to me as a member.	0.850*	
This is our club.	0.859*	
Club members feel as though they own the club.	0.874*	
<b>Team identification (TID) (CRI=0.915; p<sub>A</sub>=0.872; AVE= 0.783)</b>		
I consider myself to be a real fan of FCB.	0.889*	Trail & James (2001)
I would experience a loss if I had to stop being a fan of FCB.	0.853*	
Being a fan of FCB is very important to me.	0.911*	
<b>Participative decision-making (PDM) (CRI=0.964; p<sub>A</sub>=0.952; AVE= 0.869)</b>		
The members have a high degree of influence in FCB decisions.	0.939*	
The members can actively participate in crucial decisions affecting FCB.	0.955*	
The members can participate in establishing new club policies/strategies.	0.944*	Lam et al. (2002)
The members' views have a real influence on the club's decisions.	0.892*	
<b>Sport attachment (SOAT) (CRI=0.910; p<sub>A</sub>=0.865; AVE= 0.772)</b>		



Soccer is my favorite sport.	0.775*	Yoshida et al.
I am a soccer fan at all levels.	0.915*	(2015)
First and foremost I consider myself a "real" soccer fan.	0.745*	
<b>Players attachment (PLAT) (CRI=0.919; p<sub>A</sub>=0.865; AVE= 0.792)</b>		
I am a big fan of specific FCB players.	0.842*	
I identify with the individual FCB players.	0.818*	Yoshida et al.
I consider myself a fan of certain FCB players.	0.822*	(2015)
<b>Fans attachment (FAAT) (CRI=0.919; p<sub>A</sub>=0.865; AVE= 0.792)</b>		
I feel a deep connection with others who follow FCB.	0.781*	Keller (2003)
I really identify with people who follow FCB.	0.766*	
I feel like I belong to a club with other FCB fans.	0.902*	
FCB is supported by other fans like me.	0.836*	
<b>City attachment (CIAT) (CRI=0.905; p<sub>A</sub>=0.846; AVE= 0.761)</b>		
My self-image as a resident in Barcelona is important to me.	0.807*	Yoshida et al.
Barcelona is an important characteristic that reflects who I am.	0.752*	(2015)
I identify with other residents in Barcelona.	0.845*	
<b>Nation attachment (NAT) (CRI=0.952; p<sub>A</sub>=0.939; AVE= 0.833)</b>		
Being Catalan is very important to me.	0.781*	Huddy &
I consider myself a true Catalan citizen.	0.766*	Khatib (2007)
I think the word "Catalan" defines who I am.	0.902*	
When I speak of the Catalans I usually use the word "we" and not "they".	0.836*	

Notes. Fit of the model: chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) = 199.0793, df = 185, p = 0.22704; RMSEA = 0.009; NNFI = 0.998; CFI = 0.999; \*p < .01

**Table 2**  
Discriminant validity

Construct	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. MPI	0.790	0.556	0.427	0.344	0.407	0.311	0.451	0.455	0.297	0.185
2. SPI	0.497	0.891	0.368	0.362	0.368	0.330	0.404	0.413	0.373	0.245
3. PO	0.379	0.342	0.849	0.552	0.494	0.382	0.521	0.626	0.487	0.442
4. TID	0.302	0.325	0.494	0.885	0.206	0.695	0.653	0.699	0.526	0.466
5. PDM	0.364	0.344	0.465	0.188	0.932	0.220	0.326	0.369	0.252	0.093
6. FOAT	0.269	0.292	0.338	0.603	0.197	0.878	0.593	0.517	0.411	0.276
7. PLAT	0.390	0.361	0.466	0.567	0.297	0.511	0.890	0.689	0.599	0.302
8. FAAT	0.398	0.376	0.572	0.618	0.340	0.453	0.607	0.871	0.678	0.462
9. CIAT	0.254	0.328	0.429	0.451	0.226	0.348	0.512	0.588	0.873	0.458
10. NAT	0.167	0.227	0.410	0.420	0.089	0.249	0.274	0.426	0.408	0.913

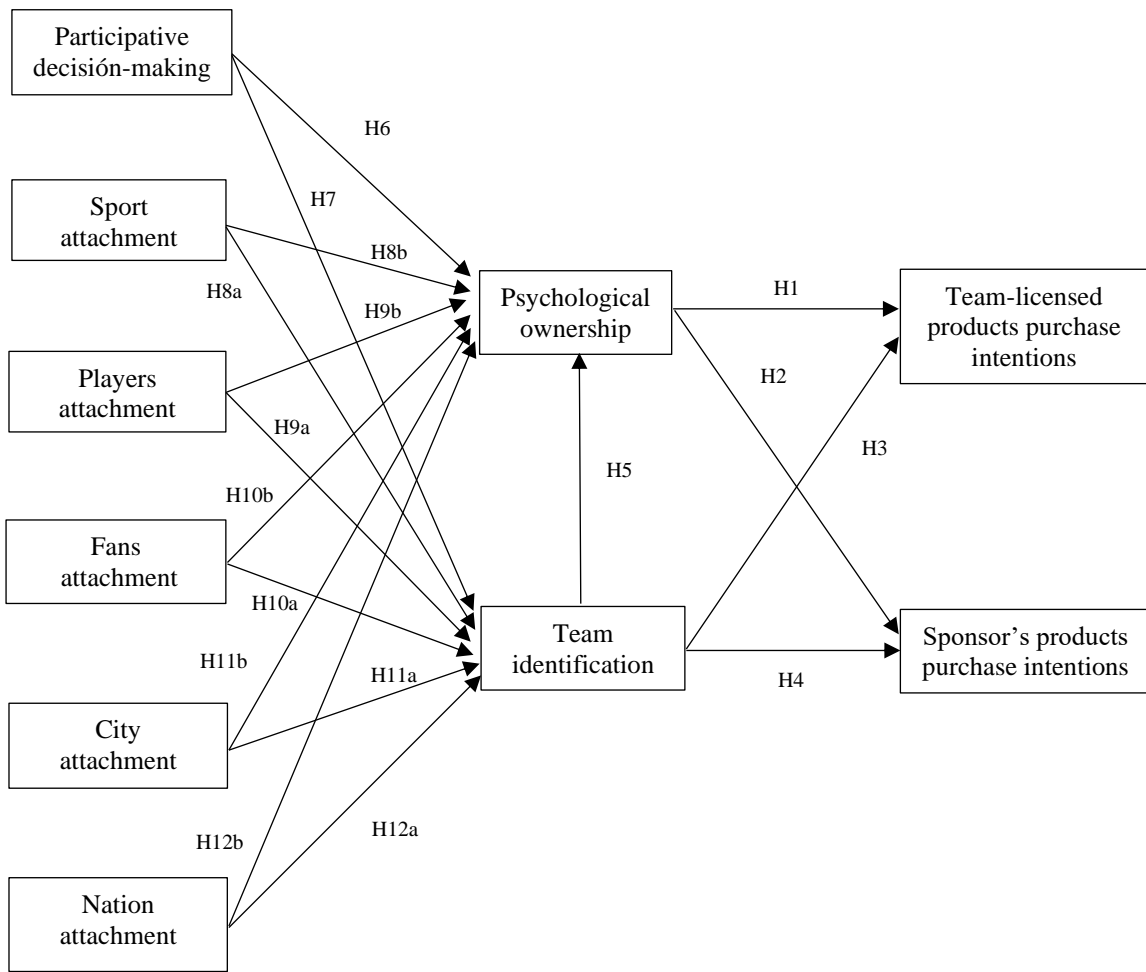
Note: Values above the diagonal represent the HTMT ratios between the latent constructs; values on the diagonal represent the square root of the AVE values; values below the diagonal represent the estimated correlations among the latent constructs.

**Table 3**  
Results of the structural model

Hypothesis	$\beta$	t-value	PCI
H1) Psychological Ownership $\rightarrow$ Team-licensed products	0.298	9.998	(0.247; 0.345)
H2) Psychological Ownership $\rightarrow$ Sponsor's purchase	0.244	7.590	(0.191; 0.297)
H3) Team Identification $\rightarrow$ Team-licensed products	0.140	4.288	(0.083; 0.191)
H4) Team Identification $\rightarrow$ Sponsor's purchases	0.193	6.078	(0.148; 0.246)
H5) Team Identification $\rightarrow$ Psychological Ownership	0.147	4.284	(0.091; 0.204)
H6) Participative Decision $\rightarrow$ Psychological Ownership	0.323	13.693	(0.273; 0.347)
H7) Participative Decision $\rightarrow$ Team Identification	0.033	1.556	(-0.008; 0.073)
H8a) Soccer Attachment $\rightarrow$ Team Identification	0.340	12.603	(0.281; 0.364)
H8b) Soccer Attachment $\rightarrow$ Psychological Ownership	-0.031	1.036	(-0.074; 0.011)
H9a) Players Attachment $\rightarrow$ Team Identification	0.190	6.606	(0.137; 0.241)
H9b) Players Attachment $\rightarrow$ Psychological Ownership	0.109	3.067	(0.050; 0.167)
H10a) Fans Attachment $\rightarrow$ Team Identification	0.255	7.612	(0.200; 0.311)
H10b) Fans Attachment $\rightarrow$ Psychological Ownership	0.194	4.993	(0.131; 0.258)
H11a) City Attachment $\rightarrow$ Team Identification	0.009	0.318	(-0.039; 0.057)
H11b) City Attachment $\rightarrow$ Psychological Ownership	0.043	1.336	(-0.009; 0.097)
H12a) Nation Attachment $\rightarrow$ Team Identification	0.167	6.177	(0.123; 0.251)
H12b) Nation Attachment $\rightarrow$ Psychological Ownership	0.196	6.003	(0.144; 0.251)

R<sup>2</sup>-Merchandise purchase=0.150; R<sup>2</sup>-Sponsor's purchase=0.141; R<sup>2</sup>-Psychological Ownership=0.467; R<sup>2</sup>-Team identification=0.543; Q<sup>2</sup>-Merchandise Purchase=0.088; Q<sup>2</sup>-Sponsor's purchase=0.109; Q<sup>2</sup>-Psychological Ownership=0.326; Q<sup>2</sup>-Team identification=0.410

PCI: Percentile confidence interval



**Fig. 1.** Theoretical model and hypotheses