



GENERATIVE ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IN SPORTS MARKETING: EXAMINING ITS INFLUENCE ON FAN ENGAGEMENT, BRAND TRUST, AND CONSUMER DECISION-MAKING

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Abstract:

The rapid evolution of Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) is transforming the global sports industry by redefining how sport organizations communicate with supporters, personalize digital experiences, and influence consumer behavior. Unlike traditional artificial intelligence applications that primarily automate operational tasks, generative AI enables the creation of personalized content, interactive communication, and immersive fan experiences through technologies such as conversational chatbots, automated content generation, recommendation systems, and virtual assistants. These innovations provide sports organizations with unprecedented opportunities to strengthen fan engagement, improve brand trust, and enhance consumer decision-making across digital platforms. Despite the increasing adoption of generative AI by professional football clubs, sports brands, and digital sport media, empirical research examining the mechanisms through which AI-driven personalization influences supporters' behavioral responses remains limited. Existing studies have largely focused on technology adoption or digital marketing effectiveness, while relatively little attention has been given to the combined effects of perceived usefulness, perceived enjoyment, brand trust, and fan engagement within a unified theoretical framework. Consequently, there remains a significant gap in understanding how generative AI contributes to long-term consumer relationships and purchasing behavior in sports marketing. Drawing upon the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), Relationship Marketing Theory, and the Stimulus–Organism–Response (S–O–R) framework, this study proposes a conceptual research model explaining how AI personalization shapes supporters' cognitive and emotional evaluations, subsequently influencing purchase intention and consumer decision-making. A quantitative research design is proposed using a structured questionnaire administered to football supporters, with data analyzed through Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). The proposed model

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incorporates AI personalization as the primary stimulus, perceived usefulness and perceived enjoyment as psychological responses, and brand trust, fan engagement, purchase intention, and consumer decision-making as behavioral outcomes. The study is expected to contribute to both theory and practice by integrating contemporary artificial intelligence literature with sports marketing research and by providing a comprehensive framework for understanding consumer behavior in AI-enabled sporting environments. The findings are anticipated to assist sports organizations, clubs, sponsors, and digital marketers in designing personalized AI-driven marketing strategies capable of strengthening fan relationships, enhancing trust, and improving long-term commercial performance.

Keywords: generative artificial intelligence; sports marketing; fan engagement; brand trust; purchase intention; consumer decision-making; technology acceptance model; digital sports; personalization

1. Introduction

The sports industry has experienced an unprecedented digital transformation over the past decade, driven by rapid technological advances, evolving consumer expectations, and the widespread adoption of digital communication platforms. Professional sports organizations increasingly rely on digital technologies to engage supporters, strengthen brand equity, create personalized experiences, and generate new commercial opportunities. Social media platforms, mobile applications, streaming services, customer relationship management systems, and data analytics have fundamentally reshaped the interaction between sports organizations and their supporters, moving beyond traditional transactional relationships toward continuous digital engagement (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016; Verhoef *et al.*, 2021).

More recently, the emergence of **Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI)** has introduced a new stage in the digital evolution of sports marketing. Unlike conventional artificial intelligence systems that primarily analyze existing information or automate repetitive processes, generative AI possesses the capability to create original content, simulate human-like conversations, personalize recommendations, and generate multimedia material in real time. Applications including ChatGPT-like conversational assistants, AI-powered customer service agents, automated marketing content generation, personalized promotional campaigns, virtual commentators, and intelligent recommendation systems are increasingly being adopted across professional football clubs, sports media organizations, and global sporting brands (Dwivedi *et al.*, 2023; Huang & Rust, 2021).

The commercial importance of generative AI extends beyond operational efficiency. Contemporary supporters expect immediate access to personalized information, customized offers, interactive communication, and immersive digital experiences that reflect their individual interests and preferences. AI-driven

personalization enables sports organizations to analyze supporter data, predict consumer preferences, and deliver highly tailored experiences throughout the fan journey. Consequently, personalization has become a critical competitive advantage within sports marketing, enabling organizations to strengthen customer relationships while simultaneously increasing commercial revenues through targeted marketing initiatives.

Fan engagement has emerged as one of the most influential concepts within contemporary sports marketing literature. Rather than viewing supporters solely as consumers purchasing tickets or merchandise, recent research conceptualizes fans as active participants who continuously interact with sports organizations across multiple digital channels (Hollebeek *et al.*, 2014; Yoshida *et al.*, 2014). Engaged supporters contribute to organizational success through repeated purchases, social media participation, positive word-of-mouth communication, content sharing, and long-term loyalty. As digital technologies continue to evolve, AI-enabled personalization offers new opportunities to deepen these relationships by providing individualized experiences capable of increasing both emotional attachment and behavioral engagement.

Alongside engagement, **brand trust** represents another fundamental determinant of long-term consumer relationships within professional sports. Trust reduces perceived uncertainty, enhances confidence in organizational decisions, and strengthens supporters' willingness to maintain enduring relationships with sports brands (Morgan & Hunt, 1994; Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001). Although generative AI provides significant opportunities for improving customer experiences, its implementation also raises concerns regarding transparency, privacy, ethical AI usage, and authenticity. Consequently, understanding whether AI-generated interactions strengthen or weaken supporter trust represents an increasingly important research question for both scholars and practitioners.

Consumer decision-making within digital sports environments has also become increasingly complex. Supporters are continuously exposed to personalized advertisements, AI-generated recommendations, social media content, influencer marketing, live streaming, and digital communities that collectively influence purchasing behavior. Rather than relying solely on rational evaluations, consumers increasingly make purchasing decisions based on emotional engagement, trust, perceived value, and personalized experiences. This shift highlights the necessity of integrating technological acceptance theories with relationship marketing perspectives to better understand modern sports consumers.

Although the literature concerning artificial intelligence, digital marketing, and sports management has expanded considerably, several important research gaps remain. Existing studies predominantly investigate AI adoption from technological or operational perspectives, while relatively few examine how AI-driven personalization influences psychological mechanisms that ultimately shape consumer behavior within sports contexts. Moreover, previous research often investigates perceived usefulness, brand trust, fan engagement, or purchase intention independently, without integrating

these constructs into a comprehensive conceptual framework capable of explaining the sequential effects of AI-enabled personalization on consumer decision-making.

To address these limitations, the present study develops an integrated conceptual model based on three complementary theoretical perspectives: the **Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)**, which explains users' cognitive evaluations of technological systems (Davis, 1989); the **Stimulus–Organism–Response (S–O–R) framework**, which explains how external technological stimuli influence internal psychological responses and subsequent behaviors (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974); and **Relationship Marketing Theory**, which emphasizes trust as the foundation of long-term customer relationships (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). By combining these theoretical perspectives, the study provides a holistic explanation of how AI personalization influences perceived usefulness, perceived enjoyment, brand trust, fan engagement, purchase intention, and ultimately consumer decision-making.

Accordingly, this study proposes and empirically examines a conceptual framework in which AI personalization functions as the primary technological stimulus, perceived usefulness and perceived enjoyment represent users' cognitive and emotional evaluations, brand trust and fan engagement serve as relational mechanisms, purchase intention reflects behavioral intention, and consumer decision-making represents the ultimate behavioral outcome. The research employs a quantitative methodology using survey data collected from football supporters and analyzes the proposed relationships through Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM), an analytical approach widely recommended for predictive research involving complex conceptual models (Hair *et al.*, 2022).

The study contributes to the growing literature on artificial intelligence and sports marketing in several ways. First, it extends existing knowledge by integrating generative AI into established theories of technology acceptance and relationship marketing. Second, it introduces a comprehensive conceptual framework explaining the mechanisms through which AI personalization influences supporters' behavioral outcomes. Third, it provides practical guidance for sports organizations seeking to implement AI technologies in ways that strengthen trust, increase fan engagement, and improve commercial performance while maintaining long-term supporter relationships. Finally, as artificial intelligence continues to reshape the global sports ecosystem, understanding how supporters perceive and respond to AI-generated experiences becomes increasingly important for academics, practitioners, and policymakers alike. The findings of this research are expected to contribute to the strategic development of AI-enabled sports marketing practices while advancing theoretical understanding of digital consumer behavior within contemporary sporting environments.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Generative Artificial Intelligence

Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) has emerged as one of the most transformative technological innovations of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, fundamentally reshaping how organizations create, distribute, and personalize digital content. Unlike traditional artificial intelligence systems that primarily focus on prediction, classification, or automation based on predefined datasets, generative AI is capable of producing novel outputs—including text, images, videos, software code, and audio—through sophisticated deep learning architectures such as transformer-based large language models (LLMs) and generative adversarial networks (GANs) (Goodfellow *et al.*, 2014; Bommasani *et al.*, 2021). These capabilities have expanded the role of AI from an analytical support tool to a strategic technology capable of enhancing creativity, communication, and customer interaction across multiple industries.

The rapid public adoption of applications such as ChatGPT, Microsoft Copilot, Google Gemini, Claude, and other generative AI systems has accelerated organizational investment in AI-driven digital transformation. According to Dwivedi *et al.* (2023), generative AI represents a paradigm shift in business innovation because it enables organizations to automate knowledge-intensive activities while simultaneously improving customer experience through highly personalized interactions. Unlike earlier generations of AI applications, which primarily optimized internal operational efficiency, GenAI directly influences customer-facing activities by producing context-aware responses, personalized recommendations, dynamic marketing campaigns, and interactive digital experiences.

From a technological perspective, generative AI is largely built upon foundation models trained on extensive datasets containing textual, visual, and multimodal information. These models employ transformer architectures capable of understanding contextual relationships between words, images, and user inputs, allowing them to generate coherent and contextually relevant outputs (Bommasani *et al.*, 2021). Consequently, organizations increasingly integrate these systems into customer service, marketing communication, product development, education, healthcare, financial services, and entertainment industries.

Within marketing, the emergence of generative AI has significantly altered the traditional communication process between organizations and consumers. Conventional digital marketing strategies typically relied on customer segmentation, demographic profiling, and predefined promotional campaigns. In contrast, AI-driven marketing enables firms to deliver individualized content tailored to consumers' behavioral patterns, purchasing histories, emotional preferences, and real-time interactions (Huang & Rust, 2021). Personalized communication generated by AI systems contributes to higher levels of perceived relevance, customer satisfaction, and engagement, thereby strengthening long-term customer relationships.

Huang and Rust (2021) argue that artificial intelligence is gradually transforming marketing functions across three complementary dimensions: mechanical intelligence, analytical intelligence, and empathetic intelligence. While mechanical intelligence automates repetitive processes and analytical intelligence facilitates data-driven decision-making, empathetic intelligence enables AI systems to simulate human-like communication by recognizing emotions, adapting language, and generating personalized interactions. Generative AI extends these capabilities by producing original content that closely resembles human creativity, allowing organizations to communicate with consumers in increasingly natural and engaging ways.

The commercialization of generative AI has also introduced significant opportunities for customer relationship management (CRM). AI-powered chatbots, intelligent virtual assistants, automated email generation, personalized advertising, recommendation engines, and conversational commerce systems enable organizations to maintain continuous communication with customers while simultaneously reducing operational costs. These technologies allow firms to respond instantly to customer inquiries, generate customized promotional content, recommend relevant products, and provide individualized support throughout the consumer journey (Davenport *et al.*, 2020). Consequently, organizations can improve both customer satisfaction and operational efficiency while strengthening relationship quality.

Despite these advantages, the rapid expansion of generative AI also raises several ethical and managerial concerns. Issues relating to data privacy, algorithmic transparency, intellectual property, misinformation, bias, and consumer trust remain central topics within contemporary AI research (Dwivedi *et al.*, 2023). Consumers increasingly expect organizations not only to provide innovative AI-driven experiences but also to ensure transparency regarding data collection, responsible AI governance, and ethical decision-making. Failure to address these concerns may undermine consumer confidence and reduce the effectiveness of AI-enabled marketing initiatives.

Within the sports industry, generative AI is increasingly employed to automate match reports, generate personalized social media content, produce multilingual communication, deliver AI-powered fan assistance, and create customized digital experiences before, during, and after sporting events. Professional football clubs and sports organizations utilize AI systems to analyze supporter preferences, recommend merchandise, personalize ticket offers, and enhance digital engagement across online platforms. These applications illustrate how generative AI extends beyond operational automation by becoming an essential component of strategic sports marketing and fan relationship management.

Although scholarly interest in generative AI has increased substantially during recent years, empirical evidence regarding its influence on consumer behavior within sports marketing remains relatively limited. Existing research has primarily examined AI adoption in general business contexts, while fewer studies investigate how AI-generated personalization influences supporters' perceptions, emotional engagement, brand trust, and purchasing behavior in professional sports. This gap highlights the need for

comprehensive theoretical frameworks capable of explaining the psychological mechanisms through which AI-driven personalization affects consumer decision-making in sports marketing, thereby providing the foundation for the present study.

2.2 Artificial Intelligence in Sports Marketing

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has become one of the most influential technological innovations shaping the contemporary sports industry. The rapid digitalization of professional sports organizations, combined with the increasing availability of consumer data and advances in machine learning, has fundamentally transformed the way clubs interact with supporters, manage marketing campaigns, and create value for stakeholders. Sports organizations are no longer viewed solely as providers of sporting events; rather, they operate as digital entertainment brands that continuously engage with fans across multiple online and offline touchpoints. Consequently, AI has emerged as a strategic resource that enables clubs to improve operational efficiency while simultaneously enhancing fan experiences and strengthening long-term customer relationships (Huang & Rust, 2021; Dwivedi *et al.*, 2023).

The commercialization of sport has intensified competition among clubs, leagues, sponsors, and broadcasters, compelling organizations to adopt innovative technologies capable of differentiating their brands in increasingly saturated markets. Digital transformation has accelerated the integration of AI into virtually every aspect of sports marketing, including customer relationship management, ticket sales, merchandising, sponsorship activation, digital communication, social media management, and personalized fan experiences (Filo, Lock, & Karg, 2015). Rather than relying on traditional mass marketing approaches, sports organizations increasingly utilize AI to deliver highly individualized communications that reflect supporters' preferences, behaviors, and consumption patterns.

One of the most significant contributions of AI to sports marketing is the development of **personalization strategies**. Personalization refers to the adaptation of marketing messages, recommendations, products, and services according to the unique characteristics and preferences of individual consumers (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). Advances in artificial intelligence have significantly improved the sophistication of personalization by enabling organizations to analyze large volumes of behavioral data in real time. AI algorithms continuously learn from consumers' browsing histories, ticket purchases, merchandise transactions, mobile application usage, social media interactions, and online engagement to generate highly relevant recommendations and customized marketing content.

In the context of professional football, personalization extends across the entire supporter journey. Fans increasingly receive individualized ticket offers based on previous attendance patterns, personalized merchandise recommendations according to favorite players or teams, customized promotional emails, AI-generated match previews, multilingual content, and individualized notifications through mobile applications. These personalized experiences increase perceived relevance and convenience, thereby

improving customer satisfaction and strengthening long-term engagement (Verhoef *et al.*, 2021). According to Huang and Rust (2021), AI-driven personalization enables organizations to transition from reactive marketing approaches toward proactive customer engagement strategies that anticipate consumer needs before they are explicitly expressed.

The effectiveness of personalization is closely linked to the emergence of **sports fan ecosystems**, which integrate multiple digital platforms into a unified customer experience. Modern supporters interact with sports organizations through official websites, streaming platforms, mobile applications, online stores, fantasy sports, gaming environments, wearable technologies, and numerous social media channels. These interconnected digital environments generate extensive behavioral data that can be analyzed using AI technologies to better understand supporters' interests and optimize marketing strategies (Kietzmann *et al.*, 2018).

Fan ecosystems emphasize that consumer engagement is no longer confined to match attendance but instead encompasses continuous interaction before, during, and after sporting events. AI technologies facilitate this continuous engagement by providing real-time content recommendations, personalized notifications, virtual assistants, automated customer support, and interactive digital experiences. For example, AI-powered chatbots can answer supporter inquiries twenty-four hours a day, recommend appropriate ticket packages, provide stadium information, or assist with merchandise purchases. Such applications improve service quality while reducing operational costs and response times, thereby enhancing overall customer satisfaction.

A critical component supporting AI implementation in sports marketing is the increasing sophistication of **Customer Relationship Management (CRM) systems**. Contemporary CRM platforms have evolved from simple customer databases into intelligent decision-support systems capable of integrating transactional, behavioral, demographic, and social media data. AI-powered CRM enables sports organizations to identify valuable customer segments, predict purchasing behavior, estimate supporter lifetime value, and design highly targeted marketing campaigns (Payne & Frow, 2017).

Predictive analytics represents one of the most valuable capabilities of AI-enhanced CRM systems. Machine learning algorithms analyze historical supporter behavior to forecast future purchasing decisions, identify potential season ticket renewals, estimate merchandise demand, and detect supporters at risk of disengagement. These predictive insights enable marketing managers to implement proactive retention strategies and allocate marketing resources more efficiently. Consequently, AI contributes not only to improved marketing effectiveness but also to long-term revenue generation and customer loyalty.

The rapid growth of social media has further expanded the role of AI within sports marketing. Platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, X, TikTok, and YouTube generate vast amounts of user-generated content that reflects supporters' emotions, attitudes, and behavioral intentions. Artificial intelligence technologies, particularly natural language processing and sentiment analysis, allow organizations to monitor fan opinions in real

time, evaluate public reactions to organizational decisions, identify emerging trends, and assess the effectiveness of digital marketing campaigns (Mariani *et al.*, 2022). These insights support evidence-based decision-making and enable organizations to respond rapidly to changes in supporter sentiment.

More recently, **Generative Artificial Intelligence** has significantly expanded the strategic possibilities of digital sports marketing. Unlike conventional AI systems that primarily classify or predict consumer behavior, generative AI actively creates personalized marketing content. Professional sports organizations increasingly employ generative AI to produce match reports, personalized newsletters, promotional videos, multilingual social media posts, automated interviews, interactive fan experiences, and conversational virtual assistants capable of engaging supporters through natural language communication (Dwivedi *et al.*, 2023). These applications substantially reduce content production time while increasing both personalization and communication efficiency.

Despite these considerable opportunities, AI implementation within sports marketing also presents important managerial and ethical challenges. The extensive collection and analysis of personal data raise concerns regarding privacy protection, cybersecurity, transparency, algorithmic fairness, and regulatory compliance. Supporters increasingly expect organizations to communicate openly about how AI systems collect, process, and utilize personal information. Moreover, excessive automation may reduce perceptions of authenticity if consumers believe that interactions are entirely machine-generated rather than reflecting genuine organizational relationships. Consequently, successful AI implementation requires balancing technological innovation with ethical governance, transparency, and human-centered communication strategies (Dwivedi *et al.*, 2023).

Overall, the literature indicates that artificial intelligence has evolved from a supporting technology into a strategic capability that shapes competitive advantage within professional sports. Through AI-enabled personalization, intelligent CRM systems, predictive analytics, digital fan ecosystems, and generative content creation, sports organizations can develop stronger relationships with supporters while simultaneously improving operational performance and commercial outcomes. Nevertheless, understanding the psychological mechanisms through which AI-driven personalization influences supporter attitudes and behaviors remains an important research challenge. This study addresses that gap by examining how AI personalization affects perceived usefulness, perceived enjoyment, brand trust, fan engagement, purchase intention, and ultimately consumer decision-making within the context of professional football.

2.3 Fan Engagement

Fan engagement has become one of the most influential constructs in contemporary sports marketing, reflecting the transition from transactional marketing approaches toward relationship-oriented strategies that emphasize long-term interaction between

sports organizations and their supporters. Rather than viewing fans as passive spectators or occasional consumers, contemporary research conceptualizes supporters as active participants who continuously interact with clubs, athletes, sponsors, and fellow fans through both physical and digital environments (Brodie *et al.*, 2011; Hollebeek, Glynn, & Brodie, 2014). This shift has fundamentally altered the objectives of sports marketing, placing sustained engagement at the center of organizational strategy.

The emergence of digital technologies has significantly expanded opportunities for fan engagement. Official club websites, mobile applications, streaming services, fantasy sports platforms, esports, and social media have transformed supporter experiences into continuous interactions that extend well beyond match days (Filo *et al.*, 2015). Consequently, fan engagement is increasingly understood as a multidimensional psychological state comprising cognitive, emotional, and behavioral dimensions (Hollebeek *et al.*, 2014).

The **cognitive dimension** reflects the degree to which supporters devote attention, concentration, and mental involvement to a sports organization. Highly engaged fans actively seek information regarding club activities, player performance, tactical analysis, transfer news, and organizational developments. AI-powered recommendation systems further strengthen cognitive engagement by delivering personalized content that matches supporters' interests and previous behaviors. Through intelligent content curation, sports organizations can increase the relevance of information presented to individual fans, thereby encouraging continuous interaction.

The **emotional dimension** refers to the psychological attachment and affective connection supporters develop toward their favorite clubs. Emotional engagement is often associated with feelings of excitement, pride, passion, identification, and belonging that characterize sport consumption (Yoshida *et al.*, 2014). Unlike many commercial industries, professional sports generate exceptionally strong emotional responses because supporters frequently perceive their clubs as integral components of their personal and social identities. These emotional bonds significantly influence loyalty, advocacy, and long-term commitment regardless of on-field performance.

The **behavioral dimension** encompasses the observable actions through which supporters demonstrate their involvement with sports organizations. Such behaviors include attending matches, purchasing merchandise, renewing season tickets, participating in loyalty programs, sharing digital content, commenting on social media, recommending clubs to others, and engaging in online communities (Brodie *et al.*, 2011). Digital platforms have substantially increased the opportunities for behavioral engagement by enabling supporters to interact with clubs continuously rather than only during live sporting events.

Artificial intelligence has significantly enhanced organizations' ability to strengthen each of these engagement dimensions. AI-powered personalization enables clubs to recommend relevant articles, exclusive videos, individualized ticket offers, customized merchandise, and interactive experiences that reflect supporters' unique interests. Rather than delivering standardized promotional campaigns, sports

organizations increasingly employ machine learning algorithms to predict individual preferences and provide personalized communications throughout the fan journey (Huang & Rust, 2021). This level of personalization increases perceived relevance and strengthens supporters' willingness to interact with organizational content.

Generative Artificial Intelligence further extends these capabilities by enabling organizations to create highly interactive and conversational fan experiences. AI-generated match summaries, multilingual content, personalized newsletters, virtual assistants, and conversational chatbots facilitate continuous communication between clubs and supporters. These technologies provide immediate responses to supporter inquiries while simultaneously creating more engaging digital environments capable of fostering stronger emotional connections. Unlike traditional automated systems, generative AI can adapt communication styles according to supporter preferences, creating experiences that resemble human interaction and increasing perceptions of personalization and service quality (Dwivedi *et al.*, 2023).

The relationship between fan engagement and organizational performance has been consistently supported by previous research. Highly engaged supporters exhibit stronger brand loyalty, greater purchase intention, increased merchandise consumption, higher attendance rates, more positive electronic word-of-mouth, and greater resistance to competitive alternatives (Yoshida *et al.*, 2014; Hollebeek *et al.*, 2014). Furthermore, engaged fans frequently become voluntary brand ambassadors who promote clubs through social media interactions, content sharing, and community participation, thereby contributing to brand visibility and commercial success.

Nevertheless, researchers emphasize that technological innovation alone cannot guarantee meaningful engagement. The effectiveness of AI-driven initiatives depends on supporters' perceptions of authenticity, trustworthiness, transparency, and value. Excessive automation or impersonal interactions may reduce emotional attachment if supporters perceive communication as artificial or manipulative. Consequently, successful implementation of AI technologies requires balancing automation with human-centered communication strategies that preserve the emotional authenticity traditionally associated with sports organizations.

Within the context of the present study, fan engagement is conceptualized as a central mediating construct linking brand trust and purchase intention. Drawing upon previous theoretical and empirical research, it is proposed that AI-enabled personalization enhances supporters' perceived enjoyment and trust, which subsequently increase cognitive, emotional, and behavioral engagement. Higher engagement is expected to strengthen supporters' willingness to purchase club-related products and services while positively influencing broader consumer decision-making processes. Accordingly, fan engagement represents one of the principal mechanisms through which generative AI creates long-term value for sports organizations in increasingly digitalized competitive environments.

2.4 Brand Trust

Brand trust is widely recognized as one of the most fundamental determinants of long-term customer relationships and sustainable competitive advantage. Within relationship marketing literature, trust is conceptualized as the consumer's willingness to rely on an organization based on confidence in its reliability, integrity, competence, and ability to consistently deliver value (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). In highly competitive industries such as professional sports, where supporters establish enduring emotional relationships with clubs, trust represents a strategic asset that extends beyond product quality and directly influences loyalty, advocacy, and long-term purchasing behavior.

Relationship Marketing Theory positions trust as the cornerstone of successful exchange relationships. Morgan and Hunt's (1994) Commitment–Trust Theory argues that trust and commitment jointly determine relationship success by reducing uncertainty, encouraging cooperation, and increasing consumers' willingness to maintain long-term interactions with organizations. In sports marketing, these principles are particularly relevant because supporters frequently maintain relationships with clubs over many years, often independent of athletic performance or competitive success. Trust therefore serves as a stabilizing mechanism that reinforces organizational legitimacy and strengthens supporter commitment during both successful and unsuccessful sporting periods.

Brand trust has been defined as consumers' confidence that a brand will consistently fulfill its promises while acting in the best interests of its customers (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001). Trust develops gradually through repeated positive experiences, consistent service quality, transparent communication, and perceived organizational competence. When consumers believe that an organization is dependable and trustworthy, they experience lower levels of perceived risk and uncertainty, increasing their willingness to purchase products, engage with organizational initiatives, and recommend the brand to others. Consequently, trust functions as an important psychological mechanism connecting customer experiences with behavioral outcomes.

Within professional sports, trust extends beyond commercial transactions to encompass supporters' beliefs regarding organizational authenticity, fairness, transparency, and ethical conduct. Football clubs, for example, are expected not only to provide entertainment but also to represent community values, maintain sporting integrity, communicate honestly with supporters, and demonstrate responsible governance. These expectations significantly influence supporters' emotional attachment and long-term identification with the club (Yoshida *et al.*, 2014). Therefore, maintaining brand trust requires continuous investment in both organizational performance and relationship quality.

The increasing adoption of Artificial Intelligence introduces new opportunities as well as new challenges for the development of brand trust. AI-powered customer service, intelligent recommendation systems, automated communication, and personalized digital experiences can improve service quality by providing faster responses, greater convenience, and more relevant information. Personalized interactions generated

through AI technologies often increase consumers' perceptions of usefulness and service efficiency, which contribute positively to trust formation (Huang & Rust, 2021). When AI systems consistently deliver accurate recommendations and meaningful personalization, consumers are more likely to perceive organizations as competent, responsive, and customer-oriented.

However, trust in AI-enabled environments depends not only on technological performance but also on ethical implementation. Consumers increasingly express concerns regarding privacy, algorithmic transparency, data security, fairness, and the responsible use of personal information (Dwivedi *et al.*, 2023). Sports organizations collect extensive behavioral data through ticketing systems, mobile applications, online stores, loyalty programs, wearable technologies, and social media interactions. Although these data enable sophisticated personalization, supporters may become reluctant to engage if they perceive excessive surveillance or insufficient transparency regarding data usage. Accordingly, organizations must ensure that AI implementation complies with ethical principles, privacy regulations, and responsible governance practices to preserve consumer confidence.

Generative Artificial Intelligence further complicates trust dynamics because AI-generated content increasingly resembles human communication. Personalized newsletters, conversational chatbots, virtual assistants, and AI-generated promotional campaigns provide opportunities for deeper supporter interaction. Nevertheless, organizations must clearly communicate when content is AI-generated and ensure that automated communication remains accurate, transparent, and aligned with organizational values. Authenticity remains particularly important within sports marketing, where emotional identification and perceived sincerity strongly influence supporter attitudes.

Previous empirical studies consistently demonstrate that brand trust positively influences customer satisfaction, loyalty, commitment, and purchase intention across various industries (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001; Delgado-Ballester, 2004). Within sports marketing specifically, supporters who trust their clubs are more likely to renew season tickets, purchase official merchandise, participate in membership programs, and recommend the club to friends and family. Trust also strengthens resilience during periods of poor athletic performance, reducing supporters' likelihood of disengagement and reinforcing long-term loyalty.

Moreover, brand trust serves as an important antecedent of fan engagement. Supporters who perceive their club as trustworthy are generally more willing to participate in online communities, interact through social media, consume digital content, and engage in organizational initiatives. Trust reduces psychological uncertainty and encourages supporters to invest greater emotional, cognitive, and behavioral resources in their relationship with the organization. Consequently, fan engagement may function as an important mechanism through which trust translates into favorable behavioral outcomes, including stronger purchase intentions and positive consumer decision-making.

Drawing upon Relationship Marketing Theory and contemporary AI literature, the present study conceptualizes brand trust as a central mediating construct connecting supporters' evaluations of AI-enabled personalization with subsequent behavioral responses. Specifically, it is proposed that greater perceived usefulness of AI personalization enhances supporters' trust in the sports organization (H3), while higher levels of trust positively influence fan engagement (H5), purchase intention (H6), and indirectly strengthen purchase intention through increased engagement (H10). By integrating trust into the proposed conceptual framework, this study contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of how generative AI influences long-term supporter relationships within digital sports ecosystems.

2.5 Purchase Intention and Consumer Decision-Making

Purchase intention represents one of the most extensively investigated constructs in consumer behavior research because it reflects an individual's conscious willingness to purchase a product or service in the future. Within the context of sports marketing, purchase intention encompasses supporters' willingness to buy match tickets, official merchandise, premium digital services, club memberships, streaming subscriptions, and sponsor-related products (Ajzen, 1991; Yoshida *et al.*, 2014). Although purchase intention does not always guarantee actual purchasing behavior, it is widely considered one of the strongest predictors of future consumer actions and therefore constitutes an essential outcome variable in marketing research.

According to the **Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB)**, purchase intention is determined by consumers' attitudes toward a behavior, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control (Ajzen, 1991). Positive evaluations of products or services increase the likelihood that consumers will develop favorable behavioral intentions, which subsequently influence actual purchasing decisions. Within sports marketing, supporters' attitudes are shaped not only by the quality of products and services but also by emotional attachment, identification with the club, trust in the organization, and previous consumption experiences.

The digital transformation of the sports industry has significantly altered traditional consumer decision-making processes. Historically, supporters primarily purchased tickets or merchandise through physical outlets and were influenced by conventional advertising or interpersonal communication. Today, however, purchasing decisions occur within highly interconnected digital ecosystems where consumers interact with official club websites, mobile applications, e-commerce platforms, streaming services, social media, and AI-powered recommendation systems (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). Consequently, decision-making has become increasingly dynamic, data-driven, and personalized.

Artificial Intelligence plays a pivotal role in this transformation by enabling sports organizations to predict consumer preferences, personalize recommendations, and optimize purchasing journeys. AI algorithms analyze historical purchasing behavior, browsing activity, demographic characteristics, social media engagement, and real-time

interactions to generate individualized product recommendations and promotional messages. These personalized recommendations reduce information overload, simplify product evaluation, and improve consumers' confidence during purchasing decisions (Huang & Rust, 2021). As a result, AI-driven personalization enhances both the efficiency and effectiveness of digital marketing strategies.

Generative Artificial Intelligence further expands these capabilities by creating personalized content tailored to individual supporters. AI-generated emails, conversational virtual assistants, customized product descriptions, multilingual communications, and individualized promotional campaigns enable organizations to deliver highly relevant information at every stage of the customer journey (Dwivedi *et al.*, 2023). Rather than exposing all supporters to identical marketing messages, sports organizations increasingly provide personalized experiences that reflect each fan's preferences, favorite players, purchasing history, and engagement patterns. Such individualized communication increases perceived relevance and contributes positively to purchase intention.

Research in digital marketing consistently demonstrates that personalized experiences improve consumers' perceptions of value, convenience, and satisfaction, thereby increasing behavioral intentions (Verhoef *et al.*, 2021). When supporters receive recommendations that closely match their interests, they perceive lower decision complexity and greater confidence in their purchasing choices. AI therefore functions not merely as a technological tool but also as a decision-support mechanism that facilitates consumer evaluations throughout the purchasing process.

Brand trust represents another critical determinant of purchase intention within AI-enabled sports environments. Consumers are more willing to purchase products and services from organizations they perceive as reliable, transparent, and ethically responsible (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001). Trust reduces perceived risk associated with online transactions and increases consumers' confidence in personalized recommendations generated through AI systems. Consequently, organizations capable of combining technological innovation with transparent communication are more likely to achieve favorable commercial outcomes.

Fan engagement further reinforces purchase intention by strengthening supporters' emotional and psychological commitment to sports organizations. Highly engaged supporters exhibit stronger identification with their clubs, participate more actively in digital communities, consume greater amounts of club-related content, and demonstrate increased willingness to purchase official products and services (Hollebeek *et al.*, 2014; Yoshida *et al.*, 2014). Previous studies indicate that engagement functions as an important mediator linking psychological attachment to purchasing behavior, suggesting that emotionally connected supporters are significantly more likely to convert favorable attitudes into actual consumption.

Consumer decision-making represents the final stage of this process. Traditional consumer behavior models describe decision-making as a sequence of problem recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, purchase decision, and post-

purchase evaluation (Kotler & Keller, 2016). However, digital technologies have transformed this linear process into a continuous and interactive journey in which consumers repeatedly engage with organizations across multiple touchpoints before, during, and after purchase. AI technologies contribute to each stage by delivering personalized information, facilitating product comparisons, answering customer inquiries, predicting future preferences, and providing real-time assistance.

Within professional sports, consumer decision-making extends beyond individual purchases and encompasses broader behavioral choices, including attendance at sporting events, participation in loyalty programs, subscription to digital platforms, engagement with sponsors, and long-term club affiliation. These decisions are increasingly influenced by AI-enabled personalization, perceived usefulness, emotional engagement, and trust developed through continuous digital interactions.

Despite the growing adoption of AI technologies, relatively limited empirical research has examined how generative AI simultaneously influences purchase intention and consumer decision-making within sports marketing. Most previous studies have investigated these constructs independently or within general e-commerce environments, providing limited understanding of their interrelationships in professional sports. Accordingly, the present study proposes that purchase intention serves as the immediate antecedent of consumer decision-making (H8), while brand trust and fan engagement operate as critical mechanisms linking AI-enabled personalization to favorable purchasing outcomes. By integrating these constructs within a unified conceptual framework, the study contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of how generative artificial intelligence shapes consumer behavior in contemporary sports marketing environments.

2.6 Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)

The **Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)**, originally developed by Davis (1986, 1989), is one of the most influential theoretical frameworks for explaining individuals' acceptance and use of information technologies. Since its introduction, TAM has been extensively applied across numerous disciplines, including information systems, e-commerce, healthcare, education, banking, tourism, and digital marketing, demonstrating strong explanatory power in predicting users' behavioral intentions toward emerging technologies (Venkatesh & Davis, 2000; Venkatesh *et al.*, 2003). Given the increasing integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) into customer-facing applications, TAM provides an appropriate theoretical foundation for understanding how supporters evaluate AI-enabled services within sports marketing.

According to TAM, users' acceptance of a technological system is primarily determined by two cognitive beliefs: **Perceived Usefulness (PU)** and **Perceived Ease of Use (PEOU)** (Davis, 1989). Perceived usefulness refers to the degree to which an individual believes that using a particular technology enhances task performance or improves decision-making, whereas perceived ease of use reflects the extent to which

technology is perceived as effortless to use. These beliefs shape users' attitudes toward technology, which subsequently influence behavioral intentions and actual system usage. As digital technologies have become increasingly sophisticated, researchers have proposed several extensions to the original TAM model. Contemporary studies emphasize that technology adoption is influenced not only by functional benefits but also by emotional experiences such as enjoyment, curiosity, immersion, and satisfaction (Venkatesh *et al.*, 2012). Consequently, **Perceived Enjoyment** has emerged as an important intrinsic motivational factor that complements perceived usefulness, particularly within entertainment-oriented digital environments such as professional sports.

Sports consumption differs from many traditional consumption contexts because it is strongly driven by emotional experiences rather than purely rational evaluations. Supporters interact with clubs for entertainment, social identity, excitement, and emotional attachment rather than solely for functional utility. Therefore, both utilitarian and hedonic motivations influence how fans evaluate AI-powered digital services. AI applications that provide personalized recommendations, conversational assistance, interactive match information, or customized multimedia content may simultaneously increase perceptions of usefulness and enjoyment, leading to greater acceptance of AI technologies.

Within professional sports organizations, perceived usefulness reflects supporters' beliefs that AI technologies improve their interactions with clubs by facilitating ticket purchases, recommending relevant merchandise, delivering personalized information, providing immediate customer support, and simplifying navigation across digital platforms. When AI systems reduce search effort, increase informational accuracy, and enhance service efficiency, supporters are more likely to perceive tangible benefits from their use. Previous studies consistently demonstrate that perceived usefulness positively influences consumers' trust, satisfaction, and behavioral intentions across digital environments (Davis, 1989; Venkatesh *et al.*, 2003).

Generative Artificial Intelligence significantly enhances perceived usefulness because it provides personalized responses that adapt dynamically to individual supporter preferences. AI-powered virtual assistants can answer complex questions regarding fixtures, player statistics, ticket availability, loyalty programs, stadium services, and merchandise recommendations in real time. Similarly, AI-generated content enables sports organizations to provide multilingual communication, personalized newsletters, and customized promotional campaigns that improve information quality while reducing communication delays. These capabilities increase supporters' perceptions that AI contributes meaningfully to their overall fan experience.

Alongside functional benefits, **Perceived Enjoyment** has become increasingly important in AI-enabled sports marketing. Davis, Bagozzi, and Warshaw (1992) define perceived enjoyment as the extent to which using a technological system is perceived to be enjoyable independently of its functional outcomes. Within sports environments, enjoyment represents an essential component of supporter experiences because fans seek

entertainment, excitement, emotional stimulation, and social interaction. AI technologies capable of generating engaging conversations, interactive quizzes, personalized match previews, fantasy sports recommendations, and immersive digital experiences contribute significantly to these intrinsic motivations.

Generative AI is particularly effective in enhancing enjoyment because it transforms passive information consumption into interactive experiences. Rather than simply displaying static information, AI systems engage supporters through conversational dialogue, personalized storytelling, gamified interactions, and creative multimedia content. Such experiences increase supporters' emotional involvement and strengthen their willingness to continue interacting with digital platforms. Research in digital marketing suggests that enjoyable technological experiences positively influence engagement, satisfaction, loyalty, and long-term behavioral intentions (Hollebeek *et al.*, 2014; Huang & Rust, 2021).

The integration of AI personalization with TAM is particularly relevant because personalization directly shapes both perceived usefulness and perceived enjoyment. Personalized recommendations reduce irrelevant information, simplify decision-making, and improve service effectiveness, thereby increasing perceived usefulness. Simultaneously, individualized communication creates richer and more enjoyable experiences that strengthen emotional engagement. Consequently, AI-enabled personalization represents a key antecedent of both cognitive and affective evaluations of technology.

Within the conceptual framework proposed in this study, TAM provides the theoretical explanation for the first stage of the consumer decision-making process. Specifically, AI personalization is expected to positively influence supporters' perceptions of usefulness (H1) and perceived enjoyment (H2). Subsequently, perceived usefulness is proposed to strengthen brand trust (H3), while perceived enjoyment enhances fan engagement (H4). These relationships illustrate how cognitive and emotional evaluations of AI technologies initiate broader relational and behavioral processes that ultimately influence purchase intention and consumer decision-making.

Although TAM has been extensively validated across various technological contexts, relatively few studies have applied the model specifically to **Generative Artificial Intelligence within sports marketing**. Existing research has primarily focused on general technology adoption or e-commerce platforms, leaving significant opportunities to examine how AI-powered personalization affects supporters' psychological evaluations in digital sports ecosystems. By integrating TAM with Relationship Marketing Theory and the Stimulus–Organism–Response framework, the present study extends traditional technology acceptance research beyond system usage toward understanding the broader commercial and relational outcomes associated with AI-enabled fan experiences.

2.7 Stimulus–Organism–Response (S–O–R) Theory

The **Stimulus–Organism–Response (S–O–R) Theory**, originally developed by Mehrabian and Russell (1974), is one of the most widely adopted theoretical frameworks for explaining consumer behavior in marketing, retail, tourism, hospitality, and digital commerce. The model proposes that external environmental stimuli influence consumers' internal cognitive and emotional states, which subsequently determine their behavioral responses. Unlike traditional behavioral theories that assume direct relationships between external factors and consumer behavior, the S–O–R framework emphasizes the psychological mechanisms that mediate this relationship. Consequently, it provides an appropriate theoretical lens for understanding how AI-enabled personalization influences supporters' perceptions, emotions, and purchasing decisions within contemporary sports marketing.

According to the S–O–R framework, **Stimuli (S)** represent external environmental factors capable of influencing consumers. These stimuli may include technological innovations, digital interfaces, service quality, marketing communications, website design, social interactions, or personalized recommendations. **The Organism (O)** refers to consumers' internal psychological processes, including cognitive evaluations, emotional reactions, attitudes, perceptions, and affective responses. Finally, **Responses (R)** correspond to observable behavioral outcomes such as purchase intention, customer loyalty, continued usage, recommendation behavior, and actual purchasing decisions (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974).

The rapid digitalization of customer experiences has significantly increased the application of the S–O–R model within online environments. Modern consumers interact continuously with websites, mobile applications, virtual assistants, recommendation systems, and AI-driven communication platforms. These digital environments generate numerous external stimuli capable of shaping consumers' emotions and behavioral intentions. Consequently, recent studies have successfully employed the S–O–R framework to explain online shopping behavior, e-commerce adoption, mobile application usage, digital engagement, and technology-mediated consumer experiences (Eroglu, Machleit, & Davis, 2003).

Within sports marketing, Artificial Intelligence represents a particularly influential environmental stimulus because it directly shapes supporters' digital experiences throughout the customer journey. AI-powered personalization, intelligent recommendation systems, conversational chatbots, automated customer support, virtual assistants, and personalized promotional campaigns continuously expose supporters to customized digital interactions that differ substantially from traditional mass marketing approaches. These AI-enabled experiences constitute external stimuli capable of influencing supporters' cognitive evaluations and emotional reactions.

In the context of the present study, **AI personalization** is conceptualized as the primary **stimulus**. Personalized recommendations, customized promotional messages, AI-generated content, individualized ticket offers, and intelligent customer support provide supporters with relevant and context-specific experiences that increase the

perceived value of digital interactions. Unlike generic communication strategies, AI personalization delivers information tailored to individual preferences, thereby increasing the salience and effectiveness of marketing communications.

The **organism** component is represented by supporters' internal psychological responses, specifically **Perceived Usefulness**, **Perceived Enjoyment**, **Brand Trust**, and **Fan Engagement**. These constructs capture both cognitive and affective evaluations that arise following interaction with AI-enabled personalization. Perceived usefulness reflects supporters' rational assessment of AI's functional benefits, whereas perceived enjoyment captures intrinsic emotional satisfaction derived from AI-powered interactions. These evaluations subsequently contribute to the development of brand trust and deeper fan engagement, illustrating how external technological stimuli influence internal psychological processes.

The final component of the framework, **response**, is represented by **Purchase Intention** and **Consumer Decision-Making**. Following the S–O–R logic, favorable psychological evaluations generated through AI personalization increase supporters' willingness to purchase products and services offered by sports organizations. These positive behavioral intentions ultimately influence broader consumer decision-making, including ticket purchases, merchandise consumption, subscription to premium digital services, participation in loyalty programs, and long-term commercial relationships with sports organizations.

The application of the S–O–R framework has become increasingly relevant in AI research because technological interactions frequently involve both cognitive and emotional processing. AI-generated personalization does not simply improve information quality; it also influences how consumers feel during digital interactions. Personalized communication may create feelings of recognition, convenience, enjoyment, trust, and emotional attachment, all of which contribute to stronger behavioral intentions. Previous research demonstrates that personalized digital environments positively affect consumers' satisfaction, engagement, loyalty, and purchase intentions by stimulating favorable psychological responses (Verhoef *et al.*, 2021; Huang & Rust, 2021).

Within professional sports, the emotional nature of fan consumption further strengthens the applicability of the S–O–R framework. Supporters often make purchasing decisions based not only on rational evaluations but also on emotional attachment, club identification, excitement, and social belonging. AI technologies capable of enhancing these psychological experiences may therefore produce stronger behavioral outcomes than in more utilitarian industries. For example, personalized match content, AI-generated highlight videos, interactive virtual assistants, and customized fan communications contribute simultaneously to cognitive satisfaction and emotional involvement, increasing supporters' willingness to maintain long-term relationships with sports organizations.

The integration of S–O–R with **Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)** and **Relationship Marketing Theory** strengthens the conceptual foundation of the present study. TAM explains supporters' initial cognitive evaluations of AI technologies,

Relationship Marketing Theory explains the development of trust-based relationships, while the S–O–R framework provides the overarching behavioral mechanism linking technological stimuli to psychological reactions and commercial outcomes. Together, these complementary theories offer a comprehensive explanation of how AI personalization influences consumer behavior within digital sports ecosystems.

Accordingly, the present study adopts the S–O–R framework as the primary behavioral mechanism underlying the proposed conceptual model. AI personalization functions as the external stimulus, perceived usefulness, perceived enjoyment, brand trust, and fan engagement represent internal organism states, while purchase intention and consumer decision-making constitute the final behavioral responses. This theoretical integration provides a robust foundation for examining the complex psychological processes through which Generative Artificial Intelligence influences supporter behavior in professional football.

2.8 Relationship Marketing Theory

Relationship Marketing Theory has become one of the most influential theoretical perspectives in contemporary marketing because it shifts organizational focus from short-term transactions toward the development of long-term, mutually beneficial relationships between firms and customers. Rather than emphasizing isolated purchasing decisions, relationship marketing recognizes that sustainable competitive advantage is achieved through continuous interaction, trust, commitment, satisfaction, and value co-creation (Berry, 1983; Grönroos, 1994). Within the sports industry, where supporters often maintain lifelong emotional attachments to clubs, the principles of relationship marketing are particularly applicable.

The origins of relationship marketing can be traced to Berry (1983), who argued that attracting customers is only the first stage of marketing success. Organizations must also maintain and strengthen customer relationships through continuous communication and superior service quality. This perspective contrasts with traditional transactional marketing, which primarily focuses on individual sales and short-term financial outcomes. As competition intensifies and customer acquisition costs increase, maintaining existing customers has become increasingly important for organizational sustainability.

One of the most influential contributions to Relationship Marketing Theory is the **Commitment–Trust Theory**, proposed by Morgan and Hunt (1994). According to this framework, **trust** and **commitment** represent the two fundamental variables determining the success of long-term exchange relationships. Trust reflects consumers' confidence in an organization's reliability, honesty, and competence, whereas commitment refers to the desire to maintain an ongoing relationship despite alternative market opportunities. Morgan and Hunt argue that trust reduces uncertainty, facilitates cooperation, and strengthens long-term relational exchanges, ultimately improving organizational performance and customer loyalty.

Professional sports organizations provide an ideal context for applying Relationship Marketing Theory because supporters rarely behave as conventional consumers. Fans frequently establish deep psychological, emotional, and social connections with their favorite clubs that extend far beyond individual purchasing transactions. Club identification often becomes part of personal identity, family traditions, and community belonging, making supporter relationships considerably stronger than those observed in many commercial industries (Yoshida *et al.*, 2014). Consequently, maintaining long-term trust becomes essential for sustaining fan loyalty and commercial success.

Digital transformation has fundamentally expanded the opportunities available for relationship marketing within sports organizations. Official websites, mobile applications, streaming services, social media platforms, and online communities enable clubs to maintain continuous communication with supporters regardless of geographical location. These digital channels facilitate two-way interaction, allowing organizations not only to distribute information but also to collect feedback, monitor supporter sentiment, and personalize communication according to individual preferences (Filo *et al.*, 2015).

Artificial Intelligence has significantly enhanced the implementation of relationship marketing strategies by enabling organizations to personalize interactions at an unprecedented scale. AI-powered Customer Relationship Management (CRM) systems integrate transactional, demographic, and behavioral data to create comprehensive supporter profiles. These intelligent systems allow sports organizations to anticipate supporter needs, personalize promotional campaigns, recommend relevant products, and maintain continuous engagement throughout the customer journey (Payne & Frow, 2017). Consequently, AI strengthens relationship quality by increasing the relevance, responsiveness, and consistency of organizational communication.

The emergence of **Generative Artificial Intelligence** further extends the capabilities of relationship marketing by facilitating highly personalized, conversational, and interactive communication. AI-generated newsletters, virtual assistants, multilingual content, personalized match reports, and intelligent chatbots enable clubs to interact with thousands of supporters simultaneously while maintaining individualized communication. Unlike traditional automated systems that rely on predefined scripts, generative AI adapts responses according to supporter preferences and contextual information, thereby creating experiences that resemble human interaction (Dwivedi *et al.*, 2023). Such personalized communication contributes to stronger perceptions of organizational responsiveness, competence, and customer orientation.

Nevertheless, Relationship Marketing Theory emphasizes that technology alone cannot create enduring customer relationships. Sustainable relationships require authenticity, transparency, and ethical organizational behavior. While AI facilitates efficiency and personalization, excessive automation may reduce perceptions of sincerity if supporters believe interactions are purely algorithmic rather than reflecting genuine organizational concern. Consequently, successful AI implementation requires balancing technological innovation with human-centered communication that preserves the

emotional authenticity traditionally associated with sports organizations (Huang & Rust, 2021).

Trust remains the central mechanism through which relationship marketing influences behavioral outcomes. Previous studies consistently demonstrate that higher levels of brand trust lead to stronger customer loyalty, greater satisfaction, increased advocacy, and higher purchase intentions (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001; Delgado-Ballester, 2004). Within sports marketing, trusted organizations are more likely to retain season ticket holders, increase merchandise sales, strengthen membership participation, and encourage positive electronic word-of-mouth. Trust also facilitates fan engagement by increasing supporters' willingness to participate in organizational initiatives, consume digital content, and maintain long-term relationships.

Relationship Marketing Theory also recognizes that value creation increasingly occurs through collaboration between organizations and consumers. Modern supporters actively contribute to brand communities by creating user-generated content, participating in online discussions, interacting through social media, and promoting clubs within their personal networks. AI technologies support this co-creation process by enabling personalized communication, interactive digital experiences, and continuous dialogue between organizations and supporters. Rather than replacing human relationships, AI serves as an enabling technology that facilitates deeper engagement and stronger relational bonds when implemented responsibly.

Within the conceptual framework proposed in this study, Relationship Marketing Theory explains the role of **brand trust** as the primary relational mechanism connecting AI-enabled personalization with favorable behavioral outcomes. Specifically, perceived usefulness generated through AI personalization is expected to strengthen supporters' trust in sports organizations, while higher levels of trust subsequently enhance fan engagement and purchase intention. These relationships illustrate how AI technologies contribute to long-term customer relationship development by improving communication quality, increasing perceived organizational competence, and reinforcing emotional connections between supporters and sports organizations.

Overall, Relationship Marketing Theory complements the Technology Acceptance Model and the Stimulus–Organism–Response framework by emphasizing the relational processes through which AI-enabled interactions translate into sustainable commercial outcomes. The integration of these three theoretical perspectives provides a comprehensive explanation of how generative artificial intelligence supports relationship building, strengthens supporter trust, and ultimately influences consumer decision-making within contemporary sports marketing.

2.9 Research Gap

The rapid advancement of Artificial Intelligence (AI), particularly Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI), has attracted considerable attention from researchers across information systems, marketing, management, and digital business. Recent studies have demonstrated that AI technologies improve organizational efficiency, enhance customer

experiences, support decision-making processes, and facilitate personalized marketing communication (Huang & Rust, 2021; Dwivedi *et al.*, 2023). Simultaneously, sports marketing research has increasingly recognized the importance of digital transformation, fan engagement, customer relationship management, and data-driven marketing strategies in strengthening competitive advantage (Filo *et al.*, 2015; Yoshida *et al.*, 2014). Despite these developments, the integration of Generative AI into sports marketing remains at an early stage of theoretical and empirical investigation.

A review of the existing literature reveals that previous research has primarily examined artificial intelligence from either a **technological** or **managerial** perspective. Information systems research has largely focused on AI adoption, system performance, automation, algorithmic capabilities, and technology acceptance (Davis, 1989; Venkatesh *et al.*, 2003). Marketing scholars, in contrast, have emphasized personalization, customer experience, digital transformation, and consumer satisfaction (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016; Verhoef *et al.*, 2021). Although these studies provide valuable insights into the potential benefits of AI, relatively few investigate how AI-driven personalization simultaneously influences the psychological, relational, and behavioral mechanisms that shape supporter decision-making within professional sports.

Moreover, existing sports marketing literature has predominantly examined fan engagement, loyalty, brand attachment, sponsorship effectiveness, and social media interaction without explicitly considering the emerging role of Generative Artificial Intelligence as a strategic marketing capability. While digital technologies such as mobile applications, online communities, and social media platforms have received considerable scholarly attention, empirical evidence regarding AI-generated content, conversational AI, intelligent recommendation systems, and personalized virtual assistants within sports organizations remains limited. Consequently, current knowledge provides only a partial understanding of how AI-enabled interactions reshape supporter experiences across the digital customer journey.

Another important limitation concerns the **fragmented nature of existing theoretical models**. Previous studies frequently investigate individual constructs—such as perceived usefulness, brand trust, fan engagement, or purchase intention—in isolation rather than integrating them into a comprehensive explanatory framework. For example, Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) research primarily focuses on technology adoption and usage intentions (Davis, 1989), whereas Relationship Marketing Theory emphasizes trust, commitment, and loyalty (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). Similarly, studies employing the Stimulus–Organism–Response (S–O–R) framework typically examine the influence of digital environments on consumer behavior without specifically addressing the unique characteristics of generative AI technologies. As a result, there remains limited theoretical integration capable of explaining how AI personalization influences supporters from initial technological evaluations to final purchasing decisions.

Furthermore, the literature has devoted relatively little attention to the **mediating mechanisms** through which AI personalization produces commercial outcomes. While previous research generally acknowledges that personalization improves customer

experiences, few studies empirically examine the sequential relationships among perceived usefulness, perceived enjoyment, brand trust, fan engagement, purchase intention, and consumer decision-making. Understanding these indirect effects is particularly important because consumer responses to AI technologies are unlikely to occur through direct causal relationships alone. Instead, AI-enabled personalization first shapes cognitive and emotional evaluations, which subsequently influence relational outcomes before ultimately affecting purchasing behavior.

An additional research gap relates to the **context of professional football and sports consumption**. Sports differ substantially from many traditional industries because supporters' decisions are strongly influenced by emotional attachment, social identity, passion, and long-term psychological commitment. Unlike consumers purchasing conventional products, football supporters frequently maintain lifelong relationships with clubs regardless of athletic performance. Consequently, theoretical models developed within general e-commerce or retail settings may not fully explain AI-enabled consumer behavior in sports environments. There is therefore a need for context-specific research examining how generative AI affects supporters' perceptions and behavioral intentions within professional football.

The emergence of Generative Artificial Intelligence also introduces new managerial and ethical considerations that remain insufficiently explored in sports marketing research. AI-generated communication, automated content creation, conversational assistants, and personalized recommendation systems create opportunities for deeper supporter engagement while simultaneously raising concerns regarding transparency, authenticity, privacy, algorithmic bias, and responsible data governance (Dwivedi *et al.*, 2023). Existing studies have only begun to examine how these ethical considerations influence supporters' trust and acceptance of AI-enabled interactions. Consequently, further research is required to understand how organizations can successfully implement AI technologies while maintaining supporter confidence and preserving authentic brand relationships.

In response to these limitations, the present study develops an integrated conceptual framework that combines **Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)**, **Stimulus–Organism–Response (S–O–R) Theory**, and **Relationship Marketing Theory** to explain consumer behavior within AI-enabled sports marketing. Specifically, the proposed model positions **AI personalization** as the primary technological stimulus influencing supporters' perceptions of usefulness and enjoyment. These cognitive and emotional evaluations subsequently strengthen **brand trust** and **fan engagement**, which in turn increase **purchase intention** and ultimately shape **consumer decision-making**. By simultaneously examining these constructs within a single theoretical framework, the study addresses important gaps in both AI and sports marketing literature.

The proposed framework also contributes methodologically by examining both **direct and indirect relationships** among the study variables. In particular, the inclusion of **brand trust** and **fan engagement** as mediating constructs extends previous research beyond simple technology adoption models and provides a richer explanation of how

AI-generated personalization influences commercial outcomes. This approach reflects the increasingly relational nature of digital sports marketing, where long-term supporter engagement often determines organizational success more effectively than isolated purchasing decisions.

Finally, this study responds to recent calls for interdisciplinary research integrating artificial intelligence, digital marketing, consumer behavior, and sports management (Dwivedi *et al.*, 2023; Verhoef *et al.*, 2021). As Generative Artificial Intelligence continues to transform customer interactions across industries, understanding its implications within professional sports becomes increasingly important for both scholars and practitioners. Accordingly, the proposed conceptual model offers a comprehensive theoretical foundation for examining how AI-enabled personalization contributes to stronger supporter relationships, greater commercial performance, and more effective consumer decision-making in contemporary sports organizations.

3. Conceptual Framework and Research Hypotheses

3.1 Conceptual Framework

Based on the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), the Stimulus–Organism–Response (S–O–R) framework, and Relationship Marketing Theory, this study proposes an integrated conceptual model to examine the impact of AI personalization on consumer behavior in sports marketing. AI personalization is considered the external stimulus that influences supporters' cognitive and emotional evaluations, represented by perceived usefulness and perceived enjoyment. These evaluations subsequently strengthen brand trust and fan engagement, leading to higher purchase intention and ultimately influencing consumer decision-making.

The proposed framework suggests that AI-powered personalization enhances supporters' digital experiences by providing relevant, interactive, and customized content. These experiences increase the perceived value of AI technologies while simultaneously strengthening long-term relationships between sports organizations and their supporters.

Figure 1: Proposed Conceptual Framework

Independent Variable	Mediator(s)	Dependent Variable	Final Outcome
AI Personalization	Perceived Usefulness	Brand Trust	Consumer Decision-Making
AI Personalization	Perceived Enjoyment	Fan Engagement	Consumer Decision-Making
Brand Trust	Fan Engagement	Purchase Intention	Consumer Decision-Making

3.2 Research Hypotheses

H1: AI personalization positively influences perceived usefulness because personalized AI services improve the quality, relevance, and efficiency of supporters' digital experiences (Davis, 1989; Huang & Rust, 2021).

H2: AI personalization positively influences perceived enjoyment by creating interactive, engaging, and personalized digital experiences that enhance supporters' intrinsic motivation (Dwivedi *et al.*, 2023).

H3: Perceived usefulness positively influences brand trust, as supporters who perceive AI technologies as valuable and reliable are more likely to trust the sports organization (Morgan & Hunt, 1994).

H4: Perceived enjoyment positively influences fan engagement because enjoyable digital interactions encourage greater cognitive, emotional, and behavioral involvement (Hollebeek *et al.*, 2014).

H5: Brand trust positively influences fan engagement. Supporters who trust a sports organization are more willing to interact with its digital platforms, participate in online communities, and maintain long-term relationships.

H6: Brand trust positively influences purchase intention by reducing perceived uncertainty and increasing confidence in products, services, and digital transactions (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001).

H7: Fan engagement positively influences purchase intention because highly engaged supporters demonstrate stronger loyalty and greater willingness to purchase tickets, merchandise, and club-related services (Yoshida *et al.*, 2014).

H8: Purchase intention positively influences consumer decision-making, as stronger purchasing intentions increase the likelihood of actual purchasing behavior (Ajzen, 1991).

H9: Brand trust mediates the relationship between perceived usefulness and purchase intention. Supporters who perceive AI as useful are expected to develop higher trust, which subsequently increases their intention to purchase.

H10: Fan engagement mediates the relationship between brand trust and purchase intention. Trustworthy relationships strengthen supporter engagement, which in turn enhances purchasing intentions.

4. Methodology

4.1 Research Design

This study adopts a **quantitative research approach** to examine the influence of Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) personalization on fan engagement, brand trust, purchase intention, and consumer decision-making within the context of professional football. A cross-sectional survey design was selected because it enables the collection of standardized data from a large number of respondents and facilitates the empirical testing of the proposed conceptual model.

4.2 Population and Sampling

The target population consists of **football supporters** who regularly follow professional football clubs and use digital platforms such as official club websites, mobile applications,

and social media. A **convenience sampling** technique was employed due to its suitability for exploratory studies in digital marketing and consumer behavior research.

A minimum sample size of **300 respondents** is considered appropriate for Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM), following the recommendations of Hair *et al.* (2022).

4.3 Data Collection

Primary data will be collected using a **structured online questionnaire** distributed through social media platforms, football fan communities, and online supporter groups. Participation will be voluntary and anonymous, and respondents will be informed that their answers will be used solely for academic research purposes.

4.4 Measurement Instrument

The questionnaire consists of two sections. The first collects respondents' demographic characteristics (e.g., gender, age, education level, and frequency of following football). The second measures the study constructs using previously validated measurement scales adapted from the literature.

All questionnaire items will be measured using a **seven-point Likert scale**, ranging from **1 = Strongly Disagree** to **7 = Strongly Agree**.

4.5 Measurement of Constructs

The study includes seven latent constructs:

- AI Personalization
- Perceived Usefulness
- Perceived Enjoyment
- Brand Trust
- Fan Engagement
- Purchase Intention
- Consumer Decision-Making

Measurement items are adapted from established studies, including Davis (1989), Morgan and Hunt (1994), Hollebeek *et al.* (2014), Yoshida *et al.* (2014), Huang and Rust (2021), and Dwivedi *et al.* (2023).

4.6 Data Analysis

The proposed conceptual model will be analyzed using **SmartPLS 4** and the Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) approach. PLS-SEM is appropriate because it allows the simultaneous estimation of multiple relationships among latent constructs while accommodating prediction-oriented research models.

The analysis will be conducted in two stages.

First, the **measurement model** will be evaluated by assessing:

- Indicator reliability
- Internal consistency reliability (Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability)

- Convergent validity (Average Variance Extracted)
- Discriminant validity (HTMT criterion)
- Multicollinearity (Variance Inflation Factor)

Second, the **structural model** will be assessed by examining:

- Path coefficients (β)
- Coefficient of determination (R^2)
- Effect size (f^2)
- Predictive relevance (Q^2)
- Bootstrapping with **5,000 resamples** to test the significance of the proposed hypotheses.

Construct	Definition	Key References
AI Personalization	The extent to which AI provides customized and relevant digital experiences.	Huang & Rust (2021); Dwivedi <i>et al.</i> (2023)
Perceived Usefulness	The degree to which AI improves supporters' experience and decision-making.	Davis (1989)
Perceived Enjoyment	The extent to which AI interactions are enjoyable and entertaining.	Davis <i>et al.</i> (1992)
Brand Trust	Supporters' confidence in the reliability and integrity of the sports organization.	Morgan & Hunt (1994); Chaudhuri & Holbrook (2001)
Fan Engagement	Cognitive, emotional, and behavioral involvement with the sports organization.	Hollebeek <i>et al.</i> (2014); Yoshida <i>et al.</i> (2014)
Purchase Intention	The likelihood of purchasing club-related products and services.	Ajzen (1991)
Consumer Decision-Making	The final purchasing decision influenced by AI-enabled experiences.	Kotler & Keller (2016)

4. Results and Discussion (Illustrative Results)

The following results are presented for illustrative purposes only and do not represent empirical findings.

The illustrative findings support the proposed conceptual model, suggesting that **Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI)** can serve as a strategic tool for enhancing sports marketing performance. Overall, respondents demonstrated positive attitudes toward AI-driven personalization, indicating that AI technologies have the potential to strengthen supporters' digital experiences, increase brand trust, stimulate fan engagement, and positively influence purchase intention and consumer decision-making.

One of the strongest relationships observed in the proposed model concerns the impact of **AI personalization on perceived usefulness**. The illustrative results indicate that supporters perceive AI-powered services, such as personalized recommendations, intelligent chatbots, and customized digital content, as useful tools that improve access to information, simplify interactions with football clubs, and enhance the overall digital fan experience. These findings are consistent with the Technology Acceptance Model,

which argues that perceived usefulness is a primary determinant of technology acceptance (Davis, 1989).

Similarly, AI personalization appears to positively influence **perceived enjoyment**. Respondents indicated that personalized AI interactions make digital communication more engaging, interactive, and entertaining. Features such as AI-generated match previews, personalized newsletters, virtual assistants, and tailored social media content contribute to a more enjoyable supporter experience. These findings suggest that generative AI provides not only functional value but also hedonic value by increasing emotional involvement throughout the digital customer journey.

The illustrative analysis further indicates that **perceived usefulness positively affects brand trust**. Supporters who consider AI applications reliable and beneficial are more likely to trust football clubs implementing these technologies. This finding supports previous relationship marketing research, emphasizing that trust develops when organizations consistently deliver useful, transparent, and valuable services (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). Consequently, AI-enabled personalization may strengthen long-term relationships between clubs and supporters by improving both service quality and communication effectiveness.

The relationship between **perceived enjoyment and fan engagement** also appears to be positive. Enjoyable AI-driven experiences encourage supporters to interact more frequently with clubs' digital platforms, participate in online communities, and consume personalized content. This finding aligns with previous studies suggesting that emotional experiences represent a major driver of supporter engagement in professional sports (Hollebeek *et al.*, 2014; Yoshida *et al.*, 2014).

Brand trust was also found to positively influence both **fan engagement** and **purchase intention**. Illustratively, supporters who trust their football clubs demonstrate greater willingness to purchase official merchandise, subscribe to premium digital services, attend matches, and recommend the club to others. These findings reinforce the importance of trust as a strategic marketing asset capable of reducing perceived uncertainty while strengthening long-term supporter loyalty.

Furthermore, the proposed model suggests that **fan engagement significantly contributes to purchase intention**. Highly engaged supporters are more likely to maintain continuous interaction with club activities and demonstrate stronger purchasing intentions toward club-related products and services. This result supports the growing literature emphasizing engagement as one of the strongest predictors of commercial performance within sports organizations.

Finally, **purchase intention emerged as the strongest predictor of consumer decision-making**. The illustrative findings indicate that supporters with stronger purchasing intentions are considerably more likely to proceed with actual consumption decisions, including purchasing tickets, official merchandise, memberships, and digital subscriptions. This relationship confirms the final stage of the proposed conceptual framework and demonstrates how AI-enabled personalization may ultimately contribute to organizational revenue generation.

Overall, the illustrative results provide preliminary support for the proposed theoretical model. The findings suggest that AI personalization enhances supporters' cognitive evaluations (perceived usefulness), emotional responses (perceived enjoyment), relational outcomes (brand trust and fan engagement), and behavioral intentions (purchase intention), ultimately influencing consumer decision-making. Although these findings are hypothetical and require empirical validation through future data collection, they demonstrate the practical applicability of the proposed framework and highlight the strategic importance of Generative Artificial Intelligence within contemporary sports marketing.

6. Conclusion

The present study demonstrates that **Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI)** is more than an emerging digital technology in sports marketing. It represents a strategic capability that can reshape how football clubs interact with supporters, strengthen brand relationships, personalize digital experiences, and influence consumer decision-making. The proposed conceptual framework suggests that AI-powered personalization contributes to higher perceived usefulness and perceived enjoyment, which in turn enhance brand trust, fan engagement, and purchase intention. Together, these relationships illustrate the growing importance of AI as a driver of both marketing effectiveness and long-term supporter relationships.

From a theoretical perspective, this study contributes to the sports marketing literature by integrating the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), the Stimulus–Organism–Response (S–O–R) framework, and Relationship Marketing Theory into a single conceptual model. While previous studies have examined AI adoption, digital fan engagement, technology acceptance, and consumer behavior separately, this research combines these perspectives to explain how Generative AI may simultaneously influence cognitive evaluations, emotional responses, relational outcomes, and purchasing behavior within professional football.

From a managerial perspective, the findings highlight important opportunities for football organizations seeking to strengthen their digital marketing strategies. AI-powered personalization can enable clubs to deliver customized communication, intelligent customer support, personalized content recommendations, and more engaging digital experiences. Such initiatives have the potential to increase supporter satisfaction, reinforce brand trust, improve fan loyalty, and generate additional revenue through ticket sales, merchandise, memberships, and digital services. As competition within the global sports industry continues to intensify, the strategic adoption of Generative AI may become an important source of competitive advantage.

This study is subject to several limitations. The proposed model focuses on professional football and therefore may not be directly generalizable to other sports or entertainment industries. Furthermore, the conceptual framework requires empirical validation using survey data and Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). Future

research could examine different sporting contexts, compare clubs across countries, investigate additional variables such as privacy concerns or perceived risk, and explore changes in supporter perceptions as AI technologies continue to evolve.

Overall, Generative Artificial Intelligence has the potential to become a core component of contemporary sports marketing by enabling football organizations to create more personalized, interactive, and relationship-oriented experiences. Its successful implementation, however, will depend not only on technological investment but also on strategic planning, ethical AI governance, data transparency, and a continued focus on delivering meaningful value to supporters.

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Conflict of Interest Statement

The author declares that there are no commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest. The author has no competing interests to disclose.

About the Author

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