



Development of a Brand Polarization Scale in Sports

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to explain the phenomenon of brand polarization in the context of the sports industry and to develop a valid and reliable scale to measure this phenomenon. Although polarization has been examined across various disciplines in the literature, the lack of a systematic measurement tool in the context of sports marketing and football fandom is noteworthy. In this study, the concepts of polarization, brand, and brand polarization were first examined theoretically, followed by an analysis of the transformation of the sports industry, the globalization of football, and fan behavior. Based on this theoretical foundation, scale items were developed and refined through expert opinions, a pilot study, and data collected from the sample. The validity and reliability of the scale were tested using Cronbach's Alpha, KMO, Bartlett's Test, exploratory factor analysis, and confirmatory factor analysis. The findings indicate that the scale demonstrates high internal consistency and a robust factor structure. Data were collected through snowball and convenience sampling methods and tested across different demographic groups. The analyses revealed two dimensions: the positive pole, reflecting fans' strong positive attitudes toward their supported teams, and the negative pole, representing their strong negative attitudes toward rival teams. In conclusion, the developed scale provides an original theoretical contribution to the fields of international business, international marketing, and sports literature, while also serving as a practical tool applicable across all sports disciplines.

Keywords: Brand Polarization, Scale Development, Team Fandom.

JEL Classifications: M30, M31

1. INTRODUCTION

Sports consumers, or fans, do not merely establish a consumer-brand relationship with the teams they support; they also reconstruct their social identities through this relationship. Therefore, fandom ceases to be a rational choice and becomes a way of life fueled by belonging, loyalty, and passion (Funk and James, 2001). This emotional attachment enables sports team brands to create a much stronger, more enduring loyalty dynamic than in many other industries. The elements of competition, conflict, and opposition inherent in fan culture facilitate the emergence of intense emotions around the brand: Positive feelings toward the supported team, while distinct negative feelings toward rival teams (Kerr and Gladden, 2008). Over time, this dual emotional structure produces a strong sense of

belonging on the one hand, while on the other hand, it paves the way for hostility, prejudice, and exclusionary attitudes towards rival brands (Dalakas and Melancon, 2012). It is precisely at this point that the concept of polarization, which is gaining increasing attention in different disciplines, becomes a critical analytical tool in sports marketing. Polarization, characterized by intense emotional and intellectual divisions between two extremes across many areas, from politics to economics, yields significant results when applied to brand dynamics in the sports industry. The economic power balances of clubs, competition for media and broadcasting rights, fan behavior, and brand perceptions are the key areas affected by this phenomenon. As Ramirez et al. (2024) emphasize, brand polarization is a complex structure that refers to the simultaneous development of strong negative feelings toward rival brands alongside intense positive feelings toward a specific

brand. However, a review of the existing literature reveals that this structure has not been systematically and comprehensively examined in the context of sports. Most studies address positive and negative brand attitudes separately; comprehensive models and scales that capture the interaction between love and hate have not been developed. Although there is a rich literature on polarization in the context of social identity, political ideology, and economic divisions (Veloutsou and Guzman, 2017), the lack of valid and reliable measurement tools specific to fandom and sports marketing creates a notable gap. This study aims to fill precisely this gap.

The sports industry is structured so that brands are experienced not only as commercial entities but also as symbolic spaces where identity, belonging, and opposition are intensely embodied. Fandom provides a natural terrain for polarization, where strong intra-group solidarity, distinct differentiation from rival groups, and emotional extremes coexist. The ability of sports brands and teams to generate both passionate love and intense opposition among fans highlights the need to scale and make measurable the concept of brand polarization in this context. Therefore, developing a brand polarization scale in the context of sports is necessary, both theoretically and practically, to capture the love-hate axis inherent in fan culture, group processes, and antagonism dynamics. The scale to be developed will enable a comprehensive assessment of fans' emotional positioning toward a sports brand or team, their level of identification within the group and differentiation from the rival team, and their tendencies toward brand-antagonistic behavior. This will create a more in-depth understanding of how brand polarization manifests in sports, offering new insights for use in fan management, marketing communication, and club brand strategies. This study aims to make a conceptual contribution to the literature on sports marketing and to develop a practical measurement tool for use in sports clubs' competitive strategies, fan relations, and brand management. Thus, the multidimensional dynamics of brand polarization within the unique emotional and social structure of sports will be made more visible, and an essential gap in the literature will be filled both theoretically and empirically.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The concept of polarization has increasingly taken center stage in recent years, not only in political, social, and economic spheres but also in consumer behavior literature. Merriam-Webster's (2024) selection of polarization as its word of the year demonstrates how the concept has become a defining feature in contemporary societies. Definitions explain polarization as the concentration of opinions, beliefs, and interests at two sharp extremes and the division of communities into opposing groups, pointing to the fact that divisions shaped by binary oppositions, such as "us versus them," have become a fundamental element of modern social structures (Atlee, 2004; Marshall, 1999). This process encompasses not only competition over symbolic resources but also social and political divisions that are reinforced by the struggle for access to material resources (Jost and Sidanius, 2004). The emergence of polarization is critically influenced by the crystallization of group-internal similarity and group-external

differentiation; findings indicating that individuals perceive those similar to themselves as close and those different as distant within a specific "identity window" support this process (Duclos and Taptué, 2015; Duclos et al., 2006). In this context, it has been shown that individuals' socioeconomic status, especially their income level, is decisive in both identification processes and their capacity for political/social influence (Esteban and Ray, 1994).

Research demonstrates that polarization profoundly reconfigures economic and political behaviors: people in polarized societies become more individualistic, support for public expenditure wanes, and the state's economic role narrows (Keyifli and Akdede, 2020). Deepening political polarization obstructs legislation, reduces compromise, and escalates societal tensions (Lindqvist and Östling, 2010). Identity-based divisions intensify hostility and threat perceptions (Bilgiç, 2014). Overall, these findings reveal that polarization is not just a backdrop but a driving force shaping patterns in consumer behavior.

With the acceleration of digitalization, individuals' political leanings, the brands they consume, the institutions they support, and their affiliations have become increasingly visible on social media, leading to brand preferences being shaped along a polarization axis. Indeed, Schoenmueller et al. (2023) developed a "brand political commitment score" based on social media data that measures the degree to which brands identify with specific political or ideological groups. Tornberg (2021), considering the speed of online information flow, argues that brands can suddenly become polarizing symbols in social debates. Group polarization theory emphasizes the potential of digital interactions to radicalize individuals' views and push them toward extreme positions; it also applies to brands and brand-related content (Evans, 2017). In this context, the concept of brand polarization has emerged as an important area of research in marketing literature. Brand polarization is a phenomenon characterized by the simultaneous emergence of strong and opposing emotions, such as love and hate, towards a brand (Ramirez et al., 2024). Unlike traditional brand management strategies that appeal to broad audiences, polarizing brands create intense loyalty among certain consumer groups and intense opposition among others. Fulfilling brand promises triggers brand love, while breaking them triggers brand hate (Kucuk, 2018). Ramirez (2020) defines the concept as a cognitive-emotional process, explaining brand polarization not only through the individual's relationship with the brand but also through the social relationships and interactions between consumers who love or hate the same brand. Therefore, many powerful brands simultaneously produce both loyal advocates and staunch opponents and are referred to as "polarizing brands" (Monahan et al., 2023).

Brand polarization is seen not only as an emotional response but also as an extension of identity construction processes. Kucuk (2016) reveals that negative brand identities are stronger and more predictable than positive ones; the process of consumers hating a brand is often associated with behaviors such as self-expression, demonstrating belonging, and determining social status. In this context, brand polarization plays a critical role in shaping and expressing consumer identity. Ramirez et al. (2019)

conceptualize brand competition as a form of attitude polarization that strengthens in-group identity and out-group alienation, while Esteban and Ray (1994) show that elements such as group homogeneity and intergroup heterogeneity support this process (Clark, 2009).

The literature also provides more concrete explanations of how group dynamics reinforce brand polarization. Hickman and Ward (2013) show that brand communities develop negative stereotypes about users of rival brands, triggering negative word-of-mouth communication and discrediting processes. Keim (2017) states that polarizing discourse creates admiration and enthusiasm on one side and anger and anxiety on the other, enabling brand-related content to spread rapidly. Therefore, brand polarization is considered a mechanism that increases brand visibility in the age of social media, makes brands open to debate, and sometimes affects brand value in a risky way (Tornberg, 2021).

In terms of conceptual models, Ramirez's (2020) four-dimensional brand polarization framework (brand passion, brand comparison, intragroup identification, and intergroup differentiation) is a fundamental reference point in the literature. Ramirez et al. (2024) expanded this model to include strong emotional responses to brand success or failure, thus defining brand polarization as a five-dimensional structure. Alvarado's (2014) typology of brand love and hate shows that emotional intensity follows a gradual structure from simple to complex expression. When these frameworks are considered together, brand polarization is seen as a multidimensional phenomenon that generates strong emotions, behaviors, and social interactions at both positive and negative extremes. All these theoretical and empirical findings reveal that polarization has evolved beyond mere political or sociological division, becoming a complex field of interaction that shapes consumer psychology, brand strategies, and market competition. As brands increasingly position themselves on a polarized social terrain, their dual-polar structures, which generate both strong loyalty and intense opposition, are becoming more visible, prompting new conceptual and methodological needs in the marketing literature.

3. METHODOLOGY

The systematic and transparent presentation of the methodological approach followed in scale development research is a critical element that strengthens the scientific validity and theoretical contribution of the developed measurement tool. In this regard, the current study aims to create a psychometrically valid and reliable scale to measure brand polarization in the sports industry. The process is grounded in theoretical and methodological frameworks widely accepted in the scale development literature (Churchill Jr., 1979; DeVellis, 2017; MacKenzie et al., 2011; Rossiter, 2002; Ramirez, 2020).

The study follows a four-stage methodological approach in line

with the recommendations of the literature on scale development (Figure 1). In the first stage, the structural dimensions of the concept of brand polarization were identified from the relevant literature, and a comprehensive items representing these dimensions was created. Clarifying the conceptual definition and ensuring theoretical representation formed the primary focus of this stage. In the second stage, item-refinement procedures were applied to the created items. To this end, expert opinions were utilized to examine the conceptual consistency, dimensional representation, and content appropriateness of the items, thereby ensuring the scale's content integrity and theoretical consistency. In the third stage, the scale's reliability and validity properties were empirically tested. This stage provides statistical validation of the scale's measurement power. In the fourth and final stage, a normative framework was developed to interpret the scale's scores. This process supports the practical use of the scale in its application context and enables comparative analysis of brand polarization levels.

3.1. Selection of Participating Groups

In line with the theoretical framework, a comprehensive items comprising 94 items was created to reflect individuals' strong positive feelings towards the team brand they support and their strong negative feelings towards the rival team, which will serve as the basis for the quantitative research process. The prepared items were submitted for expert evaluation on language, meaning, and field suitability. To this end, the opinions of three experts in language and meaning, three in communication, and three in marketing were obtained; the items were systematically reviewed for content validity, and the necessary adjustments were made.

When the pilot application phase was reached, participants who declared a strong attachment to any football team in Turkey and were aged 18 and over were included in the survey using snowball sampling, and this phase was carried out in July (2025). Based on data from 39 participants, the scale items were revised and prepared for final application.

Subsequently, an online survey was conducted in August (2025) using convenience sampling from the same population, and data from "Participant Group 1" comprising 388 participants, were collected. The data from this group were used for exploratory factor analysis (EFA). To validate the EFA results, the process was repeated in the research population, and data from "Participant Group 2" comprising 401 participants, were collected via convenience sampling. The data from this group were then used in confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to test the structural validity of the measurement model.

3.2. Data Collection and Analysis Procedures

The data obtained in the study were systematically analyzed using statistical programs selected in line with the research objectives. In the first stage, frequency and percentage distributions, as well as mean and standard deviation values, were calculated to

Figure 1: Steps in developing the brand polarization scale in sports

Step 1: Dimensionality of the construct and item generation	Step 2: Item purification	Step 3: Reliability and validity	Step 4: Development of norms
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Table 1: Planned dimension structure and items

Positive pole		Negative pole				
Items	Adaptation	Items	Adaptation			
I make a totem to increase my favorite team's chances of winning.	Vallerand et al. (2008)	The company sponsoring the rival team negatively affects my product/service preference.	Zhang and Laroche (2021)			
After my favorite team loses, I go through a complex emotional recovery process.		I think the rival team and its fans are hypocritical.				
I celebrate my team's victory in the streets.		I feel disgust towards the rival team.				
I struggle to recover after my team loses.		I hate the rival team.		Akrouf and Mrad (2023)		
I get into serious arguments with fans of other teams about my team's performance.		I don't want anything to do with the rival team's sponsors.				
If my favorite team and athlete advertise a product, then that product is good.		Karademir (2010)		I refuse to use any products offered to me by the rival team.		
Even if the product advertised by my favorite team and athlete is more expensive than other products, I will buy it.				The rival team bothers me.		
I will buy products that benefit my favorite team and athlete.				I want to maintain as much distance as possible between myself and the opposing team and their products.		
				If the opposing team and its sponsors were boycotted, I would participate.		Grappi et al. (2013)
The urge I feel to support the team is so strong that I can't help but get involved.				I create content on social media against the rival team and its product.		
The team I support gives me unforgettable experiences.	I participate in protests against the rival team.					
I have strong feelings for the team I support.	I say negative things about the rival team to my social circle and other people.					
I have common ground with people who feel the same way about the team I support.	I advise my social circle not to buy the rival team's and sponsors' products.					
I identify with people who feel the same way about the team I support.	I consider discrediting the rival team in the eyes of my social circle and others.					
The team I support gives me a variety of experiences.	I identify with people who feel the same way as I do about the rival team.					
I have almost obsessive feelings towards the team I support.						
I feel betrayed because of the failure of the team I support.						
	Bagozzi et al. (2017)	The opposing team and the values it represents are incompatible with my values and beliefs.	Tolunay and Veloutsou (2025)			
Wearing the jersey of the team I support is a real and vital part of my identity.		In my opinion, the opposing team violates ethical standards.				
I often find myself thinking about the team I support.		The opposing team symbolizes the kind of person I would never want to be.				
I am willing to spend time and money to get the jersey of the team I support.		The opposing team has committed ethical violations.		Havard (2017)		
My feelings for the team I support often override my logic.		I will not support the rival team when they play another team in a championship match.				
The team I support is a way for me to express my identity.		I will not support the rival team when they play another team in a relegation match.				
The team I support allows me to be with people who share similar values.		The rival team's fans display unsportsmanlike behavior at matches.				
When the team I support wins, I feel intense emotional joy.		The rival team's fans do not show respect to others.				
I feel close to people who share my feelings about the team I support.		The rival team's prestige is weak.				
The team I support's failure negatively affects my mood.		The rival team's fans are missing out on a good life because they support this team.				
The team I support is generally considered good by others.	I don't think the city/region where the rival team plays is very prestigious.					
	I am pleased when the opposing team performs poorly in international matches.	Present study				
I want to be with people who share the team I support's values.	I am easily influenced by the provocative actions of the opposing team's players.					
The team I support makes me feel strong.	I am affected by the foul language used by other fans around me in the stadium.					
The team I support has a powerful effect on my visual perception and other senses.	I believe the opposing team is involved in match-fixing.					
	I avoid people who don't share my views about the team I support.		Ramirez et al. (2024)			
My support for a team may lead me to choose a product for the 1 st time because that team sponsors it.	I keep my distance from people who don't share my opinions about the team I support.					
I particularly prefer products from companies that sponsor the team I support.						
Between two companies with the same price and features, I prefer the company that sponsors the team I support.						
Even if I have to pay a higher price, I would still choose the products/services of the company sponsoring my favorite team over those of other companies						

(contd...)

Table 1: (Continued)

Positive pole		Negative pole			
Items	Adaptation	Items	Adaptation		
The team I support contributes to my personal image.	Wallace et al. (2014)	I despise the rival team and everything it represents.	Hegner et al. (2017)		
The team I support has a positive impact on how others view me.		I have zero tolerance for the rival team.			
I advertise the team I support extensively online.	Thomson et al. (2005)	The rival team's jersey colors are irritating.	I speak negatively about the rival team in my social circle.		
I share positive news I see on social media about the team I support.		The rival team does not reflect who I am.			
I am passionately devoted to the team I support.		The rival team does not suit my personality.			
I feel an emotional bond with the team I support.		I constantly disparage the rival team in my social circle.			
I see the matches played by the team I support as a battle between good and evil.		Kemper et al. (2014)		I share posts on my social media account to publicize the rival team's behavior and practices.	
I display the team's logo and emblem at work and in my personal life.		Konter (2006)			
I display the team's logo and emblem in my social life.					
I usually wear clothes or uniforms that show the logo and emblem of the team I support.					
I read news articles in the newspaper about the team I support.					
I follow online posts to celebrate the team I support's victories.					
I rewatch the critical moments of the team I support after the match.					
I make sarcastic comments to fans of teams my team has beaten.					
I make fun of fans of other teams that don't perform as well as my team.					
I send online messages (DMs) to show my support for my team.					
I feel a sense of belonging when my team beats its rival.					
I feel a sense of achievement when the team I support defeats its rival.					
I boast when the team I support defeats its rival.					
The team I support is superior to its closest rival.					
I chat online with other fans of my team about matches.					

Table 2: Characteristics of the participant group in the pilot study

Variable	Subvariable	n
Age	18-25	6
	26-35	13
	36-45	16
	46-55	3
	56-65	1
Gender	Female	14
	Male	25
Marital status	Married	25
	Unmarried	14
Education Level	Master's and Doctoral Degrees	9
	Bachelor's Degree	14
	Associate Degree	5
	High School	9
	Middle School	2
Total		39

describe the participants' demographic characteristics and define the general profile of the sample. In the second stage, Cronbach's Alpha was calculated to evaluate the internal consistency of the developed measurement tool and to assess the scale's reliability. Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and confirmatory factor

Table 3: Demographic characteristics of participant group 1

Variable	Subvariable	n
Age	18-25	105
	26-35	126
	36-45	118
	46-55	24
	56-65	10
	66+	5
Gender	Female	218
	Male	170
Marital Status	Married	192
	Unmarried	196
Education Level	Literate or Primary School	7
	Middle School	11
	High School	92
	Associate Degree	45
	Bachelor's Degree	185
	Master's and Doctoral Degrees	48
Total		388

analysis (CFA) were applied to examine the construct validity of the scale and to determine the underlying dimensions and items to be eliminated from the brand polarization structure in sports. This allowed the scale's alignment with theoretical foundations

Table 4: Participant Group 1's Fan Characteristics

Variable	Subvariable	n
Please indicate which team you support	Galatasaray	135
	Fenerbahçe	127
	Beşiktaş	60
	Trabzon	15
	Samsunspor	34
How long have you been a fan?	Other (13 different team)	16
	<1 year	7
	1-5 years	27
	6-10 years	50
	11-15 years	66
Do you often watch your team's matches?	16-20 years	55
	21 years and over	183
	Yes	270
	No	118
	Have you ever watched your team's matches at the stadium?	Yes
Do you buy licensed merchandise from your team?	No	202
	Yes	289
Would you describe yourself as a die-hard fan?	No	99
	Yes	211
Have you ever switched teams?	No	177
	Yes	36
Total	No	352
		388

and the meaningfulness of the factors to be tested. In the next stage, descriptive statistical methods were used to examine participants' attitudes and assessments of each scale item and the identified factors. Thus, the participants' tendencies toward brand polarization and the differences among the factors were more clearly analyzed.

3.3. Limitations

The brand polarization scale developed in this study was conducted within certain limitations. First, the data used in the research were obtained from fans of football teams in Turkey. Therefore, it is uncertain whether the developed scale will yield equally valid and reliable results in different sports, cultures, or geographical regions. In addition, the research data were obtained using snowball and convenience sampling methods. This limits the representativeness of the data obtained for the entire fan population and the generalizability of the results. Since a literature review and expert opinions shaped the conceptual framework of brand polarization in this study, it is anticipated that the concept may be reinterpreted across disciplines or over time, necessitating updates to the scale.

4. FINDINGS

4.1. Dimensionality of Structure and Expression Production

In the first stage, a comprehensive literature review was conducted to determine the dimensional framework of brand polarization

in sports and to develop appropriate items representing these dimensions. In this review, the concept of brand polarization was theoretically evaluated alongside related sub-concepts, including social identity, political polarization, and economic polarization, thereby revealing its psychosocial foundations comprehensively. Subsequently, the literature on sports marketing, the sports industry, and industrial football was examined in detail; the competitive and emotional structure of sports was analyzed theoretically to understand how it lays the groundwork for brand polarization. In line with this theoretical framework, a comprehensive items of 94 items was developed to serve as the basis for the quantitative research process, reflecting individuals' strong positive feelings towards the team brand they support and their distinct negative feelings towards rival teams. The prepared items were designed to represent the multidimensional structure of brand polarization in the context of sports. The dimensions that constitute the conceptual structure of the scale, along with the items corresponding to these dimensions, are presented in the table below.

The 94 items developed to measure brand polarization in sports were prepared in line with previous studies. The item production process was carried out systematically to cover all dimensions related to the subject. As the process progressed, it was observed that the newly added items began to repeat the previous items in terms of meaning and content, failing to contribute to conceptual diversity. At this point, it was evident that producing additional items led to unnecessary repetition rather than increasing the scale's content validity. Therefore, it was concluded that the existing 94 items were conceptually sufficient to represent the structure of brand polarization, and the item production process was terminated at this stage. The items, shaped under two basic dimensions, namely the positive biased attitudes developed by fans towards their own team brand and the negative biased attitudes towards the rival team, revealed brand polarization in a two-way manner. Items related to positive attitudes focus on measuring fans' perceptions of their own team, including belonging, loyalty, identity construction, social approval, consumption behaviors, and emotional responses.

On the other hand, items related to negative bias encompass negative feelings towards the rival team and its fans, boycott tendencies, social distance, hatred, discrediting, and exclusion of the rival team's brand. These comprehensive items can address fan behavior in the sports industry not only in terms of "being a fan," but also from the perspectives of rivalry and brand-based polarization. Thus, it is anticipated that brand polarization will be evaluated holistically.

DeVellis (2017), Netemeyer et al. (2003), and Clark and Watson (2016) emphasize that in the scale development process, items should be clear, unambiguous, and consistent with the conceptual framework. Furthermore, Hinkin (1998) states that similar or repetitive items create unnecessary redundancy in the scale and may undermine its validity and reliability. Accordingly, after the items were created, some items were removed from the scale during the initial refinement process. These include: "The rival team bothers me" "I have almost obsessive feelings towards the team I support," "I create content on social media against the rival

Table 5: Exploratory factor analysis findings

Items	Factors	
	NP	PP
1. I despise the rival team and everything it represents	0.864	
2. I think the rival team and its fans are hypocritical.	0.856	
3. I feel disgust towards the rival team.	0.846	
4. I hate the rival team.	0.843	
5. I don't want anything to do with the rival team's sponsors.	0.829	
6. The rival team's jersey colors are irritating	0.818	
7. I think the rival team and its fans are hypocritical	0.816	
8. I advise my social circle not to buy the rival team's and sponsors' products	0.812	
9. The rival team's prestige is weak	0.791	
10. I create content on social media against the rival team and its produc.	0.782	
11. The rival team's fans are missing out on a good life because they support this team	0.764	
12. The rival team's fans display unsportsmanlike behavior at matches	0.764	
13. I advise my social circle not to buy the rival team's and sponsors' products.	0.758	
14. I share posts on my social media account to publicize the rival team's behavior and practices	0.757	
15. I participate in protests against the rival team	0.756	
16. The rival team does not suit my personality	0.731	
17. I am pleased when the opposing team performs poorly in international matches	0.718	
18. The opposing team symbolizes the kind of person I would never want to be.	0.686	
19. I will not support the rival team when they play another team in a relegation match	0.677	
20. I am easily influenced by the provocative actions of the opposing team's players	0.545	
21. I am willing to spend time and money to get the jersey of the team I support		0.812
22. I am passionately devoted to the team I support		0.797
23. The team I support gives me unforgettable experiences		0.789
24. I follow online posts to celebrate the team I support's victories		0.784
25. I share positive news I see on social media about the team I support		0.761
26. I feel a sense of achievement when the team I support defeats its rival		0.754
27. I display the team's logo and emblem in my social life		0.754
28. I rewatch the critical moments of the team I support after the match		0.748
29. The team I support allows me to be with people who share similar values		0.743
30. The team I support contributes to my personal image		0.740
31. The team I support makes me feel strong		0.720
32. Wearing the jersey of the team I support is a real and vital part of my identity		0.704
33. I celebrate my team's victory in the streets		0.686
34. I make a totem to increase my favorite team's chances of winning		0.665
35. The team I support has a positive impact on how others view me		0.639
36. I particularly prefer products from companies that sponsor the team I support		0.620
37. I send online messages (DMs) to show my support for my team		0.611
38. Even if the product advertised by my favorite team and athlete is more expensive than other products, I will buy it		0.579
39. My feelings for the team I support often override my logic		0.520
40. After my favorite team loses, I go through a complex emotional recovery process		0.511
41. I get into serious arguments with fans of other teams about my team's performance		0.452
42. I make fun of fans of other teams that don't perform as well as my team		0.444
% of variance	33.5	27.6

team and its products," "Between two companies with the same price and features, I prefer the company that sponsors the team I support," "I feel betrayed because of the failure of the team I support" and "I see the matches played by the team I support as a battle between good and evil". The six items mentioned above were removed from the scale during the initial refinement phase due to conceptual ambiguity, excessive emotional load, emphasis on specific behaviors, and the presence of other items that conveyed the same meaning. Thus, the redundancy of the items was reduced, and the scale's conceptual clarity and measurement power were increased.

4.2. Item Purification

The prepared items were sent to 9 academics from the fields of Language and Literature, Communication, and Marketing for evaluation based on grammar, meaning, and field appropriateness criteria following the initial screening. In this application, in which

the scales were evaluated for overall content validity, the content validity index (CVI) was calculated. The CVI, developed by Lawshe (1975), is the content validity ratio for the statement items. Accordingly, experts were presented with a form containing the options "This item should remain in the scale," "This item should be removed from the scale," and "This item should be revised (please write your suggestion)". They were asked to express their opinions. The experts examined the statements in detail, and based on their feedback, the number was reduced from 88 to 61, and the suggested revisions were implemented to make the scale suitable for the pilot study. In this context, a scale consisting of 29 items measuring individuals' strong positive feelings toward their own team and 32 items measuring individuals' strong negative feelings toward the rival team was developed and sent to participants for pilot study.

Pilot studies, as they are generally small-scale trials of a comprehensive research, include pre-testing of data collection

tools such as questionnaires or interviews. These studies help anticipate problems that may arise during the research process and contribute to smoother progress in the primary survey (Van Teijlingen and Hundley, 2001). The data from the pilot study (39) were analyzed using Jamovi, a widely used statistical program in the social sciences. The questionnaire form used in the pilot study consisted of two main sections. The first section contained a form with information on participants' demographics. The second section used the brand polarization scale in sports. Thus, information on the participants' general profile was obtained, and the psychometric properties of the scale were evaluated.

When examining the demographic characteristics of the 39 participants in the study, the sample is predominantly in the

Table 6: Demographic characteristics of participant group 2

Variable	Subvariable	n
Age	18-25	115
	26-35	130
	36-45	95
	46-55	40
	56-65	17
	66+	4
Gender	Female	164
	Male	237
Marital Status	Married	208
	Unmarried	193
Education level	Literate or Primary School	8
	Middle School	14
	High School	104
	Associate Degree	53
	Bachelor's Degree	170
	Master's and Doctoral Degrees	52
Total		401

36-45 (16 people) and 26-35 (13 people) age groups. In terms of gender distribution, men (25 individuals) constituted a clear majority over women (14 individuals). Regarding marital status, 64% of participants (25 individuals) were married. In terms of education level, bachelor's degrees (14 people) and master's and doctoral degrees (9 people) constitute a significant share of the sample, totaling 23 people, and high school degrees (9 people) also have a considerable share in comparison to lower education levels (middle school: 2 people). Overall, the sample profile shows a predominance of male, married individuals with higher education levels, with the age distribution concentrated in groups corresponding to the active working period.

One of the most critical stages of the pilot study was testing the scale's reliability. To this end, the scale items' internal consistency was analyzed, and Cronbach's alpha was calculated. The analysis showed that the scale had a Cronbach's alpha of 0.905. In the literature, it is stated that a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient above 0.70 indicates that the scale is reliable, while values above 0.90 indicate that the scale is highly reliable (Tavşancıl, 2010). This finding suggests that the scale used in the study has relatively high measurement reliability. Item-level analyses were also conducted during the scale evaluation. During this process, it was determined that the statement "*I identify with people who feel the same way about the team I support*" which reflects an individual's strong positive feelings toward their own team within the scale's factor structure, did not make a sufficient statistical contribution. The relevant item was excluded because it was consistent with the scale as a whole. Thus, the scale was made more functional without compromising the integrity and measurement power of the research.

Table 7: Final structure of the brand polarization scale in sports

Factors and items	
Negative pole	Positive pole
1. I despise the rival team and everything it represents	I am passionately devoted to the team I support
2. I don't want anything to do with the rival team's sponsors.	I display the team's logo and emblem in my social life
3. The rival team's jersey colors are irritating.	I share positive news I see on social media about the team I support
4. I think the rival team and its fans are hypocritical.	I send online messages (DMs) to show my support for my team
5. I advise my social circle not to buy the rival team's and sponsors' products.	I feel a sense of achievement when the team I support defeats its rival
6. The rival team's prestige is weak.	I celebrate my team's victory in the streets
7. The rival team's fans are missing out on a good life because they support this team.	Wearing the jersey of the team I support is a real and vital part of my identity
8. The rival team's fans display unsportsmanlike behavior at matches.	The team I support has a positive impact on how others view me
9. I share posts on my social media account to publicize the rival team's behavior and practices.	I particularly prefer products from companies that sponsor the team I support
10. I participate in protests against the rival team.	My feelings for the team I support often override my logic
11. I am pleased when the opposing team performs poorly in international matches.	After my favorite team loses, I go through a complex emotional recovery process
12. I will not support the rival team when they play another team in a relegation match.	I get into serious arguments with fans of other teams about my team's performance
13. The rival team does not suit my personality.	
14. I am easily influenced by the provocative actions of the opposing team's players.	

Table 8: Descriptive statistics for statements

Negative pole	Mean	Standard deviation	Cronbahs alpha	%		
				25 th	50 th	75 th
I despise the rival team and everything it represents	3.61	1.28	0.965	1.00	2.00	4.00
I don't want anything to do with the rival team's sponsors	2.46	1.37	0.965	1.00	2.00	4.00
The rival team's jersey colors are irritating.	2.98	1.45	0.964	1.00	3.00	4.00
I think the rival team and its fans are hypocritical	2.74	1.39	0.964	1.00	3.00	4.00
I advise my social circle not to buy the rival team's and sponsors' products.	3.26	1.33	0.964	1.00	2.00	3.00
The rival team's prestige is weak	2.80	1.44	0.964	1.00	3.00	4.00
The rival team's fans are missing out on a good life because they support this team	3.06	1.39	0.964	1.00	2.00	4.00
The rival team's fans display unsportsmanlike behavior at matches	2.48	1.41	0.964	1.00	2.00	3.00
I share posts on my social media account to publicize the rival team's behavior and practices	3.60	1.25	0.964	1.00	2.00	3.00
I participate in protests against the rival team	2.38	1.35	0.965	1.00	2.00	3.00
I am pleased when the opposing team performs poorly in international matches	2.14	1.26	0.964	1.00	2.00	4.00
I will not support the rival team when they play another team in a relegation match	2.27	1.37	0.964	1.00	3.00	4.00
The rival team does not suit my personality	2.29	1.33	0.964	1.00	2.00	3.00
I am easily influenced by the provocative actions of the opposing team's players	2.23	1.31	0.964	1.00	2.00	3.00
Positive pole	Mean	Standard deviation	Cronbahs alpha	%		
				25 th	50 th	75 th
I am passionately devoted to the team I support	2.67	1.32	0.964	1.00	2.00	3.00
I display the team's logo and emblem in my social life	2.38	1.40	0.965	1.00	2.00	3.00
I share positive news I see on social media about the team I support	2.16	1.36	0.964	1.00	2.00	3.00
I send online messages (DMs) to show my support for my team	2.09	1.25	0.966	3.00	4.00	5.00
I feel a sense of achievement when the team I support defeats its rival	2.15	1.39	0.965	1.00	2.00	4.00
I celebrate my team's victory in the streets	2.45	1.45	0.965	2.00	3.00	4.00
Wearing the jersey of the team I support is a real and vital part of my identity	2.80	1.53	0.964	1.00	3.00	4.00
The team I support has a positive impact on how others view me	2.07	1.25	0.966	2.00	3.00	4.00
I particularly prefer products from companies that sponsor the team I support	2.86	1.49	0.965	1.00	3.00	4.00
My feelings for the team I support often override my logic	2.69	1.39	0.965	2.00	3.00	4.00
After my favorite team loses, I go through a complex emotional recovery process	2.53	1.39	0.965	1.00	2.00	3.00
I get into serious arguments with fans of other teams about my team's performance	2.45	1.44	0.966	3.00	4.00	5.00

As a result, following the pilot study, the scale was reorganized into 60 items and two dimensions. In this form, the scale has maintained both its high reliability and measurement validity. The findings obtained from the pilot study clearly show that the questionnaire form is ready for field application. Thus, before proceeding to the primary research process, it has been confirmed that the scale is based on sound methodological foundations.

4.3. Reliability and Validity

4.3.1. Findings regarding reliability

As a result of the pilot study, 60 items were retained, and it was decided to add a section to the survey to measure participants' commitment to their teams. Following these adjustments, the survey form was finalized. Data were collected from football fans in Turkey using a convenience sampling method, and the sample consisted of 388 individuals who met the criterion of being football fans. To assess the scale's reliability, the internal consistency coefficient (Cronbach's Alpha) was calculated and found to be 0.987. This value indicates that the scale has a very high level of

internal consistency. However, such a high value also raises the suspicion that there may be excessively high correlations between items (DeVellis, 2017). Nevertheless, the findings show that brand polarization in sports can be reliably measured and that the scale provides a solid foundation for subsequent validity analyses. This value will be obtained again when the final structure of the scale is established.

4.3.2. Findings regarding validity

4.3.2.1. Exploratory factor analysis

An exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was applied to the data to evaluate the measurement tool in the sample and examine the factor structure's consistency. Within this scope, the distribution of factors, the level of aggregation of items under relevant factors, and indicators related to the construct validity of the scale were analyzed in detail. Meanwhile, to better understand the research context, the basic demographic characteristics of the participant group are presented in the table below.

Firstly, the age distribution shows that the vast majority of participants are in the 18-25, 26-35, and 36-45 age ranges. This indicates that the research did not focus on a specific age group, but rather that these age groups were naturally more interested in the research topic. Looking at the gender distribution, the ratio of participants was different from expectations, with women dominating participation. It is seen that the majority of participants have a high level of education. This situation is thought to have positively affected the research results. The table below provides details about the participants' fan information.

34.8% of participants ($n = 135$) stated they were Galatasaray fans, 32.7% ($n = 127$) were Fenerbahçe fans, 15.5% ($n = 60$) were Beşiktaş fans, 3.9% ($n = 15$) were Trabzonspor fans, and 8.8% ($n = 34$) were Samsunspor fans. In addition, 4.1% ($n = 16$) stated that they supported other teams. These results show that the sample consisted mainly of supporters of the "big three" clubs (83.0% in total). In terms of fan duration, 47.2% of participants ($n = 183$) stated that they had supported the same team for 21 years or more. 31.2% ($n = 121$) had been fans for 11-20 years. The percentage of participants with 10 years or less of fanhood is 21.6% ($n = 84$). This finding reveals that the research group has a significantly "senior" and long-standing fan experience. When examining the frequency of watching their team's matches, 69.6% of participants ($n = 270$) reported regularly following their team's matches, while 30.4% ($n = 118$) reported not watching them frequently. However, when looking at the stadium experience, this rate is lower: only 47.9% of participants ($n = 186$) reported watching matches at the stadium, while 52.1% ($n = 202$) reported never going to the stadium. This result suggests that fans' match-viewing behavior occurs more through television and digital platforms. A higher level of participation is evident in purchasing licensed products. 74.5% of participants ($n = 289$) reported purchasing licensed products for their teams, while 25.5% ($n = 99$) did not have this habit. This finding shows that licensed products play an essential role in identifying with fan identity and offer significant revenue potential for clubs. When examining participants' definitions of fan identity, 54.4% ($n = 211$) defined themselves as "hardcore fans," while 45.6% ($n = 177$) did not accept this definition. This reveals that a significant portion of fans may be behaviorally active (watching matches, purchasing merchandise) but do not consider themselves hardcore fans in terms of attitude. Finally, among fans' history of changing teams, 90.7% ($n = 352$) stated that they had never changed teams in their lives, while only 9.3% ($n = 36$) said that they had switched to supporting a different team. This finding indicates that brand loyalty in football fandom is quite strong and enduring.

An exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was conducted to test the validity of the brand polarization scale in sports. At this stage, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) sample adequacy test was used to assess the suitability of the data for factor analysis, and Bartlett's Sphericity Test was used to determine whether the correlations between variables were significant (Field, 2018; Tabachnick and Fidell, 2019). The KMO value ranges from 0 to 1. In the literature, values between 0.8 and 1.00 are considered very good, between 0.70 and 0.79 moderate, and between 0.60 and 0.69 weak; values below 0.60 indicate that the sample is inadequate and requires

additional adjustments (Shrestha, 2021). In this study, the KMO value was 0.973, indicating that the sample is "perfectly" suitable for factor analysis (Kaiser, 1974). However, when both a high internal consistency (Cronbach's Alpha) score and a high Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) value were observed, this raised suspicion of a high degree of correlation (multicollinearity) among the scale items. The literature indicates that high Cronbach's Alpha values often indicate excessive item-to-item correlation (Tavşancıl, 2010; Gliem and Gliem, 2003). Similarly, while high KMO values indicate good sample adequacy, they can also indicate strong item interrelationships (Field, 2013). This situation suggests that the independence of the items must be carefully evaluated before factor analysis. The Bartlett Sphericity Test yielded $P < 0.001$, indicating meaningful relationships among the variables at a level suitable for factor analysis (Field, 2024). Finally, an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was conducted on the brand polarization scale in sports. According to the analysis, the scale exhibited a two-factor structure. During the exploratory factor analysis (EFA), the loadings of the scale items on the factors and the discriminability between the items were taken into account. This situation is referred to in the literature as "cross-loading," indicating that an item may represent more than one factor simultaneously, potentially confusing the scale's dimensional structure (Tabachnick and Fidell, 2019; Hair et al., 2019). It is recommended that items showing cross-loading be removed from the scale, as they may undermine the scale's conceptual integrity and weaken factor differentiation (DeVellis, 2017). The load differences between the identified items were found to be close to 0.15, and the findings were rechecked after each item was deleted.

The presence of items with highly similar content within the same factor can substantially increase Cronbach's alpha values and lead to item duplication in the scale (Clark and Watson, 2016; Worthington and Whittaker, 2006). Furthermore, an excess of items reduces the scale's applicability and can lead to participant fatigue (DeVellis, 2017). Therefore, when examining the EFA results, not only factor loadings but also the content similarity of the statements were taken into account. In this context, statements with high factor loadings, more explicit and comprehensive statements, and statements with similar meanings or redundancy were retained. In contrast, statements with low factor loadings or that were less explicit or comprehensive were removed from the scale. Thus, to determine the factor structure, the new 42-item structure was tested using Exploratory Factor Analysis, and the results are shown in the table.

Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) revealed a two-factor structure for the scale. The first factor accounted for 33.5% of the total variance, and the second accounted for 27.6%. Thus, the two dimensions of the scale together explained 61.1% of the total variance. Since variance ratios of 50% or more are considered acceptable in social sciences (Hair et al., 2013), this result demonstrates that the scale has a strong factor structure. When the factor content was examined, it was concluded that these two dimensions represent two complementary, opposing poles of fan behavior. The first factor contained items that highly described participants' negative attitudes, exclusion, and rejection toward the opposing team. Therefore, this dimension was labeled the

“negative pole” of the fan phenomenon. The second factor consisted of items describing a sense of belonging, emotional attachment, and positive social interaction toward the team they support. This content led to the definition of the second factor as the “positive pole” of the fan experience. This polarized structure is indicative of the “us”-“them” distinction, as emphasized in the sports marketing literature (Tajfel et al., 1979).

4.4. Confirmatory Factor Analysis

The 42-item scale was tested using a two-factor model using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) with data from a new group of participants. The “Negative Polar Factor,” which includes negative feelings and behaviors toward the opposing team, its fans, and its sponsors, and the “Positive Polar Factor,” which provides for belonging, loyalty, and support for the team one supports, were analyzed using data from a new sample of 401 participants, along with question wording. The demographic characteristics of the participant group are presented in the table.

An examination of the participant characteristics presented in the table reveals that, in terms of age distribution, the sample was primarily comprised of individuals aged 18-35 (61.1%), indicating that the study was particularly popular among youth and young adults. In terms of gender distribution, male participants predominated at 59.1%, suggesting that the research topic resonated more with men. An examination of the educational profile reveals that 55.4% of participants had a bachelor’s or master’s degree. In comparison, 93.5% had more than a high school education, indicating that the data were obtained from a highly educated group. All these demographic indicators support the fact that the 401-person sample constituted an appropriate framework for the study in terms of diversity and representation.

During CFA testing of the 42-item scale using participant group 2 data, some items were removed to improve model fit and structural validity. During item reduction, items with factor loadings below 0.40 were removed from the scale because they did not adequately represent the relevant factor (Brown, 2015). Items with high loadings on multiple factors were removed because they disrupted the separation between factors (Hair et al., 2019). Some items were removed because they negatively affected the RMSEA, CFI, and TLI values, thereby reducing the model’s structural fit (Kline, 2023). In this context, the model, tested with 42 items, was reduced to 26 items based on data from the new sample.

The factor loadings of the “Negative Polarity Factor” items of the final 26-item scale ranged from 0.84 to 1.25, while the “Positive Polarity Factor” loadings ranged from 0.78 to 1.18. In the literature, factor loadings of 0.40 and above are considered good (Hair et al., 2019; Tabachnick and Fidell, 2019). All items met this criterion and significantly represented the relevant factors ($P < 0.001$). The covariance between the negative and positive pole factors was $r = 0.73$ ($P < 0.001$). This is considered a moderate-to-high level of correlation in the literature and indicates that the factors are related but distinct constructs (Kline, 2023). When the fit indices of the model were examined, RMSEA was 0.100 (90% CI: 0.097-0.107). An RMSEA value of ≤ 0.05 is considered a good fit, 0.05-0.08 is regarded as an acceptable fit, 0.08-0.10 is considered a moderate

fit, and > 0.10 is considered a poor fit (MacCallum et al., 1996; Hu and Bentler, 1999). Therefore, the model exhibits a moderate fit. The CFI value is 0.86. CFI values of ≥ 0.90 are interpreted as a good fit, and ≥ 0.95 as a perfect fit (Hu and Bentler, 1999). This value indicates that the model has an acceptable but suboptimal fit. The TLI is 0.847. A TLI of ≥ 0.90 is recommended for a good fit; in this case, the model provides a fit considered moderate in the literature (Hu and Bentler, 1999).

CFA results indicate that the scale reliably and validly measures both the “Negative Polarity Factor” and “Positive Polarity Factor” dimensions. The high factor loadings indicate that the items meaningfully represent the relevant factors. Reducing the number of items from 42 to 26 improved model fit and clarified the distinction between factors. The significant positive correlation ($r = 0.73$) between the negative and positive polarity factors suggests a relationship between fans’ loyalty to their own team and their negative attitudes toward opposing teams. Overall, the scale is reliable in terms of structural validity and is suitable for measuring fan attitudes within a two-dimensional framework. In this context, the final structure of the brand polarization scale in sports is presented in the table.

4.5. Development of Norms

The final step in the scale development process is the creation of norms. This means creating a reference against which to compare scale scores. Mackenzie et al. (2011), in their study detailing the scale development process, emphasized the practical importance of developing norms. According to the researchers, developing norms after ensuring the scale’s theoretical and psychometric soundness enables comparisons at the individual and group levels. Rossiter (2002) similarly stated that scale development should not only involve validity and reliability tests but also translate the obtained scores into applicable standards. Ramirez (2020) argues that the norm development process should be standardized to facilitate field use of the scale, especially in applied research. Accordingly, norms are the most essential tool for practical benefit. In the literature, it is recommended that descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation) obtained from the sample be presented during the norm development phase, and that norm tables be prepared by generating standard scores (z-scores, T-scores) or percentages. This will allow the scores obtained from the scale to be interpreted not only in terms of raw values but also within a normative reference framework (Mackenzie et al., 2011; Churchill Jr., 1979; DeVellis, 2017; Rossiter, 2002). In this context, the data showing these values are presented in the table.

The findings presented in the table provide a significant framework for the norm development process. First, an examination of the mean values reveals that the items generally ranged from 2.0 to 3.6. This suggests that participants neither completely agreed nor completely rejected the statements, but instead responded at a moderate level. Specifically, higher means for some items on the negative pole and lower means for some items on the positive pole indicate that fans experience more intense negative emotions. However, the standard deviation values ranging from 1.2 to 1.5 indicate that the responses were not homogeneous and that there were significant differences among participants. This variation is

essential in determining how individuals are distributed across low, medium, and high levels. The table also shows that Cronbach's Alpha values ranged from 0.964 to 0.966. These values indicate very high internal consistency.

Among the negative pole items, the highest mean was observed for the statement "*I despise the rival team and everything it represents*" (mean = 3.61). This finding suggests that strong negative feelings toward the opposing team are widespread among fans. The lowest mean is found in the statement "I'm happy when the opposing team does poorly in international matches" (Mean = 2.14). This suggests that participants are less inclined to celebrate their opponent's defeat directly. Generally, the percentages ranged from 1, 2, 3, or 4 for most items. This suggests that most participants showed moderate agreement, with little clustering at the extremes.

Among the positive pole items, the highest mean is for "*I particularly prefer products from companies that sponsor the team I support*" (Mean = 2.86). This finding suggests that fans demonstrate their affiliation, particularly through consumption behaviors. It is noteworthy that the lowest mean is found in the item "*The team I support has a positive impact on how others view me*" (Mean = 2.07). This suggests that the impact of fandom on an individual's social image is relatively weak. Additionally, for some of the positive pole items, the percentile values are 3–4–5. This indicates that a particular group of fans engages in these behaviors at a high level, and these items are particularly distinctive in terms of "high fan behavior."

The 25th, 50th, and 75th percentiles in the table serve an essential function in developing norms. For example, for the item "*I despise the rival team and everything it represents*," the 25th percentile = 1 and the 75th percentile = 4. These values indicate that individuals who score 1–2 have low levels of negative emotions, those who score 3 have moderate levels, and those who score 4–5 have high levels. Similarly, for the positive pole items, these percentiles indicate the category in which individuals' levels of belonging will be assessed. Thus, individuals' scores on the scale can be classified as low, moderate, or high.

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study examines the concept of brand polarization, particularly in the context of football fandom, at both theoretical and empirical levels. A "Sports Brand Polarization Scale," specific to the sports industry and with demonstrated reliability and validity, was developed. Efforts to establish a direct scale for brand polarization are limited in the literature (Ramírez, 2020; Ramirez et al., 2024), and existing studies approach the concept from a more general consumer behavior perspective, rather than focusing on a context characterized by intense competition and emotional attachment, such as sports fandom. However, it is crucial to holistically measure simultaneous, opposing, and mutually reinforcing emotional responses such as brand love, brand loyalty, brand hate, and brand avoidance within a polarization perspective.

A review of existing research reveals that while the brand polarization conceptually has positive (love, belonging, grouping) and negative (opposition, alienation, separation) dimensions, these dimensions are not defined as distinct axes in the literature. The scale developed by Ramírez (2020) combines positive and negative emotions within a single general construct. This study fills this gap in the literature by treating brand polarization as a two-way construct. It offers a unique framework that measures both strong positive emotions toward the supported brand and negative tendencies toward competing brands. This approach enables a realistic and holistic assessment of the brand-fan relationship. The fact that the scale was developed in the context of football fandom also clarifies the concept's definition and provides a specialization specific to sports consumerism.

The research findings revealed that fans' strong positive emotions toward their own team and their negative tendencies toward opposing teams constitute two poles of the same construct. Thus, the concept of brand polarization has been concretized in sports marketing literature at both theoretical and empirical levels. One of the most important theoretical contributions of the study is its systematic measurement of brand polarization. The emotional processes previously addressed in a fragmented manner have been integrated into a holistic framework in this research, providing an important reference point for future studies across different sectors. The study does not limit polarization to political and social contexts but considers it a component of consumer behavior. In this respect, it offers a unique contribution to the consumer behavior literature. The emotional intensity of sports fandom is one of the areas where brand polarization can be most strongly observed, and this research supports this with empirical data. In this context, the study offers important implications not only for academic circles but also for sports clubs, federations, broadcasters, and sports marketers. For example:

- Football clubs can use this scale to understand better the strong sense of belonging fans feel towards their teams and to translate these feelings into loyalty, sponsorship, and revenue generation activities.
- Sports marketers can design their campaigns more strategically, considering that polarization is shaped not only by positive loyalty but also by negative feelings toward opposing teams.
- Broadcasters and media outlets can capitalize on the polarizing nature of football in terms of ratings and audience interest. Still, it is ethically essential to avoid overly polarizing rhetoric in this process.
- In terms of sponsorship strategies, brands should consider the risks and opportunities of polarization when positioning themselves around specific teams. For multinational brands in particular, remaining neutral or delivering messages that balance polarization can be a strategic choice.

The study demonstrates that brand polarization is not merely a theoretical discussion but also has practical implications for marketing strategies, sponsorship decisions, media content, and fan relations. For future research, examining brand polarization across disciplines such as psychology, sociology, and communication sciences will contribute to a more in-depth understanding of the

concept. Applying the scale to different sports and cultural contexts is essential for testing the validity of the concept. Studies focusing on digital fandom and social media interactions are anticipated to add new dimensions to the phenomenon of polarization. Furthermore, from a brand management perspective, transforming the positive aspects of polarization (loyalty, commitment) into opportunities and managing its negative aspects (hate, boycott) with the right strategies will offer significant contributions to both academic and applied fields. In conclusion, this study provides a valid and reliable method for measuring the phenomenon of “Brand Polarization in Sports”.

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