

Evaluating the social impact of a university sport event on satisfaction, quality of life, and loyalty toward the university: Why It Matters

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Abstract

Sport experience in a social setting provides numerous opportunities for participants to form meaningful relationships. While student engagement in campus activities plays a vital role in generating positive benefits at individual, interpersonal, and social levels, prior research has yet to provide a comprehensive understanding of university students' sport-related campus experiences. To bridge this gap, the current study investigates the relationship between the social impact of a university-hosted sport event and subsequent student behaviors. Drawing on social exchange theory and a community-based perspective, this examination explores the structural relationships among perceived social impact, event satisfaction, quality of life, and student loyalty to the university. Analyzing survey data from 284 students at a large university in Belgium, the results indicate that community pride positively influences satisfaction, and community attachment serves as a key antecedent of both satisfaction and quality of life. Additionally, the social benefit of community excitement is positively associated with students' perceived quality of life. Furthermore, higher levels of satisfaction and quality of life significantly enhance student loyalty toward the university. These results suggest that strategically leveraging campus sport events can optimize students' social experiences and quality of college life, ultimately fostering greater institutional commitment. Accordingly, university administrators should view campus sport events not merely as transitory entertainment or one-time occurrences, but as strategic platforms for strengthening students' sense of belonging and attachment to the campus community. The findings also confirm the application of social exchange theory, demonstrating that participants are more likely to perceive social benefits of a sport event when it becomes internalized as a meaningful experience that satisfies their needs within the college environment.

Key Words: Social impact, social exchange theory, university effectiveness, quality of college life, student engagement

Introduction

Student loyalty has emerged as a critical component in understanding the long-term viability and competitive positioning of higher education within the contemporary academic landscape (Annamdevula & Bellamkonda, 2016; Chandra et al., 2019). As student loyalty hinges on universities' effectiveness in retaining and maintaining student engagement, it has the potential to serve as a determinant of a university's internal and external outcomes, influencing student commitment (Helgesen & Nettet, 2007). Through a set of enriched academic and social experiences, students develop a collective sense of the university, form evaluative judgments about their university, and demonstrate loyalty-related behaviors such as positive word-of-mouth communication and the intention to reselect the same institution for future studies (Chen, 2016; Henning-Thurau et al., 2001).

Against this backdrop, most previous studies have sought to identify the determinants of student loyalty by applying the concept of service quality, often overlooking the impact of extracurricular experiences on campus (Chandra et al., 2019; Latif et al., 2021; Yu & Kim, 2008). Additionally, prior research has primarily focused on students' overall perceptions of universities, such as institutional image (Alves & Raposo, 2010; Brown & Mazzarol, 2009), trust in the higher education management (Carvalho & Mota, 2010), and perceived value of higher education (Alves, 2011). However, extant literature has largely disregarded the benefits of students' on-campus experiences—particularly those related to sport—which have the potential to enhance satisfaction and student loyalty (Shin et al., 2018). By arguing that creating students' social benefits and fostering interactions through sport experiences on campus can directly or indirectly improve college life and strengthen students' association with their university (Shin et al., 2019). Building on the implication of Shin et al. (2019), the present research extends the theoretical framework of student loyalty by incorporating students' perceptions of social impact. Specifically, we examine the structural relationships that elucidate how the perceived social impact of a campus sport event contributes to students' satisfaction and quality of life, which ultimately leads to student loyalty. First, by arguing that the implementation of a sport event plays as a robust indicator of the generation of social impact—providing intangible and psychological benefits (Crompton, 2004),

this study proposes a set of social impacts as *antecedents* of satisfaction and quality of life. Although several previous studies (e.g., Duan et al., 2021; Kaplanidou et al., 2013; Ouyang, 2019) have established these relationships, empirical evidence linking social benefits to key consumer variables within the sport context of higher education remains limited. Second, this research further examines an additional aspect by investigating the *consequences* of overall satisfaction with a sport event and quality of life resulting from sport experience, which may generate social and economic benefits for universities.

Higher education constitutes a unique context in which student loyalty, derived from positive experiences and satisfaction, contributes to a higher level of student retention, desire for continued affiliation, psychological identification, and enduring allegiance to the institution (Henning-Thurau et al., 2001; Shin et al., 2019; Yu & Kim, 2008). Despite the growing body of research on student loyalty, relatively little attention has been devoted to how university-hosted sport events for students influence their evaluations of the institution in comparison to mega- or community-level events, and how such experiences shape their consequent behaviors (student loyalty in this study) in a single framework. As such, applying this perspective to the higher education sector offers a more comprehensive understanding of the administrative and managerial implications of student experiences, ultimately informing strategies to enhance institutional (i.e., university) performance. By focusing on university students as the primary stakeholders in higher education, this study provides valuable insights into how sport events on campus can serve as strategic tools for fostering student loyalty and promoting institutional success (Woodall et al., 2014). Furthermore, the findings offer actionable implications for university administrators and policymakers endeavoring to orchestrate student experiences that fortify long-term institutional commitment.

Literature Review

Social exchange theory

Social exchange theory (SET) conceptualizes human behavior as a series of ongoing, interdependent exchanges in which individuals evaluate interactions based on perceived benefits relative to anticipated costs (Ap, 1990; Emerson, 1976). Central to SET is the assumption that one party is motivated to engage in a social relationship when it expects reciprocal or potential returns that are valued and meaningful (Cialdini, 2009; Molm, 1991). Such exchanges extend beyond purely economic considerations to encompass social and psychological resources, reflecting both tangible and intangible outcomes that contribute to individual well-being and relational stability. Within this framework, economic exchanges typically involve monetary or material rewards, whereas social exchanges consist of non-monetary benefits derived from interpersonal interaction, such as social support, emotional connection, and a sense of belonging (Cropanza & Mitchell, 2005). Importantly, SET emphasizes not only the intrinsic value of exchanged resources but also the relational conditions under which exchanges occur. As individuals repeatedly experience meaningful exchanges, they tend to develop perceived obligations and expectations of reciprocity, fostering trust and commitment within the relationship (Lawler & Thye, 1999). Conversely, when perceived costs outweigh anticipated benefits, exchange relationships may weaken and, in turn, reduce sustained engagement.

From an event-focused perspective, SET has been extensively utilized to elucidate stakeholders' responses to sport events across mega, community, and small-scale settings (Czekanski et al., 2023; Kim et al., 2022). Research consistently underscores that stakeholders (i.e., host and residents) who perceive sport events as generating social benefits are more likely to develop favorable attitudes toward those events and exhibit supportive behaviors (Inoue & Harvard, 2014). For example, studies adopting a SET perspective on mega sport events have shown that residents' perceived improvements in quality of life—conceptualized as a key exchange benefit—significantly influence event support, whereas perceived negative impacts diminish such support (Gursoy et al., 2017; Kaplanidou et al., 2013). Similarly, Kim et al. (2021), examining the 2018 Winter Olympics, found that perceived benefits function as salient exchange resources that foster positive attitudes and behavioral support among host residents. Beyond mega events, research on community level and recurring sport events further indicates the importance of social exchange mechanisms. Scholars have established that social benefits, including enhanced social interaction, community cohesion, and collective identity, constitute central exchange resources that promote mutually beneficial outcomes among event stakeholders (Duan et al., 2021; Kellett et al., 2008; Parra-Camacho et al., 2021; Taks et al., 2015). From an organizational perspective, event providers strategically cultivate these benefits to enhance institutional image, media exposure, and stakeholder support in return for their investments and engagement (Chalip & Leyns, 2002). At the individual and community levels, sport events are often associated with heightened pride, attachment, hedonic experiences, satisfaction, and opportunities for socialization and interaction (Chalip & Leyns, 2002).

In this regard, the principles of social exchange are equally salient within higher education contexts, where relational dynamics between institutions and students are shaped by reciprocal expectations (Annamdevula & Bellamkonda, 2016). Trust is particularly central in university settings, as students increasingly evaluate their educational experience not only on academic quality but also on the breadth and depth of extracurricular and campus-based opportunities (Carvalho & Mota, 2010). Universities, in turn, invest substantial tangible and intangible resources to enhance student experiences, strengthen institutional image, and build long-term student loyalty (Annamdevula & Bellamkonda, 2016; Panda et al., 2019). From a student experience standpoint, the application of SET provides a robust theoretical lens for understanding how students

interpret the social benefits derived from campus sport events. These events may constitute as a form of institutional exchange leverage, providing a platform for universities to distribute social and experiential resources (e.g., social connection, collective identity, and affective engagement) that promote students' quality of life and long-term loyalty behaviors (Liu, Chen and Liu, 2025). Accordingly, SET offers a theoretically grounded framework for understanding how perceived social impacts of sport events on campus translate into student support, satisfaction, and enduring loyalty toward the university.

Social impact of a sport event

Sport events are widely acknowledged as effective mechanisms for generating positive social outcomes within local communities (Misener & Mason, 2006). Previous literature specifies perceived social impact as involving a range of intangible benefits that can be leveraged to enhance social interaction, foster community pride, strengthen community attachment, promote social bonding, and create a shared sense of excitement within the community (Crompton, 2004; Inoue & Harvard, 2014).

In a higher education context, sport events similarly serve as effective platforms for enhancing social benefits, including a sense of belonging, group cohesion, cultural diversity, and opportunities for interpersonal interaction within the university environment (Allen et al., 2010; Artinger et al., 2006). By facilitating student engagement in both the event atmosphere and event planning process, universities can cultivate co-creative experiences that enhance community building and promote a sense of psychological ownership among students (Asatryan et al., 2013; Elkins, et al., 2011; Warner & Dixon, 2013). According to Shin et al. (2019), students who participate in intramural sport experiences report increased perceived social benefits, which in turn contribute to greater satisfaction with college life and stronger loyalty toward the university. Furthermore, evidence from prior studies suggests that students with high levels of involvement in sport events and related activities are more likely to experience improved interpersonal relationships and social interaction within the campus community (Artinger et al., 2006). Collectively, these findings offer that the social benefits derived from sport participation play a meaningful role in enriching students' overall campus experiences (Webb & Forrester, 2015). In addition to participation-based experiences, the sportscape—defined as the physical environment and service quality of sport-related facilities (Wakefield & Sloan, 1995)—has also been established as an important stimulus influencing student satisfaction and loyalty. Elements such as sport clubs, classes, and facility quality have been shown to elicit positive attitudinal and behavioral responses among students (Shin et al., 2018).

Although prior research has highlighted the importance of student participation in sports and its influence on satisfaction and consequent behavioral outcomes in higher education, much of this work has approached the sport context primarily through a service quality lens (e.g., high versus low quality) and has treated social benefits as a unidimensional construct (Annamdevula & Bellamkonda, 2016; Shin et al., 2019). In contrast, the present framework extends the literature by conceptualizing social impact as a multidimensional construct rooted in university sport events, recognizing universities as both small- and large-scale communities. Specifically, this study focuses on three key dimensions of social benefits: community pride, community attachment, and community excitement. Consistent with prior scholarly recommendations (i.e., Chen & Lin, 2021; Duan & Liu, 2021; Ghaderi et al., 2023; Inoue & Havard, 2014), these dimensions represent foundational sources of social benefits that emerge from sport events and shape stakeholders' perceptions and responses within the community.

Satisfaction

Satisfaction is a well-established construct in consumer research, serving as a critical indicator of individuals' overall evaluations of products and/or services (Jeong & Kim, 2020; Sato et al., 2017). Within the context of event satisfaction, previous research emphasizes the role of event experiences in fulfilling individuals' psychological needs (Sato et al., 2017). In the field of higher education, student satisfaction is largely influenced by their assessments of how effectively social and physical activities generate positive and pleasurable experiences relative to their expectations (Bjelica & Jovanović, 2016; Wong & Chapman, 2023). In other words, these evaluations are, therefore, stem from the congruence between perceived experiences and anticipated outcomes. Consequently, campus sport events, which often facilitate experiential consumption (e.g., being engaged with peers or actively participating), can induce positive reactions from students, resulting in an overall evaluation of their event experience within the higher education context (Nutsugbodo et al., 2024).

Empirical evidence supports the notion that the student experiences associated with sport-related activities and participation are closely linked to enhanced levels of satisfaction. For instance, Shin et al. (2018) found a positive relationship between students' experiences of the collegiate sportscape and their satisfaction. Along the same line, Wilson and Millar (2021) identified that students who participated in intramural sports experienced higher levels of social learning outcomes, which in turn improved their satisfaction with the program. Furthermore, studies within higher education indicate that the use of sport facilities and the fulfillment of psychological need, such as competence, relatedness, and autonomy, are positively correlated (Xie et al., 2018). In line with these findings, this study posits that social benefits acquired from sport events will lead to greater satisfaction with event experiences among university students.

Quality of life

Generally, quality of life encompasses individuals' subjective feelings of satisfaction with life (Taylor & Bogdan, 1996). It reflects how people perceive their overall life experiences and circumstances (Quyang et al., 2019). In addition, quality of life refers to an individual's sense of fulfillment obtained from significant life experiences, as well as their personal perception of happiness and overall well-being (Ferrans & Power, 1992). For university students, positive experiences are often considered as key contributors to enhancing their perceptions of quality of life on campus (Tan et al., 2016). Similarly, in the function of event experiences, the university hosting an annual sport event transforms into a social gathering space for students and participants. Hence, students' life satisfaction and attitudes on campus may be affected by the extent of their involvement in a particular sport event (Lee et al., 2023). In this sense, perceptions of quality of life are closely linked to the evaluative experiences students have during the event period.

The concept of quality of life has been widely applied to higher education research (Ribeiro et al., 2018). For example, Shin et al. (2019) noted that participation in sport activities on campus is positively correlated with quality of college life, while Kim et al. (2024) identified several types of campus activities (e.g., sports, outdoor, and cultural activities) that contribute not only to quality of life but also students' happiness. This evidence underscores that sport participation plays an integral role in providing social support, managing stress, and improving the overall quality of life.

Moreover, Choi et al. (2024) advocated further research on how sport participation is associated with quality of life by examining the effects of social experiences on campus life. In a similar vein, sport volunteering is regarded as another social activity that produces a trickle-down effect on college students' quality of life (Lu et al. 2019). Given the inherent social nature and potential for personal growth associated with sport activities, scholars have highlighted the benefits of sport participation in shaping the level of students' quality of life within the higher education sector (Choi et al., 2024). Thus, it is expected that the social benefits derived from sport events on campus will enhance the quality of life among university students.

Student loyalty

Loyalty, in its fundamental sense, refers to the extent to which an individual exhibits a strong sense of attachment toward a brand or service (Dick & Basu, 1994). It is typically described as a psychological commitment that informs consistent and repeat behaviors (Dick & Basu, 1994; Russell-Bennett et al., 2013). Oliver (1999) defined customer loyalty as "a deeply held commitment to rebuy or re-patronize a preferred product or service consistently despite situational influences and marketing efforts having the potential to cause switching behavior" (p. 34). In this sense, loyalty relates to the strength of the association between one's relative attitudes and consistent behaviors or repeat patterns (Tellis, 1988).

Corresponding to the concept of customer loyalty, student loyalty reflects students' dedication and commitment to their academic institutions (Tinto, 1993). In the higher education literature, students are considered core constituents and loyal stakeholders; as such, they play an important role for institutions seeking sustainable competitive advantages in an increasing competitive and brand-oriented academic landscape (Calma & Dickson-Deane, 2020; Latif et al., 2019; McAlexander et al., 2005). Responding to evolving the academic environment and change, Pucciarelli and Kaplan (2016) argue that universities must be able to balance organizational factors (e.g., competitive strategies) with educational objectives (e.g., knowledge sharing and dissemination). Furthermore, higher education is unique in that student loyalty consistently influences the likelihood of alumni behaviors, including future donations and ongoing engagement with their alma mater (Drezner & Pizmony-Levy, 2021; Stephenson & Bell, 2014). Prior empirical research has consistently indicated that student loyalty is enhanced by satisfaction with both academic and social aspects of the student experience on campus (Chandra et al., 2019; Latif et al., 2021; Shin et al., 2018). Paralleling the similar rationale of satisfaction, improvement in students' quality of life was positively associated with loyalty behaviors, such as positive word of mouth, recommendations, and willingness to enroll or continue studying at the university (Masserini et al., 2019; Shin et al., 2019; Yu & Kim, 2008).

Building on the aforementioned discussion, a positive university experience facilitated by sport events provides a fruitful context for students to develop salient social relationships and serves as a key driver of student loyalty. Accordingly, the proposed framework integrates perceived social benefits, internal evaluations of satisfaction and quality of life, and the ultimate outcome variable of student loyalty (see Figure 1). Hence, this study aims to investigate the following hypotheses:

- 1) H1a, H2a, H3a: The perceived social impact dimensions (a) community pride, (b) community attachment, and (c) community excitement) are positively associated with satisfaction.
- 2) H1b, H2b, and H3b: The perceived social impact dimensions (a) community pride, (b) community attachment, and (c) community excitement) are positively associated with quality of life.
- 3) H4: Satisfaction is positively associated with student loyalty.
- 4) H5: Quality of life is positively associated with student loyalty.

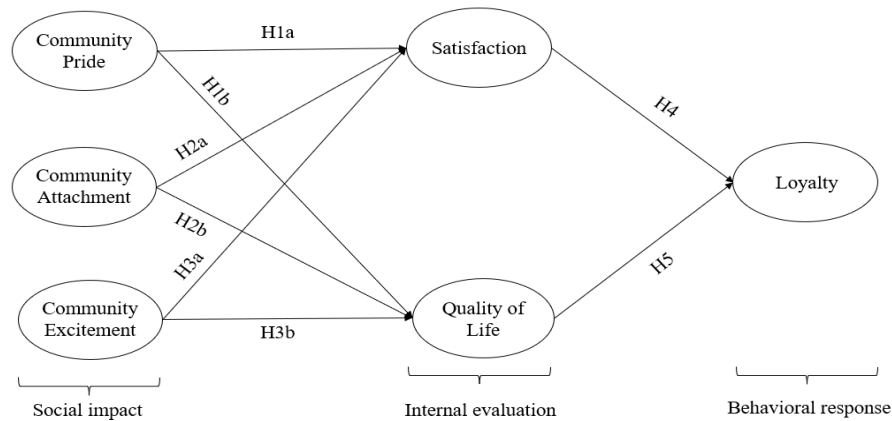


Figure 1. The proposed model

The remainder of this research presents as follows, a) method, b) results, c) discussion, d) limitations and future research, and e) conclusion

Methods

Research context

This study was conducted in the context of a university sport event known as the *24 Hours Run* (originally 24 Urenloop), held at Katholieke Universiteit Leuven (KU Leuven) in Belgium. KU Leuven is the largest university in Belgium, with approximately 45,000 students enrolled on its main campus in the city of Leuven during academic terms. The 24 Hours Run takes place on the athletic track located on the university's sport campus. The event is organized by the student association and sponsored by KU Leuven, along with several commercial partners. The event is structured as a 24-hour relay race involving teams representing various academic departments and student organizations. In accordance with the race regulations, only one runner per team is permitted on the 530-meter track at any given time. The team completing the highest number of laps within the 24-hour period is declared the winner. Throughout the duration of the race, participating student groups establish pavilions around the track, which function as social and organizational hubs. Traditionally, the event commences at 8 p.m. with a ceremonial opening led by the university rector and concludes at the same time the following day (next day). The event generates significant digital and physical engagement, attracting approximately 26,000 online viewers and utilizing nearly 1,000 volunteers. As one of the flagship activities of the academic year, the 24 Hours Run draws substantial student participation and spectator interest, with an estimated 15,000 visitors attending at various points throughout the event duration.

Data collection and measure

Data were collected over the entire duration of the event using a self-administered online survey. The questionnaire was developed and administered via Qualtrics and accessed through quick response (QR) codes. To ensure a robust sampling process, ten trained research assistants facilitated on-site recruitment by distributing the QR codes to attendees throughout the event venue. To enhance sampling breadth and maximize response reach, the QR codes were additionally displayed at departmental pavilions surrounding the course and disseminated through digital communication channels, including Facebook and Twitter, as well as the event's official website. Prior to participation, all respondents provided informed consent in accordance with established ethical research standards.

Measures of perceived social impact were adapted from validated instruments within the sport event and psychic income literature (e.g., Ghaderi et al., 2023; Inoue & Havard, 2014; Kim & Walker, 2012). Consistent with prior conceptualizations, perceived social impact was operationalized as a multidimensional construct comprising community pride (three items), community attachment (three items), and community excitement (three items). Together, these dimensions captured students' perceptions of the social benefits generated by the sport event within the campus community. Event satisfaction, conceptualized as an overall evaluative judgment of the event experience, was assessed using two items adapted from established satisfaction scales (Greenwell et al., 2002; Oliver, 1980). Quality of life, reflecting individuals' global assessment of life satisfaction, was measured using two items derived from event related quality of life research (Sirgy et al., 2011). Regarding the outcome variable, student loyalty toward the university was measured with two items capturing students' commitment to the institution, consistent with prior research in the higher education sport context (Shin et al., 2018). All items were measured on a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (very unlikely) to 7 (very likely). During the psychometric evaluation process, one item from community excitement was excluded due to an insufficient factor loading below the recommended threshold value of 0.60 (Hair et al., 2010).

Results

From the 320 individuals who initiated the survey, a total of 284 valid responses were retained for statistical analysis, yielding a usable response rate of 88.8%. Thirty-six questionnaires were excluded due to substantial missing values or incomplete responses. The sample exhibited a balanced gender distribution, with equal representation of male (142) and female (142) respondents. Regarding nationality, the vast majority of participants were as Belgian (95.4%, $n = 271$). In terms of educational level, most respondents were enrolled in undergraduate program (97.9%, $n = 278$), whereas a small proportion were graduate students (2.1%, $n = 6$). Additionally, the sample consisted of both active and passive participants: 41.5% of respondents participated in the event as runners ($n = 118$), while 58.5% attended the event as spectators ($n = 166$).

Measurement model

Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was utilized to assess the psychometric properties of the scale model with maximum likelihood (ML) estimation. The measurement model supported a good fit, $\chi^2/df = 131.425/62 = 2.120$, TLI = .928; CFI = .951; SRMR = .048; RMSEA = .063, satisfying criteria for the threshold. Hair et al. (2010) recommended cutoff value of 3 for χ^2/df , TLI and CFI values greater than .90 and SRMR and RMSEA values less than .09. Furthermore, convergent validity was demonstrated through the factor loadings, ranging from .60 to .87, composite reliability ranging from .72 to .91, and average variance extracted (AVE) of each construct ranging from .51 to .83 in this study. On the other hand, discriminant validity was established through AVE value and the squared correlations (see Table 2). When the AVE of the corresponding factors was higher than the squared correlation, the discriminant validity is achieved (Fornell & Larker, 1981). Internal consistency for the variables was determined using Cronbach's alpha ranged from .70 to .86 which was met the acceptable value by Nunally's threshold (1979). Table 1 summarizes the standardized factor loadings for each construct, composite reliability, AVE, and Cronbach alphas coefficients.

Table 1. Factor Loadings, Construct Reliability, AVE, and Internal Consistency.

	λ	CR	AVE	α
Community pride		.82	.61	.71
The 24 Hours Run provides positive recognition of KU Leuven	.759			
The 24 Hours Run shows the ability of KU Leuven to host sports events	.692			
The 24 Hours Run improves the image of KU Leuven as a big community	.605			
Community attachment		.76	.51	.73
The 24 Hours Run strengthens friendships within KU Leuven	.650			
The 24 Hours Run increases my sense of belonging in various community groups within KU Leuven	.715			
The 24 Hours Run increases my social interactions within KU Leuven	.720			
Community excitement		.73	.57	.77
The 24 Hours Run provides excitement for KU Leuven	.776			
The 24 Hours Run creates new activities for KU Leuven	.802			
Satisfaction		.91	.83	.83
Overall, I am satisfied with my decision to attend the 24 Hours Run	.815			
I think that I did the right thing by deciding to attend the 24 Hours Run	.868			
Quality of life		.81	.68	.86
Overall, the event experience has enriched my quality of life	.877			
My satisfaction with life in general is increased through the event experience	.848			
Loyalty		.72	.57	.70
I would make the same decision to study at KU Leuven	.789			
I would recommend KU Leuven to others to study for a career.	.717			

Note: significant at $p < .001$

Table 2. Correlations and Discriminant Validity.

	M (SD)	1	2	3	4	5	6
Community pride	6.28 (.59)	.61					
Community attachment	5.87 (.76)	.468** (.219)	.51				
Community excitement	5.42 (1.00)	.423** (.178)	.383** (.146)	.57			

Satisfaction	6.43 (.64)	.344** (.118)	.374** (.139)	.118* (.013)	.83		
Quality of life	5.07 (1.09)	.313** (.097)	.470** (.220)	.376** (.141)	.343** (.117)	.68	
Student loyalty	5.72 (.85)	.328** (.107)	.276** (.076)	.347** (.120)	.112 (.012)	.198** (.039)	.57

Note: Squared correlations in parenthesis; AVE in diagonal

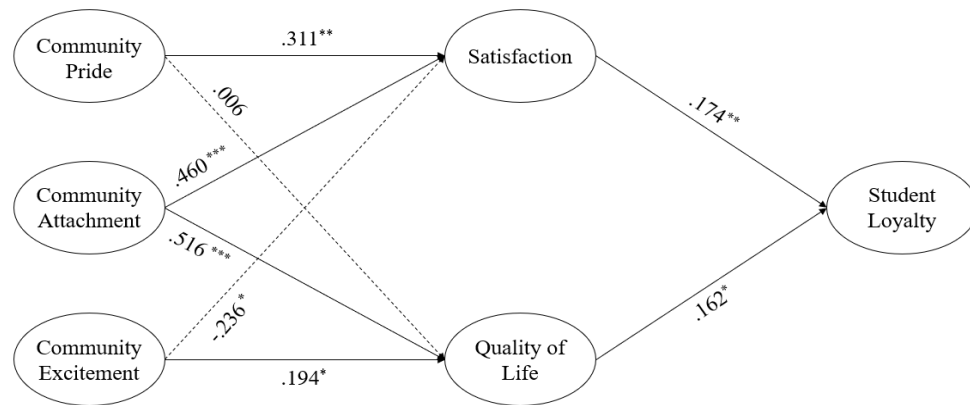
Structural model

Structural equation modeling (SEM) was employed to test the hypothesized relationship between latent constructs. The SEM provided a good fit for the data (i.e. $\chi^2/df = 167.744/66 = 2.542$, TLI = .901, CFI = .928, SRMR = .078, and RMSEA = .074). With regard to the hypothesized paths, community pride had a significant positive association with satisfaction, confirming hypothesis 1a ($\beta = .31$, $t = 2.910$, $p < .01$). In support of hypothesis 2a and 2b, community attachment had positive association with not only satisfaction ($\beta = .46$, $t = 4.217$, $p < .001$) but also quality of life ($\beta = .51$, $t = 4.962$, $p < .001$). On the contrary, community excitement had a significant negative effect on satisfaction ($\beta = -.23$, $t = -2.460$, $p < .05$), rejecting H3a, but community excitement had a positive association with quality of life ($\beta = .19$, $t = 2.242$, $p < .05$), which led to confirm of H3b. Next, Hypotheses 4 and 5 were also confirmed with path analysis, indicating satisfaction and quality of life had a positive association with student loyalty ($\beta = .17$, $t = 2.713$, $p < .01$) and ($\beta = .16$, $t = 2.567$, $p < .05$) respectively. However, the relationship between community pride and quality of life was rejected because of insignificant association which is hypothesis 1b (See table 3 and figure 2).

Table 3. Results of hypothesized paths

Path	β	t
H1a: Community Pride $\rightarrow$ Satisfaction	.311	2.910**
H1b: Community Pride $\rightarrow$ Quality of Life	.006	.062
H2a: Community Attachment $\rightarrow$ Satisfaction	.460	4.217***
H2b: Community Attachment $\rightarrow$ Quality of Life	.516	4.962***
H3a: Community Excitement $\rightarrow$ Satisfaction	-.236	-2.460*
H3b: Community Excitement $\rightarrow$ Quality of Life	.194	2.242*
H4: Satisfaction $\rightarrow$ Student loyalty	.174	2.713**
H5: Quality of Life $\rightarrow$ Student loyalty	.162	2.567*

Note: * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$.



Discussion

Facilitating sport events and activities on university campuses provides potential benefits for both students and the institution. However, the strategic leveraging of campus-based sport events to cultivate student loyalty through satisfaction and quality of life remains underexplored. To address this gap, the present research identifies the *determinants* of satisfaction and quality of life and the *consequences* of the internal evaluative process stemming from on-campus sport participation.

Theoretical Implications

First, this study found a positive effect of community pride on satisfaction. Many scholars have consistently emphasized community pride as one of the most salient psychological benefits derived from sport-related events, as such events are perceived to enhance collective pride by elevating the positive image of the

community (Crompton, 2004; Ghaderi et al., 2021). By focusing on university-based sport events, the present study extends this literature by illustrating the capacity of campus events to serve as an effective mechanism for enhancing student satisfaction. This finding extends existing research on the social benefits of sport experiences within higher education contexts (Shin et al., 2018; Shin et al., 2019) and confirms that students are more likely to experience satisfaction when pride resulting from image enhancement is recognized as a focal perceived benefit. Second, the result of this study revealed that the perceived social benefit of community attachment positively influenced both satisfaction and quality of life. Consistent with prior research (Park et al., 2022), social interaction within shared social groups leads to satisfying event experiences and contributes to a broader sense of life fulfillment. In other words, participation in campus sport events provides students with opportunities for social interaction that strengthens a sense of attachment, which in turn enhances satisfaction and overall quality of life. Furthermore, this result reflects a bottom-up process (Diener, 1984; Park et al., 2022), whereby positive experiences at a particular event level extend to higher-order life evaluations. Accordingly, community attachment cultivated through sport events functions as a foundational construct that contributes to students' overall quality of life within the university setting. Third, community excitement was found to stimulate quality of life for students. This finding underscores the notion that an increased quality of life is shaped by hedonic experiences, which constitute a meaningful component of event value (Armbrrecht & Andersson, 2020). Experiencing the feeling of excitement during campus sport events may enhance students' emotional well-being, which is positively associated with more favorable evaluation of quality of life. Fourth, the study confirms the positive relationship between satisfaction and student loyalty to the university. Consistent with prior research (Jeong & Kim, 2020; Petrick et al., 2013; Shin et al., 2018; Tsuji et al., 2007), satisfaction with sport-related experiences emerged as a key predictor of loyalty-related outcomes. In the higher education context, students' positive experiences with campus sport events shape favorable behavioral intentions, including increased loyalty and word-of-mouth (WOM), which may further reinforce their commitment to the university. This finding highlights the critical mediating role of satisfaction in linking the perceived social impacts of sport events to behavioral responses in the university settings (Hanson et al., 2020). Furthermore, quality of life exerted a direct positive effect on student loyalty, aligning with previous findings from Shin et al. (2019), Duan et al. (2021), and Quyang et al. (2019). Together, these results suggest that participation in campus sport events enhance students' satisfaction with life, which subsequently fosters stronger support for the university and its sport initiatives. Collectively, these findings offer meaningful theoretical contributions to the application of SET within the context of university sport events. Specifically, the results illustrate that when students perceive social benefits and rewards from participating in campus sport events, they are more likely to experience heightened satisfaction and improved quality of life, which serve as valuable exchange outcomes. In turn, these perceived benefits motivate continued support and sustained engagement. Thus, this study reinforces the premise that positive social and experiential outcomes derived from sport events act as exchange resources that enhance students' fulfillment and strengthen their allegiance to the university. The findings further corroborate that socially embedded sport event experiences enable students to internalize social benefits, particularly when the events are deliberately structured to generate positive impacts for students. (Nutsugbodo et al., 2024; Shin et al., 2019).

Notwithstanding these contributions, community pride did not exhibit a direct effect on quality of life, which contradicts findings reported in prior studies (Duan et al., 2021; Magno & Dossena, 2020). This discrepancy may be attributable to contextual differences, as the influence of pride on quality of life may be less pronounced in university-level sport events compared to hallmark or mega-events. Interestingly, community excitement had a significant negative effect on satisfaction, an unexpected relationship. One possible explanation is that the excitement experienced at the event site may not have been sufficiently sustained or may have been perceived as overstimulating, failing to translate into overall satisfaction. This highlights the need for future research to further disentangle the nuanced roles of hedonic experiences and their potential diminishing returns across different event contexts.

Practical Implications

The findings of this study offer meaningful implications for university administrators and event organizers seeking to enhance student satisfaction and loyalty through sport events on campus. Notably, the results indicate that participation in sport-related events among university students can function as a form of social leverage, whereby social benefits derived from event engagement enhance student satisfaction and subsequently facilitate loyalty behaviors. Accordingly, university officials should prioritize the social dimensions of campus sport events, as these experiences not only foster positive perceptions of sport participation but also provide valuable opportunities for peer interaction and social integration within the university environment. In terms of sociability, event organizers are encouraged to design sport events that intentionally promote social interaction by incorporating communal or shared spaces that facilitate engagement among participants and spectators. Such atmospheres can increase students' perceptions of both event-related and ancillary social interactions. Creating inclusive and interactive settings may be particularly effective in strengthening students' sense of belonging and attachment to the university community.

Another important practical implication concerns the role of international students. Given the substantial presence of students from abroad on university campuses, these students represent critical

stakeholders both during and beyond their period of enrollment, particularly given higher education's increasing emphasis on diversity and inclusivity. As higher education institutions function as service providers responsible for creating and delivering value (Woodall et al., 2014), administrators should strategically leverage campus sport events as platforms that facilitate cross-cultural interactions. Such strategic efforts may enable students to engage with diverse peer groups, which in turn enhance feelings of pride, camaraderie, and attachment toward the university. Finally, classroom-based experiences alone may be insufficient for cultivating long-term student loyalty. Instead, strategically leveraging sport events may serve as a mechanism for nurturing student loyalty and sustaining institutional competitiveness. Within the higher education context, students are increasingly recognized as essential stakeholders engaged in value co-creation alongside universities and educators. Consequently, universities should strive to promote a communal campus environment that supports student development through experiential learning and real-world engagement, allowing students to explore, construct, and realize their personal and social value within the university setting.

Limitations and Future Research

As with any academic research, several limitations of the present study should be acknowledged. First, the analysis aggregated the perceptions of all event attendees, including both active participants and passive spectators; this approach limits the extent to which inter-group variations in social utility can be inferred. Future research would benefit from segmenting groups into distinct categories to conduct comparative analyses, such as examining differences between (a) participants and spectators, (b) male and female attendees, and (c) undergraduate and graduate students. Second, while this study examined three specific dimensions of social benefits associated with the sport event, future research is encouraged to broaden the conceptual framework by incorporating additional impact dimensions, such as cultural exchange, broader social networking, event-related excitement, and other relevant psychological constructs.

Third, satisfaction consists of both affective and cognitive components, each of which may elicit heterogeneous student responses and subsequent behavioral outcomes. Employing a more sophisticated research design that disentangles these evaluative dimensions could provide deeper insights into the specific mechanisms linking sport event experiences to student behavior. Finally, data were collected from a single European university, which limits the geographical and institutional generalizability of the findings to other institutional and cultural contexts. Accordingly, future studies should consider cross-institutional or cross-cultural data collection to further validate and extend the applicability of these findings across diverse higher education landscapes.

Conclusions

This study demonstrates that university-hosted sport events represent a strategic vehicle for fortifying the student-institution relationship. By synthesizing SET with a multidimensional social impact framework, this study elucidates how perceived social impact functions as a salient antecedent to student satisfaction and quality of life. These internal evaluative pathways, in turn, serve as the foundational underpinnings of enduring student loyalty. Although the unexpected negative relationship between community excitement and satisfaction suggests a need for balanced event management, the overall structural model highlights that campus-based sport events are indispensable platforms for value co-creation.

Ultimately, this research shifts the focus from purely academic determinants of loyalty to the significant role of extracurricular social leverage, providing a comprehensive understanding of how sport can be strategically utilized to maintain institutional competitiveness and the college of life among students. Furthermore, the implications of this study transcend immediate managerial concerns, suggesting that the university environment functions as a complex social ecosystem where experiential value is a primary motivator of engagement. As higher education institutions face increasing pressure to differentiate themselves in a globalized market relative to traditional approaches, the integration of socially-driven sport initiatives offers a viable avenue for enhancing student well-being and institutional prestige simultaneously.

Future endeavors should continue to explore the evolving nature of these social exchanges, ensuring that the campus experience remains a holistic journey of both academic and social fulfillment. By doing so, universities move beyond transactional academic service delivery to truly cultivate an enduring institutional identity that resonates with students long after they transition into their roles as alumni.

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