

Consumption, Identity and Passion: The Role of eWOM, Materialism and Social Media in Sport Consumers

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Abstract

In the context of rapidly increasing digital consumption, this study investigates the impact of social media addiction and electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) on compulsive buying behavior among sports consumers. Drawing on the Stimulus–Organism–Response (S-O-R) model and Social Identity Theory, the research proposes a comprehensive framework in which materialism and sports passion act as mediators. Data were collected from 293 individuals who have previously purchased sports products online and are active social media users. Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) was used to test the proposed hypotheses. The findings reveal that both social media addiction and eWOM significantly increase materialistic tendencies, which in turn drive compulsive buying behavior. Additionally, team identification enhances sports passion, which also mediates the relationship between identification and compulsive consumption. The results provide new theoretical insights into the psychological mechanisms behind impulsive buying in the digital age and offer practical implications for sports marketers seeking to manage consumer behavior more ethically in online platforms.

Keywords: Compulsive buying, Passion, Digital media, Social media, Fan

Introduction

In today's digital age, social media platforms and online communication channels have become the primary tools shaping consumer behavior (Jacoby, 2002; Singh et al., 2024). In particular, electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) (Akoglu & Özbek, 2024a) and social media addiction (Majeed et al., 2021) significantly influence individuals' perceptions of products, value orientations, and ultimately purchasing decisions (Ismail et al., 2018; Chu et al., 2016). These forms of digital interaction not only serve the purpose of information sharing but also trigger individuals' identity construction (Gündüz, 2017) and social approval (Sciara et al., 2021) seeking, leading to deeper psychological consequences (Shrum et al., 2014). In this context, the Stimulus–Organism–Response (S-O-R) model (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974) provides an effective theoretical framework for understanding individuals' responses to digital stimuli.

In this study, social media addiction and eWOM content are treated as “stimuli”; the internal orientation of materialism that these stimuli create in the individual is an organismic response. The rise of materialistic values can trigger compulsive purchasing tendencies, which are behavioral outputs of the individual (Dittmar et al., 2014; Jain et al., 2024). This relationship becomes even more complex in the context of sports consumers. The sense of belonging to a sports team and the identification established with the team can increase the individual's passion for sports and imbue their consumption behaviors with symbolic meanings (Heere & James, 2007; Vallerand et al., 2003). Therefore, this study employs Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) as a second explanatory framework.

While the relationship between materialism and compulsive buying has been examined in various contexts in the existing literature (Islam et al., 2017; Tarka et al., 2022), how this relationship is shaped in the context of sports consumers, particularly through digital precursors such as social media addiction and eWOM, has been studied to a limited extent. Additionally, the mediating role of sports passion on compulsive buying, particularly in the context of fan identification, has not yet been sufficiently illuminated. In this context, this study aims to explain how digital stimuli transform individual value systems and how this transformation evolves into compulsive consumption behavior in a sports context.

This study offers three main contributions: (1) it proposes a comprehensive model explaining the effects of eWOM and social media addiction on materialism and compulsive purchasing within the S-O-R model; (2) it reveals the emotional and behavioral effects of social belonging by including sports fan identification and sports passion; (3) It tests the mediating roles of materialism and sports passion in these relationships, thereby filling theoretical gaps in the literature. In this regard, the study stands out as one of the pioneering investigations examining the psychological effects of the digital consumption environment within the context of sports consumption.

Theoretical Background and Hypothesis Development

S-O-R (Stimulus–Organism–Response) Model in Consumer Behaviour

The Stimulus–Organism–Response (S-O-R) model developed by Mehrabian and Russell (1974) suggests that environmental stimuli shape behavioral responses by influencing individuals' internal cognitive and emotional states. According to this model, stimuli (S) elicit an organismic response (O) in the individual, which in turn leads to a behavioral output (R). This model, widely adopted in consumer behavior research, is also used in the contexts of digital and sports marketing (Jacoby, 2002).

In this study, social media addiction and electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) elements are modeled as “stimuli.” These digital stimuli influence the level of materialism, which represents the consumer's internal state, thereby causing an “organismic” response. This internal orientation is considered a response that triggers the individual's compulsive (impulsive) buying behavior. In this context, materialistic values are thought of as a psychological response to the social and cognitive stimuli the individual is exposed to in the digital environment (Richins & Dawson, 1992).

This structure is based on studies in the existing literature that reveal that social media exposure and digital eWOM content trigger internal tendencies toward excessive consumption in individuals (Chatterjee & Kumar, 2020; Kim & Johnson, 2016). Therefore, this model provides an appropriate framework for explaining the effect of digital stimuli on the individual's consumption psychology.

Social Identity Theory

Social Identity Theory posits that individuals define their identities through social groups and conform to the norms and attitudes of those groups (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Group membership can create a strong sense of belonging in individuals, influencing their attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors (Ashforth & Mael, 1989).

In this study, sports fan identification represents the social identity that an individual establishes with a sports team or sports group. This identification increases the individual's passion for sports (Vallerand et al., 2003) and leads them to engage in compulsive purchasing behavior through this passion. In particular, the emotional bond formed with the team may lead individuals to reinforce this identity through sports products or symbols (Funk & James, 2001). In this context, the effect of passion for sports on compulsive purchasing behavior is a reflection of the individual's effort to externalize group identity and make this identity visible through consumption (Wann & Branscombe, 1993).

Social identity-based consumer behavior is particularly important in sports marketing in terms of fan product consumption, team logo product purchases, and conspicuous consumption behaviors (Underwood, Bond & Baer, 2001). Fans often express their passion for the team they belong to through symbolic consumption behaviors (Heere & James, 2007).

The Effect of eWOM on Materialism

With the emergence of social media platforms and the internet's ability to provide information and share it, the concept of eWOM has become an important tool for marketers (Akoglu & Özbek, 2024; Prasad et al., 2019). eWOM is communication between consumers using the internet and similar information technologies (Cheung & Thadani, 2012). According to another definition, eWOM is the sharing of comments (positive/negative) about a particular brand, product, or service by former, current, or potential consumers in an internet environment accessible to everyone (Sulthana & Vasantha, 2019). Consumers, in particular, want to feel a sense of trust when purchasing a product or service (Van der Heijden et al., 2003). Consumers take into account the reviews of previous customers when considering a product or service they wish to purchase (Akoglu & Özbek, 2024; Mortazavi et al., 2014).

In addition, previous studies have confirmed that eWOM communication can create materialistic and conspicuous consumption effects in consumers (Chu et al., 2016; Kurnaz & Duman, 2021). Belk (1985) defines materialism as a trait that values material possessions. Richins and Dawson (1992), on the other hand, view materialism as a value structure that emphasizes the important role of possessions in an individual's life. Consumers with high

materialism are more likely to use the material objects they own as a sign of their success, desire to own items that will impress others, and admire people who own expensive items (Richins and Dawson 1992). Highly materialistic consumers are more likely to make material purchases that are easily displayed in public to signal their desired self-concept to others (Fitzmaurice 2008).

H1. eWOM positively influences materialism.

The Role of Social Media Addiction in Shaping Materialism

Technological developments and social networking platforms have provided people with platforms that simplify their lives in many ways (Roberts & David, 2020). These platforms, which are frequently used by people for socializing, are also used as an important tool for marketers to reach their target audiences (Kostyk & Huhmann, 2021). However, this need for socialization has led to people becoming dependent on these platforms over time (Hu et al., 2021). Demirtepe-Saygili (2020) defined social media addiction as “a subtype of Internet addiction, including the behavior of checking and updating.” Social media platforms are important channels for consuming sports content and fan interaction. Social media addiction is defined as an individual's emotional and behavioral dependence on these platforms and is related to the internalization of consumption values (Hudders & Pandelaere, 2012). The lifestyle and branded sports content displayed on these platforms can increase materialistic tendencies. Chu et al. (2016) demonstrated a strong correlation between intensive social media use and materialistic consumption in a study conducted among university students. According to the findings of a study conducted by Ismail et al. (2018) on Malaysian university students, social media use can influence young people's materialistic consumption tendencies by affecting e-WOM communication. Based on this, the following hypothesis was developed:

H2. Social media addiction positively influences materialism.

The Role of Materialism in Compulsive Buying Behavior

Materialism is defined as an individual's definition of happiness and success through material possessions and product acquisition (Richins & Dawson, 1992). It has been observed that individuals with this orientation engage in compulsive buying behavior for the purpose of regulating their mood or strengthening their self-image (Dittmar, 2005). Edwards and Potter (1992) define compulsive buying as “a chronic abnormal pattern of shopping and spending characterized by an excessive, uncontrollable, and repetitive urge to buy, disregarding the consequences.” Research has described compulsive buying behavior as a mental state in which an isolated individual, lacking impulse control, with low self-esteem, and combined with anxiety and materialism, seeks excitement (DeSarbo & Edwards, 1996; Islam et al., 2017; Tarka et al., 2022). In the context of sports consumption, the desire to own products that serve as status symbols can further trigger these behaviors. While the relationship between materialism and purchase intention has been frequently studied in previous literature (Kamal et al., 2013; Kaur et al., 2022; Mandliya et al., 2020; Nguyen et al., 2019), the effect of materialism on compulsive buying has been limited. Jain et al. (2024) addressed this relationship and found that materialism has a significant positive direct effect on compulsive buying behavior, indicating that individuals with higher materialistic values are more prone to compulsive buying. Accordingly, the following hypothesis was formulated:

H3. Materialism positively influences compulsive buying behavior.

The Effect of Fan Identification on Sports Passion and Compulsive Buying Behavior

Fan identification is the psychological bond that an individual forms with a sports team (Wann & Branscombe, 1993). According to Wann (1997), "fans who identify with a team see the team they support as part of themselves, and their sense of self is centered on their loyalty to that team and the idea that 'I am a fan of this team.' Social identity theory argues that people define and evaluate themselves in terms of the groups they belong to and aims to explain intergroup behavior by assuming that groups compete with each other for status and prestige (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). People can derive their social identities from various groups such as professional and student communities, hobby groups, or religious organizations (Lintumäki & Koll, 2024). Based on social identity theory, a consumer's social identification with a sports team, or team identification, is defined as "a part of an individual's self-concept that is derived from membership in a community formed around a sports team, based on the emotional value attributed to this membership and the community's own knowledge, interaction, and evaluation." (Heere, 2015).

The relationship between identity and passion has been proven in previous literature (Vallerand et al., 2003). Vallerand et al. (2003) defined sports passion as a motivational state characterized by intense emotional attachment, identification, and persistence toward a sport, team, or participation behavior. Especially individuals with high levels of identification follow sports events more frequently, invest more, and develop stronger emotional bonds with the team (Funk & James, 2001). Team identification leads to the development of a "we" feeling among fans and, as a result of this sense of belonging, an increase in sports passion (Heere & James, 2007). In this context, the following hypothesis has been developed:

H4a. Fan identification positively affects sports passion.

Furthermore, previous studies have confirmed that fans' identification with their team affects motivational, emotional, and behavioral outcomes (Curran et al., 2015; Yukhymenko-Lescroart, 2018). High levels of identification can increase emotional involvement, leading to loyalty-based or compulsive consumption of team products (Lee & Trail, 2011). The identification process strengthens an individual's social identity and provides self-esteem through this identity (Tajfel et al., 1979). However, in cases of excessive identification, the individual begins to express their connection to the group or brand through consumption behaviors. Over time, this can trigger uncontrolled and compulsive buying tendencies aimed at filling an emotional void (Park et al., 2010). This relationship has been addressed only limitedly in the literature. Aiken et al. (2018) noted in their research that high fan identification in particular leads to compulsive buying. Based on this, the following hypothesis was formulated:

H4b. Fan identification positively influences compulsive purchasing buying behavior.

The Effect of Sports Passion on Compulsive Buying

Sports passion refers to the level of sustained interest and excitement that individuals develop toward sports and team-related activities (Vallerand et al., 2003). Passionate fans are generally more prone to compulsive buying behavior, exhibiting high purchase intention, emotional arousal, and desire to acquire products (Donavan et al., 2005). In the context of sports, passionate fandom or intense emotional investment in sports can increase brand loyalty in individuals and influence consumption decisions in a more emotional and uncontrolled manner (Kim et al., 2013). Individuals who are passionate about sports may

engage in sports-related consumption behaviors such as purchasing jerseys, tickets, and licensed products in order to identify with their teams and make this loyalty visible in their social circles. A high level of passion for sports can cause these individuals to have difficulty controlling their shopping behavior and exhibit compulsive buying tendencies (Mahan & McDaniel, 2009). In this context, it can be argued that sports passion may have a significant effect on individuals' compulsive buying behaviors. Based on this information, the following hypothesis has been developed:

H5. Sports passion positively affects compulsive buying behavior.

The Mediating Role of Materialism

Individuals with high materialism may purchase products not only for functional reasons but also to satisfy their psychological needs and strengthen their social identity based on information obtained through eWOM (Podoshen et al., 2011). In this context, it can be argued that eWOM does not directly trigger compulsive buying behavior, but rather prepares the ground for this behavior by first increasing materialism in individuals. Based on these reasons, the following hypothesis has been developed:

H6a. Materialism plays a mediating role in the relationship between eWOM and compulsive buying.

Social media platforms increase individuals' materialistic tendencies by exposing them to consumer culture. Visual content can trigger users' desire to possess, leading individuals to place greater importance on material values (Dittmar et al., 2014). This can cause individuals to engage in compulsive buying behavior, motivated by the desire to imitate the products and lifestyles they encounter on social media. When materialism is defined as a value orientation in which an individual associates happiness and success with material possessions (Richins & Dawson, 1992), this value orientation can form the psychological basis for compulsive buying (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2005). In this context, it is predicted that materialism may play a mediating role in the effect of social media addiction on compulsive buying behavior. Thus

H6b. Materialism plays a mediating role in the relationship between social media addiction and compulsive buying.

The Mediating Role of Sports Passion

Individuals who identify with sports teams tend to invest more in symbols, products, and lifestyles related to their teams. Over time, this identification can develop into an intense emotional bond with sports, or sports passion (Vallerand et al., 2003). Sports passion, especially when it develops into an obsessive form, is a form of attachment based on the need for external approval, which makes it difficult for individuals to control their behavior (Vallerand, 2012). This can cause individuals to purchase more sports-related products, often in an uncontrolled manner. Considering that sports passion transforms the psychological process arising from fan identification into a behavioral output—compulsive buying behavior—it can be argued that it may function as a mediating mechanism.

H7. Sports passion plays a mediating role in the relationship between sports fan identification and compulsive buying.

Material and Method

Ethics committee permission: This research was conducted after the report of Niğde Ömer Halisdemir University Ethics Committee dated 27/05/2025 and decision number 2025/09-50.

Research Model

In this research, structural equation modelling was used in quantitative research methods. Within the scope of the research, the model was created and tested based on theoretical foundations (Figure 1).

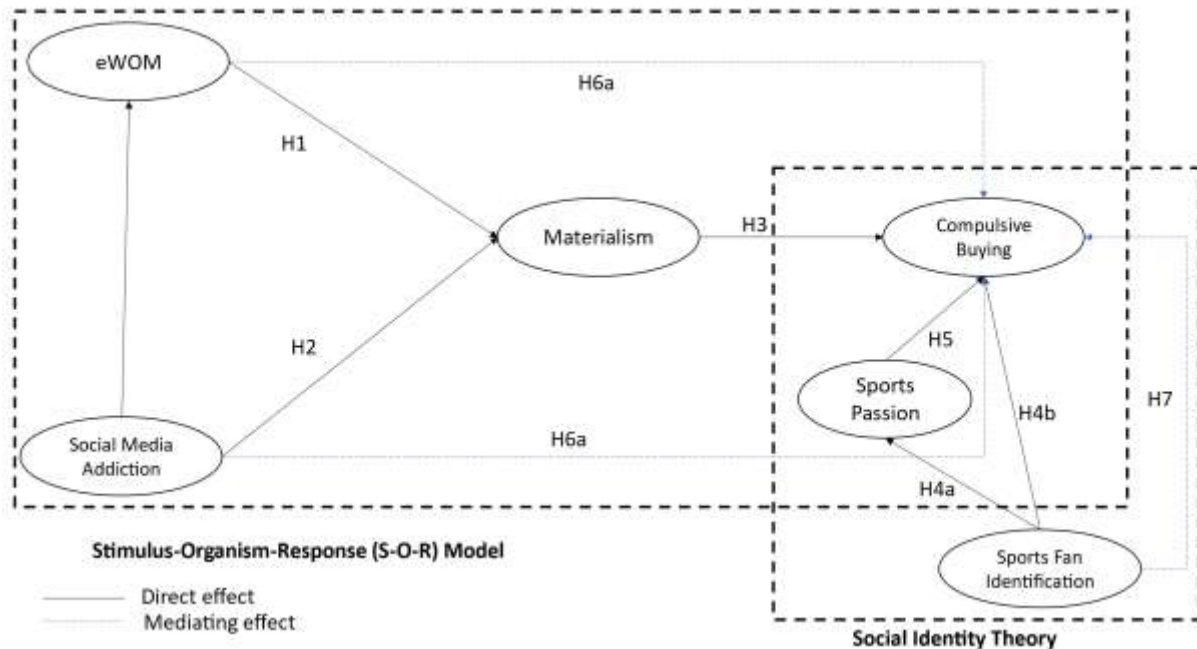


Figure 1. Research model

Measurement Instrument

All scales used in this study have been adapted from scales that have been previously validated and tested for reliability in literature. The Turkish versions of the scales have undergone cultural adaptation processes in relevant studies and their reliability has been confirmed. The scales used to measure the variables in the study are summarized below:

Electronic Word-of-Mouth (eWOM) Scale: The eWOM scale developed by Bambauer-Sachse and Mangold (2011) was used to measure participants' tendency to share their experiences in electronic environments. The Turkish version of the scale was created by Erdoğan and Özoğlu (2024) through a cultural adaptation study. The scale consists of seven items answered on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly disagree, 5 = Strongly agree).

Social Media Addiction Scale: A 7-item scale developed by Çömlekçi and Başol (2019) and adapted to Turkish culture was used to measure participants' levels of addiction to social media use. Responses were evaluated on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Never, 5 = Always).

Materialism Scale: The materialism scale developed by Richins and Dawson (1992) was chosen to determine individuals' materialistic value orientations. The scale was adapted to Turkish culture by Sunay and Tabanlı (2023). The scale consists of 4 items and was evaluated using a 5-point Likert-type response format (1 = Strongly disagree, 5 = Strongly agree).

Sports Fan Identification Scale: The scale developed by Wann and Branscombe (1993) and adapted into Turkish by Günay & Tiryaki (2003) was used to determine the level of psychological attachment individuals have to a sports team. This unidimensional scale consists of 7 items answered on a 5-point Likert scale.

Sports Passion Scale: The Sports Passion Scale, developed by Sigmundsson et al. (2020) to determine participants' emotional and cognitive attachment levels to sports, was used. The Turkish adaptation of the scale was carried out by Özdayı et al. (2021). The scale consists of 8 items with a 5-point Likert-type rating and has a single-factor structure.

Compulsive Buying Scale: The Compulsive Buying Scale, developed by Valence et al. (1988) to measure individuals' uncontrolled and compulsive buying tendencies, was used. The Turkish adaptation of the scale was conducted by Sunay and Tabanlı (2023). This 8-item scale was evaluated using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly disagree, 5 = Strongly agree).

Sampling and Data Collection

In this study, the sample group consists of sports consumers who are social media users and have purchased a sports product or service online. In line with the research objective, purposive sampling was preferred to ensure that only individuals with these characteristics were included (Büyüköztürk et al., 2022). Within this scope, participants who actively use social media platforms and have previously purchased a sports product or service online were included in the study. An online survey form was prepared as the data collection tool and administered via Google Forms. The survey form was shared online through social media platforms (Instagram, Twitter/X, and Facebook), and participants were included in the study on a voluntary basis. In the study, which reached a total of 325 participants, the data of 32 participants who did not meet the research criteria or who entered incomplete/inappropriate data were excluded from the analysis. Thus, the sample of the study consists of 293 sports consumers who met the necessary criteria and provided valid responses. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study and were told that the data would be collected anonymously and used solely for scientific research purposes. In line with this, the data collection process was conducted in accordance with ethical principles (Yıldırım & Simsek, 2021).

When demographic information is analysed, 64.51% (N=189) of the participants are male and 35.49% (N=104) are female. The time spent by the participants on social media in a day is as follows: 3-5 hours (44,03%; N=129), 1-2 hours (36,52%; N=107), more than 6 hours (13,99%; N=41), less than 1 hour (16%, N=5,46). The average age of the participants was 27.75 years and their average monthly income was 28,686 TL.

Data Analysis

In this study, structural equation modeling (SEM) was adopted for the analysis of quantitative data. SmartPLS 4.0 software was used for model testing. SmartPLS uses the Partial Least Squares (PLS-SEM) technique, which is preferred for testing exploratory models, especially when the sample size is relatively small and the data does not follow a normal distribution (Hair et al., 2017). In this study, both the measurement model and the structural model were evaluated, followed by analyses of indirect effects and predictive power.

Common Method Bias

For common method bias (CMB), both methodological and statistical measures were taken to minimise the risks that may occur due to the collection of data through a single questionnaire (Podsakoff et al., 2003). In methodological measures, firstly, measurement items were adapted from previously validated scales and adapted to this study. In addition, it was stated in the questionnaire form that the identities of the participants would remain confidential. With a 45-person pilot study, the comprehensibility of the items was tested and uncertainties were eliminated.

In the statistical methods, firstly Harman's single factor test was used and according to the exploratory factor analysis, the first factor explained 38.3% variance. This rate is less than the cut-off value of 50% (Podsakoff et al., 2012). As another statistical method, the latent common method factor method was used in the study. For this method, an additional latent factor was added to the structural model as suggested by Podsakoff et al. (2003). The loadings of the method factor were compared with the loadings of the original factors, and the fact that the loadings of the method factor remained at low and non-significant levels showed that the common method bias in the model was limited. In addition, no significant decreases were observed in the original factor loadings, indicating that CMB did not have a significant effect on the research model (Kock, 2015). Considering all these approaches, in summary, it shows that the study is not affected by common method bias.

Findings

Measurement Model

At this stage, the measurement validity and reliability of the constructs used in the study were evaluated.

Table 1. Validity and reliability for the measurement model

Constructs	Items	SFL (>0.7)	Cronbach's alpha (>0.7)	Composite reliability (> 0.7)	AVE (> 0.5)
eWOM	eWOM1	0.688	0.897	0.917	0.614
	eWOM2	0.674			
	eWOM3	0.730			
	eWOM4	0.802			
	eWOM5	0.851			
	eWOM6	0.864			
	eWOM7	0.851			
Social Media Addiction	SMA1	0.781	0.924	0.939	0.687
	SMA2	0.769			
	SMA3	0.846			
	SMA4	0.853			
	SMA5	0.871			
	SMA6	0.864			
	SMA7	0.815			
Materialism	M1	0.830	0.901	0.931	0.772
	M2	0.893			
	M3	0.917			
	M4	0.872			
Fan Identification	I1	0.853	0.940	0.952	0.739
	I2	0.907			
	I3	0.930			
	I4	0.876			
	I5	0.898			
	I6	0.712			
	I7	0.824			
Sports Passion	SP1	0.829	0.903	0.922	0.630
	SP2	0.795			
	SP3	0.693			
	SP4	0.862			
	SP5	0.772			
	SP6	0.830			
	SP7	0.766			
Compulsive Buying	CB1	0.748	0.928	0.941	0.667
	CB2	0.777			
	CB3	0.843			
	CB4	0.854			
	CB5	0.767			
	CB6	0.847			
	CB7	0.863			
	CB8	0.828			

Note(s): AVE: average variance extracted, SFL: standardized factor loadings

The measurement model results in Table 1 show that the constructs used in the study are at an acceptable level in terms of validity and reliability. Cronbach's alpha (≥ 0.897) and composite reliability (CR) (≥ 0.917) values of all constructs exceed the minimum recommended threshold of 0.70 (Hair Jr et al., 2021), confirming the internal consistency of the constructs. In addition, the average variance explained (AVE) values in all constructs were above 0.50 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981) (in the range of 0.614-0.772), indicating that the constructs have convergent validity. Although some item loadings (e.g., SP6 = 0.330; SP7 = 0.366) were below the 0.70 limit (Hair Jr et al., 2021), these items were kept in the analyses because their removal did not significantly increase the AVE and CR values and were considered important in the theoretical context. As a result, it can be said that the measurement model meets the reliability and validity criteria and provides a sufficient basis for proceeding to structural model analysis.

Table 2. Discriminant validity (Fornell-Larcker criterion) and Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)

Constructs	eWOM	SMA	M	FI	SP	CB
eWOM	0.784*					
Social Media Addiction	0.092	0.829*				
Materialism	0.284	0.519	0.879*			
Fan Identification	0.272	0.311	0.331	0.860*		
Sports Passion	0.338	0.077	0.161	0.424	0.794*	
Compulsive Buying	0.277	0.471	0.598	0.371	0.275	0.817*
Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)						
Constructs	eWOM	SMA	M	FI	SP	CB
eWOM						
Social Media Addiction	0.126					
Materialism	0.303	0.567				
Fan Identification	0.273	0.328	0.357			
Sports Passion	0.393	0.097	0.161	0.453		
Compulsive Buying	0.290	0.507	0.651	0.397	0.284	

* Root square of AVE

Source(s): Authors' own work

Discriminant validity was assessed using the Fornell-Larcker criterion (Fornell & Larcker, 1981) and the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) (Henseler et al., 2015). As shown in Table 2, the square roots of AVE (diagonal values) are higher than the inter-construct correlations, indicating sufficient discriminant validity. For example, the square root of AVE for compulsive buying (0.817) exceeds its correlations with other constructs, confirming distinctiveness.

Similarly, all HTMT values were below the conservative threshold of 0.85 (Kline, 2011), with the highest value being 0.651 between compulsive buying and materialism, supporting further evidence of discriminant validity. These results confirm that all constructs are empirically distinct, providing a sound basis for structural model analysis (Hair et al., 2019).

Structural model

After the evaluation of the measurement model, if the model is deemed adequate, the next step is the evaluation of the structural model. The important evaluation criteria in the

structural model are generally statistical significance of path coefficients, variance explained (R^2), predictive fit (Q^2) and effect size (f^2).

According to the structural model analysis presented in Table 3, four of the five hypotheses tested in the study were statistically confirmed. eWOM has a significant and positive effect on materialism (H1: $\beta = 0.213$, $t = 4.373$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that digital verbal communication can increase materialistic tendencies. Social media addiction has strong and significant effects on materialism (H2: $\beta = 0.460$, $t = 8.808$, $p < 0.001$), suggesting that digital addiction influences value orientations. The effect of materialism on compulsive buying is highly significant (H3: $\beta = 0.417$, $t = 6.508$, $p < 0.001$). The effect of fan identification on sport passion is also strong and significant (H4a: $\beta = 0.434$, $t = 8.538$, $p < 0.001$), which supports individuals' attachment to sport based on their social identity. However, the direct effect of identification on compulsive buying was not statistically significant (H4b: $\beta = 0.096$, $t = 1.646$, $p = 0.100$). Finally, the effect of sport passion on compulsive buying is significant (H5: $\beta = 0.121$, $t = 2.374$, $p = 0.018$), indicating that sport passion at the emotional level can influence buying behaviours. These findings reveal the effects of psychological and social factors on compulsive consumption behaviours and support the theoretical background of the model.

Table 3. The direct effects

Hyp	Paths	β	t	p	LLCI	ULCI	Supported?
H1	$eWOM \rightarrow M$	0.213	4.373	0.000	0.117	0.306	Yes
H2	$SMA \rightarrow M$	0.460	8.808	0.000	0.357	0.559	Yes
H3	$M \rightarrow CB$	0.417	6.508	0.000	0.286	0.539	Yes
H4a	$FI \rightarrow SP$	0.434	8.538	0.000	0.334	0.528	Yes
H4b	$FI \rightarrow CB$	0.096	1.646	0.100	-0.021	0.214	No
H5	$SP \rightarrow CB$	0.121	2.374	0.018	0.021	0.220	Yes

eWOM: Electronic word of mouth; SMA: Social media addiction; M: Materialism; FI: Fan identification; SP: Sports passion; CB: Compulsive buying

Source(s): Authors' own work

Mediating effects

To examine the mediating effects proposed in the structural model, the bootstrapping method recommended by Preacher and Hayes (2008) was employed. A total of 5000 bootstrap re-samples with a 95% bias-corrected confidence interval were used to assess the statistical significance of indirect effects. Prior to mediation analysis, all model assumptions were verified. In addition to significance testing, the Variance Accounted For (VAF) method was used to determine the nature of the mediation (Hair et al., 2017; Zhao et al., 2010). According to this approach, VAF values below 20% indicate no mediation, values between 20% and 80% indicate partial mediation, and values above 80% indicate full mediation.

As shown in Table 4, the indirect effect of eWOM on compulsive buying through materialism is significant ($\beta = 0.089$, $t = 3.316$, $p = 0.001$; 95% CI [0.041; 0.146]) and the VAF value (54.3%) suggests a partial mediation effect, supporting H6a. Similarly, social media addiction influences compulsive buying through materialism with a significant indirect effect ($\beta = 0.192$, $t = 5.172$, $p < 0.001$; 95% CI [0.124; 0.268]), and the VAF value of 47.6% also indicates partial mediation, supporting H6b. Furthermore, team identification affects compulsive buying through sport passion significantly ($\beta = 0.052$, $t = 2.223$, $p = 0.026$; 95% CI [0.009; 0.101]), and the VAF of 35.1% confirms that this relationship also exhibits partial mediation, thereby supporting H6c. Overall, these findings highlight that materialistic tendencies and emotional addiction in sports serve as meaningful

explanatory mechanisms in the relationship between social-psychological antecedents and compulsive sport-related consumer behavior.

Table 4. The mediation effects

Hyp	Paths	β	t	p	LLCI	ULCI	VAF	Result	Med.?
H6a	eWOM→M→CB	0.089	3.316	0.001	0.041	0.146	54%	Supported	Partial
H6b	SMA→M→CB	0.192	5.172	0.000	0.124	0.268	48%	Supported	Partial
H6c	FI→SP→CB	0.052	2.223	0.026	0.009	0.101	35%	Supported	Partial

eWOM: Electronic word of mouth; SMA: Social media addiction; M: Materialism; FI: Fan identification; SP: Sports passion; CB: Compulsive buying

Source(s): Authors' own work

Predictive Power

Analyses are reported to reveal the variance explained (R^2), predictive power (Q^2) and effect size (f^2) in the relationship between the focal variables in the model. The R^2 values are explained as psychological ownership 44.6%, ease of use of AI 69.5%, trust in AI 48.9% and purchase intention 60.9%. Accordingly, the model has medium and high explanatory power (Hair et al., 2017). Following the criteria of Stone (1974) and Geisser (1974), all internal constructs in the model showed significant predictive relevance ($Q^2 > 0$) with values indicating a high level of predictive power. Effect sizes (f^2) were analyzed according to the thresholds suggested by Cohen (1988), where values of 0.02, 0.15 and 0.35 indicate small, medium and large effects, respectively. Accordingly, the AI ease of use variable has a large effect on the purchase intention variable ($f^2 = 0.366$). Different effect sizes are also observed among other variables and the results are shown in Table 6.

Table 6. Model's explanatory and predictive power and effectsizes

	M	SP	CB
R^2	0.337	0.181	0.426
Q^2	0.259	0.110	0.286
f^2			
eWOM	0.062		0.008
SMA	0.290		0.054
M			0.203
FI		0.225	0.012
SP			0.020

eWOM: Electronic word of mouth; SMA: Social media addiction; M: Materialism; FI: Fan identification; SP: Sports passion; CB: Compulsive buying

Source(s): Authors' own work

In Table 6, the explanatory, predictive power and effect size values of the model are evaluated. The R^2 values of the dependent variables indicate the extent to which the model explains these variables. Accordingly, the model explains 33.7% ($R^2 = 0.337$) for materialism, 18.1% ($R^2 = 0.181$) for sport passion and 42.6% ($R^2 = 0.426$) for compulsive buying. These values are accepted as medium (around 0.33) and high (0.42 and above) levels of explanation in the literature (Hair et al., 2017). When the predictive power of the model was analysed with Q^2 values according to the threshold values of Stone (1974) and Geisser (1974); it was found to be 0.259 for materialism, 0.110 for sports passion and 0.286 for compulsive buying. These results show that the model has good predictive power especially on materialism and compulsive buying, while it has weak-medium predictive power on sport passion. When f^2 effect size values were analysed according to Cohen (1988) thresholds, the effect of social media addiction on materialism was found to be moderate ($f^2 = 0.290$), and the effect of materialism on compulsive buying was found to be moderate ($f^2 = 0.203$). The effect of fan

identification on sport passion shows a medium-sized effect with $f^2 = 0.225$, while the effects of eWOM ($f^2 = 0.062$ for M; $f^2 = 0.008$ for CB) and the effect of sport passion on compulsive buying ($f^2 = 0.020$) are low. In general, the effects of the model, especially materialism and compulsive buying.

Discussion

This study aims to determine the antecedents affecting the compulsive purchase intentions of sport consumers based on S-O-R and social identity theory. For this purpose, a conceptual model was created and hypotheses were tested and discussed in this section.

According to the findings, all hypotheses in the research model were confirmed. First of all, the positive effect of eWOM on the materialistic behaviour of sport consumers was revealed. Previous studies in the literature support our research results (Chu et al., 2016; Jameel et al., 2024). Kurnaz and Duman (2021) stated in their research that e-WOM communication positively affects materialistic consumption, and explained it with the motivation of individuals to overvalue material objects in order to create their identity and reveal their existence. Chia (2010), in his research on Singaporean adolescent consumers, found that communication about consumption increased the commitment to materialistic values.

In another hypothesis, it was shown that consumers' social media addiction positively affects their materialistic behaviours and hypothesis 2 was confirmed. These results show parallel results with previous studies (Chu et al., 2016; Ismail et al., 2018). Colella et al. (2021) conducted a study on Chinese consumers and found that luxury products are perceived as more luxurious when promoted on social media platforms and increase consumers' materialism levels. Therefore, consumers who spend more time on social media are expected to have higher levels of materialism. Thoumrungroje (2018) conducted a comparative study on U.S. and South Korean consumers and concluded that consumers' intensive use of social media increases materialistic behaviours in both nationalities. Kamal et al. (2013) also examined this relationship and found that consumers tend to have higher levels of materialism when they participate more in social networking activities.

The effect of consumers' materialistic behaviours on their compulsive buying behaviour was examined and hypothesis 3 was confirmed. Islam et al. (2017) supports that young people with a tendency to orient towards high materialistic values can greatly affect the level of compulsive buying. Tarka et al. (2022) examined the effect of materialism on compulsive buying behaviour of Polish consumers and stated that consumers with high materialistic tendencies have high compulsive buying behaviour. In their comparison between men and women, they showed that women exhibited more compulsive buying behaviour than men in this relationship. Likewise, Dittmar (2005) and Pradhan et al. (2018) also confirmed this relationship.

The research findings showed that the identification levels of sports fans positively affect their passion for sports and hypothesis 4a was confirmed. Wann et al. (2001), in support of our research results, showed that fans with high fan identification show higher passion for supporting their teams and that these individuals allocate more time and resources to sports. Vallerand et al. (2008) emphasised that there is a bidirectional relationship between sports passion and fan identification and that one can feed the other. According to our research findings, as the identification and loyalty of the fans with the team increases, their passion for their team and sports may also increase.

Research findings indicate that fan identification does not significantly influence compulsive buying behavior. This contradicts previous studies by Wang and Yang (2008), who found that passion is associated with compulsive buying behavior, and Japutra et al. (2022; 2025), who stated that individuals with high brand passion exhibit more obsessive-compulsive buying behavior. This discrepancy in findings can be explained by sample characteristics and contextual factors. First, individuals with high fan identity make more conscious and planned decisions when purchasing team-related products, despite their emotional attachment; therefore, they do not exhibit compulsive tendencies. Furthermore, the socially negative evaluation of compulsive buying behaviors in the cultural context in which the study was conducted may have led to the suppression of such behaviors. In addition, personal and situational factors such as impulsivity, low self-control, stress, or negative mood may be more decisive in the emergence of compulsive buying behaviors than fan identity. Finally, participants' economic concerns and limited disposable income may have suppressed their compulsive buying tendencies despite their fan identities.

In another of the research findings, it was examined that consumers' passion for sports positively affected their compulsive buying behaviour and hypothesis 5 was confirmed. In their research, Aiken et al. (2018) found that especially fans with obsessive sports passion are prone to compulsive buying. Again, Le (2021) stated in his research that people who are passionate about a brand have a high tendency to compulsive buying behaviour. Our research result is in parallel with the literature and shows that passion for sports can trigger this behaviour with a similar psychological mechanism.

The findings of the study revealed that materialism plays a significant mediating role in the relationship between electronic word-of-mouth communication (eWOM) and compulsive buying behaviour. This finding supports that eWOM is not only an information-based tool, but also influences individuals' value orientations and shapes their consumption behaviours. In particular, eWOM content, which is frequently encountered in social media, causes users to orient towards material values, which results in the identification of happiness, success and social acceptance with the products owned (Kurnaz & Duman, 2021; Richins & Dawson, 1992). This value orientation paves the way for uncontrolled consumption behaviours such as compulsive buying (Podoshen et al., 2011). When evaluated according to the S-O-R (Stimulus-Organism-Response) model, eWOM as an external stimulus (S) causes the individual to develop a materialism orientation at the organismic level, which results in compulsive buying, which is the ultimate behavioural response. This finding supports studies emphasising the mediating role of individual values in online consumer behaviour (Dittmar et al., 2014) and allows us to understand the impact of digital marketing environments on consumer psychology in more depth.

The findings of the study show that materialism plays a significant mediating role in the effect of social media addiction on compulsive buying behaviour, hypothesis 6b is confirmed. Social media can trigger the development of materialistic values as a medium where individuals are exposed to intense visual stimuli related to lifestyles, consumption practices and status symbols (Shrum et al., 2014). In particular, influencers, brand collaborations and user-generated content reinforce individuals' beliefs in material success and ownership, which leads to an increase in materialistic orientation (Hudders & Pandelaere, 2012). Materialistic individuals may see shopping as a means of establishing an identity or emotional fulfilment because they believe that possession will bring social status and happiness (Richins & Dawson, 1992). This psychological basis may lead individuals away from planned and need-based shopping and lead them to compulsive and uncontrolled buying behaviours (Dittmar, 2005).

The research findings revealed that sports passion plays a significant mediating role in the effect of fan identification on compulsive buying behaviour and hypothesis 7 was supported. Fan identification is explained as an individual defining his/her self and strengthening his/her social identity through a psychological bond with the sport team (Hogg, 2016). This process may lead to the development of intense emotional investment in the team, i.e. sport passion (Vallerand et al., 2003). Sports passion, especially when it is obsessive, may make it difficult for the individual to control his/her behaviour and this may result in compulsive buying behaviour (Vallerand, 2012).

Theoretical implications

The present study makes a significant contribution to the extant literature by means of a comprehensive utilisation of the S-O-R (Stimulus–Organism–Response) model (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974) and Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) to elucidate the compulsive purchasing behaviour of sports consumers. Within the S-O-R model framework, it has been demonstrated that digital stimuli, such as social media addiction and eWOM, increase materialistic orientation in individuals, which in turn leads to compulsive purchasing intention. This finding suggests that the digital environment has the capacity to trigger uncontrolled consumption by transforming individual value systems (Dittmar et al., 2014; Shrum et al., 2014). In the context of Social Identity Theory, it has been determined that sports fan identification fosters an escalation in the intensity of individuals' passion for sports. This heightened passion subsequently functions as a mediating factor in the elucidation of compulsive purchasing behaviour. This finding suggests that social belonging influences consumption behaviour through emotional investment (Heere & James, 2007; Vallerand et al., 2003). The results of the study demonstrate that both digital stimuli and social identity processes influence consumer behaviour through psychological factors. Consequently, the study's integrated model provides significant theoretical contributions to the sports marketing literature.

Practical implications

The findings of this study have several practical implications for sports clubs, marketing managers and brand strategists. Firstly, it is evident that digital marketing strategies, particularly those focused on social media and eWOM, have the potential to stimulate compulsive purchasing behaviour by increasing individuals' materialistic values. Therefore, marketing communications should encourage conscious and responsible consumption rather than solely promoting consumption. Sports clubs could, for example, add responsible consumption reminders such as 'buy what you need' or 'limited stock, think before you purchase' to product promotions, or implement purchase limit pop-up alerts on their online stores to help control excessive shopping impulses. Secondly, when creating content to strengthen fan identification, sports clubs and licensed product sellers should be aware that sports passion can reach obsessive levels, and they should adopt a balanced approach. Rather than solely promoting limited-edition and premium products that intensify fan desire, for instance, clubs could simultaneously highlight affordable and essential merchandise to avoid overstimulating purchase urges. Additionally, content celebrating community values and team history (rather than product ownership alone) could help balance emotional attachment with responsible behaviour. Thirdly, young consumers tend to consume excessively, driven by social media exposure and fan identification. Therefore, ethical marketing principles must be meticulously applied in campaigns targeting young audiences. Rather than running continuous product discount campaigns, for example, clubs could offer 'Support your team

without buying' digital badges, virtual fan club memberships or gamified engagement activities that foster a sense of belonging without pushing physical product purchases. Finally, marketers should integrate personalised content, awareness-raising initiatives and socially responsible elements into the marketing of sports products, particularly for vulnerable segments prone to compulsive purchasing. For example, online stores could send personalised 'shopping break' reminders when spending thresholds are exceeded, add carbon footprint calculators to product pages, or include messages on products such as 'a portion of this purchase supports youth sports'. Such initiatives can encourage engagement and promote responsible consumption behaviour simultaneously.

Limitations and further research

It is acknowledged that the present study is not without its limitations, in addition to the significant findings that have been reported. Firstly, the study is cross-sectional in nature. In subsequent studies, the impact of sports passion over time and the evolution of compulsive buying behaviour can be examined through longitudinal data collection. A further limitation of the study is that it exclusively considered consumers who had purchased sports products or services. This sampling approach may have introduced a self-selection bias by overrepresenting individuals already engaged in sports consumption. Future studies could include both active consumers and non-consumers to provide a more comprehensive perspective. Moreover, the study did not distinguish between different types of sports consumption. Passion for specific sports (e.g., football, basketball, e-sports) may involve different cultural meanings, fan rituals, and market dynamics that could influence compulsive purchasing tendencies. Future research could adopt a comparative approach across different sports contexts. Another limitation is that the study was conducted within a single cultural context, which may limit the generalisability of the findings. Cultural norms regarding materialism, emotional expression, and consumption patterns may moderate the effect of sports passion on compulsive purchasing. Cross-cultural studies are therefore recommended to validate the robustness of the relationships identified. The present study focused on the negative outcomes of sports passion. In subsequent studies, it is recommended that multi-level models which incorporate positive outcomes such as loyalty, word-of-mouth communication, and brand advocacy be tested.

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