



The Effect of Click and Brick Strategy on Consumer Behavior in Sports Clubs

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the impact of different marketing strategies (Click and Brick, Pure Brick, and Pure Click) on customer satisfaction, trust, and word-of-mouth (WOM) marketing in sports clubs. In the digital era, sports clubs face challenges in selecting the optimal strategy for customer engagement. Using a causal-comparative method, this research sampled 360 customers from the Warzin Sports Club. Data were collected through standardized questionnaires measuring satisfaction, trust, and WOM, and analyzed using MANOVA tests. The findings reveal that the Click and Brick strategy significantly increases customer satisfaction, trust, and WOM tendencies across all three stages: pre-purchase, during purchase, and post-purchase. The results demonstrate the superiority of multi-channel strategies over single-channel approaches in the sports club industry. Sports clubs implementing the Click and Brick strategy, by offering services through various channels and maintaining continuous communication with customers in both physical and online environments, can generate higher satisfaction, greater trust, and more effective word-of-mouth marketing among their customers.

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1. Introduction

Like all service organizations that seek to retain and expand their customer base, sports clubs are not exempt from this objective. They also strive to establish continuous relationships with their customers in order to increase profitability, generate revenue, and achieve organizational growth. In recent years, many sports clubs have realized that focusing on the needs of sport consumer's entails attention to the quality of sport activities, competitions, and sport products, as well as the delivery of appropriate services to customers. Any sport organization that adopts a customer-oriented approach must therefore become familiar with these concepts (Robinson, 2010).

On the other hand, successful sport marketing begins with an understanding of why and how sport consumers and audiences behave the way they do. Understanding the factors that influence the preferences and behaviors of sport consumers can be considered a fundamental basis for decision-making in sport consumption. In order to influence consumer behaviors—such as repeat attendance, loyalty, satisfaction, and trust—it is essential to address issues such as word-of-mouth marketing and related mechanisms. Identifying the critical factors that influence customers and their expectations enables organizations to rely on these needs and expectations both to retain existing customers and to attract new ones (Trkulja, 2019).

Sports clubs have increasingly evolved into active commercial enterprises operating in economic and revenue-generating domains, where maintaining relationships with customers has become a primary priority. Consequently, the analysis of customer behavior has become a fundamental component in the management of both small and large sports clubs. The geographical dispersion of audiences, the wide age range of participants, and the considerable diversity in their physical needs compel sports club managers to adopt the most effective strategies for engaging with their audiences and achieving

maximum customer satisfaction (Tumijan, 2020; Trkulja, 2019).

During the COVID-19 pandemic, individuals interested in sports and wellness increasingly preferred to make purchases online due to social distancing requirements and stay-at-home orders aimed at protecting them from the virus. In addition, many consumers attempted to maintain their physical and psychological well-being during the COVID-19 period by transforming their homes into workout spaces or personal gyms. For instance, in the United States, sales of home fitness products in March 2020 increased dramatically by 307 percent compared with March 2019—immediately after the World Health Organization officially declared COVID-19 a global pandemic in the second week of March 2020 (Stackline, 2020).

Beyond the pandemic context, many contemporary sport consumers with busy lifestyles tend to prefer online environments over physical ones, as these allow them to access digital sport content anytime and anywhere (Di et al., 2020). In addition to purchasing home fitness products, consumers increasingly use websites and social media platforms for workouts and fitness-related content consumption. These platforms enable individuals to engage in exercise activities at home before or after completing daily tasks, regardless of time and location (Stragier et al., 2016).

Such changes have pushed sports clubs toward utilizing online platforms and engaging with online audiences. Adopting an appropriate strategy for communicating with customers has therefore become a key factor in the success of modern organizations and sports clubs. Depending on the type of interaction with customers, companies can generally be categorized into three types. The first type consists of traditional companies, commonly referred to as “brick-and-mortar” firms. These companies conduct business exclusively through physical stores and do not use the internet as a medium for electronic commerce. Their interactions

with customers occur solely through face-to-face contact at physical locations. If these companies maintain websites, such platforms are typically used only to provide information about the company, its products and/or services, and its physical locations. Currently, many sports clubs follow this strategy and primarily interact with customers in person, maintaining a traditional operational structure. Their use of websites is generally limited to introducing the club and providing address or contact information (Stieler et al., 2019).

The second type of companies consists of those that conduct their commercial transactions exclusively within an online electronic marketplace and are highly dependent on the internet. The evolution of online platforms and social media has led to a growing number of consumers who increasingly rely on digital environments and social media to develop and manage various aspects of their lives, such as online learning, online shopping, and online media consumption (Di et al., 2020; Stieler et al., 2019).

Online platforms have enabled sports clubs to communicate with their athletes and customers without temporal or geographical limitations and to continue their activities in virtual environments. These firms are commonly referred to as online companies, internet companies, dot-coms, or “pure-click” businesses. Such companies interact with customers solely through internet-based platforms and websites, without any face-to-face contact. In the contemporary era, given the internet’s ability to overcome geographical barriers and facilitate connections between coaches and athletes across different parts of the world, the provision of training programs and sports consultation entirely online—through various platforms such as websites, Instagram, Facebook, and other digital media—has become highly common and increasingly popular.

The third type of companies are known as “click-and-brick” organizations. These institutions conduct their business using both approaches: traditional physical stores and internet-based platforms. Accordingly, sports clubs can be

categorized based on their physical presence, their e-commerce capabilities, and the extent to which they utilize the internet (Ko & Roztock, 2009). In today’s digital era, both traditional brick-and-mortar firms and pure-click companies are increasingly challenged to become more intelligent and innovative in order to create greater value for consumers and retailers (Dacko, 2017).

Adopting a click-and-brick strategy refers to the ability to utilize both physical and online platforms simultaneously. This approach enables sports clubs to go beyond the limitations of the two previously mentioned strategies and allows them to interact with customers without restricting them to either exclusively in-person or exclusively online services. Organizations have recognized that success in the internet era depends on the ability to effectively implement click-and-brick strategies. In this regard, sports clubs and companies operating in the sport industry can adjust integration strategies in accordance with their products, target markets, and competitive environments (Wilson & Daniel, 2007). In particular, because click-and-brick strategies operate at a relatively high conceptual level, complementary supports play a crucial role as fundamental principles and important sources of value creation in electronic commerce. These supports may include complementary goods and services, cross-promotion, shared technologies, and similar mechanisms. Many scholars have proposed specific alternatives and configurations for click-and-brick strategies (Song & Zahedi, 2006). However, in practice, no single option can be considered the optimal solution for all organizations. Given the diversity of customers in terms of age, gender, and preferences, sports clubs must adopt the most appropriate channel combination to maximize efficiency and profitability, while considering their geographical location as well as existing opportunities and threats.

Sports clubs and sport complexes can therefore design their click-and-brick strategies based on their specific market characteristics and competitive conditions, significantly increasing their chances of

success in electronic commerce. Today, well-known sport service organizations such as the NSCA provide their services through both online and offline platforms. At the same time, multichannel consumers are those who use multiple channels throughout the purchasing process. For example, members of sports clubs may prefer to pay their membership fees online, receive their training programs digitally, attend training sessions in person at the club, and monitor the progress of their physical fitness indicators through mobile applications (Frasquet, Molla, & Ruiz, 2015).

It can therefore be argued that successful sports club managers are those who effectively manage their business activities and adopt appropriate strategies for customer engagement. Selecting the right strategy for interacting with customers is crucial for sports clubs and serves as a key factor in differentiating them from competitors. It appears that adopting a click-and-brick strategy can help clubs fully exploit the capacities of the existing market. Accordingly, the present study seeks to examine the importance of establishing multiple channels for more effective communication with athletes by comparing the click-and-brick strategy with pure-click and brick-and-mortar strategies in sports clubs.

Theoretical Foundations and Hypothesis Development

Click-and-Brick Strategy and Customer Satisfaction

A substantial body of research supports the hypothesis that satisfaction or dissatisfaction with a customer's experience in a store (e.g., a sports club) has a direct effect on the likelihood of revisiting that store (Feinberg, 2001; Fornell, Johnson, Anderson, Cha, & Bryant, 1996; Laumann, 1998; Rust & Zahorik, 1993; Rust, Zeithaml, & Lemon, 2000). Customer satisfaction is generally regarded as the foundation of any marketing relationship (Morgan & Hunt, 1994; Selnes, 1998).

Research in the field of electronic retailing is similarly grounded in the assumption that customer satisfaction can be evaluated through consumers'

intentions to revisit a website. The belief that customer satisfaction represents the "guiding principle" of retail-consumer relationships has also been widely supported by numerous influential works in this field (Blanchard & Bowles, 1993; Sewell & Brown, 2002).

Previous studies suggest that the click-and-brick (multichannel) strategy leads to higher levels of customer satisfaction among consumers (Balasubramanian, Konana, & Menon, 2003; Freed, 2003; Riebstein, 2002; Zeithaml et al., 2002). Consumers who utilize multiple channels for their purchases tend to spend more, visit stores more frequently, repurchase products more often, report higher levels of satisfaction, and demonstrate greater loyalty compared with single-channel customers. Accordingly, it is expected that customers of sports clubs who are able to utilize services and facilities across multiple channels will exhibit greater loyalty than single-channel customers (Dholakia, 2005; Graham, 2004; Hoxhaj, 2005; Kumar & Venkatesan, 2005).

Based on these arguments, the following hypotheses were formulated:

- **Hypothesis 1:** There is a significant difference in the level of customer satisfaction between click-and-brick customers and in-person (brick-and-mortar) customers across the three stages of the purchasing process: before, during, and after purchase.
- **Hypothesis 2:** There is a significant difference in the level of customer satisfaction between click-and-brick customers and pure-click customers across the three stages of the purchasing process: before, during, and after purchase.

Click-and-Brick Strategy and Word-of-Mouth Marketing

Customer satisfaction with a purchase experience can lead to repeat purchasing behavior as well as engagement in word-of-mouth (WOM) communication. Word-of-mouth marketing refers to the process through which customers who have

used a particular product or service share their experiences with other potential customers. Individuals who have not previously experienced a purchase or who lack a comprehensive understanding of the specific characteristics of a product or service often rely on word-of-mouth communication to obtain information. In the context of sports clubs, a satisfied athlete can act as an effective promoter of a club's services and contribute to attracting new members.

Compared with external marketing strategies, word-of-mouth communication has a significant and substantial influence on customer attitudes and behaviors. Advocacy and recommendation are also considered dimensions of customer loyalty, referring to positive word-of-mouth and the encouragement of others to obtain services from a particular provider. Previous research indicates that customers of click-and-brick companies are more likely to engage in word-of-mouth communication and encourage other customers to use the products and services offered by these organizations (Flavián et al., 2020). Based on this reasoning, the following hypotheses were proposed:

- **Hypothesis 3:** There is a significant difference in the level of word-of-mouth marketing engagement between click-and-brick customers and brick-and-mortar customers across the three stages of the purchasing process: before, during, and after purchase.
- **Hypothesis 4:** There is a significant difference in the level of word-of-mouth marketing engagement between click-and-brick customers and pure-click customers across the three stages of the purchasing process: before, during, and after purchase.

Click-and-Brick Strategy and Trust

2. Methodology

The present study employed a causal-comparative research design. Participants were examined across

Lack of trust in online clubs and web-based coaches is often a barrier to online purchasing. Click-and-brick companies, due to their physical presence in the markets they serve, are generally better positioned to build trust among consumers. The existence of a tangible location where customers can return products or register complaints reduces the perceived risk for consumers. Moreover, businesses embedded within a community can participate in social networks that help foster trust.

Accordingly, sports clubs that operate both online and offline—providing their diverse services through digital platforms such as websites and social media as well as through physical facilities—can enhance trust among athletes and customers. Researchers suggest that such activities facilitate trust and enable exchanges without the need for costly contracts or legal expenses. Particularly in high-risk transactions, consumers tend to rely on social relationships as a mechanism for governing trust (Steinfeld, 2002). Empirical studies have also shown that customer trust in brick-and-mortar companies tends to be higher than in pure-click companies, while click-and-brick firms are capable of generating even greater levels of trust than either brick-and-mortar or pure-click organizations.

Based on these considerations, the following hypotheses were developed:

- **Hypothesis 5:** There is a significant difference in the level of customer trust between click-and-brick customers and brick-and-mortar customers across the three stages of the purchasing process: before, during, and after purchase.

Hypothesis 6: There is a significant difference in the level of customer trust between click-and-brick customers and pure-click customers across the three stages of the purchasing process: before, during, and after purchase.

three stages of the purchasing process—before purchase, during purchase, and after purchase—



within three different service delivery strategies: brick and mortar (in person), online (pure click), click and brick, Participants and Population.

The statistical population of the study consisted of all users and customers of the Vahrezin Sports Complex. The Vahrezin Health and Wellness Center began its operations in 2017 as a sports club aimed at promoting community health. The club provides sports services for both men and women, including activities such as team sports, aerobics and physical fitness training, yoga, aquatic exercise and hydrotherapy, swimming instruction, CrossFit, and bodybuilding.

Sample

Among the athletes and visitors of the Vahrezin complex, a total of 360 participants ($n = 360$) were selected. In accordance with the measurement stages and service strategies, 120 participants were assigned to each strategy (brick and mortar, pure click, and click and brick).

3. Results

A total of 357 participants completed the questionnaires across all three stages of the study. Among the respondents, 180 were male and 177 were female. Regarding age distribution, 25% of the participants were under 25 years old, 39% were between 25 and 40 years old, 24% were between 41 and 60 years old, and 12% were over 60 years old.

Instrument

Data were collected using a questionnaire adapted from previous studies. The instrument included:

- Customer satisfaction: 5 items (Fernández & Román, 2016)
- Trust: 3 items (Corritore et al., 2005)
- Word of mouth (WOM): 6 items (Goyette et al., 2010)

For in person customers of the Vahrezin complex, paper questionnaires were distributed at all three stages of the purchasing process (before purchase, during purchase, and after purchase). For online customers, the questionnaire was provided through the support system of the club's website, where responses were recorded and stored in each participant's personal profile.

Data Analysis

To analyze the research data, Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) was employed after verifying the necessary statistical assumptions.

In terms of educational level, 15% of participants had less than a high school diploma, 33% held a high school diploma, 39% had a bachelor's degree, and 13% possessed a master's or doctoral degree.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of the Study Variables

Variable	Stage (Time)	Brick-and-Mortar		Pure-Click		Click-and-Brick	
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Customer Satisfaction	Before Purchase	15.7143	2.84379	15.6975	2.90399	17.5424	2.94869
	During Purchase	16.1176	2.87649	16.3109	3.15624	17.3220	2.98108
	After Purchase	16.0924	2.69963	16.0924	3.29353	16.8390	3.12959
Trust	Before Purchase	10.1750	1.78067	10.2250	1.75117	10.9167	1.90348
	During Purchase	10.2917	1.64698	10.2917	1.94200	11.0750	1.67112
	After Purchase	10.3250	1.67614	10.2750	1.84237	10.9250	1.86143
Word-of-Mouth (WOM)	Before Purchase	19.8120	2.80680	19.8870	3.26804	21.6053	2.86455

During Purchase	20.3333	2.91252	20.6000	2.91036	21.4649	2.93644
After Purchase	20.2650	3.06367	20.7304	2.78253	21.52	

The results of Wilks’ Lambda test presented in Table 2 indicate that the lambda (λ) values across the three stages of the purchasing process—before, during, and after purchase—were 0.868, 0.937, and 0.947, respectively. The significance levels in all three stages were less than 0.05, indicating a

statistically significant multivariate difference among the three strategies (brick and mortar, pure click, and click and brick) with respect to the combined dependent variables (customer satisfaction, trust, and word of mouth marketing).

Table 2. Results of Wilks’ Lambda Test for Comparing the Three Variables Across Purchase Stages

Stage (Time)	Value (λ)	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared	Observed Power
Before Purchase	0.868	8.479	6.000	692.000	0.000	0.068	1.000
During Purchase	0.937	3.798	6.000	694.000	0.001	0.032	0.965
After Purchase	0.947	3.219	6.000	694.000	0.004	0.027	0.929

One Way ANOVA Results within MANOVA

A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) conducted within the MANOVA framework was used to examine differences in the mean levels of customer satisfaction, trust, and word of mouth

marketing (WOM) among customers using the brick and mortar, pure click, and click and brick strategies at the pre purchase stage.

Table 3. ANOVA Results for Univariate Comparisons Across Purchase Stages

Stage	Dependent Variable	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared	Observed Power
Before Purchase	Satisfaction	269.221	2	134.610	18.049	0.000	0.094	1.000
	Trust	35.573	2	17.787	5.873	0.003	0.033	0.873
	WOM	250.645	2	125.323	14.296	0.000	0.076	0.999
During Purchase	Satisfaction	91.764	2	45.882	5.514	0.004	0.031	0.850
	Trust	45.270	2	22.635	7.831	0.000	0.043	0.951
	WOM	73.017	2	36.509	4.340	0.014	0.024	0.751
After Purchase	Satisfaction	49.373	2	24.687	2.932	0.055	0.017	0.570
	Trust	34.139	2	17.070	5.690	0.004	0.032	0.862
	WOM	88.018	2	44.009	5.363	0.005	0.030	0.840

To further examine the differences among the three purchasing strategies, a Least Significant Difference (LSD) post hoc test was conducted (Table 4).

At the pre purchase stage, the results showed no significant difference between the brick and mortar and pure click strategies in terms of customer satisfaction, trust, and word of mouth marketing. However, significant differences were observed between the click and brick strategy and the other two strategies. Specifically, the click and brick strategy showed significantly higher levels of satisfaction, trust, and word of mouth marketing

compared with both brick and mortar and pure click strategies.

At the during purchase stage, the results again indicated no significant difference between brick and mortar and pure click strategies for any of the three variables. However, click and brick customers reported significantly higher levels of satisfaction and trust compared with both other strategies. For word of mouth marketing, the difference was significant between brick and mortar and click and brick, while the difference between pure click and click and brick approached significance but was not statistically significant ($p = .053$).



At the post purchase stage, there was no significant difference between brick and mortar and pure click strategies for satisfaction, trust, or word of mouth marketing. However, significant differences were observed between click and brick and the other strategies for satisfaction and trust,

with the click and brick strategy again showing higher mean values. For word of mouth marketing, a significant difference was found between brick and mortar and click and brick, whereas the difference between pure click and click and brick was not statistically significant.

Table 4. Results of LSD Post Hoc Test for Comparing Variables Based on Purchase Strategies Across Purchase Stages

Stage	Dependent Variable	Comparison	Mean Difference	Std. Error	Sig.
Before Purchase	Satisfaction	Brick – Click	-0.063	0.356	0.860
		Brick – Click and Brick	-1.893*	0.358	0.000
		Click – Click and Brick	-1.830*	0.357	0.000
	Trust	Brick – Click	-0.067	0.227	0.769
		Brick – Click and Brick	-0.708*	0.228	0.002
		Click – Click and Brick	-0.641*	0.228	0.005
	WOM	Brick – Click	-0.154	0.386	0.690
		Brick – Click and Brick	-1.869*	0.388	0.000
		Click – Click and Brick	-1.715*	0.387	0.000
During Purchase	Satisfaction	Brick – Click	-0.231	0.376	0.538
		Brick – Click and Brick	-1.182*	0.376	0.002
		Click – Click and Brick	-0.951*	0.378	0.012
	Trust	Brick – Click	0.013	0.221	0.954
		Brick – Click and Brick	-0.757*	0.222	0.001
		Click – Click and Brick	-0.769*	0.223	0.001
	WOM	Brick – Click	-0.356	0.378	0.347
		Brick – Click and Brick	-1.094*	0.378	0.004

After Purchase	Satisfaction	Click – Click and Brick	-0.739	0.380	0.053	
		Brick – Click	0.017	0.379	0.965	
		Brick – Click and Brick	-0.787*	0.378	0.038	
	Trust	Click – Click and Brick	-0.803*	0.380	0.035	
		Brick – Click	0.105	0.226	0.644	
		Brick – Click and Brick	-0.603*	0.226	0.008	
		Click – Click and Brick	-0.708*	0.227	0.002	
		WOM	Brick – Click	-0.524	0.374	0.162
			Brick – Click and Brick	-1.218*	0.373	0.001
	Click – Click and Brick		-0.694	0.375	0.06	

Interpretation of LSD and Scheffé Post Hoc Tests

According to Table 4, the results of the LSD post hoc test indicated that there are significant differences in customer satisfaction, trust, and word of mouth marketing between customers using the click and brick strategy and those using the brick and mortar and pure click strategies at the pre purchase stage.

Furthermore, the Scheffé post hoc test (Table 5) was conducted to provide a more conservative

examination of the differences among the strategies. The results demonstrated that, overall, customer satisfaction, trust, and word of mouth marketing were significantly higher in the click and brick strategy compared with both brick and mortar and pure click strategies across the different stages of the purchasing process.

Table 5. Results of Wilks’ Lambda Test for Comparing the Three Variables Across Purchase Stages

Dependent Variable	(I) Participation Type	(J) Participation Type	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% CI Lower	95% CI Upper
SATpre	Click-and-Brick	Brick	1.06227*	0.06878	0.000	0.8932	1.2313
		Click	1.06013*	0.06864	0.000	0.8914	1.2289
TRUSTpre	Click-and-Brick	Brick	0.86759*	0.06890	0.000	0.6982	1.0370
		Click	0.83148*	0.06890	0.000	0.6621	1.0008
WOMpre	Click-and-Brick	Brick	0.97980*	0.05998	0.000	0.8324	1.1272
		Click	0.95438*	0.05998	0.000	0.8069	1.1018
SATdur	Click-and-Brick	Brick	1.02453*	0.07056	0.000	0.8511	1.1980
		Click	0.98568*	0.07071	0.000	0.8119	1.1595
TRUSTdur	Click-and-Brick	Brick	0.83725*	0.13979	0.000	0.4936	1.1809
		Click	0.83725*	0.13979	0.000	0.4936	1.1809
WOMdur	Click-and-Brick	Brick	0.66188*	0.06281	0.000	0.5075	0.8163
		Click	0.60776*	0.06294	0.000	0.4530	0.7625
SATpost	Click-and-Brick	Brick	1.10132*	0.07112	0.000	0.9265	1.2761
		Click	1.10117*	0.07126	0.000	0.9260	1.2763



TRUSTpost	Click-and-Brick	Brick	0.80335*	0.07173	0.000	0.6270	0.9797
		Click	0.82001*	0.07173	0.000	0.6437	0.9963
WOMpost	Click-and-Brick	Brick	0.93946*	0.08078	0.000	0.7409	1.1380
		Click	0.85755*	0.08112	0.000	0.6581	1.0524

4. Discussion and Conclusion

The Today, the economic growth of the sports industry largely depends on the increasing attention of people toward this phenomenon. Therefore, maintaining strong relationships with customers and sports consumers should occupy a central position in the strategic performance of sports clubs. In the digital era, selecting an appropriate strategy and formulating effective operational policies for sports clubs not only reflects the orientation of managers but also determines the level of organizational success and survival in today’s competitive environment.

The present study aimed to compare the effects of three different strategies—click-and-brick, pure brick-and-mortar, and pure online (click)—on the key indicators of customer satisfaction, trust, and word-of-mouth marketing across three stages of the purchasing process: pre-purchase, during purchase, and post-purchase in sports clubs. The findings clearly demonstrated that the click-and-brick strategy significantly outperforms the other two strategies.

The results showed that sports clubs adopting the click-and-brick strategy, by providing services through multiple channels and maintaining continuous and comprehensive interactions with customers across both physical and online platforms, were able to generate higher levels of customer satisfaction. This significant difference was observed across all three stages of the purchasing process—before, during, and after purchase—and is consistent with the findings of Harris et al. (2021), Daniel Beer and Alexander Rose (2020), Larry Weir et al. (2009), and Rita Nadaleno et al. (2014).

These findings clearly indicate that a multichannel customer experience, which allows customers to choose their preferred method of

interaction with the club based on their personal preferences, expectations, and environmental conditions, leads to greater satisfaction. From a theoretical perspective, this result supports the person–environment fit theory, which suggests that alignment between individuals’ needs and environmental opportunities enhances satisfaction. The click-and-brick strategy creates such alignment by providing a flexible environment in which time and location constraints are minimized.

The findings also indicate a significant difference in customer trust among sports club members using the click-and-brick strategy compared with the other two strategies. These results are consistent with previous studies conducted by Stella and Román (2015), Ji Wu et al. (2012), and Hui Hong and Ji Wu (2007).

Trust, as one of the most fundamental pillars of marketing, plays a critical role in establishing long-term relationships with customers. The click-and-brick strategy enhances trust by providing greater transparency of information, opportunities for multichannel interaction, and reduced perceived risk for customers. By combining the advantages of the digital environment—such as easy access to information, comparison convenience, and flexibility—with those of the physical environment—including face-to-face interaction, the ability to experience services directly, and the development of human relationships—this strategy creates a foundation for deeper and more sustainable trust.

Finally, the results revealed that the click-and-brick strategy significantly increases customers’ willingness to engage in word-of-mouth marketing across all three stages of the purchasing process. This finding is consistent

with the studies of Kim and Insook (2014), Duarte et al. (2018), and Flavián et al. (2020).

In today's marketing environment, where trust in traditional advertising has declined, word-of-mouth communication has become one of the most powerful influences on purchasing decisions. Based on the findings of this study, sports clubs that adopt the click-and-brick strategy and provide customers with an integrated and satisfying experience can effectively transform them into brand advocates. This not only reduces marketing costs but also significantly enhances the effectiveness of marketing efforts.

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

Given the novelty of research on multichannel strategies in sports clubs, a major limitation of the present study was the lack of sufficient prior research related to this topic, which restricted the availability of theoretical and empirical references for the researchers. In this study, a questionnaire was used as the primary data collection instrument; therefore, it is possible that some respondents may have refrained from providing completely accurate responses or may have given socially desirable answers.

Moreover, the study was conducted using a cross-sectional design. Individuals may respond differently to survey questions under different conditions and at different times depending on their circumstances. In addition, the multi-stage and cross-sectional nature of the research contributed to a relatively lengthy research process.

The findings of this study are primarily generalizable to sports clubs operating in the fields of fitness and wellness. Therefore, extending the results to other types of clubs, such as professional sports clubs or clubs in other sports disciplines,

5. Conflict of Interest: The authors report no conflict of interest.

6. Author Contributions: All Authors contributed equally.

should be undertaken with caution and with adequate contextual knowledge. Furthermore, due to cultural differences among Iranian consumers in their use of different service channels compared with consumers in other countries, the generalization of these findings to sports club audiences in other countries should also be approached carefully.

Omni channel sports clubs adopt a broader perspective regarding communication and service channels and how customers can be influenced, guided, and moved through different channels during their search and purchasing processes. At the same time, multichannel and Omni channel strategies have attracted considerable attention among marketing researchers; however, due to the complexity of this topic, further development of knowledge in this field remains necessary (Verhoef et al., 2015; Harris et al., 2018).

Operating in a multichannel environment, where sports clubs simultaneously benefit from both online and offline platforms, requires the development of comprehensive and well-structured strategic frameworks for modern sports club management. The present study examined the differences between the click-and-brick strategy and the pure brick-and-mortar and pure online strategies. Future researchers are therefore encouraged to focus on designing and developing comprehensive multichannel management strategies for sports clubs.

Furthermore, as many businesses are gradually transitioning from multichannel operations toward Omni channel strategies, there is a growing need for research in the field of sport management to identify and clarify the key factors and sub-factors required for implementing Omni channel environments in sports clubs.

7. Declaration: We utilized the ChatGPT language model to enhance and refine the academic writing of our paper.

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