Moving Judo Closer to the Fans:  
A Framework of Sport Consumer Engagement for  
National Judo Federations

Mariana Ziemkiewicz de Carvalho Pinto

Master’s Program in Sport and Olympic Studies,  
Master’s Program in Health and Sport Sciences,  
Graduate School of Comprehensive Human Sciences,  
University of Tsukuba

2019
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Right after the fourth surgery on my elbow that ended my career as an athlete one of my biggest concerns was the fear of no longer having Judo in my life. Eleven years later I now see myself completing a master’s degree in the university founded by Jigoro Kano shihan with a study attempting to apply marketing – the second career I chose – to facilitate the growth of Judo. Life has been generous in offering me opportunities to recycle old broken dreams into incredible achievements and surrounded by supportive people who I will always be grateful for.

To the whole TIAS family, including all professors, members of the office and colleagues from the four batches, my appreciation for the learning and moments we shared. Special thanks to the support received from my academic supervisor, Associate Professor Yoshio Takahashi, and to Dr. Devena Haggis, for the always kind help.

To Guido Sensei (in memoriam), whose passion for teaching will be always an inspiration and whose pleasant presence left great memories. Your impact in my life will make a Brazilian soccer lover cheer (only a little) for the Germans in the next World Cup. Wish we could laugh about this over some beers and cheese naans.

To the ‘Brazilian House’ friends, for the great times full of laughter, interesting talks and oishii barbecues. We will sure meet again somewhere in the world. To Motoki, the best-tutor-ever who turned out to be also a good friend. And to the Brazilian friends, for making Tsukuba warmer and funnier. Can’t wait to have you all in Rio with us!

To the beloved ones I had to be away from during these eighteen months - my family and close friends - I refuse to try to find the proper words to express my gratitude. We will soon be together to celebrate this love that was never affected by the thousands of kilometers between us.

Finally, to Taci, my best friend, wife, unofficial supervisor and amazing partner throughout this whole journey, my gratitude for being the inspiration and support I needed, for continuously and kindly raising the bar and for never letting go of my hand. The gentle way has brought us from Lima to Tsukuba, and I definitely could not have chosen a better person to cross the world with.
ABSTRACT

Engaged consumers can contribute in many ways to a sport organization’s sustainable growth by directly and indirectly generating revenue and co-creating value regardless of sporting performance. The importance of the fans for the survival of sport organizations such as national federations in an ever-growing competitive marketplace has challenged marketers to develop strategies intended to strengthen the bond between consumer and sport. Therefore, this study aimed to explore the status, challenges and benefits of implementing sport consumer engagement strategies in national Judo federations and offer recommendations that consider the structure and objectives of these organizations. To this end, semi-structured interviews were conducted with nine professionals in Brazil, Germany, Great Britain and Japan to elucidate the marketing context of national Judo federations and the use of five engagement pillars as tools to strengthen the connection with Judo consumers: events, membership, licensed merchandise, idols and social media. An analysis of 1,596 tweets was also undertaken to investigate the type of content, the growth of followers and the engagement rates of the national Judo federations Twitter accounts. Findings revealed that in general these organizations struggle to implement solid marketing strategies focused on consumers due to lack of resources and a major emphasis on sporting performance. Event attendance was found as a common issue, especially to attract non-judokas audience, while membership rates have been consistently decreasing in Germany and Japan. Twitter analysis revealed a massive focus on informative posts (86.5%), suggesting that national Judo federations are using the platform as a one-way communication tool rather than fostering engagement. A framework was then proposed to lead the organizations through the engagement path, considering the importance of designing Judo as a product accordingly with the dynamic directions indicated by the fans and delivered through the five engagement pillars.

Keywords: sport consumer engagement, national federation, Judo, sport marketing.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ........................................................................................................ i
ABSTRACT ........................................................................................................................... ii
TABLE OF CONTENTS .......................................................................................................... iii
LIST OF FIGURES .............................................................................................................. v
LIST OF TABLES ................................................................................................................. vi
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS .................................................................................................. vii

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION ............................................................................................. 1
  The ‘Gentle Way’ ..................................................................................................................... 2
  Context of Study .................................................................................................................... 4
  Delimitation .......................................................................................................................... 5
  Definition of Terms .............................................................................................................. 5

CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW .................................................................................... 7
  Relationship Marketing ........................................................................................................ 7
  Sport Consumer Behavior .................................................................................................... 12
  Sport Consumer Engagement .............................................................................................. 15
  The Five Engagement Pillars ............................................................................................... 21

CHAPTER 3. METHODOLOGY ............................................................................................. 25
  Research Design .................................................................................................................. 25
  Data Collection and Procedures ......................................................................................... 25
  Participants .......................................................................................................................... 27
  Data Analysis ...................................................................................................................... 27

CHAPTER 4. RESULTS .......................................................................................................... 29
  National Judo Federations Marketing Contexts ................................................................... 29
Brazil .................................................................................................................. 29
Germany ........................................................................................................... 34
Great Britain ..................................................................................................... 36
Japan ................................................................................................................... 39
Engagement Pillars ......................................................................................... 42
Events ............................................................................................................... 42
Membership ....................................................................................................... 47
Licensed Merchandise ....................................................................................... 52
Idols ................................................................................................................. 54
Social Media ...................................................................................................... 56

CHAPTER 5. DISCUSSION ................................................................................. 70
Paving the Path for Engagement ...................................................................... 70
Moving Judo Closer to the Fans ....................................................................... 79

CHAPTER 6. CONCLUSION ............................................................................. 83
Limitations .......................................................................................................... 86
Future Perspectives ........................................................................................... 86

REFERENCES .................................................................................................... 88
APPENDIX A: Script of questions for the semi-structured interview ................... 99
APPENDIX B: Observational field notes of the 2018 Brazilian U21 Championship .... 100
APPENDIX C: Observational field notes of the 2018 Osaka Judo Grand Slam .......... 101
APPENDIX D: Informed Consent ....................................................................... 102
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. The Psychological Continuum Model (PCM) adapted from Funk et al. (2016, p. 171) .......................................................................................................................... 16
Figure 2. Psychological and Behavioral Engagement within the PCM adapted from Funk et al. (2016, p. 185) ........................................................................................................ 16
Figure 3. Poster of the AJF MIND program ......................................................................................................................... 41
Figure 4. National Judo Federations Annual Membership Evolution .................................................................................... 48
Figure 5. Number of Daily Tweets Posted by Judo National Federations in this Study ........ 61
Figure 6. Daily Accumulated Growth of Twitter Followers ................................................................................................. 62
Figure 7. Daily Accumulated Per-Post Engagement Rate ................................................................................................. 62
Figure 8. A Framework of Sport Consumer Engagement for National Judo Federations....... 79
LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Types of Events Reported in the Interviews ..................................................43
Table 2. Members of the National Judo Federations in this Study .................................47
Table 3. Followers on Official Social Media Platforms ..............................................57
Table 4. Summary of Twitter Data Collection ................................................................59
Table 5. Types of Twitter posts by National Federation ..............................................60
Table 6. National Judo Federations Twitter Content by Categories ..............................64
Table 7. Frequency and Coverage of Tweets by Content Category .............................67
Table 8. Average Engagement Rate by Content Category ..........................................69
# ABBREVIATIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AJF</td>
<td>All Japan Judo Federation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BJA</td>
<td>British Judo Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CBJ</td>
<td>Brazilian Judo Confederation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRM</td>
<td>Customer Relationship Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DJB</td>
<td>German Judo Federation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IIF</td>
<td>International Judo Federation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IOC</td>
<td>International Olympic Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NF</td>
<td>National Federation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGB</td>
<td>National Governing Body NOC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>National Olympic Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PCM</td>
<td>Psychological Continuum Model</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

Sport organizations are being constantly challenged. While in the past success was almost exclusively related with on-field achievement, the cultural and economic changes within the society added several new and complex variables that can determine success in the sport market. Among other reasons, the fast growth of technologies removed any existent boundary for sport consumption and the sport marketplace became overcrowded, offering fans a nearly endless range of options (Rein, Kotler, & Shields, 2006). Growth in sport organizations can no longer be measured solely by winning championships as on-field achievements are uncertain and therefore not sustainable (Allison, 2013). Trophies and medals indicate the success of teams and athletes, but from a marketing perspective the organizational strategic growth goes beyond and include, among other variables, the relationship with its target consumers. In the context of the sport industry, sustainability relies in the quality of customer engagement (Bradley, 2012).

Sport consumers are crucial due to their contribution to the development of sport organizations in different ways: they directly generate revenue through ticketing, licensed goods sales and membership programs, drive the earnings from sponsorships, naming rights and broadcasting deals, co-create the event’s atmosphere leading to a better experience for all spectators and can even interfere in the sporting performance (Bühler & Nufer, 2010; Funk, Alexandris, & McDonald, 2016; Gray & Wert-Gray, 2012; Silva & Las Casas, 2017; Yoshida, Heere, & Gordon, 2015). The undeniable importance of fans for the survival and development of the sport business has shown organizations in the field the need for understanding supporters to establish and maintain a quality relationship with them (Bee & Kahle, 2006; Bühler & Nufer, 2010). This is, in fact, the foundation of Relationship Marketing, a concept still widely overlooked by sport organizations and to which these entities must switch their mindset if aiming to leverage sustainable growth focusing on their customers and, therefore, fostering engagement (Allison, 2013).

Though relationship marketing has been extensively discussed in the sport marketing literature (Abeza, O’Reilly, & Reid, 2013; Bee & Kahle, 2006; Bühler & Nufer, 2010; Ferrand & McCarthy, 2008; Roșca, 2013; Stavros, Pope, & Winzar, 2008; Tsiotsovou, 2013), implementation of this concept in the reality of sport organizations such as National Federations (NF), also known as National Governing Bodies (NGB), face different challenges. Even the establishment of a marketing department and strategy relies on a minimum level of
professionalization of sport entities, which must develop contemporary management structure and overcome the barriers of professionalization that are imposed by their internal and external environment and sometimes by the organization itself (Siegfried, Schlesinger, Bayle, & Giauque, 2015). In addition, all sports are driven by the availability of financial and human resources to deliver a product, as pointed out by Ferrand and McCarthy (2008). Even when it comes to professionalized sport organizations such as football clubs of major leagues such as the English Premier League, the implementation of modern marketing strategies is restricted due to lack of resources and a more fan-centric approach and long-term sustainable strategy is commonly overlooked by short-term revenue growth and on-field performance success (Allison, 2013). The controversial aspect of this mindset is that the funds usually needed to improve sporting performance can be sourced from the outcomes of a well-designed marketing strategy focused on enhancing the engagement of sport consumers. The results of this approach are, indeed, more manageable than the complex performance and almost unpredictable sporting achievements of the athletes (J. M. Gladden & Funk, 2002; J. M. Gladden & Milne, 2004).

Yet benefits achieved from successful sport consumer engagement strategies are important and desired, the process through which organizations strengthen the connection of fans with the sport may be quite complex. Beyond the need of a well-structured marketing department, the path of engagement combines perspectives from the organization where a relationship approach is implemented to design a product with a defined and distinctive brand identity (Bühler & Nufer, 2010; Funk et al., 2016; J. M. Gladden & Funk, 2002), and from the consumers, whose decision-making process leads to a journey towards reducing the gap between the individual and the sport object (Funk & James, 2001; Gray & Wert-Gray, 2012). Both perspectives, though, are also highly influenced by the environment organizations and consumers are immersed in. Therefore, the following section provides a brief overview of Judo in order to contextualize this study.

The ‘Gentle Way’

Created in Japan in 1882, Judo was developed as a method of education derived from traditional forms of combat and was spread throughout the world by the Japanese immigrants before the foundation of the International Judo Federation (IJF), the world governing body, that is constituted of 195 national federations in five continents (International Judo Federation [IJF], n.d.). The Japanese word can be translated as ‘the gentle way’ and its meaning is based in the core values proposed by Jigoro Kano Shihan (Japanese for master instructor), the founder
of Judo (CNN, 2017). Kano created the ‘gentle way’ with the purpose of training body and mind with the ultimate goal of contributing to society and benefiting the world (Sanada, n.d.). Among many teachings, the founder of Judo developed two main concepts that are the essence of the ‘gentle way’: Seiryoku-Zenyo means ‘maximum efficient use of energy’, while Jita-Kyoei reflects the idea of ‘mutual prosperity for self and others’ (Kodokan, n.d.-b).

As a sport, Judo was included in the Olympic Games program for the first time in Tokyo 1964, became an official Olympic sport in Munich 1972 and has been present in every edition since then (International Olympic Committee [IOC], n.d.). Being part of the largest sporting event in the world helped to encourage individuals around the globe to practice the sport and was a catalyst to spread it throughout the five continents (Mazzei, 2015), achieving the current number of approximately twenty million practitioners (L. Allan, IJF Competition Manager, personal communication, April 4, 2018). Moreover, Judo has evolved over the last decades as one of the most relevant sports of the Olympic program, reaching high rates of television audience during the Games. For example, the live coverage of the men’s +100kg final was the most viewed event in France with over five million viewers (IOC, 2017), while in Brazil, the host country, Judo was ranked in the top five sports with highest television audience, reaching 41.7 million individuals (Kantar Ibope Media, 2016).

In fact, even though the Olympic Games plays a vital role for the success of the sport, the international appeal of Judo is somehow extended to the World Judo Tour, managed by the IJF and composed of eighteen televised events in 2018 – two World Championships, one World Masters, five Grand Slams and ten Grand Prix (IJF, 2018b). As an illustration of the commercial power of the sport, the 2017 Suzuki World Championships held in Budapest had an estimated global audience of 220 million on TV & Web according with the IJF Competition Manager (L. Allan, personal communication, April 3, 2018), setting a new audience record as the most viewed World Judo Championship, overtaking the Astana 2015 edition, that had 193 million viewers worldwide (Pavitt, 2015).

Although the international audience rates may show steady growth in terms of international events, the well-known crowded marketplace in which all sports exist demands sustained attention on the fan’s decision-making process to understand their connection with the sport and secure the fan base (Rein et al., 2006). Besides, the relatively good success on the world stage is not well transferred to a country context. Ferrand and McCarthy (2008) identified that a national Judo federation faces challenges for marketing the sport as media attention is
not naturally attracted to the sport and therefore the limited exposure within a country harms the promotion of Judo.

As different perspectives can enrich discussions and offer diverse points of view, this study analyzes national Judo federations in four countries that were chosen due to their similarities and disparities. Brazil, Great Britain, Germany and Japan can be considered nations where Judo has a good level of relevance in the sport system as they figure in the top ten countries by number of medals in the history of the Olympic Games (JudoInside, n.d.). The sport environment of each country also brings different challenges for each NF. For instance, Great Britain and Brazil have recently held editions of the Olympic Games (London 2012 and Rio 2016), while Japan is getting ready for the Tokyo 2020 Games. On the other hand, though Germany is not scheduled to host this world multi-sport event, within the Judo context the country has recently upgraded the traditional Dusseldorf Grand Prix to Grand Slam status. The challenges for promoting Judo are also different in each country, varying with the competitiveness of the sport market in each context. For instance, while Brazilian judokas account for the highest number of Olympic medals in the country’s history, the massive importance of soccer harms the penetration of Judo in the media and imposes barriers for the NF evolution.

In this sense, the implementation of sport consumer engagement strategies might be even more important for the sustainable growth of these organizations not only due to Judo’s reported difficulties of being promoted and somehow supported by the traditional media in a national perspective, but also as a consequence of all aforementioned challenges that every sport organization has to deal with. The already difficult goal of starting, maintaining and strengthening the relationship between Judo and its consumers is also affected by the lack of research in this field of study applied to the context of Judo and of national federations. It is important, therefore, to deepen the understanding of these organizations marketing context so interventions aimed to engage fans can be implemented, facilitating the growth of Judo beyond the on-mat performance.

Context of Study

Based on the previous outline, the aim of this study was to explore the status, challenges and possible outcomes of the implementation of sport consumer engagement strategies in national Judo federations and offer recommendations that consider the structure and objectives
of these organizations combined with the requirements of the whole process of fostering consumer engagement. To meet these goals, the study focuses on (i) a review of literature that combined the perspectives of the organization and of the consumers in the development of strategies to strengthen the connection with the sport; (ii) exploring the strategic objectives attached to marketing of the national Judo federations of Brazil, Germany, Great Britain and Japan to understand the role of consumers for the growth of these organizations; (iii) describing the implemented marketing activities aimed at relating with consumers; and (iv) analyzing the current challenges and barriers for improving consumer engagement strategies.

**Delimitation**

The scope of this study was delimited to examine marketing strategies aimed at improving the relationship between consumers and the national Judo federations. Therefore, aspects related to other stakeholders such as sponsors or media, and with regards to other Judo organizations such as international and regional federations were not investigated. Additionally, to allow a valuable level of depth in the study considering its timeframe only the national Judo federations of Brazil, Germany, Great Britain and Japan were analyzed. Finally, strategies for engaging practitioners with the sport were investigated solely through a marketing perspective, even though other variables such as coaching practices, for instance, may also affect this process.

**Definition of Terms**

*Dojo* is the room or hall where Judo is practiced.

*Fan or supporter* is anyone that identifies with a particular sport object on a cognitive, affective and behavior-specific level; usually also considered a sport consumer.

*Judogi* is the uniform used to practice Judo.

*Judoka* is the Judo practitioner.

*Practitioner* is anyone who practices sport at any level – amateur or professional.

*Relationship Marketing* in sports is the “establishment and maintenance of positive, enduring and mutually beneficial relations between professional sporting organizations and their stakeholders” (Bühler & Nufer, 2010, p. 25).
Spectator is anyone who attends or watches a sport event by any media (TV, internet, etc).

Sport Consumer is anyone that engages in any type of consumption; among others, including spectators, fans and practitioners.

Sport Consumer Engagement is the psychological and behavioral connection between a consumer and a sport object. Strengthening Sport Consumer Engagement means developing a closer, consistent and enduring relationship with fans.
CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter aims to examine the existing literature on the path of sport engagement from the perspective of both the sport organization and the sport consumer, targeting the identification of parallels and the recognition of marketing activities applicable for national federations. First, an overview regarding the foundations and features of a relationship marketing approach is presented with a review of the characteristics of sport organizations and their products and branding challenges. From the emerging need of understanding their stakeholders, with a special focus on consumers, the discussion is then deepened on the aspects of sport consumer behavior and the psychological forces that drive the connection between fans and sport.

A model outlining the sport consumer engagement process is then introduced and analyzed, combining aspects from the organization perspective and the decision-making process a sport consumer goes through while actually engaging with a sport object or activity. Marketing practices in each stage of engagement will be presented to facilitate managerial understanding and application. The preceding discussion is then followed by the identification of five engagement pillars and a brief overview of each of them is given at the end of the chapter.

Relationship Marketing

Over the past two decades, the theory and implementation of marketing strategies raised the importance of a new approach more focused on the consumer and associated relationships rather than a transactional marketing approach that is more product-centred. Confirming this movement, Buttle (1996, p.1) stated that, “marketing is no longer simply about developing, selling, and delivering products. It is progressively more concerned with the development and maintenance of mutually satisfying long-term relationships”. In this relational approach, the exchange is based on the cooperation that is the consequence of the values shared by the parts involved in the relationship, while transactional exchanges expect to deliver extrinsic factors such as money or other rewards in exchange of a high level good or service (Bee & Kahle, 2006).

In the context of sports, a considerable amount of research was undertaken on the relationship marketing and its importance to this specific industry (Bee & Kahle, 2006; Bühler
& Nufer, 2010; Ferrand & McCarthy, 2008; Tsiotsou, 2013). The relevance of relationship marketing in sport can be better realized through the cultural and economic evolution that changed the society over the last century, affecting the sport industry and creating the elusive fan (Rein et al., 2006). The same authors suggest that these changes are derived from the Three Sports Generations: the Monopoly Generation (1900 – 1950), the Television Generation (1950-1990) and the Highlight Generation (1990 – Present). In summary, the revolution caused by television and the fast growth of technologies offered the fans an almost endless range of options. Attempting to retain this elusive consumer in this competitive market, the industry then moved the fan to the center of attention and began to focus on developing a relationship rather than merely attracting new consumers (Rein et al., 2006). Benefits of the shift to a relational approach include also the possibility to repair damaged relationships with fans that are unhappy with the organization, avoiding the fan apathy that can reduce attendance and television ratings, as well as all other incomes derived from fan consumption (Kim & Trail, 2011). Furthermore, an increase in profitability and sustainability of the sport organization is another potential outcome of a relationship marketing approach in this industry (Achen, 2014).

These advantages are consequences of the core concept of relationship marketing, which underlines the importance of long-term customer retention by moving the consumer to a higher level of psychological attachment and better attitudinal positions (Bee & Kahle, 2006). Moreover, Bühler and Nufer (2010, p. 25) defined relationship marketing in sports as “the establishment and maintenance of positive, enduring and mutually beneficial relations between professional sporting organizations and their stakeholders”. Thus, two important aspects of the implementation of a relationship marketing strategy in sport organizations arise from this definition: the quality of the relationship and the parts involved.

Regarding the first aspect, as a positive relationship must be ensured, an understanding on what quality means is a vital part of a successful strategy (Kim & Trail, 2011). The purpose of engaging in a relationship must be clear to the parts involved, allowing a mutual effort and commitment towards achieving the objectives and contributing to a positive perception of the association (Parvatiyar & Sheth, 2000). A conceptual model to understand the quality of a sport consumer relationship was developed by Kim and Trail (2011) and proposes five constructs that jointly represent the concept of relationship quality in sport: trust, commitment, intimacy, self-connection and reciprocity. In addition, the same study suggests that a quality relationship between sport consumer and organization can influence four primary behaviors of the fans.
(word of mouth, merchandise consumption, media consumption and attendance), which reinforce the relevance of ensuring a quality relationship in order to foster engagement.

The second aspect stemming from the definition of relationship marketing in sport is the importance of the two parts involved. As a relationship is based on the existence of at least two partners, marketers must have a clear and solid knowledge about the two ends of this relation: the sport organization and its products; and the sport stakeholders and consumers (Ferrand & McCarthy, 2008).

Towards the understanding of the first aspect, the sport organization and its products, it is important to highlight the unique characteristics of the sport industry, as sport organizations can manage and provide tangible products (e.g., licensed merchandise), pure services (e.g., sport lesson) or in many cases even a combination of both (e.g., sport event) (Funk et al., 2016). Another approach for the definition of sports products include three different categories - spectator sports, participation sports and sporting goods, apparel, athletic shoes and sport related products (Fullerton & Merz, 2008) as explained below.

According to the same authors, the spectator sports product main marketing objective is to sell tickets and increase media exposure and consumption. In both cases, the product is represented by the game or the event itself. Hence, among other variables, the importance of the field of play competition in the customer satisfaction level is highlighted, as attested in the sport marketing literature when focusing on the performance of the spectator’s preferred team (Kim & Trail, 2011; Van Leeuwen, Quick, & Daniel, 2002).

Regarding participation sports, the key marketing objective is not only increasing the number of participants, but also raising the frequency rates of participation in a sport activity. In this case, the product sold by sports marketers is the participation in organized leagues and tournaments, the casual practice of the sport activity or even the access to sport facilities where the participants can practice the sport (Fullerton & Merz, 2008). In the tennis segment, for instance, the individual’s athletic skill level influences the participation rates in the sport, suggesting that sport organizations focused on participation should consider developing strategies to contribute with the on-field performance improvement of the participants (Casper, 2007). Accordingly, personal performance emerged as an antecedent of service quality in the context of running events, implying that event organizers should support participants to achieve their own performance goals as a way of influencing the participant’s decision-making process for the following events (Du, Jordan, & Funk, 2015).
Finally, the category of *sporting goods, apparel, athletic shoes and sport related products* represents the most tangible goods of the sport industry. It is composed of a broad range of items, from sports equipment to licensed goods and souvenirs sold at sports venues (Fullerton & Merz, 2008). In regard to licensed merchandise consumption, Y. Kwon and Kwak's (2014) study provides two important managerial implications. First, emotional value was found as a key driver in the consumer’s decision process of buying any kind of team related product, suggesting that sport organizations should emphasize values such as pride and fun, for example, in their marketing campaigns. Additionally, strong team identification can determine the perception of value of a licensed good, indicating that understanding and enhancing the level of connection between the fan and the sport organization can be critical for consumption.

In general, sport organizations might struggle to have a clear definition of their core products, as most of the times the industry is dominated by services whose intangible aspects make this definition extremely complex (Funk et al., 2016). However, the challenge for sport national federations can be even bigger, as this type of organization must also develop and manage, at the same time, sport spectator products (e.g., focusing on increase attendance and media consumption of their national events, teams and athletes, as well as improving or sustaining an high level on-field performance), sport participation products (e.g., aiming to enhance the number of practitioners and the frequency of participation) and sometimes even sporting goods, apparel, athletic shoes and sport related products (e.g., leveraging revenue from national team uniform and other licensed merchandise).

Facing such a complex and mainly intangible sports products portfolio, a solid strategy to build a strong sport brand may emerge as a possible solution (Funk et al., 2016). Considering that this quite intricate portfolio of one single national federation is also competing in the marketplace with all other equally complex national federation portfolios, as well as with all others sport entities, the need for finding a distinctive brand identity arises.

In this sense, the role of brand identity is to provide direction, purpose and meaning by establishing a strategy to develop how it should be perceived by the consumers, whose thoughts and ideas towards a specific product or event constitutes what is called brand image (Aaker, 1996). Although the antecedents of sports brand identity will be further discussed in the following section the concept itself plays an important role in the process of building a remarkable product as it is also an antecedent of brand equity (Keller, 1993). In the context of sport, J. M. Gladden and Milne (2004) defined brand equity as the added value that sport
consumers attach to their favorite team through their brand elements. In practical terms, the same authors noted that, regarding merchandise sales in the spectator sports market, brand equity can have more importance than the winning percentage of the teams, suggesting that sport marketers should focus on brand management as sport performance is inconsistent, difficult to predict and out of a sport marketer’s control.

The path between the sport product and the sport consumer can be paved by the development of a strong branding strategy, as the role of brand identity is to create a relationship between the brand and their customers (Aaker, 1996). Therefore, after identifying the sport product and branding it in a solid, authentic and distinctive way, it is important to move the focus to the second component of the relationship: the sport stakeholders and consumers.

Sport entities deal with different organizations and individuals that can influence their success or be influenced by it and with whom they must develop a relationship. In the context of a professional sporting organization, which is defined by Bühler and Nufer (2010, p.51) as “clubs, associations or teams which are involved in spectator sports on a professional level”, eight main stakeholders are listed by the authors and can be divided into two categories: sponsors, fans/spectators and media belongs to the primary customers category, while governments/authorities, employees, agents/agencies, competitors and other external stakeholders belongs to the secondary customers one. Although the proposition made by the authors does not reflect the entire market of national federations, the suggested list of stakeholders gives a glimpse of the complex network of relationships that sport organizations must manage.

Yet the ranking of importance between stakeholders varies depending on organizational goals and contexts, the vital aspect of the need for supporters for any kind of sport entity is undeniable. Sport consumer importance is also related to the creation of value for other stakeholders: for example, the media aims to build audience through the supporters and sponsors want to spread their advertising messages to and through them (Roșca, 2013). Sport consumers are also important as they directly and indirectly generate revenue, co-create the atmosphere of the events, influence the athlete’s performance (Bühler & Nufer, 2010; Funk et al., 2016; Silva & Las Casas, 2017) and are, as practitioners, the base of the entire sport system (Smolianov, Zakus, & Gallo, 2015).
By playing such an essential role for the success of any sport organization, the need of understanding who the sport consumers are and why and how they connect with a sport object arises as a vital part of a sport marketing strategy. The following section aims to present the academic knowledge related to this field of study.

**Sport Consumer Behavior**

While explaining the meaning of sport consumer behavior, Funk (2008, p.4) stated that this field of study is “about the journey, not the destination”, attempting to emphasize the importance of the path that leads the sport consumer to effectively experience the sport object (e.g., event, athlete and sport). It relates to the conduct and the psychological and physical responses derived from the process of seeking out and engaging in a sport experience in order to obtain benefits and satisfy needs and wants while spending finite amounts of time, money and effort (Funk et al., 2016; Schwarz, Hunter, & LaFleur, 2013).

In order to understand this journey, a sport consumer decision-making model was developed being constituted of three phases: the *inputs*, composed by the external forces such as marketing activities and the socio-cultural factors that can influence the sport consumer on defining if the sport object can satisfy their needs and provide the desired benefits; the *internal processing* phase, which relates to the psychological forces such as motivation, attitudes, personality and perceptions that evaluate the inputs of the previous phase through the sport consumer’s psychological mechanisms; and the *outputs* phase, the final stage related to attitude formation and change derived from the sport experience, as well as to the behavior outcomes that define frequency and complexity of the actual behavior and also the intentions to behave in the future (Funk, 2008; Funk et al., 2016; Funk & James, 2001).

The external forces that are part of the input phase emphasize the importance of marketing activities as it can influence the entire decision process of engaging in a sport experience or not. Following the concept of brand identity presented in the previous section, the framework of customer-based brand equity proposed by Keller (1993) describes that the image of the brand has two main components: the brand awareness, meaning that the consumer must be aware of the existence of the brand, and brand associations, which contains the meaning of the brand in the consumer’s mind and is categorized into attributes, benefits and attitudes.
In the context of team sports, brand associations “captures experiential and emotional benefits that consumers receive through the consumption of sport” (J. M. Gladden & Funk, 2002, p. 56). The Team Association Model was developed by the same authors to apply brand association theory to the sport industry and is composed of sixteen dimensions grouped into three categories: attributes (success, head coach, star player, management, stadium, logo design, product delivery, and tradition), benefits (identification, nostalgia, pride in place, escape and peer group acceptance) and attitude (importance, knowledge and affect) (J. M. Gladden & Funk, 2002). Although this model may not fit the reality of all sports and sport organizations, it provides an essential perspective on the different components that drive brand association and influence the decision-making process of engaging in sport. Marketers in national federations must understand which attributes, benefits and attitudes are more relevant to their target markets and manage their activities in order to position the brand in a way that meets their desires and fosters association with the sport object.

Regarding the effect of the socio-cultural environment role on the decision-making process, reference groups such as family, social class, age cohort, culture and sub-culture as well as a broad range of demographic and geographic aspects can influence the sport consumer perception towards the sport object (Funk et al., 2016). Therefore, even though marketers have little control over these forces, comprehension of these factors may help to drive these influencing agents in an advantageous way towards fulfilling the sport organization goals (Schwarz et al., 2013).

Once sport consumers receive the inputs the internal processing phase begins and the psychological forces of each consumer perform evaluation of the information, past experiences and stimuli received (Funk et al., 2016). This unobservable process occurs in the “mental box” of each individual and includes activities such as need recognition, information search and evaluation of alternatives (Funk, 2008; Schwarz et al., 2013). In the sport consumer behaviour literature, many psychological factors are discussed within this phase such as motivation, attitudes, personality, perception and learning process. The first two are the most relevant and widely researched ones and therefore are described below.

Motivation refers to the forces that trigger the drive for satisfying needs and wants (Funk et al., 2016; Kurpis & Bozman, 2011; Schwarz et al., 2013). Although spectators and participants are both influenced by motivation, sport marketing literature often focuses on the first group (Prayag & Gravel, 2014), as considerable research and scales were developed aiming
to explain sport event attendance. Within this context, the SPEED scale (Funk, Filo, Beaton, & Pritchard, 2009) stands out and is well recognized by its “excellence performance in explaining attendance and team commitment” (Pons, Giroux, & Mourali, 2014, p. 29). The scale is based on the five facets of spectator motivation: Socialization, Performance, Excitement, Esteem and Diversion (SPEED), and provides a useful tool with which sport event marketers can segment their targets and direct their activities.

In the participation market, few studies have traced the motivation to engage in sport. Prayag and Grivel's (2014) research on the motivation factors for youth participants of an international sport event found seven dimensions: competing with other participants, escape, excitement, learning & discovery, participation and socialization. Another study focusing on the motives of martial arts participants found three main reasons for engaging in this type of sport (fun, physical fitness and aesthetics), although other motives such as personal growth were also important (Ko, Kim, & Valacich, 2010). An important finding from this last study refers to the differences in the motives related to each martial art discipline, as well as participant’s level of experience and competition orientation.

The second relevant psychological factor in sport consumer behavior, attitude refers to the general thoughts, feelings or behavior predisposition towards a sport object that are often formed due to influences of the socio-cultural environment and the individual’s own personality (Funk et al., 2016; Schwarz et al., 2013). Several models aim to explain the attitude formation and identification, though the most used is the tri-component model of attitudes proposed by Schiffman and Kanuk (2004), which considers three aspects that shape evaluation towards the object: the affective, the cognitive and the conative-behavioral. In the sport consumer environment, these components are respectively related to the feelings and emotional responses toward the sport object, the knowledge and perceptions assimilated in previous sport related experiences and the observable behavior and likelihood to perform an action related to the sport object (Funk et al., 2016; Schwarz et al., 2013). The Fan Attitude Network (FAN) model provides a framework to explain how the internalization and the development of a sport identity into the psychological mechanism of an individual influences attitude formation and change, which in turn strengthen the connection between the individual and the sport object, guiding the individual to behave accordingly (Funk & James, 2004).

Thus, the inputs received by external forces are processed and evaluated in the individual’s mind (internal processing phase), and the results lead to the last phase of the sport
consumer decision-making process: the outputs phase. In this stage, the outcomes are observed in both the attitudinal and behavioral dimensions and, through a feedback looping system, influence future decisions (Funk et al., 2016).

**Sport Consumer Engagement**

In the general marketing literature, customer engagement is characterized by the individual’s voluntary contribution to the marketing functions of the brand he/she is engaged with (Harmeling, Moffett, Arnold, & Carlson, 2017). With regards to the sport marketing literature, a wide body of research exists on engagement. A literature review performed by Yoshida, Gordon, Nakazawa, and Biscaia (2014) identified four types of sport consumer engagement behavior in the spectator segment: sport-related behaviors, impression-management behaviors, relationship-building behaviors, and non-transactional extra-role behaviors, also called fan-engagement behavior.

Although the authors utilized a behavioral approach to describe and define the types of engagement, each concept in the framework has at least one well-discussed psychological factor as antecedent, (e.g., attitude, motivation, identification, involvement). Therefore, when aiming to build the foundation of sport engagement behavior through marketing strategies, developing a strong connection between the consumer and the sport object must be emphasized. In this sense, the Psychological Continuum Model (PCM) emerges as an important tool to develop the psychological engagement and understand its correlation with behavioral engagement (Park, Andrew, & Mahony, 2008).

The PCM is a stage-based theoretical framework proposed by Funk and James (2001) that outlines the progression of sport engagement and is based on the inputs, throughputs and outcomes of the sport consumer decision-making process, as illustrated on Figure 1. The framework is composed by four hierarchical stages, each with distinct psychological connections: awareness, attraction, attachment and allegiance.
**Figure 1.** The Psychological Continuum Model (PCM) adapted from Funk et al. (2016, p. 171)

While an individual moves through the stages, his/her psychological or attitudinal engagement evolves from minimal to enhanced and his/her behavioral engagement goes from none/trial and exploratory in the first stage to a consistent and enduring one in the final step (Funk, 2008; Funk et al., 2016), as illustrated on Figure 2. For a better understanding of the characteristics and difference in the stages, framework’ phases are described below with an attempt to contextualize them within a national federation and complemented with studies related with the features of each stage.

**Figure 2.** Psychological and Behavioral Engagement within the PCM adapted from Funk et al. (2016, p. 185)
The awareness stage represents the initial contact of the individual with the sport when a minimal psychological connection is formed by acknowledging the existence of the sport, commonly due to the external forces such as socialization agents and the socio-cultural environment in which the consumer lives (Funk & James, 2001). The psychological process within this stage is based on the cognitive acknowledgment that the sport or event exists, as well as a few other simple facts about it. There is no emotional connection or positive affect toward the sport (Funk & James, 2004). Applied to the context of Judo, for example, it relates to the acknowledgement that Judo exists, and is a martial art, has some specific athletes, can be practiced or watched in some specific ways costing a certain amount of time, money or effort. As the individuals in this phase must learn about the sport, reference groups, the physical environment, mass media and the family and friends play important roles to establish this initial connection, suggesting that marketers must focus on the spread of knowledge about the sport and use socialization agents as multipliers of the message (Funk et al., 2016).

In this sense, both social media and the local community can be strategic tools for national federations. Social media because it combines its wide reach with a relatively low cost compared with other traditional media, while at the same time takes advantage of the influence of the reference groups, adding a trust component to the basic cognitive information (Funk et al., 2016). Also, the local community offers both a feasible and an identity component to engage in the sport. Feasible because it is geographically close to the individual, which reduces most of the perceived constraints such as location, cost and access to information (Kim & Trail, 2010); and identity, as it can set the bases for psychological outcomes such as sense of belonging, sport identification and pride in place (Funk & James, 2004; Yoshida et al., 2015). Due to national federation limitations in directly approaching every local community, it is important that these entities proactively encourage and even capacitate their affiliate members such as state or regional federations, as well as the clubs and training centers across the country to promote the sport and the local events and idols through a marketing strategy.

The outcomes of the first stage, which are the knowledge about the sport object and the realization of opportunities to engage with it, are then provided as inputs to the second stage, attraction (Funk & James, 2001). In this phase, the increased knowledge acquired triggers the individual’s search on whether this sport activity can satisfy their own needs and desires, as well as engage in a trial experience, allowing the consumer to compare the outcomes of this activity with other options available or past experiences. This evaluation occurs based on psychological forces related to brand associations and motivation, based on the analysis on
whether the sport attributes provide the chance of satisfying their specific needs and offers relevant benefits (Funk et al., 2016). Among other psychological forces, self-efficacy is also an important aspect in this stage in the case of sport participants, as an individual’s positive perception about its own ability to properly perform a sport activity generates higher confidence which in turn result in positive feelings (Kurpis & Bozman, 2011). In general, the attraction stage is where the psychological connection toward the sport object is formed and a positive evaluation of the sport experience shapes the attitudes and behaviors of the consumer and creates a network of interrelated beliefs (Funk & James, 2004). An individual in this phase would likely say that he/she ‘likes to watch the sport’ or ‘likes to practice the sport’ (Funk, 2008). However, the connection is still being formed and thus it is neither enduring nor stable and consumers may dropout when other alternatives emerge as more attractive to him/her.

Considering attraction characteristics, it is suggested that the main marketing objectives in this phase are the acquisition of more consumers, as well as the increase of consumption and decrease of loss among the existing consumers (Funk et al., 2016). Hence, it is suggested the development of communication efforts with the aim to leverage distinctive attributes and benefits of the sport brand identity and differentiate the sport towards all other options in the market. In the context of Judo, for instance, personal growth is a distinctive attribute already found as a motive to engage in martial arts, as well as fun, physical activity and aesthetics, which are also motives commonly related to general sports (Ko et al., 2010). Moreover, satisfaction with the sport experience must be assured for both spectators and practitioners to reduce dropout. For the first group, marketing activities that provide a general feeling of fun while attending events may be a determinant influence for next decisions on engaging in new sport experiences (Funk et al., 2009). With regards to the practitioners, providing the tools for increasing participant skill levels was already found as key driver of participation rate, willingness to continue participating and even event service quality (Casper, 2007; Casper, Gray, & Stellino, 2007; Du et al., 2015). Finally, events can be used in this stage as a platform for individuals who want to get introduced to the sport experience, develop social bonding or even contribute to a social cause (Filo, Funk, & O’Brien, 2009; Funk et al., 2016).

Progressing within the PCM framework, the outcomes of the attraction phase – a psychological connection based on an individual’s beliefs, feelings and experiences with the sport object –, combined with self-concept and personal meaning and importance are the inputs for the third stage, the attachment phase, when the behavioral engagement becomes frequent and expressive (Funk et al., 2016). A sport identity arises due to the presence of the sport object
in the individual’s self-concept, forging an interconnected network with the sport brand associations (Funk & James, 2004). In this stage, the connection is based on the emotional, functional and symbolic meaning that the consumer attaches to the sport, which in turn becomes more relevant and important on a personal level, implicating a high level of sport involvement. A multi-dimensional approach to sport involvement suggests three facets that explain and measure the concept: pleasure, the enjoyment derived from the sport activity; sign, the symbolic value of the sport for an individual; and centrality, the level of importance the sport represents in the daily life of the individual (Beaton, Funk, Ridinger, & Jordan, 2011). This is the phase where the individual recognizes oneself as fan of the sport object (Funk, 2008; Funk & James, 2004).

For marketers, the main objective in the attachment phase is to make the sport object more personally relevant (Funk et al., 2016). Merchandise products are important in the sense that they provide to the fan an opportunity to express sport identity in daily life, strengthening the connection while at the same time generating another source of revenue for sport organizations (Bee & Kahle, 2006). CRM (Customer Relationship Management) strategies applied to membership programs provide opportunities to personalize the communication and the forms of engagement in a specific way to fulfil the needs and desires of each fan (Allison, 2013; Couvelaere & Richelieu, 2005; Lock & Funk, 2016). The creation of sport groups as social and interpersonal strategies can also contribute to the attachment phase by forging a group identity and a space for exchange of experiences and thoughts regarding the sport (Lock & Funk, 2016). Assets such as idols can provide opportunities for one-on-one experiences or engage with fans in their own social media profiles, making the sport more personally relevant to the fan by making him/her feel important for the idol and the sport (Frederick, Hoon Lim, Clavio, & Walsh, 2012; Kassing & Sanderson, 2010; Kunkel, Doyle, & Funk, 2014). Mobile apps are another interesting option that provides content to fans and keep them engaged wherever they are, leveraging the personal relevance of the sport (Watkins, Tech, & Lewis, 2014).

The final stage of the PCM, allegiance, receives the inputs from the attachment stages and has also as antecedent the value congruence and the internalization of the sport identity (Funk & James, 2001). As the sport becomes an extension of the individual’s self as a result of positive multiple experiences and evaluations, and personal meaning makes the sport a central point of the individual’s life, the connection does not receive influence from the socialization agents and external forces anymore, resulting in a stable relationship that is not affected by the
fear of bad performance and thus presents enduring and consistent behaviors (Funk et al., 2016). Long-term and enduring relationships between fans and sports are the consequence of shared values, so the sport consumer must realize that by being in a relationship with this sport his/her values will be maximized (Bee & Kahle, 2006). The psychological structure related to the sport in this stage shows indistinguishable bonds and it is not possible to realize the boundaries between the sport elements and one’s internal features (Funk et al., 2016). Besides the enhanced attitudinal engagement, individuals in the allegiance phase have consistent, enduring and complex behaviors, meaning that they tend to engage in many different types of sport’s consumption in a steady and resistant way (Funk, 2008). In other words, they have developed attitudinal and behavioral loyalty.

Loyal and engaged fans are often recognized as the end goal for sport marketers, therefore the whole process that brings individuals to this stage is crucial. However, sport organizations must also develop strategies to ensure that the fan will maintain engagement with the sport, as well as create opportunities that capitalize on these highly engaged fans (Funk et al., 2016). In this stage, consumption is more related with identification and values than with performance satisfaction (Bee & Kahle, 2006; Gray & Wert-Gray, 2012), suggesting, for instance, that national federations aiming to engage loyal fans should focus more on the values of the sport than on the results on the field of play. Idols can also play a role in this sense, by being promoted as the personification of the sport values and identity beyond their athletic achievements (Bee & Kahle, 2006). Digital marketing strategies such as fantasy games and gamification apps can also leverage levels of sport involvement (Kunkel & Funk, 2014).

In the participation market, national federations must develop marketing efforts that aim to maintain an individual’s sport identity and revisit their passion for sport, as it may fluctuate throughout life due to the different types of constraints even though the commitment stays stable (Funk et al., 2016). Communication efforts focusing on nostalgia, a benefit associated to sport (J. Gladden, 2014), may be a bridge to bring back the sport participants who stop practicing. Also, it is important to ensure that participants will be able to find places to practice the sport that meets with their own performance level and goals, a strategy that must be developed along with the affiliated clubs and local federations (Casper, 2007; Wolman & Fraser-Thomas, 2017). Finally, individuals in the allegiance stage must be encouraged to co-create value for the sport by acting as promoters of the marketing messages, becoming socializing agents that introduce the sport to their peers and even provide feedback and suggestions to the organization (Kunkel et al., 2014; Yoshida et al., 2014). In this sense, social
media emerges as a useful tool as it provides opportunities for campaigns that can be shared by
the fans, as well as fan-to-fan and fan-to-organization interactions (Funk et al., 2016; Parganas,
Anagnostopoulou, & Chadwick, 2015).

The Five Engagement Pillars

As the previous section described, previous studies have suggested a wide range of
marketing activities aimed to enhance sport consumers connection and bridge the gap between
fan and sport. Although the extant body of literature proposes practices that are not being
discussed in this study due to its delimitation, overall the marketing activities that stand out by
its relevance and applicability for national Judo federations can be grouped into five sport
consumer engagement pillars: events; membership; licensed merchandise; idols; and social
media. While the importance of each topic was already presented throughout the chapter as
well as their application as marketing activities recommended in each of the four PCM stages,
a brief description of the five pillars will be introduced below.

Events. Overall, events can be considered the heart of the sport business. From a
commercial perspective, the importance of sport events is easily explained through its massive
figures of sponsorship, tickets and broadcast rights, being an important source of revenue for a
sport organization (Ferrand & McCarthy, 2008; Funk, 2008; Rein et al., 2006). Besides, events
can also drive number of sport participants when incorporated into the marketing strategy of
the sport organization, going beyond the event organization itself (Chalip, Green, Taks, &
Misener, 2017).

Due to its importance, one of the most common challenges for sport marketers is related
to engaging fans to attend, watch or participate in sport events, and therefore understanding
consumer’s motivations associated to sport events is so crucial for sport organizations (Kurpis
& Bozman, 2011). Whereas different types of events can be organized by national federations
to address different organizational objectives, from a consumer engagement perspective the
common point for marketers relies on ensuring satisfaction according with individual’s motives
to engage in a sport event (Funk et al., 2009). A positive event experience may also help to
forge the required psychological aspects to move the sport consumer to a higher stage in the
PCM and, thus, strengthen his/her engagement with the sport (Funk et al., 2016).

Membership. Sport organizations such as national federations are overall membership-
based in the sense that sport practitioners must be registered to become members or license
holders and thus be allowed to practice the sport and/or take part in official national competitions, depending on each country policies and regulations. With regards to the financial aspects of national federations, members are crucial as their fees may represent a substantial source of revenue for these organizations (Bühler & Nufer, 2010; Hoehn, 2006). The importance of members also relies on the sport development aspect of national federations, as increasing number of participants can be a foundation of sport elite success (De Bosscher, Shibli, Westerbeek, & van Bottenburg, 2015; Smolianov et al., 2015; Sotiriadou, Shilbury, & Quick, 2008). Moreover, from a relationship marketing perspective, membership schemes and the implementation of CRM strategies are vital tools to create a bond with customers - sport practitioners and fans - as well as maintain and strengthen this connection by offering relevant benefits and ensuring a continuous, relevant and personalized communication with each member (Allison, 2013; Bühler & Nufer, 2010; Ferrand & McCarthy, 2008). In this sense, business intelligence becomes highly important as organizations must have data not only to understand their customers and members, but also to track the evolution of the membership base and its segments and plan accordingly whenever actions may be needed (Ferrand & McCarthy, 2008).

Licensed Merchandise. In the context of sport organizations, the link between engagement and licensed merchandise can be considered a two-way road. Fans highly identified with their teams are recognized as more likely to be frequent and loyal consumers of licensed goods and less sensitive to price and sport performance outcome (Baena, 2016; Silva & Las Casas, 2017; Stokburger-Sauer & Teichmann, 2014). In this sense, the relationship between fans and their favorite sport entity was already defined as a predictor of licensed merchandise consumption (Y. Kwon & Kwak, 2014), which reinforce the importance of developing engagement strategies also as way of generating revenue for the organization. On the other hand, offering licensed goods for consumers can also contribute to leverage the level of identification a fan has towards a sport team or organization (Bee & Kahle, 2006), increasing sport consumer engagement. Fans usually use licensed merchandise as a way of enhancing their sport identity, which also implicates on using these items outside of their sport groups, indirectly helping sport organizations to raise their brand awareness (H. H. Kwon & Armstrong, 2006)

Idols. Successful and recognized athletes play different roles in the sport marketing. For the branding of sport organizations, star players are defined as attributes and therefore drive brand association and influence the decision-making process about engaging in a sport activity
or consumption (J. M. Gladden & Funk, 2002) and are precursors of allegiance (Funk & James, 2006). Athletes role models are also important to enhance relationship between fan and sport while the process of identification is being developed (Bee & Kahle, 2006) and act as socialization agents encouraging participation and fan’s support (Sotiriadou et al., 2008). Further, the presence of star players was also found as significantly impacting sport event attendance and service quality (Shapiro, DeSchriver, & Rascher, 2017). Television ratings represent another important aspect of the sport industry that is highly affected by the presence of great athletes (Buraimo & Simmons, 2015), a key indicator for national federations that usually struggle to achieve media exposure.

**Social Media.** Several benefits are associated with the use of social media from a relationship marketing approach in sport organization: provide a better knowledge of customers, allows a closer customer-organization interaction, enables effective sport participants and fans engagement, provide efficient use of resources such as time and money, and a quicker evaluation of the organization-customer relationship status (Abeza et al., 2013), as well as enhance team identification (Meng, Stavros, & Westberg, 2015; Stavros, Meng, Westberg, & Farrelly, 2014). The challenge for implementing social media strategies to build relationship and foster engagement relies on using the platforms as a two-way communication scheme, instead of focusing solely on the on-way communication aspect that is the base of traditional media (Abeza et al., 2013). Overall, sport organizations should prioritize engagement over mere presence on social media, since, “it is the creative, engaging, exclusive and relevant content which builds loyalty, advocacy and interaction amongst fans” (Allison, 2013, p. 51). In this sense, Meng et al. (2015) proposed a framework of team communication through social media outlining four different groups of posts based on their types of content and dialogue: informing and marketing are categories associated to one-way communication, while personalizing and activating relates to the two-way online conversation. Furthermore, a study on the use of Twitter by National Governing Bodies (NGB) in the United Kingdom highlighted that not only the type of content shared influenced engagement on the social media, but also the number of followers the organization has on its official profile, as well as the popularity of the sport itself and the strategic objectives of each NGB, that varied from engaging their fans and increase participation (Campos & Anagnostopoulos, 2013).

The five engagement pillars described in this section have many intersection points and can be combined in different strategies aimed at enhancing the connection with sport consumers. For example, idols can be promoted through social media and licensed merchandise
can be associated with membership programs. In this sense, national Judo federations may use these tools according with their own structure, challenges, objectives and consumers. Thus, this study attempted to analyze (i) the marketing context of national Judo federations in Brazil, Germany, Great Britain and Japan, and (ii) the implementation, challenges and benefits associated to each of the five aforementioned engagement pillars.
CHAPTER 3. METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study uses a qualitative approach and is based on an exploratory and non-experimental nature, as there was no intervention or active manipulation of variables. Elements of phenomenological and descriptive research designs are also present (Skinner, Edwards, & Cobertt, 2015). The first phase of the research was based on a literature review of the path of sport consumer engagement, from which five pillars of marketing activities were extracted. Those engagement themes provided the background through which the findings are presented and discussed. The second phase entailed different types of data collection, such as document and social media analysis, field observation and semi-structured interviews aiming to propose a framework of judo consumer’ engagement to facilitate the sustainable growth of national Judo federations.

Data Collection and Procedures

Four distinct approaches to data collection were used in this study: document analysis, semi-structured interviews with professionals involved with marketing and/or the five engagement pillars at the four national Judo federations studied, field observations at a Judo domestic event in Brazil and an international event in Japan, and an analysis of the organizations’ social media.

Document Analysis. Different documents obtained as secondary data were retrieved from the official website of the organizations studied in this research and provided relevant information about the marketing strategy and structure at national Judo federations. Overall the documents analyzed were Organizational Charts (Confederação Brasileira de Judô [CBJ], 2018), Annual Reports (All Japan Judo Federation [AJJF], 2017c; British Judo Association [BJA], 2018; CBJ, 2017b), Strategic Plans (BJA, 2017a, 2017b; CBJ, 2017a) and Membership reports (AJJF, 2017a, 2017b, Deutscher Olympischer Sportbund [DOSB], 2018a, 2018b). The analysis of each document was exploratory in nature, as the researcher collected and summarized any information relevant for the study.

Semi-structured Interviews. Interviews were conducted with general managers and/or professionals in charge of marketing in national Judo federations in four countries: Brazil,
Germany, Great Britain and Japan. All interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed to facilitate the researcher’ analysis, as oriented by Skinner et al (2015).

Except for the German federation, where the interview was undertaken in English due to the respondent’s fluency, all interviews were conducted in the interviewee’s native languages and then translated into English in order to facilitate participant’ expression of thoughts and ideas. In the case of Brazil, the author is a Portuguese native speaker and fluent in English, so the interviews were done in person. However, for the Japanese federation a translator familiar with the research conducted the in-person interview in Japanese with the presence of the researcher, and later translated the contents into English. Online face-to-face interviews were conducted with the British and German federations.

Appendix A contains the general script of the interviews, that aimed to cover the marketing structure and strategy of the federations, features of fans in the different countries and the five pillars of engagement applied in each federation. However, it is important to note that, as the nature of semi-structured interviews allows some flexibility (Skinner et al., 2015), the questions varied accordingly with the topics raised in the conversations and the depth of information provided.

**Field Observations.** Observational data were gathered during researcher’s visit to a domestic event, the 2018 Brazilian U21 Interclub Championship in Sao Paulo, Brazil, and an international event, the 2018 Osaka Judo Grand Slam in Osaka, Japan. Notes were taken regarding the audience and the engagement activities in the events. The observations provided inputs to understand the current practices and challenges regarding engagement at Judo competition events. Appendix B and C refers to the field observations registered in both events.

**Social Media.** The initial stage of the data collection related with social media involved visiting the website of the national federations studied and recording their profiles on each platform. Twitter was chosen as the social media platform of this research due not only to the fact that all four organizations have official accounts in the micro blog, but also because of the platform’ relevance and use in the sport marketing literature and practice (Filo, Lock, & Karg, 2015; Williams, Chinn, & Suleiman, 2014). A pilot data collection was undertaken in the first two weeks of April 2018, so the author could understand the procedures to extract content from the platform and the amount of information required to perform the analysis desired.

After this, researcher decided to collect data during September 2018, the month when the World Judo Championship was being held in Baku, Azerbaijan, between 20th and 27th
September. The period was selected as it was expected a high number of tweets (the name of the 280 characters posts on Twitter) by all national federations as the event can be considered the most important competition of the 2018 international Judo calendar, an expectation confirmed as 1,596 posts were collected.

The number of followers for each Twitter account was analyzed and their tweets were then collected manually and daily by the author at the same time every day to ensure consistency. Engagements in each tweet (number of likes, shares and comments) were collected only two days after posting so followers could have enough time to engage with the tweet. Considering the features of the platform and its timeline nature, as well as the author’s experience with the pilot study, the data collection time frame applied was considered reasonable for the purpose of this research.

Participants

**Semi-structured Interviews.** Interviews were conducted at seven different moments throughout the 2018 calendar year with nine professionals involved in marketing and/or engagement activities in national Judo federations of four countries: Brazil, Germany, Great Britain and Japan. Participants provided consent through the acceptance of the consent form (Appendix D) and the researcher assured confidentiality of the responses. The positions of the participants in the organizational charts include general manager, planning director, event manager and staff, communication manager and staff, and public relations officer.

Data Analysis

**Semi-structured Interviews, Document Analysis and Field Observations.** Data obtained through semi-structured interviews and document analysis were grouped first by countries, to understand each context as a whole, and then clustered utilizing a thematic approach based on the five engagement pillars of the study, with the aim of raising common challenges and practices while also highlighting the data that stood out from the others. In this sense, even though comparisons may be inescapable, it was not the focus of the data analysis. Quotes from participants were used to better illustrate themes and to offer a ‘voice’ in the text, a common aspect in qualitative research (Skinner et al., 2015). The notes from field observations were also incorporated to the analysis of the events section.
**Social Media.** The data obtained through the Twitter posts were analyzed in two different ways. Simple descriptive statistics (average and percentage) were applied to the data base using MS Excel software and provided a general picture of the use of the platform by the national federations studied. Per-post engagement rate was measured by the sum of each post likes, comments and shares (or retweets), split by the number of followers the national federation had on the moment of each post data collection; the result number was then multiplied by 100 to facilitate manipulation and understanding. Average engagement rate refers to the sum of post’s engagement rate split by the number of posts and was used to represent the efficiency of the respective group of tweets regarding engagement. On the other hand, the accumulated daily engagement rate – the simple sum of the engagement rate of all tweets of a specific group in one day – was used to illustrate total engagement reach during a specific period.

Additionally, content analysis was undertaken to analyze and categorize the tweets, an approach widely used for studies that aim to understand the use of Twitter in sports (Belot, Winand, & Kolyperas, 2016; Hull, 2014; Meng et al., 2015; Pegoraro, 2010). The four types of social media communication (informing, marketing, personalizing and activating) and its sub-categories proposed by Meng et al. (2015) were used as the base for the thematic framework of the content analysis, and new groups were created to accommodate tweets that did not fit on the original model. Data was read repeatedly to ensure familiarity and the constant-comparative method (Glaser, 1965) was used to revisit the data until new changes were not necessary after different observations.
CHAPTER 4. RESULTS

Findings derived from all four methods of data collection will be described in the current chapter to offer a better understanding of national Judo federations’ challenges and strategies towards the development of marketing strategies focusing on sport consumer engagement. Thus, results will be presented in two main sections. First, each national federation marketing context will be described, offering an organizational perspective regarding their structure, strategic objectives and challenges that will serve as the background for the further analysis and discussions taking in consideration each country’s reality.

The second main section of the chapter refers to the thematic description of each of the five engagement pillars that emerged from the literature review: events, membership, licensed merchandise, idols and social media. The results related with the last pillar, social media, includes a deeper investigation on how the NFs studied are using Twitter to engage with their fans. Since the focus of the final section of this chapter is on understanding each topic in a general context regardless of countries’ boundaries, common grounds within national federations’ will be addressed, with the aim of highlighting similarities and raising points that stand out from the others. Throughout the whole chapter, quotes derived from interviews will be used to better illustrate participant’s ideas.

National Judo Federations Marketing Contexts

Brazil

The 2017-2020 strategic map of the Brazilian Judo Confederation (CBJ; Confederação Brasileira de Judô) states that the vision of the organization is “to become one of the top five Olympic countries in the sport” (CBJ, 2017a). Within the nineteen strategic objectives aimed to lead the organization to achieve the aforementioned vision, at least marketing activities can directly or indirectly influence six of these. These are: 1. Develop new sources of revenue; 2. Implement management of human resources, marketing and internal communication; 3. Increase the society’s interest in the sport; 4. Create and develop idols; 5. Promote the CBJ brand; and 6. Achieve self-sustainability.

Although marketing appears to be highly relevant for the CBJ strategy, both the organizational chart and the interviews revealed that overall marketing, communication and commercial departments are outsourced. The organization chart positions these three
outsourced companies as being supervised by the general manager (CBJ, 2018), though in practical terms decisions related to the marketing strategies developed by the outsourced companies are discussed and evaluated in the CBJ by a group of managers, constituted by the Executive Manager, the Olympic Team High Performance Manager, the Youth Teams Performance Manager, the Financial Manager and the outsourced partners. An update on the CBJ statute was approved and implemented after the data collection stage of this report, which changed this model to include an executive board. However, the implementation of an in-house marketing department or executive was not mentioned during the interviews.

Regarding marketing objectives, the primary focus of the organization relies on the achievement of financial self-sustainability, especially as the majority of financial resources of the CBJ is funded by governmental investments or laws. The political facet of this kind of organization cannot be ignored, as well as the sport policies of the country. In Brazil, for example, the laws that facilitate fundraising for sport are also the ones that restrict the autonomy the organization has on spending the money. For example, almost all CBJ incomes are originated from these laws and the organization must spend these resources with a major focus on sporting performance, which hampers investments in marketing activities, as per the response of one of the Brazilian’ participants of the study.

“We are trying to find a path on which the CBJ can have its own financial resources, regardless of the desires and changes of the government, because we use a lot of governmental money. (...) The money we receive from sponsors through the government laws is excellent, but we don’t have a lot of autonomy on how to use it, we have to spend it exclusively on the projects approved, we can’t use this money to cover unforeseen events, for example, neither for other projects not related with performance, such as the promotion of the sport. In these cases, we have to find this resource inside the CBJ, within the money that is not originated from the government. (...) Besides, the government environment is unstable, so we are concerned with the future because nowadays the majority of our funding comes from public resources. That’s why we are trying to find funds that can be spent in a more autonomous and free way. ”

The importance of the fan has emerged in the organization as an alternative source of new revenue. Early discussions were in place aiming to develop projects such as a portfolio of licensed merchandise or a new membership program focused not only on the practitioners.
“The Judo fan has different roles in the sport. It’s the one who brings emotion to the sport, who promotes Judo, it’s the potential future judo practitioner, so the engagement with them is what feeds the sport, what makes the wheel going around. So, there is this concern, we have been thinking in some alternatives to bring the fan closer to the federation, like a ‘fan membership’ or things like this, to make the fan really feel he/she is a member of the sport.”

In general, a Judo fan in Brazil is also a Judo practitioner. Both the interviews and the field observation at the 2018 Brazilian U21 Interclub Championship indicated that the majority of attendees at Brazilian Judo events comprise athletes, their families and friends.

“One of the items of our strategic plan is to create this so called ‘Judo fan’. Actually, we have to define who is the fan, because so far, the supporter is the practitioner, who is at the event most of the times because he/she will compete there, and then he/she brings along to the event someone else who is interested in his/her performance at the competition.”

However, the CBJ doesn’t have enough information about the profile of the fans and practitioners of Judo in the country. There is no research on this topic, therefore the social media metrics and empirical analysis of the interactions at the CBJ profiles are the only details the organization has about their consumers. In this sense, the profile of social media’ followers is mostly constituted of males, between 18 and 24 years old, residents in the states of Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paulo, and likely judokas, as they “understand the language of the sport and generally comment based on specific knowledge”, as stated by one of the interviewees. It was also mentioned that there are 2.5 million practitioners of Judo in the country, but none of the participants who mentioned this number were confident about the reliability of this data or the criteria used to determine it.

The lack of information regarding the number and the profile of the Judo fans in Brazil was determined to be one of the barriers to develop engagement, but not the only one. Respondents in general mentioned lack of marketing resources, both financial and human, as the main challenge. Regarding the aforementioned financial aspect, the sport policies in Brazil are injecting an impressive amount of money in the CBJ, but the resources are mainly directed to the performance aspects of the sport, supporting the athletes and paying the costs of travelling around the world to compete. This is, in fact, aligned with the idea that the success of the CBJ is highly related with the number of medals obtained throughout the year in the
most important Judo competitions, as one of the participants indicated when asked how the organization measures its growth and success.

“(…) a national federation doesn’t have a product to be sold. In the sport world there are many metrics of success, but the first one is the quantity of medals we gain, and the ‘medal cost’. This is how we measure our profit. If a medal costed 100 last year and this year the cost was 80, then we can say we have profit, because we got the medal spending less money. So, the medal is the product a national federation sells. The product we sell is this. One of the products, the most tangible one.”

After emphasizing the importance of the performance achievements for the growth of the CBJ, the participant also mentioned a few other indicators, such as the number of affiliated members, practitioners, quantity of athletes competing in the events, attendance, engagement on social media, tv rankings and media exposure. In addition, it was mentioned that one of the challenges of marketing at a national federation is the intangibility of the sport as a product.

“(…) because the sport deals with emotions, you need to do everything you do [in terms of marketing strategies] but always adding emotion as a component. It’s about how much of emotion we can share with the Judo fan or practitioner through our activities. And this is not that simple.”

The complexity of the sport as a product combined with the lack of financial resources for marketing purposes increases the importance of human resources in solving this puzzle. However, the interviews indicated that the current model with the marketing department being outsourced is not delivering the desired outcomes by harming the integration with the other functional areas in the organization. Furthermore, the lack of marketing’ knowledge within the technical and operational teams was also pointed out as barriers for developing and implementing marketing and engagement strategies, as exemplified by the quote below.

“We have a superficial knowledge about marketing. We know how much could be done, but I think that to deliver more we should have a marketing department inside the CBJ, that would be closer to us and promote discussions in a way that everyone understands what is the ‘world of marketing’. Nowadays we understand only what is the ‘world of Judo’, not the marketing one. (…) So, the main criticism in a constructive way is that we miss an in-house marketing department at the national federation that could show us the directions and bring insights in a way that we could discuss together the best activities
to strengthen and position the Judo brand. This kind of knowledge and understanding within the technical department is still very small.”

Other variables were also mentioned as possible barriers to developing marketing strategies and foster engagement within Judo fans in Brazil. First, the sport culture in Brazil presents challenges for a sport like Judo, that only catches the attention of media and public every four years during the Olympic Games or when Brazilian judokas achieve expressive results at World Championships. The massive presence of soccer in the media reduces the opportunities of exposure for other sports and even the outstanding results achieved at the Olympic Games do not maintain a long presence in the media and public interest to allow a sufficient level of capitalization by the CBJ. In addition, the strongest Judo clubs in Brazil are not the most popular ones, which undermines the desired transference of soccer fans of a specific club to this club’s Judo team, for instance.

Judo specific features in the Brazilian context have also emerged as factors that could hamper the implementation of modern ways of engagement. Participants mentioned a resistance to changes within the Judo fans in the country, especially between those who are considered decision-makers, as they were described as highly traditional, perhaps due to the Judo history and philosophy. This reluctance, as per the findings of the interviews, could be one of the reasons for the stagnation of engagement practices to attract new fans to the sport. An example mentioned was the rejected idea of allowing different colors of judogi in the club’s team championship, and even the “Ippon” program, a reality show with young judokas that was broadcasted on the most important TV channel in Brazil, faced strong criticism among the most traditional Judo groups before its implementation. This alleged traditionalism was also cited as a concern by one of the participants regarding the possible loss Judo is facing in competition with other sports to attract children as practitioners, as exemplified in the quote below.

“Attracting new practitioners with all of this traditionalism is harder nowadays. The kids sometimes can’t go to a Judo class wearing a different color of judogi. That’s why Brazilian jiu-jitsu is attracting new participants. A while ago they [jiu-jitsu] were focusing on teenagers and adults, but nowadays you can find many places offering jiu-jitsu for children, an adapted form of jiu-jitsu for them. Judo still has the advantage of promoting discipline, but when you look at what the child really wants to practice, then maybe it’s not an advantage anymore. Judo wins and loses because of traditionalism”.
**Germany**

The marketing is managed in the German Judo Federation (DJB; *Deutscher Judo-Bund*) by a separate company that was founded by the DJB and that has as it owners the national federation itself (the main owner) along with nearly all local Judo federations in the country. This company oversees the events and marketing activities related to them, such as advertising and TV presentation, for instance. Communication aspects of the federation, such as managing social media and website, and dealing with the press are activities conducted directly by the DJB staff.

When asked about the main marketing objectives, the interviewee pointed out the importance of closing optimum deals with sponsors in order to achieve financial health and support the development of the sport, both in terms of performance and participation. Regarding the top-level sport, the government plays a huge role by providing the funds, but the federation is aware about the need of earning medals in the next Olympic Games, in Tokyo 2020, so as to keep receiving a reasonable amount of money from the government. However, in relation to the participants, the DJB demonstrated concern about the challenges in attracting new practitioners and especially maintaining their engagement in the sport for a long time, which could, in the end, undermine the development of top-level athletes in the near future.

“We need the support of our government to make our sport in general, but we also know that beside this top-level sport if we want to make this sport in a good level on a long time we have to increase the sport in general and we have to look at the young people, have to find young people who are willing to compete. (...) We have to establish Judo as part of our social activities, and this is a little bit difficult. We are losing a lot of people. In the beginning of Judo, we have no problem, but people are stopping Judo very fast, so we have to increase the people who wants to be long in Judo, that’s our biggest problem.”

The concern relies on the fact that the DJB membership base changes almost completely every three years, a strong indicator that, besides being able to keep attracting a reasonable number of young practitioners, they are dropping out of the sport after a short period of time. The reason for this, according to the respondent, is based on the attractiveness of other sports and the barriers in the practice of Judo.
“Many sport disciplines are more interesting than Judo. You can have a ball and every boy or girl can play football, but in Judo you must learn the technique, you have to find a partner to fight, you need someone’s body to play the sport, and this can be difficult.”

Segmentation strategies, though, are possible solutions to engage specific target groups that the DJB has identified as critical to the future of Judo in Germany. In order to increase the number of women practicing the sport the DJB launched the programs “Ippon Girls” and “Ippon Ladies”, incorporating activities and events focusing on females. The same strategy is being used with older practitioners through the “Dan Community” program, with the development of activities aimed at maintaining their practice of Judo and also engaging with the sport in different ways, such as encouraging their participation as coaches, club presidents or volunteers. Activities focused on other groups such as teenagers and refugees are part of the segmentation strategy as well.

Challenges are also related with the structure of Judo in the country and the level of professionalization of the other organizations that integrate the system. The DJB manages Judo in the country, but there are eighteen regional federations affiliated to the NF that are in charge of developing the sport in their regions. However, within them, only three regional federations are “working with very professional people”, according to the interview response. The other fifteen federations are not structured well to properly develop the sport and most of them work exclusively with volunteers. The solution found by the DJB is bypassing the regional federations and working directly with the clubs that are interested in the development of Judo at the top-level as well as in increasing sport participation. As such, the DJB website has a section called ‘Club Flyers’ where club members can order templates of flyers promoting Judo and offering a trial lesson coupon, which could help attract new practitioners to the clubs. Also, some activities such as the ‘day of Judo’ in some schools or Judo festivals in clubs are being developed. However, although the participant reported the success of this strategy, concern about the lack of staff in the DJB to run all these activities across the country also emerged.

In general, the interview showed that the focus of the German federation is more related with attracting and engaging the fan as a practitioner than as a spectator. This is highly linked with the current challenges regarding the decrease in the number of members and especially with the impact this could cause in the future of high-performance Judo in the country. However, even though the focus does not seem to be on this group, the DJB has indeed being developing a few activities to engage the spectator fans of Judo. The best example of this is the
‘Judo Fan Club’, an initiative of the national federation to create a fan culture within the German Judo community. According to the interview, around 250 people are currently members of the club, paying an annual fee and in return receiving a series of benefits such as a member card, free subscription to the magazine, access to tickets, exclusive items and special offers and discounts in DJB’s events and products. Members also receive discounts for ‘DJB Fan Travel’, an initiative that organizes travel groups to attend major world Judo events, supporting and engaging with the German athletes and other living experiences related with the sport.

**Great Britain**

The National Governing Body for Judo in the Great Britain is the British Judo Association (BJA), whose activities are mainly focused on *“the growing and overseeing the sport of Judo and winning medals at Olympic and Paralympic Games”*, as stated in the British Judo Strategic Plan 2017-2021 (BJA, 2017a). The same document reports the three corporate objectives for the period: increase participation to 50,000 members by 2021; produce a minimum of four Olympic and Paralympic medalists in 2020; and establish robust systems of governance at every level of the sport in accordance with UK Government standards.

In order to achieve the objectives, five strategies are described. Within them, two are directly related with the context of this study: Participation – deliver integrated programs that will increase membership recruitment and retention levels; and Commercial & Marketing – raise the profile of the sport to generate greater levels of revenue, influence and interest. Several tactics are listed in the document within the two strategies aforementioned. Incentivize clubs, retention levels within existing markets, inclusive opportunities to participate and excel, capitalize upon the evolving agendas, acquisition programs, and appealing membership offers are attached to the participation strategic pillar. On the other hand, tactics related to the commercial and marketing strategy are diversified income generation, market reach & digital activity, public relations, Judo brand, and stakeholder engagement (BJA, 2017a).

With marketing having such importance to the achievement of the organization goals, the structure of the marketing and communication department is mainly in-house, with a Marketing and Communication Manager and a Public Relations Officer. Membership and events are the other two departments within the BJA that also oversee some activities related to marketing and engagement, while a commercial department does not exist in the
organization. Although the vast majority of creations are mainly in-house, high-end graphic designs and video work are outsourced to a marketing agency on a case by case basis.

The BJA was clearly defined throughout the interview as a membership organization. In this sense, the role of the fan as practitioner and member of the BJA was considered critical to the success of the organization and the growth of the sport, both in terms of providing resources and of nurturing the sporting system, as per the quote below.

“[the importance of the fan for the BJA] is massive. Reality is that we are a membership organization, really. So, if we don’t have the member we don’t get the athletes coming through, but also essentially the more members you get obviously there are more money coming in. So, it’s really very important and obviously the more members we have it will raise the profile of the sport and that’s one of our main objectives, and with this we would have raised the revenue coming in, more interest and influence.”

Though the establishment of the member as the core target of the organization may facilitate the development of marketing strategies for the fan as Judo practitioner, it is important to note that throughout the interview little was mentioned about the fan as spectator. Moreover, the definition of members as the marketing target of the organization is also clearly expressed in the ‘Stakeholder Engagement Strategy 2017-2021’ document that defines engagement as “all about connectedness, or creating a closer relationship with your audience, or in our case, our membership programme” (BJA, 2017b). According to the Annual Report & Accounts 2017/18, the BJA has 46,134 members split between the four home nations (England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales) and the affiliates, confirming a continuous growth in the membership numbers following the past two seasons (43,606 in 2015/16 and 43,931 in 2016/17), (BJA, 2018).

As for the profile of the BJA members, the information obtained through the interview showed that the majority are young (over 75% are under 25 years old) and more male than female. Regarding the motives for engaging in Judo, the top-ranked are keeping fit, improving strength and making friends, while self-confidence and grading were mentioned of being of a minor importance and competition was not in the top six motivation factors in the research conducted by BJA on their members, as reported by the participant. There is a low percentage of minorities and the majority of members come from a working and middle-class background. They are well spread across the United Kingdom, with a great concentration in middle and
south England. By acknowledging the profile of their membership base, BJA has been able to understand the engagement strategies needed for the future of Judo in the UK.

“An overview of how our membership looks like shows that it is fairly wide ranging, so it means that for us the fans that we got are very sizable, majority are young people. That is something for us to think about long-term of our engagement strategies, because those are the fans that hopefully are going to still keep in the sport in 15, 20 even 25 years’ time, so you want to keep them involved.”

Although the solutions to retain members and prevent dropout from the sport are not simple, the participant listed as the first thing the importance of understanding what people want from practicing Judo and being a member. Besides, the interviewee also pointed out the relevance of keeping in touch consistently with the members and engaging them by offering a wide range of benefits to serve the different needs, profiles and motivations. Furthermore, the existence of ‘Judo families’ where children get into Judo due to one or both parents experience with the sport without BJA’s direct influence was also mentioned, suggesting the importance of keeping former members and practitioners involved with Judo.

However, the implementation of engagement strategies frequently faces different barriers. In the case of BJA, the participant mentioned budget as the most important barrier.

“A barrier that every kind of marketing and communication team will say no matter where you are is always budget as a big one. I think every marketing and communication staff will say that, even guys in Arsenal will say the budget isn’t big enough there but is massive compared to what we have. Budget is obviously a big thing, in reality would be amazing to have a budget to send our photographer to every major championship but we just don’t have the budget, so we have to rely on other resource efforts.”

Financial restrictions were indicated as the root of another barrier: the human resources limitation. The participant highlighted that ideally the marketing and communication team should have three people, instead of only two, and that it is important to have on the team someone more focused on the marketing side of the department. Apart from that, two other barriers were raised in the interview. First, concerns the sport environment in the UK and the battle for market share between other successful sports in the region.

“If we are looking to grow to new markets trying to get that kind of noise, cycling is doing really well, rowing is doing really well, gymnastics is doing really well. And we
are trying to get through that market because football it is not gonna go away, tennis is not gonna go away, rugby is not gonna go away, cricket is not gonna go away. So, it’s about trying how to go for the market of those other sports that are doing well every four years [in the Olympic and Paralympic Games] or every two years in the Commonwealth Games. How do you get that market, how do you push through that noise, that’s another barrier.”

Lastly, the interviewee emphasized the impact of the lack of information regarding the target audience of sport organizations.

“Not only within the BJA, but I think every sport probably is like this, I think that any kind of barrier in any kind of engagement activity is not knowing what your fans or members are alike or who they are. That is not British Judo specific, it’s a general kind of barrier I think a lot of marketing and communication teams face within sport in the UK and abroad.”

**Japan**

The birth country of Judo has as its national governing body the All Japan Judo Federation (AJJF), which has two in-house departments that were mentioned in the interview as being in charge of marketing and/or engagement activities. The first is the Strategy team, where two people are responsible for marketing, communication and media. The second is the Planning and Financial team, who deal with sponsors and money allocation within the federation. When asked about who is in charge of managing the Judo fans in Japan, the participant also mentioned the competition department, which is responsible for enticing fans to attend the competition events.

Despite being an important part of Japanese culture, Judo is struggling to attract new fans and practitioners. One of the main marketing objectives of the AJJF, as suggested during the interview, relates to reversing the current decrease in the number of people practicing Judo in Japan, which has been affecting the membership base of AJJF. The reasons suggested in the interview are mainly two. First, the well-known demographic crises in Japan, with less children being born, directly affects the numbers of new members every year. Second, the competitive sport environment that offers many different sports for children is also challenging the growth of Judo in its birth country.
“There are a lot of popular sports right now. A lot of popular sport for children such as soccer, baseball and tennis. Within these sports we must be able to show the positive things of Judo to the society, to the new generation. We are trying to do this by having idol athletes on television, for the new generation to see them and understand them as role models. So, idol athletes will encourage children to get into Judo and will raise popularity of Judo.”

In this sense, the importance of engaging people with Judo relates with raising the profile of the sport and, with this, achieving a few different objectives mentioned throughout the interview. First, engagement was reported as important for its influence in the TV ratings, which was stated as an important tool to measure popularity of Judo in the country and what can highly influence sponsorship deals, a significant source of income for the AJJF.

Additionally, engagement could directly influence the AJJF membership base and its effect in the finances of the organization. Strategies linked with this idea are being already implemented, such as new competitions for senior athletes over 30 years old, and the inclusion of Paralympic Judo in the AJJF. Both tactics aims not only to encourage inclusion and participation in the sport, but also, as mentioned in the interview, increase revenue as athletes of these new categories will have to register themselves and become members of the federation. Also, Judo classes for beginners are being conducted by the AJJF throughout the country. This strategy focuses on hiring high-level and famous Japanese athletes to teach children and, based on the experience of being taught by a great athlete, encourage them to try Judo again.

Despite the relevance fans have for the success of the organization, the AJJF has almost no information about them. The athletes’ registration system provides information on the number of practitioners in Japan and TV ratings are used as a tool to measure the interest of the public towards Judo, but none of them go deeper on defining the profile of the fan – practitioner or spectator – of Judo in the country. When asked about the image of the sport in Japan, the participant indicated that the common attributes associated with Judo are the huge number of Olympic medals earned by the Japanese athletes and the traditional and cultural aspects of the sport due to its Japanese origin.

The cultural traits of Judo and its philosophy are indeed being promoted through the Judo MIND program, an initiative of the AJJF. MIND refers to the acronym for Manners, Independence, Nobility, and Dignity, and aims to highlight the values of Judo and remind the Japanese judokas of the essence of the sport. Although the program was developed to solve an
issue not related with marketing, the Judo MIND program can also play an important role in branding Judo and clearly defining the image of the sport through the posters that are placed in many dojos around Japan (Figure 3).

“We had a great problem within the Japanese Judo Federation and at this point we decided that is impossible to have the kind of outlook that we used to have, that if you are strong it is enough to win, if you push your opponent, if you win because you are stronger is ok, because you win. This kind of outlook you can injury your opponent very easily and that’s what we had within our national team. But at this point we thought about Kano Jigoro, about his initial understanding of Judo. Judo arose from the idea of always considering your opponent while believing in harmony of yourself in the humanistic way. So, we decided to pursue the real state of Judo which was declared by Kano Jigoro. And the key words are placed in this MIND conception. So, if one follows MIND key words, one can choose as the right path to consider your opponent and to grow as human being. We cannot see the results of this program now, but we are trying to do something with posters, with bulletins, with posting information here and we are trying to go there little by little to spread this mentality in the Judo practitioners.”

![Figure 3. Poster of the AJJF MIND program (AJJF, 2016)](image-url)
Engagement Pillars

After the contextualization of each national Judo federation marketing structure, objectives, challenges and strategies provided in the previous section, the focus now turns to each of the five engagement pillars. Throughout the following sub-sections findings are presented with the aim of highlighting the use of events, membership, licensed merchandise and social media as engagement tools by national Judo federations. However, as the engagement pillars have many intersection points, the same marketing strategy can be presented in more than one sub-section, being described by different perspectives.

Events

Professionals from the national Judo federations interviewed in this study reported different objectives and challenges related to the implementation of different types of events as part of their marketing strategy. In general, events at these organizations can be split into competitive and non-competitive events. The first group refers to those that have Judo competitions as their core focus and can be performance-based (domestic or international) or commercial-based, while the second one is constituted by those events related to Judo that do not include contests and are divided into sport-based and stakeholder-based events, as described at Table 1.

As expected, domestic performance-based events were reported by all four national federations interviewed as they need to run the Judo competitions in their countries. Overall, these events are the Judo national championships in the different categories managed by each NF. Within this category, the event that stood out in the interviews was the German Bundesliga, a club team competition that takes advantage of the marketing and financial structure of their strong clubs to implement innovations, such as the internet streaming project started in 2018.

In addition to the domestic events, a few performance-based international events were also mentioned as being part of the strategy of the national Judo federations. During the year of data collection, two IJF events were organized by the NFs studied: the DJB organized the 2018 Düsseldorf Grand Slam while the AJIF was in charge of the 2018 Osaka Grand Slam.

For the Germans, the Düsseldorf event received an upgrade in 2018 from a traditional Grand Prix to a brand new Grand Slam. The main motivation for this shift, though, was not marketing-based. According to the interview, the key benefit was related with the effect on the sporting aspect of the DJB, as a Grand Slam offers more points in the world ranking list than a
Grand Prix and the host country can register more athletes than the other national federations. In addition, the participant also declared as a secondary benefit the opportunity to showcase the quality of the federation and the sport in the country by organizing a high-level event.

**Table 1. Types of Events Reported in the Interviews**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Competitive</td>
<td>Events with competition as the core</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Performance-based</td>
<td>Focus on the performance aspect; official competition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Domestic</td>
<td>Owned and organized by the NF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ex. National Championship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- International</td>
<td>In the NF territory, but not owned by the NF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ex. IJF Grand Slam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Commercial-based</td>
<td>Focus on the commercial aspect; non-official competition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ex. Judo Challenge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Non-competitive</td>
<td>Events without competition as the core</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Sport-based</td>
<td>Focus on developing and/or teaching the sport</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ex. Judo open classes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Relationship-based</td>
<td>Focus on developing a relationship with stakeholders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ex. Award Ceremonies</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Likewise, the Japanese Grand Slam also experienced a change in 2018, as the event traditionally held in Tokyo was moved to Osaka due to the renovation of the venue for the Tokyo 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games. The importance of the Grand Slam in Japan particularly in 2018 refers, as per the interview, to the fact that it was the only Judo international championship held within the country during the year, and therefore attracted a lot of interest from fans and TV channels in Japan.

Holding major international Judo events is one of the BJA’s ambitions in the coming years. According to the interviewee, the reasons for this objective include not only the opportunity to bring commercial sponsors and increase income for the sport, but also to engage with non-Judo people since major international events promote a different type of engagement
and attractiveness that goes beyond the specific attributes and features of the sport that perhaps a fan may or may not enjoy.

Apart from the performance-based ones, Brazilian federation also mentioned a different type of competitive event owned and organized by the CBJ, called *Judo International Challenge* (*Desafio Internacional de Judô*, in Portuguese). The *Judo International Challenges* are mainly focusing on the commercial objectives of the CBJ, as it was created to fulfill the requirements of Brazilian TV channels as a way to ensure television exposure for the national federation sponsors in a period of time when international Judo events in Brazil were missing, as explained by one of the interviewees at CBJ.

“It’s a product developed by the marketing agency and embraced by the CBJ as a way of offering return to the sponsors during the recess of international events. (...) it is based on an economic model, built to fit the time of television requirements, which was important, because is the type of event that the TV channels were willing to buy and broadcast, around one hour, no more than one hour and forty minutes. That’s why we chose a team’s competition, because the individual’s competition it’s hard to define the duration. (...) but is a product that got worn a little bit because many elite athletes were not here [in Brazil] or were not interested in taking part.”

All four national federations in the study reported non-competitive events. The sport-based ones are mainly training camps and Judo classes. Best examples of this type of event come from Germany and Japan. The European country organizes segmented events and training camps to engage specific targets, such as the “Ippon Girls” and the “Ippon Ladies” as an alternative to increase woman participation in the sport, a relevant concern for the DJB due to the gender unbalanced membership base. Meanwhile, the home country of Judo organizes Judo classes for beginners in town gyms and public places across Japan as an attempt to increase children’s participation and affiliation to the AJJF.

In addition, both British and Japanese federations also mentioned non-competitive events whose focus is on developing or strengthening relationships, instead of on the sport itself. BJA organizes the annual Award’s Evening, an event where members are recognized for their efforts and achievement throughout the year. Aimed to engage members, staff and sponsors, the gala event also contributes financially to the organization as tickets and tables are sold to members and sponsors. In addition, the sending off ceremony is the non-competitive
relationship-based event example from the AJIF, where fans can meet and engage with athletes before their travel to the World Championships.

While describing their different types of events, interviewees also commented a diverse range of marketing objectives to be achieved through this engagement pillar. Commercial and financial benefits, raising the profile of the sport and the national federation, grabbing media attention and engaging with fans and other stakeholders were benefits associated with events throughout the interviews. However, different challenges and barriers were also reported towards using events as part of national Judo federations marketing and engagement strategies.

Resource restrictions were mentioned as a challenge in two different ways. First, financial limitations were pointed out as barriers to the delivery of high-level events that could attract and engage spectators. A CBJ participant reported difficulty in making the event financially sustainable, as the costs are too high compared to the potential income derived from them. Likewise, the BJA mentioned that due to the objective of hosting major international events in the future they have to deliver a higher standard event and, therefore, costs are higher. In this sense, the battle for achieving at least a break even and avoid a potential financial loss is a significant challenge for the organization.

Furthermore, human resources limitations were also suggested as barriers to the development and growth of events as engagement tools. Both Germans and Brazilians mentioned lack of staff as an issue: the Europeans were concerned with the amount of work it takes to run the non-competitive events such as Judo festivals, while the South Americans suggested that not only the quantity of staff was a concern, but also the absence of marketing professionals leading or cooperating with events is preventing them from adding more attractiveness to the Judo competitions in the country. In this sense, a CBJ participant explained that the domestic events are planned to focus mainly on the field of play and that the fan is not considered in the event planning developed by the event department of the organization, as summarized by one interviewee that “in reality we [CBJ] run a competition event instead of a judo event”.

Apart from that, attendance issues were also highlighted throughout the interviews with all national federations in this study. Between those that reported attendance numbers, a relevant disparity was found: while the DJB indicated that in general their national individual championships receive around 800 to 1,500 spectators, the AJIF stated that the All Japan Judo Championship men finals attendance is around 10,000 people. The profile of Judo event
attendees is also a challenge for national federations, as both British and Brazilian federations reported that they are mainly comprised of the ‘Judo family’, which are Judo coaches, athletes and their families and friends. Interviewees from the CBJ also reported that concern with the lack of attendance in national events broadcasted by Brazilian television made them combine events as an ‘Emergence Act’: an under 15 championship was scheduled along with the under 21 tournament so the younger athletes could fill the stands that would appear empty in the TV images due to lack of attendance.

Even in relation to international events the challenge of attracting spectators persists. Offering free entrance for elementary school children was a not fully successful strategy implemented by the AJJF as not many students went to the event. The CBJ also reported a huge difficult in matching attendance capacity when charging tickets for Judo events such as past IJF events held in the country. The solution found by the Brazilians at the time was very similar with the strategy implemented by the Japanese federation: taking students for free to attend the event.

Data collected from field observation also confirmed that overall attendance at Judo events is comprised of Judo members and a few relatives and friends. Additionally, few entertainment activities were offered to the audience. In the case of the Brazilian domestic event, the competition did not have a presenter providing information about the contests or interacting with the audience, which was well implemented at the Osaka Grand Slam, but the vast difference in the magnitudes of both events must not allow comparisons. The Japanese international event also offered a few engagement activities, such as photo opportunities, social media contests, autograph sessions and a licensed merchandise store.

Despite the challenges, different marketing tools and activities to foster engagement through and at events were reported in the interviews. In this sense, the role of the idols was expressed by all four national federations interviewed: they were mentioned as important in attracting spectators and media, to engage with fans through autograph sessions and hand shaking activations and also in the non-competitive events as Judo professors and role models to encourage participation and share Judo knowledge with the practitioners.

The British federation also pointed out the importance of engaging athletes’ competing at the events. The BJA participant mentioned the importance of encouraging members to bring people with them to attend the competitions and cheer, as well as spread the event through their social medias profiles, aiming to make their friends and families aware of and
involved with the Judo event. Surveys were also implemented with athletes and coaches in Brazil to evaluate service quality at the domestic events and provide the organization with insights to consistently improve and satisfy CBJ members.

**Membership**

As discussed in the literature review chapter, although members are undoubtedly crucial for national Judo federations, the way these organizations manage and engage with their membership bases varies across countries. Overall, affiliated members are registered in a system where the national federations manage the information accordingly with their own objectives and needs. The way the sport is structured in each country also affects the composition of membership bases, as the existence of regional federations may impact whether members are registered directly in the national federations or through their regional counterparts.

In Brazil, for instance, members are registered in their state federations, that chooses whether to register each athlete in the CBJ membership base or not, as national registration is needed only when judokas are going to participate in an event that integrates the CBJ national ranking or during the application for a black belt graduation. Therefore, the Brazilian National Confederation currently does not have a total for the number of Judo members in Brazil. In their membership system called Zempo there are only 71,974 registered athletes as reported in the interview. However, the interviewee estimated that around 200,000 to 300,000 Judo athletes could be registered throughout all twenty-seven state federations in the country. The inaccurate number of registered athletes was only found in the South American country, even though similarities with the regional federation structure are also present in the other three nations studied, whose numbers are presented in table 2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>National Federation</th>
<th>Registered Members</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>CBJ</td>
<td>71,974</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>DJB</td>
<td>143,781</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Great Britain</td>
<td>BJA</td>
<td>46,134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>AJF</td>
<td>155,367</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The importance of the numbers, however, becomes more relevant when analyzed throughout time, as shown in Figure 4. The annual report of the British Judo Association shows a 5.8% growth in the membership base between seasons 2015/16 and 2017/18, a good indicator for the organization that has as one strategic objective of increasing participation to 50,000 members by 2021 (BJA, 2016, 2018).

On the other hand, however, Germany and Japan have strong reasons to be concerned with their membership rates, as expressed during the interviews. Both countries are facing a very similar and steady decrease over recent years, with the DJB losing 46.5% of their membership base since 2000 (DOSB, 2018b), while the AJJF lost 23.9% of members since 2003 (AJJF, 2017a, 2017b). For the European country, concerns are mainly focused on female and teenager members. Female participation represents only 24.7% of the DJB membership (DOSB, 2018b), while the drop-out rates of practitioners between 12 and 18 years old are very high, according to the interviewee. As for Japan, the respondent highlighted that the initiation of kids in Judo is the major focus in reversing the membership crisis.

![Graph showing membership evolution for Germany (GER), Japan (JPN), and Great Britain (GBR) from 2000 to 2018.](image)

**Figure 4. National Judo Federations Annual Membership Evolution**

The importance of membership programs and the benefits offered to the members show differences across the NFs in this study. The British Judo Association clearly defines itself as a ‘membership organization’, which drives the whole marketing strategy towards engaging with current members and attracting new ones. Members, according to the interviewee, are relevant for organization growth as they account for three different and important aspects within the BJA: they bring revenue through membership fees; they represent the athletes who
feed the British Judo teams; and they raise the profile of the sport. Besides, increasing the number of members is one of the strategic objectives of the organization, which endorses the importance of the topic.

In this sense, the BJA emphasizes understanding the members as a crucial aspect for a successful membership strategy, which is being conducted through a professional marketing perspective. Understanding members profiles and their motivations to practice Judo and to affiliate to the BJA was mentioned as the most relevant tools to develop member retention strategies. Thereby, surveys were implemented over the last few years and were extremely helpful in generating insights regarding specific points for attention, such as the importance of developing long-term engagement strategies to ensure that young practitioners – the majority of the membership base – will keep involved with Judo for a long time. Furthermore, analyzing the motivations behind engaging in Judo and affiliating to the BJA has helped the organization to design and offer relevant benefits, that can be oriented to the practice of Judo, such as access to a degree scheme and competitions, or beyond the sport itself, such as giving vouchers to go to family parks or discounts in tickets and products.

Being consistently in touch with members was also mentioned as an important part of BJA membership engagement strategy. In this sense, a CRM system plays an important role as it allows target communications using e-mail marketing strategies and a personalized communication with each member in addition to the administrative aspects of the relationship. The implementation of a new CRM system in 2018 was mentioned in the interview as an important tool to increase fan engagement in the BJA in the coming years as it supposedly allows more connection and content than the previous system.

The role of engaging with current members and attracting new ones, though, is also shared with club members across the UK. The BJA website has an entire section dedicated to ‘marketing your club’, with information about how to understand customers, best practices, branding, marketing resources, social and digital media as well as how to use the club’s local press (BJA, n.d.). According to the interview, the section was implemented as the organization could not support each club individually when they requested assistance regarding marketing. In addition, clubs have more knowledge about their local community than the BJA, which reinforces the importance of giving the tools to the clubs to assist in developing their own marketing strategies. Also, clubs may have different objectives and offer different services in
regard to Judo and therefore need to adapt marketing strategies to their own realities and targets, as stated by the BJA interviewee.

“(…) your club can be purely a community club that is just about people doing the sport, participating and having fun, but then you have clubs which are very geared towards competition, who want to go out and produce players who will go fight on the national championship and potentially on the GB squad and internationally. (…) so, if you feel people is coming wanting competition, great, if they don’t do and they just want to get fit, that’s great, but do your marketing and make sure you are aware of that potential differences. And understand your customer.”

Providing marketing tools for clubs is not an exclusivity of the British Judo Association though. The German Judo Federation has a website page that offers a standard flyer that highlights the benefits and values of the sport along with a trial lesson voucher and can be ordered online and personalized to include club’ details. As mentioned in the previous section, the DJB also develops engagement activities and events directly with the clubs where regional federations are not well professionalized.

The focus of the German federation regarding membership, however, relies on segmentation strategies. Members are considered important for the organization growth due to their contribution to sporting development as practitioners and due to the revenue derived from the membership fees, which are considered expensive within country’s sport context. By analyzing the membership base, the DJB realized that some segments needed tactics focused on growth in order to potentialize their contribution to the organization. In this sense, three specific membership segments and their respective engagement strategies were highlighted during the interview.

The low participation of woman in the sport led to the creation of the ‘Ippon Girls’ and the ‘Ippon Ladies’, whose objectives are related to increasing female membership, promoting and raising percentage of women in voluntary work, coaching and judging positions and inspiring women for sports, specifically Judo. Events for girls and women are organized by the national federation, that also encourages clubs to follow the same strategy, offering advice, contacts and making the DJB communication channels available to promote the club’s actions.

While the analyses of the membership base shows that teenagers are dropping out of the sport, the German federation created the ‘DJB Junior Team’ to engage with these members and promote activities beyond Judo practice and aligned with the needs and desires of this
specific and important age group. Events, specific social media profiles and even a youth media
team are actions developed to keep young members engaged with Judo as a social activity
beyond the sport itself with the aim of creating a network of young judokas in the country
(Deutscher Judo-Bund [DJB], 2018b).

The third strategic segment for the DJB is composed of experienced judokas who have
already graded at least as first Dan (first Judo black belt level). The ‘Dan Community’ aims to
reunite Judo masters and keep them engaged with the sport and contributing to development
of Judo in the country (DJB, 2018a). A different type of membership is offered to this group
with benefits such as badges with the respective Dan of each member, participation in exclusive
events and specific products developed for them. Keeping them engaged with the sport is
important for the DJB as they can engage in different roles within the German Judo structure.

Besides the actions focused on the aforementioned three critical segments, the German
Judo Federation has also introduced and created a different type of membership: the Judo Fan
Club. With around 250 members, the main idea consists of developing a Judo fan culture by
creating activities around the world for the Germans who want to engage with the sport, attend
international Judo competitions and connect with the DJB athletes. By paying an annual fee,
members of the fan club receive in return a membership card, free subscription to the DJB
magazine, discounts in DJB Fan Travel and other benefits that include special offers, exclusive
items and discounts.

The idea of creating a membership program for fans was also mentioned by the
Brazilian participants. However, the plan is still at a very early stage within the CBJ, with no
perspective of being implemented in the near future. The challenges regarding membership in
the South American country are more complex. As mentioned before, while Germany, Great
Britain and Japan are able to analyze the evolution and critical points of their membership bases
and develop strategies accordingly, Brazil struggles with inaccurate data.

*Zempo*, the CBJ membership system, was originally developed as a competition
management system. The necessity of inputting athletes into the competition draw along with
the administrative demands of gathering information regarding members gave a membership
dimension to *Zempo*. However, the political structure of the sport in the country harmed the
evolution and the credibility of the system. As judokas in Brazil are affiliated with the state
federations, the CBJ cannot manage directly the members and the registration of athletes in the
*Zempo* depends on the state federation’s willingness to do so. Nonetheless, according to the
interviews, state federations are resisting a change to the system, concerned that when all members were registered in Zempo the national federation would start charging for its use. It is important to note, however, that during all interviews at the CBJ at no time was anything mentioned regarding the possibility of requiring payments for use of the system.

Judo members in Brazil receive as benefits only access to participate in competitions and to apply for Dan grading. Likewise, Japanese members receive only the opportunity to take part in competitions and a magazine with content about the sport in the country, activities for children and sponsor’s advertisements. For the AJJF interviewee, however, the membership fee is considered expensive, specially taking into consideration that members must also register and pay their local federations. For instance, a judoka in Shinjuku must pay for the respective district federation, for the Tokyo municipal federation and also for the All Japan Judo Federation, an amount that can cost around 5,000 to 6,000 yen (45 to 55 USD) yearly. Furthermore, communicating with members was not listed as a priority by the Japanese interviewee, as it was stated that emails are only sent to them when membership renewal is needed.

The consistent decrease in the AJJF number of members since 2003, as previously shown in Figure 4 has been addressed mainly by three different actions that aim to target the children, through Judo open classes, the veterans, through the implementation of competitions for judokas over 30 years old, and for people with disabilities, through providing competition opportunities for Paralympic categories.

**Licensed Merchandise**

Overall, the topic of licensed merchandise as an engagement pillar was neglected by the majority of the participants in this study, in comparison with the other four aspects analyzed. Limited information was shared about the topic and the discussions were superficial to some extent, which may suggest a lack of interest and the reduced importance of licensed merchandise in the marketing strategy of some of these organizations.

Challenges for the implementation of a licensed merchandise portfolio emerged in the interviews with the Brazilian and the Japanese federations and helped to elucidate the reasons why these organizations are facing difficulties. The Asian participant mentioned that the Judo federation finds it difficult to sell items such as t-shirts, caps and training gear that are commonly sold by the soccer and baseball federations in Japan. Instead, the AJJF usually only
sells name cards with photos and autographs of their elite athletes, items that were pointed out as not generating financial benefits for the organization as they need to set a price that only covers the costs. However, field observations at the Osaka Grand Slam showed that items such as t-shirts exclusive to the event were sold in the sponsor’s store, suggesting that at least in international events the Japanese fans are willing to consume Judo-related goods.

As for the Brazilians, research into implementing a licensed merchandise portfolio is still at an early stage. Benefits mentioned in the interviews as associated with this engagement pillar are the generation of a new source of revenue, the opportunity of bringing fans closer to the sport and even the indirect effect that fan engagement may have in the image of the sport as perceived by potential sponsors.

Despite the relevant advantages, the complexity of developing a portfolio with products that deliver the emotion of the sport and generate interest, as well as defining logistics and developing selling channels are preventing the CBJ from moving forward with these initiatives. For them, financial sustainability of the project must be assured, therefore a partner or outsourced company is needed to present low-cost suggestions and share the potential risks of the business. Additionally, CBJ participants also mentioned a lack of specialized staff to oversee this project and lack of knowledge about the Judo fanbase in the country as further barriers.

In the case of the German federation, an online store is available at the DJB website and is managed by the marketing company owned by the federation. According to the interviews, the best seller items are the Judo books, and the store was evaluated as showing a very good experience for the DJB, that was willing to increase the portfolio offered. In this sense, a DJB stuffed mascot was introduced to the online store.

The British Judo Association also has an online store where items such as Judo equipment, BJA branded products and sponsor’s items are available. A relaunch of the BJA Judo Store was in development during the data collection period and was expected to have a more robust portfolio. Marketing strategy for the new store was focused on taking advantage of the new CRM system as well as the social media engagement as a way of reaching members and communicating the new portfolio and offers. Besides, pop up stalls in the BJA events were also mentioned as positive strategies already implemented in the past and capable of generating extra income for the organization as, according to the interviewee, spectators usually are willing to buy new items at events.
**Idols**

The importance of idols in the marketing strategy of national Judo federations was praised by all four countries studied due to different benefits associated with this pillar, while several challenges were considered barriers to foster idol development. For the DJB, although idols were assessed as very important for the organization, the reality shows that a limited number of athletes earn this status. In terms of public recognition, only Ole Bischof - Olympic gold in Beijing 2008 and silver medalist in London 2012 - was indicated as well-known across the country, while other Judo athletes are recognized only inside the Judo community or in their own regions despite of their important medals achieved in the international stage. The low identification rate between athletes and the general public is indeed the reason why communication efforts to promote important events such as the World Championships must focus on the good level of the German Judo instead of on the athletes itself.

The British Judo Association also reported the difficulty of expanding recognition of their idols to the non-Judo community. The explanation, however, relies on the sport saturated market in the UK with many sports and athletes performing very well and catching the attention of the public and the media. In this context, the importance of earning gold medals in the most important and well-known competitions increases as a way of generating interest.

Challenges apart, idols were defined as very important for the BJA as they are the role models and the shop window of the sport. Top British Judo athletes were defined as clearly aware of their responsibilities as idols to the development of the sport and were considered good in engaging Judo members, especially through volunteer appearances such as running Judo sessions in community clubs or speaking with children at schools. It must be noted that the BJA interviewee also highlighted the importance for the federation of developing idols also as a whole person and not only for the interest of the organization, as skills and experiences acquired in this process can be vital for these athletes when they retire from the sport, normally at an early age in comparison with other occupations.

Another alternative that emerged in the interview to foster idol development outside the Judo community is chasing opportunities to appear on non-sport related media. As an example, the participant mentioned that one British Olympic Judo medalist was participating in a reality TV show in the UK, which helps to appear consistently in the media and goes beyond interviews that focuses solely on the athlete’s specific medal or competition. Inevitably,
television appearance was highlighted as crucial to increase idol recognition, while written interviews and articles on the internet were pointed as not enough for this purpose.

The Japanese federation also emphasized the role of television for idol development. For the AJJF participant, athletes must be present on television to be seen, generate recognition and also be perceived as role models. Idols are certainly the key element of Judo’ marketing strategy in Japan, as they are also explored as the assets that are the base of the other four engagement pillars analyzed in this study, as explained throughout the sections of this chapter. The fact that Japanese judokas are the most awarded internationally and obtained excellent results in the most important competitions of the sport contributes to this strategy. Moreover, idols were mentioned as vital in encouraging children to begin practicing Judo, to raise popularity of the sport and particularly as a central tool to lead Judo towards new growth in Japan, an important objective of the AJJF due to the consistent decrease in the number of members in recent years.

Creating and developing idols is also a strategic objective of the Brazilian Judo Federation (CBJ, 2017a), reinforcing the undeniable relevance of this pillar for the four nations studied. Benefits associated to idols by the CBJ participants included encouragement for beginning Judo, the voice and face of the sport, motivation for younger athletes, the fact that idols themselves are communication assets of the national federation and even the importance they have for sponsors as in general those companies recognize the value of investing in sports that have idols.

Brazilians, however, also reported a few challenges for achieving this specific strategic objective. The main one is related to the sport culture in the country being highly focused on soccer, which undermines the media appearance opportunities for sports such as Judo that overall only catch public interest in the months before the Olympic Games, every four years. It was suggested that the exception in this case is Rafaela Silva, the Brazilian judoka who won gold in the Rio 2016 Olympic Games and reached the position of one of the biggest Olympic idols of the country. In fact, at least in the Judo international scenario, Silva has been recognized as one of the stars of the sport, which is attested by the number of followers on Instagram the Brazilian received after the Olympic gold medal in her hometown and that made her the most popular judoka in the world right after the Rio Games (JudoInside, 2016), even though the French star Teddy Rinner has already surpassed her, as identified by the author in November 2018.
Another challenge derived from the lack of media exposure due to the sport culture in Brazil is the absence of Portuguese commentators in the IJF official broadcast of Judo events. When TV channels in the South American country do not transmit competitions such as the World Championship the Brazilian judo fans must watch the event through the IJF website, which has only English commentators. However, as stated by one interviewee, commentators play a big role on idol development through an engagement perspective as they are the ones who deliver emotion and perpetuate the moment in the spectator’s mind. As an example, the participant mentioned that when the Brazilian judoka Mayra Aguiar won her second world title in 2017 there were no commentators in Portuguese sharing the emotion of that important moment for the Brazilian Judo fans, which perhaps undermined the positive impact that the gold medal could have brought for the athlete and the sport.

Despite the barriers the CBJ has been facing, some activities were implemented as an attempt to boost idol development as an engagement tool of Judo in Brazil. By using former successful athletes as idols, the Brazilian Judo Federation has been trying to motivate youth athletes with their presence in training camps, as well as raising awareness of these Judo stars through including them as representatives of the sport in events broadcast by television. Media training and social media, on the other hand, are the tools being utilized by the CBJ for the idols that are being developed for the future.

**Social Media**

As expected, social media plays an important role in developing engagement and bringing fans closer to Judo in the four countries studied, that have official accounts in Facebook, Twitter and YouTube. Except from the DJB, the federations of Brazil, Great Britain and Japan are also present on Instagram, whilst the Germans have only an official profile for the DJB Junior Team project. The number of followers of the national federations on each platform are shown in table 3. Objectives and strategies related to the use of social media varies not only accordingly with the structure, aims and resources of each organization, but also with the countries culture of using and engaging in the different social media platforms.

For the DJB participant, who mentioned that the organization is quite strong in the social media community, activities such as interviews with athletes highlighting their personal traits are important for engaging fans. Social media was also emphasized as an important tool to disseminate information about the performance and results of the athletes across the country. This informative aspect of social media is critical in a context where the main sport media
usually focus its attention on another sport such as soccer and was also mentioned in the Brazilian interview, a country that shows similarities with the European nation in this sense. Even in the context of Japan, where Judo has more media penetration in comparison with the other three countries studied, social media was reported as a powerful tool to communicate information about the sport and keep the fans interested and involved with Judo.

**Table 3. Followers on Official Social Media Platforms**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>NF</th>
<th>Facebook</th>
<th>Twitter</th>
<th>Instagram</th>
<th>YouTube</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>CBJ</td>
<td>300,974</td>
<td>21,565</td>
<td>42,610</td>
<td>5,928</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>DJB</td>
<td>18,133</td>
<td>4,774</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3,742</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Great Britain</td>
<td>BJA</td>
<td>17,721</td>
<td>22,036</td>
<td>7,765</td>
<td>2,376</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>AJF</td>
<td>122,021</td>
<td>24,380</td>
<td>19,134</td>
<td>1,293</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. Data was collected by the author on November 19th, 2018. A dash (-) indicates that the NF does not have an official account on the platform.*

Social media strategy for the BJA, however, is more focused on member engagement and encouraging people to enter Judo. In this sense, the main challenge is trying to find the optimum balance between posts that highlight the performance, reported as being more shareable and catching more impact, and those that put the grassroots and the Judo community in the focus, showing the enjoyable side of practicing the sport. For both, images were mentioned as highly powerful to engage fans and non-fans.

Clubs and members are also frequently encouraged to produce their own content, which the BJA promotes and shares in the official accounts of the organization. The effect of positive sporting achievements in the social media rates was also mentioned, highlighting that good results internationally could bring more visitors to the BJA website and social media profiles and therefore the organization must be ready to show the benefits of the sport and practical information about how to engage in the sport in order to capitalize over the interest generated.

While federations in Germany, Great Britain and Japan have an in-house department or staff in charge of managing social media, the CBJ has an outsourced communication agency that has one staff exclusively dedicated and daily allocated to social media tasks at the organization headquarters. Social media engagement indicators were considered as one of the CBJ’s metrics of success, and the main strategy relies on content production for the official website, also as an alternative for overcome the media lack of attention and coverage of the sport in the country.
Followers of the Brazilian federation social media profiles were described as specialized in Judo, even though differences are perceived between users of each platform. According to the interviews, the CBJ has been able to interact with a more wider audience and non-specific Judo fans on Facebook than on Instagram, where interviewee perception estimated around 70% of judokas, and on Twitter, where the strategy of reporting live results of competitions attracts mainly the ‘Judo families’ eager for information about the performance of their relatives and friends. The organization has different approaches for each platform: Facebook is highly informative and the place where the national federation shares the articles of the official website; Twitter is 100% informative, as the main focus is on live coverage of competitions; and Instagram is 90% focused on engagement, due to the esthetic nature of the platform.

Building characters and telling their stories was pointed out as highly important through a communication perspective that aims to leverage the connection with fans. Therefore, not only idols play an important role, but also the amount and quality of information about them. In this sense, Brazilian interviewees suggested that improvement of the CBJ Zempo system would provide benefits as having access to data about the whole sporting history of each athlete could support the communication team in content creation and thus facilitate engagement strategies.

Two other specific topics raised in the interviews with CBJ participants were the relevance of the Judo values as content that generate engagement on social media and the possible conflict with the organization’s official hashtag. Firstly, it was stated that, “there is no doubt that the posts which generate more engagement on our [CBJ] social media are videos that represent Judo values”. An example of this was the video posted by the CBJ where an athlete who lost the fight tied the belt of his opponent that had injured an arm during the match in a Brazilian national competition. The engagement of the post was massive, with many followers commenting that the action of the defeated judoka truly represents the real values of the sport. In spite of this, the CBJ slogan and official hashtag that can be translated as “prepared to win” was appointed as sensitive to be used in some contexts as it may seem arrogant, even though it works really well as part of the organization’s branding, in the view of the participant. Hence, the use of the hashtag on social media is limited to the posts related to the positive achievements of Brazilian judokas.
The findings collected through the semi-structured interviews with participants of the four Judo national federations contributed to the understanding of the objectives, strategies and challenges of using social media as a way of fostering engagement with their consumers. Additionally, the public nature of this tool also allowed a deeper investigation on how social media is being implemented in practice by analyzing the content, the growth and the engagement rates of the national federations accounts on their social networks.

As described on the previous chapter, 1,596 tweets of the four national federations official Twitter accounts were collected throughout the whole month of September 2018, when the main international competition of the year, the World Judo Championship was held in Baku, Azerbaijan, between September 20th and 27th. Table 4 presents a descriptive summary of the data collected in the Twitter account of each national federation. The British Judo Association was responsible for 52% of all tweets collected in the period, but the massive presence in the social media did not boost to a greater performance in follower’s growth (0.51%) and average engagement rate (0.02), both indicators led by the Japanese federation (2.45% and 0.42 respectively), as well as the accumulated engagement rate (69.47).

### Table 4. Summary of Twitter Data Collection

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NF</th>
<th>Twitter Account</th>
<th>Tweets Collected</th>
<th>Followers on Oct 1st</th>
<th>Followers Growth</th>
<th>Average Engag. Rate Per-Post</th>
<th>Accumulated Engag. Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CBJ</td>
<td>@noticiascbj</td>
<td>334</td>
<td>21,164</td>
<td>1.16%</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>19.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DJB</td>
<td>@judobund</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>4,744</td>
<td>0.61%</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>3.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BJA</td>
<td>@BritishJudo</td>
<td>837</td>
<td>21,894</td>
<td>0.51%</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>15.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AJF</td>
<td>@ajif_judo</td>
<td>289</td>
<td>23,987</td>
<td>2.45%</td>
<td>0.42</td>
<td>69.47</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. *Average of engagement rate of each NF post; engagement rate = [(likes + comments + shares) / followers] x 100. *Sum of all engagement rates of the NF during September 2018.

Since the platform analyzed, Twitter, allows different types of posts, each national federation utilized different strategies while communicating through this social media, as presented on Table 5. Overall, 80.3% of all posts collected from the four organizations are within the ‘Own Tweets’ group, constituted by the general tweets, the replies and the commented retweets (when a Twitter profile shares the content of another user adding a comment to it). These three types of posts have as common feature a content that is in some extent created by each national federation and, therefore, whose engagements (i.e. likes, shares and comments) are accounted to them.
On the other hand, simple tweets are considered as ‘Other’s Tweets’ in the sense that the national federations shared them exactly as other Twitter users originally posted them. In this case, engagements are not accounted for the national federation who shared the content. Therefore, in this study, all engagement rates presented (as on Table 4, for instance) refers exclusively to the interactions occurred on posts within the ‘Own Tweets’ group. Simple retweets accounted for 19.7% of the data collected and was widely used by the AJJF (42.9%). Conversely, the DJB did not used this type of post a single time throughout the month analyzed.

### Table 5. Types of Twitter posts by National Federation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of posts</th>
<th>CBJ</th>
<th>DJB</th>
<th>BJA</th>
<th>AJJF</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>f</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>f</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Own Tweets</td>
<td>281</td>
<td>84.1</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Tweet</td>
<td>268</td>
<td>80.2</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>685</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reply</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commented Retweet</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other’s Tweets</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simple Retweet</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>15.9</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>334</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>837</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. f = frequency of tweets. A dash (−) appears when the category had no tweet related.*

A closer look at the daily evolution of the indicators across the period studied also provides interesting findings for understanding national Judo federations use of social media, as presented on Figures 5, 6 and 7. With regards to the daily number of tweets, the impact of the World Judo Championship is clearly shown in Figure 5 during the eight days of competition (September 20th to September 27th) with a massive quantity of posts that are drastically reduced right after the end of the event. The last three days of the month could be interpreted as a World Championship ‘hangover’ for the twitter accounts analyzed.

Other competitions also contributed to raising the number of tweets by national federations in the first half of the month, such as the under 15 Brazilian Championship (September 1st and 2nd) with results being posted on the CBJ’s official Twitter account, as well as the IBSA (International Blind Sports Federation) Attyrau World Cup (September 9th and 10th) and the European Judo Championship (between September 13th and 16th), both events with real time coverage of the British judokas on the BJA official twitter.
The World Championship apparently also impacted growth in the number of followers. In general, the competition period, especially between the first and fourth days, presented consistent and higher increment of followers than the daily average accumulated growth, that was 0.16%. Important to note that this indicator is based on the difference between the number of followers of one day compared with the day before. Therefore, as the data collection began on September 1st, the indicator’s period of analysis ranges between September 2nd and October 1st. In this sense, for instance, the effect of the World Championship’s first day, September 20th, appears in Figure 6 only on the day after, that is September 21st.

Besides the World Championship, other Judo events in the month may have contributed to the growth in the number of followers of each national federation. The case of the Brazilian under 15 National Championship is a good example, as the competition’s period (first days of the month analyzed) refers to the two highest daily increments in the CBJ’s Twitter followers number (0.27% and 0.08%).

**Figure 5.** Number of Daily Tweets Posted by Judo National Federations in this Study
**Figure 6.** Daily Accumulated Growth of Twitter Followers

With regards to the daily accumulated per-post engagement rate, though, the power of the World Championship seems even more undeniable and hard to compare with the impact of other events within the same month, as Figure 7 shows. The eight days of the competition held in Baku presented the eight higher rates in this indicator, confirming the massive interest the event generated on the four national federations fans and followers. The Japanese ones, however, stood out as the AJF presented the highest daily accumulated per-post engagement rates on twenty-four out of thirty days analyzed.

**Figure 7.** Daily Accumulated Per-Post Engagement Rate

In addition to the descriptive findings presented above, this study also attempted to categorize the different types of content national Judo federations used to communicate and
engage with their fans. In this sense, the 1,596 tweets collected were categorized into four main categories (Informing, Marketing, Personalizing and Activating) and then in sub-categories that provided more details regarding the posts. Table 6 provides the description of each category and sub-category, as well as relevant examples of tweets collected within each of them. Important to note that even though each of the four categories are different from each other an individual tweet can be identified with more than one category.

Moreover, each category plays a different role to strengthen the connection between the fan/follower and the national federation, the sport and their assets. However, the categories of informing and marketing are also considered as one-way communication and thus similar to the traditional media, while the interactive aspects of social media are better explored through contents within the personalizing and activating categories.

Providing unrequested information is the main feature of the informing category. Within it, six sub-categories were found across the tweets collected. The first topic was related to activities outside of the sport that athletes, coaches, staff or the organization as a whole were involved, such as charity and volunteer activities, non-performance exchange programs, and athletes’ traveling or hanging out together, for instance. The following sub-category, diversion, relates to the posts that focus on providing extra information or content to followers other than those that fits in the 280 characters and that are not directly related with none of the other informing sub-categories. Examples within this theme are photo galleries, videos not related with performance and documents or articles with the results and stats of competitions.

Posts that aim to offer information directly associated with the organization and its events and members of staff are categorized as organizational news. Within this group are tweets about the domestic events organized by the NF and the news related with staff such as coaches and members of the board. As for the stakeholders news sub-category, posts are directly associated with the sport organizations with whom the NF relates, such as clubs, regional and international Judo federations, National Olympic Committee and the Ministry of Sport or related institutions of their countries.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One-way communication</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informing</td>
<td>&quot;Some of our DJB Junior team are once again part of an international youth exchange program in Malta this year. Encouraging young commitment. 🐱 #judo #djbjudo #Judobullvssports #euproject #bullvssports #maltajudo [Link provided]&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diversion</td>
<td>&quot;【#All Japan Jr】Today, we will hold fund-raising activities as part of Nishinihon Typhoon and Hokkaido Earthquake support activities for the victims in the clean-up time (after the third round). Kosei Inoue All-Japan men's coach, Kenji Sasaki that participated in the Asian Games in the 81 kg class and the 100 kg class lida Kentaro will join! #judo #japan #FundraisingActivities&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational News</td>
<td>&quot;What is it like to command the men's judo team in Brazil? Our coach Yuko Fuji has told a little bit of her story to @IntJudoFed in this super special interview! [link provided]&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stakeholders News</td>
<td>&quot;RT @JudoScotland: Day nine celebrates Judo Girls Rock (JGR). This initiative focuses on encouraging female participation in judo. Since it started JGR has engaged 186 females in Judo-in-Scotland. #celebrating30years There will be a free JGR session at the Glasgow European Open! @BritishJudo&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Performance-related News         | "【# Baku World Championship】September 21 (2nd day of event) ✧ women's 52 kg class ____ #AbeUta 📸 and 2nd place #ShishimeAi 📸 congratulations 🥇🥈🥉 #judoworlds2018 Details: [link provided]"
| Real Time Coverage               | "Erika Miranda (52kg) guarantees Brazil on the podium for the first time in Baku! 🇧🇷 #preparadaparavencer 🇧🇷: @IntJudoFed" |

Table 6. National Judo Federations Twitter Content by Categories
Table 6 (continued).

**Marketing**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Promotion</th>
<th>Providing relevant marketing communications through advertising or promotion of the sport, athletes, clubs, competitions and special events, both domestic and international ones.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Direct Sales</td>
<td>Providing fans with the opportunity to easily purchase items online, such as tickets, licensed merchandise and membership affiliation and renewal. Can include direct call for event registration and newsletter subscription.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Two-way communication**

**Activating**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group Involvement</th>
<th>Ensure, where possible, fans are included in relevant general interactive processes. Can also include group discussions and asking for followers' opinions.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Direct Responses</td>
<td>Directly responding to individual questions or comments.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Personalizing**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Initiating Contact</th>
<th>Direct, interpersonal contact with an individual fan/follower, initiated by the organization. Can include mentioning or tagging followers and/or stakeholders profiles.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Forwarding content</td>
<td>Retweeting followers, athletes and stakeholders content</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| | “.@stuartmcwatt is fighting at #JudoGlasgow2018 Get your tickets and show your support: [link provided] #WeAreGBJudo 🚴‍♂️” |
| | “Sign up for the free Power Boys Camp in Hannover. Registration deadline is the upcoming Monday! So secure one of the coveted remnants. U21 European champion Falk Petersilka is also there 🏆 [link provided]” |
| | “It’s the last day at #JudoWorlds2018! It’s been a long old stint here in Baku but we love a Team competition! Let’s go GB Judo! Watch Live: [link provided] #WeAreGBJudo #JudoWorlds2018” |
| | “It’s just a World Cup, but a raffle never hurts 🎁 In addition, our World Cup starters Theresa and Amelie Stoll are part of this action ” |
| | “Well...how’s everyone feeling after that last fight? #WeAreGBJudo #JudoWorlds2018” |
| | “Point 14:00 will be serious for Stoll. Can she prevail against the French woman Receveaux? #judo #djf #judoworlds2018 [link provided]” |
| | “Hello, Esther! We have no transmission, but you can track the updated results on the CBJ website. Who are you rooting for in this Brazilian Championship?” |
| | “Cheers Mark! Really appreciated all of your support over the last week 🎉” |
| | “Cheers to the teams from @judo_sj and @JudoScotland for coming down this week! #WeAreGBJudo #JudoFamily #MoreThanASport” |
| | “Today is @Rafaelasilvaa at #JudoWorlds2018! Brazilian will make 7th fight in mat 1 against Jessica Klımkait (CAN)! Follow our direct coverage of Baku in another dawn full of judo! 3h-Preliminaries [link provided] 9am-recap, semi and finals at @SporTV” |

The last two sub-categories within informing, *performance-related news* and *real time coverage*, have as common point the focus on the sporting performance aspect of the national federations. Overall their differences are more related with the purpose of each tweet than with the content itself, as both highlight the high-level sportive facet of the organizations. While the
performance-related news aimed to inform about athletes and coaches training, preparation, competition and achievements in a more timeless perspective, the real time coverage was all about reporting the immediate facts related to competitions in an up-to-the-minute detail of contests and behind the scenes information.

Marketing communications differs from the informing tweets as they aim to offer significant and engaging promotions or advertisements directly to the followers of the national federation Twitter. Two sub-categories emerged within the marketing theme. First, direct sales group is the one composed by posts that directly offers opportunities of purchasing items or tickets, affiliating to the organization or registering in events. The second one, promotion, refers to the tweets that advertise or promote the organization, the sport, athletes, events and competitions. The majority of posts within promotion were inviting followers to watch and follow the countries’ athletes competing at the World Championship through the official broadcasters.

Activating, the first of two categories identified as two-way communication, refers to the efforts of trying to involve followers in different ways. Although the literature mentions two sub-categories within this group (Meng et al., 2015), posts related with gathering feedback were not found in the data collection. Thus, the only sub-category within activating is group involvement, when national federations aimed to involve followers by asking their opinions. In general, the few tweets in this topic were those asking fans about their guesses in regards to the performance of some athletes in specific contests of the World Championship.

The personalizing category refers to the interactions made by the national federation with other followers and Twitter profiles. The direct responses are those where organizations replied to individual questions or comments, as well as when they commented others’ tweets through the platform’s commented retweet option. The national federation’s initiatives of beginning a conversation with a follower or simply mentioning them in a post were accounted within the initiating contact sub-category. Tweets in this group included tagging athlete’s profiles in national federation’s contents, a strategy that was widely used specially by the Japanese federation, while the British federation used the same approach frequently to connect with stakeholders.

The last group, forwarding content, was included in the study due to the vast use of simple retweets from three of the national federations analyzed. Even though this type of tweet is not considered for engagement rates, as aforementioned, they are often used as part of social
media strategies and are helpful to elucidate the contents that were worth to be shared by national federation, regardless of their authorship.

The content analysis of the national federations’ twitter communications was also extended to understand the frequency and coverage of each category, as outlined in Table 7. It is important to note that, as mentioned previously, each post can be associated with more than one category. For example, BJA tweet "@nekodadavis_57 will be back in the final block at #JudoWorlds2018 where she will face current world champion Sumiya Dorjsuren (MGL) for a place in the -57kg FINAL! Watch live from 1PM UK Time: [link provided] #WeAreGBJudo #JudoWorlds2018" shows the interrelatedness between three categories: informing, marketing and personalizing.

**Table 7. Frequency and Coverage of Tweets by Content Category**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>CBJ</th>
<th>BJA</th>
<th>DJB</th>
<th>AJF</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Informing</td>
<td>301</td>
<td>90.1</td>
<td>729</td>
<td>87.1</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activities</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outside Sport</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diversion</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>News</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>23.6</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>12.2</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stakeholders</td>
<td>201</td>
<td>66.8</td>
<td>603</td>
<td>82.7</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Related News</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>14.7</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>15.2</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct Sales</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promotion</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>91.3</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personalizing</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>28.1</td>
<td>358</td>
<td>42.8</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct Responses</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>13.8</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initiating</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>29.8</td>
<td>205</td>
<td>57.3</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>56.4</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>38.8</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forwarding</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activating</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group Involvement</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note 1. f = frequency of tweets. A dash (-) appears when the category had no tweet related.*

*Note 2. Percentage of categories (Informing, Marketing, Personalizing and Activating) are based on total number of tweets in each column. Thus, as one tweet can be associated with more than one category, the sum surpasses 100%.*

*Note 3. Percentages of sub-categories are based on the number of tweets in their own categories.*
The distribution of tweets between categories shows that overall national federations are using Twitter to mainly inform their followers, as 86.5% of all tweets collected were within the informing category. With 16% of posts being related with marketing, the other one-way communication category, the findings suggest that the organizations studied are mainly using Twitter as a traditional media, neglecting to some extent the interactive potential of the platform. While activating was almost not used (only 0.5%), the 37.8% of posts in the personalizing group indicate that the willingness to interact with others – mainly athletes and stakeholders, rarely with fans – was not fully overlooked by national federations.

Within sub-categories, the 90% of informing posts being constituted by performance related news and real time coverage stands out. The massive use of the up-to-the-minute details of competitions by the British (82.7%) and the Brazilian (66.8%) federations must be also highlighted as can be a strong indicator of the strategy of these organizations towards Twitter. The low frequency of direct sales posts (17) may also show the challenges national federations have on using social media to directly raise revenue. Additionally, frequency of direct responses (27) and group involvement (8) can indicate a certain degree of difficulty to proactively interact with followers and drive participation on this specific social media.

Findings presented in Table 7 are important to understand how national Judo federations are using Twitter to engage with their fans, whereas data outlined in Table 8 attempts to go beyond and offer a glimpse on how followers are reacting to the types of content posted by the organizations studied. Before describing the results, however, is necessary to highlight the differences between the data used in the two aforementioned tables.

While coverage of posts by content category utilized all tweets posted by the four national federations, the analysis in Table 8 uses only the communications included in the ‘Own Tweets’ category (general tweets, replies and commented retweets), as only within this group engagement activities (likes, shares and comments) are associated with national federations’ accounts. Furthermore, since many categories and sub-categories of each national federation has a small number of associated tweets, analysis must be performed with caution as this study is merely descriptive and therefore findings cannot be projected to other contexts.

Nevertheless, interesting information emerges from the analysis of average engagement rate by content category. Considering the sample of this study, the two-way communication category labelled as personalizing scored the highest engagement rate (0.14), followed by marketing (0.12), informing (0.08) and activating (0.02). Within sub-categories, though, the
best engagement rate was the performance related news, that scored 0.23. Considering that data was collected during the World Championship month, this result is not a surprise. Apart from that, activities outside the sport (0.18), initiating contact (0.15), organizational news (0.14) and promotion (0.13) completed the top five of most engaged categories.

Table 8. Average Engagement Rate by Content Category

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>CBJ f</th>
<th>DBJ f</th>
<th>BJA f</th>
<th>AJF f</th>
<th>Total f</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Informing</td>
<td>261</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>673</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>1,178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activities Outside Sport</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diversion</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational News</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stakeholders News</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performance related news</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>228</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Real Time Coverage</td>
<td>198</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>601</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>856</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marketing</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>221</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct Sales</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promotion</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>207</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personalizing</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>219</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>286</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct Responses</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initiating Contact</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>205</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>259</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activating</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group Involvement</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note 1. f = frequency of tweets. A dash (-) appears when the category had no tweet related.

Note 2. Simple Retweets were removed from this analysis, as engagement with them is not counted for the organizations studied.

Although limitations due to the size of the national federations Twitter sample prevent a deeper analysis within countries, two distinctive findings should be highlighted. First, the AJIF leadership in ten out of eleven categories regarding engagement rate is worthy of discussion and will be included in the next chapter. Additionally, the BJA strategy of detailing as much as possible about the contests of British judokas through the real time coverage category (601 tweets) did not result in a good engagement rate (0.01).
CHAPTER 5. DISCUSSION

This study investigated the features and challenges of implementing marketing strategies aimed to increase sport consumer engagement by national Judo federations. The organizations of Brazil, Germany, Great Britain and Japan were analyzed and provided crucial data for the understanding of their organizational objectives and approaches associated with engagement, as well as information regarding the Judo consumers in each country and the challenges and tools to start and maintain a close relationship with them. Findings derived from this research can be valuable for the development of marketing strategies in national federations aimed to facilitate sport’s and organization’s sustainable growth by strengthening the bond between the sport consumer – spectator and/or practitioner – and Judo. In this sense, results are now discussed in two sections attempting to cover the organizational and the consumer perspectives of the engagement process, as well as providing practical implications through a framework proposal.

Paving the Path for Engagement

Sport organizations such as national federations are quite complex with regards to their key objectives and resources to achieve them. Though in a simple and wider perspective these organizations’ primary goal is move their sport forward in all related areas, secondary objectives coexist in a broad spectrum that can include, within others, management of the sport, increase participation and revenue, raise the sport profile, organize different types of events, improve workforce, serve members, promote high-level performance and entertain fans (Ferrand & McCarthy, 2008).

The multifaceted platform increases in complexity when resources needed to deliver all of these spheres are taken into consideration. Financial aspects are critical for success in the competitive and dynamic sport market. The on-field performance costs, for instance, increase continuously over time following an also ever-growing fierce competition for medals. In the specific case of Judo, national federations must fund not only the grassroots initiatives that feed the sport system and the development and training of their elite athletes, but also their travel around the globe to compete in the IJF events that offer points in the world ranking list that lead to classification for the Olympic Games.
The interview responses highlighted that sporting achievements are, no doubt, crucial for the finances of the national Judo federations. Medals are even recognized as the main product of these organizations as they are considered important criteria for governmental funding, besides the effects that great international results may cause on level of interest and incomes generated from sponsors, fans and members. However, at the same time, achieving medals is an expensive effort and an uncontrollable variable. Therefore, a national federation’s sustainability relies on diversifying sources of revenue by trying to divert the dependence on sporting performance and even to reinvent in it, an alternative that is already present in the strategic plan of national Judo federations (BJA, 2017a; CBJ, 2017a).

Marketing, thus, rises in importance as an alternative to overcome these funding and membership challenges. However, some national federations do not seem to have a clear idea about the potential impact a marketing unity has in the business performance when fully integrated in the sport organization. The complex features of marketing at national Judo federations requires human resources with the proper skills to re-invent Judo as a valuable product and to integrate areas in a way that makes the organization grow in the same direction. Overall, as Nike’s founder Phil Knight stated, “marketing knits the whole organization together” (Willigan, 1992). Instead, the absence of an in-house marketing department, lack of specialized staff and integration within other functional areas, and a predominantly commercial perspective were found to be barriers to sustainable growth in national Judo federations.

Confirming prior research and literature (Bühler & Nufer, 2010; Ferrand & McCarthy, 2008; Funk et al., 2016), this study revealed that the sport product is difficult to define by national Judo federations due to its intangibility, different facets and objectives that these organizations have to achieve. The Brazilian federation, for example, mentioned that the organization does not have a tangible product to sell and that therefore medals are the most palpable ones. Other than that, number of members, practitioners, attendance, social media and TV rankings, among others, are used as metrics to understand the success of the Brazilian Judo product. The intangibility issue, however, seems to be less critical for the British Association that defined itself clearly as a membership association. Through a marketing perspective, even though membership is also far from being a very tangible product, it is much easier to manage than the sporting outcomes that marketers do not control.

Despite the fact that national federations may use different approaches according to their strategies, the core product – even though it can be packed in many ways – is Judo itself.
However, findings suggested that the Judo product is facing a worrying moment from the practitioner’s perspective at least in Germany and Japan, where membership rates have been decreasing consistently for over a decade. While the same metric in Great Britain is growing, the absence of information regarding the Brazilian scenario prevents proper evaluation and has raised an alert within the national federation, as not knowing how the product is performing can be even more prejudicial than being aware of its crisis.

The market was defined as competitive and challenging for Judo as all four countries studied reported a fierce competition with other sports to attract and maintain fans. Macro-level matters such as the emergence of other popular sports and demographic crises, as well as Judo-related issues such as lack of appeal for youngsters, excess of traditionalism and perceived constraints were pointed out as negatively influencing the performance of the sport and consequently of the national federations.

It is a more complicated process to attract fans than ever before due to the proliferation of new sports and the different ways of consumption, a puzzle that can only be solved through understanding how consumers connect with the sport and then building a branding and marketing strategy aimed to foster and consolidate this attachment (Rein et al., 2006). Though the four national Judo federations mentioned the importance of the fans and might even have been implementing some activities focused on them, overall very little has been done in terms of centering the relationship with consumers at the heart of these organizations’ marketing strategy. Aside from the BJA and its membership approach, in general the engagement activities implemented are good individual initiatives that should be integrated into a more solid engagement strategy. In this sense, a deep understanding of the Judo consumer and its connection with Judo should be the first step.

Yet the literature has been unanimous about the importance of understanding consumers in all markets, including the sport one (Bühler & Nufer, 2010; Funk et al., 2016; Rein et al., 2006), the findings of this study revealed that national Judo federations do not have enough information in this field, even though participants recognized lack of consumer’s understanding as a limitation for their marketing strategies. In this sense, surveys are highly recommended tools to deepen knowledge of consumer profiles, points of connection and motives for engaging with Judo.

Overall, interviews and field observations revealed that national Judo federations consumers are mostly based on practitioners and those associated with them. Spectatorship in
Judo is still underdeveloped, with variations evident to each country’s context, but mainly composed of ‘Judo families’. Further, buyers of tangible products seem to be even more related with practitioners, as licensed merchandise portfolios are scarce and, where present, are mainly focused on those who practice the sport – books, *judogis* and mats. In this sense, the role of practitioners as the main consumers in the national Judo federations rises in importance. Participation is, indeed, the most traditional connection entryway in sports, and is highly effective in childhood, although its importance in adulthood should not be overlooked (Rein et al., 2006).

The key point for national federations may be, thus, not only about enlarging participation, but strengthening practitioner’s engagement so they can keep involved with the sport longer while opportunities to consume Judo as spectators and buyers are also offered throughout consumer’s journey and delivered in a way that contributes to fostering their engagement. Considering the membership crisis in Germany and Japan along with interviews in the four countries studied and based on the Psychological Continuum Model (PCM) discussed in Chapter 2, national Judo federations are struggling to move consumers to the *attraction* stage and from there to the *attachment* level.

Regarding attraction, both the German and the Japanese federations reported difficulties in provoking people’s interest in Judo enough to take part. An analysis of the *attraction* stage in the PCM model shows as antecedents the outcomes of *awareness* (knowledge and realization of participation opportunities), as well as hedonic and dispositional needs, self-efficacy and perceived constraints (Funk et al., 2016). Considering Japan, where Judo is well spread throughout the country, it is unlikely that the issue of attraction relies on consumers not being aware of the sport or of how to start practicing or consuming it. The other countries, though, must assess if information about the sport and especially about how to enter the sport is being properly shared and easily available for those who are willing to try Judo.

In this sense, the BJA provided a valuable benchmark as the organization highlighted the importance of capitalizing on the interest derived from great sport performance by being ready to promote through social media and websites the benefits of practicing Judo as well as practical information regarding how and where one can engage with the sport. Findings from the Twitter analysis suggest the influence of important competitions and athletes’ performance in attracting new followers and raising their level of engagement. It is important thus that national Judo federations proactively use performance achievements to address their
engagement needs and do not rely only on organic media exposure medals bring to Judo in their countries: if sport marketers cannot control how athletes will perform in the big competitions, it is part of the job to ensure that when a judoka gets there the whole sport will benefit from this achievement and grow in a sustainable way.

Moving onwards and considering that the awareness stage is being well developed, the organization’s spotlight must be on other antecedents of attraction. Perceived constraints must be understood so marketers can develop strategies to reduce its effects on consumer’s willingness to engage (Funk et al., 2016). Trial vouchers such as those available on the DJB website may be a relevant tool to negotiate over financial restrictions, for instance, especially in a country that reported as expensive the costs of being a member of the national Judo federation, a statement that was also expressed by the Japanese participant. Overall, organizations must understand the intrapersonal, interpersonal and structural constraints preventing individuals to engage in Judo considering each country’s context.

Other than that, engagement on the attraction stage has a lot to do with understanding consumers motives to engage in the sport and delivering accordingly. Within the four national Judo federations studied, only the BJA has data that support strategies on this matter. Their surveys with members raised keeping fit, improving strength, making friends, increasing self-confidence and getting access to the grading scheme as the main motives for becoming a member of the British Judo Association. The low-ranking of motives associated with competition must be considered for all national Judo federations. Overall, the organizations analyzed often focus on performance achievements and features rather than on motives associated with practicing the sport for health and socialization matters. This commonly used strategy may be helpful in some extent when the target is more focused on increasing spectatorship than the participant’s rate, so each NF must consider if the use of this approach is aligned with the organization’ goals.

Another interesting discussion regarding motives listed by the BJA members is the fact that they are not strictly related with Judo. In other words, keeping fit and strong, making friends and raising confidence are motives that can lead consumers to engage with a wide range of different sports. Attraction has also a lot to do with differentiating the sport from the other options available in the market (Funk et al., 2016), and Judo perhaps is not being able to promote its inherent attributes. Though further studies are needed to prove this correlation, the statement by one Brazilian participant regarding the higher engagement level on social media
when Judo values are promoted may open an avenue through which marketers at national federations can clearly differentiate Judo from all other sports. The AJIF MIND program, that highlights the essence of Judo, can also contribute to branding the sport in a distinguishable way if promoted not only within the current practitioners but also to a broader audience.

Considering the factors discussed above, one’s successful journey in the attraction stage generates as outcome an overall feeling of having a positive experience with the sport. The challenge for national Judo federations here is that, in general, these organizations do not have direct control over the delivery aspect of practicing the sport. Though they can – and should – work to reduce the influence of perceived constraints and design marketing efforts to promote the attributes of the sport and thus encourage trial experiences, Judo is mainly delivered by regional federations and local clubs with regards to the practitioner points of contact with the sport. In this sense, two different approaches were found to be helpful: supporting the improvement of attraction and creating alternatives to directly deliver the sport. Examples are the BJA and DJB provision of tools for clubs to develop their own marketing strategies; or creating opportunities where national federations themselves can be the point of contact, whereby the DJB organized events alongside some regional federations or the AJIF organizing open classes and sessions using idols as positive attributes to deliver a good first experience with the sport.

Even though attraction plays an important role in the growth of national Judo federations by enlarging the consumer base engaging with the sport, this stage still does not create a strong connection with Judo and therefore drop-out is still likely to occur when expectations are not met or other alternatives emerge offering similar benefits (Funk et al., 2016; Funk & James, 2001). The difficulty DJB faces in retaining members for more than three years and interview responses highlighting other sports as being more interesting than Judo may have a strong relation with struggle to move consumers from the attraction stage to the attachment one.

Among with attraction outcomes, self-concept, importance and personal meaning of the sport object are the antecedents of attachment (Funk, 2008). In other words, in this stage the sport identity becomes more salient and is internalized as part of the consumer’s self-identity (Funk & James, 2004). Throughout this study, few marketing activities were identified as contributing to build and strengthen this Judo identity. Personalization, a recommended marketing strategy in this stage and defined as ‘customizing the marketing mix to selected
target sport consumer markets to increase personal meaning of the sport product or service’ (Funk et al., 2016, p. 182), was addressed in three different ways: social media, CRM and segmented events.

Through social media, the Twitter analysis showed that the Brazilian, British and Japanese federations utilized communications categorized as personalizing to engage with their followers and stakeholders during the month of September 2018. Ranked as the second most used category within the four national federations’ tweets, personalizing posts achieved the best engagement rate in the study, which stresses the importance and effectiveness of directly reaching and communicating with the consumer (or, in this case, the Twitter follower).

The BJA’ use of a CRM strategy towards its membership base is another alternative of implementing personalization as a way of facilitating attachment. Not only ensuring a continuous and relevant communication with members is important, but also adding personal elements and establishing a one-on-one conversation so the consumer can feel more related with the organization. Reaching out to members only during renewal period, as mentioned by the AJJF, does not contribute to fostering engagement and suggest that NFs must switch their mindset to implement a relationship approach.

Attachment can also be reached in some extent through segmented events, an alternative often used by the German federation, especially with the ‘Junior Team’ project, where a sense of group-identity is fostered and the personal relevance with the sport is leveraged by the activities that are not strictly related with the act of practicing the sport. In activities like this, the meaning of Judo is expanded and transferred to different other areas of the consumer’s life, fostering emotional and symbolic attachment and leveraging sport involvement.

Although the three national Judo federations have already implemented the aforementioned marketing activities that can assist in leading consumers to and through the attachment stage, some other strategies suggested by the literature have been underutilized. Licensed merchandise can contribute to strengthening identification between consumer and the sport (Bee & Kahle, 2006), but its importance was somehow neglected by the organizations. In fact, developing and managing a licensed merchandise portfolio requires resources and skills not often found in national Judo federations that usually have under developed marketing departments, as the findings of this study revealed. However, merchandise items could not only contribute as new sources of revenue for organizations that are indeed chasing these
alternatives, but could also enhance consumer’s sport identity (H. H. Kwon & Armstrong, 2006), which is a crucial aspect for attachment.

The Twitter analysis also indicated room for improvement regarding the use of social media to foster engagement and identification. Overall, national Judo federations used the platform as a one-way communication media, as 86.5% of all tweets collected had the aim of informing followers while tweets willing to involve fans represented only 0.5% of the sample. The huge focus on providing information is even clearer when analyzing the high frequency of real time coverage posts in comparison with the low engagement rate the sub-category achieved. For example, the BJA’s massive number of tweets (601) detailing each contest obtained a very small engagement rate (0.01). The eagerness to provide extensive up-to-the- minute information is understandable, but perhaps Twitter may not be the most appropriate place to do so when engaging fans is the goal. After all, sport organizations should prioritize engaging communications on social media rather than merely ensuring presence in the digital space (Allison, 2013). Conversely, the Japanese leadership in all metrics is impressive, but consideration must be given to the fact that the country obtained eight of the fifteen gold medals offered in the World Championship (IJF, 2018a), a sport performance that could have contributed to engage followers. Besides, Twitter is highly embraced by the Japanese people (Akimoto, 2011), a cultural trait that harms comparison between the other three countries.

Regardless of the tool used, bridging a sport object from identification to internalization is a complex process to manage as it varies for each individual and is represented by the formation of a sport identity, meaning that the sport became an integral part of a person’s self-concept (Funk & James, 2004). In this sense, some considerations and suggestions can be proposed for national Judo federations. While the need of differentiating Judo from other sports is highly relevant in the attraction stage, within attachment the need for a Judo identity that can be incorporated into one’s self could be achieved by defining and promoting what being a judoka means – and how those that fit in this definition differ from the ones that do not.

Hence, going back to the essence of the sport and leveraging Judo’s tradition and values can be a valuable strategy, as well as using idols as the personification of this Judo identity, facilitating recognition and identification. Adding country-specific traits is recommended so that the differentiation in the international context is ensured and the link with non-practitioners is protected. Indeed, the importance of allowing consumers that are not associated with the actual practice of the sport to relate with this identity cannot be overlooked. Not only pure
spectators must have an open door to relate with and express this identity, but also former practitioners must be able and encouraged to recognize themselves as judokas even though they have not engaged with the sport for a while. Therefore, transferring values and behaviors of Judo practitioners to the daily life of a ‘normal’ person is the challenge.

Additionally, national Judo federations must encourage the expression of a Judo identity and offer opportunities for this behavior to take place outside the sport community. While licensed merchandise could be an important tool in this sense as already pointed out above, other marketing alternatives also emerge. Non-elite athletes integrate the largest part of a national federation membership base and therefore increasing their engagement with the sport in order to retaining them is a strategic action. Besides, due to their wide reach the public expression of a Judo identity would benefit the organization by spreading awareness and adding associations to the Judo brand. In this sense, national federations could design marketing communications for each athlete that takes part in a competitive event to promote its participation in the other groups he/she is associated with. For instance, a young athlete could have access to personalized posters and social media templates that communicate his/her participation in an event, inviting school’ friends to cheer for him/her while at the same time consolidating his/her identity as a judoka. By reinforcing the sport identity to one’s peers and groups, the personal meaning and importance of the sport increases and attachment can be reached (Funk et al., 2016; Lock & Funk, 2016).

The bridge from attachment to allegiance, the last stage in the sport engagement process proposed by the PCM and where the connection becomes durable and stable, is based on the outcomes of the previous stage associated with higher identification and value congruence (Funk et al., 2016). The suggestions made above regarding the implementation of strategies aimed to create and strengthen a Judo identity based on the sport’ unique values are reinforced when achieving loyalty is the goal. Literature had already suggested that a high level of internalization leading to a long-term and enduring relationship between consumer and sport is influenced by shared values, the consumer’s perception that the sport object is not only aligned with his/her values, but also helps to maximize them (Bee & Kahle, 2006).

It is not often a sport has its values so genuinely integrated and explicit such as Judo. The fact that the sport was first developed as an educational tool attaches to Judo a load of values and teachings proposed by Jigoro Kano Shihan and spread along with the sport across the world for over a century (Kodokan, n.d.-a). Consumers that had already surpassed the
attachment stage may found in Judo’ values the final key for internalizing the sport and achieving allegiance. As a result, national Judo federations will have consumers whose connection with the sport is deeper and stronger enough so they engage in different ways of consumption regardless of constraints, poor performance or external forces. The highest level of the engagement process is, indeed, the ultimate goal of any sport organization and the key for sustainable growth.

**Moving Judo Closer to the Fans**

As discussed throughout this study, the process of developing sport consumer engagement strategies at national Judo federations is as complex as needed. In an attempt of organizing suggestions as practical implications, a framework was designed. Its core idea relies on the assumption that engagement is a path that must be led by the national Judo federations, but where consumers (or fans) are the ones who give the directions. In this sense, four elements integrate the framework: the starting point, the product, the directions, and the vehicles. The framework is presented in Figure 8 and explained below.

![Framework Diagram](image)

**Figure 8.** A Framework of Sport Consumer Engagement for National Judo Federations

*The starting point.* Yet it may seem quite obvious, every journey begins with a first step. In the context of this study, this means that national Judo federations must make an organizational decision of acknowledging the importance of engaging fans and structuring...
itself in a way that enables the implementation of engagement strategies. National Judo federations are already aware, to some extent, of the role of fans for the sustainable growth of the sport. Though it might be very important, inertia must be overcome and organizational actions should be implemented. For instance, national federations may consider that fans will not attend Judo events simply because they are expected to go, therefore the planning of events must include fans instead of focusing solely on organizing the field of play. Moreover, positioning the relationship with fans as a strategic objective indicates that a marketing department rises in relevance for the organization’ growth. In this sense, not only an in-house unity is highly recommended, but also a marketing perspective that emphasizes the development of relationships with stakeholders – consumers included – rather than a strictly commercial approach. Similar to the long-term process of athlete development that national federations are used to, engaging consumers is an investment that cannot be overlooked by short-term rewards. Paving the path for medals or for engaged fans takes time, funding and effort but is undeniably worth it.

*The product.* With marketing well established, the movement towards engaging fans begins and the importance of understanding the main product that will be delivered to the consumers emerges. As previously discussed, defining the sport product is a quite complex task due to its intangibility, emotional traits and different formats. To facilitate this understanding, a distinction must be made: the national federation is one product and the sport is another. Though fans can engage with the organization, overall the initial link, reason to engage and strongest connection is with the sport itself. Therefore, for the purpose of this framework the product is Judo, not the national federations.

In this sense, developing an engageable and desirable product includes differentiating it from the other options in the market and thus strategies related with branding are recommended to create a distinctive brand identity, highlighting its unique attributes and benefits that best generate positive attitudes from the target consumers. Findings of this study suggest that the essence and values of Judo can be powerful tool to drive engagement and should be considered in this stage. Additionally, the previous section’ discussion recommended the design of a Judo identity that combines unique elements from the sport with traits related with each country’ context and objectives.

*The directions.* Understanding fans is crucial for engagement. The organization can establish a solid in-house marketing department that designs a great product, but without
knowing who the consumers are and what they need, the path of engagement will not have proper direction, which can result in a non-sustainable and less efficient use of resources. In this sense, surveys and business intelligence are required to guide the whole engagement strategy. As the PCM explained, consumers not only differ from each other, but the distinctions regarding the psychological forces that are involved in each stage of the engagement process require different inputs and marketing efforts from the sport organization (Funk et al., 2016). A consumer may engage with Judo for different motives that completely change the way the product should be delivered. For instance, an individual seeking socialization will probably expect an experience with the sport distinct from the one desired by someone eager for competitive achievements. Similarly, directions send by someone experiencing the sport for the first time with a low level of engagement will be different from the ones a highly engaged consumer would give. Thus, being aware of the differences is vital to determine where and how the product should be delivered and therefore national Judo federations are highly recommended to invest in strategies aimed to get information from the consumers.

The vehicles. When product and directions are strategically combined, engagement pillars serve as the vehicles that move the sport closer to the fans. Considering the context of this study, five pillars were selected not only due to their relevance in the sport marketing literature, but most importantly because they fit in the structure of national Judo federations without the need for complex efforts and expensive changes within the organization. Events are at the core of national federations as organizing Judo competitions is part of the role of managing the sport. Athletes are registered through membership, and CRM can just be a smart way of communicating and engaging with members. Idols are the personification of the sport and whose on-field achievements are one of the main goals of any organization in this market. Social media is already widely implemented and a tool for directly engaging with fans and divert from the lack of media coverage that the sport may face in some countries. Licensed merchandise, perhaps the pillar that needs more development effort as suggested by the findings, is already implemented to some extent and helps to push the organizations further along the engagement path.

Overall, there is nothing revolutionary in the pillars suggested, but in the way they must be designed and delivered. It is about doing the basics well, aiming to adapt the vehicles according to the product and the directions consumers require. When the organization is mature enough in terms of its marketing strategy, with a strong Judo product and nurtured by the knowledge of consumers, the range of vehicles to drive engagement is countless and the
The important aspect of the proposed framework is that sport consumer engagement for national Judo federations is a process through which Judo is continuously moved closer to the fans and adapted to meet the changes consumers require while the connection is being strengthened. Though it has a starting point, the journey does not have a finish line.
CHAPTER 6. CONCLUSION

This study was designed to analyze the status, challenges and benefits of sport consumer engagement strategies in national Judo federations and to propose a practical framework to implement this marketing approach as a way of facilitating the sustainable growth of these organizations. Engaged consumers are recognized as vital for the sport business as they directly and indirectly contribute to generate revenue, proactively promote the sport through word-of-mouth and co-create value for sport organizations (Bühler & Nufer, 2010; Funk et al., 2016; Gray & Wert-Gray, 2012; Rein et al., 2006; Silva & Las Casas, 2017). Though the importance of developing a quality relationship and fostering engagement with consumers is undeniable in the sport marketing literature, research aimed to analyze its implementation in sport organizations often find barriers and challenges for practical application, such as primary focus on on-field performance and its short-term revenues (Allison, 2013) or the limitations imposed by the lack of resources (Ferrand & McCarthy, 2008).

By analyzing data collected from the national Judo federations of Brazil, Germany, Great Britain and Japan, findings revealed that, as suggested by literature, these organizations are struggling to implement marketing strategies focused on fostering consumer engagement. While participants stated that fans – practitioners and spectators – are crucial for the growth of the sport and the national federation, the marketing structure of some organizations is still underdeveloped, exclusively outsourced or focused primarily on commercial outcomes rather than on building long-term relationships with consumers, which may be harming the evolution of the sport.

In this sense, organizations such as National Olympic Committees and the International Judo Federation are important to assist and sometimes even to require improvements and lead the development of NFs. The German NOC, for instance, publishes yearly the membership data of all national sport federations in the country stratified by region, gender and age group (DOSB, 2018b). While it allows rich analysis on the evolution of all sports in each segment and also facilitates marketing intelligence to understand the competitiveness in the market, such publication pushes NFs to deliver official and reliable membership data. From the IJF perspective, strategies to support national federations in a marketing perspective are already being implemented, such as the Certified Judo Manager course offered by the IJF Academy for NFs staff and Judo club managers (IJF Academy, n.d.).
Although capacitating human resources is extremely valid, the IJF should also adopt the role of providing data for business intelligence that would allow a better understanding of Judo consumers worldwide. Implementing surveys aimed to ascertain fans profiles and behaviors in target countries would be extremely helpful for the sport and all Judo organizations – an investment that national federations would hardly be able to afford.

Regarding consumers, national Judo federations seems to be more concerned with engagement of practitioners than of spectators and buyers. This is comprehensible as findings suggested that Judo athletes constitute the biggest ratio of consumers a national federation has. Attendees at events and even followers in social media were reported as being mostly practitioners. Moreover, they are the ones who feed the sporting system and national teams, and who financially contribute with membership fees. Besides, costs for attracting pure spectators are supposedly higher than those for attracting and retaining practitioners. Thus, strategies to enlarge the base of Judo athletes and foster their engagement with the sport while offering opportunities to consume as spectator and buyer may be more suitable for national Judo federations.

Within the four organizations investigated, only the British Judo Association has information about their consumers as the result of surveys implemented with members, which helped in designing marketing strategies by providing data about the profile of British Judo members and their motives to engage in the sport. Conversely, the Brazilian federation was the organization with least reliable data about Judo fans. The South American nation is still struggling to gain access to an accurate number of Judo athletes registered in the twenty-seven regional federations across the country. Meanwhile, membership data of Japan and Germany shows a steady decrease in registered athletes for over a decade and indicates a possible crisis that could affect the future of Judo in these countries if efficient mitigation strategies are not implemented soon. The confrontation between data collected and literature review indicated possible issues in the attraction and attachment stages of sport engagement as proposed by the Psychological Continuum Model (PCM) (Funk & James, 2001).

From the concept that sport consumer engagement is a long-term process, a framework was then proposed to organize and summarize the practical suggestions and implications of this study with the goal of facilitating the sustainable growth of national Judo federations. The framework suggests that in order to develop engagement strategies, the starting point is led by the organization that must recognize the importance of the consumer and establish an in-house
marketing department with an approach geared towards creating and consolidating relationships with target individuals. The Judo product must then be designed to highlight the unique attributes that differentiate the sport in the market, preferably adding elements of the essence of the sport and characteristic traits of each country. Meanwhile, the directions of the strategy are defined through a solid and continuous understanding of the consumers’ needs and profiles, so the product can be adapted accordingly. Finally, the framework suggests five engagement pillars - events, membership, licensed merchandise, idols and social media - that work as the vehicles in the path of engagement.

The suggested framework can facilitate the sustainable growth of Judo by increasing fan and membership bases and strengthening their connection with the sport. The relevance of both contributions also relies on the rise in potential revenue generated directly and indirectly by them, an increment that could be reinvested to support the development of Judo in accordance with each country’s needs and strategies. In this sense, as few studies aimed to investigate or to suggest the implementation of marketing strategies in national federations and particularly in Judo, the unique findings of this research could guide organizations in this field to find solutions that better relate with their own context.

Though the structural marketing challenges national Judo federations may have to deal with and the complexity of managing the process that fosters consumer engagement can be seen as barriers, inspiration can be extracted from the core values of the sport and the teachings left by Jigoro Kano Shihan, the founder of Judo. To overcome challenges, maximum efficient use of energy (or Seiryoku-Zenyo) could be applied to an organizational context by efficiently using resources with a focus on accomplishing strategic and long-term objectives that will benefit the sport’s sustainable growth. Leaving aside a marketing approach strictly commercial and transactional to implement relationship marketing – in which satisfying needs and desires of the parts involved is the main goal – is a way of finding common ground with the concept of mutual prosperity, or Jita-Kyoei. The values of Judo go far beyond dojos’ boundaries and should even be implemented in the marketing strategy of the organizations in charge of developing the sport, such as the national federations investigated in this study. If the ultimate goal of Judo is to benefit the world (Kodokan, n.d.-b), then any sustainable strategy aimed to engage people with the sport and its essence may be an important step in this (gentle) way.
Limitations

This study has offered a valuable perspective towards challenges for developing marketing strategies focused on consumer engagement in national Judo federations with a qualitative approach within a cross-cultural environment. As a consequence of this methodology, a number of limitations were encountered and thus need to be discussed. First, the number of participants by country in the semi-structured interviews was not equal. The researcher internship in the Brazilian federation provided opportunities to undertake more interviews in the CBJ than in the other three organizations. Though this can be seen as a limitation, the fact that the study does not have a comparative aim diminishes the influence of the unbalanced per-country data collection. Second, differences were found in the depth of discussion within participants, despite the researcher’s efforts in requesting further explanations and details from interviewees.

As a cross-cultural study, limitations are also present in language barriers. The interview with the German participant was conducted in English as both interviewee and researcher are fluent in this language. However, as a non-native speaker some thoughts might not be fully expressed or understood. In the case of the Japanese participant, an English- Japanese interpreter conducted the interview in the presence of the researcher and then translated the data for transcription, which diminished the language barrier.

Finally, the Twitter analysis also presents limitations. The period selected for data collection – the month of the World Judo Championship – can be considered atypical to some extent as it was supposedly the most engageable period of the year, which can have affected both the amount of posts and the engagement rates. Additionally, analysis were merely descriptive and therefore inferences cannot be extrapolated for samples and contexts different from the one studied.

Future Perspectives

Several avenues for future work arise from this study and should be pursued. First, marketing research focusing on the context of the national federations is scarce. The unique features of these organizations raise challenges that differ from those of clubs, teams and leagues, the main focus of research in this field. The differences between marketing and engaging with a national federation and with the sport itself should also be further investigated, as well as the role of each governing body within the whole sport system with regards to
strategies to develop engagement. In this sense, examining the same variables of this study in the context of international and regional federations as well as National Olympic Committees may provide interesting perspectives.

Like many Olympic and Paralympic sports, Judo is widely neglected in the sport marketing literature, therefore studies aimed to understand its brand associations (e.g., attributes, benefits and attitudes) and consumers (e.g., profile, segmentation and motives to engage) would contribute to the academic body of knowledge and to the practical development of the sport itself. Findings of this study suggested that the unique values of Judo can mediate the process of sport consumer engagement, a correlation that should be further investigated.

The proposed framework also raises opportunities for future work. The suggested path of engagement must be tested to verify its correlations, as well as the performance of each engagement pillar to strengthen connection between consumer and the sport object in the context of national Judo federations. Moreover, further applications adapted to fit different environments, including other countries (e.g., France, as a country with an impressive Judo culture, and The Netherlands, whose IJF Grand Prix has been showing outstanding rates of attendance, are suggestions of contexts that could provide insightful perspectives of sport consumer engagement in Judo), sports and type of organization, may expand the potential of the proposed framework.
REFERENCES


Baena, V. (2016). Online and mobile marketing strategies as drivers of brand love in sports...


the longitudinal impact of a star performer on league marketing, novelty, and scarcity. 


APPENDIX A: Script of questions for the semi-structured interview

1. **Marketing Structure and Strategy**

   How the marketing department is structured?

   What are the main marketing objectives?

   What is the importance of the fans (spectators and practitioners) for the federation?

   What are the main barriers to develop engagement activities?

2. **Judo fans/consumers**

   Who are the fans/consumers/practitioners of judo?

   What information the federation is able to get from and about the fans?

   How the federation attracts new fans and practitioners?

   What are the benefits of engaging the fans?

3. **Engagement tools**

   The engagement tools are divided into five pillars: content and social media, events, membership and CRM, idol development, and licensed merchandise. The questions in this topic are related with how the federation is developing each of these pillars and what is the importance of them in order to achieve the strategic goals of the federation.
APPENDIX B: Observational field notes of the 2018 Brazilian U21 Championship

Venue: Club Paineiras do Morumby, Sao Paulo, Brazil
Date: February 4th, 2018

General notes:

- Entrance for fans was a secondary one, with no external signage communicating that the event was happening inside the club.
- Every attendee needed to be registered at the reception and received a wristband to enter in the club facilities, an indication that they were not expecting a huge number of spectators, which was confirmed later.
- Once inside the club, there were some signage indicating the way to the sports hall where the competition was taking place. The signage presented, along with the direction indications, some pictures of the judokas from the club that were competing in the event, a strategy to attract the club members to support their athletes.
- Absence of a presenter providing information and interacting with audience during the competition.
- The spectators who attended the event were basically the coaches, family members and athletes that were not competing at that moment.
APPENDIX C: Observational field notes of the 2018 Osaka Judo Grand Slam

Venue: Maruzen Intec Arena Osaka

Dates: November 23rd to November 25th, 2018

General notes:

- Two stores were open by organization/event sponsors: Mizuno and Kusakura. They sold judogis and obis and also other items such as t-shirts and jackets promoting the event, judo and the Japanese national team. The Mizuno area had many banners with the Japanese judo athletes, activating the sponsorship between the company and the AJJF.
- Photo opportunity activations were organized right at the entrance of the arena. An Instagram frame simulating the AJJF official account in the platform was available for spectators to take pictures holding it. Additionally, a small podium and some official Japanese judogis were available for kids to take pictures as if they were part of the national team and had won a medal.
- During the second and third days, autograph sessions with Japanese medalists in the competition were organized. Many kids lined up for their chance of meeting their idols and collected their autographs.
- Posters with all Japanese judokas who had won Olympic medals were in the corridors of the arena.
- Despite the overall good attendance, the arena didn’t reach full capacity in any of the three days of competition. In general, the majority of attendees appear to be composed by young judo athletes, with many groups wearing school’ or university’ uniforms indicating that they were part of the respective judo club. Groups from Japanese companies were also present supporting their respective athletes.
- During competition sessions intervals, music was played in the arena. However, as soon as contests started the music was stopped and most of the time the silence prevailed, with public interacting only when Japanese athletes were competing.
APPENDIX D: Informed Consent

I, ____________________________, agree to participate in a sport science study about the development of fan engagement by Judo National Federations.

I understand that, as a participant in the study, I will be asked to fill out one questionnaire that:

• Will ask me about the structure, strategy, objectives and challenges of marketing the National Federation.

• Will ask me about the development of fan engagement in many different departments of the National Federation.

I understand that the interview shall take about 1 hour.

I understand that I am under no obligation to agree to complete the interview. I understand that if I do participate I can refuse to answer any questions contained in the interview. I understand that I may withdraw from the study at any time. I understand that my specific interview responses will be kept confidential. I understand that my name will not be identified in any report or presentation which may arise from the study. I understand that only the investigators and the research supervisor will have access to information collected during the study.

I understand that the information gained may assist researchers to better understand how Judo national federations are developing fan engagement and how the challenges for this implementation can be overcome. I understand that this information may eventually increase the connection of fans with judo, enhancing the general interest in the sport and facilitating the growth of Judo National Federations. I understand that I may ask any questions of request, further explanation, or information about the procedures at any time before, during, and after the data collection. I understand that a summary of the findings of the study will be sent to me and that if I wish I may upon request obtain a copy of the report in full.

I understand what this study involves and agree to participate. I have had an opportunity to ask any questions and have had these questions answered to my satisfaction. I have been given a copy of this consent form.

______________________________ ________________________________
SIGNATURE DATE

If you want to receive the summary of the findings of this study, please write your email address:

__________________________________________

If you have any other questions or concerns about this study, please contact the principal investigator.