



The Impact of Agile Marketing on Behavioral Intentions: Examining the Mediating Roles of Customer Trust and the Competitive Advantage of Sports Products

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to elucidate the effect of agile marketing on behavioral intentions, with customer trust and the competitive advantage of sports products serving as mediating variables. For the qualitative component, the study population consisted of industry experts, sports business managers, and academic faculty members well-versed in the relevant literature. A purposive snowball sampling approach was implemented until theoretical saturation was reached. Regarding the quantitative dimension, the study focused on sports consumers. To ensure sufficiency for Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) via PLS, a minimum sample of 384 was required; thus, 400 questionnaires were distributed to mitigate potential non-response or attrition. A convenience sampling method was applied. Data were collected using a researcher-developed agile marketing scale, alongside established instruments: Ballester's (2004) customer trust scale, Hill and Jones's (2010) competitive advantage scale, and Zeithaml and Bitner's (2003) customer behavioral intentions scale. SEM analysis was performed using SPSS (v. 23) and PLS (v. 2), yielding a Goodness-of-Fit (GOF) index of 0.80. The results demonstrated that agile marketing exerts a significant influence on behavioral intentions, mediated by both customer trust and the competitive advantage of sports products.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary era, the sporting landscape has undergone a profound paradigm shift, transcending its rudimentary origins as mere physical exertion to evolve into a formidable global economic sector. This burgeoning industry exerts a significant influence on diverse socioeconomic dimensions, driving the production and consumption of sporting goods and services while acting as a primary catalyst for the economic development of nations. Consequently, sport is increasingly recognized by policymakers in advanced economies as a vital industrial complex, integrated alongside traditional sectors. This economic intensification has heightened consumer engagement, fostering a robust demand for brand affiliation. Concomitantly, sports enterprises are compelled to optimize customer acquisition and retention strategies—primarily through match ticket sales and merchandise—to bolster profitability, ensure revenue stability, and guarantee long-term institutional survival (Gustafson, 2005). In this context, strategic customer management emerges as a critical mechanism for mitigating economic barriers and sustaining market presence (Tabatabaei Nasab & Mohammadian Yazd, 1998).

Amidst this turbulence, "agility" has emerged as a pivotal organizational imperative, evolving from traditional methodologies such as craft, mass, and lean production (Jamali & Fallah, 1996). Organizational agility is fundamentally bifurcated into two dimensions: organizational adaptability (a reactive facet) and organizational flexibility (a proactive facet) (Philipp et al., 2016). In today's hyper-competitive environment, agile organizations demonstrate superior resilience and performance. Despite its increasing criticality, empirical literature addressing agility remains relatively sparse. As a dynamic capability, agility is essential in emerging business landscapes where traditionally stable industries face unprecedented disruption from decentralized, knowledge-based, and entrepreneurial firms (Roberts & Grover, 2016). Within this framework, "Agile Marketing" serves as

a potent strategic approach, leveraging cross-functional teams to deliver enhanced value to end-consumers. Tactically, it involves the rapid identification and prioritization of high-value market opportunities to maximize efficiency and project velocity (Rahimi, 2019).

Central to these strategic efforts is customer trust, defined as the consumer's belief in the integrity and benevolence of a brand or organization. As a multifaceted psychological construct, trust operates at both intra-organizational and inter-organizational levels, serving as the cornerstone of long-term relationship management. Cultivating a high-equity brand and prioritizing consumer trust are indispensable precursors to commercial success. Indeed, service-oriented managers increasingly recognize that enhancing customer trust is a primary driver of organizational profitability, with recent scholarship suggesting that trust may hold even greater significance for organizational longevity than mere customer satisfaction (Habibi Pir Kouhi, 2006).

Furthermore, competitive advantage represents the unique, inimitable value proposition offered by an organization that defies competitor emulation (West et al., 2015). Achieving such advantage necessitates a dual focus on both external market positioning and internal resource optimization (Barney, 1991). In highly competitive markets, firms must influence future consumer behaviors to ensure sustainability. Within the sporting goods sector, research suggests that the synergy between agile marketing, customer trust, and competitive advantage is pivotal in shaping behavioral intentions. These intentions manifest through various dimensions, such as initial purchase propensity or brand commitment. For instance, Bramantio et al. (2022) demonstrated that service quality significantly bolsters consumer trust and loyalty, noting that while satisfaction positively influences trust, its impact on loyalty may be less direct, whereas trust remains a robust predictor of long-term loyalty.

According to Zeithaml and Bitner (2012), behavioral intentions are operationalized through dimensions such as purchase intention, word-of-

mouth (WOM), loyalty, and price sensitivity. Drawing upon the Theory of Planned Behavior, an individual's behavior can be elucidated through their intentions, which are collectively influenced by attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. Attitude refers to the individual's positive or negative evaluation of a specific behavior, while subjective norms pertain to the individual's perception of social pressure regarding whether they should perform a specific behavior between the intention to act and the capacity to do so. In contrast, perceived behavioral control pertains to an individual's cognition regarding the availability of requisite resources or opportunities to execute a specific behavior. Customer behavioral intentions are conceptualized as the culmination of service evaluations and a multifaceted array of responses—both behavioral and non-behavioral—(Smith & Reynold, 2009) that can manifest in either conducive or maladaptive forms. Conducive behavioral intentions frequently catalyze sustained engagement with service providers, augmented purchase volumes, positive provider advocacy, and a willingness to pay a price premium. Conversely, maladaptive intentions often precipitate brand-switching propensities, diminished purchase volumes, negative word-of-mouth (NWOM), and a reluctance to accept premium pricing (Miyaki & Mukhtar, 2012).

Empirical evidence from Chenkshe et al. (2021) suggests that in the context of online purchasing, trust, convenience, and customer service exert a positive influence on purchase attitudes; furthermore, trust, convenience, attitudes, and subjective norms are positively correlated with online purchase intentions, although the impact of customer service on purchase intention failed to reach statistical significance. Similarly, findings by Rabiei and Ramazani (2022) indicated that a lack of customer affirmation negatively impacts both satisfaction and trust. These two variables, in turn, significantly influence the antecedents of customer behavioral intentions, which subsequently exert a profound effect on attitudinal loyalty. Furthermore, Khodaparast et al. (2021) posit that in environments

characterized by eroding consumer trust and diminishing advertising efficacy, word-of-mouth (WOM) serves as a critical mechanism for firms to influence consumer purchasing behavior. Arsalan (2020) further emphasizes that implementing customer loyalty programs serves as a potent marketing instrument, where relationship marketing strategies facilitate long-term development rooted in consumer behavior.

In the contemporary landscape, Gera et al. (2019) underscore the pivotal role of agile marketing, highlighting its inherent challenges and offering recommendations to enhance its efficacy, particularly regarding its impact on consumer behavior. A significant challenge emerging within the sports marketing domain is the implementation of agile marketing. The absence of specialized analytical instruments to identify and evaluate the determinants of agile marketing within the sports industry has created a critical research gap, hindering the ability to conduct necessary assessments. Consequently, drawing upon the aforementioned theoretical and empirical considerations, this study seeks to address the following research question: To what extent does agile marketing influence behavioral intentions, through the mediating mechanisms of customer trust and the competitive advantage of sports products?

2. Methodology

This study adopted a mixed-methods descriptive-analytical design. The qualitative component utilized purposive snowball sampling to recruit experts, active sports business managers, and academic faculty members specialized in the relevant literature. Data collection proceeded until theoretical saturation was reached. For the quantitative component, a sample size of 384 was established to ensure sufficient statistical power for Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) via Partial Least Squares (PLS). To mitigate the risk of non-response or attrition, 400 questionnaires were distributed using a convenience sampling technique.

The measurement instruments comprised: (i) the Brand Trust scale (Ballester, 2004), encompassing two dimensions (Brand Reliability and Brand Intent) through 8 items on a 5-point Likert scale; (ii) the Competitive Advantage scale (Hill & Jones, 2010), featuring 16 items across four constructs (Quality, Innovation, Efficiency, and Responsiveness); (iii) the Customer Behavioral Intentions scale (Zeithaml & Bitner, 2003), consisting of 8 items; and (iv) a researcher-developed scale for Agile Marketing.

The Agile Marketing instrument was constructed through a rigorous process involving a comprehensive theoretical review followed by semi-structured expert interviews. The coding process was executed in three sequential stages:

3. Findings of the Research

Table 1 shows the frequency distribution and percentage of frequency of Participants based on educational attainment.

Table 1. Frequency distribution and frequency percentage based on educational Attainment

Statistical Indicator	Frequency	Percentage of Frequency
Educational Attainment		
Associate's degree and below	186	48.5
Bachelor's Degree	140	36.5
Master's Degree	42	10.9
Ph.D.	16	4.1
Total	384	100

Table 2 shows the frequency distribution and percentage of frequency of research samples based on occupation.

Table 2. Frequency distribution and frequency percentage by occupation

Statistical Indicator	Frequency	Percentage of Frequency
Educational Attainment		
Associate's degree and below	186	48.5
Bachelor's Degree	140	36.5
Master's Degree	42	10.9
Ph.D.	16	4.1
Total	384	100

In order to examine the reliability and assess the reliability of the internal consistency of the

*open coding, where 87 initial codes were distilled from 10 interviews into 56 refined codes; axial coding, which involved integrating open codes with extant literature; and selective coding, the pivotal stage of theory construction. This iterative process yielded five core categories: Marketing Methods, Supply Chain Agility, Integration, Agile Management, and Flexibility. The resulting scale was finalized with 21 items on a 5-point Likert scale.

Statistical analyses were performed using SPSS (v. 23) and PLS (v. 2). Reliability was assessed via Cronbach's alpha, while composite reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity were evaluated through Structural Equation Modeling (SEM).

measurement model variables, two indices, Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability, were

used. According to George and Mallory (2003), values higher than 0.7 are acceptable for Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability indices. According to the results obtained in Table 3, the values of Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability are acceptable for all research variables. Therefore, the reliability and internal consistency of the research variables were confirmed. Also, the convergent validity of the research measurement model was used by the average variance extracted index. By

which, the correlation of each construct with its indicators was examined. The AVE criterion indicates the average variance shared between each construct with its indicators, and a value of at least 0.5 or higher is considered sufficient for it (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). According to the results of Table 3, the average variance extracted for all factors is greater than 0.5. Therefore, the convergent validity of the model was confirmed.

Table 3. General criteria for model quality

Research variables	Mean extracted variance >0.5	Combined reliability <0.7(CR)	Coefficient of determination	Cronbach's alpha <0.7(a)
Agile Marketing	0.56	0.86	-	0.84
Customer Trust	0.53	0.89	0.59	0.87
Competitive Advantage	0.58	0.91	0.73	0.90
Behavioral Intentions	0.65	0.86	0.91	0.82

In order to examine the divergent validity, the Fornell and Locker index was used. In divergent validity, the correlation of an indicator with its own construct should be greater than the correlation of that indicator with another construct. In other words, according to this index, the root mean square

of the extracted variance of each latent variable should be greater than the maximum correlation of that latent variable with other latent variables. According to the results obtained in Table 4, the divergent validity of the model was confirmed.

Table 4. Divergent validity of the model according to the method of Fornell and Locker (1981)

Research variables	1	2	3	4
Agile Marketing	0.74			
Customer Trust	0.67	0.72		
Competitive Advantage	0.75	0.63	0.76	
Behavioral Intentions	0.81	0.43	0.52	0.80

Unlike measurement models in which the relationships between latent variables and manifest variables are considered, in the structural model, the relationships between latent variables are analyzed and the criteria of significance coefficients t-values, the criterion of the coefficient of determination (R²), and the Stone-Geiser criterion (Q²) are examined for the fit of the structural model. Therefore, in order to evaluate the fit of the

structural model of the research, several criteria were used, the first and most basic of which is the significance coefficients Z or the t-values. If the t-values are greater than 1.96, it indicates the accuracy of the relationship between the structures at a confidence level of 95 percent. Considering the t-values reported in Figure 1, the results indicate the significance of the paths and the suitability of the structural model.

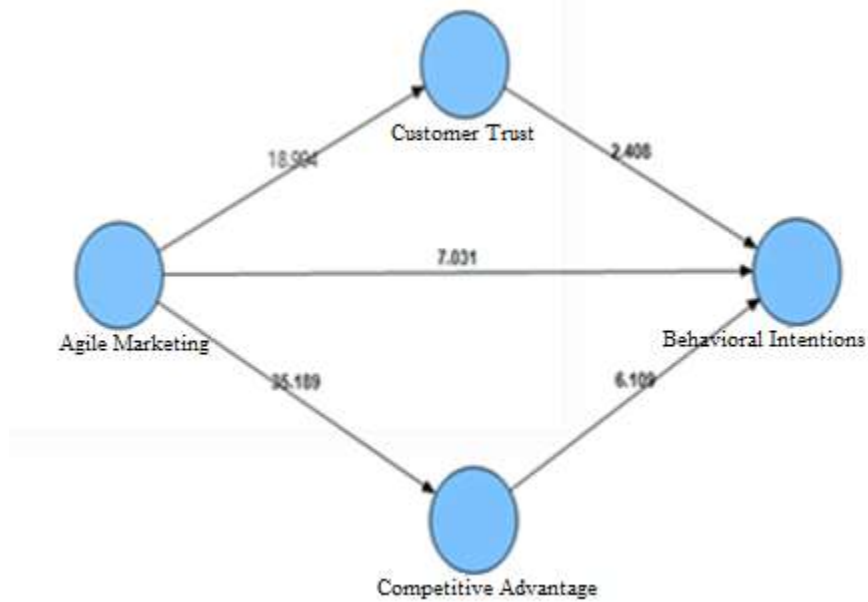


Figure 1. Fitted research model (significance coefficients)

Coefficient of determination R2: This measure indicates the effect that an exogenous variable has on an endogenous variable. The value of this coefficient ranges from zero to one, with larger values being more desirable, and three values of

0.19, 0.33, and 0.67 are considered as criterion values for weak, medium, and strong R2 values (Stevens, 2009). Therefore, based on the values shown in Figure 2, the suitability of the structural model fit is confirmed.

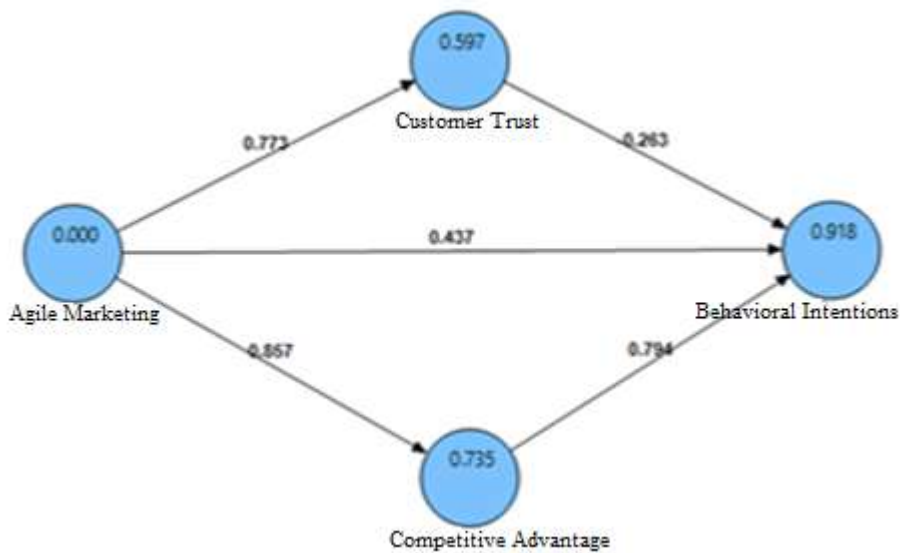


Figure 2. Standard coefficients of the research model

Q2 criterion: This criterion determines the predictive power of the model, and if the Q2 value for an endogenous construct reaches three values of 0.02, 0.15, and 0.35, it indicates weak, moderate, and strong predictive power of the related

endogenous constructs, respectively (Hensler and Fassot, 2010). The Q2 criterion for the endogenous factor of the research model is reported in Table 7, which confirms the fit of the structural equation model.

Table 5. Q2 Criterion Rate

Research variables	Q2
Agile Marketing	0.28
Customer Trust	0.26
Competitive Advantage	0.21
Behavioral Intentions	0.40

Fit Overall criterion

To examine the fit of the overall model, the GOF criterion is used, where three values of 0.01, 0.25, and 0.36 are introduced as weak, moderate, and

strong values for GOF (Wenz, Chen, Hansler, and Wang, 2010). This criterion is calculated using the following formula.

$$GOF = \sqrt{\text{communalities} \times R^2}$$

The results show a value of 0.80 for GOF, indicating a strong fit of the model. The table below

reports the path coefficient and significance value (T-Value) for each of the research paths.

Table 6. Divergent validity of the model according to the method of Fornell and Locker (1981)

Structural Path	Path Coefficient	Significance (T-Value)	Test Result
Agile Marketing - Behavioral Intentions	0.43	7.03	Verification
Customer Trust - Behavioral Intentions	0.26	2.40	Verification
Competitive Advantage - Behavioral Intentions	0.79	6.10	Verification

To determine the indirect effect through the mediating variable, a statistic called VAF is used, which takes a value between 0 and 1, and the closer

this value is to 1, the stronger the effect of the mediating variable. In fact, this value measures the ratio of the indirect effect to the total effect.

VAF calculation method

- A: The value of the path coefficient between the independent and mediating variables
- B: The value of the path coefficient of the mediating and dependent variables
- C: The value of the path coefficient of the independent and dependent variables

$$VAF = \frac{A * B}{(A * B) + C}$$

$$VAF = \frac{0/77 * 0/26}{(0/77 * 0/26) + (0/43)} = 0/33$$

This means that 33 percent of the total effect of agile marketing on behavioral intentions is explained by the mediating role of customer trust.

$$VAF = \frac{0/87 * 0/79}{(0/87 * 0/79) + (0/43)} = 0/33$$

This means that 42 percent of the total effect of agile marketing on behavioral intentions is

explained by the mediating role of competitive advantage.

4. Discussion and conclusion

The results of the study showed that agile marketing has an impact on customers' behavioral intentions. Agile marketing is an effective organizational strategy using multi-purpose teams to deliver value to the end customer. In general, agile marketing is a tactical approach in marketing in which organizational teams identify valuable market opportunities and focus their efforts on them. After that, continuous and continuous efforts are made to improve the results obtained from these activities. Agile marketing is a method that helps the organization's management to perform work tasks and manage the organization's projects faster and more focused. This method prevents long and eroding hierarchies. With this method, more valuable projects are defined and the work delivery date will be faster. Also, by grouping topics and people in each group, topics can be followed up with greater flexibility and speed. Agile marketing is a management method designed to save time and increase the speed of large projects (Rahimi, 2010). This management tool provides a situation where large projects are divided into several smaller parts in a transparent manner and, to speed up the work process, a team is working on each specific part. This method not only prevents wasting time, but can also be useful in many aspects. Programmers and software developers are well familiar with this management method. Although no similar research was found in this field, it can be stated that according to the results of this research, creating agility in marketing through the speed of delivery of goods and optimal services in the sports sector, it is hoped that sports product manufacturers will be aware of the behavioral intentions of customers by providing correct and timely services or will lead them to have positive feedback from that company.

The results of the study showed that customer trust has an impact on customers' behavioral intentions. Trust is undoubtedly an important factor in service marketing to maintain relationships between customers and businesses. Trust has a great impact on the success of service

organizations, because unlike products, services cannot be seen or touched before purchase, and service buyers always consider them to be high-risk (Joe et al., 2010). In a study conducted by Karpour et al. (2019) entitled Explaining the Customer Behavioral Intention Model Based on Social Commerce Dimensions with an Emphasis on User Trust, it was shown that in addition to the significant correlation between customers' behavioral intentions and their trust, social commerce dimensions also have an impact on customers' behavioral intentions through trust. The results of the above study are consistent with the results of this study. In this regard, considering that customer behavioral intentions originate from the customer's perception of the place or brand in question, creating a type of trust in the place can cause the customer to behave and return again and create a specific type of behavior in the customer. Therefore, today, managers of sports organizations and companies, as part of the sports industry, must use all senses along with other various marketing methods to maintain long-term relationships with customers.

The research results showed that competitive advantage has an effect on customers' behavioral intentions. Competitive advantage includes a set of factors or capabilities that always enable the company to perform better than its competitors. In other words, competitive advantage is a factor or a combination of factors that makes an organization much more successful than other organizations in a competitive environment and competitors cannot easily imitate it. In his research on bank customers, Rezaei Kelidbari (2018) came to the conclusion that customers' intentions regarding the services provided can have positive effects on competitive advantage and customer return motivation. Therefore, to achieve a competitive advantage, an organization must pay attention to its external position and internal capabilities. In the path of creating a competitive advantage, two important points can be considered: first, this path is a sequential process that leads to excellent performance and competitiveness of the

organization. It means that if the organization can create a sustainable competitive advantage through its merits, which is valuable for customers and is always superior to its competitors, it has actually left a worthy performance and brought competitiveness. Competitive advantage is the unique value and capability that the organization offers to its customers, so that competitors are unable to provide it (West et al., 2015). Competition in the field of sports causes sports complexes to face a large number of customers with different tastes and needs in a fiercely competitive campaign. Nowadays, along with the increase in the number of sports clubs, the competition in attracting customers and providing better services is expanding (Pour Sultan et al., 2018). In order to achieve a competitive advantage, an organization must pay attention to its external position as well as its internal position (Barney, 1991).

The results of the study showed that agile marketing has a role in behavioral intentions by mediating the trust of sports product customers. Organizational agility is rooted in two sequential concepts: organizational adaptability (a reactive aspect) and organizational flexibility (a proactive aspect) (Phillip et al., 2016). In today's highly competitive environment, agile organizations are more successful. However, despite the widespread and increasing importance of agility, there is limited research on this topic. Agility is emerging as an important dynamic capability in contemporary business environments. Many industries that had imagined a relatively stable environment for themselves suddenly found themselves in an aggressive environment, such that in this new environment, many industry giants were threatened by knowledge-based and start-up companies scattered all over the world (Roberts and Grover, 2016). On the other hand, there are several definitions of trust. The diversity of definitions of trust in the theoretical literature on the subject is probably due to two reasons. First, trust is an abstract concept and is sometimes taken as synonymous with concepts such as credibility,

trustworthiness, or reliability. Second, trust is a multifaceted concept and has different perceptual, sensory, and behavioral dimensions.

The results of the study showed that agile marketing has a role in behavioral intentions as a mediator of the competitive advantage of sports products. Jerra et al. (2019) Good marketing strategies are of great importance for any size of organization. In the beginning, traditional marketing methods were used by marketers, but with the invention of technology, many changes have been made in the field of marketing, including email marketing, content marketing, social media marketing, etc. Agile marketing is one of them. Agile marketing encourages cross-functional collaboration, common goals, and empowered groups. In competitive conditions, customers, in addition to meeting the need for speed of service, also pay special attention. Lack of agility in meeting expectations can lead to negative feelings towards the organization or brand. Negative customer feelings are the most important reason for behaviors such as complaints, negative word-of-mouth, and brand switching, which can have devastating negative consequences for the organization. With the increasing importance of marketing and customer relationship management, the issue of trust has also become more important. Marketing success is based on trust; Because it plays an important role in the development of business relationships. Therefore, in the marketing literature, trust is defined as one of the main factors that plays an important role in influencing a customer to develop and maintain relationships with a service provider. Zeithamel and Bitten (2012) state that behavioral intentions are determined by measures such as purchase intentions, word-of-mouth communication, loyalty, and price sensitivity. While Lim (2006) states that an individual's behavior can be explained by his behavioral intentions, which are jointly influenced by attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. Attitude refers to an individual's positive or negative evaluation of the impact of performing a particular behavior.

Subjective norms refer to an individual's perception of others' opinions about whether or not he should perform a particular behavior; while perceived behavioral control refers to an individual's perception of the presence or absence of the necessary resources or opportunities to perform a behavior. Customer behavioral intentions are explained as the results of service evaluation and a set of multiple responses (behavioral and non-behavioral) (Smith and Reynolds, 2009) that can be both favorable and unfavorable. Favorable behavioral intentions often lead to maintaining a relationship with the service provider, increasing purchase volume, praising the service provider, and willingness to pay extra. Conversely, unfavorable behavioral intentions lead to increased likelihood of brand switching, decreasing purchase volume, negative word-of-mouth advertising, and unwillingness to pay extra (Mayaki and Mokhtar, 2012).

In general, sports have never been considered as mere games and entertainment, but have always been considered as an industry. One of the issues whose importance is clearly understood in the sports industry today is the issue of marketing. This type of marketing, with a strong and appropriate connection with the customer, creates behavioral intentions and loyalty among customers. This is while the competition in the field of sports has caused sports groups to face a large number of customers with different tastes and needs in a fiercely competitive campaign and to attract their satisfaction and loyalty to the group in any way. Agile marketing is undoubtedly essential for the media, business, economy, consumers and sports merchants. One of the challenges we face in the field of sports marketing is the issue of agile marketing. The lack of specialized tools in this field to evaluate and identify the factors affecting agile marketing in the field of sports marketing has faced a challenge that we cannot make the necessary assessments of agile marketing in sports. The results of the study showed that agile marketing plays a role in behavioral intention. It is suggested that marketing projects be divided into

several smaller parts in a transparent manner and that a group work on each specific part to accelerate the work process. The results of the study showed that customer trust plays a role in behavioral intention. It is suggested that the right sentences be used to attract customers and that transparency be practiced in marketing discussions. The results of the study showed that competitive advantage plays a role in behavioral intention. In the path of creating competitive advantage, two points that can be proposed are very important: First, this path is a sequential process that leads to better organizational performance. If the organization can create a sustainable competitive advantage through its competencies that is valuable to customers and is always superior to competitors, it has in fact left a worthy performance and has brought competitiveness. The results of the study showed that agile marketing plays a role in behavioral intentions by mediating customer trust and the competitive advantage of sports products. Finally, it can be stated that the lack of agility in meeting expectations can lead to negative feelings towards the organization or brand. Negative customer feelings are the most important reason for behaviors such as complaints, negative word of mouth, and brand switching, which can have devastating negative consequences for the organization. With the increasing importance of marketing and customer relationship management, the issue of trust has also become more important. Marketing success is based on trust and competitive advantage, because it plays an important role in the development of business relationships. Therefore, in the marketing literature, trust has been defined as one of the main factors that plays an important role in influencing a customer to develop and maintain relationships with a service provider.

5. Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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