

Gender Differences in Media Consumption: Influences and Attitudes Towards the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games

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Abstract

This study explores gender differences in media consumption and fandom behavior related to the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games. Using correlation analysis, regression, and path analysis, it investigates how interest in athletes' success, fandom strength, and traditional, digital, and social media consumption shaped public attitudes toward the event. Data from 1,043 Japanese respondents highlight varying media influences across genders. For men, traditional media remains relevant for performance-driven content but is overshadowed by the growing influence of digital and social media, which offer more interactive engagement. Fandom strength was the strongest predictor of men attitudes, followed by social media. In contrast, women showed a significant influence of athletes' success on digital media consumption, using digital platforms for personalized, narrative-driven content. Women's engagement with social media enhances their attitudes toward the Olympics, as they use these platforms for interactive participation. Traditional media also plays a key role for women, where emotionally rich storytelling complements their digital and social engagement. Women prioritize community-driven interactions and emotional connections over competitive success, which had a smaller influence on their attitudes compared to men. The study underscores the importance of gender-specific media strategies for promoting large-scale sporting events. For men audiences, marketing should combine traditional media's performance-driven coverage with real-time digital engagement. For women audiences, social media campaigns should prioritize personal narratives and athlete-fan interactions, leveraging digital and traditional media to foster community engagement. These findings provide actionable recommendations for enhancing public support in future Olympic events.

Keywords

Engagement, Event management, Olympic movement, Mega event

Introduction

The Olympic Games represent a pinnacle of international sports, serving as a global stage for athletes to showcase their prowess and for nations to express their pride and unity. As a mega-event, the Olympics have far-reaching economic, social, and cultural impacts, making public attitudes towards the Games a critical factor in their success and legacy (Grix & Carmichael, 2012). When selecting host countries, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) places significant emphasis on the support and approval of the local population. The attitudes of the host nation's citizens towards the Olympic Games are indispensable to the event's success (Ando et al., 2023; Preuss, 2007). Positive public sentiment can lead to smoother event operations, stronger local support for athletes, increased tourism, and broader economic revitalization (Prayag et al., 2013). Moreover, public approval is directly linked to key factors such as television ratings, attendance, and sponsorship deals, all of which contribute to the Games' overall impact and long-term legacy (IOC, 2023).

Sports fandom is a social and cultural phenomenon closely tied to national identity and social cohesion, with the Olympics serving as a prime example (Billings et al., 2017; Horne & Whannel, 2020). In Japan, interest in Olympic athletes serves as a strong marker of national pride (McPherson & Ilevbare, 2021). Media plays a crucial role in shaping sports fandom. Traditional media, such as television and newspapers, provide extensive coverage, while digital and social media platforms like Twitter and Facebook offer real-time updates and interactive engagement (Boyle & Haynes, 2004; Hutchins & Rowe, 2012; Pegoraro, 2010; Whannel, 2005a). Fan behavior and interest are measured through psychological and behavioral metrics. Wann (1995) developed the Sports Fan Identification Scale (SFIS) to assess fan attachment. Studies also focus on media consumption behaviors, particularly through digital and social media (Clavio & Walsh, 2014). Gender differences are evident in sports fandom. Men generally show higher sports interest and are more proactive in consuming sports information through various media channels, while women engage more through social media, valuing relational aspects (Dietz-Uhler et al., 2000; Fink et al., 2002; Kian et al., 2013). Public attitudes towards the Olympics are vital for the event's success, enhancing attendance, television ratings, and sponsorship opportunities (Preuss (2010). In particular, higher levels of public interest in the Olympics are correlated with greater support for the event (Devlin et al., 2020), which is critical for fostering national and local success. As such, the IOC prioritizes securing positive public sentiment from host nations, recognizing its importance in ensuring both the operational success and the lasting legacy of the Olympic Games (Olympic Study Center, 2023). However, there is a notable gap in the literature regarding attitudes towards the Olympics in Japan. Despite the significant cultural and national importance of the Olympics in Japan, few studies have specifically examined how Japanese public attitudes towards the Olympics develop and what factors influence these

attitudes. While numerous studies have explored global attitudes towards the Olympics, few have focused on how cultural and national pride specifically shape public attitudes in Japan, a country with a deep historical connection to sports and national identity.

This study aims to examine how interest in Japanese Olympic athletes and media following behaviors—specifically, how fans use various types of media to follow and engage with Olympic content— influenced attitudes towards the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games. It explores the impact of interest in athlete success, levels of fandom, and media consumption on overall Olympic attitudes, with a particular focus on gender differences, using path analysis to provide insights into sports fandom and its implications for large-scale sporting events.

Literature Review

Media and Sports Fandom

Media plays an indispensable role in the formation and maintenance of sports fandom. Traditionally, sports fans relied on television broadcasts, radio, and newspapers to follow their favorite teams and athletes. These forms of media provided scheduled updates and post-event analyses, fostering a dedicated viewership (Real, 1998). However, the advent and proliferation of digital and social media have dramatically transformed fan behavior, introducing new dynamics to how fans engage with sports content (Hutchins & Rowe, 2012).

Despite the rise of digital media, traditional media such as television and newspapers continue to be significant sources of sports information. Television broadcasts, in particular, offer comprehensive coverage of sports events, including live broadcasts, replays, and expert commentary. This medium has been instrumental in shaping the viewing habits of sports fans and remains a primary source of sports entertainment (Whannel, 2005a). Newspapers and sports magazines provide in-depth analyses and feature stories, which have been crucial for fans who seek detailed insights into their favorite sports and athletes (Boyle & Haynes, 2004).

The shift from traditional to digital media has introduced a paradigm change in sports fandom. Digital platforms such as websites, blogs, and streaming services offer instantaneous access to sports content, transcending the limitations of time and location (Hutchins & Rowe, 2012). Internet news has become a primary source for sports fans, providing real-time updates, live scores, and breaking news (Kian et al., 2011). This immediacy and accessibility have revolutionized how fans consume sports content, enabling them to stay informed at all times.

Social media platforms such as Twitter (renamed X in 2023), Facebook, and Instagram have further revolutionized sports fandom by facilitating direct interaction between fans, athletes, and sports organizations (Pegoraro, 2010). These platforms enable fans to

receive real-time updates, share their opinions, and engage in discussions with other fans globally (Sanderson, 2011). The interactive nature of social media allows fans to feel more connected to their favorite athletes and teams, fostering a sense of community and belonging (Smith & Stewart, 2013). For example, athletes' use of social media to share personal insights and behind-the-scenes content has humanized them, making them more relatable to their followers (Gibbs et al., 2014). Moreover, social media has empowered fans to become content creators themselves, contributing to the sports discourse through blogs, fan pages, and user-generated content (Hutchins & Rowe, 2012). This participatory culture has democratized sports media, giving fans a voice and a platform to express their passion and knowledge (Jenkins, 2006). The engagement metrics on these platforms, such as likes, shares, and comments, have also provided valuable data for sports organizations to understand fan preferences and behaviors better (Clavio & Walsh, 2014).

The convergence of traditional and digital media has created a comprehensive media ecosystem that enhances the sports fandom experience. Fans now have multiple avenues to engage with sports content, each offering unique benefits. Traditional media provides the authoritative and in-depth coverage that fans trust, while digital and social media offer immediacy, interactivity, and community building (Hutchins & Rowe, 2012).

The role of media in shaping sports fandom is particularly evident during major events like the Olympics. Extensive media coverage across various platforms ensures that fans are continuously engaged, fostering a collective experience that transcends geographic boundaries (Billings & Angelini, 2007). This continuous engagement helps maintain high levels of interest and emotional investment in sports, crucial for the sustenance of sports fandom (Raney & Bryant, 2009).

Interest in Sports and Athlete Following Behavior

Interest in sports, particularly in elite athletic events such as the Olympic Games, has been widely studied. Researchers have found that interest in sports can significantly impact viewership and the overall perception of events (Funk et al., 2002). This interest often translates into following behaviors, where individuals engage with athletes through various media, including social media, television broadcasts, and live events (Billings et al., 2017). However, there are notable gender differences in how these following behaviors manifest, with men and women engaging with sports content through distinct media channels and with different motivations (Kian et al., 2013).

Sports fandom is a multifaceted phenomenon encompassing emotional, cognitive, and behavioral dimensions (Wann, 1995). It reflects the degree of enthusiasm and dedication an individual has towards a sport or an athlete. High levels of sports fandom are often associated with increased media consumption and more intense following behaviors

(Madrigal, 2006). Fans seek to connect with their favorite athletes and teams through various media channels, which enhances their sense of belonging and community (Lock et al., 2012).

Gender plays a crucial role in shaping this fandom: men are generally more likely to engage with competitive and performance-focused aspects of sports, while women often prioritize relational aspects, such as community involvement and the personal stories of athletes (Fink et al., 2002). High levels of sports fandom are often associated with increased media consumption and more intense following behaviors, though the type of media consumed tends to differ by gender. Men tend to favor traditional media like television, while women are more active on social media platforms (Frederick et al., 2012; Pegoraro, 2010).

The advent of social media has revolutionized the way fans interact with athletes, and this shift has also revealed gender differences. Platforms like Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook provide athletes with direct channels to communicate with their fans, share personal insights, and build their personal brands (Pegoraro, 2010). Studies have shown that social media engagement can enhance fans' perceptions of athletes and foster a sense of intimacy and loyalty (Frederick et al., 2012). This type of engagement is particularly significant during large-scale events like the Olympics, where real-time updates and personal stories from athletes can heighten the emotional connection between fans and the event (Hutchins & Rowe, 2012).

Despite the rise of digital media, television remains a dominant medium for sports consumption. Extensive coverage of events like the Olympic Games allows fans to follow competitions in real-time and experience the excitement of live performances (Dyreson, 2015). Television broadcasts offer a comprehensive view of the events, complete with expert commentary, athlete interviews, and behind-the-scenes footage, which enriches the viewer's experience and deepens their connection to the event (Whannel, 2005b).

For men, this form of media tends to be the primary avenue for sports consumption, offering a comprehensive view of the events, expert commentary, and athlete interviews. This aligns with men's general preference for structured, performance-based content (Kian et al., 2013). On the other hand, women may complement their traditional media consumption with social media interactions, thereby engaging with both the competition and the more relational aspects of the event (Gibbs et al., 2014).

Attending live sporting events offers a unique experience that cannot be replicated through media. The atmosphere of the stadium, the collective excitement of the crowd, and the opportunity to witness athletes' performances firsthand create a powerful connection between fans and the sport (Holt, 1995). However, not all fans can attend these events, making media engagement an essential alternative for maintaining their interest and involvement (Gantz & Wenner, 1995).

The level of interest and following behavior significantly influences public perception and support for sporting events. Fans who actively follow athletes and events through various media channels are more likely to develop positive attitudes towards the events and express higher levels of support (Devlin et al., 2020). Gender differences are also evident here, as men's support tends to be driven by competition and national pride, while women's support is more likely to be influenced by athlete narratives and community involvement (Fink et al., 2002). This support is crucial for the success of events like the Olympics, which rely on public enthusiasm and engagement to drive viewership, sponsorship, and overall legacy (Preuss, 2007).

Interest in sports and athlete following behaviors play a critical role in shaping public attitudes towards elite athletic events. The interplay between traditional media, social media, and live event attendance creates a multifaceted engagement landscape that enhances the overall experience for fans. Understanding these dynamics is essential for stakeholders aiming to maximize public support and ensure the success of large-scale sporting events.

Gender Differences in Fan Behavior

Gender differences in sports fandom have been extensively researched, revealing distinct patterns in sports interest and media consumption behaviors between men and women. These differences are influenced by a variety of social, cultural, and psychological factors.

Studies consistently show that men tend to exhibit higher levels of interest in sports compared to women. (Dietz-Uhler et al., 2000) found that men are more likely to identify as sports fans and follow sports more avidly. This heightened interest among men is often attributed to traditional gender roles and socialization processes that encourage men to engage in and follow sports from a young age (Messner & Heywood, 2002). Fink et al. (2002) further support these findings, indicating that men are more proactive in tracking sports information through various media channels. This proactive behavior includes regularly watching sports broadcasts, reading sports sections in newspapers, and engaging with sports content online. Men's engagement with sports is often characterized by a deep knowledge of the game, teams, and player statistics, contributing to their overall sports fandom experience (Gantz & Wenner, 1991).

Gender differences extend beyond interest levels to media consumption behaviors. Men and women utilize different media platforms to engage with sports content, reflecting their unique preferences and social interactions. Men have traditionally dominated the viewership of sports broadcasts on television and radio, as well as readership of sports sections in newspapers. This preference is rooted in the historical targeting of men audiences by sports media and advertising (Wenner, 1989). Men's media consumption behaviors are

often driven by a desire to stay informed about game outcomes, player performances, and sports news, which align with their higher levels of sports interest (Real & Mechikoff, 1992).

Conversely, women often find greater value in engaging with athletes and other fans through digital and social media platforms. Kian et al. (2011) highlighted that women are more likely to use social media to follow sports, engage in discussions, and connect with fellow fans. Social media platforms such as Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook provide interactive environments where women can share their thoughts, access behind-the-scenes content, and participate in fan communities. This preference for social media among women is partly due to the platforms' facilitation of relational interactions, which are more aligned with the communal and social aspects of sports fandom that appeal to women fans (Frisby, 2005). Women' engagement on these platforms often focuses on the personal stories of athletes, community building, and fan support networks, contrasting with the more information-centric media consumption patterns of men (Kassing & Sanderson, 2010).

The psychological and social influences on gender differences in sports fandom are profound. Men' sports fandom is often linked to identity formation and social bonding, providing a context for men camaraderie and competition (Crawford, 2004). In contrast, women' sports fandom frequently involves creating and sustaining social connections, both with other fans and athletes, emphasizing inclusivity and support (Thompson, 1999).

Attitudes Towards the Olympics and Their Impact

Public attitudes towards the Olympics play a pivotal role in the success and sustained support of the event. These attitudes can significantly influence various aspects of the Olympic Games, from attendance and viewership to sponsorship and overall economic impact. Public attitudes towards the Olympics are critical for ensuring the event's success and garnering widespread support. Positive public sentiment can lead to increased attendance at the events, higher television ratings, and greater engagement on digital platforms, which in turn attract more sponsorship opportunities (Grix & Carmichael, 2012). Men, who tend to favor traditional media, may focus more on the competitive aspects of the Games, while women, who are more engaged through social media, might emphasize the relational and community aspects of the event (Fink et al., 2002). These factors collectively contribute to the economic and social benefits associated with hosting the Olympics (Preuss, 2010). For instance, the 2008 Beijing Olympics saw a surge in national pride and international interest, which significantly boosted tourism and business opportunities in China (Brownell, 2008).

These gendered differences in attitudes are crucial for designing targeted strategies to maximize public engagement. Positive public sentiment, particularly among women, who are often more active on digital platforms, can lead to increased attendance at events, higher television ratings, and greater engagement on social media, which in turn attract more

sponsorship opportunities (Grix & Carmichael, 2012). For instance, women engagement through volunteerism and social media promotion has been shown to significantly enhance public support for the Games, as demonstrated during the Tokyo 2020 Olympics (Ando et al., 2022). These factors collectively contribute to the economic and social benefits associated with hosting the Olympics (Preuss, 2010).

The economic benefits of positive public attitudes towards the Olympics are multifaceted. Increased attendance at Olympic events not only generates direct revenue through ticket sales but also stimulates the local economy through tourism and related spending on accommodation, food, and transportation (Malfas et al., 2004). Higher television ratings enhance the value of broadcasting rights, which are a major source of revenue for the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and host cities (Chalip, 2006). Studies have shown a strong correlation between public interest in the Olympics and support for the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games. (McPherson & Ilevbare, 2021) argued that higher levels of interest among the Japanese public were associated with greater support for hosting the Games. This support was evident through various forms of public engagement, including volunteerism, attendance at pre-Olympic events, and positive media coverage. According to Guajardo (2016), the Tokyo 2020 Olympics played a significant role in enhancing Japan's cultural and national identity. The Olympics were used as a platform to showcase positive aspects of Japanese culture, such as traditions, etiquette, work ethic, attention to detail, and reliability. Moreover, government-led reform initiatives aimed to address cultural issues like women's societal roles and increased foreign representation in educational institutions, thereby contributing to Japan's nation branding. Ando et al. (2022) highlighted the critical role of volunteers in the Tokyo 2020 Olympics. Their study found that the value dimension of friendship significantly influenced women volunteers' endorsement of Japan hosting the Games, while the value dimension of excellence reduced favorable endorsements among both women and men volunteers. This underscores the importance of aligning volunteer perceptions with the broader goals of the Olympics. Research by Ando et al. (2022) on community engagement and economic impact of the Tokyo 2020 Olympics further revealed that local events and infrastructure investments significantly contributed to regional economic revitalization and increased civic participation. These activities fostered a sense of community and collective involvement among residents, further enhancing support for the Games.

Historical examples underscore the impact of public attitudes on the success of the Olympics. The 2012 London Olympics, for instance, benefited from robust public support, which translated into record attendance and high television ratings (Smith & Stewart, 2013). The legacy of the London Olympics includes the regeneration of East London and increased participation in sports among the British population (Gold & Gold, 2012). Conversely, the

1976 Montreal Olympics suffered from negative public sentiment due to cost overruns and financial mismanagement, which led to long-term debt for the city and a cautious approach to future bids for hosting the Olympics (Zimbalist, 2016). These examples illustrate that understanding gender differences in public attitudes is not only beneficial but essential for the short-term success and long-term legacy of the Olympic Games.

In the context of the Tokyo 2020 Olympics, fostering positive public sentiment across genders was critical for ensuring the event's success. Organizers and policymakers must therefore prioritize gender-specific public engagement strategies to maximize the benefits of hosting the Olympics. For example, while men audiences may respond more strongly to traditional media campaigns that emphasize athletic achievement and national pride, women audiences may be better engaged through digital media campaigns that highlight personal stories and community involvement. By adopting these targeted approaches, the economic and social impact of the Games can be significantly enhanced.

Existing Gaps in Research on Gender Differences in Olympic Fandom

While research on sports fandom has advanced significantly, the study of gender differences in Olympic fandom remains underdeveloped, with several key gaps that require further investigation.

Studies has shown that men and women engage with sports through different media channels. Men tend to rely more on traditional media such as television and newspapers, while women are more active on social media platforms, engaging with athletes' personal stories and community-driven content. However, existing studies often focus on general sports fandom and do not extensively explore these differences within the specific context of the Olympics. The lack of focused research on how these consumption patterns affect Olympic-related attitudes and behaviors among different genders is a crucial gap.

Most of the existing research on gender differences in sports fandom is rooted in Western contexts, with little emphasis on how these dynamics play out in non-Western countries such as Japan during events like the Tokyo 2020 Olympics.

The International Olympic Committee (IOC) has implemented several gender equality initiatives, especially for the Tokyo 2020 Olympics, to increase women's participation and representation (DeChano-Cook & Shelley, 2024). However, there is a dearth of research on how these initiatives have influenced men and women fans' attitudes toward the Games. More studies are needed to assess whether such initiatives have had a lasting impact on reducing gender bias in Olympic fandom, particularly through media portrayal and fan engagement.

Addressing these gaps in the literature will not only deepen our understanding of gendered experiences in Olympic fandom but also provide actionable insights for marketers,

policymakers, and event organizers seeking to foster more inclusive and effective fan engagement strategies. Future research should strive to explore how gender intersects with media consumption, volunteerism, national identity, and commercial strategies within the Olympic context, offering a more nuanced understanding of these dynamics.

Methodology

This study employed a quantitative research design using a structured questionnaire to collect data from respondents. The primary objective was to examine how interest in Japanese Olympic athletes and following behaviors influence attitudes towards the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games. The selection of Japanese citizens as the sample population is particularly important given the context of the Tokyo 2020 Olympics, which was held in Japan. As the host nation, Japan's public sentiment and media engagement patterns are critical for understanding both national and global perspectives on the Games. Hosting the Olympics places a unique cultural and emotional burden on the host country's citizens, making their attitudes towards the event highly influential in shaping the overall success and legacy of the Games (Grix & Carmichael, 2012).

Japan's position as a host nation also introduces distinct media consumption behaviors and nationalistic responses that may not be present in other countries. Research shows that the public in host nations often has heightened interest and pride in their athletes, which in turn affects media consumption patterns (Billings et al., 2017). This study's focus on Japan offers valuable insights into how the local population's engagement with the Olympics may differ from that of other countries, making the findings particularly relevant for understanding how large-scale international events are perceived by the host nation compared to other nations.

In addition, Japanese citizens' media consumption behaviors, particularly the interaction between traditional and digital media, offer a unique opportunity to explore gender differences in Olympic fandom, which may not be as pronounced or relevant in other cultural contexts. By focusing on Japan, the study highlights the intersection of national pride, media engagement, and gender differences, all within the specific context of a host nation during a global mega-event.

Instruments

To achieve the objectives of this study, a quantitative approach was adopted. This approach was chosen for its ability to systematically collect and analyze numerical data, providing a clear and objective assessment of the public's attitudes and behaviors. By utilizing structured questionnaires and statistical analysis, the research aimed to quantify the level of interest in Japanese Olympic athletes and the corresponding support for the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games.

The questionnaire comprised two main sections. The first section gathered essential demographic information about the respondents, including age, gender, and living prefecture. Collecting this data was crucial for analyzing how demographic factors might influence attitudes and behaviors related to the Olympics.

The second section focused on interest and attitudes towards the Olympics, with specific emphasis on Japanese Olympic athletes. Respondents were asked to rate the importance of their nation's favorite athletes winning at the Olympic Games using a 7-point Likert scale ranging from "Not important at all" (1) to "Very important" (7). This was followed by questions assessing the strength of fandom, where respondents rated how strongly they, their friends, and their family are fans of Japanese Olympic athletes, again using a 7-point scale from "Not a fan at all" (1) to "A huge fan" (7). Furthermore, respondents indicated how closely they followed their nation's favorite Olympic athletes via various media channels, including friends, television, radio, newspapers, internet news, Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, and other social media, using a 7-point scale from "Didn't follow them at all" (1) to "Followed them a lot" (7). Additionally, they rated their agreement with statements about supporting Japanese athletes, their feelings towards rivalry, and the display of national symbols like the Japanese flag, with ratings on a 7-point scale from "Strongly disagree" (1) to "Strongly agree" (7). Finally, respondents' overall involvement with and concern about the Olympic Games was measured. They rated their involvement on a 7-point Likert scale, responding to pairs of statements such as "Unimportant to me" (1) to "Important to me" (7), "Of no concern to me" (1) to "Of concern to me" (7), and "Irrelevant to me" (1) to "Relevant to me" (7).

This structured design of the questionnaire was intended to capture the intensity of respondents' interest and attitudes, ensuring that the collected data would provide a nuanced understanding of public sentiment towards the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games. By using a 7-point Likert scale throughout, the questionnaire allowed for detailed insights into varying degrees of interest, engagement, and support among the Japanese public. Pre-testing with a small sample helped refine the questions for clarity and relevance, ensuring the final version was effective in capturing the desired data. This comprehensive approach facilitated the collection of data necessary to analyze the complex relationship between interest in Olympic athletes and attitudes towards the Tokyo 2020 Olympics.

Population and Sample Collection

Population is defined as all elements (individuals, objects, and events) that meet the sample criteria for inclusion in a study (Susan et al., 2016). This study population consisted of Japanese citizens living in Japan and aged 18–80 years.

The researchers conducted an online survey with residents in Japan in September and October 2021, after the 2020 Tokyo Olympic Games. The online survey system helped data collection. The 1,169 samples were collected after the Tokyo 2020 Olympic and

Paralympic Games, from September 10 to October 30, 2021, via an online questionnaire survey. However, responses where participants marked '1' for all items were removed from the dataset, leading to a final sample of 1,043 valid responses for analysis.

Data Analysis

The data collected from the survey were analyzed using various statistical techniques. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the demographic data and general trends in media consumption and fan behaviors. Correlation and regression analyses were employed to examine the relationships between interest in Japanese Olympic athletes, following behaviors, and attitudes towards the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games. Path analysis was utilized to understand the influence of these factors on overall public attitudes. The statistical software SPSS and AMOS were used for data analysis.

The Variables Used in the Analysis

V1: The Importance of Athletes' Success

V1 represents how much importance respondents place on the success of their national athletes, in this case, Japanese Olympic athletes. This factor gauges the emotional and national pride associated with their performances at the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games. It highlights how much the public ties the success of athletes to their own sense of national identity and personal investment in the Games.

V2: The Strength of Fandom

V2 measures how strongly individuals identify as fans of Japanese Olympic athletes. This variable is a reflection of sports fandom intensity, capturing both the emotional attachment and behavioral engagement with sports teams and athletes.

V3: Media Consumption

This is divided into three categories:

V3 Traditional: Includes television and radio consumption.

V3 Digital: Includes the use of internet news and digital platforms to follow the Olympics.

V3 Social: Refers to social media usage, such as Twitter and Instagram.

V4: Attitudes Towards the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games

V4 is measuring the overall attitudes and support for the Tokyo 2020 Olympics. This includes positive feelings, support for the Games, and general satisfaction with the event.

Ethical Considerations

No identifying information could be gauged from the questionnaires, and questionnaires were only numbered after data was collected (Polit & Beck, 2004). The ethics committee of Kasetsart University examined the research instrument prior to distribution to

ensure content validity and avoid any ethical concerns (COA No. COA64/048). Informed consent was obtained from all participants, ensuring anonymity and confidentiality. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study, their voluntary participation, and the right to withdraw at any time.

Results

The demographic data were summarized using descriptive statistics, including frequency tables, means, and standard deviations. The respondents' ages were categorized as follows (Table 1): 9.9% were under 20 years old, 19.2% were in their 20s, 24.6% were in their 30s, 18.1% were in their 40s, 15.9% were in their 50s, 10.1% were in their 60s, and 1.9% were 70 years old or above. The gender distribution showed 49.0% men ($n = 511$) and 51.0% women ($n = 532$) participants.

Table 1 Sample Descriptions (Age)

Age Category	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
18-24	103	9.9%	9.9%
25-34	200	19.2%	29.1%
35-44	257	24.6%	53.7%
45-54	189	18.1%	71.8%
55-64	166	15.9%	87.7%
65-74	105	10.1%	97.8%
75 and above	20	1.9%	99.7%
Missing	3	0.3%	100.0%
Total	1043	100.0%	100.0%

Table 2 Sample Descriptions (Gender)

Gender	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Men	511	49.0%	49.0%
Women	532	51.0%	100.0%
Total	1043	100.0%	100.0%

As shown in Table 3, the importance of athletes' success (V1) had a mean score of 3.93 ($SD = 1.665$), with approximately 28.1% of respondents rating it as somewhat important. The strength of fandom (V2) showed a mean score of 4.48 ($SD = 1.725$), with 21.9% of respondents expressing neutrality. Media consumption was evaluated through traditional, digital, and social media channels. Traditional media usage (V3 Traditional) had a mean score of 2.87 ($SD = 1.611$), with 27.5% not following at all. Digital media usage (V3 Digital) had a mean score of 3.32 ($SD = 2.080$), with 35.3% not following at all. Social media usage

(V3 Social) had a mean score of 2.21 ($SD = 1.538$), with 49.5% not following at all. Attitudes towards the Olympic Games (V4) were measured with a mean score of 3.61 ($SD = 1.675$), indicating that 13.8% of respondents were not involved at all.

Table 3 Variable Descriptions

Variable	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
V1	1043	1	7	3.93	1.665
V2	1043	1	7	4.48	1.725
V3 Traditional	1043	1	7	2.87	1.611
V3 Digital	1043	1	7	3.32	2.080
V3 Social	1043	1	7	2.21	1.538
V4	1043	1	7	3.61	1.675

The means for all variables are below 4.5, indicating moderate levels of interest, fandom, media consumption, and positive attitudes. This suggests that respondents are engaged but not highly enthusiastic across these dimensions. The high standard deviation for digital media consumption (V3 Digital) shows the greatest variability among respondents, suggesting that engagement with digital platforms is highly differentiated across the population. This could imply that digital media is appealing to a specific subset of the audience. The mean for social media consumption (V3 Social) is particularly low, indicating that most respondents do not heavily rely on social platforms for Olympic-related content (49.5% not following at all). This may point to a gap in how social media is leveraged during large-scale sporting events, potentially offering an opportunity for better engagement strategies.

Correlation Analysis

The correlation analysis showed significant relationships between variables. For instance, as shown in Table 4, the correlation between the importance of athletes' success (V1) and the strength of fandom (V2) was strong ($r = .657, p < .001$). Similarly, there were significant correlations between traditional media consumption (V3 Traditional) and digital media consumption (V3 Digital) ($r = .746, p < .001$), indicating that individuals who followed athletes through traditional media were also likely to use digital media.

Table 4 Pearson correlation coefficient

	V1	V2	V3 Traditional	V3 Digital	V3 Social	V4
V1	-	.657***	.360***	.379***	.181***	.499***
V2		-	.439***	.458***	.220***	.610***
V3 Traditional			-	.746***	.675***	.520***
V3 Digital				-	.566***	.482***
V3 Social					-	.425***
V4						-

Note:

p: Indicates the p-value, representing the statistical significance of the path coefficients in the model. A lower p-value (typically less than 0.05) indicates that the path coefficient is statistically significant.

* (single asterisk): Denotes $p < 0.05$, indicating statistical significance at the 5% level.

** (double asterisks): Denotes $p < 0.01$, indicating statistical significance at the 1% level.

*** (triple asterisks): Denotes $p < 0.001$, indicating statistical significance at the 0.1% level.

r: Represents the Pearson correlation coefficient, which indicates the strength and direction of the relationship between variables.

Regression Analysis

The regression analysis aimed to understand the influence of various factors on attitudes towards the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games (V4). The predictors included the importance of athletes' success (V1), strength of fandom (V2), traditional media consumption (V3 Traditional), digital media consumption (V3 Digital), and social media consumption (V3 Social).

The model summary showed an *R* value of 0.696, indicating a relatively strong positive relationship between the predictors (independent variables) and attitudes towards the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games (dependent variable). In regression analysis, *R* provides an overall measure of how well the predictors are associated with the outcome. Additionally, the *R*² value, or coefficient of determination, was 0.484, which means that 48.4% of the variance in attitudes towards the Olympic Games was explained by these predictors. This result is statistically significant, underscoring the explanatory power of the model. The ANOVA results confirmed the model's significance with an F-value of 194.869 and a *p*-value of less than 0.001. The regression coefficients are detailed in the following table 5:

Table 5 Result of Regression Coefficients

Predictor	Unstandardized Coefficients (B)	Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients (β)	<i>t</i>	Sig.
(Constant)	0.351	0.114	-	3.088	0.002
V1	0.139	0.030	0.138	4.626	<.001
V2	0.390	0.030	0.402	12.810	<.001
V3 Traditional	0.138	0.040	0.132	3.423	<.001
V3 Digital	0.026	0.028	0.032	0.924	0.356
V3 Social	0.222	0.034	0.204	6.604	<.001

Path Analysis

In this study, V1 (Interest in Athletes' Success), V2 (Fandom Strength), and V3 (Media Consumption: Traditional, Digital, Social) were treated as independent variables, while V4 (Attitudes Towards the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games) was considered the dependent variable. The path analysis was designed to examine how V1, V2, and V3 impact V4, focusing particularly on gender differences in these relationships.

Using the software AMOS, the path model was constructed and tested, which aimed to identify a well-fitting model by evaluating how the predictors (V1, V2, V3) collectively influence the outcome variable (V4). The model fit indices confirmed that the hypothesized relationships between these variables are well-supported. The results indicated that the model achieved good fit based on several criteria, including the Chi-square statistic, Comparative Fit Index (CFI), Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI), and Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA).

Chi-square (χ^2) = 6.422, *df* = 6, *p* = .378

Comparative Fit Index (CFI) = 0.998

Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI) = 1.000

Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) = 0.008

Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) = 0.006

These indices suggest that the model adequately represents the relationships among the variables, as the CFI and TLI values are close to 1.000, and the RMSEA and SRMR values are below the recommended threshold of 0.05 (Bentler, 1990; Hu & Bentler, 1999).

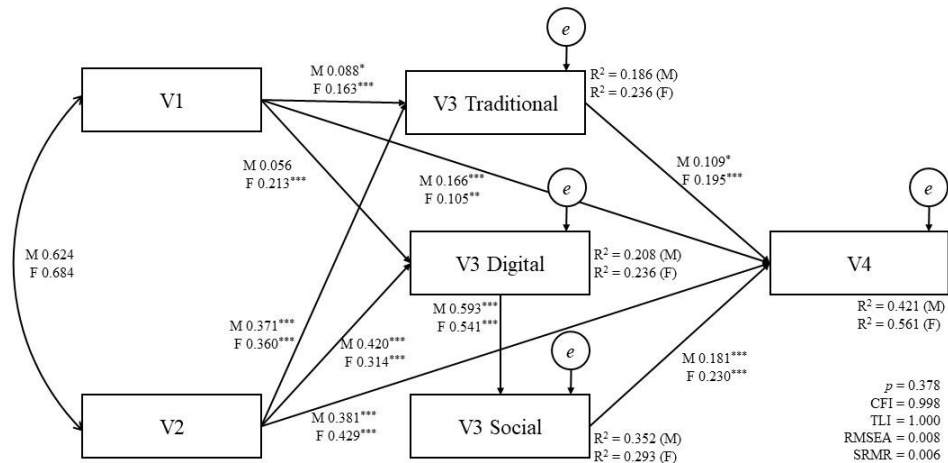


Figure 1 Applicable model

Note:

e: Represents the error terms or disturbances associated with each variable in the model. These account for the variance in the dependent variables that is not explained by the independent variables.

M: Refers to the men group in the path analysis. Path coefficients marked with “M” represent the strength of relationships for men respondents.

F: Refers to the women group in the path analysis. Path coefficients marked with “F” represent the strength of relationships for women respondents.

p: Indicates the p-value, representing the statistical significance of the path coefficients in the model. A lower p-value (typically less than 0.05) indicates that the path coefficient is statistically significant.

* (single asterisk): Denotes $p < 0.05$, indicating statistical significance at the 5% level.

** (double asterisks): Denotes $p < 0.01$, indicating statistical significance at the 1% level.

*** (triple asterisks): Denotes $p < 0.001$, indicating statistical significance at the 0.1% level.

Conceptual Model and Gender Perspective in Path Analysis

The path analysis was conducted to explore how various factors, including interest in athletes’ success (V1), fandom strength (V2), and media consumption (V3), influence attitudes towards the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games (V4). The analysis also examined gender-specific dynamics by modeling separate paths for men (M) and women (F) respondents, allowing the study to capture how these factors operate differently across genders.

The conceptual model posits that attitudes towards the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games (V4) are shaped by three main predictors:

1. Interest in Athletes’ Success (V1): The degree of importance respondents place on the success of Japanese Olympic athletes.
2. Strength of Fandom (V2): The intensity of individuals’ identification and emotional investment in the Olympics and its athletes.

3. Media Consumption (V3): This includes traditional media (V3 Traditional), digital media (V3 Digital), and social media (V3 Social) usage.

Gender is a moderating variable in this model, meaning the influence of these predictors on attitudes towards the Olympics is examined separately for men and women groups to assess how gender differences shape media consumption and fandom behaviors.

For the men group (M), the strength of fandom (V2) had the most substantial impact on attitudes towards the Games (V4), with a standardized coefficient (β) of 0.381. This indicates that men who identify strongly as fans of the Olympics are more likely to have positive attitudes towards the event. Additionally, traditional media consumption (V3 Traditional) and social media consumption (V3 Social) were significant predictors, with coefficients of 0.109 and 0.181, respectively, suggesting that both traditional media (e.g., TV) and social platforms contribute to shaping men's attitudes. The importance of athletes' success (V1) also played a role, with a coefficient of 0.166, though its impact was smaller. Notably, digital media consumption (V3 Digital) did not significantly affect attitudes in the men group.

In contrast, for the women group (F), fandom strength (V2) was again the strongest predictor ($\beta = 0.429$), indicating that women who identify strongly with the Olympic movement are more likely to have favorable attitudes towards the event. Social media consumption (V3 Social) had a stronger effect on attitudes for women ($\beta = 0.230$) compared to men, highlighting the importance of digital platforms in shaping women engagement with the Games. Traditional media consumption (V3 Traditional) was also significant ($\beta = 0.195$), though its effect was smaller than for men. Interestingly, digital media consumption (V3 Digital) showed a notable influence on attitudes ($\beta = 0.213$) for women, unlike in the group of men, suggesting that women rely more on digital content when forming opinions about the Olympics.

The decision coefficients (R^2) indicate that the predictors explain 42.1% of the variance in attitudes towards the Tokyo 2020 Olympics for the men group ($R^2 = 0.421$) and 56.1% for the women group ($R^2 = 0.561$). This demonstrates that the model is more effective in predicting attitudes among women, likely due to the more diverse media consumption patterns and the greater influence of digital and social media in the women group.

The model fit indices, including Chi-square ($\chi^2 = 6.422$, $df = 6$, $p = .378$), Comparative Fit Index (CFI = 0.998), Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI = 1.000), and Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA = 0.008), indicate a good fit for both men and women groups, suggesting that the paths accurately capture the relationships between the variables.

This path analysis demonstrates clear gender differences in how fandom, media consumption, and interest in athletes influence attitudes towards the Olympics. For men,

traditional media and fandom play more central roles, while for women, social and digital media consumption are more significant. These findings suggest that targeted communication strategies—such as emphasizing competitive aspects and traditional media for men and leveraging digital storytelling and community-driven content for women—could be employed to enhance public support and engagement for future Olympic Games.

The path coefficients (β) and their significance levels for both men and women participants are summarized in the table 6.

Table 6 Coefficients (β) and Significance

Path	Men (β)	p-value	Women (β)	p-value
V2 to V3 Digital	0.420	<.001	0.314	<.001
V1 to V3 Digital	0.056	0.270	0.213	<.001
V2 to V3 Traditional	0.371	<.001	0.360	<.001
V1 to V3 Traditional	0.088	0.060	0.163	<.001
V3 Digital to V3 social	0.593	<.001	0.541	<.001
V1 to V4	0.166	<.001	0.105	0.008
V2 to V4	0.381	<.001	0.429	<.001
V3 Traditional to V4	0.109	0.041	0.195	<.001
V3z social to V4	0.181	<.001	0.230	<.001

Discussion

The correlation analysis results illustrate respondents' varying levels of interest and engagement with the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games, indicating significant reliance on both traditional ($r = .360, p < .001$) and digital media ($r = .379, p < .001$) for following Olympic athletes, as well as overall attitudes towards the event (Traditional; $r = .520, p < .001$, Digital; $r = .482, p < .001$). The detailed statistics provide insights into public sentiment and behaviors related to the Olympics in Japan.

The regression analysis indicates that the strength of fandom ($\beta = .402, p < .001$), traditional media consumption ($\beta = .132, p < .001$), and social media consumption ($\beta = .204, p < .001$) significantly predict attitudes towards the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games. The importance of athletes' success also significantly influences these attitudes, while digital media consumption does not have a significant effect ($p = .356$). Specifically, the strong positive correlation between fandom and media following behaviors underscores the pivotal role of these elements in shaping public attitudes towards the Games. Traditional media, despite the rise of digital platforms, continues to be a substantial predictor, suggesting that established media forms still hold significant sway in public opinion. Social media's significant

influence highlights its role in fostering a sense of community and real-time engagement among fans.

The path analysis results provide meaningful insights into the distinct ways that media consumption and fandom behaviors shape attitudes towards the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games across gender lines. The higher R^2 value (for women 0.561 compared to 0.421 for men) suggests that the model is more effective in explaining women respondents' attitudes, emphasizing the critical role of media engagement—particularly social and digital media—in shaping women public sentiment toward large-scale sporting events.

Gender Differences in the Influence of Athletes' Success

The path analysis results provide important insights into the gender differences regarding how interest in athletes' success (V1) impacts attitudes towards the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games (V4). The results showed a notable divergence between men and women respondents, with athletes' success (V1) having a stronger effect on men respondents ($\beta = 0.166$) compared to women respondents ($\beta = 0.105$). This suggests that competitive success and performance outcomes are more salient for men when forming their attitudes towards the Olympics.

For men respondents, the stronger influence of athletes' success aligns with previous research that underscores the importance of competition and national pride for men in sports fandom (Billings et al., 2017). Men tend to be more driven by performance metrics, including their national athletes' achievements, which are often emphasized through traditional media channels like television and newspapers. These platforms typically offer extensive statistical analysis, athlete profiles, and commentary on performance, catering to men fans' interest in the outcome of competitions. The strong effect of V1 on V4 in this group confirms that athlete success stories significantly boost men attitudes towards the Olympics, which in turn can heighten their engagement with the event.

In contrast, the lower impact of V1 on V4 for women respondents indicates that competitive success is less central to shaping their attitudes towards the Games. For women, the focus tends to shift more towards relational aspects of sports fandom, such as the personal stories of athletes, their struggles, and the emotional journeys they undertake. Women fans are more engaged with athlete narratives beyond performance, which explains why athletes' success does not play as dominant a role in influencing their attitudes. This is further supported by the stronger role that social media (V3 Social) plays for women ($\beta = 0.230$), where such personal and emotionally driven content is often shared and discussed in online communities.

The results show that women respondents exhibited a significant influence of interest in athletes' success (V1) on their consumption of digital media ($\beta = 0.213$), whereas this relationship was not significant for men respondents. This suggests that for women,

interest in athletes' success drives digital engagement, as they turn to online platforms to follow stories related to their favorite athletes. Unlike men, who might rely more on traditional channels for competition-driven content, women appear to use digital media to explore narrative-rich and interactive content, such as athlete blogs, video interviews, and live streaming of Olympic-related content. The digital space offers flexibility and customization, allowing women fans to seek out human-interest stories and behind-the-scenes insights that provide a more personal connection with athletes. These findings suggest that digital media becomes a gateway for women to access detailed and emotionally resonant content.

Interestingly, women respondents also demonstrated a greater influence of V1 on their consumption of traditional media (V3 Traditional) compared to men respondents ($\beta = 0.163$ for women vs. $\beta = 0.088$ for men). This suggests that women are more likely to turn to traditional outlets, such as television and newspapers, when they are interested in the success of athletes. For women, traditional media may still serve as a key source for comprehensive event coverage and official narratives, including televised athlete interviews, post-event coverage, and highlights of athlete achievements.

Gender Differences in Fandom and Media Consumption

For men respondents, the strength of fandom (V2; $\beta = 0.381$) emerged as the most significant predictor of attitudes towards the Olympics, followed by social media consumption (V3 Social; $\beta = 0.181$), the importance of athletes' success (V1; $\beta = 0.166$), and traditional media consumption (V3 Traditional; $\beta = 0.109$). This pattern is consistent with existing literature that highlights men's higher levels of interest in competitive sports and their proactive consumption of sports information through various media channels (Dietz-Uhler et al., 2000; Fink et al., 2002). These results revealed that for men respondents, traditional media consumption (V3 Traditional) had a smaller effect on attitudes towards the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games compared to other factors such as fandom strength (V2) and social media consumption (V3 Social). This somewhat unexpected result, given the well-documented importance of traditional media like television in shaping men sports fandom (Kian et al., 2013), warrants deeper exploration. While traditional media is often seen as the dominant source of sports content for men audiences, several factors may explain why its influence was relatively low in this study.

One key explanation for the lower impact of traditional media is the broader shift towards digital and social media consumption across all demographics, including men. While television and newspapers remain important for providing comprehensive coverage of events, real-time updates, and expert commentary, the rise of digital platforms has increasingly displaced traditional media's dominance. Research by Hutchins and Rowe (2012) highlights that digital media offers fans immediate, on-demand access to content that can be tailored to their specific interests. In this context, traditional media may not provide the

level of customization and interactive engagement that men sports fans now expect, making it less influential in shaping their overall attitudes towards the Olympics.

Another important consideration is that traditional media often caters to broad, general audiences rather than niche, highly engaged fan groups. For men respondents with a strong connection to the Olympics (as reflected in the high coefficient for fandom strength), the broad, often generic nature of television coverage might not fully meet their needs for in-depth, specific, or personalized information. As Gantz and Wenner (1995) noted, traditional sports coverage often fails to engage fans at the deeper, more interactive level that digital platforms can achieve. Men fans, particularly those with high levels of sports interest, may increasingly prefer more specialized sources of information that allow for real-time interaction and targeted content, such as specific athlete stats, behind-the-scenes details, or expert fan communities that are better served by social and digital media.

On the other hand, women respondents showed a stronger reliance on social media (V3 Social; $\beta = 0.230$), which aligns with studies that indicate women's preference for relational and community-oriented interactions (Frisby, 2005). For women, social media platforms like Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook provide spaces to engage with athletes on a personal level, share emotional stories, and foster a sense of connection through community support. This finding is consistent with the view that women fans tend to value the social and emotional aspects of sports fandom, such as team camaraderie and athlete narratives, more than purely competitive elements (Kian et al., 2013). While traditional media (V3 Traditional; $\beta = 0.195$), still has an influence on women's attitudes, the stronger impact of digital media and social media suggests that women are more engaged with interactive and narrative-driven content, especially content that allows them to follow behind-the-scenes aspects of athletes' journeys and engage with other fans (Hutchins & Rowe, 2012). This is significant because it highlights the interactive nature of digital media as a platform that caters more effectively to women sports fans, who are looking for more than just the competition—they seek a sense of community and connection.

Importance of Athletes' Success and Its Gendered Impact

Interestingly, while the importance of athletes' success (V1) was a significant predictor of attitudes for both genders, it had a smaller effect on women ($\beta = 0.105$) respondents compared to men ($\beta = 0.166$). This could suggest that women fans place less emphasis on competitive success and more on the personal stories and struggles of athletes. This finding mirrors existing research, which posits that women may value the social and emotional dimensions of sports fandom more than the outcome of the competitions themselves (Frisby, 2005). Conversely, men respondents are more likely to associate positive attitudes with the success of their national athletes, reflecting their higher levels of national pride and identification with competitive success (Billings et al., 2017).

Implications for Communication Strategies

The results of the path analysis underscore the need for tailored communication strategies to effectively engage both men and women audiences. For men audiences, strategies should emphasize traditional media coverage and athlete performance. Marketing campaigns could focus on broadcasting detailed statistical insights, athlete success stories, and competitive narratives, as men are more likely to be driven by these elements. Additionally, while social media plays a role for men, the content here should still emphasize competition-focused discussions and real-time updates, which foster men engagement with the event.

In contrast, communication strategies aimed at women audiences should prioritize social and digital media platforms, emphasizing interactive, community-driven, and emotionally engaging content. Highlighting the personal stories of athletes, sharing behind-the-scenes content, and promoting athlete-fan interactions on social media can foster deeper connections with women fans. Interactive campaigns that encourage women participation, such as discussions, hashtags, or fan engagement opportunities, would resonate more strongly with this demographic.

Digital Media's Role in Informational Needs for Women Fans

In the path analysis, while digital media consumption (V3 Digital) did not have a direct influence on attitudes towards the Tokyo 2020 Olympics (V4) for either gender, it had a significant indirect effect by enhancing social media engagement (V3 Social). This finding highlights the role of digital media as a gateway to deeper social engagement, rather than a direct predictor of Olympic attitudes.

It indicates that digital media consumption (e.g., following Olympic events through websites, blogs, or streaming platforms) is closely linked to social media activity ($\beta = 0.541$ for women, $\beta = 0.593$ for men). This suggests that digital platforms serve as an informational foundation, providing the initial context and content (such as event updates, athlete profiles, and real-time news) that is then actively discussed and shared on social media platforms. For women fans, this indirect relationship is significant because social media plays a more substantial role in shaping their attitudes towards the Olympics ($\beta = 0.230$). Therefore, while digital media itself may not directly influence attitudes, it is crucial in driving social media engagement, which has a stronger impact on women audiences. Although digital media does not directly shape attitudes, it still plays an important role in meeting the informational needs of women sports fans. Digital platforms provide detailed, customizable content that is not always available through traditional media. Women respondents may use digital media to follow specific athletes, explore human-interest stories, or find behind-the-scenes content that resonates with their personal interests. This type of content helps women build a deeper

emotional connection to the event, which they later express and explore further on social media platforms. This community interaction can significantly enhance their overall attitudes towards the Games, particularly by fostering a sense of belonging and shared experience, elements that are central to women fandom (Frisby, 2005; Kian et al., 2013).

The indirect relationship between digital media consumption and attitudes towards the Olympics suggests that sports organizations and marketers should continue to invest in high-quality digital content that can feed into social media discussions. By providing engaging, interactive digital experiences—such as athlete interviews, event highlights, and behind-the-scenes footage—organizations can drive higher levels of social media engagement. Given that social media has a direct and significant influence on women attitudes, digital content should be designed with an eye toward fostering online communities and facilitating discussion, particularly around personal stories and emotional connections with athletes.

Conclusion

The findings of this study emphasize the significant role of social media in shaping public attitudes towards the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games for both men and women respondents. Across genders, social media consumption (V3 Social) had a larger influence on Olympic attitudes compared to traditional media consumption (V3 Traditional), highlighting the ongoing shift from conventional media platforms like television and newspapers to more interactive, real-time, and community-driven engagement offered by social media. This result underscores the need for event organizers and marketers to prioritize social media as a key avenue for fan engagement.

Although traditional media still plays a role, its impact on men attitudes towards the Olympics was smaller than that of social media ($\beta = 0.181$ for social media vs. $\beta = 0.109$ for traditional media). This finding is consistent with broader trends in media consumption, where even traditionally loyal audiences like men sports fans are increasingly drawn to interactive platforms that allow for real-time discussions, sharing, and community engagement. Marketers targeting men audiences should thus ensure that their strategies are multichannel, combining detailed coverage on traditional platforms with real-time updates, discussions, and interactive experiences on social media.

For women respondents, social media played an even more prominent role ($\beta = 0.230$), reinforcing the idea that women are more likely to engage with content that emphasizes relational and community-oriented interactions. The relatively lower impact of traditional media ($\beta = 0.195$) suggests that women fans prefer narrative-driven, emotionally engaging content found on platforms like Twitter and Instagram, where they can follow athletes' personal journeys, participate in discussions, and foster connections with other fans. Therefore, campaigns targeting women fans should emphasize interactive features, athlete-

fan engagement, and community-building initiatives on social media to drive positive attitudes and engagement with future events.

The differences in how interest in athletes' success influences traditional and digital media consumption between men and women suggest that tailored marketing strategies should take these distinct preferences into account. For women audiences, digital media campaigns should highlight interactive features, personal stories, and real-time engagement with athletes, while traditional media campaigns should continue to emphasize athlete success and provide emotionally rich coverage that resonates with women's interest in the personal journeys of Olympians.

The stronger influence of social media for both genders, compared to traditional media, suggests that sports organizations and marketers need to focus more on digital and social platforms to maximize engagement and support for future sporting events. Interactive campaigns, such as live Q&A sessions with athletes, behind-the-scenes footage, and opportunities for fans to share their experiences online, can foster a stronger sense of community and connection to the event. By creating emotionally resonant and engaging content that leverages the strengths of social media, stakeholders can boost public interest and enhance the overall experience for diverse audiences.

Despite the valuable insights provided by this study, several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the study relied on self-reported data, which can be subject to biases such as social desirability and recall bias, which may affect the accuracy of the responses. Second, the survey was conducted online, potentially excluding individuals without internet access or those less familiar with digital platforms, thereby limiting the diversity of the sample. Third, the study focused on Japan constrains the generalizability of the findings to other countries and cultural contexts, given that media consumption and attitudes toward the Olympics may vary significantly across regions.

Additionally, the cross-sectional design of the study captures attitudes and behaviors at a single point in time, making it difficult to infer causality. Longitudinal studies would be beneficial in understanding how attitudes and media consumption behaviors evolve over time. Lastly, the study did not explore the impact of specific content types within media channels, which could further elucidate the nuances of media influence on public attitudes.

Moreover, this study did not delve into the impact of specific content types within media channels, which could offer a more granular understanding of media influence. Future research should examine how different narrative styles, athlete portrayals, and interactive features on social media influence public attitudes. For instance, analyzing how personal stories of athletes or user-generated content might affect fan engagement would enhance understanding of the emotional drivers behind sports fandom. Emerging technologies, such as virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR), also represent an important area for future

exploration. These technologies have the potential to reshape sports engagement by offering immersive, personalized experiences that could further enhance fan connection to sporting events. Research into how these technologies might affect both fandom strength and media consumption behaviors would provide important insights for sports marketers and event organizers.

In conclusion, while this study has highlighted the importance of media engagement in shaping public attitudes towards the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games, it opens the door for further research to fully understand these dynamics. The research question remains highly relevant, as understanding the evolving media landscape and its role in sports fandom is crucial for improving event management and marketing strategies. Tailored communication approaches, considering gender-specific media consumption behaviors, can help enhance public engagement with large-scale sporting events like the Olympics. Further investigation into longitudinal effects, cultural differences, and content-specific influences will be essential to fully capture the evolving role of media in shaping sports fandom and public sentiment towards global sporting events.

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