

## **The Influence of Sustainable Marketing on Gen Z Users' Value Perception, Image, and Intention at Sports Events**

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### **Abstract**

The recent upsurge in sporting events has instigated a positive shift in the habits of Generation Z, placing a strong emphasis on embracing a healthy lifestyle through sports while also prioritizing other aspects of life. This comprehensive study delves into the impact of sustainable marketing activities (SMA) on the perceived value and self-image associated with sporting events, as well as its influence on the intention of Gen Z individuals to actively participate in these events (Sports User Behavioral Intention/SUBI). Given the paramount importance of sustainability in organizing sporting events, this study aims to uncover effective strategies for marketing these events to appeal to a wider user base, both in digital and non-digital realms. Through comprehensive data collection via questionnaires and rigorous analysis using the PLS (Partial Least Squares) method, we anticipate elucidating the intricate relationship between SMA, sports event image, perceived value, and sports user intention. Additionally, we seek to explore the mediating role of perceived value and event description in this dynamic relationship. The results of this study hold the potential to revolutionize sustainable marketing for sports events and carry profound implications for event management and sustainability. By identifying limitations and opportunities for future research, this study paves the way for further advancements in this vital field.

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## INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is currently a country whose people are very aware of the importance of exercising Funk, D. C., Alexandris, K., & McDonald, H. (2021). Sports are an activity that is increasingly growing and developing into a reasonably commercial industry and providing many new opportunities for those who provide specific financial benefits to many parties involved in it (Funk, D. C., Alexandris, K., & McDonald, H. (2021). In the past, only athletes and their sports received financial benefits; now, all supporting components have also received monetary benefits (Chalip, 2021).

Because of this, various sports events continue to emerge and mushroom. With the rapid development of the era, sports events if not managed with management that supports the principles of sustainability (McWilliams, A., & Siegel, D. 2020). Form an effort to emphasize the importance of sustainability principles to popularize sustainable sports industry activities, the sports industry must be encouraged to advance further through holding interesting events and involving many young generations and previous generations who are already users of the sport itself, before it turns into a financial commodity which is attractive to users that can be marketed digitally and non-digitally (Andreini, D., & Bettinelli, C. 2020). Consideration of sustainability is important in discussions of organizational development and commercialism in the sports industry. Implementing social responsibility or CSR activities can maximize the long-term benefits of the organization and increase good interactions between the organization and the community (Cornwell, T. B., & Coote, L. V. 2021).

The financial benefits of sustainability are not to be overlooked, as they play an essential role in the goals of organizations that hold sports events. Because it is undeniable that the concept of organizational sustainability is a significant focus in the modern business world, Organizations not only focus on

economic profit but also consider the social, environmental, and cultural impacts of their business activities. This concept of sustainability has evolved to include economic, social, ecological and cultural aspects that are inter-related and support each other, enlightening us about the holistic nature of sustainability (Crane, A., Matten, D., & Spence, L. 2020)

Sustainability affects not only the long-term success of an organization but also the group closely related stakeholders include users, shareholders, geographic communities, and cultural circles (Freeman, R. E. 2021). Sustainable Marketing Act (SMA), event image, perceived value, and sport user behavioral intention (SUBI) are essential factors that impact these interest groups. In the modern marketing world, SMA has been recognized as one of the crucial approaches to maintaining long-term relationships with users and other stakeholders. SMA, through a multidimensional and systematic approach, can build user trust. Previous studies have shown that corporate social responsibility (CSR) programs also play an essential role in shaping a positive brand image and increasing user loyalty. Effective implementation of SMA plays a role in strengthening user behavioral intentions, which in turn can impact their purchasing decisions.

Sustainable marketing is an approach that emphasizes the importance of considering the long-term impacts of marketing activities on the environment, society, and economy (Funk, D. C., Alexandris, K., & McDonald, H. 2021). In recent decades, sustainability issues have become a significant concern in business, especially in sectors closely related to using natural resources, such as tourism and sports. According to previous studies, sustainable marketing not only impacts achieving short-term business goals but also helps build the foundation for the organization's long-term success.

Sustainable marketing focuses on creating business value without sacrificing environmental and social welfare. In addition, SMA plays a vital role in building user value

and increasing user loyalty Kotler, P., & Keller, K. L. (2020). According to Gummeson, E. (2021), one of the main strengths of SMA is its ability to bridge the relationship between organizations and users through a more ethical and responsible approach. For example, several studies have shown that users tend to be more loyal to brands that implement sustainable practices and demonstrate their commitment to social and environmental issues (Maignan, I., & Ferrell, O. C. 2020). In addition to focusing on sustainable marketing, this study also highlights the importance of event image and perceived value by users, especially in the context of sporting events. In a sporting event, event image plays a significant role in shaping the perception of event participants. Major sporting events such as the World Cup or the Olympics, for example, provide critical economic impacts for the host destination and form a positive image that can attract more new users in the future Lee, S., & Chang, S. (2021).

A strong event image can connect users emotionally with the existing economic destination. Users tend to have positive behavioral intentions if they feel the event has meaningful value. Perceived value, whether in social, financial benefits, or personal experiences, is essential in users' decisions to participate in sporting events (Peattie, K. 2021). In addition, perceived value can also increase user loyalty to the event or destination, ultimately impacting the event's long-term success.

Sports user behavioral intention (SUBI) is one of the main focuses of this study. SUBI includes user intentions to participate in sports events, purchase related products, or support marketing initiatives by event organizers. According to Oliver, R. L., & Bhattacharya, C. B. (2020), SMA significantly influences SUBI, especially in the context of sports events. Effective SMA implementation can improve user perceptions of sports events, which in turn can affect their behavioral intentions. In sports events, users tend to prefer supporting events or destinations that demonstrate a commitment to sustainability. CSR organi-

zations that implement sports programs that focus on environmental issues, such as waste management and carbon emission reduction, are preferred by users more. In addition, a positive event image, built through sustainable marketing practices, can also strengthen user behavioral intentions, including the intention to purchase event tickets, participate in events, or support programs related to the event.

This study uses a quantitative approach by collecting data through a Partial Least Squares (PLS) model questionnaire. Data will be collected during sports events held throughout 2024 at various events organized by multiple sports event organizers in Semarang. The PLS method was chosen because it allows the analysis of the relationship between complex variables, including the influence of SMA, event image, perceived value, and SUBI. In addition, PLS is also suitable for research involving a large number of variables and samples.

This study also adopted a mediation model to analyze the role of event image and perceived value in the relationship between SMA and SUBI. This mediation model is used to identify how event image and perceived value can strengthen or weaken the influence of SMA on user behavioral intentions. Hypothesis testing was conducted to explore the direct and indirect relationships between these variables.

The results of this study are expected to provide significant contributions to understanding the role of SMA in the context of sporting events. Specifically, this study will examine how SMA can influence event image, perceived value, and user behavioral intention. In addition, this study will also explore the mediating role of event image and perceived value in strengthening the relationship between SMA and SUBI.

This study is also expected to provide new insights for marketers and sporting event managers about the importance of implementing SMA in their marketing strategies. Effective SMA implementation can not only improve event image and perceived value by users.

Still, it can also encourage positive behavioral intentions from users, including the intention to participate in sporting events and support initiatives related to sustainability.

From a managerial perspective, the results of this study will provide implications in the form of valuable guidelines for sports organizations in designing and implementing sustainable marketing strategies Keller, K. L. (2020). Effective SMA implementation can help sports organizations increase user loyalty, strengthen event image, and increase user behavioral intention. In addition, this study also emphasizes the importance of the role of event image and perceived value in creating a stronger relationship between SMA and SUBI.

Sports organizations, especially those involved in organizing significant events at the regional level, can use the results of this study to design more effective and sustainable marketing strategies (Holt, D. B. 2020). For example, organizations can utilize CSR programs that focus on environmental and social issues to build a positive event image and increase the value perceived by users.

This study's results are expected to significantly contribute to the development of sustainable marketing theory and sports event management. This study is also likely to contribute to the literature on sustainable marketing by expanding the understanding of the relationship between SMA, event image, perceived value, and SUBI. From a practical perspective, this study provides helpful guidance for sports organizations in designing and implementing more sustainable and effective marketing strategies. The proposed hypothesis is as follows: H1: The sustainable marketing act has a significant effect on sports user behavior intention H2: Sports User perceived value significantly mediates the relationship between the sustainable marketing act and sports user behavior intention H3: Image of sports events substantially mediates the relationship between sustainable marketing act and sport user behavior intention H4: Sports user perceived value has a significant effect on sport user

behavior intention H5: Image of sports event is having a considerable impact on sport user behavior intention.

## METHODS

### Sampling Technique

This study uses a purposive sampling technique, which considers specific criteria in accordance with the study's objectives. The criteria used to determine the sample are as follows: (1) Respondents must be individuals who have access to online platforms, such as short video platforms, TV terminals, PC terminals, and social networking platforms; (2) Respondents must be in the age group of Generation Z, which is the dominant demographic group in consuming sports content and participating in sports events; and (3) Respondents must have an interest or involvement in sports activities, either as spectators, participants, or consumers of sports-related products.

This technique was chosen to ensure that the sample is a population relevant to the research context, namely sustainable marketing in sports events. Data Analysis Technique, The data obtained from the online questionnaire will be analyzed using Warp PLS. Warp PLS is a Partial Least Squares (PLS)-based analysis tool used to test the causal relationship between latent variables, directly and indirectly. This technique was chosen because: (1) it is very suitable for models with many latent variables and complex indicators and data with a relatively small sample size; (2) it can handle non-normal data and produce more accurate non-linear models in some cases; and (3) This study involves many relationships between latent variables, and Warp PLS allows for more flexible structural analysis. The steps of data analysis include: (1) Construct Validity Test; (2) Construct Reliability Test; and (3) Hypothesis Test

### Variables Used

This study involves four main latent variables: Sustainable Marketing Act (SMA), Event Image, Perceived Value, and Sport

User Behavioral Intention (SUBI). Each latent variable is measured by several indicators adapted from existing literature. The following indicators are used for each variable:

(1) Sustainable Marketing Act (SMA) or Economic Dimension: The indicator measures the extent to which the sporting event provides economic benefits to the surrounding community and organizers. Example item: "This sporting event has a positive economic impact on the local community." Social Dimension: The indicator measures the contribution of the sporting event to strengthening social ties among participants and the community. Example item: "This sporting event helps to improve social ties among participants." Environmental Dimension: The indicator measures the extent to which the event minimizes environmental impacts and promotes environmental awareness. Example item: "This sporting event emphasizes the importance of environmental sustainability." Cultural Dimension: The indicator measures how the event promotes and preserves local cultural values. Example item: "This event reflects and preserves local cultural heritage."

(2) Event Image This indicator measures the general perception of the quality and reputation of the sporting event. Example item: "This sporting event has a good reputation among the community." This indicator also evaluates the uniqueness and attractiveness of the event in the sporting context. Example item: "This event offers a unique and engaging sporting experience."

(3) Perceived value or Functional Value: The extent to which participants felt that the event provided practical or functional benefits. Example item: "This event provided benefits that aligned with my expectations as a spectator/participant." Emotional Value: The extent to which participants felt the emotional value of the experience of participating in the event. Example item: "I felt satisfied and happy after participating in this sporting event." Social

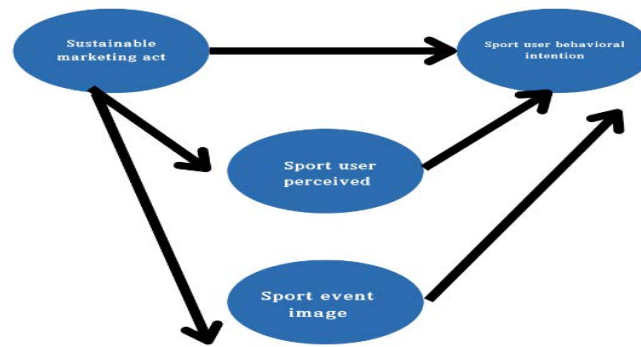
Value: The extent to which the event provided social benefits for participants. Example item: "This event strengthened my social relationships with others."

(4) Sport User Behavioral Intention (SUBI) or Intention to Attend Future Events: This indicator measures participants' intention to attend similar events. Example item: "I plan to attend similar sporting events." Intention to Purchase Event-Related Products: Measures participants' intention to purchase products or services related to the event. Example item: "I intend to purchase the product promoted during the event." Intention to Participate Further: Measures the participant's intention to engage further in activities organized by the event organizer. Example item: "I am interested in participating more actively in similar sporting events."

### Data Analysis Procedure

After the data is collected, here are the steps of data analysis that will be carried out: (1) Respondent Profile Description: Includes demographic distribution such as age, gender, marital status, education level, income, and geographic origin; (2) Validity and Reliability Test: Using AVE and Cronbach's Alpha to ensure that the items used are valid and reliable; (3) Structural Model Test: Using Warp PLS to analyze the causal relationship between the variables studied, both direct and indirect influences; and (4) Hypothesis Testing: The proposed hypothesis regarding the influence of SMA on event image, perceived value, and SUBI will be tested using statistical tests in Warp PLS.

The mediating effect of event image and perceived value will also be tested. Using this method, the study is expected to provide a deep understanding of how sustainable marketing can be applied in the context of sporting events and its impact on consumer behavioral intentions (SUBI). Research framework presented in Figure 1.



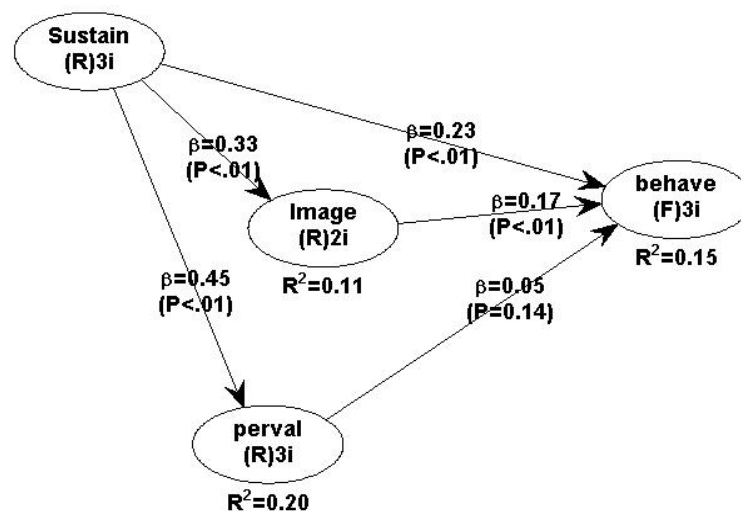
**Figure 1.** Research Framework

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The sample of Gen Z is 506 people, with an average age in 2024 of 19 to 21 years. With a minimum high school education level, more than 70 percent of the gender types are female and have at least two years of online experience. Expenditure in the online arena. Approximately a minimum of 1 million rupiah per month and fairly intense daily internet usage between 6 to 12 hours. The results of the test using warp PLS presented in Figure 2. From the test results, it was found that H1, H4, and H5 were significantly accepted because they produced  $P < 0.01$ . For H2, the mediation relationship was significantly strengthened, but in H3, the mediation relationship strengthened weakly. These results slightly differ from previous studies that researched

a sporting event explicitly in a particular type of sport. However, with results that were quite significant on all sides, it can be said that the proposed sustainable business model is appropriate for marketing a sporting event that suits the tastes of Gen Z in the environment around the researcher.

This study focuses on sustainable marketing that is environmentally friendly and relevant to marketing sporting events among Gen Z. The sample in this study includes 506 respondents with an average age of 19 to 21 years, indicating that the majority of them are female and have pretty intense online experience. This study uses the Warp PLS model to analyze the relationship between the variables studied, with the results showing that hypothesis H1, H4, and H5 are significantly accepted with  $P < 0.01$ , while H2 shows a sig-



**Figure 2.** Regression Results

nificant mediation relationship, and H3 shows a weak mediation relationship. This study's results align with the theory of elastic demand. Gen Z, as a digital-native generation, tends to have flexible and dynamic preferences for products and services presented online. They respond more to products that combine environmental, economic, and social aspects in a balanced manner. This sustainable marketing concept emphasizes that companies or event organizers not only focus on short-term profits but also consider the long-term impact on the environment and society, which aligns with Oliver, R. L., & Bhattacharya, C. B.'s consumer value theory (2020).

Gen Z tends to pay more attention to social values and sustainability, so this group accepts the sustainable marketing model. This can be seen in the acceptance of H1, H4, and H5, which show the relationship between sustainable marketing, event image, and value perceived by consumers. From an accounting perspective, this concept aligns with the triple bottom line approach, which considers financial, social, and environmental impacts when evaluating a company's performance.

Implementing SMA (Sustainable Marketing Act) as part of a marketing strategy places sustainability as one of the critical elements in achieving sustainable financial performance (Peattie et al, 2021). In this context, environmental accounting theory also provides a basis for measuring the environmental impact of sporting events, which can help event organizers manage financial risks associated with unsustainable operations. These results support that Gen Z appreciates socially and environmentally responsible business models, as indicated in the acceptance of H1, H4, and H5. The solid but weak mediation relationship in H3 indicates that although event image plays a role in increasing behavioral intention, the value perceived by consumers must also be strengthened. This differs from previous studies focusing more on specific sporting events and tend to emphasize only one aspect of sport.

## CONCLUSION

These results underline the importance of comprehensive sustainable marketing in sporting events because Gen Z prefers broader values, including social and environmental impacts. This study successfully proves that sustainable marketing that focuses on economic, social, and environmental aspects is very suitable for marketing sporting events to Gen Z. The proposed business model successfully achieved significant results, especially in H1, H4, and H5, which showed the relationship between sustainable marketing and event image, perceived value, and behavioral intention of sport users. Although there are weaknesses in the mediation relationship of H3, overall, this sustainable business model has been proven to be relevant to the needs and preferences of Gen Z, especially in the context of digital and online consumption. Understanding Gen Z's sustainability and social awareness preferences provides new insights for sports event organizers to design marketing strategies that are more responsive to this generation. Funk, D. C., & James, J. (2021). In theory, modern economic and accounting concepts also support sustainable marketing by emphasizing the importance of paying attention to social and environmental impacts in business operations Peattie, K. (2021).

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