



Relationship between identification levels of fans that support Turkish Super League's three big football clubs with their teams and their consumer behavior intentions

Utku Isik¹, Arslan Kalkavan² and Seydi Karakus¹

¹ Dumlupınar University, Kutahya, Turkey.

² Recep Tayyip Erdoğan University, Rize, Turkey.

utkuisik87@gmail.com

Abstract

This study aimed to reveal the sports consumption behavior and intentions of fans of three big football teams competing in Turkish Super League and investigate how these intentions varied based on levels of identification with their teams. In addition, the study also attempted to detect whether there were any differences in the consumption behaviors of the fans of these three big teams (Fenerbahçe, Galatasaray and Beşiktaş) and to present related reasons, if any. Fans of the sports clubs competing in Turkish Super League -Fenerbahçe, Galatasaray and Beşiktaş- participated in the study on voluntary basis. A total of 548 sports fans participated in the study: 32.30% (N=177) of these fans supported Beşiktaş, 34.30% (N=188) supported Galatasaray and 33.40% (N=183) supported Fenerbahçe. In the framework of the study, Sports Consumption Behavior Scale, developed by Kim et al. (2011), whose validity and reliability of the Turkish version was tested by Kiremitci et al. (2014) was used along with Sport Spectator Identification Scale, developed by Wann and Branscombe (1993) whose validity and reliability of the Turkish version was tested by Günay and Tiryaki (2003) in order to realize the purpose. In conclusion, a positive and significant relationship was found between the consumption behavior intentions of the fans that support the three big teams in the Turkish Super League and their identification levels with their teams. In addition to this, Fenerbahçe supporters were found to display more identification with their teams compared to Galatasaray and Beşiktaş fans and Galatasaray fans were observed to have statistically more significant and higher means both in attendance and media consumption intentions compared to the fans of the two other big teams ($p<0,05$).

Keywords: Sport spectator identification, Turkish super league, sports consumption behavior

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, sports have started to occupy an important place in our daily lives. The number of individuals who actively do sports to be healthier and to benefit from various advantages of sports has increased. Sports fandom has also gained a new dimension in the modern world and this concept is investigated by several disciplines. What affects sports fandom and the fans' sports related consumption is a crucial dynamics that needs to be comprehended by sports administrators.

In recent years, various sports marketing studies have focused on sports consumption behaviors and intentions. These studies have presented many factors that affect intentions and behaviors. Motivation is known to be one of the major effects (Fink et. al., 2002; Funk et. al., 2002; Wann et. al., 1999). Parallel to this, value associated with the team has significant impact on sports consumption behaviors (Dalakas and Kropp, 2002; Madrigal, 2001; Schwartz, 1992; Shao, 2002). Individuals who display different behaviors in sports competitions may attach importance to different values; individuals who pay per view and watch sports competitions at home and individuals who watch sport competitions from the tribunes similarly have different emphasis for different values.

Identifying with the team or forming psychological ties with it is one of most commonly investigated topics by the researchers (Fink et. al., 2002; Jones, 1997; Wann and Branscombe, 1993; Wann and Dolan, 1994; Wann and Schrader, 1997). Fan endeavors for identification with their teams display strong evidence that presents various fan behaviors. It is known that individuals who identify with their teams more spend more time on TV, go to football matches more and spend more money (Pease and Zhang, 1996; Wakefield, 1995; Wann and Branscombe, 1993; Wann et. al., 1999). They also have more positive views about the future successes of their teams (Wann & Branscombe, 1993) and find watching football matches more enjoyable (Madrigal, 1995; Wann & Schrader, 1997; Greenwood et. al., 2006).

Quoted from Fairley et al. (2015); consumption becomes an opportunity to symbolize or reinforce the identification (Giddens, 1991; McCracken, 1986). Consequently, identification with a sport, team, or leisure subculture is associated with elevated consumption of goods that have symbolic value in the subculture (Algesheimer et al., 2005; Green, 2001; Kwon & Armstrong, 2002, 2006; Schouten & McAlexander, 1995). In the case of professional sport, fans who identify with a team invest larger amounts of time and money on team paraphernalia and watching the team play (Fisher & Wakefield, 1998; Laverie & Arnett, 2000; Matsuoka et al., 2003). Further, this higher level of identification could potentially lead to traveling to follow one's favorite team or travel to a sport event (Fairley, 2003; Green & Jones, 2005).

While observing a sportive event accompanies the fact that the event will be forgotten in a short time period, fans or fandom that involves significant commitment includes showing long term interest towards the sportive event, sportsmen and the team; committing a rather lengthy time frame in one's life to the team and regarding fandom as a part of one's life. According to Mullin et. al. (2007), consumer behaviors, feelings and sentiments are affected by sport fans' thoughts, sports products and services. Therefore, studies point to relationships between consumer behaviors and sport fans' identification (Laverie and Arnett, 2000; Madrigal, 1995; Wakefield, 1995; Wann and Branscombe, 1993).

In addition to many factors such as level of identification with the team, impact of peer groups, commitment to the team, the atmosphere of the store, pleasure from shopping, quality of the licensed product and its value for the consumer, sportive achievements of the team also affects the behaviors

that motivate fans to purchase products (Kwon and Kwak, 2014; Torlak et. al., 2014). This concept examined in the literature as core service quality is interested in values such as general performance of the team, the number of victories or defeats, position of the team in the league, existence of a star player in the team, general quality of the team and the image and charisma of the coach (Byon et. al., 2013).

Comprehension of fans' consumption behaviors and identifying their marketing strategies based on this comprehension by the sports clubs and companies that produce licensed products is crucial for the future of the clubs. Considering the fact that increases in club income will result in success and increases in success will result in club income, it becomes evident that these two variables should be well managed. If the view stating that fans identifying with their teams consume more sports products can be proven, the dynamics of identification with the team may be explored and the road to bringing more income to the team can be paved. In this context, this study intended to present sports consumption behavior and intentions of fans of three big football teams competing in Turkish Super League, to identify whether there were any relationships between these intentions and identifications with their teams and to clarify the reasons behind the differences.

METHODS

Participants

Fans of the sports clubs competing in Turkish Super League participated in the study on voluntary basis. A total of 548 sports fans participated in the study: 32.30% (N=177) of these fans supported Beşiktaş, 34.30% (N=188) supported Galatasaray and 33.40% (N=183) supported Fenerbahçe. Mean age of the participants was as follows: $M_{age} = 26.21 \pm 7.34$. Convenience sampling technique was used in the study.

Data Collection Tools

Sports Consumption Behavior Scale: The scale developed by Kim et. al. (2011) whose validity and reliability of the Turkish version was tested by Kiremitci et al. (2014) is composed of three sub dimensions. These sub dimensions are Attendance Intention, Media Consumption Intention and Licensed Merchandise Consumption Intention. The scale is a 5-point Likert type scale.

Sport Spectator Identification Scale: Sport Spectator Identification Scale, developed by Wann and Branscombe (1993), whose validity and reliability of the Turkish version was tested by Günay and Tiryaki (2003) was used in the study to measure spectator identification levels. Günay and Tiryaki's (2003) study presented the Cronbach Alpha value of the scale as 0.87. The scale has 7 items.

Procedure

Participants that took part in the study were selected via convenience sampling method. Researchers administered the scales to the participants before the matches of participants' own teams at the entrances of stadiums where participants were requested to correctly fill in the forms. 12 students attending the School of Physical Education and Sports assisted the researchers. A total of 548 fans correctly filled the scales. The scales were administered to the fans of all three teams during the home match of the second half of 2014-2015 Turkish Super League Season. The scales were filled by the fans of Fenerbahçe Club in front of Fenerbahçe Şükrü Saraçoğlu Stadium on 20.04.2015, by fans of Galatasaray Club in front of Ali Sami Yen Türk Telekom Arena Stadium on 26.04.2015 and by fans of Beşiktaş Club in front of Osmanlı Stadium in Ankara on 27.04.2015.

Data Analysis

SPSS 21.0 package program was used to analyze the data obtained from the study. Descriptive analysis method (frequencies and percentages) was utilized to analyze the participants' general demographical information. Shapiro-Wilk and Lilliefors corrected Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was adopted for use in order to determine whether the sub dimensions of the scale showed normal distribution. Based on the test, it was found that not all sub dimensions revealed normal distribution ($p < 0,05$). At this point, Spearman Correlation analysis was used to identify linear relationships of the scales, Mann Whitney-U test was utilized for pairwise groups and Kruskal Wallis test was adopted for variables with three or more groups.

RESULTS

Table 1. Distribution of Personal Information for the Working Group

FACTOR	VARIABLE	F	%
Gender	Female	185	33.8
	Male	363	66.2
	Total	548	100.0
Age	22 and younger	186	33.9
	23-25	146	26.6
	26-28	74	13.5
	29-31	46	8.4
	31 and higher	94	17.2
	Total	548	100.0
Team	Fenerbahçe	183	33.4
	Galatasaray	188	34.3
	Beşiktaş	177	32.3
	Total	548	100.0
Level of Education	Primary	53	9.7
	Secondary	94	17.2
	High School	121	22.1
	University	236	43.1
	Graduate	44	8.0
	Total	548	100.0

Table 1 presents the distribution of personal information regarding the participants. According to the data, 66,2% of the participants in the sample were males (N=363), 33,8% were females (N=185). Five different age ranges were used in the study. When the age categories included in the sample group were taken into consideration, it was seen that fans in the age range of "22 years and younger" were more common with a rate of 33.9% (N=186) whereas fans in the age range of "31 years and older" showed the least amount of participation with 15,1% ratio. 43,10% of the participants (N=236) were university graduates.

Table 2. Normalcy Test

	Kolmogorof-Smirnov			Shapiro-Wilks		
	Statistical Value	df	p	Statistical Value	df	p
Attendance Intention	0,194	547	,000	0,864	547	,000
Media Consumption Intention	0,176	547	,000	0,883	547	,000
Licensed Merchandise Consumption Intention	0,154	547	,000	0,893	547	,000
Identification	0,127	547	,000	0,932	547	,000

Examination of Table 2 displays that all sub dimensions and trends of identification with the team did not show normal distribution ($p < 0,05$).

Table 3. Consumer Behavior Intentions and Level of Identification with the Team According to Gender Variable

	Gender	N	Mean Rank	U	Z	p
Identification with the Team	Female	185	302,73	23329,00	-5,852	,000*
	Male	363	219,10			
Attendance Intention	Female	185	248,64	28793,00	-2,765	,006*
	Male	363	287,68			
Media Consumption Intention	Female	185	228,37	24999,50	-4,863	,000*
	Male	363	297,13			
Licensed Merchandise Consumption Intention	Female	185	245,11	28140,00	-3,132	,002*
	Male	363	289,48			

* $p < 0,05$

Examination of Table 3 shows significant differences based on Man-Whitney-U analysis in levels of identification with the team for male and female fans ($z = -5,852$; $p < 0,05$); in Attendance Intention sub dimension ($z = -2,765$; $p < 0,05$); in Media Consumption Intention sub dimension ($z = -4,863$; $p < 0,05$) and Licensed Merchandise Consumption Intention sub dimension ($z = -3,132$; $p < 0,05$). Mean ranks show that male participants had higher scores in all sub dimensions compared to female participants.

Table 4. Spearman Correlation Analysis for Consumer Behavior Intentions and Level of Identification with the Team

		X	SD	Identification with the Team	Attendance Intention	Media Consumption Intention	Licensed Merchandise Consumption Intention	p
Fenerbahçe	Identification with the Team	42,25	9,45		,540**	,566**	,596**	0,00
	Attendance Intention	2,45	,48	,540**		,749**	,688**	0,00
	Media Consumption Intention	2,42	,49	,566**	,749**		,705**	0,00
	Licensed Merchandise Consumption Intention	2,38	,50	,569**	,688**	,705**		0,00
Galatasaray	Identification with the Team	41,79	8,97		,390**	,518**	,432**	0,00
	Attendance Intention	2,49	,48	,390**		,477**	,556**	0,00
	Media Consumption Intention	2,52	,46	,518**	,477**		,506**	0,00
	Licensed Merchandise Consumption Intention	2,43	,54	,432**	,556**	,506**		0,00
Beşiktaş	Identification with the Team	39,85	9,84		,591**	,519**	,550**	0,00
	Attendance Intention	2,35	,56	,591**		,777**	,714*	0,00
	Media Consumption Intention	2,31	,57	,519**	,777**		,668**	0,00
	Licensed Merchandise Consumption Intention	2,32	,58	,550**	,714**	,668**		0,00

**p<0,01

Table 4 points to positive and significant relationships between the consumer behavior intentions and identification with their teams for the fans of all teams ($p<0,05$). In other words, Attendance Intention, Media Consumption Intention and Licensed Merchandise Consumption Intention increase in all teams when identification with the team increases. Linear relationships were found between sub dimensions in all teams ($p<0,01$).

Table 5. Kruskal Wallis Test Results for Participants' Identification and Consumer Intentions based on their Teams

Dimensions	Teams	N	Mean Rank	df	X ²	P
Identification with the Team	Fenerbahçe	183	294,47	2	8.270	.016*
	Galatasaray	188	280,34			
	Beşiktaş	177	247,65			
Attendance Intention	Fenerbahçe	183	273,38	2	6.091	.048*
	Galatasaray	188	294,63			
	Beşiktaş	177	254,28			
Media Consumption Intention	Fenerbahçe	183	269,06	2	12.874	.002*
	Galatasaray	188	304,63			
	Beşiktaş	177	246,54			
Licensed Merchandise Consumption Intention	Fenerbahçe	183	268,66	2	3.819	.148
	Galatasaray	188	292,20			
	Beşiktaş	177	261,75			

*p<0,05

Table 5 presents Kruskal-Wallis test results for identification and consumer intention sub dimensions for the teams. Based on analysis results, there are meaningful differences between identification with the team ($X^2(3)=8.270$; $p<0.05$), attendance intention ($X^2(3)=6.091$; $p<0.05$) and media consumption intention ($X^2(3)=12.874$; $p<0.05$) based on the teams they support. Mean rank for the teams show that Fenerbahçe fans have more identification with their teams compared to Galatasaray and Beşiktaş fans. In addition, Galatasaray fans have higher means both in attendance intention and media consumption intention compared to both Fenerbahçe and Beşiktaş fans. In other words, while Fenerbahçe fans have more identification with their teams, Galatasaray fans attend more matches and want to follow their teams from the media in higher ratios.

DISCUSSION and RESULT

According to Trail and James's (2001) studies, spectator behaviors are based on psychological and social needs. Comprehending the importance of motivation to attend a sportive activity is related to understanding the forms of sportive consumption; sports spectators and fans display different trends based on their characters. These various diversities have created different types of sports consumption (attending sportive events, watching matches on TV or buying sportive merchandise). The most significant part of fan motivation in a sportive activity is closely related to the success of the team and high performance presentation during the match.

This study examined the levels of relationship between Attendance Intention, Media Consumption Intention and Licensed Merchandise Consumption Intention and the team identification levels for the spectators of three big teams that compete in Turkish Football Super League. Results show that higher identification levels point to higher purchasing behavior. In their study, Torlak et. al. (2014) found that spectator identification levels have significant effects on both the quality perceptions of licensed merchandise and licensed merchandise consumption intention. The study conducted by Greenwood et. al. (2006) on the fans of medium level professional sportsmen revealed that fans that identify with their teams set aside larger budgets to buy tickets for their teams. This study and similar studies in the literature (Harolle et. al., 2010; Tsiotsou, 2006) have parallel findings with the current study. Also Fairley et al. (2015) mentioned about relationship between consumption and identification on sport field.

Another result of the current study thought to contribute to literature is the finding that the position of the teams in the league affects the level of fan identification and their consumption intentions. Previous literature studies (Kwon and Kwak, 2014; Kim SK, 2013; Kim JW, 2013) reported that sports consumption intention of the spectators did not change much according to losing or winning a match and was more related to the level of identification with the team and various value judgments related to the team. Unlike Karakus (2014) study offers the following result based on the data obtained in this scope: Intention of a spectator to attend future games decreases, at a statistically significant level, particularly after a lost game. This study's statistical analyses show that Fenerbahçe fans have higher identification levels with their teams compared to the fans of other teams. When scale implementation locations and dates were considered, the last league competition prior to the date of scale implementation for Fenerbahçe fans (20.04.2015) was Çaykur Rize Spor match played on 04.04.2015. There was an armed assault on the team bus following this match and the bus driver was injured. These type of social impact and events are known to affect fan identification sentiments (Trail and James, 2001). These social cases can be said to increase fans' drive to protect their teams. As a matter of fact, fans showed more interest to the match following this incident compared to all the other matches of the season (www.milliyet.com, Access date: 01.06.2015). The reason why Beşiktaş football spectators have statistically lower identification and consumption intentions compared to the fans of other teams may be related to the fact that the specific match included in the study was played in another city and in the stadium of another club. The spectators who came to watch the team that had to play football in a different province since the construction of Beşiktaş stadium was still ongoing were not the regular Beşiktaş fans who watched each and every game from the tribunes but the Beşiktaş fans residing in Ankara who transformed this event into an opportunity. This can be interpreted as a result that affects team identification and consumption behavior. Baller and Cornelissen (2013)'s study mentioned that the relationship between quality of the sport facility and consumption. Relationship between supporter's identification and sports facilities is reflected even in their cheering.

Future studies may contribute to the study by including comparisons of sports fans' identification and consumption behaviors for sports teams in various sports branches. Also, studies on fans' brand awareness for their teams, team identification as a result of considering the sports event as a merchandise and fans' perceptions towards their teams' merchandise will contribute to literature and researchers.

Results of this study can be interpreted to mean that several decisions that generate important income for sports clubs such as decisions to attend sportive events, decisions to follow teams via media and decisions to purchase licensed merchandise are made based on emotional ties developed between the fans and the sports clubs rather than based on the type and variety of the products/merchandise. It is believed that in order to generate more income, managers of sports clubs should implement marketing strategies that will develop emotional ties with the fans instead of ensuring the existence of higher quality licensed products. Also, managing the social events inside the country may indirectly contribute to the teams. It can also be stated that not having an individual stadium in which matches can be played will result in decreases in commitment to the team which will in turn affect the income for the team.

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