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THE SPONSOR OF MY RIVAL TEAM IS MY ENEMY: THE IMPACT OF COMPETITIVE TEAM SPONSORSHIP ON PURCHASING INTENTION

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Abstract: The sponsorship in football has become a multi-million-dollar industry. Sponsors expect fans' loyalty to their teams to provide significant benefits to them in the long term. However, the intensity of inter-team competition may mean that sponsors move away from rival team supporters. The aim of the study is to examine the intention of football fans to buy from rival team sponsors in the context of a set of related structures. Research data were collected by convenience sampling method from the fans of teams competing in Turkish Football Super League. The obtained data were analyzed in accordance with the methodological principles of structural equation modeling. As a result of the analyzes, it was revealed that team identity and hatred against the rival team had a significant effect on purchasing decisions from the rival team sponsors. The findings of the research highlight the importance of sponsorship decisions and provide new suggestions for developing sponsorship strategies.

Key Words: Schadenfreude, sponsorship, team identification

RAKİBİMİN SPONSORU BENİM DÜŞMANIMDIR: RAKİP TAKIM SPONSORLUĞUNUN SATIN ALMA NİYETLERİ ÜZERİNDEKİ ETKİSİ

Öz: Futbolda sponsorluk milyonlarca dolarlık endüstri haline gelmiştir. Sponsorlar taraftarların takımlarına olan sadakatlerinin uzun dönemde kendilerine önemli faydalar sağlamaları beklentisindedirler. Bununla birlikte takımlar arası rekabetin şiddeti sponsorların rakip takım taraftarlarından uzaklaşması anlamına gelebilir. Bu araştırmanın amacı futbol taraftarlarının rakip takım sponsorlarından satın alma niyetlerini ilişkili olduğu bir takım yapılar bağlamında incelemektir. Araştırma verileri kolayda örnekleme yöntemi ile Türkiye Futbol Süper Ligi takım taraftarlarından toplanmıştır. Elde edilen veriler yapısal eşitlik modellemesinin metodolojik ilkeleri doğrultusunda analiz edilmiştir. Yapılan analizler sonucunda rakip takıma yönelik nefretin ve takım kimliğinin rakip takım sponsorlarından satın alma kararları üzerinde önemli etkileri olduğunu ortaya koymuştur. Araştırma bulguları sponsorluk kararlarının önemini vurgulamakta ve sponsorluk stratejileri geliştirmek için yeni öneriler sunmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Nefret, sponsorluk, takım kimliği

INTRODUCTION

In the context of sports sponsorship activities represent an important stream of research in marketing literature. Sponsorship can be defined as "an investment in cash or in kind into an activity in return for access to the exploitable commercial potential associated with that activity (Meenaghan, 1991). In line with this definition, researchers have often described sponsorship as a mutually beneficial business-to-business relationship between a sponsor and a sports organization (Farrelly et al., 2005; Henseler et al., 2011). This point of view indicates that a sports organization gains the financial support and / or other in-kind resources needed to improve team quality and other managerial aspects of the club, while the sponsor receives the tangible and intangible benefits of being associated with the sports presence (Chen and Zhang, 2011; Yang , Sparks and Li, 2008). There are a number of goals and benefits companies pursue when activating their sports sponsorship program. Many studies in the literature indicate the

90

benefits in question. Sports sponsorship can overcome cultural barriers (Cousens, Babiak and Bradish, 2006), establish relationships with media organizations (Chadwick and Thwaites, 2004), reach new target markets, increase sales and market share through brand loyalty, protect against competitors, and even increase employee morale. It has been shown to be an important argument to increase or facilitate recruitment (Barros and Silvestre, 2006). In essence, sports sponsorship has become a powerful marketing strategy that firms use for differentiating themselves from competitors and communicating with broad external and internal audiences (Barros and Silvestre, 2006) in order to direct consumer preferences towards the products of the sponsors.

Meenaghan (2001) stated that consumers perceive sponsorship as less commercial than conventional advertising as more subtle and indirect form of communication. In this respect, it offers important opportunities to businesses as a very important sponsorship area with its meanings in sports. As Cornwell and Maignan (1998) expressed, such opportunities for sponsors can be evaluated in three categories as awareness, image and sales. Awareness, especially the impact of television, the name, the logo which appears on the jerseys, shorts etc. of players, or other stakeholders' clothes, will be important in placing brands in front of a wide audience (Amis et al., 1999). Image transfer is seen as the most important advantage of sports sponsorship because of containing strong emotions (Keller, 1993). Meenaghan (2001), found that consumers give meanings to sports sponsoring brands as energetic, fast and healthy. The sum of all this interaction provides significant returns to brands in sales (Pope and Voges, 2000). Today, sponsorships of football teams, leagues, events and players has become a multi-million-dollar industry (Davies et al., 2006). The other and the most important distinguishing feature of this industry is the loyalty of fans as the customers (Argan and Katırcı, 2002). In Europe football, the most popular spectator sport, many teams have high level of loyal fans (Heere and James, 2007). This lets companies the opportunity to turn their fans' loyalty and goodwill towards their teams into purchasing behavior against sponsorship brands. The accessibility power of football, especially through mass media, gives brands the opportunity to reach large audiences. Studies have shown that the parties are emotionally involved while participating in sports events (Madrigal, 2003) and that global brands use this emotional effect of sports (Santomier, 2008). Meenaghan (2001) argues that the sponsor's investment in professional sports teams creates a goodwill effect among the fans, which in turn affects the attitude and behavior towards the sponsor. Similarly, Parker and Fink (2010) claim that the sponsor is a member of a tight fan network after the relationship between the team and the sponsor is established.

However, there is another aspect of sports sponsorship that is often overlooked in the marketing literature: competition. Not to hate any other team, not to hate the fans, colors, songs, mascots of that club; not cheering up with genuine pleasure at every misfortune and failure on and off the pitch makes you a fan of missing a vital gene. Sports sponsorship is an area where "things" (teams) can polarize ideas greatly. While fans may experience the transfer of images to their sponsors for their teams, they can likewise transfer the hostility of a rival team to their sponsor, which is consistent with the 'us' and 'them' group mentality (Smith, et al, 2009). Jenkins and Fleming (2002) stated that a football team sponsorship can have significant risks for brands. It is thought that one of the most important of these risks is the alienation of the rival team's football fans with a high level. Supporting this argument, Dalakas and Levin (2005) found that NASCAR (National Stock Car Auto Racing Association) supporters have negative attitudes towards sponsors of drivers they do not like. Particularly depending on the team identity, fans who hate the rival team will move away from the sponsor team's brands. It has been determined that there is not enough research in the sports science's literature. In accordance with this

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information the objective of this research is to identify the attitudes of fans of all three major football clubs' in Turkey (Besiktas, Fenerbahce and Galatasaray) towards the competing teams' sponsor brands in the context of associated structures.

The aim of this study is to determine the attitudes of football team fans towards rival team sponsors in relation to various variables. For this purpose, five research hypotheses have been produced in the light of related literature. The research model, which was formed in the context of related hypotheses was analyzed in accordance with the basic methodological principles of structural equation modeling. The results were discussed and presented in the sponsorship literature.

Conceptual Framework Related to Research Hypotheses
Team identity is defined as what the audience perceives as a commitment to a team and experiences the failures and successes of the team as one's own (Ashforth and Mael, 1989). Some fans may show interest in a particular type of sport as well as an interest in a particular team. Fisher and Wakefield (1998) found that personal interest in a particular object, situation or action is important in the development of identification with a particular group.

This personal interest is called domain participation and refers to a specific area rather than a particular group or groups. Spectator sports can create a sense of community. Sports provide a collective identity by uniting people for a common purpose. In this context, Lascu et al. (1995) empirically demonstrated that individuals who score high on golf engagement differ significantly from those with low scores. Fisher and Wakefield (1998) argued that field participation may be related to characteristics associated with team identity. The supporters' team will have a significant impact on the identity development processes of the fans who connect not only with the success of the team in the field but also with their participation in the field. This indicates that interest in football may be related to team identity. In this context, the first hypothesis of this research was formed as follows.

H1: There is a positive relationship between team identity and football involvement.
It shows that as the importance of identification with a team increases, fans will seek more individual relationships with the team (Mael and Ashforth, 1992). Sports team supporters need to distinguish their group from other groups with some personal values (Tajfel et al., 1979). Regarding the subject, Mahony and Howard (1998) revealed that the hate towards the rival team is the most important variable affecting team identity. In their experimental study, Wenger and Brown (2014) found that sports fans have an internalized positive attitude towards their own teams, but in the same study, fans have negative attitudes towards rival teams. Wann and Pierce (2003) found that supporters with a high level of team identity have a significantly higher tendency to violence towards their rival team players, coaches and supporters than those with low levels. In the light of all this information, the second hypothesis of this research is formed as follows.

H2: There is a significant relationship between football involvement and hatred towards the rival team.
To maintain self-esteem, individuals evaluate in-group members more positively than out-group members (Wann and Branscombe, 1995). More identification with the team results in an individual's desire to engage in consumption behaviors that support the group (Fisher and Wakefield, 1998). One way this can manifest itself can be seen as supporting sponsoring organizations. Ko et al. (2008) stated that the participation of consumers in sports has an important role in purchasing intention of sponsors for their products, while Lee and Walsh.

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(2011) suggest that sports consumers with higher participation frequency are more likely to purchase products from the general sponsors of an event. These studies are based on the idea that the stronger the bond with the team, the more fans feel that it is the duty to purchase sponsored products as a way of paying back sponsor brands for supporting the team (Crimmins and Horn, 1996). Speed and Thompson (2000) report that positive attitudes towards a sponsor are positively associated with the intention of participating in the sponsor's product, favor, and willingness to evaluate. Therefore, understanding a fan's attitude towards a sponsor can play a role in understanding a consumer's buying behavior. Hoek (1997) found a link between sponsorship and purchase intentions. In some ways, a sponsor can be perceived as an important supporter of fans by promoting something that he believes is important. This is consistent with McDonald's (1991) belief that those involved in a particular event or sport can feel positively inclined towards sponsoring companies. Similarly, Crimmins and Horn (1996) reported that about 60 percent of the US adult population would buy a company's product if they supported the Olympic Games. Jenkins and Fleming (2002) found a negative relationship between team identification and purchase intention regarding the competitor's products. In this context, the third, fourth and fifth hypotheses of this research were formed as follows.

H3: There is a significant relationship between hate to the rival team and rejection of the sponsor.
H4: There is a significant relationship between hatred towards the rival team and purchase behavior from the rival team sponsor.
H5: There is a significant relationship between rejecting the sponsor and purchase behavior from the competing team sponsor.

METHOD

Research Model
SEM (Structural Equation Modeling) is a very useful method to test multiple causal relationships together (Hair et al., 2006). In this study, which aims to explore the causal relationships between different structures, it has been found appropriate to test in accordance with the methodological principles of SEM.

Sampling
Büyüköztürk et al., (2015) argued that a sample size greater than 30 and smaller than 500 would be sufficient for many quantitative studies. In this context, a total of 202 football fans were involved in the study by convenience sampling method in the scope of the research. Research data were collected through personal interviews during the 2017-2018 football season. The sample must be well organized in order to conduct a valid research. It is thought that Beşiktas, Fenerbahçe and Galatasaray fans, who have been competing for many years in the historical process, will constitute a good sample. While most of the participants were male (77.7%), it was found that a significant portion of them were between the ages of 18-25 (79.7%). In addition, 82.7% of the participants had a university education and 83.2% were found to be single. While 32.3% of the participants are Beşiktaş fans 44% of them are Fenerbahçe supporters and 22.7% of them are Galatasaray fans.

In parallel with this information, the sample of the study was generated from the fans of those major teams. Questionnaires were not distributed to people who did not want to participate in the study or stated that they were not supporters of the three football teams.

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Questionnaires

In order to collect the data, a questionnaire was developed including five scales and demographic information. As a result of the examination of the measurement tools developed to determine team identity levels of fans in the questionnaire, the items of the structure developed by Koo et al., (2015) were utilized. Dalakas and Melancon's (2012) scale items were used for the hatred structure towards the rival team. The expressions of the structure used by Davies et al., (2006) were used to determine the football engagement levels of the fans. For purchasing from the sponsor or rejecting the sponsor, the measurement tool developed by Biscaia et al., (2013) items were used. In order to demonstrate the equivalence of measurement, all the statements included in the research were translated into Turkish by two academicians who were experts in the field, and then re-translated into English to eliminate possible language problems (Hambleton and Kanjee 1995). In order to ensure the control of the expressions in the questionnaire forms prepared, a pilot study was carried out with 20 supporters in the sample of the research and the necessary arrangements were made as a result of the feedback received and the questionnaire was finalized (Babbie, 1998).

Data Analysis

The study aims to explore the causal relationships between different structures and it was suitable to test the structures in accordance with methodological principles of SEM. In line with this information, the research model was analyzed by Amos 20 program with a two-stage approach consisting of measurement and structural model within the scope of SEM application. The structures of the research were tested with DFA within the scope of the measurement model. After verification of the measurement model, the structural model was established and tested.

FINDINGS

The structures of the research were tested with DFA within the scope of the measurement model. As a result of the analyses, it was determined that the fit indices and measurement model were above the limit specified in the literature (Table-1). The obtained values are slightly below the level where the GFI values are slightly lower but still acceptable (Hu and Bentler, 1999; Bove and Johnson, 2006). The research model was verified in the context of the relevant results.

Table 1. Validity and reliability results for scale items

Construct	Factor Loadings
Team ID (AVE: ,689), (Cronbach's alpha: ,921), (CR: ,917)	
I am a fanatic fan of my team	,819
People around me know I am fanatic	,750
It is important for me to be a fan of this team	,862
I use items having the colors of my team	,855
I regularly keep up with my team	,858
Hatred (AVE: ,512), (Cronbach's alpha: ,814), (CR: ,805)	
If my hatred team's sponsor falls in to a difficult situation, I enjoy	,732
If the president of the team I hate is in trouble, I enjoy	,751
I am not sorry when the footballer of the team I hate is injured	,561
I enjoy when the team I hate is lost	,797
Football involvement (AVE: ,659), (Cronbach's alpha: ,942), (CR: ,931)	
I am very interested in football	,877
Football is a very attractive game	,820
Football is very important for me	,899
I want to know more about football	,756
I'm connected to football with passion	,861
I love football	,758
I like to talk about football	,698

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Table 1 (Continued). Validity and reliability results for scale items

Rejecting the sponsor (AVE: ,719), (Cronbach's alpha: ,846), (CR: ,835)	
I don't want the rival team's sponsor to sponsor my team	**,925**
It would be better if my team's sponsor is not the same with the competing team	**,763**
Attitude to the sponsor (AVE: ,638), (Cronbach's alpha: ,852), (CR: ,839)	
I don't like the brands that sponsor the competing team	**,834**
I have negative attitudes towards the brands that sponsor the competing team	**,870**
I try not to buy brands that sponsor to the competing team	**,679**
Fit indices: *X2= 376,374 p=0,000, X2/SD =2,126, GFI=0,847, CFI = 0,935, IFI =0,935, RMSEA =0,075*	

Validity and Reliability Analysis

AVE (average variance extracted) values of all structures were calculated to determine the construct validity (convergent & discriminant) of the measurement model and all values were found to be over 0.50. In order to determine the reliability of the structures, Cronbach's alpha and CR (composite reliability) coefficients were calculated and all coefficients were found to be over 0.70. For the external validity of the measurement model, the relationships between all the structures were examined and the correlation coefficients were statistically significant, but all coefficients were less than 0.85. Finally, for discriminant validity of the measurement model, the relationships of all structures with each other were examined and it was seen that almost all correlation coefficients were statistically significant, but all coefficients were below 0.85 (Table-2). Based on these results, it has been determined that the measurement model is valid and reliable.

Table-2- Correlation Matrix of Structures

	1	2	3	4	5
Football involvement	1.000				
Team ID	,777**	1.000			
Hatred	,334**	,330*	1.000		
Rejecting the sponsor	,074**	,145**	,608**	1.000	
Attitude to the sponsor	,156**	,193**	,668**	,717**	1.000
Mean	3,11	3,29	2,31	2,41	2,33
Standard deviation	1,07	1,07	,95	1,10	1,05

Structural model and hypothesis testing

After verification of the measurement model, the structural model was established and tested (figure-1). As a result of the analysis, it was found that the model had acceptable goodness of fit indices (X2 = 407,397 p = 0,000, X2/SD = 2,226, GFI = 0.84, CFI = 0.92, IFI = 0.93, RMSEA = 0.078).
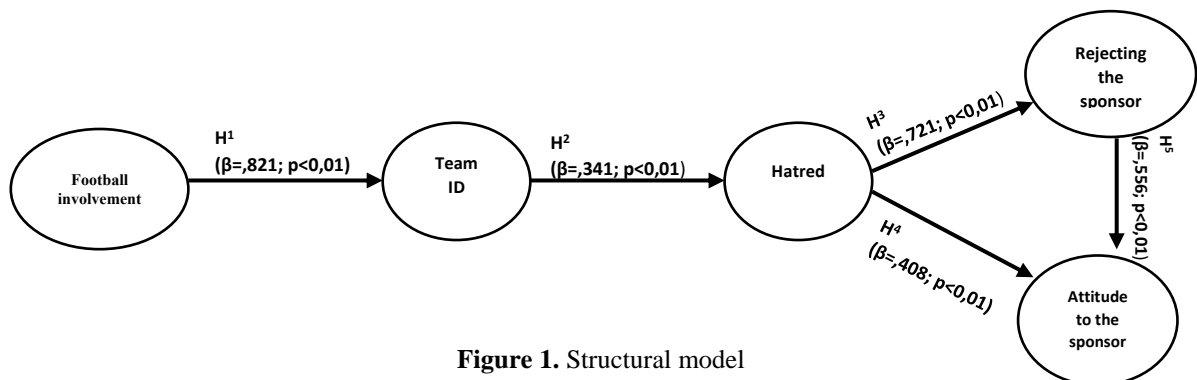

Figure 1. Structural model

Sorumlu Yazar: Caner Özgen, Arş. Gör. Dr., E-mail: canerozgen@eskisehir.edu.tr

Five hypotheses were tested in the scope of the research. As a result of the analyses, it was found that there is a high significant relationship between football team interests and supporters' identity levels. In addition, it was revealed that there was a significant relationship between football involvement and fans hatred levels of the rival team. It's been shown that there is a significant relationship between hatred towards competing team and rejecting the sponsor and attitude to the sponsor. Finally, it was found that there was a significant relationship between sponsor rejection behaviours. Accordingly, all hypotheses created within the scope of the aim of the study were accepted (Table-3).

Table 3. Results of the hyphothesis tests

Analysis	Coefficient	t-value	Result
H[1] Team ID <--- Football involvement	,821	9,38	Accepted**
H[2] Hatred against competing team <--- Team ID	,341	4,11	Accepted **
H[3] Rejecting the sponsor <--- Hatred against competing team	,721	7,60	Accepted **
H[4] Attitude to the sponsor <--- Hatred against competing team	,408	5,83	Accepted **
H[5] Attitude to the sponsor <--- Rejecting the sponsor	,556	4,25	Accepted **

** $p < 0,01$

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The relationship between the structures put forward in the research has shown that the attitudes of the fans towards rival team sponsors are influenced by many different structures such as team identity, hate and football interest. Particularly, as in many studies investigating fan behaviour, team identity has been shown to have a significant impact on attitudes towards sponsorship. This relationship was similar to Gwinner and Swanson's (2003) research with the fans of American football college league.

One of the most important contributions of this research to the literature is that it helps to solve the inconsistencies in the related literature. The important thing for our results is that which type of supporters (high team identity level) are included in the research. As has been shown in previous researches and as expected, the fans have shown positive attitudes towards the sponsors of their teams. On the other hand, the sponsorship brings highly complex relationships between the competing teams' fans. According to the results of the research, football involvement is indirectly related to the purchase behavior against competing teams' sponsors products. This situation is thought to be due to different culture of fanship, the subject raises different questions that should be investigated in the literature. In their research, Davies et al., (2006) stated that sponsorship creates a desire for fans to buy but does not have any effect on achieving the sales targets of the enterprises and that the level of loyalty of the fans is important. This can be stated by Sutton et al., (1997) suggesting that fans with a high level of team identity have lower sensitivity to price. On the other hand, it can be stated in the alternative opinions that sponsoring firms may have effective results if they work towards a team with low level of identity. Because fans having high level of team identity have already positive attitudes towards sponsors. In this case, the real opportunity may be to carry out awareness studies against the fans in this group.

The relationship between hatred for the competing team and team identity has been demonstrated by various studies in the literature (Dalakas and Melancon, 2012). The results of the study are confirming this relationship. In this case, it was revealed that team identity, negative and damaging attitudes towards the competing team continued similar to the sponsors.

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LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCHES

This research has been created by using convenience sampling method, and more generalizable results can be obtained from the studies that will be formed by using probabilistic sampling method. In addition, future researches in different cultures and sports branches can be a sign of intercultural exchange of sponsorship. At the same time, new models can be developed in light of the current literature on different structures that affect attitudes towards competing team sponsors in future researches.

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