The relationship between the social responsibility of club with fans' appreciation and loyalty of the football premier league teams

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ABSTRACT: The aim of the present research is to study the relationship between social responsibility of club with fans' appreciation and loyalty of the football premier league teams. The present research is of correlation type and has been performed as a field study. Its statistical universe included all fans of premier league teams in 2013- 2014. The statistical sample was selected among the fans attended sport stadia. Considering on average 9000 fans attended each play , the sample size , according to Morgan Table, was estimated 380 persons (each team : 190) and available sampling method was used . To collect data, the social responsibility standard questionnaire (Stewart, 2003) with reliability coefficient (0/88) was used. In Iran, It was validated by Bakhshandeh (2012) and its content validity and construct had been approved by him . And the questionnaires of fans' loyalty (Lat, 2010) with reliability 0/85 and the appreciation of team (Lat, 2010) with reliability 0/87 were used .To analyze data , addition to descriptive statistical indexes , the statistical methods of Spearman correlation coefficient , and Kolmogorov- Smirnov were used . The results showed that there was a significant and positive correlation between the aspects of club social responsibility and loyalty (r=0/43, p=0/001). Also there was a significant and positive relationship between the aspects of social responsibility and fans' appreciation of team (r=0/28, p=0/001).

Keywords: Social responsibility, Appreciation, Loyalty, Premier league, Fans.

INTRODUCTION

Today, football has the most fans and is the most popular sport in the world. In Iran, it has the most athletes and fans too (Asadi, 2009). Undoubtedly, the most important part of a sport event is the attendance of fans in the club (Masoumi, 2008).The level of attitude and fans' support from the football club is considered as a key variable in the income- making section for the club. Therefore, employing some appropriate strategies for attending fans in the clubs requires sufficient awareness of the kind of their support.Since the fans support their own popular team and remain loyal to it according to some various interests, identifying their sport consumption behavior can help attract, protect and develop numerous fans (Saat Chian, 2011). Opposition to traditional perspectives, the task of companies and organizations is not only profit taking, but also they have responsibilities in their own business environment whose name is social responsibility (Ebrahimi and Roodani, 2009). In this way, one of the social problems that has been considered by the authors and researchers of the various societies is lack of loyalty and attention of the organizations and managers to their own social duty and responsibility. This subject, especially in Iran is very important due to special conditions and need to the comprehensive development (Nikoo Maram &Mohamadian, 2009). Thus, due to the special place of football, there has been a strong relationship between football clubs and their communities.Football clubs don't want to win at any price, but according to Nick Hornby :" they owe a popularity and competence feeling to their fans" (Rooska, 2011).
Walker and Kent (2009) have said that the social responsibility in the sport industry is different from the other areas because this industry has some characteristics which distinguish it from the other organizations in the trade area (Walker and Parnet, 2010). The football club also is an influential force and member of a society like citizens. The

football clubs not only in the field but also in the outside initiatives including social responsibility cause to progress the society (Rooska, 2011). Therefore, one of the social problems which has attracted attention of authorities and practitioners of different societies is inattention and lack of loyalty of organizations and managers to their social responsibility and task. This subject, especially in Iran is very important due to some certain conditions and necessity of comprehensive development, (Nikoomaram and Mohamadian saravi, 2009). In today's comparative world, the fans are in favor of the clubs and their satisfaction is the major factor of taking competitive profit of the clubs. To satisfy the fans requires meeting their needs completely and identifying exactly their demands, expectations, tendencies, abilities and limitations in usage of the services or purchasing products (Chavosh bashi, 2010). Today, the discussion of the customer's loyalty has been one of the most important discussions in the sport industry. Dishman reports that about a half of subjects beginning to exercise after a short time period become disappointed. Savier and Smith, also, reported that on average 40% customers of sport facilities and equipment eliminate every year. Lif believes that the cost of the new customer attraction is 6 times of that of maintaining the old customer and on average the customer loyalty values 10 times of a new customer (Ki Hoo, 2000). Loyalty is one of the positive behavior of the customers. Since appreciation is an ethical concept, loyalty is its behavioral prospect (Mack Kallo et al., 2001). Additionally, Kim et al. pointed out that loyalty is one of the consequences of appreciation (Kim et al., 2010). On the other hand, the social initiatives cause appreciation which in addition to profitability result in communicating in the future (Elgo et al., 2008). Today all managers should make decisions and activities that the society accept them and are consistent with its values. They should regulate the gain and loss of their companies and institutions for the society such that the people benefit them more than cost they have paid. These values and considerations as the social responsibility of the organizations have considered (Kavoosi & Chavosh Bashi, 2010). Studying the social responsibility issue is important due to several reasons:

1)The managers' decisions influence deeply the different parts of the society.

2) If the individuals, groups, organizations and institutes of the society hold themselves responsible for various events, happenings and crises and attempt to solve the various problems, many crises and problems will be solved at a short time and a healthy and pacific society will be exist.

3) To improve and protect their place in the society, organizations should pay attention to their own social responsibilities and have legality in the society.

4)All performances of organization influence the society and this effect, good or bad, will be reflected on organization itself ; therefore managers' malfunction causes many problems for society that finally will involve themselves.

5) The cost of society in which managers haven't any sense of responsibility is very high (Alvani and Ghasemi, 1998; Chavoshbashi, 2010).

The football clubs maintain their relation to the citizens of society through doing initiatives of the social responsibility (Vindesour, 2001; Wood ad Loosdon, 2001) and thus increases fans' support. One of the ways to return on investment for the clubs is such increased support of fans (Rooska, 2011).

Moshbeki and Khalili Shojaie, (2010) in their research concluded that there is a positive and significant correlation between the organizational factors and the social responsibility of organization. They stated employees' mental pattern is the most effective major factor on organization social responsibility.

Also Hasani and Heydari Zade, (2013) in another research named "Fitness of causal – structural relations of Islamic Ethics in work on the social responsibility and individual responsiveness given to mediator effects of service culture " concluded that there is a positive and significant correlation between Islamic ethics of work with social responsibility and individual responsiveness. Also, the mediator role of service culture in the relationship between Islamic ethics of work with social responsibility wasn't approved, but the findings show the mediator role of service culture in the relationship between Islamic ethics of work with individual social responsibility.

Walker at al, (2010) in their research related to the social responsibility of Olympic games named " Social responsibility and Olympic games : The mediator role of customers' characteristics " studied the influence of the social responsibility of Olympic games on customers' responses. Their results showed that in general the spectators ' awareness of the social responsibility was low. The results of their research demonstrated the spectators ' awareness of the social responsibility has a positive and significant effect on credit of Olympic games, repeat business, mouth – to- mouth expression and products consumption (Walker, 2010).

AbdolRahim et al, (2011) in a research named " The importance and effect of social responsibility on the customers' behavior in Malaysia" studied the importance of the social responsibility in the customers' behavior. Their results showed that the customers expect the organizations to provide information about what they do and the customers support the organization which follow the initiatives of social responsibility.

Dogar et al (2010) also studied the social responsibility of the private companies in two scopes of ethical and social expectations. Their results showed a positive relation between the social responsibility and the financial performance of the organization. These results also demonstrate that there is a positive relation between organization's social

responsibility and the levels of customers' satisfaction, but it was not significant. Swaen and Chumpitaz (2008) in their research named" The influence of social responsibility on customers' trust " studied the effect of customers' perception related to the initiatives of organization social responsibility on their trust in the organization. Their results showed the initiatives of social responsibility influence customers' trust, directly and indirectly.

TEjari et al. (2011) in a research titled " Studying the fans' loyalty of Esteghlal and Perspolise teams " showed that an equal play has not the significant effect on the fans' loyalty. Two factors of the participates ' fan record and competitive characteristics of these teams explain these findings.It seems that indeed the level of fans' loyalty is independent of the present successes of the teams and this loyalty is related to the team record (TEjari et al. 2011).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research methodology

The present research is of correlation kind and in terms of objective is practical. The statistical universe of research includes the fans of 16 teams of football premier league (2013- 2014) ; considering there are millions of fans in throughout Iran, and on average about 9000 spectators attended clubs. For more confidence, the researcher selected his statistical sample only among spectators. The sample size was estimated 380 spectators by Morgan Table (each team 190). Considering the probability of fall and increasing generalizability among the fans of each team, 200 questionnaires were distributed and the available sampling method was used.

In this research, 3 inventories were used. The social responsibility inventory has Composed of four aspects of ethical, economic, legal and humanistic responsibilities and was measured by 12 questions about the social responsibility standard inventory (Stewart, 2003). The inventories of fans loyalty (Let, 20100 with reliability 0.85 and team appreciation (Let, 2010) with reliability 0.87 were used.

The social responsibility standard inventory with reliability coefficient 0.88 including four aspects of rules observance (with reliability coefficient 0.78), economic responsibility (reliability coefficient 0.730), ethical responsibility (with reliability coefficient 0.89) and humanistic responsibility (with reliability coefficient 0.83) which has been validated by Bakhshande(2012) in Iran. Additionally, the content validity and structure of this inventory have been confirmed by him.

In inferential analysis of the findings, Kolmogorov- Smirnov test was applied to determine to be normal data and Spearman correlation coefficient was used for determining the relationship between variables using software SPSS and version 20.

The research findings

1- Age : 51/2% fans have the age range of 18-24 and 8% were above 45.
2- Record of support : 38/5% and 9/2% fans have supported their popular team for 2-5 and 11-15 years, respectively.
3- Education : 37/2% and 17/6% fans were holder of diploma and M.A and higher level, respectively.
4- Attendance in one season : 37/8% spectators attend 1-3 times in the club and 17/6% of them, 7-10 times.
5- Following the plays : 68/ 5% spectators follow all plays of their popular team and 6/5% of them don't follow the plays of their own team.

The results of the normality assumption test of the social responsibility component and its aspects and the variables of research are provided in the following table (table 1) :

Table 1. the results of Kolmogorov- Smirnov test

Social responsibility	loyalty	Appreciation of team	humanistic	Ethical	economic	legal	
1732	1732	1732	1732	1732	1732	1732	frequency
2.882	8.12	7.39	6.641	8.118	7.405	7.075	Kolmogorov- Smirnov
0/001	0/001	0/001	0/001	0/001	0/001	0/001	Significance level s

As the table 1 demonstrates the significance level in the above table in none of the cells isn't more than 0/05 and this shows that our statistical sample isn't normal. Thus in the following, we must use non parametric tests.

To study the relationship between the club social responsibility with the team appreciation and the fans' loyalty of football premier league teams, Spearman correlation coefficient was used which the table 2 shows its results.

Table 2. Spearman correlation between the variables of social responsibility, appreciation and fans' loyalty

Team appreciation	fans' loyalty	Social responsibility	Variable
0/289***	0/435***	1	Social responsibility
0/667***	1	0/435***	fans' loyalty
1	0/667***	0/289***	Team appreciation

*** shows correlation is significance in the level 0/001

Discussion and conclusion

The aim of the present research was to study the relationship between the club social responsibility with team appreciation and the fans' loyalty of football premier league teams. The findings showed that there is a positive and significance relationship between the club social responsibility with team appreciation and the fans' loyalty. It means that increasing the social responsibility of the club, team appreciation and the fans' loyalty also increase. The results of this research are associated with the results of Hasani and Heydari Zade (2013), Moshbeki and Khalili Shojaie, (2010), Walker et al, (2010), Abdol Rahim et al, (2011), Dogar, (2010) and Russel's, (2010) researches.

The results of Spearman correlation coefficient test showed that there is a positive and significant relationship between the social responsibility with the team appreciation and the fans' loyalty of football premier league teams(p=0.001, r=0.435). The above results are consistent with the Bakhshande(2012), Babic and Richard Boul(2006), Sarto et al (2011), Anlaveror and Tekankit (2010) and Diew 's researches. It is inconsistent with Klin and Davar 's research (2004).

Bakhshande in a research titled " Studying the situation of social responsibility of the selected clubs of Iran football premier league and its influence on the fans' reaction" found that social responsibility influence fans' loyalty. Since the presupposition of existing influences is the relationship between variables,in above research there was a relationship between social responsibility and loyalty. The above research in terms of sample and universe is similar to the present research. The participates' uniform culture can be the cause of this consistency in two researches.

Sarto et al. (2011) found that social responsibility increases the intention of support and loyalty. The cause of this positive and consistent relationship has been explained in the above research. Social responsibility increases the customers' loyalty and support through improving the image of organization. It seems when the image of organization promotes, customers and fans have a intention to more loyalty with organization. This may be the cause of consistency of the above research with the present research.

The results of Spearman correlation coefficient test showed a positive and significant relationship between social responsibility and appreciation (r=0.289, p=0.001). The above results are consistent with Klin and Davar(2004), Mack Kalo et al (2001), Elgo et al (2008), Bartlet and Destno(2006) and Tea Song' research (2006). There was no inconsistent relationship in this research.

Klin and Davar (2004) found that the social responsibility had a positive role to form brand and product evaluation by customers. The cause of relationship consistency may be this reason that, as explained in Klin and Davar's research (2004), it increases the brand image and when the brand image promotes, customers will appreciate that organization.

Elgo et al (2008) found that the social initiatives result in appreciation. Since they had studied profitability in their research and suggested profitability can result in communicating in the future and increasing appreciation, one may say that there is consistency in their researches.

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