

## CONSUMER BEHAVIOR IN SPORTS MARKETING IN THE CONTEXT OF FOOTBALL

**Murad Khudiyev<sup>1</sup>, Zoltán Szabó<sup>2</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>PhD student, <sup>2</sup>associate professor

<sup>1</sup>Szent István University, Doctoral School of Management and Business Administration,

<sup>2</sup>Budapest Business School, Faculty of International Management and Business

E-mail: <sup>1</sup>m.xudiyev@mail.ru, <sup>2</sup>szabo.zoltan.phd@uni-bge.hu

### Abstract

This article evaluates the main concepts of Sports Marketing that influences on consumer behavior in the context of football. As it is disputable if sports consumers are unique or not, within researchers and marketers, this article also tries to investigate the literature presenting opinions on the topic. The author has tried to find out the main traits that make sports consumers unique or non-unique by synthesizing academic literature and a case study on Fenerbahce SK. This research is not empirical and presents a theoretical framework.

**Keywords:** Sports Marketing, Football Marketing, consumer behavior, commitment, uniqueness

**JEL classification:** M3, M31

**LCC:** HF5410-5417.5

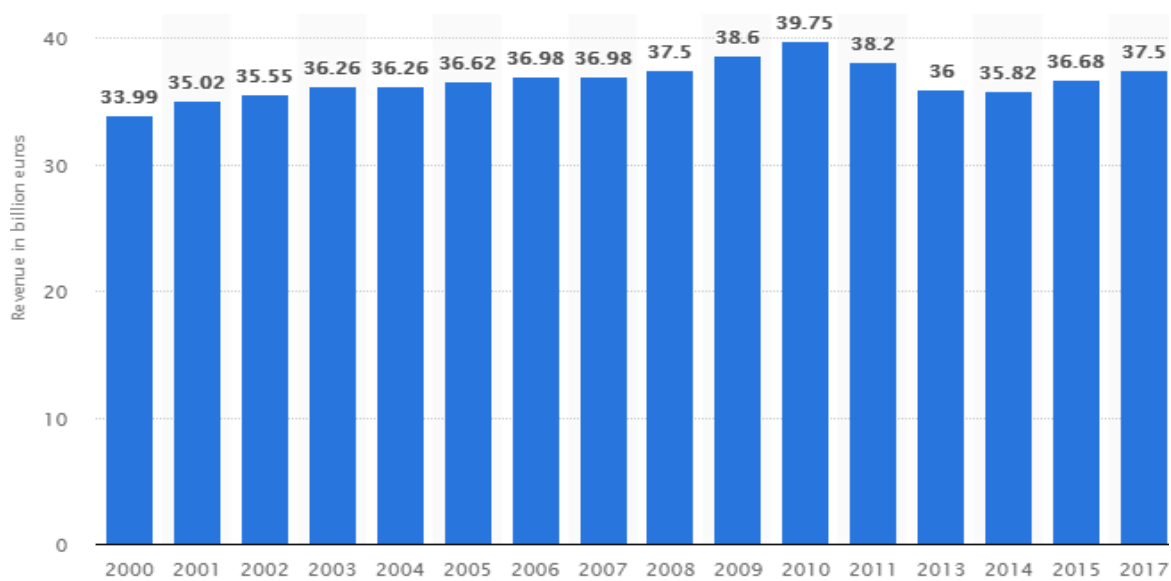
### Introduction

Galen & Jeffrey (2015) emphasizing the importance and rapidly growing character of sports market, note that, US sport business industry was valued 213 billion USD in 2014 which was twice more than automobile industry and seven times more than the amount circulated in movie industry. Further they add that more than 32 billion USD of this amount had been spent by sport audience, in other words, by consumers on teams in the US. PriceWaterHouseCoopers (2018) has estimated North American sport market to be valued 71.6 billion USD in 2018 (figure 1), in addition revenue from sports goods in Europe (figure 2) was 37.5 billion EUR in 2017 (Statista). In turn this number shows the importance of this sector and the need for deeper research on consumers and their behavior in the related market, since they are the key actors in circulation of such huge amounts in this market.

**Figure 1: North American sport market estimated value for 2018**

<i>North America sports market by segment</i>											
	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	CAGR
<i>USD millions</i>											
Media rights	12.262	14.595	16.305	18.372	19.073	20.141	20.944	21.752	22.655	23.803	4.5%
Gate revenues	17.142	17.448	17.963	18.649	19.015	19.311	19.750	20.298	20.723	21.167	2.2%
Sponsorship	13.900	14.689	15.481	16.301	16.658	17.169	18.030	19.057	19.538	20.089	3.8%
Merchandising	13.144	13.493	13.806	13.966	14.390	14.565	14.739	14.938	15.091	15.238	1.2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>56.448</b>	<b>60.225</b>	<b>63.555</b>	<b>67.288</b>	<b>69.136</b>	<b>71.186</b>	<b>73.463</b>	<b>76.045</b>	<b>78.007</b>	<b>80.297</b>	<b>3.0%</b>
<i>% change year on year</i>											
Media rights		19.0%	11.7%	12.7%	3.8%	5.6%	4.0%	3.9%	4.2%	5.1%	
Gate revenues		1.8%	3.0%	3.8%	2.0%	1.6%	2.3%	2.8%	2.1%	2.1%	
Sponsorship		5.7%	5.4%	5.3%	2.2%	3.1%	5.0%	5.7%	2.5%	2.8%	
Merchandising		2.7%	2.3%	1.2%	3.0%	1.2%	1.2%	1.3%	1.0%	1.0%	
<b>Total</b>		<b>6.7%</b>	<b>5.5%</b>	<b>5.9%</b>	<b>2.7%</b>	<b>2.9%</b>	<b>3.1%</b>	<b>3.4%</b>	<b>2.5%</b>	<b>2.9%</b>	

Source: PwC 2018, *At the gate and beyond, Outlook for the sports market in North America through 2022*

**Figure 2: Revenue from sports goods in Europe**

Source: Statista 2018, Revenues in sporting goods retail in Europe from 2000 to 2017 (in billion euros)

Growth of commercialization caused to an increase in the number of teams and leagues improving their policies and strategies to involve consumers and their money (James, Kolbe, & Trail, 2002). Therefore, attempts to evolve bigger audience to such events and sports brands in turn, calls need to focus on key actors in the growing market, which one of them are consumers. In addition, consumer itself is also a broad notion to learn, that is why learning their decision-making and purchasing behaviors in target market seems to be more logical.

This paper presents the theoretical framework and review of the existing researches on consumer behavior in football marketing. In order to go deeper to the topic there is a need to identify the theoretical definition of consumer behavior and then to try to clarify the place of consumer behavior especially in sports marketing. Blackwell et al. defined consumer behavior as a system of activities consumers realize during purchasing, consuming and utilizing (Blackwell, Miniard, & Engel, 2006). Although the goods and services defer in the market for their content and nature these elements of consumer behavior do not change for any of them. In this mean a group of scholars generalize the core aspects based on this definition and give interpretations which sometimes confront the real-life cases. Thus, there is a widespread debate among limited number of scholars who hold their researches on football and/or sports marketing, who discuss if sports/football consumers are unique or not, also are their behaviors the same with consumers in other markets or theirs' are unique.

All the facts and interpretations obtained through literature review has shown the importance for a deeper research of this field and the lack of deeper researches or existing weaknesses in the existing researches on this topic. Despite the fact that there is a complete unanimity about existence of growing and highly competitive sport markets (McDonald, Karg, & Lock, 2010), researches attempting to quantify the behavior and structure of these multitudinous sport markets are limited (Field, 2006). This paper aims an attempt to show the existing researches and real-life situation of this area, furthermore, to show possible aspects for future researches on this topic.

## **Literature review**

### ***Sports Marketing***

Sports marketing is a tool for businesses to boost their sales of products or services; to achieve higher goodwill and awareness in order to channel sports to average fans; and to attain relationship marketing for their products and services in the direction of their marketing strategy, by placing themselves in a favorable position, through using the emotional devotion to favorite teams or athletes shown by fans (Schlossberg, 1996). According to another interpretation, sports marketing is a way to use sports as a promotional tool for industrial and consumer products and services, as well as for marketing sports products, services and events to consumers that build the audience in sports. Additionally, sport organizations transcribe a market guidance in order to keep their commercial resistance in highly competitive conditions (Evans et.al., 1996).

As a subunit of marketing, sports marketing concentrates on the boost of sport events and teams, on the boost of products and services of other industries as well, which try to reach customers through sports events and sports teams. Both physical products and brand names can be the element promoted within this service. Sports marketing aims to boost sports or to pull attention on certain product, service, business with strategies. Moreover, it is projected to fulfill the needs and requirements of consumers in the frame of exchange process (Lovelock et al., 2004). Mullin et.al. have defined sports marketing as a unit of sports promotion that covers a range of fields in sports industry as ticket sales, community relations, social media and other digital platforms, advertising and broadcasting (Mullin, B. J. et. al., 2014).

Giving an explanation to sports outturn, Shank (1999) propose that, it can be goods, services, or their contraction which is designed to maximize the satisfaction of sport participants, audience or sponsors. As we have a definition of sports product, the turn is for description of sports marketing which still does not have monosemous interpretation. Mullin et.al. (2000), describing sports marketing, note that it implicates all related activities which serves to fulfill sport consumers' needs choosing interactive process as a tool. They offer a classification in which attention of sports marketing is divided into 2 parts: if one of them is promotion of sport outturns and services directly to sports consumers, the other is the boost of products and services from other industries by using sport promotions. Further, a similar but more elucidated description has been offered, which claims that sports marketing has three main concerns not two. Promotion of sports, sports teams and sports associations e.g. Olympic games, national football leagues, NHL, also teams like, Juventus, Fenerbahce, Barcelona or New York Yankees is the first concern. The use of sports events as matches and contests such as World Cup, league matches, sport teams or athletes themselves for promotion of different products or services has been underlined as the second concern. Finally, promotion of sports to the audience aiming to boost mass participation has been suggested as the third concern of sport marketing.

Sports marketing aims to create a highly passionate fan pool that fans, media, sponsors, governments and other actors encourage and promote organization in the direction of avail of personal, group and community identity, as well as social interaction through a achieving a cooperating competitive atmosphere (Wakefield, 2018). Despite the fact that, sport consumption has become a foremost field of research, the focus area has mainly targeted on fan behavior in individual sports instead of consumer markets where teams are in rivalry with each other (Pelnar, 2009).

### **Consumer Behavior**

Hawkins et.al. defining consumer behavior, propose that it is the aggregate of activities which consumers realize while obtaining, consuming and disposing the products and services. Further they state: "The study of individuals, groups, or organizations and the processes they use to select, secure, use, and dispose of products, services, experiences, or ideas to satisfy needs and the impacts that these processes have on the consumer and society" (Hawkins et. al., 2004, p.7). According to the definition given by The American Marketing Association's Dictionary of terms (2008), consumer behavior is: "The dynamic interaction of affect and cognition, behavior, and the environment by which human beings conduct the exchange aspects of their lives." The importance of consumer behavior information is based on the modern marketing philosophy that considers the consumer as the focal point of marketing activity and has an ever-increasing impact on business activities and decisions (Kotler, et.al. 2005; Schiffman & Kunuck, 2004; Blackwell et al., 2006). Another interpretation says, consumer behavior includes "all activities associated with the purchase, use and disposal of goods and services, including the consumer's emotional, mental and behavioral responses that precede or follow these activities". As a term consumer can be understood either individual consumer or organizational consumers (Kardes et. al., 2011). Further they continue that, consumer responses may be reflected in 3 ways:

1. Emotional (affective) responses: the emotions such as moods or feelings;
2. Mental (cognitive) responses: consumers' cerebration processes
3. Behavioral (conative) responses: observable responses that are reflected by consumers in relation with the purchase and disposal of goods and services (Kardes et.al. 2011).

Considering that competition is the core of the sport sector, scantiness of researches of this kind is incomprehensible: "Managing the implications of competition, both on and off the field, is a critical success factor and a strategic imperative in its own right. Competition, therefore, is the heart and soul of sport management" (Shilbury, 2012, p. 2).

### **Commitment**

Unidimensional conceptualization of commitment holds the title to be the main method that has been used in the majority of research done in sports marketing, which was mostly put into operation as affective commitment (Funk & James, 2001, 2006; Heere & Dickson, 2008; Kwon & Trail, 2003; Mahony et al, 2000; Trail et.al, 2000). There is also a debate that, researches on commitment has been mainly focused on it in relation to team loyalty in the existing sport marketing literature. In order to segment sport consumers Mahony et.al. (2000) has developed a scale called Psychological Commitment to Team (PCT). A person's specific range of commitment has an impact on his/her classification within one of the four identified loyalty segments, as a subjective component of team loyalty. In another research Heere and Dickson (2008) have stated that segregation among commitment and loyalty as terms is uncertain. Later on, instead of constitution of commitment, they suggested reliability and validity issues for the assessment of loyalty, because of the incomprehensibility between these two terms. Heere and Dickson (2008) still kept considering commitment as a unidimensional notion, although they formulated a concept to distinct loyalty and commitment.

Although traditionally commitment has been considered unidimensional, there are also enough scholars who thinks it is multidimensional (Allen & Meyer, 1996; Bansal et al., 2004; Gruen et al., 2000; Hackett et.al., 1994). Bansal et.al. (1990) claim that, definition of commitment is multidirectional in fields as psychology or organizational behavior, although scholars refer to it as a unidimensional concept. Three-component model developed by Allen and Meyer (1990)

also support their opinion in regard with the multidimensional character of commitment. Sport consumer motives (Sloan, 1989; Trail & James, 2001; Wann, 1995) is another concept along with commitment which evolves a great interest within sports marketing researchers. The only difference within these two disputable directions is that, consumer motives and commitment have developed separately in the sports marketing literature. Research attempts to unite these two concepts could help to understand what kind of impacts may consumer motives and commitment create on consumer behavior, however such research attempts have not been observed (Kim et.al. 2013).

### ***Uniqueness of sports consumers***

It is traditionally believed in sports marketing literature that, sports consumers show unique behaviors, especially in regard with the perception of loyalty in comparison with consumers in other industries (Fujak et.al.2018). Supporting the idea that sports marketing has specific characteristics, Wakefield (2018), states: "Some might argue that sports marketing is a "special case" of marketing, meaning there are theoretical and practical dimensions of marketing peculiar to sports marketing." Further he adds, we are offered courses separately for service marketing, international marketing, business-to-business marketing and other similar fields, because, in order to put marketing in practice in these specific contexts we need specific approach to each of these fields. Sports marketing also requires a special approach as a unique case to examine if we follow this logic, considering that, its treatments do not work properly for goods and services from other industries (Wakefield, 2018).

However, some researchers focusing on sports management in their researches, have argued with these approach decades ago, i.e. Neale (1964), states that this interpretation does not reflect a new effort, in his identification of the peculiar economics of professional sport. Similarly, in another study done by Tapp (2004), the idea that sports supporters, in another words, sports consumers display unique loyalty patterns has been rejected and stressed out that they demonstrate loyalty patterns similar to consumers in non-sport industries.

For a long period of time, it was believed that consumer behavior reflected by sports consumers has different features rather than consumers in other industries, especially for loyalty, which has to be researched separately, or as Baker et.al. suggest, it requires different management practice (Baker, McDonald, & Funk, 2016). Emphasizing the difference in decision-making process between sports consumers and consumers in other industries and calling other consumers rational, Smith & Stewart comment: "ephemeral experience mired in the irrational passions of fans, commanding high levels of product and brand loyalty, optimism and vicarious identification" (Smith & Stewart, 2010, p.3). Likewise, this criticism denotes irrationality of sports consumers and/or fans during decision-making influenced by factors like optimism and passion.

The features and characteristics considered unique for sports consumers and followers of these ideas in academic environment as well, have been evaluated and criticized by Smith and Stewart (2010), as a result developing the 10 features presented in their original work (Stewart and Smith, 1999), they presented them in four dimensions:

- a. Sport is a heterogeneous and ephemeral experience mired in the irrational passions of fans, commanding high levels of product and brand loyalty, optimism, and vicarious identification.
- b. Sport favours on-field winning over profit.

- c. Sport is subject to variable quality, which in turn has implications for the management of competitive balance and anticompetitive behavior.
- d. Sport has to manage a fixed supply schedule (Smith & Stewart, 2010, p. 3).

Accordingly, Smith and Stewart (1999, 2010) made a statement that, although sport holds specific attributes, these attributes have frequently been exaggerated since they can be observed in other products and services within other markets, and they are mostly tend to decrease after a while. Thus, they believed that, the unique features of sports that were believed for long period of time have been overstated and these features has decreased after they were postulated initially. Based on the first dimension developed by them, characterizing sport consumption as an example or sample rather than considering them as exceptions of modern consumer behavior, they add: "Sport is still characterized by fierce, loyal, and passionate fans who experience a strong, vicarious identification with their players and teams. It remains one of the few products that delivers engaging experiences that become part of our collective memory" (p. 10). However, evaluating different famous sport management and marketing textbooks (Mullin et.al., 2014; Pedersen & Thibault, 2014) which provide findings describing the uniqueness of sport, Baker et.al. (2016) state that uniqueness keeps its existence as integral part of definition and understanding of sport management.

### ***Repeat Purchase Markets***

Another aspect that helps to understand consumer behavior in sports marketing is repeat purchase markets in which distinguishing repertoire and subscription markets creates an important impact on marketing practice. According to Uncles et.al. (2003) businesses that are in competition within repertoire markets are more to share their customers with other brands, which in result influence their strategic orientation of marketing approaches. Brands try to serve better in the frame of repertoire markets in order to increase its consumption rather than showing an effort to build a contingent of solely loyal buyers. However, brands competing in subscription markets direct their efforts to minimize customers switching to other brands and increasing new customers (Sharp et.al, 2002). McDonald and Stavros (2007) are representing early-birds who examined consumption patterns broader and they have noticed that season ticket holder (STH) category is characteristic for subscription markets. They described their observations with following statement: "in sporting clubs, consumers rarely 'switch' teams; thus, the issue is not one of attracting customers away from competitors, but rather reengaging, maintaining, or increasing the level of participation of supporters" (2007, p. 219).

### ***Sponsorships***

Model of sponsorship effects developed by Meenaghan (2001), propose that favorable demeanors towards sponsors are leading factors in consumer purchase intentions and in actual purchase behaviors as well. In other words, sponsors can influence to consumer behaviors in a great deal as soon as positive attitude has formed towards them. Existing researches on the impacts of sponsors on customer purchase intentions have also proved that attitudes towards sponsor shape future consumer behaviors (Faircloth et.al., 2001; Kooet.al., 2006; Lee et al., 1997; Madrigal, 2001; Meenaghan, 2001; Terry & Hogg, 1996)

### ***Role of Social Medial in Sports Marketing:***

Internet is a unique tool to communicate with fans, consumers and even with potential consumers for sport organizations. Sport organizations directed their focus point on

communicating, selling and marketing their products and services to their fans with help of this unique tool (Blazska, 2011). In respect with the growing influence of social media (Safko, 2010), sports fans have begun to use these new innovations to stay in touch with their favorite sports teams. Consequently, it created a valuable opportunity for sport organizations to procure their fan pool in order to keep fans updated about their organization by providing related information to them hereby they can market their goods and service better (Lukach, 2012).

Emphasizing the role of Facebook on relationship with fans, Broughton (2010) states that, this platform gives an opportunity to sport clubs to connect with fans personally and vice versa, which in turn has an important impact on team identification. Furthermore, such platforms create a channel of communication for keeping potential audience updated in regard with their programs from the sport organizations' point of view, which consequently help to build better brand awareness (Wallace et.al.,2011). Similarly, social media has become a leading tool to make an impact on different aspects of consumer behavior such as awareness, information acquisition, opinions, attitudes purchase behavior, post-purchase communication and evaluation (Mangold & Faulds, 2009).

On the other hand, social media serves to deliver fan opinions and requirements to their favorite teams and their management as well. Thus, management of teams which are not enough successful from performance point of view may get influenced by the growing pressure by fans in direction of more investments on transfers in low developed football leagues such as Turkish Super League (TSL). These impacts created the following research questions:

- Q1 - Does the team performance have an impact on the amount spent on transfers in TSL?
- Q2 – Does the team performance have negative impact (increase) on the amount spent on transfers in TSL?

## **Methodology**

This paper is formulated with review article style through examination of existing articles on the current topic. I have grouped and compared the emphasized opinions after tough review and acquaintance with related articles. This article is based on theoretical framework. I have used the following key words: consumer behavior, football marketing, sports marketing, unique, loyalty. The section called Discussion has discussed the advantages and disadvantages of the reviewed articles on the topic, also their limitations.

## **Discussion & Results**

Currently sport is one of the most profitable and attractive industries, which calls attention in scientific level as well. May be that is the reason why there are plenty of definitions and interpretations about sports marketing. These abundant opinions are mostly clear and responds to the nature of sports marketing, if to consider interpretations as promotion of goods and services by placing themselves in a favorable position (Schlossberg, 1996), or fulfilling the needs and requirements of consumers in the frame of exchange process (Lovelock et al., 2004). Overall, this definitions and interpretations are not complete separately, unless, altogether they complete each other and give a clear idea what sports marketing is.

However, Pelnar's (2009) argumentation that researches on sports consumption area has mainly focused on fan behavior in individual sports rather than consumer markets, leaves an open door for disputes and make researchers to question if it is true or not. Thus, models based on the evaluation of fan behaviors cannot guide a stable and long-term marketing strategies for brands competing in this industry. Case study of Fenerbahce SK can be a good example for statement,

inasmuch as shaping the transfer policy according to fan behavior made a giant impact on the financial failure and caused a deep crisis for this team in a long term. Considering that Fenerbahce SK had won the title on 2010/2011 and 2013/2014 seasons of Turkish Super League, spending on transfers can show the relationship between performance and purchase behavior reflected by the club management. Of course, the amounts used for transfers including incomes and expenditures (Table 1) are only a small and visible part of this financial failure, considering that, unsuccessful transfers called also frustrating results in winning titles in national league, international leagues, interest fee rates earned for streams in TV channels, interest rate in stock markets, sales of jerseys and other related goods offered in fan-shops, salaries, bonuses and promotions, also many other direct and indirect factors that influence the overall financial status (Table 2).

**Table 1: Basic statistics about transfers realized by Fenerbahce SK in latest 8 seasons**

Season	Number of transferred players (in)	Number of transferred players (out)	Income (in EUR)	Expenditure	Total revenue from transfers
2011/2012	9	11	27.5M	34.5M	-7M
2012/2013	11	12	4M	33.9M	-29.9M
2013/2014	5	4	1.5M	29.25M	-27.75M
2014/2015	2	2	0	0	0
2015/2016	11	15	20.5M	42.78M	-22.28M
2016/2017	16	17	8.5M	6.1M	2.4M
2017/2018	11	18	18.75M	17.68M	1.07M
2018/2019	14	9	25.5M	16.04M	9.46M
<b>Total</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>106.25</b>	<b>180.25M</b>	<b>-74M</b>

Source: Transfermarkt, 2019

**Table 2: Annual Financials for Fenerbahce Futbol A.S. for latest 5 years (2014-2018)**

<b>Net Income</b>	<b>(128.08M)</b>	<b>(181.19M)</b>	<b>(116.53M)</b>	<b>(153.08M)</b>	<b>(278.29M)</b>
Net Income after Extraordinaries	(128.08M)	(181.19M)	(116.53M)	(153.08M)	(278.29M)
Preferred Dividends	-	-	-	-	-
Net Income Available to Common	(128.08M)	(181.19M)	(116.53M)	(153.08M)	(278.29M)
EPS (Basic)	(2.44)	(3.45)	(2.14)	(2.57)	(4.68)
Basic Shares Outstanding	52.57M	52.57M	54.3M	59.46M	59.46M
EPS (Diluted)	(2.44)	(3.45)	(2.14)	(2.57)	(4.68)
Diluted Shares Outstanding	52.57M	52.57M	54.3M	59.46M	59.46M
EBITDA	(14.56M)	(20.62M)	37.35M	(29.93M)	(40.54M)

Note: Currencies have shown in TL

Source: MarketWatch 2019, Annual Financials for Fenerbahce Futbol A.S., FactSet Fundamentals, viewed 14 November 2019

As it is reflected on Table 2, the club has failed financially in a long term as the management has realized its transfer policies according to fans' requirements based on fan behavior. The context is very simple and it has influenced by the sport culture of Turkey in a great deal. Thus, fans are extremely passionate about their teams and results gained each season. Accordingly, bad results cause them to increase criticism and pressure on the management to make well-known transfers, however, management makes "star" transfers in panic which cause worse



problems both in seasonal team results and financial conditions. This tendency has continued for 11 years since 2008 as vicious circle, which brought serious financial punishments and sanctions by UEFA (Union of European Football Associations) and TFF (Turkish Football Federation) in a long term. The results of this punishments created a long-term liabilities and debts which costs 621 million Euros (Fenerbahce.org) in total and has to be completed within limited time frame.

However, in this point we can purely see the nature of consumer behavior and brand loyalty, that differentiates it from all other industries. Whereas, all the negative changes in the financial circumstances of the club, their performance as well as results, did not have any negative impact on loyalty and commitment reflected by fans. The very opposite, all the negative factors stressed above, has strengthened brand loyalty and commitment of them, which can be overall evaluated as consumer behavior. But how can we explain this unusual nature of consumer behavior in sports industry? Gladden & Funk have answered this question underlining the fundamental role of brand loyalty through explaining it with 2 reasons: "First, brand loyalty ensures a more stable following even when the core product's performance falters (i.e., the team has a losing season). Second, brand loyalty creates opportunities for product extensions beyond the core product" (2001).

Definition given by Blackwell et.al. explains the nature of consumer behavior and gives a good opportunity for broader approach to understand the fact that consumer behaviors towards different goods or services are not the same (Blackwell, Miniard, & Engel, 2006). In other words, behaviors including emotions reflected during decision-making process or decision-making process itself does not change much in the context of purchasing a good or service. Changing features are only the shapes and reflection of these emotions and decisions made, whereas the context remains the same. However, this approach is open for criticism, whereas, such an interpretation does not take geo-cultural differences into account and it needs further and deeper empirical research comparing behavioral aspects reflected by consumers from two or more culturally different regions.

K. Wakefield, has tried to explain the unique nature of sports consumers in his online platform. According to Wakefield, if a customer is a loyal to an "X" coffee brand, it can be predicted that he/she will be tend to keep buying "X" coffee at the grocery store. A loyal "X" coffee brand customer however, may switch to a similar "Y" coffee brand or purchase "X" coffee at another store if it is meaningfully discounted. Further he adds, it is not usual to see "X" coffee brand customers to wear T-shirts with "X" brand logo on the chest or frequently visit this brand's web-site, for example, xbrand.com. If they visit, then probably the people who also frequently visit abrand.com, fbrand.com or zbrand.com which are the web-site of similar brands. His example actually is a good description of the nature of other industrial goods or services, which I turn explains the halogenic nature of sports industry.

A similar concept supporting this point of view has suggested by Fisher et.al. (1998), in which they suggest that, if a person is a fan of a sports team following statements can be predicted even if that team losing:

- Follow the team players and their behaviors on that team in the field as well as in on-line and off-line platforms (e.g. espn.com, official or fan web-sites of that team, TV, radio, yellow media);
- Buy licensed goods (e.g. jersey, clothes, cups, mugs) promoting that team;
- Purchase seasonal tickets
- Visit not only home matches, but also the away matches;

- Attend in tax-based activities to pay for new facilities for the team;
- Support the league in which favorite team plays;
- Use some significant time watching and discussing that team's matches

Briefly they conclude that, while the consumer decisions on purchasing a good or service (e.g. perfume, clothes, detergent) is mainly based on economic evaluation, attending in sports event is based on emotional decisions, which makes them fans. According to The American Heritage, Idioms Dictionary, customer is the "One that buys goods or services", however a fan is "an ardent devotee; an enthusiast" and a fanatic is "a person marked or motivated by an extreme, unreasoning enthusiasm, as for a cause."

A relevant contribution has been made by Kahn (1935) to the researches on imperfect market by classifying and distinguishing between rational and irrational consumer choices under imperfect or monopolistic competition conditions. Although this research was a good entrance to the study of customers' rationality and irrationality, observations of existing literature has shown that this terms have not been studied widely in terms of sports industry. Thus, authors aimed to broaden current research with deeper evaluation of customer behaviors from the rational and irrational point of view, existing literature has shown the gap which should be fulfilled with researches mainly based on case studies.

## **Conclusion**

This study aimed to describe the core concepts of consumer behavior in sports marketing. Although the main goal of authors was creating a descriptive framework of contradicting opinions that belong to the researchers in the field expressed in a comparative table, research has shown that there are significant gaps in the current literature on related topics. In turn these gaps have caused important limitations which has made barriers for the current study. Furthermore, revealing the gaps this research has discovered that there is a need for detailed researches based on case studies and abundant data collected from the first hand in order to create a general view of the main reasons of success and failures in the marketing policies in sports industry recently, thus, this is a giant and rapidly growing industry attracting more and more audience both as consumers and main actors.

On the other hand, this research has revealed that concepts analyzed in this study mostly have not satisfactory and clear descriptions and completely certain academic descriptions (e.g. commitment, loyalty). Additionally, considering that there are complex terminology which sometimes cause confusions as consumer commitment or customer commitment, consumer loyalty, customer loyalty or fan loyalty or brand loyalty in general, rational and irrational decision making compared in example of sports and non-sports industries, there is a shortage of comparative studies which can help businesses to create more successful strategies.

Another core problem, lays under the differentiation of the notions stressed above from the sports point of view, thus, as it can be observed from this research based on existing literature, sports industry has quit distinct place in comparison with other industries for consumer behavior. Limitations of the existing literature directed the research on non-sport literatures on the terms evaluated, which can only partly explain the nature of these concepts.

Moreover, considering the rapid growth in business environment, which cause increasing challenges, higher competition, fast changes requiring fast adaptation and flexibility, more and more risky business environment, the studies should also be up-to date, however, most of the researches are quite old - early 1930s to late 1990s – which cannot respond to the underlined

challenging nature of this industry, thus it cannot catch the innovative changes in minds, tastes, renewing trends by customer side, as well as strategies, technologies and other similar factors by business point of view.

To sum up, this study gives a clear idea for future research and helps to build a strategy and plan for data to be collected and analyzed, how to develop the research, what are the gaps. In addition this study gave the authors to hold the future research on the topic in a comparative method.

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