EVALUATION OF RELATIONAL MARKETING ACTIVITIES OF FOOTBALL CLUBS FROM A FAN PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

Relational marketing that occurs in modern marketing activities, the implementation of professional football clubs, assessing the data obtained from the fans, is to examine the differences between demographic characteristics. 766 followers voluntarily participated in the study. Personal information form and ''Relational Marketing Service Scale'' were applied to the fans by e-survey via internet. The obtained data were analyzed using SPSS 20.0 program in the study. The results of this study the sample group of the gender variable in the dimension in customer relations and satisfaction, customer relations and satisfaction variable in the age range 18-25, communication, orientation and confidence of the fans, the size of the variable marital status of the fans in being the bachelor customer relations and satisfaction, communication, and orientation of fans with confidence in the dimension, the size of the education variable and satisfaction, customer relations, communication, orientation and confidence of the fans, the size of and Support Team, according to the supporters of Besiktas gymnastics club's customer relations and relational marketing services detected significant differences between levels of satisfaction in the dimension of evaluation, the levels of significant differences between monthly income and have not been identified using passolig.

Key Words: Sport Industry, Customer Relations Management, Football Club, Relationship Marketing, Fun.

ÖZ

Modern pazarlama faaliyetlerinin içinde oluşan ilişkisel pazarlamanın, profesyonel futbol kulüplerinde uygulanmasının, taraftardan elde edilen verilerle değerlendirilmesi, demografik özelliklerine göre arasındaki farkın incelenmesidir. Çalışmaya 766 taraftar gönüllü olarak katılmıştır. Taraftarlara, kişisel bilgi formu ve ilişkisel pazarlama hizmet ölçeği, internet üzerinden e-anket yoluyla uygulanmıştır. Araştırmada elde edilen veriler SPSS 20.0 (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) programı kullanılarak analiz edilmiştir. Verilerin normal dağılım gösterip göstermediği Kolmogrov-Smirnof testi ile analiz edilmiş ve normal dağılım göstermediği anlaşılmıştır. (p<0,05). Bunun sonuncunda; Mann Whitney U ve Kruskal Wallis H testleri uygulanmıştır. Sonuç olarak örneklem grubunun cinsiyet, yaş, medeni durum, eğitim ve destekledikleri takımlara göre ilişkisel pazarlama hizmetlerini değerlendirme düzeyleri arasında anlamlı farklılık tespit edilirken, aylık gelir ve passolig kullanma düzeyleri arasında anlanlı farklılık tespit edilmemiştir.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Spor Endüstirsi, Futbol Kulüpleri, Müşteri ilişkileri Yönetimi, İlişkisel Pazarlama, Taraftarlık.

1. INTRODUCTION

The dynamics of industrial transformation in today's football lead the clubs to perform restructuring, establish new marketing strategies and work on the relationship management. Using the production factors of the game and with the help of mass media as well as technological means, the football industry has become a great economy of industrial product creation and marketing all over the world (Akşar & Merih, 2006). Consumer behaviors and expectations in economic, technological, social and cultural areas have started to differ starting from the late 20th century. Increasing competition in every field led to the emergence of new marketing approaches, revealing the necessity for companies to establish closer relations by understanding the customers better (Terzioğlu, 2008).

Marketing activities within the definition of relational marketing are divided into three parts as continuity, individuality and personalization. The continuity dimension that differs relational marketing from other

marketing types refers to continuation of interaction of the two sides that constitute the relationship (Örs, 2007). It is observed that the places that provide interaction with the fans do not offer access to fans through means such as stadiums, licensed merchandise stores, fan groups, mass media channels, social media accounts, and websites.

The relationship between fans and football clubs is not like any company and customer relationship. In order to understand and maintain this relationship, it is necessary for sports clubs to increase their communication activities towards fans and implement strategies that can recognize them better (Hamil et al., 2004).Football clubs should know their fans and develop new relationship strategies to meet their demands and retain the fans. When developing such programs, assistance of customer relations departments should be obtained and records should be kept systematically (Köse, 2014).

In the football industry, factors such interactions between clubs and companies, match day tickets, licensed product sales, coverage of news on newspapers and TV channels before and after the games, betting, radios, and use of social media accounts have resulted in mutual benefit for both sides. This turned the direction of interaction from fans to the club (Güneş, 2010).

The relationship between the fans and the club is carried out as a renewing relationship of continuous information. As far as the sportive achievement has benefits for the football clubs, the relationship with supporters is also an important part of this success. It is necessary to manage this process by using the facilities at full capacity, hosting the competitions and other organizations, preparing the databases from information of participants and supporting them with the technology and establishing a relationship with the fans. In this way, every detail about the fans will be used as information advantage in a competitive environment (Köse, 2014).

This study was conducted to evaluate and compare relational marketing activities from the perspective of fans of professional football clubs and develop new suggestions. This study made us understand the perspective of football clubs on relational marketing activities based on different variables. Accordingly, information was given on opinions of fans about communication and trust, customer relations satisfaction and fan orientation dimensions of the services offered by the clubs.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

2.1. Location and duration of study

Study Group: Population of the study includes the fans of Turkish professional football clubs, while the study sample consists of 776 voluntary fans of Beşiktaş, Fenerbahçe, Galatasaray and Trabzonspor football clubs, who accepted to voluntarily participate in the study in the 2015-2016 Season of Turkish Football Super League.

Data Collection Tool: When developing the questionnaires, a question pool was created first by reviewing previous studies on the subject. The researcher developed a questionnaire by using previous questionnaires with validity and reliability and obtaining opinions of academicians who are experts in their fields.The questionnaire that was used to evaluate relational marketing activities consists questions on gender, age, marital status, educational level, profession, income level, 7 question about demographic characteristics and 24 5-point Likert questions (Strongly Agree, Agree, Undecided, Disagree, Strongly Disagree).

As a result of the statistical analysis, the questions 1, 2, 10, 12, 14, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20 and 24 constituted the "Communication and Trust" sub-dimension of scale, the questions 4, 11, 13, 15, 21, 22 and 23 constituted the "Customer Relations and Satisfaction" sub-dimension, and the questions 3, 6, 7, 8 and 9 constituted the "Fan Orientation" sub-dimension.

Table 1. Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Test

KMO and Bartlett's Test		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		,962
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	12205,863
	Df	276
	Sig.	0,000

As a result of the statistical analysis, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin value was found to be (,962). The Bartlett's Test of Sphericity test was statistically significant (p <.000). The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin value should be at least 60 and the Bartlett's Test of Sphericit test should be significant in order to be able to perform the exploratory factor analysis (AFA) (Büyüköztürk, 2007).

Table 2. Cronbach Alpha Values of the Scale

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
0,952	24

As a result of the statistical analysis, reliability value of the scale was found to be 0.952.

Analysis of Data: The data obtained in the study were analyzed using the SPSS 20.0 (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) program. Normal distribution of the data was analyzed by the Kolmogrov-Smirnof test, which revealed no normal distribution (p<0,05). Accordingly, Mann Whitney U and Kruskal Wallis H Tests were made.

Findings: The following are the findings of this study which was conducted to evaluate relational marketing activities of football clubs from the perspective of fans.

Table 3. Relational Marketing Service Levels by Gender of Participants

Sub-dimension	Gender	N	Rank Value Avg.	Z	P
Customer Relations and Satisfaction	Male	558	372,30	-2,201	**,005***
	Female	207	411,83		

The Man Whitney-U test was made at a significance level of α=0.05 in order to determine whether there is a significant difference between relational marketing service levels of participants by gender. According to the test results, a statistically significant difference was found between male and female participants in customer relations and satisfaction sub-dimension of relational marketing service scale (z=-2,201; p<0.05). Customer relations and satisfaction sub-dimension score of female participants was found to be (3,0649 ± .859) significantly higher than customer relations and satisfaction sub-dimension score of male participants (2,9089 ± 1.010).

Table 4. Relational Marketing Service Levels by Marital Status of Participants

Sub-dimension	Marital Status	N	Avg.	X^2	P
Communication and Trust	Married	271	333,90	-4,555	**,000***
	Single	494	409,94		
Customer Relations and Satisfaction	Married	271	348,39	-3,213	**,001***
	Single	494	401,99		
Fan Orientation	Evli	271	341,20	-3,884	**,000***
	Single	494	405,93		

The Man Whitney-U test was made at a significance level of α=0.05 in order to determine whether there is a significant difference between relational marketing service levels of participants by marital status. According to the test results, a statistically significant difference was found in all sub-dimensions of the relational marketing service scale by age of participants (z= -4,555; -3,213; -3,884; p<0.05).

Table 5. Relational Marketing Service Levels by Age of Participants

Sub-dimension	Age	N	Avg.	X^2	P
Communication and Trust	18-25	354	429,68	37,572	**,000***
	26-33	236	360,11		
	34-41	95	298,26		
	42-49	53	315,11		
	50 and older	27	342,26		
Customer Relations and Satisfaction	18-25	354	418,28	25,123	**,000***
	26-33	236	367,51		
	34-41	95	303,74		
	42-49	53	340,47		
	50 and older	27	356,22		
Fan Orientation	18-25	354	418,62	26,583	**,000***
	26-33	236	368,18		
	34-41	95	307,00		
	42-49	53	323,83		
	50 and older	27	374,26		

The Kruskal-Wallis test was made at a significance level of α=0.05 in order to determine whether there is a significant difference between relational marketing service levels of participants by age. According to the test results, a statistically significant difference was found in all sub-dimensions of the relational marketing service scale by age of participants (X2 = 37.572; 25,123; 26,583; p<0.05). Accordingly, customer relations and satisfaction sub-dimension score of participants in the 18-25 age group was found to be (3,1045 ± 1.015) significantly higher than customer relations and satisfaction sub-dimension score of participants in other age groups (X2 =737.572; p<0.05).

Table 6. Relational Marketing Service Levels by Educational Level of Participants

Sub-dimension	Educational Level	N	Avg.	X²	P
Communication and Trust	Primary school	42	288,11	32,828	**,000***
	High school	189	343,16		
	University	438	421,20		
	Graduate	96	328,69		
Customer Relations and Satisfaction	Primary school	42	377,61	10,468	**,015***
	High school	189	370,01		
	University	438	401,81		
	Graduate	96	325,11		
Fan Orientation	Primary school	42	331,69	19,001	**,000***
	High school	189	352,01		
	University	438	412,49		
	Graduate	96	331,90		

The Kruskal-Wallis test was made at a significance level of α=0.05 in order to determine whether there is a significant difference between relational marketing service levels of participants by educational level. According to the test results, a statistically significant difference was found in all sub-dimensions of the relational marketing service scale by educational level of participants (X2 = 32.828; 10,468; 19,001; p<0.05).

Table 7. Relational Marketing Service Levels by Profession of Participants

Sub-dimension	Occupational Groups	N	Avg.	X²	P
Communication and Trust	Civil Servant	118	322,23	31,220	**,000***
	Worker	174	358,16		
	Retired	36	328,68		
	Self-employed	103	362,92		
	Student	297	435,87		
	Other	37	377,97		

The Kruskal-Wallis test was made at a significance level of α=0.05 in order to determine whether there is a significant difference between relational marketing service levels of participants by profession. According to the test results, a statistically significant difference was found only in the communication and trust sub-dimension of the relational marketing service scale by profession of participants (X2 = 31,220; p<0.05).

Table 8. Relational Marketing Service Levels by Monthly Income of Participants

Sub-dimension	Monthly Income	N	Avg.	X²	P
Communication and Trust	750-1500	242	410,90	9,689	,046
	1501-2250	143	388,70		
	2251-3000	168	377,33		
	3001-3750	98	332,54		
	3751 and over	114	368,36		
Customer Relations and Satisfaction	750-1500	242	407,81	7,278	,122
	1501-2250	143	360,85		
	2251-3000	168	391,35		
	3001-3750	98	348,41		
	3751 and over	114	375,56		
Fan Orientation	750-1500	242	413,39	10,824	,029
	1501-2250	143	365,52		
	2251-3000	168	393,75		
	3001-3750	98	338,70		
	3751 and over	114	362,64		

The Kruskal-Wallis test was made at a significance level of α=0.05 in order to determine whether there is a significant difference between relational marketing service levels of participants by monthly income. According to the test results, no statistically significant difference was found in sub-dimensions of the relational marketing service scale by monthly income of participants (p>0.05).

Table 9. Relational Marketing Service Levels by Favorite Clubs of Participants

Sub-dimension		Team	N	Avg.	X^2	P
Communication	**and**	Beşiktaş	167	407,49		
Trust		Fenerbahçe	265	405,61	13,384	**,004***
		Galatasaray	209	369,92		
		Trabzonspor	124	326,44		
Fan Orientation		Beşiktaş	167	421,84		
		Fenerbahçe	265	378,71	15,151	**,002***
		Galatasaray	209	340,44		
		Trabzonspor	124	411,60		

The Kruskal-Wallis test was made at a significance level of α=0.05 in order to determine whether there is a significant difference between relational marketing service levels of participants by their favorite clubs. According to the test results, a statistically significant difference was found in the fan orientation and communication and trust sub-dimensions of Beşiktaş in relational marketing service scale by favorite team of participants (X2 =13,384;15,151; p<0.05).

Table 10. Relational Marketing Service Levels by Passolig Usage Status of Participants

Sub-dimension	Use of Passolig	N	Avg.	Z	P
Communication and Trust	Yes	280	393,38	-,988	,323
	No	485	377,01		
Customer Relations and Satisfaction	Yes	280	387,89	-,487	,627
	No	485	375,89		
Fan Orientation	Yes	280	388,74	-,547	,584
	No	485	379,69		

The Man Whitney-U test was made at a significance level of α=0.05 in order to determine whether there is a significant difference between relational marketing service levels of participants by Passolig usage status. According to the test results, no statistically significant difference was found in sub-dimensions of the relational marketing service scale by Passolig usage of participants (z= -,988; -,487; -,547; p>0.05).

3. CONCLUSION

When the findings on comparison of relational marketing levels of fans by gender are examined, majority of 765 fans consists of male participants, 558 men and 207 women). As a result of the analysis, no significant difference was found in communication and trust and fan orientation sub-dimensions of the scale, but a significant difference was found in terms of customer relations and satisfaction. In similar studies, (Orçun and Demirtaş, 2015, Köse, 2014, Söker, 2015; Or, 2009, İnan, 2007), it was reported that majority of the participants are men.

When the findings on comparison of relational marketing levels of fans by age are examined, majority of participants were found to be between 18-25 years of age. As a result of the analysis, a significant difference was found in customer relations and satisfaction and communication and trust and fan orientation sub-dimensions of the scale (X^2= 37.572; 25,123; 26,583; p<0.05). In similar studies, (Orçun ve Demirtaş, 2015; Köse, 2014; Söker, 2015; Or, 2009), it was reported that majority of participants are between the ages of 18-25.

When the findings on comparison of relational marketing levels of fans by marital status are examined, majority of participants were found to be single. According to the test results, a statistically significant difference was found in all sub-dimensions of the relational marketing service scale by age of participants (z= -4,555; -3,213; -3,884; p<0.05).In similar studies, (Orçun ve Demirtaş, 2015; Köse, 2014; Söker, 2015; Or, 2009), it was reported that majority of participants are single.

When the findings on comparison of relational marketing levels of fans by educational level are examined, a significant difference was found in customer relations and satisfaction, communication and trust and fan orientation sub-dimensions of the scale (X2 = 32.828; 10,468; 19,001; p<0.05). In similar studies, (Orçun ve

Demirtaş, 2015; Köse, 2014; Söker, 2015; Or, 2009; Akyüz, 2017; Keskin, 2014) , it was reported that majority of participants are university graduates.

No significant difference was found when the findings on comparison of relational marketing levels of fans are examined by monthly income. No statistically significant difference was found in sub-dimensions of the relational marketing service scale by monthly income of participants.

When the findings on comparison of relational marketing levels of fans by favorite clubs are examined, the fans of Beşiktaş Gymnastics Club constitute more participants. Analysis results show that a significant difference was found in fan scoring of Beşiktaş fans in fan orientation and communication and trust sub-dimensions of the scale ($X2 = 13,384; 15,151; p < 0.05$).

No significant difference was found when the findings on comparison of relational marketing levels of fans are examined by Passolig usage status. No statistically significant difference was found in sub-dimensions of the relational marketing service scale by Passolig usage of participants.

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