

The Mediating Role of Fans' Trust in the Relationship between Social Responsibility of Club and Products Consumption (Case Study: Football Premier League Teams)

Seyed Ahmad Nejhad Sajadi^{1,*}, Milad Karamoozian²

¹Department of Sport Science, Faculty of Literature and Humanities Sciences, Vali-e-Asr University of Rafsanjan, Rafsanjan, Iran

²Neuroscience Research Center, Institute of Neuropharmacology, Kerman university of Medical Sciences, Kerman, Iran

Abstract The aim of this research is to study the mediating role of fans' trust in the Relationship between social responsibility of club and products consumption of football premier league teams. The present research is of correlation type and has been performed as a field study. The statistical universe includes all fans of premier league teams in 2013-2014. The statistical sample was selected among the fans attended sport stadia. Considering at least 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 (Stewart, 2003) with reliability coefficient (0/88) and so the questionnaires of fans' trust (Oswin and Kampitez, 2008) with reliability (0/76) and products consumption (Kim, 2008) with reliability coefficient (0/70) standard questionnaires were used as research tool. The content and construct validity of these questionnaires were confirmed in Bakhshande (2012) research, respectively. This was descriptive- correlation field study. Using smart PLS software, the descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation, frequency) and inferential statistics (structural equal modeling) were analyzed. The findings showed that. 1) the provided model had good fitness (GOF) with general model, 2) trust fans can mediate the relationship between social responsibility and products consumption, 3) social responsibility as the predictor variables could partially predict 58% products consumption changes (indirectly). Social responsibility as the predictor variables could predict 31% products consumption changes (directly).

Keywords Social responsibility, Products consumption, Trust, Premier league, Fans

1. Introduction

Today, football has the most fans and is the most popular sport in the world. In our country, Iran, 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). 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 and task. This subject, especially in Iran is very important due to some

* Corresponding author:

a.sajadi@vru.ac.ir (Seyed Ahmad Nejhad Sajadi)

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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). The fans play a deniable role in surviving sport industry. They are so important which are counted among major capitals of every professional club and sport leagues and clubs are identified by fans (Hassan Zade, 2011). The researchers also believe that the fans are considered as pillars of sport industry, because they provide athlete with a live and direct environment, so that the athlete cannot exhibit a good play in the competition (Khabiri, 2004).

One of the social problems which many of authorities and practitioners of different societies pay attention to it is inattention and lack of commitment of organizations and managers to their own social responsibility and task. This important subject, especially in Iran has been considered due to some certain conditions and necessity of comprehensive development, (Nikoomaram, Mohammadian Saravi, 2009).

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 (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 (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.

Russel (2010) in a research titled "Here or There? customer's reactions to corporate social responsibility: egocentric tendencies and their moderators " examined the customers' response to the initiatives of the social responsibility in the different geographical regions. They concluded that although the customers approved the initiatives of the social responsibility in the nonlocal societies, these initiatives haven't any influences on their support and purchase intention. Given to studying the above research background, it can be said that decision making of sport clubs managers can have several great and deep effects on the various sections of a society. Therefore managers' awareness and attention regard to their social responsibilities during decision making is very important; because an

irrational and incorrect decision and regardless to the social influences can impose many irreversible damages on the society (Nikoomaram and Mohamadian Saravi, 2009).

The football federations of countries may be considered as one of the most influential organizations to fill the leisure time of people and enrich the recreational sport sector at societies. Since the needs of sport organizations and fans change over time, it is important to generate new ideas, to improve the trust and loyal of fans, and effectiveness of financial support for sport in the Iranian football championship league and encourage them to continue physical activities. Since the analyzing relationship between the mediating role of fans' trust in the relationship between social responsibility of club and products consumption in the Iranian football premier league in studied population less was considered in previous studies, however, this study aims to investigate the mediating role of fans' trust in the relationship between social responsibility of club and products consumption in the Iranian football premier league.

2. Methods

The present research is of correlation kind and in terms of objective, is functional. 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 sample). Considering the probability of fall and increasing generalizability among the fans of each team, 200 questionnaires were distributed ($n = 200 \text{ questionnaires} \times 16 \text{ teams}$) and finally, 1720 the questionnaires were returned. The random and 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 from the social responsibility standard inventory (Stewart, 2003). The inventory of fans trust has been designed in 2008 by Swaen and chumpitaz and includes 6 questions. It has been arranged on 5 point Likert scale. The products consumption inventory has been designed in 2008 by Kim and has 4 questions and is based on 5 point Likert scale.

The social responsibility standard inventory (reliability coefficient 0/88) includes four aspects of obedience to law (reliability coefficient 0/78), economic responsibility (reliability coefficient 0/73), ethical responsibility (reliability coefficient 0/89) and humanistic responsibility (reliability coefficient 0/83) that has been validated in Iran

by Bakhshande (2012). The content validity and construct of this inventory have been approved by him. The inventories of the fans trust (Swaen and chumpitaz, 2008) and the products consumption (Kim, 2008) were used with reliability coefficients 0/76 and 0/70, respectively. This was descriptive- correlation field study. Using smartPLS software (Partial Least Squares method), the descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation, frequency) and inferential statistics (structural equal modeling) were analyzed.

3. Results

- 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.

a. 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.

Using software PLS, this study aimed to investigate the role of variables and provide a model. The structural equation model examines model fitness in three parts: 1) Measurement models, 2) Structural model, and 3) General model. The measurement model investigates the reliability and validity of research measurement tools.

Fitness of measurement models: According to PLS algorithm, the reliability, convergent validity, and divergent validity were used to study the fitness of measurement models (Nunnally, 1978, quoted by Chou, Lin, Chang, & Chuang, 2013: 5). The AVE of research structure related factors in original research model showed that all research items were qualified to explain relevant variables.

Table (1) showed that in measurement model, the coefficients of factor loadings, Alpha Cronbach, combined reliability, and common values which are used to assess the overall value of model are in good condition. The AVE scores also confirm the convergent validity.

Fitness of structural model: The result of structural model test (i.e. t-value) of tree structures are 33/769, 7/775, 13/552 (Figure 2). The obtained standard score (=1.96) shows the suitability of research structural model.

The F scores (Effect Size): impact of social variables on consumer products (0/016) and impact of fans on Products Consumption (0/575), shows suitability and strong impact of research structural model.

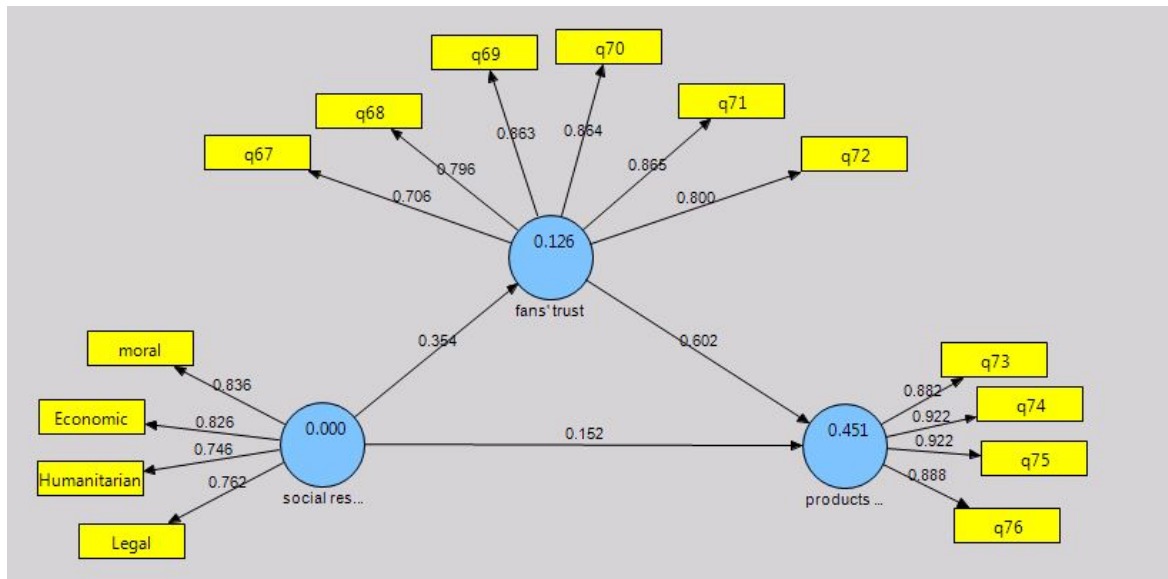


Figure 1. Final model implemented without removing factor loadings

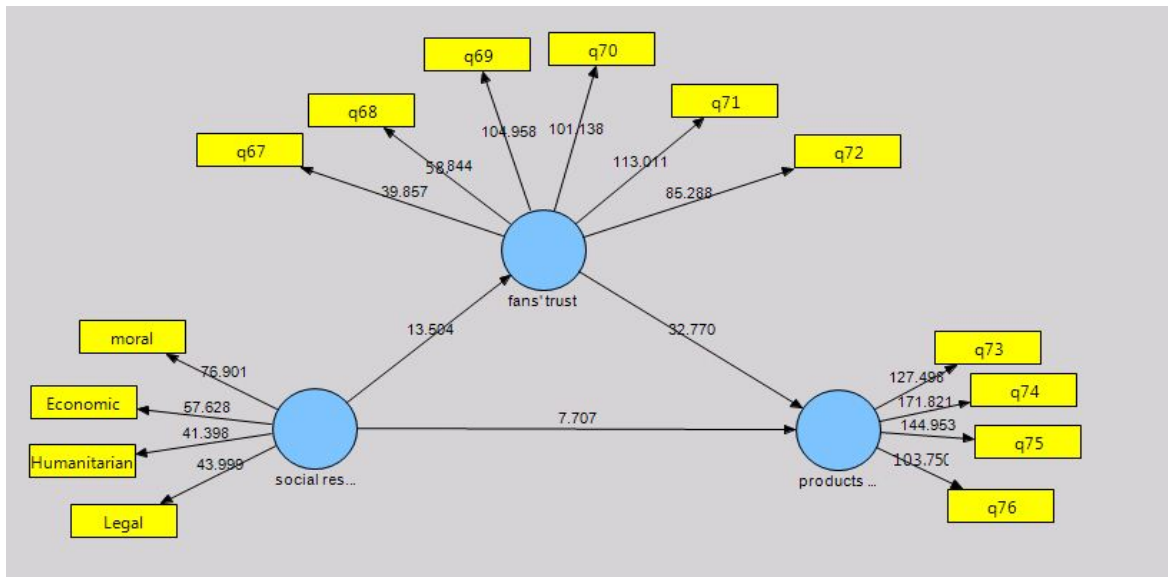


Figure 2. Structural Model of Research

Table 1. Verify the validity of variables

Variables	Trust Fans	Products Consumption	Social Responsibility	Acceptable values
Trust fans	0/817			scores must be greater than numbers below and numbers in left side (Confirmation of divergent validity)
Products Consumption	0/656433	0/903		
Social Responsibility	0/354458	0/365910	0/793	
Composite Reliability(CR)	0/923440	0/946863	0/871548	More than 0.7 (Fornell and Larcker, 1981)
Cronbach's alpha	0/901695	0/925342	0/803205	More than 0.6 (Chu, Lin, Chang, and Chuang, 2013: 5)
Average variance Extracted (AVE)	0/668889	0/816741	0/629672	More than 0.5 (Fornell and Larcker, 1981)
R2	0/125640	0/451206		More than 0.4

Note: The numbers in table represent the square root of AVE (Fornell and Lacker method to verify divergent validity)

Table 2. Main hypothesis test

Impact level	Path coefficient	Value T	R2	Impact level	Test result	
S.R \Rightarrow Products Consumption	0/367	7/707	0/135	Weak	Acceptance of research hypothesis	Directly
S.R \Rightarrow Trust fans	0/345	13/504	0/35	Mediate	Acceptance of research hypothesis	Directly
Trust fans \Rightarrow Products Consumption	0/602	32/770	0/60	Good	Acceptance of research hypothesis	Directly
S.R \Rightarrow Trust fans \Rightarrow Products Consumption	0/207 (0/345 \times 0/602)	10/63	0/38 (0/152 \times 0/152) + (0/602 \times 0/602)	Good	Acceptance of research hypothesis	Indirectly

Fitness of General model: The **GOF** is used to investigate the fitness of general model. This criterion is the square root of multiplying structures' shared values in R2. The 0.01, 0.25, and 0.36 are considered as weak, medium, and strong scores for GOF; the 0.437 score shows that the general model has very good fitness (Davari & Rezazade, 2014).

$$GOF = \sqrt{COMMU \times R^2}$$

Since the t-value is greater than 1.96, it can be said that:

Social responsibility has a significant impact on Products Consumption of Football Premier League teams' fans. (directly). The social responsibility explains 15% of variance Products Consumption of fans. (directly). (T=7/707)

Social responsibility has a significant impact on Trust fans of Football Premier League teams' fans. The social responsibility explains 35% of variance Trust fans of fans. (T=13/504)

Fans Trust have a significant impact on Products Consumption of Football Premier League teams' fans. The social responsibility explains 60% of variance Products Consumption of fans. (T=32/770)

Social responsibility has indirect and significant impact by Trust fans on Products Consumption of Football Premier League teams' fans. The social responsibility explains 21% of variance Products Consumption of fans. (Indirectly). (T=10/63)

4. Conclusions

The findings showed that the provided model had good fitness (GOF) with general model. Trust fans can mediate the relationship between social responsibility and products consumption. Social responsibility as the predictor variables could predict 31% products consumption changes (directly). Also social responsibility as the predictor variables could partially predict 58% products consumption changes (indirectly). The results of this research are associated with the results of Hasani and Heydari Zade (2013), Moshbaki and Khalili Shojaie (2010), Walker (2010), Abdol Rahim (2011), Dogar (2010) and Russel's (2010).

The findings showed that social responsibility of club has impact on fans' trust the social responsibility explains 35% of variance Trust fans of fans. Lo and Bethchray (2006) studied the relationship between the social responsibility, market value and customer's satisfaction. These findings are similar to results of present study. They found that in the same conditions, the customers are satisfied with the organizations which participate in the initiatives of social responsibility. Also in the companies with the low initiative of social responsibility, the customers' satisfaction actually reduces (Lo, 2006). This finding is associated with the results of a research titled "Effectiveness of the sport financial supports among the fans of football in Iran" (Eshghi, 2009). This is one of a few researches related to the effectiveness of the sport financial support in the football league of Iran in which the effect of the sport financial supports on 5 variables of the costumer's (fan) maturity process was studied.

The results obtained showed that social responsibility as the predictor variables could predict 31% products consumption changes (directly) and also social responsibility as the predictor variables could partially predict 58% products consumption changes (indirectly). It seems that the consumers and the fans always search the suppliers whose products have a better quality. In the today's competitive world, discovering fans' needs and demands and meeting their needs is a basic condition to success the organizations. The similar researches related to this subject include Karlson, Dona and Nokamiski (2009), in the scanning research titled the relation of brand – sport consumer. The results of these researches were associated with our results. considering the above mentioned, it can be concluded that the major aim of a football club is to increase its convenience and well being either in the form of success in the field or in the activities outside the field. It is important to say that the well-being a club is not only the record of a team but also it is financial, technical and trade stability of that team. Therefore the role of the social responsibility in the sport and sport financial support and whether participation in the initiatives of the social responsibility influence the products consumption is completely clear and we observed a directs and significance relation between them. According to findings, it is suggested that the Premier League organization, sports organizations,

and clubs management departments identify other factors affecting products consumption and also determine the barriers and factors affecting the relationship between social responsibility of clubs and products consumption of fans to improve products consumption, and promote the culture of products consumption among fans.

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